

BUILDING CONSOLIDATED AND COMPREHENSIVE DEMOCRACY

Policy Document





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Publisher

General Federation of Nepali Trade Unions (GEFONT)

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Chapter 1

Today's troubled political power balance

1. Crisis over political course

Nepali politics took a right course after the local level elections in 2017. Our Politics was polarised between the forward-looking progressive front and the status-quoist right-wing stream. It was clearly manifested, on 3 August 2017, through the electoral alliance between Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre). The historical success won in the general elections held in November 2017 did not only create a foundation for powerful left government, but also ossified the fortress for unification of the two parties.

With the unification of the two parties on 17 May 2018 the balance of power became favourable for the working class. Patriotic, democratic and socialist forces became strong and enthusiastic. A positive message surged in the leftist movement. Foundation for political stability was laid. Though the unification was a historical move to unify the communist movement, it was not based on the strength and popularity of the two parties. It was formed on the unity of the two streams of the communist movement.

‘The unification] determined Marxism-Leninism as the guiding principle, socialism as strategic goal, and socialism-oriented people’s democracy the immediate programme. Building the foundation for socialism by implementing people’s democracy was decided to be the partyline. Keeping in mind the psychology of unity, provisions of leading the party by two presidents were arranged. Method of moving forward on the basis of consensus until the National Congress was agreed and commitment was expressed to hold the Congress on consensus. Almost equal number of representations from both the parties was ensured in the entire party structure.’ [CPN(UML), 2021]

The Seventh National Congress of GEFONT expressed happiness over this changed situation.

‘[The year] 2017 has become a keystone for Nepal’s politics. A new but positive balance of power has been established in the country. The seven-point agreement between CPN (UML) and CPN (MC) on 19 February 2018 for the unification of the two parties has freed the state power from the bargaining of small parties. Now the balance of power has polarised between UML-led left-democratic progressive front and Nepali Congress-led right-wing opposition. Undoubtedly, there has never been such a favourable situation for the people and the working class in the history of Nepal. At the same time, the struggle for political rights has basically been completed. Now, the Nepali society has entered the stage of ‘movements in democracy’ from ‘movement for democracy.’ Nepali society has entered a new era of hope and enthusiasm by overcoming a difficult phase of struggle. It is moving towards socio-economic transformation with rapid development on the solid foundation of political achievements.’ [GEFONT, 2017]

As the conclusion drawn by the Congress, the delivery of then government changed the narrative of Nepali politics. Instead of discussing the cycle of power, power-equation and change of government, new discourse of development, construction, prosperity and happiness began. Railways, ships, tunnels, wide-roads, multi-purpose irrigation and other development projects became the topics of talks even at the tea shops. In order to make the operation of the government effective, ministers signed a performance agreement with the prime minister and the secretaries with respective ministers determining the key performance indicators and performance measurement. Government's work picked up speed. There was a time in our country when only 10 kilometres of road used to be blacktopped in the entire fiscal year. But the government under the leadership of UML President K P Sharma Oli overtopped the performance constructing the blacktopped road on an average speed of 5 kilometres every single day. At least 12 buildings and an average of one or more suspension bridges were constructed every day. At least one road bridge was built every second day and an average of one rural bridge every third day. The post-earthquake reconstruction work was completed in a way that it would be an example to the world.

Due to the pace of the development, Nepal's economic growth steadily increased by 7% in an average in the pre-Covid-19 period. Nepal was enlisted among the top 10 countries in the world for economic growth. Nepal's per capita income increased by NPR 35.2%. About 900,000 Nepalis were lifted out of absolute poverty line. The United Nations Development Policy Committee recommended that Nepal be upgraded from the list of LDC (least developed countries) to a developing country.

A new wave was created in the field of community development mainly in education, health, capacity enhancement. Health insurance services expanded. In order to implement it effectively, the foundation stone for basic hospitals with five to fifteen beds was laid in 396 municipalities at a time. Treatment assistance for ten different types of serious diseases including kidney, heart and cancer has been increased. Nepal has been declared the first open defecation country in South Asia.

Employment service centres were established at all local levels. Labour related services were simplified and made easy introducing technology. Services including providing work permit for those going for foreign employment started from province level. The process of paying wages to the workers through the bank was initiated for the first time.

Prime Minister Employment Programme was launched to ensure a minimum of 100 days of employment for the unemployed in a fiscal year. This scheme created employment equivalent worth about 2.2 million work-days in the first two years of government. The work done by the government through the National Reconstruction Authority created 400 million work-days of employment. It provided employment to 100,000 skilled and one million semi-skilled workers. As many as 6,000 engineers were trained.

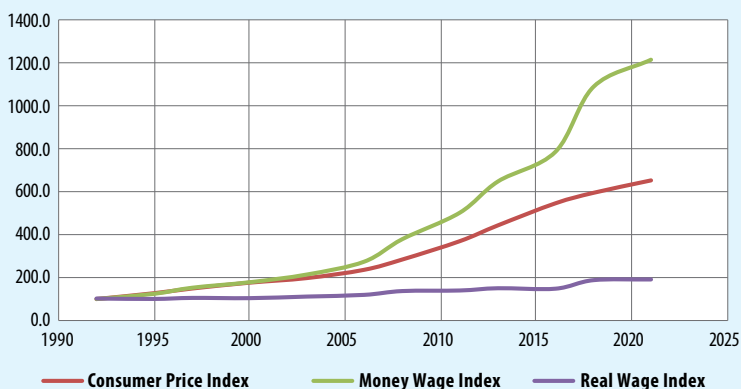
Project-based loans up to NPR 1 million were arranged for the returnee youth from foreign employment to start business based on the skills they gained. In order to attract youth with higher education into entrepreneurship, the government started providing loans up to NPR 700,000 at 5% subsidised interest rate with collateral of their educational certificates. Start-up Challenge Fund was managed to provide a start-up capital for

business support to entrepreneurs with innovative ideas, skills and capacities.

A 'new era' was ushered in the field of labour and social security with various social protection schemes. Contribution-based social security for workers started. Allowance for senior citizens which started from NPR 100 per month was increased to NPR 133 per day. The number of people covered by 8 different types of social assistance reached about 10 million. The minimum wage of workers increased by NPR 5,300 and inflation was kept under control to check the real wages from falling (Figure 1).

The government was working smoothly. However, trouble started within the ruling party (NCP) within two years. The unity between the two parties had created a huge wall of challenges in front of reactionary forces and the opposition as a whole. But the NCP failed to prepare itself to thwart the fierce counter-attacks by the same proportion. Even the unification could not be carried forward in the way it should have been. All the committees were dissolved being emotionally guided that unification would be

Figure1: Status of real wage



completed in three months. No alternative arrangements were made. This created organisational void in the NCP.

Contrary to the government's effort to advance stability, development and social justice, there were activities directed at creating political instability within the party, overshadowing the positive work and achievements of the government, and opposing the government even overtaking the opposition, spreading frustration among people and creating problems in Nepal's external relations. Contrary to the methods of taking all decision on the basis of consensus until the unity congress (as agreed during unification), some leaders of the party launched a protest against their own party president and the prime minister.

'Multiple centres were created within the party. Due to the constitutional provision that a no-confidence motion against the prime minister cannot be filed for two years, visible and invisible efforts to remove the prime minister started from February 2020, from the day that the government completed its two years in office. The conspiracy intensified after the publication of the map of Nepal including Nepali territory Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura in it, and amendment to the constitution unanimously by the parliament.' [CPN (UML), 2020]

At a glance, these activities seemed to be focused against the party president and the prime minister K P Sharma Oli, but in essence, they were aimed at reversing the political stability achieved by the country. They were focused against the achievements on nationalism of Nepal. They were against the optimism and confidence of Nepali people. They all were aimed at tearing down the national unity by awakening the defeated caste-regional-religion based extremism.

'At a meeting of the Central Secretariat on 13 November 2020, Prachanda suddenly distributed a charge sheet with serious political and criminal accusations against the party president. The document was in fact a formal announcement of the party split. ... President and other comrades tried till the end to create a comfortable environment in the party by asking Prachanda to withdraw the charge sheet. On the day before the dissolution of the House of Representatives, party president met Prachanda at his residence and asked him to to preserve the party unity. Prachanda who was committed to fulfilling the wishes of domestic and international reactionaries did not agree to this. His activities made the parliament a place of instability and the centre for forming and toppling the government through building unholy alliances. In the midst of this compelling situation, the House of Representatives was dissolved on 20 December 2020.' [CPN (UML), 2021]

After that, anarchic activities reached its peak at NCP. Announcements were made from the street that the party's first president was removed, he was expelled from the parliamentary party leadership, and also expelled from the party's general member. A no confidence motion was tabled to oust him from the prime minister and attempts were made to overthrow the provincial governments.

The NCP had reached to the verge of division ideologically and organisationally already. The decision of the Supreme Court on 7 March 2021 formally ended the unification process. The unification of the parties, which was done with great enthusiasm, was stuck in the middle without reaching a conclusion.

A new crisis emerged over the political course that had been resolved after the general election of 2017. A powerful government led by the communist party for the first time in history was overthrown for no reason.

2. Balance of power of the day

The politics of the day can be understood, analysed and given the right direction only when we analyse the historical People's Movement of 2006, its background, the comprehensive peace agreement, peace process over the period, and the painful process of constitution making. Also the protracted transition, promulgation of the constitution and subsequent important events, past general elections and the balance of power it created, CPN (UML)-led government and the socio- economic transformation campaign it accelerated, party unification, NCP-era and the disintegration of the unification, verdict of the supreme court and the door of regression it opened give us a lot to understand today's politics.

'The course followed by the country in the past decade is oriented towards strengthening the nation and national unity, making democracy meaningful, accelerating socio-economic transformation and fulfilling the national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. Undoubtedly, CPN (UML) has a decisive role in pursuing this course and party president K P Sharma Oli is at the centre of it. It is natural to stand against all these for the parties which do not like all these changes. They did the same and were trying to reverse these achievements for a long time. There are instances that these were the forces who tried to stop the promulgation of the constitution, replace the progressive and patriotic government, forge opportunistic alliances, not to allow to hold elections or foil the left parties to win majority. However, overcoming all these obstacles, the left forces won the majority in the last elections. It was not possible to constitutionally reverse this course as long as the NCP remained united. Therefore, efforts to split the NCP began. For this, Prachanda, who enjoys instability, and can be blackmailed and used easily, was used. By playing on his wild ambitions, the NCP was brought to the point of division. [Gyawali, 2021]

It was not enough for instability and regression. Therefore, conspiracy to oust CPN (UML) from power and divide it started. For this, all available 'weapons' were used including deviation and 'partyless' interpretation of the constitution, misuse of judiciary, fraudulent ordinances related to party division, illegal actions of the Election Commission and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The party was divided making a mockery of the democratic values and using the leader(s) who had led the party for a long time but left the leadership of it by reducing the party into a third force, and who were laden with frustration and revenge.

With this change, efforts to move the country in the opposite direction began. Anti-nationalist and anti-people activities were carried forwarded one after another.

