

“ बालबालिका र विद्यालय शान्तिक्षेत्र हुन् ”



CHILD RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER ELECTIONS IN CONTEXT OF FEDERAL ELECTION OF NEPAL 2026



प्रतिवेदन तयार गर्ने



बालबालिका शान्तिक्षेत्र राष्ट्रिय अभियान

सहयोग/सहकार्य



Save the Children

Child Rights Violations Before, During, and After Elections in context of Federal Election of Nepal 2026

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Background

The Children as Zones of Peace National Campaign (CZOP) was established in 2001 and formally launched in 2003 as a broad civic initiative. The campaign has consistently advocated for the protection and promotion of child rights in Nepal, particularly during sensitive periods such as political transitions, armed conflict, and elections. Through collaboration with civil society organizations, international non-governmental organizations, child rights activists, and other stakeholders, the campaign has played a significant role in placing the principle of “Children as Zones of Peace” at the center of national moral and political discourse.

In Nepal’s democratic practice, elections constitute a fundamental pillar. Following the establishment of the federal democratic republic, federal, provincial, and local elections have provided opportunities to strengthen democratic institutions. However, past experiences show that political competition, mass gatherings, rallies, campaigns, and potential tensions during elections have exposed children to various risks. Practices such as the political use of children, involving them in campaign activities, disrupting school operations, compelling their presence in rallies and demonstrations, and exposing them to violent incidents constitute violations of child rights. These realities have further underscored the sensitivity of child protection during elections.

In particular, during the federal and provincial elections held in 2022, various types of child rights-related incidents were recorded. CZOP monitored, documented, and analyzed these incidents and published a public report, which provided an important basis for sensitizing political parties, election management bodies, and government institutions to ensure child-friendly elections. The findings highlighted weaknesses in the effective implementation of the election code of conduct, insufficiently active monitoring mechanisms, and discrepancies between the commitments and practices of political parties. This confirmed the need for continuous monitoring and evidence-based advocacy for child rights protection.

The concept of “Children as Zones of Peace” is closely linked to Nepal’s peace process and human rights movement. It establishes the principle that children must be kept separate from all forms of political, military, or violent activities; that their best interests must prevail; and that their right to grow up in a safe and fear-free environment must be guaranteed. Respecting children as neutral and protected zones even during competitive and sometimes tense electoral processes is a fundamental condition of democratic culture.

In this context, with the federal elections scheduled for March 5, 2026, it has become necessary to conduct a systematic study, documentation, and analysis of the status of child rights during the pre-election, election day, and post-election periods. This study aims to identify trends in child rights violations, risk areas, and institutional challenges, and to present policy and practical recommendations to ensure child-friendly and peaceful electoral processes.

Executive Summary

This report presents an analysis of the status of child rights during the federal election cycle (pre, during and post) in Nepal held on March 5, 2026 done by Children as Zones of Peace (CZOP) National Campaign. The study aimed to document and categorize incidents involving children in election-related activities, assess compliance with Nepal's legal and policy framework, and provide practical recommendations for ensuring child-friendly elections. It covered the period from 25 January to 11 March 2026, enabling observation across the full election cycle—from campaign activities and rallies before the election, to election day logistics, and post-election celebrations and tensions. The study adopted a nationwide perspective, drawing data from incidents reported across Koshi, Bagmati, Madhesh, Lumbini, Karnali, Gandaki, and Sudurpashchim Provinces, thereby capturing both urban and rural patterns of child involvement. The methodology combined literature review, incident documentation, and analytical categorization. Relevant national and international legal instruments, including the Constitution of Nepal, the Children's Act, the Election Commission's Code of Conduct, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, were reviewed to establish the normative framework. The main evidence base came from media monitoring, social media observation, and civil society reporting. Platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube were systematically monitored, and incidents were verified through cross-checking and visual evidence before being documented in a standardized format.

The findings show that the pre-election phase was the most critical and high-risk period for children. During the campaign period alone, 285 incidents of child rights violations were recorded. The most frequent forms of misuse included children carrying party flags and election symbols (54 incidents), participating in rallies and mass gatherings (48 incidents), appearing in campaign videos (47 incidents) and chanting political slogans (39 incidents). Other forms included distributing pamphlets, dancing to campaign songs, showering flowers on political leaders, and wearing party-branded clothing. These practices are both ethically and legally problematic, as they use children as tools of political mobilization while exposing them to physical, emotional, and developmental risks. The study also highlights the troubling involvement of schools and educational spaces in election-related activities. Incidents included students participating in rallies while wearing school uniforms, political leaders entering school premises during campaign periods, campaign activities occurring near schools during school hours, and even reports of school buses being used for campaign purposes. Such actions compromise the neutrality of schools and undermine the principle of "Children and Schools as Zones of Peace."

A particularly significant concern is the growing digital exploitation of children during elections. Numerous incidents involved children appearing in political content on social media, often recorded by parents or guardians asking children to request votes for specific political parties. Influencers and content creators also used children in politically branded content to increase online engagement. Emerging risks included AI-generated videos of children endorsing political actors and monetized political content featuring minors. These practices create long-term risks for children's privacy, dignity, and autonomy, as digital content can remain online indefinitely and may expose children to harassment or misuse. The report finds that child rights violations during elections are systemic rather than isolated. Of the 285 pre-election incidents, 177 were directly linked to political parties and their supporters, while 108 incidents involved parents, guardians, social media users, influencers, media personnel, and education-related actors. This indicates that the misuse of children in elections is not confined to one political group but reflects broader societal normalization, weak enforcement of rules, and inadequate accountability.

Geographically, the highest number of incidents was reported in Koshi Province, followed by Bagmati and Madhesh Provinces, with smaller numbers in other provinces. This distribution confirms that child involvement in elections is a nationwide issue. In contrast, relatively few incidents were recorded on election day, and no verified cases were found of children being used directly at polling stations. However, two incidents of school buses being used to transport ballot boxes raised concerns about the misuse of educational resources. In the post-election period, 18 sample incidents documented children participating in victory rallies and celebrations, where they were seen carrying flags, chanting slogans, dancing, and accompanying adults in politically charged gatherings.

The study concludes that despite the existence of constitutional guarantees, child protection laws, and electoral codes of conduct, children continue to be drawn into political campaigns, public demonstrations, and online political messaging in Nepal. The persistence and spread of these incidents reveal major gaps in awareness, monitoring, and enforcement. The report therefore calls for stronger institutional mechanisms, including stricter monitoring of campaign activities, stronger enforcement of election regulations, accountability for political actors, and public awareness campaigns targeting parents, communities, and digital content creators. Protecting children during elections is both a legal obligation and a democratic responsibility, and upholding the principle of Children and Schools as Zones of Peace requires collective commitment from political parties, state institutions, civil society, and communities.

Objectives

► Overall Objective

To analyze the status of child rights and document violations during the federal election cycle (pre-election, election day, and post-election periods).

► Specific Objectives

- To collect and categorize incidents of child rights violations.
- To assess the status of compliance with the election code of conduct.
- To present policy-level and practical recommendations.

Scope, Methodology and Limitation

► SCOPE:

Study Period:

The study covers the period from 25 January 2026– 11 March 2026, corresponding to the weeks before and immediately after the federal elections held on March 5, 2026. This timeframe was deliberately selected to capture developments across the three critical phases of the electoral cycle: the pre-election period, election day, and the immediate post-election phase. The pre-election period is particularly important because most campaign-related activities—including rallies, door-to-door campaigning, mass gatherings, and social media mobilization—occur during this stage, increasing the likelihood of children being exposed to political activities or used for campaign purposes. Election day itself represents a sensitive moment when public movement, voter mobilization, and security concerns may affect children's safety around polling centers or public spaces. The post-election period was also included in the study to identify any child-related impacts resulting from election outcomes, including potential political tensions, celebratory rallies, or localized conflicts that may affect children's wellbeing. By covering this entire timeframe, the study provides a comprehensive overview of how electoral processes influence the environment in which children live, learn, and participate in society. The chosen period also aligns with monitoring activities conducted under the Children as Zones of Peace campaign, ensuring that observations reflect real-time developments and capture both immediate and emerging risks affecting child rights during the election cycle.

Study Area:

The study adopts a nationwide perspective, covering multiple provinces and districts across Nepal in order to capture the geographic spread and diversity of child rights-related incidents during the election period. Incidents were documented from districts across several provinces, including areas in Bagmati, Koshi, Madhesh, Lumbini, Karnali, Gandaki, and Sudurpashchim Provinces. These areas include both urban centers and rural communities, allowing the study to identify variations in how child-related electoral practices occur in different socio-political contexts. Urban districts such as Kathmandu and Lalitpur often experience high visibility campaign activities, including rallies, media coverage, and social media production, which increases the likelihood of documented incidents. In contrast, rural districts may experience different forms of child involvement, such as participation in local gatherings, processions, or campaign logistics. The geographic scope of the study therefore provides insight into both widespread patterns and localized dynamics of child involvement in political activities. Additionally, including districts from diverse ecological and administrative regions helps ensure that the findings reflect a broad representation of Nepal's electoral environment. This approach allows the analysis to identify whether certain types of violations are concentrated in particular regions or whether they represent systemic practices across the country. By examining incidents across multiple provinces and districts, the study aims to provide evidence that can inform national-level policy discussions while also highlighting the need for context-specific interventions at the provincial and local levels.

► METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

The study began with a comprehensive review of relevant literature and policy documents in order to establish the legal, institutional, and conceptual framework guiding the analysis. Key sources included previous reports produced by the Children as Zones of Peace campaign, which provided valuable historical context regarding patterns of child involvement during earlier elections. National legal instruments were also reviewed, including the Constitution of Nepal and the Act Relating to Children, to identify provisions related to child protection and the prohibition of child exploitation. Particular attention was given to the election code of conduct issued by the Election Commission Nepal, which contains specific guidelines regarding campaign behavior and restrictions on the involvement of minors in electoral activities. In addition, international legal standards were examined, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to align the study with globally recognized principles of child protection, participation, and best interests of the child. The review also considered the election manifestos of major political parties to assess whether commitments to child rights were reflected in campaign rhetoric and policy proposals. This literature review served several purposes: it helped define key analytical categories for identifying violations, clarified legal obligations for political actors, and provided a benchmark against which observed practices could be assessed. By grounding the study in both national and international legal frameworks, the literature review ensured that the analysis of incidents is informed by recognized child rights standards and broader democratic governance principles.

Incident Documentation

Incident documentation constituted a central component of the study. Information about potential child rights violations was collected from multiple sources, including media reports, civil society networks, direct spot observations/monitoring, and reports submitted by community members and partner organizations. This multi-source approach was adopted to enhance the reliability and comprehensiveness of the data. Media monitoring involved reviewing news articles, television coverage, and digital reporting related to election activities across various districts. In addition, social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube were monitored to identify cases where children appeared in political messaging, campaign videos, or influencer content. Direct spot observation and monitoring was done in province level by CZOP through its member organizations. These observations were done in six provinces of Nepal. Reports collected from this spot observation were carefully reviewed, cross-checked and documented. A verification process was applied wherever possible, including triangulation with multiple sources, confirmation through local contacts, or examination of available visual evidence. Only incidents that met the verification criteria were included in the analytical dataset. Each documented incident was recorded using a standardized format that captured details such as location, type of activity, involvement of children, and potential safety risks. The documentation process also considered contextual factors, including the nature of the political event, the role assigned to children, and whether institutional actors such as schools or local authorities were involved. This systematic documentation approach enabled the study to move beyond anecdotal evidence and provide a structured overview of child rights concerns during the election period. (View Annex 1 for the documentation list of incidences in pre-election context)

Analytical Framework

The study employs an analytical framework designed to systematically examine the nature, patterns, and implications of child rights violations during the election cycle. Incidents documented during the monitoring process were categorized into thematic groups, such as the direct use of children in political campaigning, the use of school spaces and uniformed students, social media exploitation, and safety-related risks associated with rallies and public gatherings. This categorization allowed the analysis to identify recurring forms of child involvement and to examine how different types of activities may affect children's rights and wellbeing. The framework also incorporates demographic and geographic dimensions, including the age and gender of children where such information was available, as well as the province in which incidents occurred. This classification helps highlight potential vulnerabilities among specific groups and regions. In addition, the analysis considers contextual risk factors, including political competition, parental involvement, digital media dynamics, and gaps in regulatory enforcement. Institutional dimensions were also examined to assess the role of political parties, schools, election authorities, and local governance structures in either preventing or enabling such practices. By combining qualitative analysis with structured categorization, the analytical framework allows the study to identify both individual incidents and broader systemic trends. Ultimately, this approach supports evidence-based conclusions regarding the challenges of protecting children during elections and informs practical recommendations for policymakers, political actors, and child rights advocates.

Legal and Policy Framework

The analysis of child rights in the context of elections is grounded in a comprehensive review of national and international legal and policy instruments that define the rights of children and the responsibilities of state and non-state actors. At the national level, the Constitution of Nepal provides the fundamental framework for the protection and promotion of child rights. The Constitution guarantees children's rights to identity, education, health, protection from exploitation, and protection from involvement in hazardous or harmful activities. It also establishes the principle that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions affecting them. These constitutional guarantees serve as the highest legal standard against which electoral practices involving children are evaluated. In addition to the Constitution, the study considers the provisions of the Act Relating to Children 2018, which operationalizes constitutional commitments and provides specific protections against the exploitation or misuse of children. The Act explicitly prohibits the involvement of children in activities that may harm their physical, mental, or emotional wellbeing, including political manipulation or exploitation. It also outlines responsibilities for guardians, institutions, and the state to ensure child protection. The analysis further examines relevant provisions within the election regulatory framework, particularly the Election Code of Conduct, which restricts the use of minors in campaign activities and requires political parties and candidates to respect child protection principles during electoral processes. At the international level, the study draws upon key provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially articles related to the best interests of the child, protection from exploitation, and the right to safe development. Together, these legal and policy instruments provide the normative basis for assessing whether documented practices during elections align with national obligations and international child rights standards.

► LIMITATIONS

Limited coverage of all the incidences nationwide:

Due to time, resource, and access constraints, the study was not able to document every instance of child rights violations that may have occurred across all districts and local levels of Nepal during the election cycle. Therefore, the analysis is based on representative incidents collected from available media reports, social media monitoring, and inputs from civil society networks. While these incidents illustrate important patterns and trends of child involvement in the election process, they may not fully reflect the total number or full geographic spread of violations nationwide.

Reliance on secondary and publicly available resources:

This study primarily relied on media reports, social media monitoring, and information shared through civil society networks rather than direct field-based verification in all locations. As a result, some incidents may have been underreported, overrepresented, or lacked complete contextual detail, particularly in remote areas where public documentation was limited.

Positive initiatives taken by different agencies to protect child rights during the election process

► Initiatives taken by Constitutional bodies, government bodies and Political Parties:

The Election Commission of Nepal issued public reminders and press statements urging political parties, candidates, and supporters to strictly follow the election code of conduct, which prohibits the use of children in campaign activities. These communications emphasized that children should not be mobilized for political rallies, promotional activities, or propaganda. Similarly, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) released statements reminding political actors and the public of their legal and moral obligations to respect child rights during the election period. The NHRC highlighted that the involvement of children in political campaigns could expose them to physical, psychological, and social risks, and called for collective responsibility to ensure child-safe electoral practices.

The National Child Rights Council (NCRC) also played a significant role in advocating for the protection of children during elections. Through public communications and coordination with relevant agencies, the Council emphasized that children should not be used as instruments of political mobilization. These institutional interventions helped reinforce national legal standards and contributed to raising public awareness about child protection responsibilities during the election cycle. At the provincial and district levels, administrative authorities also took steps to address concerns related to child involvement in election activities. For example, District Administration Offices (DAOs) in districts such as Mahottari and Rautahat districts reportedly issued directives reminding political parties, candidates, and campaign organizers to avoid involving children in political rallies, campaigning, or other election-related activities. Such administrative orders reflect an important effort by local authorities to translate national legal provisions into practical action at the community level.

Positive efforts were also observed at the local political level, where some political parties and local leaders publicly committed to respecting child rights during the election process. In several districts, including Kailali and Dailekh districts, local political actors reportedly expressed commitments not to involve children in campaign activities and to respect schools as politically neutral spaces. These commitments were often encouraged through local advocacy initiatives and engagement by civil society organizations and child rights networks. In addition to government and political actors, civil society organizations and local child rights advocates played an important role in promoting child-friendly election practices. Awareness campaigns, community discussions, and media engagement helped highlight the risks associated with the politicization of children and encouraged greater vigilance among communities.

► Initiatives taken by CZOP, its member organizations, CSOs and media:

CZOP National Campaign implemented a wide range of advocacy, consultation, media, and coordination initiatives to safeguard children from political exploitation and to promote the principle of "Children and Schools as Zones of Peace." A major area of work was consultation and dialogue with children, civil society organizations (CSOs), and stakeholders to gather recommendations on child-related issues for inclusion in political party manifestos. Between January and February 2026, CZOP organized and supported several provincial and national discussions in collaboration with partners such as INSEC, JCYCN, N-CFLG Forum, VOC, Sabal Nepal, CDC Nepal, and CCR-Karnali. These consultations took place in multiple provinces including Koshi, Madhesh, Gandaki, Karnali, and Sudurpashchim, and included direct engagement with children through the CZOP Child Advisory Committee. These forums generated important inputs from children and CSOs, strengthened awareness on child protection during elections, and built stakeholder commitments for peaceful and child-sensitive electoral practices.

CZOP also carried out direct advocacy with political parties. After collecting suggestions from member organizations and partners, CZOP prepared and shared an attention letter/memorandum highlighting child-related priorities for political manifestos. The campaign formally submitted recommendations to 136 political parties registered with the Election Commission via email and conducted in-person advocacy with major political parties at the central, provincial, and district levels. Meetings were held with leaders and representatives of parties such as the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, Nepal Communist Party, Janamat Party, Rastriya Swatantra Party, Ujyalo Nepal Party, Janata Samajbadi Party, and Rastriya Prajatantra Party, among others. These engagements focused on child protection, compliance with the election code of conduct, and commitments to include child rights issues in party manifestos. According to the campaign, many parties responded positively and included child-related concerns in their manifestos.