The left-democratic alliance in the 2017 general elections was against the wishes of some forces. The alliance succeeded to win nationwide. When the rapid changes started by the government after the elections, then the attempts to counter and reverse the course intensified. It was not possible to 'reverse the course' constitutionally as long as NCP remained unified. A military coup was not possible. External intervention was not possible either. It was not even possible to bring about social chaos by increasing extreme dissatisfaction among the people. What to do? How to reverse the recourse? They had restlessness.

“If you want to demolish a house, you have to destroy the main pillar of it. Therefore, they thought that the division of NCP is one of the most important steps to reverse the political course. So, they focused on those characters and attitudes. They concluded that a hole could be made in the weakest place within the NCP. They met Comrade Prachanda as a hole in the NCP for whom principles, ideals and everything are nothing but just tools to 'use and through'. [Gyawali, 2021]

The verdict of the Supreme Court on 7 March 2021 (on the dispute related to the name during the merger of the NCP) was only a legal decision. The verdict did not prevent unification of the parties from continuing under a new name. The Election Commission had also provided a 15-day time for it. As long as NCP remained united, there could be no instability in the country. When there was no instability, it was not possible to muddle the politics. Even though the NCP was divided, the former UML still had 121 seats [out of 275] in the parliament. UML was leading the country. There was no possibility of forming an alternate government. When the country seemed likely to move forward on the same political course, a second series of conspiracies began. The process of dividing the UML and ousting the UML government from power commenced.

‘What was not done? Article 76(5) of the constitution was misinterpreted. Partyless practice was exercised within a multi-party system which was beyond imagination. For the division of UML, the constitution was assaulted to that extent. Ordinance was introduced overnight. The Election Commission was misused. The most objectionable was the role of the Speaker. By creating many such scenarios, the CPN (UML) was divided, and the UML was removed from the government. [Gyawali, 2021]

With this, a series has now been completed. Don't make the mistake of understanding these developments just as a change of government or that one prime minister has been replaced by another. This in itself is a regression, a step taken in an attempt to reverse the 'course' that has been built over about one and half decades. The negative effects of it might have been feeling by the common Nepalis now.

‘Attempts to bring the Nepali society back to turmoil started. Practice of ‘comfortable government’, it was what the coalition partners in government now were saying, began. In essence, we represent the course of change. But the forces against the course of change have now gathered in the government as a right-wing coalition and they are taking the country to the right-wing direction. [Gyawali, 2021]

It is on this background that the local level elections were held recently. A campaign to establish the perception that the UML is damaged enough, reduced to size and it has begun its ‘continuous downward journey’ has begun after the results of the elections. In a truer term, the elections were between the UML on one side and the reactionary coalition on the other. Despite that the elections results do not show the UML is finished and going down. Results tell us that Nepali Congress has won 43.7% seats and UML 27.3% in the posts of mayor and chairperson of municipalities and rural municipalities respectively. Obviously, compared to the previous

Figure 2(a): Elected Mayors/Chairpersons in local level elections of 2022 and 2017

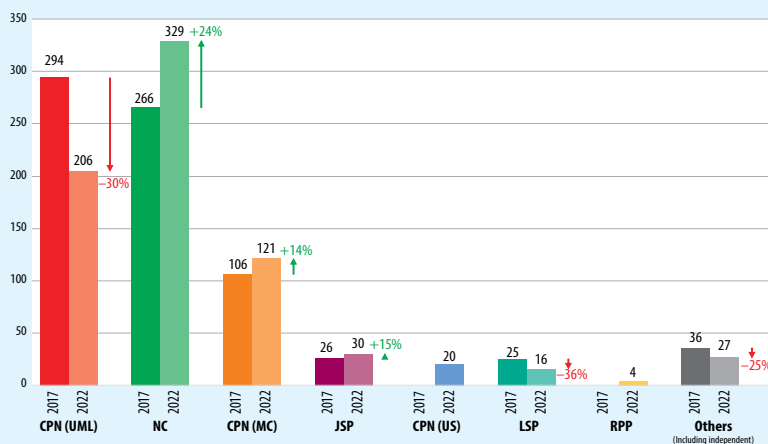
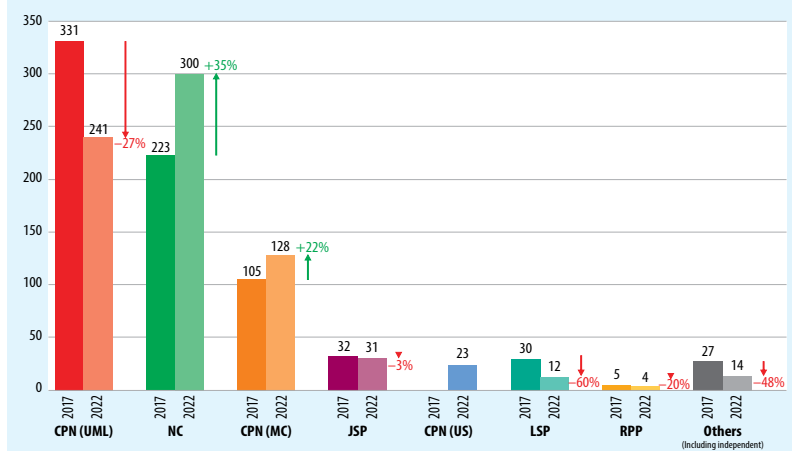


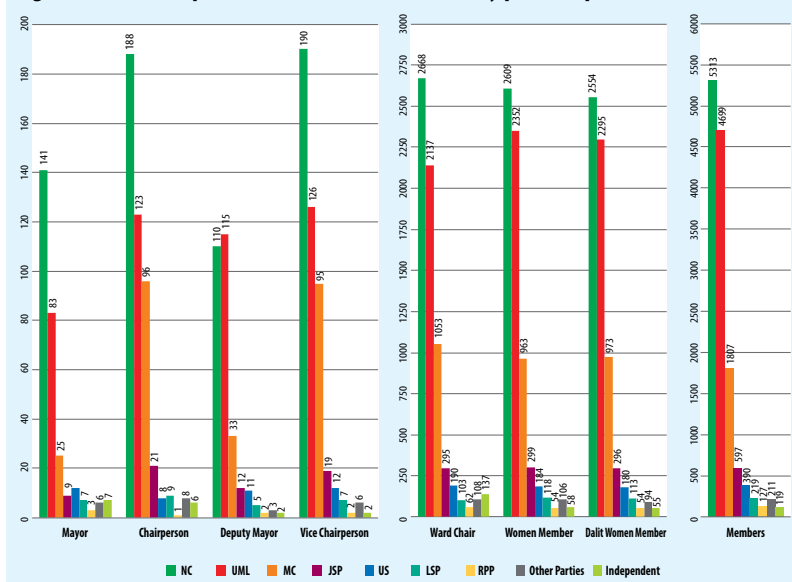
Figure 2(b): Elected Deputy Mayors/Vice Chairpersons in local level elections of 2022 and 2017

elections, it is less for UML as compared to the Nepali Congress [Figure 2(a) and 2(b)].

However, on the basis of popular vote, UML has maintained its first position. The achievement of the UML is indeed remarkable despite the collective attacks of the anti-UML coalition, protracted internal disputes and the subsequent division of the party, and the psychology of uncertainty it created.

Out of the total 35,097 people's representatives elected recently across the country, Nepali Congress has won 39%, UML 34% and Maoist Centre 14%. JSP has secured 4%, US 3%, LSP 2%, RPP 1% and other parties along with independent candidates secured 3% (Figure 3).

The main factor behind this change in the number of seats is the alliance formed against the UML. Nevertheless, the nature of such a coalition is temporary and it does not confirm the capacity and strength of any party in the long run. The fluctuation of votes

Figure 3: Elected representatives in the local level by political parties

is estimated to be 10 to 15% in each election. Such votes also keep on swinging due to immediate causes such as popularity of candidates, issues raised during the elections, effectiveness of election campaign, etc. And generally, the likelihood of such swinging votes to side the coalition remains high. If we analyse the votes received by the parties in this election (2022), we find that the major competition has been between the CPN (UML) and NC, the leading party of coalition formed against the UML. The role of other parties in the coalition is at the level of allies only. Internal disputes within then NCP and CPN (UML), and the split of UML seem to have had some negative effects on the voters this time. And it is the NC that has basically reaped the advantage of it.

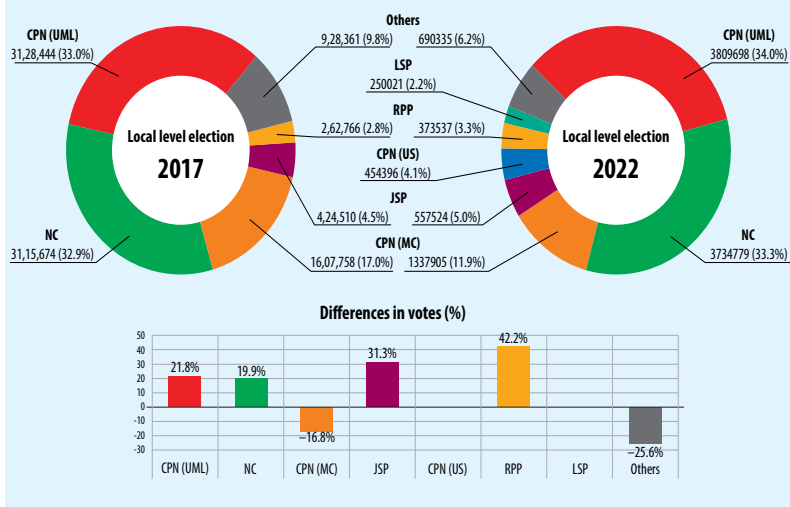
Analysing the total votes received by the mayors of the municipalities and the chairpersons of the rural municipalities

in the elections (2022), the first position of the UML remains the same as in the 2017 elections. UML had won one-third of the total votes (33%) in the previous elections. In this election, UML has increased the popular vote by one percentage point (34%). (Figure 4)

The total number of votes UML has received in this election is 681,254 more than that of the total valid votes it received in the 2017 election. This figure is 21.8% higher than that of the previous election votes (2017).

In both elections, Nepali Congress is the second largest party. The NC has got 33.3% votes in this election, which was 32.9% in 2017 election. The total number of votes that NC has received in this election is 619,105 or 19.9% more than the number of votes it received in the last election (2017).

Figure 4: Votes received by the parties in local elections of 2017 and 2022, and difference in votes received



CPN (MC) has remained the third position in both the elections. But MC's vote is much lower than that of the UML and the Nepali Congress. In the last election (2017), MC had received 17% of the popular votes, but this figure has come down to about 12% in this election (2022). The popular vote of the CPN (MC) has decreased by about 17% (269,853) from the total popular votes the party received in the 2017 election.

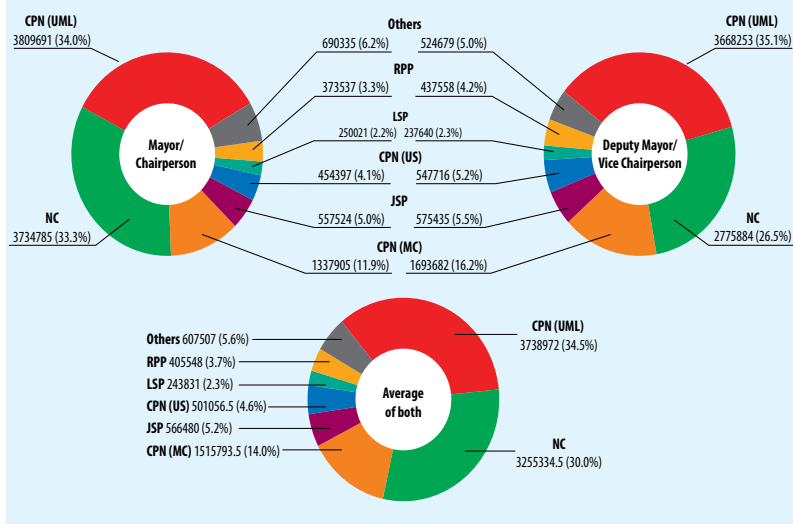
CPN (US) has got 4% votes. Popularity of other smaller parties seems to be gradually winding down.

The planned split of the CPN (UML) and the collective siege and attack of the five-party coalition on UML in the election (2022) does not seem to have much effect on the popular base of UML. It seems from this angle that the CPN (UML) has been established as the centre of the left power.

UML has received 1% more votes for the posts of deputy mayor/vice chairpersons as compared to the votes it has received for the mayors/chairpersons in this election (2022). But the votes received by the Nepali Congress for the same posts are less by about 7% than the total votes it has obtained for mayors/chairpersons (Figure 5).

Even in the average calculation of the votes received by the mayors/chairpersons and deputy mayors/vice chairpersons, UML (34.5%), NC (30%) and MC (14%) are in the first, second and third positions respectively.

Analysis of the total number of votes received for the posts of mayors/chairpersons, deputy mayors/vice chairpersons, ward chairpersons, women members, Dalit women members and two members elected under the 'open member' category shows that the CPN (UML) has got the highest number of votes.

Figure 5: Municipal Mayors and Deputy Mayors, and average votes in %

It has received 258,73,913 votes (34.13%) out of the total valid 758,09,732 votes for all the posts. In the 2017 election, UML had received 214,50,004 (33.38%) for these posts.

NC, which got the second largest votes in both the elections, has got 250,25,919 votes (33.58%) in this election. It has received 847,994 less votes than what the UML has got. The NC had received 208,74,534 votes in 2017 election.

This time, the MC has received 101,32,315 votes. It has received 10,81,818 less votes this time than the votes it got (112,14,133) in the local election of 2017 (Figure 6).

Thus, it is clear that Nepali politics has gradually become polarised between the two poles, one led by the CPN (UML), and the other by the NC. The steady growth of these two parties after

Figure 6: Total votes received by all seven elected representatives

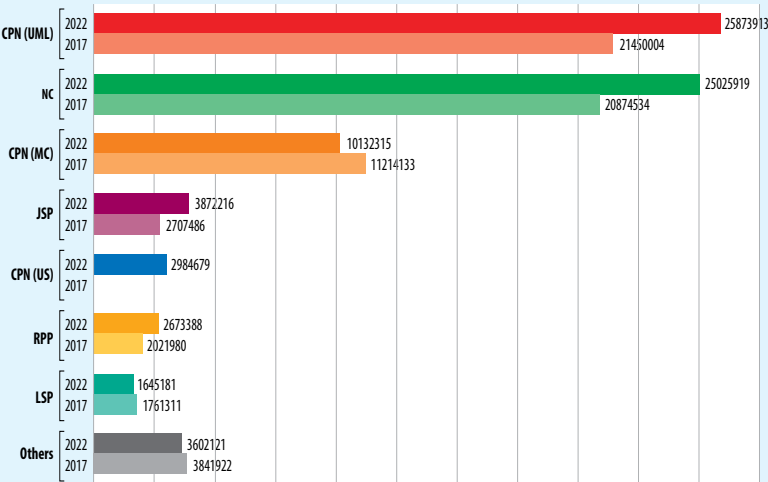
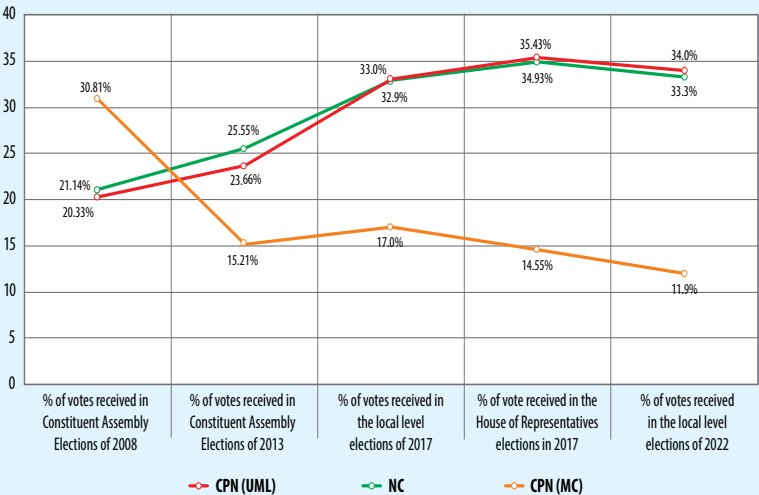


Figure 7: Popular votes of the last five elections and three parties



the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections and winding down the public support to other parties also confirm this fact (Figure 7)

In summary, in the current power structure, non- UML parties represent the non-leftist political line, and the UML, which has the largest public support, leads the mainstream left politics in Nepal.





Chapter 2

GEFONT policies and their effectiveness in labour and employment sector: A brief review

20 July 1989: The day marked centenary of declaration to celebrate International May Day. It was a rainy day of July in 1989. A group of senior activists of Nepali working-class movement quietly gathered in a secret den, hiding themselves from wolfish eyes of the agent of the reactionary establishments - the Panchayat and its police. The very gathering launched GEFONT as a coordinating mechanism to fulfil a historic task of forming an umbrella, a long-felt need in the trade union movement of Nepal.

20 July 2014: While marking the 25th founding day of GEFONT various dignitaries made their comments. The comments reflect their impression on GEFONT.

I have personally had the privilege of sharing some of more dramatic moments with you that remember visiting your leaders and hiding in Kathmandu in 2005. You have my deep respect to my admiration for the work that you do. Over the course of 25 years GEFONT has grown, grown into force to be reckoned with in trade union movement in Nepal and beyond. In November 2006, you were also one of the founding members of the ITUC, which we established together in Vienna. ... For workers in Nepal and beyond, GEFONT has grown from small spark to a big, lightening the way for lasting peace for prosperity, and for progress for working people.

Guy Ryder, Director General-ILO

Ever since its foundation (25 years ago), we have been keenly watching the activities of your organisation and you can legitimately be proud of many achievements towards improving the working and living conditions of the working people of this country and ensuring workers' rights.

N. Suzuki, (Former) General Secretary-ITUC AP

GEFONT is a treasured partner of UNI-APRO. Our relationship is an example of meaningful partnerships built upon a shared vision and a strong commitment towards the common goal of better world for all.

Christopher NG, (Former) Secretary- UNI APRO

BWI is the staunch promoter of GEFONT to unionise the construction industry inside and beyond the country. And I have the privilege to see your development year by year and I can say that I am proud to be part of the GEFONT supporter.

Ambet Yuson, General Secretary- BWI

In spite of many challenges, GEFONT has been succeeding because it is in centre of the main stream movement of the country. I congratulate you...

Rt. Hon. Subas C. Nembang, Chairperson- Constituent Assembly

28th March 2018: During the inaugural session of GEFONT 7th National Congress, some of the guests mentioned about GEFONT:

Workers from Nepal, her neighbouring country and even from Africa are working in Qatar. However, GEFONT is playing a lead role in organising them and, as a result of it, an agreement has been reached to establish an ILO office in Qatar by the end of this month. ... I would like to thank you for your strength, contribution and recognition for this. It is also a matter of pride for GEFONT, its leaders and cadres who have contributed to the international labour movement.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary-ITUC

We can say that there is no limit to the cooperation between GEFONT and ILO. You have set an example that trade unions can play a role beyond border by organising to protect Nepali workers in the Middle East, particularly in Qatar's construction sector. ... I have known, during my visit to Qatar as a member of the official delegation of the ILO, how GEFONT representatives provide information and training for the workers to protect their rights. I am convinced that this is the stepping stone for the Qatari government to reach an agreement to protect workers' rights and to end the Kafala system.

Luc Cortebeeck, Chairperson-ILO GB

Who needs justice? The victims! Who needs prosperity, and liberation from poverty? The ones who are poor! Who needs rights? Those who are deprived of it! The ideas that you have carried in these fundamental agendas have been established in such a way that no one can challenge them in Nepal today.

You have put an end to the tendency which on one side calls for the workers of the world to unite, while on the other, stoke a fight among themselves unnecessarily. You have won the victory in doing healthy competition but, in the meantime, moving forward unitedly on the issues of workers. You have made this work possible within the country, and you have established yourselves on the world stage ... You are leading the workers movement in an exemplary way. And it is for this I would like to congratulate GEFONT.

Rt. Hon. KP Sharma Oli, Former Prime Minister of Nepal

These views are testimony to the recognition of GEFONT, its history, struggle and achievements. Looking back after 33 years of its establishment, GEFONT has adopted the 'policy of facing challenges according to the circumstances' in order to achieve this height.

2. Our policy: Let the world see us through GEFONT's lens

2.1 Policy during launching of GEFONT

GEFONT was launched in such context that there were no political and human rights. A party-less system was imposed by the then regime led by absolute monarchy. Thus, all policies were basically concentrated on people's fundamental and democratic rights by opposing the hereditary system of monarchy.

The plan of action was to focus on the attainment of democratic rights and the opposition of the existing dictatorial regime. Therefore, GEFONT embraced the policy of 'struggle and labour mobilisation' to end centuries of exploitation and oppression of the working class. Immediately after its formation, GEFONT decided to join popular democratic moment of early 1990 declared by the then underground political parties.

Despite heavy repression and arrest of GEFONT



activists, thanks to the people and the workers of Nepal, multiparty system became possible within 52 days of popular movement that was begun on 18 February 1990. This change led GEFONT and its movement to a new destination.

GEFONT had high emphasis on 'struggle and workers mobilisation' to end exploitation of working class since its foundation. Based on changed political context and in the outset of newly declared constitution in 1990, it was felt necessary to reformulate future course of our struggle.