In addition, CZOP undertook a strong media and public awareness campaign in partnership with Community Information Network (CIN) and through its own digital platforms. Through radio and social media, the campaign produced and disseminated 20+ informative dialogues and radio contents, as well as 5 public service announcements (PSAs) on the election code of conduct and the prohibition of involving children in political activities. These PSAs were broadcast more than 60 times during prime time across community radio networks in four languages: Nepali, Maithili, Tharu, and Khas. On digital platforms, CZOP produced 20+ informational flyers, 5 animated awareness videos, and more than 17 informative video messages, helping expand public outreach on child-sensitive and peaceful elections. CZOP further strengthened coordination with child rights organizations, development partners, election observer groups, and state institutions such as the Election Commission, NHRC, NCRC, and MOWCSC. This included meetings on effective monitoring of child rights violations, orientation sessions for election observers in collaboration with INSEC, and support to child-led reporting, such as the complaint raised by a child club in Dharan regarding the use of children in campaign activities.

These efforts of CZOP and its member organizations reached 541 participants, including 301 adults (195 male, 104 females, 2 others) and 41 children (23 boys, 17 girls, 1 other) across multiple physical and virtual events. These efforts significantly contributed to promoting child protection, strengthening accountability, and advancing the collective commitment to child-sensitive and peaceful elections in Nepal. These positive initiatives demonstrate that while challenges remain, there is increasing recognition among institutions and stakeholders of the need to safeguard children during electoral processes. Strengthening coordination among these actors and ensuring consistent enforcement of existing laws and commitments will be essential to further advance the goal of conducting child-sensitive and child-friendly elections in Nepal.

Status of child rights violations

► PRE-ELECTION PERIOD: ANALYSIS OF THE VIOLATIONS

Nature of Reported Incidences:

S.N.	Nature of Incidence	Description/Analysis
1.	Direct Use of Children in Political Campaigning	→ Carrying party flags and symbols: Across multiple districts, children were observed carrying party flags and election symbols during rallies, processions, and roadside greetings. Symbols such as the “Sun” of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist), the “Tree” of the Nepali Congress, and the “Bell” of the Rastriya Swatantra Party were prominently displayed by minors. In several instances, children were positioned at the front of rallies or at traffic intersections to maximize visibility. The use of children in this symbolic manner creates emotional appeal and normalizes early political alignment. It also potentially violates the election code enforced by the Election Commission of Nepal, which restricts the use of minors in campaign activities. Beyond legal concerns, such visibility exposes children to road hazards, crowd risks, and partisan hostility. The embedding of party symbolism at an early age raises ethical concerns regarding political socialization without informed consent or mature understanding. → Distributing pamphlets: Children were reported distributing campaign pamphlets and leaflets in marketplaces, neighborhoods, and door-to-door outreach drives. In some districts, minors accompanied adult cadres and handed printed manifestos or candidate profiles to voters. This practice effectively turns children into campaign mobilizers. Reports suggest that such distribution often occurs during after-school hours or weekends, though some incidents allegedly occurred during school time. The activity constitutes direct participation in partisan promotion and may contravene child protection provisions under national law. It also raises safety concerns, as children move through unfamiliar neighborhoods and crowded public areas. When minors distribute materials, the emotional impact on voters may be strategically intended to generate sympathy or positive perception of a party. Furthermore, children may not understand the political content they are promoting, making the activity ethically problematic. The normalization of such involvement risks institutionalizing child participation in competitive political messaging without safeguards. → Chanting slogans: In numerous rallies, children were recorded chanting political slogans in favor of candidates and against rival parties. These slogans often include campaign promises, leadership praise, or competitive rhetoric. In some documented cases, children appeared to chant rehearsed lines in coordinated groups, suggesting adult guidance or instruction. Chanting typically occurs in high-energy settings such as roadshows, candidate arrivals, and public gatherings. This practice places children at the center of political messaging and emotional mobilization. The psychological dimension is significant: repeated chanting reinforces partisan identification at an impressionable age. It may also expose children to aggressive counter-slogans or politically charged confrontations. The use of minors in vocal political endorsement blurs the boundary between civic awareness and instrumentalization. Given that children lack legal voting rights and full political agency, structured slogan participation can be interpreted as exploitation rather than voluntary civic engagement. It also increases exposure to noise, crowd density, and possible unrest.

	→ Dancing in campaign songs: Children have been seen performing dances to campaign songs during rallies and public meetings. Campaign music, often customized with party slogans and candidate names, is designed to energize supporters and attract crowds. In several municipalities, children performed on temporary stages or open vehicles while loudspeakers broadcast promotional tracks. Such performances create a festive atmosphere, drawing public attention and enhancing social media shareability. However, this practice raises ethical concerns about entertainment-based political mobilization of minors. Children may not fully comprehend the political messaging embedded in lyrics. Public performance also subjects them to intense noise levels, late-night events, and large gatherings. In digital contexts, videos of dancing children are frequently circulated online, amplifying partisan messaging. When dance becomes a campaign tool, it merges cultural expression with electoral propaganda. This dual use increases the risk of normalizing political branding within childhood spaces traditionally reserved for education and recreation. → Acting in promotional videos: Several cases involve children appearing in campaign videos circulated on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. These videos often show minors praising candidates, requesting votes, or criticizing opposing parties. In some instances, the content appears scripted and recorded under adult supervision. Digital dissemination significantly expands the reach and permanence of such material. Once uploaded, videos may be shared widely without safeguards for child privacy or future reputational protection. The involvement of minors in campaign advertising introduces a new dimension of political exploitation, blending electoral promotion with digital content creation. This trend reflects the increasing integration of social media into campaign strategies. However, it also raises concerns about informed consent, data protection, and long-term psychological impact. Unlike traditional rallies, online content remains searchable and traceable. Using children in political videos therefore not only influences immediate voters but also creates a lasting digital footprint that may affect the child's future autonomy and identity. → Showering flowers on candidates: During candidate arrivals and victory-style receptions, children have been observed showering flowers on political leaders as a sign of welcome and endorsement. This symbolic act, often performed at airport receptions, road entries, or community gatherings, visually conveys innocence and community blessing. Strategically, the presence of children enhances the emotional appeal of campaign imagery and conveys moral legitimacy. Photographs of such moments are widely circulated in media and social platforms. However, positioning children close to vehicles, elevated platforms, or dense crowds introduces safety risks. In some events, crowd surges and uncontrolled enthusiasm may create hazardous conditions. The use of children in ceremonial endorsement also raises ethical concerns about staged political optics. While culturally rooted in hospitality traditions, its repeated use in campaign settings transforms a social gesture into electoral messaging. The act becomes less about cultural respect and more about symbolic political branding, placing minors at the center of orchestrated public imagery.
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		→ Participating in rallies and mass gatherings: Children have been documented attending and actively participating in large campaign rallies across provinces. In certain instances, minors marched in processions, rode on decorated vehicles, or stood in dense crowds during speeches. Mass gatherings can involve thousands of supporters, amplified sound systems, and extended durations. These environments present substantial risks, including heat exposure, dehydration, crowd crush, and road accidents. Children are particularly vulnerable in such settings due to limited physical resilience and dependency on adult supervision. Moreover, rallies sometimes involve confrontational rhetoric or rivalry between party supporters, potentially exposing minors to tense or volatile situations. The presence of children also serves as a visual demonstration of grassroots support. However, when minors are integrated into mobilization strategies, it challenges principles of child neutrality in political competition. Participation in such gatherings without adequate safety measures raises serious protection concerns alongside broader ethical questions. → Wearing party-branded clothing: Reports indicate that children were seen wearing party-branded caps, T-shirts, scarves, and badges during campaign periods. These items typically display party symbols, slogans, or candidate images. Distribution of such clothing may occur during rallies or community outreach programs. Wearing branded attire transforms children into walking promotional displays, increasing campaign visibility in neighborhoods and schools. In some cases, children reportedly attended public spaces or even school environments while visibly affiliated with a political party through clothing. This practice contributes to early partisan labeling and peer influence dynamics. From a psychological standpoint, children may adopt political identity through repetition and social reinforcement rather than informed choice. The normalization of branded attire in childhood spaces risks politicizing educational and recreational environments. Additionally, such visible affiliation could expose minors to social pressure or hostility from supporters of rival parties. As with other activities, this raises questions regarding consent, neutrality, and the boundaries between civic awareness and political exploitation.
2.	Use of school spaces and uniformed students	→ Students in school uniforms participating in rallies: Multiple reported incidents indicate that students wearing identifiable school uniforms were present in political rallies and campaign processions across several districts. The visibility of uniforms suggests either participation immediately after school hours or direct mobilization from school premises. The involvement of uniformed students heightens concern because it symbolically links educational institutions with partisan political activity. Under the election code enforced by the Election Commission Nepal, minors are not to be used in campaign activities, and the Act Relating to Children 2018 protects children from political exploitation. When students attend rallies in uniform, it may create public perception of institutional endorsement. Additionally, uniforms make children easily identifiable, increasing exposure to safety risks in crowded and politically charged environments. The practice risks normalizing partisan identity within school-aged populations and may undermine the neutrality of educational institutions, which are legally and ethically intended to remain politically non-aligned spaces.