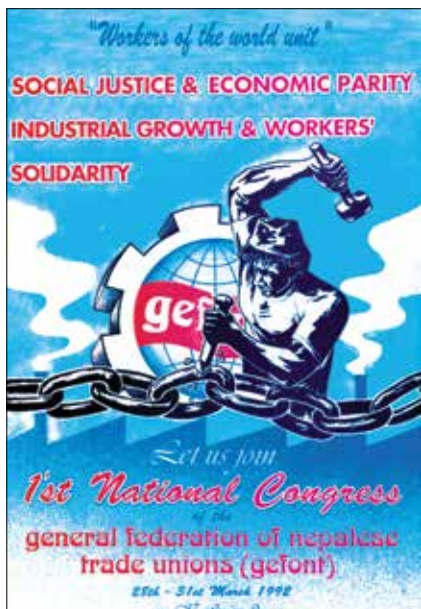
THE FIRST NATIONAL CONGRESS: 28-31 March 1992, Kathmandu

The theme: Social Justice and Economic Parity, Industrial Growth and Workers Solidarity!

Major policy departure: Recognising the need of a long battle yet to fight against exploitation imposed on working class in

order to achieve social justice; the Congress set policy for industrial growth and parity in balance with workers solidarity.

For this, a policy was adopted to institutionalise achievements of decade's long struggle. The First Congress decided to carry forward the struggle along with social dialogue, rather than repeating directionless rhetoric of 'class-struggle'.



GEFONT actively participated by mobilising workers in the first parliamentary election held after 3 decades. Thanks to the understanding of all concerned parties and hard work of our members, Labour Act, 1990 and Trade Union Act, 1992 were adopted for the first time in Nepal's history by the parliament.

From this Congress, GEFONT made a policy departure as well. It declared policies compatible to the changed political scenario. Various programmes were launched such as:

- A unique trade union education programme popularly known as TRUECampaign (Trade Union Education Campaign)
- Initiation of free Legal Service to the working people
- Fight against Child labour problem
- A programme to aware workers on OSH, and
- Establishment of solidarity fund entitled Emergency Fund.

THE SECOND NATIONAL CONGRESS: *16-19 March 1996, Kathmandu*

Theme: Towards Labour Welfare and Industrial Revolution; Let Us Translate Our Policy into Action !

Continuity in policy: This congress had continued and concretised the policies adopted by the First National Congress. As aimed by the 1st National Congress, GEFONT concentrated itself to formulate National Labour Policy through this congress in order to further institutionalise achievements gained by the past struggles. GEFONT argued with and asked the state to enact National Labour Policy. By the time, many of the planners and policy makers were considering Labour Law as the labour policy; but GEFONT put forward a concept of National Labour Policy



correcting the erroneous understanding of concerned stakeholders.

The 2nd National Congress was the last GEFONT Congress of 20th Century, thus it adopted programme entitled 'GEFONT BY 2000.' The aim was to prepare GEFONT to grab opportunity and become capable of facing challenges of 21st Century. For this, the TRUE Campaign was focused on clarifying what and what not is the Labour

policy. Various intellectuals were invited to and experts were involved in discussing the GEFONT's concept. A proposal of 'One Class, One Organisation; One Enterprise, One Union' was put forward to end multiplicity of unions at workplace. Campaign to liberate Kamaiya (the bonded agricultural labourers) from slavery and unionisation of agricultural workers was initiated. Programme against the use of child labour was continued. In order to build up higher capacity of GEFONT to face future challenges, new programme 'GEFONT Cadre Top-100' was introduced. A special programme to increase woman participation in union movement was launched with a slogan: 'Not mere representation, but equal participation.' GEFONT restructured its larger federations in line of their nature of work. It continued OSH campaign and asked its members to pay one-day wages to construct its own building by 2000.

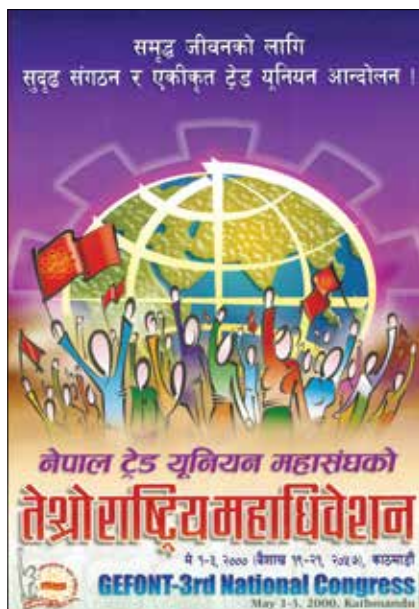
Today, we are proud of enlisting our success here -

- National Labour Policy was declared in 1997 in the line of GEFONT stand and concept
- Kamaiyas (Bonded Agricultural Labour) were declared free on 17 July 2000
- Entire Tea Plantation was declared “child labour free” in 2000, and
- Man Mohan Labour Building was inaugurated as GEFONT headquarters on 1 May 2000.

THE THIRD NATIONAL CONGRESS: 1-3 May 2000, Kathmandu

Theme: Unified Trade Unionism for Prosperous Life !

Major policy departure: The congress was held after the celebration of 10th founding day of GEFONT. Thus, the policy programme carried wide range of reflection of decade long experiences. The congress was begun with inauguration of the new building as its Head Quarter. A pair of policy reviews were carried out which included ‘Glorious Ten Years of Our Struggle’ and ‘Moving Ahead with the First Decade of 21st Century!’ The set of policy review documents carried an analysis of GEFONT efforts for the development of unified trade union movement, its organisation



and mobilisation work, major struggles and labour action for the decade; workers' education campaign; GEFONT involvement in the issues of social concern, activities on social security, labour legislation and trade union rights; and GEFONT and contemporary politics. First time since its inception, GEFONT made public its SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis.

Followed by this policy analysis and review of activities, 6-point policy recommendation was adopted under the broader headings of:

- Politics, political party and trade unions
- International trade union movement
- Recommendation for unified trade union movement
- Contemporary issues and GEFONT position (globalisation, privatisation, wage and industrial policy, class structure and struggle, etc)
- Action focused policies (agriculture, services, social issues, big business house, TNC and trade union member, etc)

The 16-point plan of action entitled 'GEFONT Campaign in the New Millennium' was based on the policy recommendations. Through this plan of action, GEFONT identified NTUC - the main competitors in Nepali world of work, to form high-level taskforce to materialise One Voice Dream. It was the first time in union movement that asked categorically to competing partner to balance labour market flexibility with social security.

THE FOURTH NATIONAL CONGRESS: 1-3 May 2004, Kathmandu

Theme: One Union for Democracy, Peace and Overall Change!

Major policy departure: GEFONT Fourth National Congress was the congress convened in the period of political crisis. On one side, the monarchy which was made constitutional, was moving towards autocracy, and parties in mainstream were exhibiting high ineffectiveness to govern while on the other, the violent insurgency was gaining momentum. There was looming confusion among the public, and high degree of frustration was growing. Workers were caught in crossfire. In that outset, GEFONT first made political scenario forecast; warn entire working masses to fit collectively to face crisis of any proportion. Our slogan 'One Union' was signifying progress towards collaboration between the then competing two national centres GEFONT and NTUC. The effort was to initiate possible trade union unity with involvement of other existing trade unions as well. Democracy and peace as we expected, according to the Fourth Congress, would be possible if there were structural change!



GEFONT questioned through the Congress report -

- How to dissociate the middle class and families from the lust of land ownership having good earning from other alternatives sources and how to eliminate absentee ownership?
- How to make tens of thousands of landless families (agricultural workers), who depend on land for employment, the owner of sufficient land; and how to increase their wage to the level that could provide them a decent living?
- How to increase the share of land of the poor families who have just a small piece of land for living with them?

The Fourth Congress drew a conclusion: contemporary Nepali society is confronting a challenge as to how to lead the society towards positive end placing class issue at the centre of it while addressing tactfully gender, caste/ ethnicity and regional issue. Thus, the Congress concluded that 'Our final destination is the achievement of free, dignified and prosperous life of the working-class people. Therefore, socialism is our long-term political goal!'

The Congress paved a way GEFONT to shift its policy on international relation from non-aligned stand to critical engagement. 'Unity in diversity', keeping this mantra at the centre, the Congress sided the creation of single international trade union centre.

Fourth Congress elected new General Secretary, replacing incumbent General Secretary who served GEFONT for 15 years. A policy was adopted to demarcate mobilisation and thinking functions. The Congress also reworked on its existing structure

and launched a new think tank wing called Central Planning Commission to be headed by a designated vice chairperson.

The programme adopted by the Congress incorporated the spirit of the policy document.

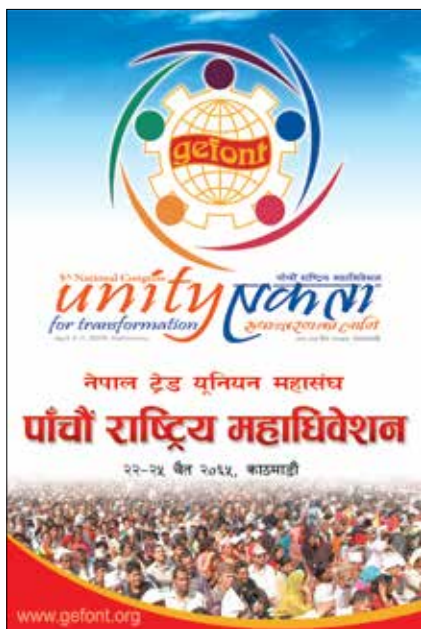
- Partnership with political parties for social transformation
- One union in the country and one centre in global trade union movement
- Package deal in the labour market reform under the slogan of 'the more social security, the more flexible labour market.

These were the major areas focused by the Plan of Action.

THE FIFTH NATIONAL CONGRESS: *4-7 April 2009, Kathmandu*

Theme: Unity for Transformation!

Major policy departure: The Fifth National Congress was held in an entire new political atmosphere. By the time, new power structure had emerged. The politics was passing through a transitional phase, which is still lingering. Centuries long monarchical system was replaced by the historic revolution. Nepal was declared secular Federal Democratic Republic. The country entered the new political course signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the then rebel party (CPN-Maoist). A new initiative began. Three options to choose were given to almost 20 thousand Maoist combatants barracked at 28 different cantonments. The options included integration with national security agencies, rehabilitation in the society, and package for voluntary retirement.



This context demanded new policy discourse in the trade union movement. GEFONT proposed the theme - Unity for Transformation!

GEFONT opinion was that those who have been enjoying their rights have control over power and resources; those deprived of it are denied even an opportunity to have access to power and resources. Unless this socio-economic pyramid is altered, economy of Nepal will not undergo

transformation. The essence of the transformation should be to end the existing social order that protects the interest of those powerful exploiters, and establish a new order that provides social justice and ensures rights to all, not least the marginalised and oppressed.

For this, GEFONT expected unity among trade unions in particular and with other stakeholders in general for social transformation. Launching of Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC) was one of the outcomes in this regard.

Thus, the Fifth Congress proposed a major programme, that is, Unity for Transformation. This programme politically focused on education/training to enhance workers' awareness and coordination with political parties and Constituent Assembly members to formulate pro-worker constitution. In addition

to organisation building, and expansion and mobilisation of workers, the programme focused on intensifying campaign for social protection and labour legislations reform.

Besides ongoing women leadership development programme, a new initiative was launched to bring youth in the trade union movement by establishing GEFONT youth committees at national and various levels.

We are proud to mention that the political parties have agreed at least in principle to ensure 10% representation of working class in state bodies. Our demands for the adjustment of labour agenda in the drafts by Thematic Committees of Constituent Assembly and formation of parliamentary committee related to labour relations were implemented.

Our policy coverage was much wider to strengthen local structures and struggles, to increase membership in agriculture-construction-self-employed sectors particularly street vendors, to promote social image of the union movement through mobilisations basically for fair wage and decent work agenda.

THE SIXTH NATIONAL CONGRESS: 28-31 March 2014, Kathmandu

Theme: Transformation: By Building Workers Power!

Major policy proposal: GEFONT Sixth National Congress was unique due to the combination of technology, participation and solidarity sentiments. Aiming at making the Congress paperless, the organisers provided all guests with similar name-tag with 8GB USB drive, which contained Congress documents, GEFONT videos, a collection of music album 'Melody of Labour and Creations' along with some relevant information.



All sessions of the Congress were open for all. Media personalities were given full access, and there was no closed-door session as such. All the sessions were live streamed through GEFONT website.

A mini-TV studio was established at the Congress venue. A live broadcast was arranged simultaneously, where most of the delegates were delivering their views continuously.

The Congress endorsed a plan of Organising Academy with the objective to establish regular Trade Union School for a sustainable and systematic trade union education; and a Trade Union Policy Institute (TUPI) for policy analysis.

As the transitional structure, the Congress formed GEFONT Governing Council consisting of ex-office bearers including former deputy secretary generals and former presidents.

The Congress set age limit and tenure limit (2 terms in office and 60 years age) for the executives in National Exco.

A brief summary of the policy document adopted by the Congress:

Political-socio-economic context

- a) **The change after 2006:** The declaration of democratic republic by deposing the traditional feudal monarchy is the landmark transformation of political regime. However, the transformation of socio-economic system, which establishes new production relation among the classes and new social relation among the social groups is yet to complete.
- b) **Nepali society on the path of overall transformation:** Feudalism is deteriorating very fast and the new face of post peasant society is being witnessed. Feudalism has lost its political base. But since the task of socio-economic transformation is to complete yet, Nepali society is heading towards capitalism. Our society has yet to build its capacity to break the vicious circle of rural and land-based exploitation and discrimination. Hence the reflection of modernity in various sectors and segments of business, services and urban life has not set any concrete foundation to represent capitalism. Even though influence of capitalism is increasing in the form of consumerism, production relation in agriculture is still traditional and hence collective bargaining has not been effective even in commercial farming. The trend clearly shows that all the three sectors – agriculture, manufacturing and service - are under exploitative production relations.
- c) **Productive force and workers' power:** The coordinated form of physical factors of production and human resource is productive force. Physical factors of production also include natural resources. Human resource or workers' power means workers' skills and capacity which are negotiable/ exchangeable on wage for specified work and specified time. If a worker's labour-power is devoted to

one employer forever then it is not selling and buying, it is slavery with a relation between slave and master. Therefore, buying and selling of worker's power is based on bargaining and agreement. Working hours, shifts of work, wage rates, fringe benefits and various other work-related basics are determined through tussles, interaction and negotiation between employers and workers.

Human resource includes human knowledge too. At this advanced stage of science and technology, human knowledge has emerged almost like a separate input of production. Human workforce creates surplus value. The business class always strives for minimisation of labour cost and maximisation of profit. For the purpose, their universal agenda is to maximise the surplus value.

- d) **Our contemporary phenomena:** By the end of the 20th century, capitalism reached the stage where it could not be seen but its adverse effects could be felt. For the immediate profits, it discarded human values. Some of its adverse effects are – increase in poverty, decrease in wage share in national income, increase of precariousness and informality, declining social security, tax evasion, unstable financial market with high degree of speculation, etc.

The nature of the 20th century **capitalism** has become different **in the 21st century**, which, according to economists, is “financial capitalism”. Financial capitalism is characterised by sale and purchase of and investment in financial instruments like bonds, securities, treasury bills and shares for immediate profit. Marxist analysts criticise this interest-based system of being exploitative and antiworker and promoting the commission-agents.

In financial capitalism, agents and brokers have a wide role ranging from money market to capital market, from product market to factor market and from banks to finance companies. Therefore, its role is not limited to transactions and turnovers. It influences entire economy policies and political process. A grave adverse effect generated by the financial capitalism is inequality.

- e) **Nepali workforce:** A large number of Nepali workforce is considered self-employed where less than one third of the population is wage employed within the country. The number of wage-employed workers working outside the country is more than the wage employed within the country. Large number of wage workers outside is the self-employed and unpaid family workers who are counted as self-employed in the country. Of the 5 million workers working outside the country, excluding poorest group of the Nepali working class in Indian labour market, all others are working in third countries in Asia, Europe and America. The real number in self-employment within the country is much less than what the census reveals. Therefore, we need a triangular strategy: wage employed labour force within the country; self-employed labour force within the country, and labour force working outside the country for improving and developing workers' power.

To improve the productivity and ensure qualitative change, the workforce should be organised, disciplined and skilled with high degree of awareness. For this, we have to develop and ensure the continuity of a cycle of **“higher wages, higher productivity, higher economic growth, and equal distribution system”**

f) **The basis of building workers' power is organising:** To organise and strengthen Nepali workers' power, we need to concentrate in three areas:

- **Quantity** - Agriculture, construction and urban informal sector
- **Quality** - Modern service sector
- **Block-wise** - Manufacturing sector

Agriculture, construction, manufacturing and service sectors are the **focal points for 'Building Workers' Power'**. There are several sub-classes based on income level within these broad class-groups. For practical purpose, these sub-classes should be taken in totality. In all these categories, there are "White Collar" and "Blue Collar" workers. These four groups can lead the process of transformation of society, work and labour market.

g) **Plan to develop workers' power:** To face this challenge and building workers' power, trade union movement should be based on '**Three Guarantees**'- return (decent wage), sustainability (regular employment), protection (social security) and five Prerequisites as follow:

- **Freedom:** for union rights and democratic exercise at workplaces
- **Wage:** base of minimum wage, demand for fair wage and aim for decent wage
- **Protection:** implement all social security programmes mentioned in ILO Convention 102 based on agreement among tripartite social partners.
- **Dialogue:** make labour relation workplace-friendly through collective bargaining

- **Productivity and efficiency:** fulfilling our responsibility to ensure “high wages – high productivity”

To confirm these five prerequisites into a sustainable system, five major works have to be continued:

- **Get involved:** Build connections everywhere with workers wherever they work.
- **Organise:** Organise workers at every workplace to increase the membership.
- **Educate/train:** Increase awareness and technical skill of workers through trade union education and technical trainings.
- **Mobilise:** Mobilise workers’ power, agitate if required for promoting agenda, issues and activities of the union. Utilise mass media to maximum possible extent.
- **Intervention:** Trade union movement should intervene in ensuring representation of workers in state mechanism and reforming public policies.

- h) Realistic ground for labour relation in days to come:** The method of class struggle being used by the union movement is a major factor to build worker's power. The essence of the class struggle is also the upliftment of working class. In contemporary Nepal, 40% of Nepal’s population constitutes the poorest class. Half of the total population in the middle class is flourishing and the journey of the upper class is continuing upwards. Thus, whatever may be the method of struggle, our goal is to transform the condition of ‘**poor to sweat and rich to own**’ into decent work and equal share. Hence our movement has to uplift poor and poorest classes at least as par to today’s middle class in Nepal.

As we know, a labour relation should not be understood as production relations. If it is understood that way, union movement will have wrong conclusion to consider 'labour action' as a class struggle 'to change production relations'. Naturally this type of conclusion will promote anarchy and wildcat strike in the name of 'revolutionary' unionism.

In a labour relation, the adequate method of settlement of disputes is social dialogue. Collective bargaining is the most effective tool of social dialogue. The process of collective bargaining depends on the nature of economy adopted by the political system. In socialist economy, it will be based more on cooperation. In capitalist economy, particularly in CMEs, both regulation and control work together, thus bargaining goes through dialogue in cooperation in a centrally bargaining frame. However, in the capitalist economy, basically in LMEs, bargaining is decentralised and more conflicting as the system believes in *laissez-faire* where both employers and employees are left free to touse or interact. Employers engage in hire and fire and employees go into spontaneous strikes.

After the comprehensive peace agreement of November 2006, the character of mixed economy adopted by Nepal has been explained as a 'Three Pillar' policy (the new constitution endorsed it). Then economic policies to be implemented in Nepal will take the form of almost that of Centrally Coordinated Market Economies (CME). Whether it is a 'new democratic system' called by traditional communist parties or the system with the norm 'not to kill capitalism and also to benefit the working class'; the essence of the labour relation is 'Co-existence of Labour with Capital'.

Hence, the model of collective bargaining should be based on co-existence.

THE SEVENTH NATIONAL CONGRESS: 28-31 March 2018, Kathmandu

Theme: Prosperous Working Class in Consolidated Democracy!

Major policy announcement: The congress was held in a relaxed atmosphere. There was high hope on prevailing political scenario. As the Congress Resolution states:

‘A new but positive political power balance has been established in the country. Undoubtedly, it is most favourable political environment for the working class and Nepali people in the political history of Nepal. The movements for political rights have been fundamentally completed now. With this, Nepali society has reached to the stage of '**movement in democracy**' from the stage of '**movement for democracy**'. A new era of hope and inspiration has begun and Nepali society is gradually moving towards the socio-economic transformation based on the solid foundation of political achievements.’



Through dozens of resolutions, the Congress summarised our achievements as:

- New labour legislations an achievement (post 1990 and post 2017). After 2017, 16 legislations to implement fundamental rights were enacted along with *twin-law* (Labour Act and Contribution Based Social Security Act)
- Freedom to bonded agricultural labourer (the Kamaiya)
- Organising workers beyond the borders
- 10% service charge in HRCT sectors
- Regularisation of minimum wage
- Introduction of labour policy in the country
- Achieving great result in gender mainstreaming work
- A new journey begins towards implementing social security
- Displaying a unique model of trade union solidarity; 'unity in diversity' within trade unions
- Establishing labour movement as one of the reliable actors in the struggle for democracy, peace and prosperity.

And the Congress adopted the programmes for the future as:

- **Consolidated democracy and socialism:** Campaign to be continued to guarantee 10% representation of working people in all workers representative bodies in order to transform the character of State from 'Capital-tilt to Pro-worker'.
- **New proposal for organisational development:** Expand union power from workplace to parliament; strengthen political power and access of trade unions to local, provincial and federal state structure.