		→ Political leaders entering school premises: There have been documented instances of political leaders and candidates entering school compounds during campaign periods, sometimes addressing gatherings or interacting with students. Schools are protected civic spaces meant for education and child development, not electoral promotion. When candidates enter school premises during active campaign periods, it blurs the boundary between civic outreach and political mobilization. Such actions may violate campaign conduct guidelines overseen by the Election Commission Nepal, particularly if campaign messaging occurs. The presence of political figures can create implicit pressure on school administrators, teachers, and students. Children may feel compelled to attend or participate due to authority dynamics. Additionally, the reputational neutrality of the institution can be compromised if images circulate showing political engagement within school grounds. Even brief visits during campaign season risk institutional politicization and raise ethical concerns regarding consent, influence, and safeguarding responsibilities of school authorities. → Campaigning near schools during school hours: Reports indicate that campaign rallies, slogan chanting, vehicle caravans, and loudspeaker announcements were conducted in close proximity to schools during active school hours. Such activities disrupt the learning environment through excessive noise, crowd movement, and traffic congestion. Children may be drawn toward rallies out of curiosity, increasing exposure to political messaging and physical risk. Campaigning near schools during instructional hours raises concerns about indirect mobilization of minors and potential interference with education rights guaranteed under national law. Loudspeakers and processions can also create psychological pressure or distraction, especially during examination periods. Furthermore, visible political activities outside school gates may influence peer discussions and early partisan alignment among students. While public roads are open spaces, deliberate scheduling of campaign events near educational institutions during school hours raises ethical questions about strategic targeting. Protecting educational spaces from political intrusion is critical to maintaining neutrality, safety, and uninterrupted academic functioning. → Use of school buses for campaign purposes: In some reported cases, vehicles identifiable as school buses were allegedly used to transport participants to campaign events. The use of school transportation assets for political mobilization represents a serious institutional concern. School buses are intended solely for educational purposes and student safety. Repurposing them for campaign logistics risks violating both administrative regulations and child protection standards. If students are transported to political events using school vehicles, it indicates organized facilitation rather than incidental participation. Such actions may expose minors to road safety risks, long travel durations, and crowded rally environments. Moreover, visible association between school-branded vehicles and political events can imply institutional endorsement of a particular party or candidate. This compromises the perceived neutrality of the school and may undermine public trust. The practice also raises accountability questions regarding school management committees and local authorities responsible for safeguarding educational resources and ensuring compliance with child protection frameworks.
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3.	Social Media Exploitation	→ Parents making children request votes on TikTok/Facebook: A growing number of incidents involve parents recording and uploading videos of their children requesting votes for specific political parties or candidates on platforms such as TikTok and Facebook. In many cases, children are seen repeating scripted lines, urging viewers to “vote for” a particular election symbol associated with parties such as the Nepali Congress or the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist). These videos are often posted from personal accounts but function as unpaid political advertisements. The digital format allows rapid sharing, increasing reach beyond local communities. However, children lack legal voting rights and political maturity, raising concerns about informed consent and manipulation. Once uploaded, such content becomes part of a permanent digital footprint, potentially affecting the child’s future privacy and autonomy. The trend reflects a shift from physical rally participation to household-based digital campaigning, expanding the scope of child involvement beyond public spaces into algorithm-driven political influence. → AI-generated child videos endorsing parties: Emerging reports indicate the circulation of AI-generated videos featuring children’s faces or voices endorsing political parties. Using artificial intelligence tools, creators can manipulate or synthesize child-like images and speech to promote campaign messages. These videos may not involve real-time child participation but still exploit child identity for electoral gain. The ethical risks are significant: AI manipulation can fabricate consent, distort reality, and spread misleading endorsements. In a political context, such content may violate campaign regulations overseen by the Election Commission Nepal if it constitutes deceptive propaganda. Additionally, the misuse of a child’s likeness, real or synthetic, raises privacy and digital rights concerns. AI-generated content spreads quickly through social media algorithms, making regulation and verification difficult. This represents a technologically advanced form of political exploitation, where emotional appeal associated with children is artificially manufactured to influence voter sentiment without transparency or accountability. → Influencers using children for political branding: Social media influencers with substantial followings have been reported incorporating children into politically themed content to increase engagement and credibility. Children may appear in staged conversations, symbolic gestures, or emotionally appealing narratives aligned with particular parties. Influencers sometimes frame such content as family opinion or civic awareness, but the structure often resembles coordinated branding. The involvement of minors increases relatability and boosts algorithmic reach due to higher audience engagement rates with child-centered content. When linked to parties such as the Rastriya Swatantra Party or other major actors, the content effectively becomes decentralized digital campaigning. Unlike formal advertisements, influencer posts may not be transparently labeled as political promotion. This blurs the boundary between personal expression and electoral messaging. The commercialization of children’s appearances within political narratives raises concerns about consent, reputational impact, and long-term digital exposure in highly polarized political environments.
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		→ Children criticizing rival parties for content views: Another observed pattern involves children being recorded criticizing rival political parties, often in dramatic or emotionally charged language designed to attract attention. Such videos are structured to provoke reactions, comments, and shares, increasing overall visibility. The competitive nature of social media rewards controversial content, encouraging sharper partisan expressions. Children may be coached to repeat simplified accusations or slogans targeting opposing parties. This exposes minors to adversarial political rhetoric and potential online backlash. In highly polarized environments, these videos can trigger hostile responses in comment sections, including cyberbullying. The normalization of partisan criticism at an early age may shape identity formation around political antagonism rather than informed civic engagement. Furthermore, once circulated widely, these recordings can resurface later in life, affecting educational or professional prospects. The use of children in confrontational political discourse amplifies both psychological and digital risk dimensions beyond traditional campaign settings. → Monetization-driven political exploitation: Some digital content featuring children in political messaging appears to be monetization-driven. Platforms such as TikTok and Facebook provide financial incentives through views, advertisements, and live-stream gifts. When political content involving minors generates high engagement, content creators may be financially rewarded. This creates a dual incentive: political alignment and economic gain. In such cases, children become instruments not only of electoral messaging but also of revenue generation. The blending of political propaganda and digital monetization complicates regulatory oversight. While election laws may restrict direct campaign misuse of minors, monetized personal accounts may operate in regulatory gray zones. The financial motive intensifies the ethical breach, as children's political expressions are commodified for profit. This practice expands the traditional understanding of campaign exploitation into the digital economy, where algorithmic amplification and economic incentives reinforce the systematic involvement of minors in partisan content creation.
4	Increased Risk among children due to explosions	Incident Report of Dhanusha and Bardibas: Four people were injured in two separate explosions involving suspicious objects placed on bridges in Dhanusha and Bardibas. In Dhanusha, a suspicious object placed on a bridge at Badhari, Mithila Municipality-9, exploded, injuring 15-year-old girl Asha Bhujel and 8-year-old boy Sushil Majhi, both from Jamunibas, Mithila Municipality-8. According to DSP Ganesh Bahadur Bam of the District Police Office, Dhanusha, both injured children sustained minor injuries and their condition is reported to be normal. Police have started an investigation into the incident. In Bardibas, an abandoned suspicious object placed on the Rato Pul (Red Bridge) exploded, causing minor injuries to 25-year-old Sandesh Chaudhary and 22-year-old Sameer Chaudhary, both from Ghodaghodi Municipality-10, Kailali District. The injured persons stated that they noticed two suspicious objects placed on the bridge and attempted to move them. One of the objects exploded, after which they informed the police. According to DSP Shailendra Bhatt of the District Police Office, Mahottari, the other suspicious object was later safely defused by the Nepal Army bomb disposal team.

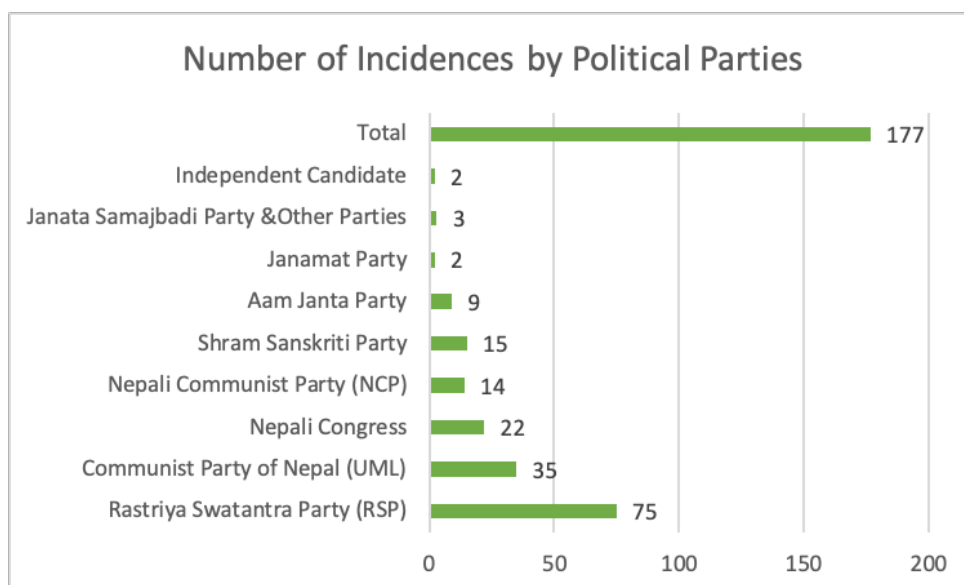
► Tabulation Summery

No.	Theme	Number of Incidents
1	Carrying party flags and symbols	55
2	Distributing pamphlets	7
3	Chanting slogans	39
4	Dancing in campaign songs	14
5	Acting in promotional videos	32
6	Showering flowers on candidates	7
7	Participating in rallies and mass gatherings	48
8	Wearing party-branded clothing	12
9	Students in school uniforms participating in rallies	12
10	Political leaders entering school premises	3
11	Campaigning near schools during school hours	6
12	Use of school buses for campaign purposes	3
13	Parents making children request votes on TikTok/Facebook	18
14	AI-generated child videos endorsing parties	2
15	Influencers using children for political branding	15
16	Children criticizing rival parties for content views	7
17	Monetization-driven political exploitation	5
	Total	286

Political Parties Violating Child Rights in Pre-Election Context:

Out of the 285 documented incidents of child rights violations during the pre-election period, 177 incidents were linked to political parties and their supporters. The highest number of cases were associated with Rastriya Swatantra Party (75 incidents), followed by Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) (35 incidents) and Nepali Congress (22 incidents). Other parties involved include Shram Sanskriti Party (15 incidents), Nepali Communist Party (14 incidents) and Aam Janata Party (9 incidents) while smaller parties and independent actors accounted for 7 additional cases.

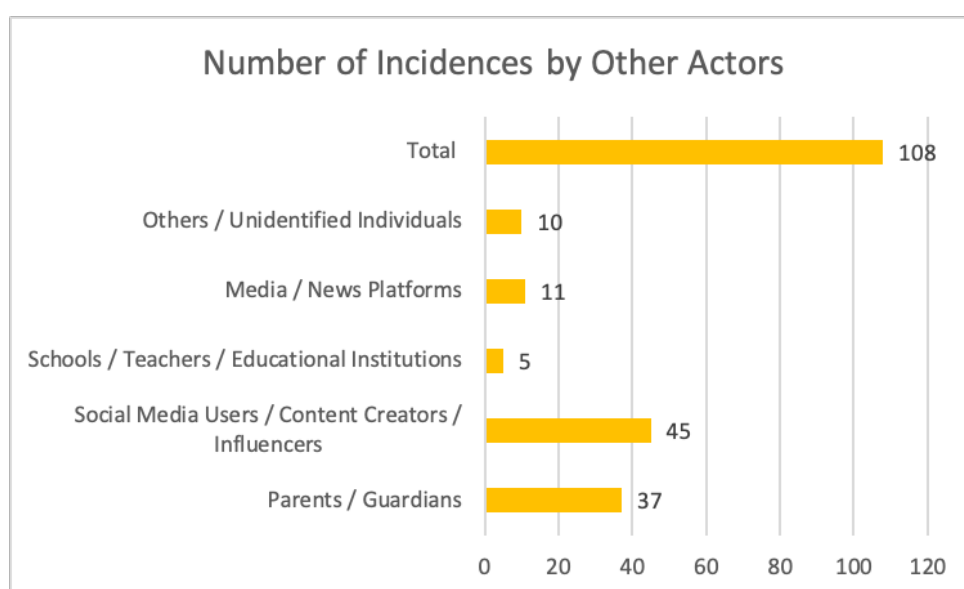
These incidents demonstrate that children were frequently used in political campaigning activities. The most common forms of violations included children carrying party flags and symbols, chanting political slogans, distributing pamphlets, and participating in rallies or mass gatherings. In several cases, children were seen wearing party-branded clothing or performing in campaign songs and promotional content. Some incidents also involved students in school uniforms taking part in political activities or leaders interacting with children in school environments. Such practices violate child protection principles and electoral codes of conduct, as children are being directly exposed to political mobilization and potential safety risks. The widespread involvement of multiple political parties indicates a systemic challenge in ensuring that electoral processes remain child-sensitive and compliant with child rights standards.



Other Actors (Parents, Media, and Social Media Influencers)

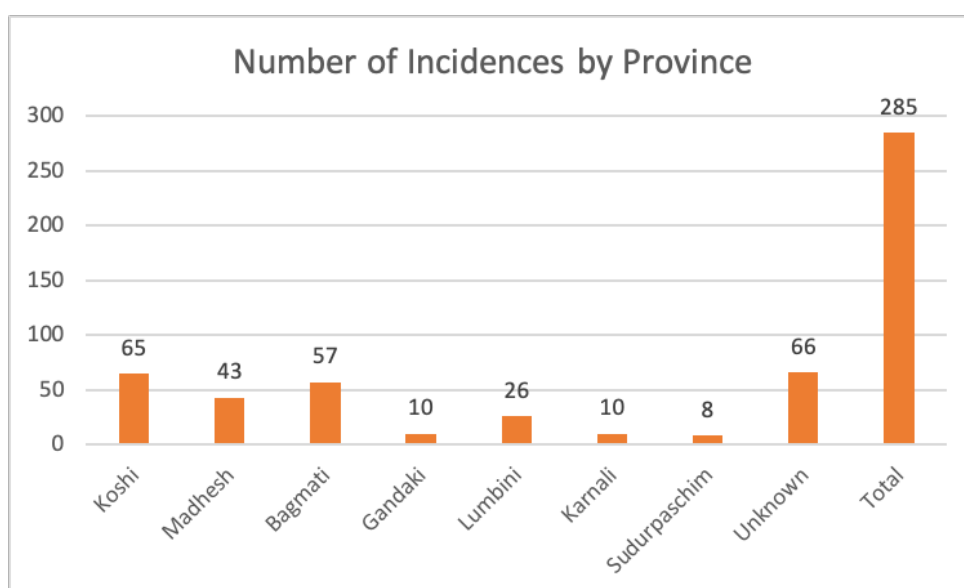
In addition to political parties, 108 of the 279 documented incidents involved other actors, including parents, guardians, social media users, influencers, media personnel, and education-related actors. Among these, parents and guardians accounted for 37 incidents, often involving children being encouraged to promote political parties or request votes in videos shared on social media platforms. Social media users, influencers, and content creators were linked to 45 incidents, where children were used for political branding, campaign messaging, or entertainment-style content designed to generate views, likes, and followers. Media and journalists accounted for 11 incidents, mostly involving interviews with children about political parties or broadcasting content that placed children in political narratives. Additionally, 5 incidents involved teachers or school-related actors, while 10 cases involved unidentified or mixed actors.

These violations largely occurred in the digital environment, where children were featured in TikTok, Facebook, or YouTube videos endorsing political parties, criticizing rival groups, or performing campaign-related messages. In some cases, the content appeared to be monetization-driven or aimed at increasing online popularity. Such practices raise serious ethical and legal concerns, as children's innocence and limited understanding of political processes are exploited for political messaging or social media engagement. This trend highlights the growing role of digital platforms in election-related child rights violations and underscores the need for stronger public awareness, digital responsibility, and regulatory oversight to protect children from political exploitation.



Geographical Spread

The incidents of child rights violations during the pre-election period shows notable geographic disparities across provinces. The highest number of cases were reported from Koshi Province (65 incidents), followed closely by Bagmati Province (57 incidents) and Madhesh Province (43 incidents). These three provinces together account for the majority of documented violations, indicating that areas with higher political activity and population density tend to experience greater involvement of children in election-related activities. At the same time, a significant number of incidents, 66 cases, were categorized as “unknown”. This represents nearly one quarter of all documented cases and suggests gaps in monitoring, reporting, or documentation of the geographic origin of violations. Improving data collection and verification mechanisms will therefore be essential for more accurate analysis and targeted interventions. Other provinces recorded comparatively lower numbers of violations, including Lumbini (26 incidents), Karnali (10 incidents), Gandaki (11 incidents), and Sudurpashchim (8 incidents). While the lower figures may indicate fewer reported incidents, they may also reflect limited monitoring coverage or lower visibility of violations. The distribution of cases highlights the need for stronger awareness and enforcement of child protection principles across all provinces during election periods. Political actors, communities, and monitoring bodies must work together to prevent the exploitation of children in political campaigns and ensure that electoral processes remain child-sensitive and rights-respecting.