- **Proposal for labour market reform:** Implement labour legislations for decent work, industry level CB in each province, policy focused social dialogue at national level; a campaign for wage increment at least NPR 5,000/m and NRs 6,00/d; workers registration and labour desk operation in the local level to materialise effectively contribution based social security schemes and other welfare programmes.
- **Strengthening unity and solidarity:** Operation of strengthened and effective JTUCC, effort to unify other confederation with GEFONT.
- **Gender equality:** Responding feminisation of labour market, 0 to 33 percent women participation in its whole structure and being counted as one of the 100 unions of the world for the "Count Us In" campaign of ITUC, is internationally a big recognition. This effort needs to further continue.
- **Youth mobilisation:** It is for preparing successors in the movement.
- **Protection of workers working aboard:** Continuity to on-going work.
- **Organising academy:** Policy analysis through GEFONT-TUPI, Research through NLA, educating activist through trade union school, mobilising through organising workers.
- Communication and publicity
- Agenda of contemporary concern





Chapter 3

Consolidated and comprehensive democracy
for dignity and prosperity of working class

1. Dignity, prosperity and happiness

In the manifesto for the general elections of 2017, the main slogan of the CPN (UML) was 'UML's Vision: Happy Nepali, Establishment of Prosperous Nepal.' After the formation of the government under the leadership of party president K P Sharma Oli on 15 February 2018, the slogan was explained as the national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.' Prosperity without people's happiness is not prosperity. The government recognised that prosperity cannot be measured by the average figure of GDP. As the prime minister, president Oli further explained happiness and prosperity ---

'Prosperity is the foundation for happiness. Happiness comes with easy availability of biological and material necessities that are reasonable and just. The indicators of prosperity consist of high and sustainable production/ productivity, modern infrastructure and deeper interconnection, human capital formation and its full utilisation, and high and equitable national income. Prosperity means progress with social justice.' [Oli, 2021]

Economic prosperity is the focus of today's supreme national concern, determination and work. The need of the day is to give extraordinary speed to the economic development by mobilising natural resources, human resources, capital, skills within the

country and moving forward along with private sectors, giving high priority to cooperatives and working hand in hand with neighbours and international friends, foreign investors and financial institutions also to make up the loss of the past.

Prosperity and happiness can be achieved only in consolidated democracy. 'Dignified and creative life for the working class can only be achieved in a consolidated democracy. That is why, GEFONT set the theme of its 7th National Congress – 'Consolidated Democracy and Prosperous Working Class.'

For the working class, a consolidated democracy means a prosperous life.

2. Comprehensive democracy

Democracy is both the value and way of life for us. A democracy without economic rights and social justice is a formal and incomplete democracy. The democracy we want is not only a democracy with the right to form a party, participate in elections, and speak and write, but a comprehensive democracy. A comprehensive democracy is a system in which everyone has equal rights, equal access to opportunities, and guarantee of equality for all, social justice and security and dignity for all.

To make this system functional, the provisions of social justice guaranteed by the constitution should be implemented. Necessary legal and structural arrangements and resources should be arranged for implementation. Gap between rich and poor should be minimised by adopting equitable development as a guiding policy.

3. Dignity and prosperity of working class

Despite the complicated election system, a strong government was formed after two and half decades through the 2017 elections. Political system was being stabilised after the end of protracted political transition. Instead of short-term publicity work, suitable condition was created for the implementation of long-term and sustainable plans for socio-economic transformation. People's shattered dreams were awakened. Their expectation that something would definitely happen now had touched the sky.

The 7th National Congress of GEFONT was organised in such a political environment with high aspirations.

However, the political course taken by the change was officially reversed after 41 months. High aspirations of the people were put to a stop. In such a situation, it was necessary for this Congress to discuss how to continue the tasks set by the previous Congress, and how to make the inconvenient power structure favourable again.

The commitment that Nepal will prosper and we should make it should be taken forward once again. Because a psychologically weak nation cannot brave challenges, our efforts should be focused on building strong national confidence.

With the promulgation of the new constitution, Nepali society entered a new era. We expected such a new era, where there would be no discrimination and inequality among the sovereign citizens of independent nation; where there would be social justice and democracy; where everyone would get equal rights and opportunities, security and respect; where there would be good governance and prosperity; where people's lives would be happy and the country prosperous. Now we should build

a society based on our expectation of a 'new era' on the basis of nationalism, democracy, social justice and equality, social harmony, national unity, peace and stability, and development and prosperity.

Now there is a disturbance in the power structure established after 2017, but there is a task for us to bring a change to the situation. Therefore, the theme of this Congress builds on the theme of previous Congress and reads as 'Consolidated and comprehensive democracy for dignity and prosperity of working class!'

In summary, our national aspiration - Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali! Our democracy- comprehensive democracy! Our principle- People's Multi-party Democracy! Our destination - socialism! Rights, opportunities, equality, security and dignity!

4. Development of foundation for socialism

The constitution has declared Nepal as a socialism-oriented state. GEFONT believes in 'socialism for dignified working class and prosperous life'. We said that the state should be built in such a way that the existing tradition of 'The one who speaks can sell flour while the one who does not have hard time to sell rice itself!' should be ended. The society should be built in such a way, where today's working class will be able to climb the ladder of prosperity. For the working class, the door to live a decent, prosperous and creative life should be open.

Therefore, in this Congress, we are contemplating socialism as our 'dream project' and discussing ways to build its foundation.

If there is 'prosperity in the country and 'feeling of happiness in the people', it can be felt that socialism is working in practice.

Socialism can be realised when the situation of 'those who can do live, those who cannot die' ends. Socialism can be experienced when the income inequality between 'haves and have-not's, and 'employers and employed' is minimised.

'Building the foundation for a socialism-oriented state system is not in itself a socialist revolution or the establishment of a socialist system. In our context, a socialism-oriented state system is basically a system with a socio-political system that is characterised by public welfare, open competition, socio-economic justice and equality.' (CPN UML, 2020)

The revolution changes the economic base, and also changes the superstructure. The change of 2006 has opened the door for socio-economic transformation. But our economic base is yet to be changed, and the superstructure has not been changed in many fronts. On the contrary, several obstacles have been created on the path of change.



‘If someone files a lawsuit in the court on issues of public interest, a stay-order is immediately granted (a similar interim order was granted against contribution based social security in the banking sector). By making social security mandatory, we envisioned a welfare state, a socialism-oriented state, but it did not happen. When we try to achieve rapid economic development, our bureaucracy does not know how to catch the pace. There are problems in the bureaucracy. There are remnants of feudalism. The biggest problem is the character of our capital, a significant part of which is crony capital. An evader evades taxes, tries to convert black money into white, and does all this feeding commission. He cheats the consumers and also the state in goods, services and public works; completes no work on time. This character evades revenue, benefits subsidy, influences political leaders and the bureaucracy and keeps himself safe always. This is the character who develops a kind of corrupt and immoral culture in the society, and it is a major obstacle in our way today. It does not establish industry because it is a risky business, so it instead runs foreign trade because it comes with commission. Such activities under the veil of crony capital seize natural resources, exploit them, and destroy the environment. Economic activities seem to be happening. The stock market flourishes. Bank deposits keep increasing. But no jobs be created, no capital formed and reproduced. National capital will not be created and the country cannot become self-reliant. This in essence makes the citizens lazy, unproductive, not entrepreneurial, but consumers. This takes them to the race of being rich overnight. This is the biggest problem for us today.’ (Gyawali, 2021)

There can be many obstacles to the development of productive forces. One of them is the subsistence-oriented traditional production model. About 70% of the labour force is still engaged in agriculture directly or indirectly. In other words, such a large labour force is being used in unproductive areas. The reason for this is the pattern of subsistence-oriented production model. Generally, the production pattern is dependent on its social environment. In order to change the society, it is necessary to change production model.

‘We call New Road the biggest commercial area of Nepal. Even in the New Road, we can see the effects and influence of subsistence oriented social system. ... The houses there have shutters in the belowstairs, people live upstairs. It has not yet become a commercial area. We can see the same practice in new cities. The overall psychology of our society largely is subsistence-oriented. There is a tendency to take less risk and lead a safe life. For example, build a house, put up shutters, rent it out so that you can collect rent and live on it. ... In other words, the kind of city that has developed in capitalist countries as a downtown, our city is not like that.’ (Pokharel, 2021)

The basis for socialism can be built by changing the pattern of production and curbing crony capital, then transforming the wage-employed labour force into entrepreneurship through self-employment. The development of productive forces is not only about securing its employment, but also a matter of transformation it. In this sense, the issue of how to transform workers in wage-employment into self-employment should become the subject of the next trade union movement.

‘I have seen wage-earners being transformed into self-employed entrepreneurs. Let's look at a practical example, many drivers or associates in the transportation sector have later become the owners of the transport vehicles and are involved in the business. Through the managerial experience of being in wage employment, I have seen that embracing the same business in which they have experience is less risky than others. The ability to earn income is better for those who have embraced entrepreneurship after wage labour. The ability of those who have become hotel owners after working in the hotel business is better than they engage in other business.’ (Pokharel, 2021)

Rising economic inequality is a challenge. A statistic from 2019 illustrates the inequality:

- 10% of richest Nepalis have 26 times more wealth than that of 40 % poor Nepalis.
- The income of 10% rich Nepalis is three times higher than that of 40% poor Nepalis.
- 20% rich people have 56.2 share in income while 20% poor people have only 4.1.
- From 1995 to 2011, 20% of the richest have increased their share by 5.0% while 20% of the poorest have decreased their share by 1.2%.

Land is an emotional asset for Nepali. But ownership on it is unequal. More than 400,000 Nepali are still landless or squatters. Increment in the productivity of agriculture has not been as expected. Farmers have not received a fair price for their produce. There is a stark difference between the wages of an average worker and the income of high-ranking officials.

Unless the role of the state increases, the task of building socialism becomes complicated. If only the private sector is strong, it will impede the journey towards socialism. Therefore, our policy should be to increase the role of the state along with the private sector. However, the public sector in our country is very weak. Socialism and a very weak public sector seem to be mutually exclusive. Therefore, more emphasis should be placed on the development of the public sector to prepare the foundation for socialism faster.

'Now it seems that more emphasis is placed on increasing the income of the state through indirect taxes. The burden of indirect tax falls on the general consumer. Basically, if we impose tax on those whom we have to lift out of poverty, the danger of falling them back into poverty will increase. The policy of uplifting the people out of poverty and building the state is derived from direct taxation. Direct tax system is a system. Journey towards indirect tax will distribute poverty. Indirect tax increases income gap, direct tax gradually reduces income inequality.' (Pokharel, 2021)

In summary, it is necessary to pay attention to the following works in building the foundation for socialism:

- **Easy availability of goods and services:** Ensure the easy availability of goods and services in collaboration with the private sector and the public sector. Increase the capacity of the private sector, expand the role of the state.
- **Emphasis on human resource development:** Provide universal education and health by the state. It will make citizens capable, capable citizens will have the ability to build a society based on equality.
- **Emphasis on infrastructure development** based on economic activity using the latest technology in production.
- **Accelerate socio-economic development:** Address the interests of the minority/ marginalised community, end the practice of untouchability, gender discrimination, etc, through effective implementation of law. Carry out economic-social-cultural transformation based on new production relations. Transform the feudal production

relations based on the existing social system into capitalist production relations and transform the economic-social-cultural relations by integrating the social elements into the economic process.