► ELECTION DAY: ANALYSIS OF THE VIOLATIONS

Nature of Reported Incidences:

S.N.	Nature of Incidence	Description/Analysis
1.	Misue of Children in or near Polling Stations	→ Use of Children as Voters: The use of children as voters represents one of the most serious forms of electoral malpractice and a violation of both electoral law and child rights principles. In Nepal, the legal voting age is 18, and the electoral roll is prepared based on citizenship registration and age verification. During the election day, no any incident was reported where minors have allegedly been encouraged or allowed to attempt voting on behalf of adults or relatives. Such practices undermine the integrity of the electoral process and manipulate the democratic system by allowing ineligible individuals to influence election outcomes. From a child rights perspective, involving children in fraudulent electoral practices places them in a situation where they may unknowingly participate in illegal activities. It also exposes them to pressure from family members, political activists, or local power groups. → Use of School Spaces as Election Booths: In the Federal Election 2026, out of 10,754 polling booths around 9450 were established in schools across the country. From a child protection perspective, educational institutions should ideally remain politically neutral spaces. Alternative public venues or better planning could reduce disruptions and ensure that children's learning environment remains safe and uninterrupted during election periods. → Using Children as Messengers: Using children as messengers during election day is a subtle but concerning form of political misuse. In some contexts, children may be asked to carry information between party agents, campaign workers, or voters waiting outside polling stations. This may include delivering instructions about whom to vote for, informing voters about party strategies, or relaying messages between campaign teams. Children are often perceived as neutral and less suspicious, which makes them vulnerable to being used in such activities. However, no such incidents were reported on the election day. → Queue Manipulation: Queue manipulation involving children occurs when adults place children in voter lines to hold positions for them while they attend other tasks or arrive later. This practice can occur in crowded polling stations where long queues form during peak voting hours. Although it may appear to be a minor or informal strategy, it undermines fairness and order in the voting process. Polling queues are designed to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to cast their vote in a transparent and organized manner. When children are used to reserve spaces for adults, it disrupts the system and may lead to disputes among voters. However, no such incidents were reported on the election day.
2.	Transportation and Logistic Exploitation	→ School buses used for transporting ballot boxes: Two cases were observed on social media where school buses were reportedly used to transport ballot boxes from polling stations after voting during the federal election held on 5 March 2026 in Nepal. However, the use of school buses for such purposes raises concerns regarding the involvement of educational resources in electoral logistics. School buses are primarily intended to support students' transportation and educational activities. Their use in election-related tasks may create perceptions that educational institutions are indirectly associated with political processes.

► POST-ELECTION PERIOD: ANALYSIS OF THE VIOLATIONS

Nature of Reported Incidences:

S.N.	Nature of Incidence	Description/Analysis
1.	Political Celebrations and Victory Rallies	→ Children Participating in Victory Rallies/Processions: The participation of children in post-election victory rallies and political processions reflects a form of indirect political mobilization. In several incidents, children were seen walking along with political supporters, sometimes without parental supervision. Such participation exposes children to crowded, noisy, and potentially unsafe environments where large groups of people gather to celebrate political victories. Political rallies often involve loud slogans, movement of vehicles, and large masses of supporters, which may create safety risks for children. Beyond physical safety concerns, the presence of children in these events can also lead to early political socialization where children become part of partisan demonstrations without understanding the political context. International child protection principles emphasize that children should not be involved in political activities that may exploit them or expose them to harm. Therefore, their presence in victory rallies raises concerns about the responsibility of political actors and communities to ensure that children are not directly or indirectly mobilized for political purposes. → Children Accompanying Parents in Rallies/Celebrations: In several incidents, children were observed attending victory rallies or celebrations while accompanying their parents or guardians. Although these cases may not always represent deliberate misuse by political parties, they still raise child protection concerns. When parents bring children to large political gatherings, children are exposed to environments characterized by large crowds, loud noises, political slogans, and potential public disorder. Such environments may not be appropriate or safe for children, particularly younger ones. The presence of children in these settings may also normalize their participation in partisan political events at an early age. While family participation in community celebrations is common, political rallies differ because they often involve intense political expressions and unpredictable crowd behavior. From a child rights perspective, it is important to encourage parents and communities to consider the safety and well-being of children when attending such events. Awareness programs can help parents understand potential risks and promote safer alternatives for celebrating political outcomes. → Children Carrying Party Symbols or Flags: The use of children to carry political party flags, symbols, or related items during victory celebrations represents a more explicit form of political involvement. In the documented incidents, children were seen carrying party flags or ringing symbolic objects representing a political party. Such actions can be interpreted as symbolic political endorsement, which may constitute a form of political exploitation of children. Children may not fully understand the political meaning or implications of the symbols they are displaying, yet their presence can be used to visually strengthen a party's public image and demonstrate mass support. This practice raises ethical concerns because children should not be used as tools for political messaging or propaganda. International child protection standards stress that children must be protected from activities that manipulate them for political gain. Political parties, community leaders, and supporters should therefore avoid involving children in symbolic political displays and ensure that campaign or celebration activities remain adult-centered.

		→ Children Chanting Political Slogans: In several cases, adolescent girls were observed chanting victory slogans during post-election rallies. Chanting slogans is a common feature of political mobilization and is intended to demonstrate public support for a political leader or party. When children participate in such activities, they effectively become part of the political messaging process. This raises concerns about the politicization of children and the potential influence of partisan ideologies on them at a young age. Adolescents may join these activities due to peer influence, social pressure, or encouragement from adults. However, their participation in chanting political slogans may blur the boundary between civic awareness and political exploitation. Child rights frameworks emphasize that children should be protected from direct involvement in partisan political activities that may compromise their neutrality or well-being. Encouraging children to participate in educational, cultural, or civic activities rather than political demonstrations can help safeguard their rights while promoting healthy social development. → Children Dancing in Victory Celebrations: Some incidents showed adolescent girls dancing during victory celebrations while wearing cultural dress and performing to local music. While cultural performances are a common part of social celebrations, their inclusion in political victory rallies can raise questions about whether children are being used to entertain or energize political supporters. When such performances occur in a political context, children may inadvertently become part of the political spectacle, contributing to the celebratory atmosphere surrounding a political leader or party. This can blur the line between cultural expression and political mobilization. In addition, performing in crowded political gatherings may expose children to safety risks and public scrutiny. From a child rights perspective, it is important to ensure that children's participation in cultural activities is voluntary, safe, and free from political pressure. Cultural performances involving children should ideally take place in appropriate community or educational settings rather than in politically charged environments such as election victory rallies. → Children Playing Musical Instruments in Rallies: In a few incidents, children were observed playing local musical instruments as part of victory processions. Music often plays a significant role in public celebrations and cultural events in Nepal, and children sometimes learn traditional instruments as part of community traditions. However, when children perform music during political rallies, their involvement becomes connected to political celebrations and messaging. This may unintentionally place them in a position where they contribute to political mobilization. Additionally, rallies can involve long walking distances, loud environments, and crowded spaces, which may not be suitable for children who are performing or carrying instruments. There is also the possibility that children may feel obliged to participate due to social expectations or direction from adults. From a child protection standpoint, it is important that children's cultural talents are nurtured in supportive and non-politicized settings such as schools, cultural festivals, or community programs rather than in politically charged public demonstrations.
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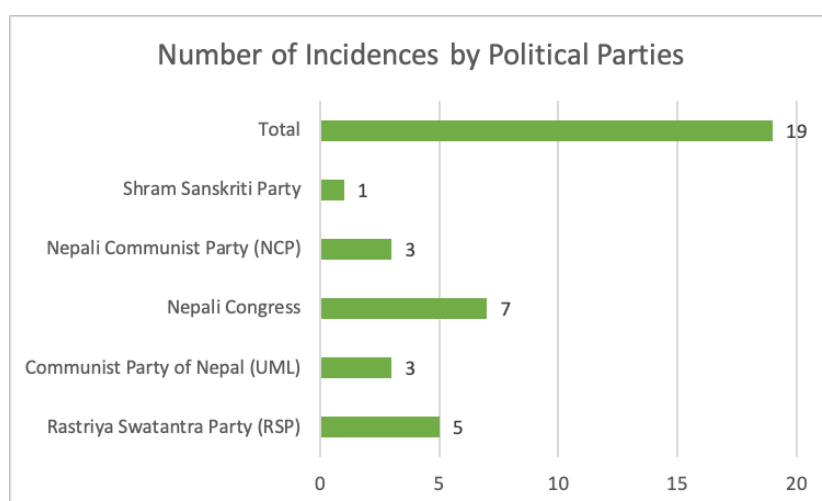
		→ Children Interacting closely with Political Leaders: Some incidents documented children approaching political leaders during victory celebrations, including shaking hands, offering flowers, offering to wear national hat (dhaka topi) or moving very close to the leader within large crowds. Such interactions may appear symbolic and respectful within local cultural contexts, but they can also raise safety and ethical concerns. In crowded political gatherings, close contact with leaders can place children at risk due to pushing, crowd movement, or security challenges. Furthermore, these interactions may be used to portray a positive public image of political leaders as being supported by children and families. This representation can unintentionally place children within political narratives and promotional imagery. Children may also feel pressured by adults to approach leaders in order to show respect or loyalty. Child protection principles emphasize that children should not be placed in situations where they become part of political symbolism or publicity. Ensuring controlled and safe public environments is therefore important when children are present. → Children Present in High-Risk Crowded Gatherings: One of the observed incidents involved children standing at the front of a large crowd while listening to a political speech during a victory celebration. Large gatherings and dense crowds can present several safety risks, including crowd surges, limited mobility, noise exposure, and potential conflict situations. Children are particularly vulnerable in such environments because they may not have the physical strength or awareness to navigate crowd pressure or emergency situations. Being positioned at the front of a large gathering can also increase the likelihood of accidental pushing or separation from guardians. From a child rights perspective, the safety and well-being of children must be prioritized in any public event. Organizers and community members share responsibility for ensuring that children are not placed in potentially hazardous situations during political events. Measures such as maintaining safe spaces, encouraging parental supervision, and discouraging children's presence in dense crowds can reduce potential risks.
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► Tabulation Summery

S.N.	Nature of Misuee of Children	Discription of Activity	Number of Incidents
1	Children participating in victory rallies/ processions	Children walking or present in rallies, sometimes without parents	5
2	Children accompanying parents in rallies/ celebrations	Children attending events with parents but present in political gathering	5
3	Children carrying party symbols/flags or ringing symbol bell	Children holding party flags or symbol objects	3
4	Children chanting slogans or supporting political messaging	Adolescents chanting victory slogans	3
5	Children dancing in celebrations	Adolescents performing dances in rallies/ celebrations	2
6	Children playing musical instruments in rallies	Children playing local musical instruments during procession	2
7	Children interacting closely with political leaders	Shaking hands, offering flowers, approaching leader in rally	2
8	Children present in high-risk crowded political gatherings	Children placed in frontlines or dense crowds	1
Total			19

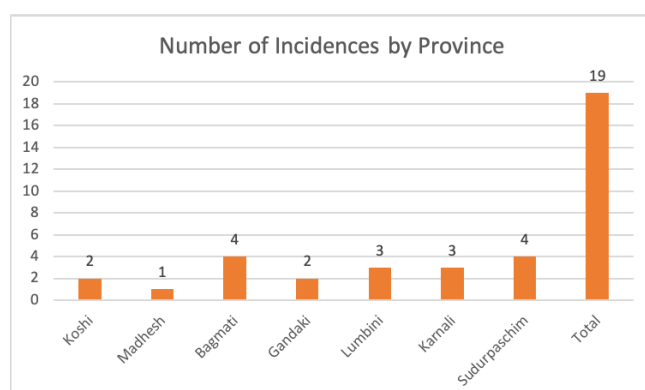
Political Parties Violating Child Rights in Post-Election Context:

The analysis of the 18 documented incidents of children's involvement in post-election victory celebrations and rallies shows that children were present in activities associated with several major political parties. The highest number of incidents was linked to Nepali Congress, with seven cases where children were observed participating in rallies, carrying party flags, playing musical instruments, chanting slogans, or accompanying adults. The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) followed with five incidents, where children were seen attending victory rallies, interacting with political leaders, or appearing in large processions. Three incidents were associated with the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and another three with the CPN UML, involving activities such as dancing in celebrations, chanting slogans, playing musical instruments, or carrying party symbols. One incident was related to the Shram Sanskriti Party, where a child was present during a victory celebration but appeared to be accompanied by a parent and not directly mobilized by the party. The data suggests that children's presence in political victory events is relatively common across multiple parties rather than being concentrated within a single political group. Most cases involve indirect participation, such as accompanying parents or being present in rallies, while some incidents indicate more active involvement, including carrying party symbols or chanting slogans. These observations highlight the need for greater awareness among political actors, communities, and families to ensure that children are protected from participation in politically charged environments.



Geographical Spread

The provincial distribution of the 18 documented incidents indicates that the involvement or presence of children in post-election victory celebrations occurred across several provinces of Nepal. The highest number of incidents was recorded in Sudurpashchim Province (4 incidents), suggesting that children were frequently observed in victory rallies, celebrations, and public gatherings in this region. Bagmati Province followed with 4 incidents, which may be linked to the concentration of national political activities and prominent leaders in the area. Karnali Province recorded 3 incidents, indicating that children's presence in political celebrations is not limited to more politically active urban centers but also occurs in other regions. Koshi Province, Gandaki Province and Lumbini Province had 2 incidents each, while Madhesh Province recorded 1 incident, the lowest in the dataset. Overall, the distribution demonstrates that children's participation or presence in post-election political gatherings is geographically widespread. This highlights the need for increased awareness among political actors, communities, and families across all provinces to ensure that children are protected from exposure to potentially unsafe and politically charged environments.



Key Findings:

Widespread Use of Children in Pre-Election Campaign Activities

The study documented 205 incidents of child rights violations during the pre-election period, indicating that the involvement of children in electoral campaigning remains widespread across Nepal. Children were frequently observed participating in political rallies, carrying party flags and symbols, chanting slogans, distributing pamphlets, and appearing in campaign songs and promotional materials. The most common forms of misuse included carrying party flags and symbols (38 incidents) and participating in rallies and mass gatherings (36 incidents). These practices demonstrate that children are often used as visible instruments of political mobilization, despite existing legal provisions that prohibit their involvement in electoral campaigning.

Systemic Involvement of Multiple Political Parties

Out of the 205 documented incidents during the pre-election period, 143 cases were linked directly to political parties and their supporters, suggesting that the issue is systemic rather than isolated. The highest number of incidents was associated with the Rastriya Swatantra Party (58 cases), followed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) (29 cases) and the Nepali Congress (18 cases). Other political parties also accounted for several incidents. This pattern indicates that child involvement in campaigns is a cross-party practice, reflecting broader weaknesses in compliance with the election code of conduct and child protection standards.

Schools and Educational Spaces Are Increasingly Exposed to Political Activities

The report highlights concerning incidents involving educational institutions and students during the campaign period. Out of 10,754 election booths 9433 were set up in school premises. In addition, students in school uniforms were observed participating in political rallies (8 incidents), political leaders were reported entering school premises during campaign periods (3 incidents), and campaign activities were conducted near schools during school hours (4 incidents). Additionally, there were reports of school buses being used for campaign-related activities (2 incidents). These practices undermine the principle that schools should remain neutral and safe spaces for children, free from political influence or mobilization.

Rapid Growth of Digital and Social Media Exploitation of Children

A notable trend identified in the study is the increasing use of children in digital political content, particularly on platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube. The study recorded 57 incidents linked to social media exploitation, including parents encouraging children to request votes online (15 incidents), children acting in campaign videos (24 incidents), and influencers using children for political branding (9 incidents). Emerging forms of misuse include AI-generated videos featuring children endorsing political parties and content created for monetization through online engagement. These developments demonstrate how digital platforms are expanding the scope of political exploitation of children beyond traditional campaign settings.

Other Actors, Especially Parents and Influencers, Contribute to Child Rights Violations

Although political parties account for the majority of incidents, 62 cases involved other actors, including parents, guardians, social media influencers, and media personnel. Parents and guardians were responsible for 24 incidents, primarily involving children appearing in social media videos requesting votes or promoting political parties. Influencers and digital content creators accounted for 20 incidents, often using children to increase online engagement. These findings show that child exploitation in elections is not limited to political parties, but also involves community and digital actors who may not fully understand the ethical and legal implications of such practices.

Limited Child Rights Violations Observed on Election Day

Compared to the pre-election and post-election period, very few incidents involving children were reported on election day. No cases were documented involving children being used as voters, messengers, or queue placeholders at polling stations. However, two incidents were reported in which school buses were used to transport ballot boxes, raising concerns about the use of educational resources for electoral logistics. Overall, the findings suggest that election day monitoring and security measures were relatively effective, although some institutional concerns remain.

Continued Child Presence in Post-Election Political Celebrations

The study documented 18 incidents during the post-election period, mainly involving children's presence in victory rallies and political celebrations. Children were seen accompanying parents in rallies, carrying party symbols, chanting slogans, dancing, and participating in processions. While many cases involved indirect participation, these activities still expose children to crowded, noisy, and potentially unsafe environments, and may contribute to early political socialization and politicization of childhood spaces.

Weak Enforcement of Child Protection Provisions in Electoral Processes

The report reveals persistent gaps in the enforcement of legal and policy provisions designed to protect children during elections. Despite clear guidelines in the election code of conduct and national child protection laws, children continue to be used in campaign activities, public demonstrations, and digital political content. The evidence suggests that stronger monitoring mechanisms, greater public awareness, and stricter accountability measures are necessary to ensure that electoral processes in Nepal fully respect the principle of "Children and School as Zones of Peace."

Recommendations

► For Political Parties

- **Strict Compliance with Child Protection Laws and Election Code of Conduct:** Political parties should strictly adhere to the election code of conduct issued by the Election Commission Nepal and national child protection laws, ensuring that children are not used in campaign activities such as rallies, slogan chanting, carrying party symbols, or distributing campaign materials.
- **Legally binding self-Declaration by Candidates:** The candidates from political parties should do self-declaration (legally binding) in not using children and school spaces during election.
- **Adopt Internal Child Protection Guidelines for Elections:** Political parties should develop and enforce internal policies prohibiting the use of children in political campaigning, including in physical events and digital media content.
- **Strictly prohibit Political Activities in Schools and Educational Spaces:** Party leaders and campaign teams should refrain from organizing political activities in school premises or near schools during school hours and ensure that students in school uniforms are not involved in campaign events.
- **Responsible Use of Digital Media:** Political parties and their supporters should avoid featuring children in campaign videos, promotional materials, or social media content and ensure that digital campaigning respects children's privacy and dignity.
- **Sensitization of Party Cadres and Volunteers:** Political parties should conduct awareness programs for party workers and supporters about child rights principles, including the concept of children as neutral and protected spaces during political processes.
- **Public Commitment to Child-Friendly Elections:** Political leaders should publicly commit to respecting the principle of the "Children as Zones of Peace" campaign and promote child-friendly electoral practices in their political discourse and actions.