- Develop accessible **public transport system**.
- **Build the basis for national economy** by developing systematic settlement and urbanisation through integrated settlement and building industrial areas, satellite cities and markets to connect with them
- Strengthen and improve the financial institutions and organise capital market. Making the capital market socialist means connecting people's savings with the stock market. The current capital market has become active as a betting market. It is a wrong practice to take a loan from the bank and invest in shares.
- **Build public welfare state system based on social justice:** We are proud of the UML government of 1994 because it determined our destination. Social security allowance, flow of resources from the centre to the local for development, land reform and right to land for the landless etc. started from that time. It should be expanded further.





Chapter 4

Challenges in the world of work: Gap between policy and practice

While proposing future programme to the Seventh National Congress, it was said that our journey of struggle and achievements has now entered a new phase with the country heading to political stability. We can draw a framework of our future priorities on the basis of the milestones of success that we have had in the past.

We had adopted 11 resolutions at the Seventh Congress, and expressed our commitments to act on them as follows:

Resolution 1: The goal of GEFONT is to tie up the 'dignified, prosperous and creative life of the working class' with the national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' and to work for the strengthening of political stability and democracy. Link prosperity with sustainable development.

Resolution 2: Continue the campaign to ensure 10% representation of the working class in all elected levels and bodies of the state system.

Resolution 3: Fully implement the constitution and move forward towards socialism. Resolutely embark on the path of transforming the working class into a middle class.

Resolution 4: Since wage increment is the main tool to fight inequality, focus will be given to the following issues:

implementation of labour legislation, policy dialogue at the national level, collective bargaining system at the industrial level, collective bargaining at the provincial and enterprise levels, pressure for an immediate increment of wage by NPR 5,000, continue to expand the scope of social security, registration of workers at the local level and operation of labour-desk, single bargaining panel of unions.

Resolution 5: Strictly implement laws to formalise informal labour, minutely analyse the state of law enforcement through labour audits and mobilise the union movement to include all types of workers in the social security system.

Resolution 6: Advance the bilateral and trilateral social relations to not jeopardise the issue of workers in the competition between the provinces in accordance with the federal structure, to implement the labour legislation and contribution-based social security law in the same rhythm at all levels, develop the law enforcement mechanism among the three levels of government, make the labour audit effective, resolve disputes through the strengthening of the labour inspection system.

Resolution 7: Regardless of the direction taken, the new course started with the discussion of unification among GEFONT, ANTUF, CONEP and RAKAS, immediately announce a joint working group and hold a unity congress within the next 2 years and operate the JTUCC in a more effective manner.

Resolution 8: Design different plans for union leadership development in areas where there are more women and areas where women are less. Join hands with various

associations and organisations to further reduce gender-based discrimination. Encourage the culture of cooperation in domestic work to maintain balance between work and family. Engage in the campaign of 'zero tolerance' for violence against women. Conduct a campaign for 33% women representation and expansion of women membership.

Resolution 9: Formulate necessary strategies to increase youth participation in the union, expand the base of the union movement for the future expanding interaction and cooperation on employment and labour market issues between youth-student movement.

Resolution 10: Sensitise all parties about climate change and environment.

Resolution 11: Remove the Central Union Council formed to coordinate the works of affiliates and make arrangement for ex-officio representation of the affiliates in National Committee. Adding a vice president to the officials, remove the Geographical Structure Coordination Committee and assign the vice presidents to coordinate the work in the geography.

Instead of a 'Transitional Structure Governing Council', establish a structure to provide the leadership institutional information and directions for monitoring, consultation and guidance on specific issues. Continue the GEFONT Veteran's Network, workers community club, disaster management committee and central cooperative promotion committee. Expand the GEFONT committees at federal, 7 provinces and 753 local levels. Arrange secretaries with defined tasks in the secretariat. Strengthen

the Organising Academy and prepare an army of organisers/mobilisers. Arrange a new structure to organise labour audit.

We had high expectations from the Congress. But now we can see some gaps between our commitment and practice. First, let's briefly look at the achievements during this period:

- Wage increment that was aimed for NPR 5,000 exceeded the expectation and reached to NPR 5,300. The method of paying workers' wages through the bank was started. It indirectly ensured the minimum wage and encouraged the workers to join social security.
- Instead of establishing labour desks, employment service centres were established in municipalities. It was linked with the Prime Minister Employment Programme.
- The contribution based social security started with huge publicity. Government presented it as the beginning of a new era. Opponents of the welfare state vehemently opposed it.
- Health insurance programme expanded significantly during this period.
- A high-level unification task force was formed for the proposed trade union unification and the process was taken forward. But due to the reluctance of other parties, the state of mind reached to a further divided level after three years.
- The mobilisation of GEFONT support groups went as expected. Efforts were made for bilateral labour agreements in some countries with minimum labour

standards for migrant workers. But the Covid pandemic put an unexpected stop to it.

- GEFONT App was launched with the expectation of its multipurpose usage.
- Outsourced workers were brought to the scope of contribution-based social security to ensure minimum labour standards for them.
- In cooperation with the government relief was provided for the workers affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Unexpected challenges were emerged in this period. The split between NCP and CPN (UML) led to instability of the government. Covid-19 has added unimaginable pain to the world of work. Let's look at them briefly:

1. Attack on twin Acts

Labour Act 2017 and Contribution Based Social Security Act 2017 are complementarity to each other. Both the laws were endorsed mutually despite some disagreements between trade unions and employers' associations. Both the Acts were brought to implementation simultaneously. The conclusion that Nepal's labour market was not flexible and workers remained insecure was also common. The Labour Act aims to make the labour market *flexible* whereas Contribution Based Social Security Act *protects* the affected workers. But some interest groups are playing game of making the Contribution Based Social Security Act 'optional' with the aim of making Labour Act work alone. This will not only push the future of the workers towards uncertainty, but also invites chaos to the world of work.

A commitment was made to formalise the informal sector through the Labour Act. Regardless of the conditions of employment

(permanent or temporary, regular or irregular, casual, contractual or outsourced, wage employment or self-employment), a method has been established to connect the workers with the Social Security Fund from the day they start the job and provide them with the same social security number no matter where they work. Also the demands of workers are divided into 'rights-based demands' and 'interest-based demands' in order to protect the labour market from unnecessary disturbances.

But the process to disassociate right-based demands with interest-based is never done job in this period. There is still confusion among the stakeholders between the right-based demand and interest-based demand. We also remained 'calm' or lost in the subject. Disassociation between the two demands was very essential to institutionalise our belief of 'struggle for democracy and struggle in democracy.' Labour administration should have been made effective to make rights-based demands universal. After that was done, if the labour administration became active, it would avoid unexpected labour disputes. Then, the issues related to interest-based demands would remain, which would be easily resolved through social dialogue.

Legal arrangements for labour inspection and workplace inspection have been made through labour audit. But the indifference of labour administration towards labour audit is a point to be noted. It is necessary to find out its reluctance towards the labour audit of entrepreneurs.

As the provision for the proposed Labour Commission is not in the new constitution, the Labour Arbitration Tribunal has been provisioned in the Labour Act. This provision is not only necessary, but also essential. There seems to be no other way to formalise the informal sector. There seems to be no better

method than this of bringing everyone under the scope of social security. There is a need for a socio-economic multi-faceted dialogue mechanism in the parliament (*Let us note here: it is not the Parliamentary Committee in the House, rather an advisory council including all stakeholders together with MPs*). These issues need to be discussed in-depth between the business community and the government.

2. New proposal of union movement

From decades of experience, GEFONT concluded that enterprise-based 'unionism' is ineffective in protecting the rights and interests of workers. This localises and disorients the union. To right this wrong, we adopted a new proposal in the Seventh Congress:

- **Collective bargaining at the foundation level** : Collect fees through the check-off system to end the pull and push of members between the unions at the local level. Build a common 'mechanism' for collective bargaining in proportion to the votes received in official union elections; and secure the future of workers through the effective implementation of contribution-based social security.
- **Industrial collective bargaining** with the commodity association of entrepreneurs at the sectoral (industry/ business) level.
- At the national level, conduct a bilateral policy dialogue between the trade union federations and the employers' umbrella organisation and a tripartite policy dialogue including the government.

- Make JUTCC more dynamic and more representative by bringing uniformity in views and opinions through the Labour Parliament (a body consisting of only elected union chairs at the enterprise/workplace level). Free the labour market from the hassle of 'paper-unions'.
- Take initiative for the establishment of economic-social multifaceted dialogue mechanism for policy dialogue in the parliament

There was no much progress on these during this period. But its alternative is not immediately visible to take the world of work on the right path.

3. GEFONT organising academy

The concept of the Academy was advanced after extensive discussions. But the concept became blurred during this period. On the one hand, political instability and the Covid pandemic put a hurdle on this campaign, on the other, there were unexpected and inconsistent actions within the structure of the academy itself. In short,

- **GEFONT-TUPI**, established as a think tank wing, was expected to provide 'policy feedback' to the GEFONT National Committee along with policy analysis on contemporary issues. But it spent more time and resources on starting *labour studies* department at university rather than providing much expected feedback through *policy analysis*. Labour studies has long-term importance, but TUPI has failed to fulfil its responsibility to advise mobilisers within union on contemporary policies.

- The pace of **research and study** was rather slow. No concrete research was carried out during this period. There should have been a demand and guidance from the political leadership on the subjects of research, and **National Labour Academy** should have delivered on this as per the demand and guidance. But a kind of vacuum was created in this matter.
- **Trade union school:** The Covid pandemic disrupted the regular operation of the school. An attempt was made to address this through a 'virtual class'. But the effectiveness of the virtual class was not experimented. Only about a year ago, a hybrid virtual class to run through the Action Room was proposed (**School from Action Room**) with the idea to connect the classes conducted from Kathmandu with the ones run from each province. But there was no solid plan on it. It seems that the political leadership who was in-charge



of running the school was not interested in it. If there was disinterest, no options were proposed either. It requires clarity.

- **Mobilisation:** Even because that the Covid pandemic slowed down the activities, no expected results were seen in the union mobilisation. Also the 'marketing' of good practices and achievements realised during this period was not done properly. Therefore, a serious discussion is needed on what are the new areas of work and how to bring new comrades to the union movement. It is necessary for everyone to be clear that the union movement does not proceed from bureaucratic relations, but it builds on comradely spirit.





Chapter 5

Proposal for structural reform

GEFONT now has a hierarchical structure of National Congress, Congress Delegates' Council, National Committee, Provincial Committee, Affiliated Union and Municipal Committee.

In the National Committee, there are 8 vice presidents including the president of Women's Committee, general secretary and 2 deputy general secretaries including the vice president of the Women's Committee. The vice presidents are responsible for foreign affairs, planning coordination and management, labour relations, trade union education, publicity and publication, economic administration and social security and labour cooperative promotion. The president of the GEFONT Women's Committee has been given the responsibility of women and gender affairs, with the same protocol as the vice president of the National Committee.

The National Committee has 5 secretaries including the secretary of the Women's Committee. There is a provision that the presidents of the provinces are ex-officio members of the National Committee. Similarly, the presidents of all affiliated unions will be the ex-officio members of the National Committee. However, this representation method has been differentiated based on the membership strength of affiliates that pay dues to the GEFONT. For example, the presidents of 6 unions which have more members are automatically represented to the National Committee. Out of the rest of the unions, the presidents of 6 unions represent the

National Committee as full members where the members of the remaining unions represent as ex-officio alternative national committee members. A total of 17 members including office-bearers and members of GEFONT Women's Committee and the chair of GEFONT Youth Committee are automatically members of the National Committee.