► For the Election Commission

- **Robust Monitoring, Real Time Reporting and Immediate enforcement:** The Election Commission Nepal should enhance robust monitoring systems to identify and respond promptly to incidents where children are involved in campaign activities.
- **Zero Tolerance Policy and enforceable Sanctions for Violations:** Political candidates need to mandatorily sign the Election code of conduct in not using children. If political parties or candidates are found using children in campaign activities they should face clear penalties, such as warnings, fines, or other disciplinary measures under the election code of conduct.
- **Promote Child-Friendly Election Awareness Campaigns:** The Commission should conduct nationwide awareness campaigns highlighting that children should not be involved in electoral campaigning or political mobilization.
- **Avoid the Use of Schools as Polling Stations and Prioritize Alternative Community Spaces:** The Commission should, wherever feasible, avoid designating schools as polling stations in upcoming elections in order to prevent disruption to children's education, safety, psychosocial well-being, and learning environment. Instead, the Commission should prioritize the use of alternative public and community-based spaces such as ward/community halls, local government service centers, multipurpose community buildings, disaster shelters, cooperative buildings, sports halls, and other suitable public infrastructure that are accessible, neutral, safe, and convenient for voters.

► For Government, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens and National Child Rights Council (NCRC):

- **Strengthen Policy Coordination on Child Protection During Elections:** All relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, should coordinate with electoral authorities to ensure child protection measures are integrated into election planning.
- **Ensure Schools Remain Neutral and Safe Spaces:** Ministry and Council should issue clear directives preventing the use of school facilities, vehicles, or students for political activities during election periods.
- **Develop Digital Child Protection Guidelines:** The government, Ministry and Council should establish regulations addressing the misuse of children in digital political content and strengthen oversight of online platforms during election

periods.

- **Support Child Rights Monitoring Mechanisms:** Ministry and Council should support independent monitoring initiatives and ensure that reports of child rights violations during elections are properly investigated.
- **Integrate Child-Friendly Election Principles into National Policies:** The government, Ministry and Council should incorporate the concept of “Children and School as Zones of Peace” into broader policies on democratic governance and civic education.

► For Security Forces:

- **Strengthen proactive monitoring and immediate intervention during campaign activities:** Security forces should intensify monitoring of election-related activities when most child rights violations occur. When such incidents are observed, security forces should intervene immediately, remove children from unsafe or inappropriate political activities, and warn or take action against responsible organizers in accordance with the law and the Election Code of Conduct.
- **Establish clear child protection instructions and accountability mechanisms for election duty personnel:** Before deployment, all security personnel assigned to election duties should receive specific orientation on child rights, child protection laws, and election code provisions related to children. Security forces should be clearly instructed that the involvement of children in election campaigning, victory rallies, or digital political content is a form of child rights concern requiring preventive action.
- **Enhance coordination with local child protection and community mechanisms:** Security forces should collaborate with Local Child Rights Committees (LCRCs), child rights organizations, community leaders, and civil society monitors to identify high-risk areas and respond quickly to incidents involving misuse of children in the election process.
- **Discourage children’s presence in post-election celebrations and politically charged gatherings:** Security forces should monitor victory rallies, protest gatherings, and post-election celebrations, where children are often present with adults and exposed to crowd-related and political risks.

► For Civil Society and Child Rights Activists

- **Strengthen Advocacy and Public Awareness:** Civil society organizations should continue raising awareness about the risks of involving children in political activities and promote child-friendly election practices.
- **Expand Monitoring Networks:** Child rights organizations should expand grassroots monitoring systems across provinces to identify and document incidents involving children during election periods.
- **Promote Community Education Programs:** Community-based campaigns should educate parents, teachers, and youth groups about child protection principles during elections.
- **Engage with Political Parties and Institutions:** Civil society should maintain dialogue with political parties and electoral authorities to encourage commitments to child rights and accountability for violations.
- **Promote Responsible Digital Engagement:** Activists should conduct digital literacy and parental education programs addressing the risks of featuring children in political social media content.

► For Election Observer Organizations

- **Integrate Child Rights Indicators in Election Monitoring:** Election observer groups should include specific indicators related to child protection in their observation frameworks.
- **Deploy Trained Child Rights Monitors:** Observers should receive training on identifying and documenting child rights violations during election campaigns, rallies, and digital activities.
- **Report Violations to Relevant Authorities:** Documented incidents involving children should be promptly reported to the Election Commission Nepal and relevant child protection agencies.
- **Publish Periodic Monitoring Reports:** Observer organizations should publish findings on child rights in elections to inform public debate and policy reforms.
- **Coordinate with Child Rights Networks and Election Observers:** Election observers should collaborate with child protection organizations to strengthen evidence collection and advocacy.

► For Families, Schools and Communities

- **Avoid Involving Children in Political Activities:** Parents and guardians should refrain from encouraging children to participate in political rallies, campaign activities, or online political messaging and accompanying in victory assemblies, rallies and celebrations.
- **Promote Safe and Neutral Learning Environments:** Schools should maintain strict neutrality during elections and ensure that school spaces, uniforms, and vehicles are not used for political purposes.
- **Strengthen Child Protection Awareness:** Teachers and community leaders should educate children about their rights and the importance of staying away from political mobilization.
- **Practice Responsible Use of Social Media:** Families should avoid sharing political content involving children on platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, or YouTube.
- **Encourage Civic Education Instead of Political Mobilization:** Communities should promote age-appropriate civic education that teaches democratic values without exposing children to partisan political activities.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of Violations in Pre-Election

Annex 2: List of Violations in Post-Election

S.N.	Using children after election/ political party	Links	Observation
1	Victory Celebration- RSP	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5ZwLtlmjw	A child observed moving along with victory rally. Also, a child ringing the bell, party symbol, after the victory
2	Victory Celebration- Harka Sampang, Shram Sanskriti Party	https://www.tiktok.com/@routineofnepalbanda/video/7614798817715588359?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc	A child seen enjoying the victory. However, the party itself has not misused and is accompanied by parent
3	Victory Celebration- Puspakamal Dahal 'Prachanda', NCP	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/18M6cboAFL/ https://www.facebook.com/share/v/18MtvKokDu/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1CJGDfmdm1Z/	Adolescent girls are dancing in the victory celebration in cultural dress. Child carrying party flag in the rally and walking with the mass.
4	Victory Celebration/Ralley- Balendra Shah, RSP	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1BEnyYzbPj/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1RiCr94QBL/	A child accompanied by parent is celebrating the victory very in front. (First video link only)
5	Victory Celebration/Rally- Bhojraj Thapa, RSP	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/18AHHenwk9/	A very small child is seen wearing Nepali Topi to the rally to Mr. Bhojraj Thapa.
6	Victory Celebration- Ravi Lamichhane, RSP	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/14SC6VqZnuc/	A child is seen very close shaking hands and offering flower to Ravi Lamichhane
7	Victory Rally-Bharat Kumar Swar, Nepali Congress	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/183eJF5JCe/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/18CPuf5Ya5/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1CAvDBVuCX/	Children have accompanied their parents in the victory rally. A child playing local musical instrument in the victory rally
8	Victory Rally-Khadga Bahadur Buda, Nepali Congress	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1CLEYwwFAo/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/18Kwssn3Ag/	A child is seen walking along in the rally without accompanying the parents A child playing local musical instrument in the victory rally
9	Victory Rally-Basana Thapa, Nepali Congress	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1HWNuqf5N/	Adolescent girls chanting victory slogans
10	Victory Rally-Khadga Bahadur Buda, Nepali Congress	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/19fSoHT46m/	A child is seen walking along in the rally without accompanying the parents

11	Victory Rally-Ain Mahar, CPN UML	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/17or2MAb7f/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1GUUcjB8qW/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1CKr7nFmL5/	Adolescent girls chanting the victory slogans and also joining the rally with red powers as victory symbols. A child playing local musical instrument in the victory rally. Children accompanied by parents in the rally.
12	Victory Rally-Bishnu Bahadur Khadka, Nepali Congress	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1CMYeANc4L/	Adolescent girls chanting the victory slogans and also joining the rally with red powers as victory symbols.
13	Victory Celebration- Barshaman Pun, NCP	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1HwmNFJtBC/	Adolescent girl dancing in the victory rally in local music. Also, a very small child accompanied by parent.
14	Victory Celebration- Yagya Bahadur Bogati, NCP	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1EHaGpRecz/	A child carrying party flag in the victory celebration
15	Victory Celebration- Dr. Lekjung Thapa, RSP	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1826tSrDPM/	A child carried by mother approaching the leader in a huge mass of people in the victory procession
16	Victory Celebration- Suhang Nemwang, CPN UML	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1JiGHWJDgd/	Children are the frontliner listening the speech in a big mass of people
17	Victory Celebration-Prakash Singh Karki, Nepali Congress	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1CKmkvv4zw/	Children accompanied by parents in the rally
18	Victory Celebration-Sandip Rana, Nepali Congress	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1CAiAqCd81/	Children carrying party flags and participating in the victory procession
19	Victory Rally-Sandip Rana, Nepali Congress	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1OqKM3pJZsGJiY-7neS4_L9VAywEde9A8	A large number of children were seen participating in the Nepali Congress victory rally in Palpa Constituency 1, raising concerns that the party's lack of accountability may endanger children's safety.



A REPORT

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