In the central structures under the National Committee, there are office-bearers' committee, secretariat, departments, women's committee, youth committee, thematic committees and commissions. Provincial committees can form committees to coordinate with municipalities under their authority and if necessary, they can form and operate other committees.

In the central structure, there is a provision of GEFONT-veterans network, disciplinary inspection commission, Trade Union Policy Institute (TUPI), parliamentary and local level coordination committee, disaster management committee, central labour relations council and workers' community club at the local level.

Currently, these structures are sufficient. But it is necessary to make periodic improvements in order to remove the ambiguities seen in the structures over time. For example, if we want to make the work at the municipal level effective, it is imperative that our local unions should do at least 12 tasks as follows:

- Register workers in the municipalities. Link employment to social security number.
- Conduct labour audit of workplace at municipal level. Monitor both rights-based and interest-based issues. Increase the effectiveness of the implementation of labour legislation by submitting a report (with

complaints if necessary) to the labour administration in coordination with the provinces.

- Obtain the labour related profile within the municipalities and proceed with the work accordingly.
- Identify the outsource-companies within the municipalities and initiate to register them in the social security fund.
- Map the interns in municipalities, join in their salary campaign.
- Prepare a list of self-employed individuals in municipalities. Prepare details of small entrepreneurs and those involved in start-ups. Facilitate them for marketing and skill training.
- Prepare the details of those registered in the social security fund every month. Explain the importance of contribution based social security and motivate them to join it.
- Keep the record of those who are in foreign employment. Inform them about the things they need to pay attention to before going abroad and after they reach the destination country.
- Keep information about other unions in the municipalities, prepare reports about their status.
- Make the union's position in favour of justice when there is an incident of violence against women.
- Keep the details of the working youth in the municipalities and pay attention to how they can be attracted to our union.
- Stand firm against social evil.

We need to carry forward the upcoming programme as the **Next Tenure's Mobilisation: GEFONT's Rejuvenation**. For this, it is necessary to make new arrangements as follows:

- Decentralise the works by forming commissions or councils for some of the tasks that are currently under the responsibility of vice presidents. While decentralising it, maintain or reduce the number of vice presidents as per the need.
- Conduct regular work with a regular structure and make the proposed rejuvenation programme a campaign. Designate one national committee member as the coordinator (director) of each campaign and involve suitable leaders of provinces and member unions in the campaign.
- Make arrangement to coordinate the campaigns by general secretary in addition to the work of central administration and entire organisation.
- Give access to the campaign teams directly to the municipal level. Based on the evaluation of the annual work of the campaign coordinator, the decision on whether we continue the work or change it will be taken through the meeting of the convention representative council.
- Maintain the current order of precedence and give the same title to those by which title they represent the national committee (for example, the chair of the youth committee should not be called necessarily a member of the national committee).





Chapter 6

Trade union unity: GEFONT's position and proposal

GEFONT has always been in favour of a single union. At the Seventh National Congress, we were optimistic at the immediate unification among some unions. However, our expectations did not materialise. Even now, we must not allow this campaign die down. The work of unifying the union movement should be continued in order to strengthen it.

- Proactively accept the process of unification and integration.
 - Include the unions ready for unification in the leadership of GEFONT giving them due



importance. Make an announcement for unification through the Congress Hall.

- Include the union leaders who came to this unification process as the representatives of the Congress. Give a suitable role in the leadership to those who come from that stream.
- Induct in leadership the representative of the federation (such as CONEP) with which has the possibility of unification in near future, and start the unification of psychology from this Congress.
- Give necessary importance to the work of strengthening the JTUCC as per the previous concept. Inspire others to make sincere efforts to amend the labour legislation and maintain one voice in the workers' agenda.





Chapter 7

Next tenure's mobilisation: GEFONT's rejuvenation

Two types of work should be completed within the next four-year tenure. First, address the rights and interest of the working class and our members in a way that they feel it, and second, rejuvenate GEFONT through these works.

Addressing the rights and interests of working class means giving them assurance of **3 Guarantees: return** (reasonable income), **sustainability** (continuity of work) and **security** (savings for the future). For this, following campaigns have been proposed:

1. **Work and fair wage: Continuity of work and sustainable democratic workplace**

- Make the wage-employment dignified.
- Implement the labour audit (both workplace inspection and labour inspection): here, inspect not only regular (permanent/temporary) workers within the formal labour sector, but also the **irregular such as** contract, daily wage and outsourced and they are listed in the Social Security Fund.
- Focus on time bound minimum wage review.
- Monitor and prepare annual reports regarding rights-based demands.
- Focus on collective bargaining with a proposal of a new system for interest-based demands.
- Be agile of union rights at workplace.

- Mobilise local unions to increase the membership and their capacity (awareness and skills).

2. Wages for interns campaign

These days, students of various colleges are provided with internships at hotels, chain restaurants and marts charging them certain fees. Where no fee is charged, even there, they are made to work for 6-8 hours for free. This is not justice. It instead is the exploitation of young workers. The Labour Act has provisioned suitable wages for interns or trainees. Here we do not have to raise the issue of the eight-hour working day. Let it be just an incentive cost for them. If we start the 'wages for interns' campaign with the help of the municipality and the labour administration following the provision of the Labour Act, it will be possible for us to expand the union in new areas.

3. Towards local: Formlise the informal

Along with the Prime Minister Employment Programme, employment service centres have been established in all municipalities. There are also employees and the employment service centres have their relations with the Ministry of Social Development at province level. Prime Minister Employment Programme can be presented in numbers as below:

— 200,000	National target of minimum employment the FY 2077/78
— 752,449	Number of registered unemployed persons
— 304,211	Number of households
— 13,807,367	Total employment days

— 184,293	Number of persons employed
— 95,658	Total employed persons receiving payment
— 18,736	Total projects
— 12,034,900,000	Total allocated budget
— 8,775,125,465	Total budget of projects being operated
— 2,525,231,145	Total expenditure
— 706	Number of local levels implementing the project
— 727	Number of local level listing of unemployed
— 753	Total municipalities

Building on this progress, we have to speed up our work for labour registration. The purpose of the registration should be to expedite the campaign to bring those who are wage-employment and self-employment under the social security. In this way, we can implement the concept of 'all labour formal - all workers regular employees' as envisioned by the Labour Act 2017.

4. From low to middle income: Journey towards affluence

A slogan – Poor sweats, rich seizes (in Madhes it is called '*Kamae lagauntiwala, Khae dhotiwala*' – poor earns, rich reaps!) is relevant even today. We should launch a '**Say No to It**' campaign. Our report has been saying since the Seventh Congress that the class of the working class should be uplifted to the middle class. Now the time has come to put this slogan to practice. This should be one of the strategies to prepare the basis for socialism. We have to emphasise on two types of work for this:

- Encourage members to self-employment rather than wage -employment.
- Enthuse them to take up entrepreneurship.
- Arrange seed capital and training.

5. Our future, social protection: Collaboration, contribution and participation

Currently, there are four types of contribution-based social security schemes in implementation through the Social Security Fund:

- Medical treatment, health and maternity protection scheme
- Accident and disability protection scheme
- Dependent family protection scheme
- Old age security scheme

The current status of the Social Security Fund is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| • 17192 | listed employers |
| • 346,744 | listed contributors |
| • 2109 crore | total contribution amount |
| • 165.99 crore | total claimed payment |
| • 136.89 crore | retirement claims |
| • 23.03 crore | medical treatment, maternity services |
| • 3.74 crore | dependent family claims |
| • 2.31 crore | accident and disability claims |

Now both the wage-employed and the self-employed workers should be included in the contribution based social security. It seems that about 5,000 workers are being registered in the Fund per month. At least 20 lakhs workers including those in foreign employment, and all kinds of wage-employment and self-employment can be listed as

contributors to the Social Security Fund in the next four years. Therefore, the aim of our campaign should be - **target the two million.**

- Carry out health insurance publicity campaign. Support in treatment and interfere in premium collection. We need to be mindful that attempts are being made to make the health insurance programme fail. Link the propaganda slogan of **where is hospital, where is treatment and where is wellness** to it.
- Be involved in the campaign of easy availability of allowance for senior citizen
- Be involved in the promotion of social assistance. Currently, the state is providing eight different types of assistance:
 - Day lunch for school children
 - Single woman allowance
 - Support for the persons with disability
 - Dalit women allowance
 - Support in chronic health problems (treatment of 10 different types of diseases)
 - Free healthcare for children and senior citizens above 70 years of age
 - Free insurance subsidy for senior citizens above 70 years of age
 - Scholarship facility for students

6. Study, research and analysis: Trade union school and mobilisation

- Launch hybrid virtual classes from the Action Room as per the concept of **School from Action Room**. It was proposed to connect the classes run from the trade

union school in Kathmandu with the classes in each province through virtual platforms. The participants of such classes will join simultaneously from all the seven provinces and the expert trainers will facilitate sessions from the action room at the centre.

- Continue the work of providing policy feedback to the GEFONT National Committee with policy analysis on contemporary issues by GEFONT-TUPI.
- Continue the work of research and study as part of the union campaign. Make the function of National Labour Academy more effective.

7. Unity in diversity: Harmonious relation in trade union and solidarity

- Accept proactively the process of unification and integration.
- Start cooperation with the unions that can be merged in the future.
- Re-evaluate the work of ITUC – National Affiliates Council (NAC).
- Review the modus operandi of JTUCC operation.

8. Beyond the border campaign: Organisation and achievement

- Continue the ongoing work
- Further strengthen the work of GEFONT support group
- Continue lobbying necessary for the benefit of Nepali migrant workers

9. Young generation (Y-Gen): Youth in union campaign

- Further strengthen the work of youth committee by setting goals.
- Train and mobilise them by involving in the community workers club and youth committee at workplace under the youth for social service programme.
- Review the youth programme organised during this period. Organise a wider youth labour conference to decide the future strategy by analysing the youth mentality, aspirations and condition.

10. Women and gender equality (We-Gen) programme

- Enhance women's participation in the union movement carrying out an assessment of the post-restructuring scenario of the state.
- Continue campaign on violence against women (Say No to Violence campaign) in society and at workplace.
- Continue the 'Count Us In' campaign against the trend of denying women's role in society and economy.
- Give emphasis on increasing women's leadership in the union movement.

11. Engagement in issues of public concerns

GEFONT engages in various issues of public concern including issues of climate change and situation of world of work after Covid-19 pandemic.

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BUILDING CONSOLIDATED AND COMPREHENSIVE DEMOCRACY

Democracy is both the value and way of life for us. A democracy without economic rights and social justice is a formal and incomplete democracy. The democracy we want is not only a democracy with the right to form a party, participate in elections, and speak and write, but a comprehensive democracy. A comprehensive democracy is a system in which everyone has equal rights, equal access to opportunities, and guarantee of equality for all, social justice and security and dignity or all.



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