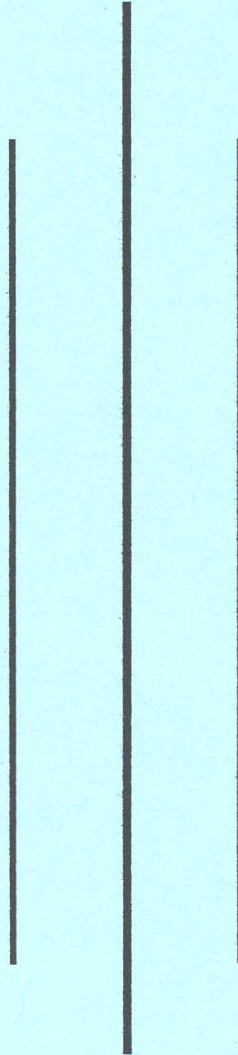


Translation:

Voters Awareness Booklet



Election Commission
Kantipath, Kathmandu

*This English-from-Nepali translation of the original booklet is provided by NDI/Nepal.
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Preface

Free and fair elections are the foundation of democracy. For free and fair elections, it is essential for everybody in society, including indigenous and aboriginal peoples and women, to have general knowledge about the fundamentals of electoral system. This booklet has been prepared to fulfill those requirements. We are hopeful that this booklet shall help everybody concerned about free and fair elections by arousing public awareness of the target groups about the fundamentals of our electoral system.

Election Commission

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(Note: the numbers refer to the sequence of questions, not to the page number)

Chapter – 1

Democracy

1. What is democracy?
 2. What roles do citizens play in a democracy?
 3. What is meant by multiparty democracy?
 4. Why are elections necessary in a democracy?
 5. How do Nepalese people participate in the governance of their country?
 6. What elections take place in Nepal where the people cast their votes?
 7. How is a government formed in Nepal's parliamentary system?
-

Chapter – 2

Free and Fair Elections

8. What are free and fair elections?
 9. What are the criteria used to evaluate free and fair elections?
 10. How can we help in holding free and fair elections?
-

Chapter – 3

Voters and Voting Rights

11. What is voting for? Why vote?
 12. What are the rights and privileges of a voter?
 13. What duties must a voter fulfill?
 14. What are a voter's rights?
 15. Who is entitled to vote?
 16. What qualifications must a person fulfill in order to vote?
 17. What are the other duties of a qualified voter?
 18. What process is a voter required to follow while registering in the voter's list?
 19. How to get a voter's identity card?
-

Chapter – 4

Polling

20. How to find out the date set for polling day?
 21. Where should one go for polling?
 22. Can a voter vote in any polling station?
 23. How does a voter know which polling station is his or hers?
 24. How to cast vote in a polling station?
 25. What is an election symbol?
 26. What is a ballot?
 27. How to stamp a ballot?
 28. Is it illegal to carry the ballot outside the polling station without placing it into the ballot box?
 29. What is the method for a blind or incapable person to cast his or her vote?
 30. What are the conditions for a ballot to be invalid?
-

Chapter – 5

The Election Commission

31. What is the Election Commission?
 32. What are the functions of the Election Commission?
 33. What is a district election office?
 34. What are the functions performed by a district election office?
 35. How to get information about elections in those districts where district election offices are not opened?
-

Chapter – 1

Democracy

1. What is democracy?

Democracy is a system of governance by the people and for the people. It is impossible for all people to participate in governance, and to govern by themselves directly. Therefore, in order to run a government, people elect representatives.

It is impossible for all people to participate directly in governance. In order to run a country's government, people elect and send representatives to the government through elections.

In a democracy, the government is responsible to the people. The government has to work accordingly to the will and aspirations of the people and satisfy them. If the people's representatives fail to satisfy the people, the people have the right and the power to defeat them in the next general election. The people can choose to send another person as their representative, and remove previous leaders from power.

In a democracy, it is essential to have elections from time to time to make government responsible to the people.

In a democracy, people are sovereign; they themselves form their government. It is essential to have elections from time to time for the people to select their representatives.

2. What roles do citizens play in a democracy?

The primary role of a citizen in an election is to select a capable and honest representative. It is the duty of every citizen to take interest in what the government and people's representatives have been able to do or not do for them. No citizen can

A citizen must take interest in the activities of the government.

use his or her voting rights properly without being aware of the activities of the government. Every citizen must stay informed about the activities of their representatives. During elections, one has to cast vote only for those candidates who will work for the people and the country.

3. What is meant by multiparty democracy?

In a multiparty democracy system, there is representation by two or more parties. The people elect people's representatives. The political party that secures a majority is

In a multi-party democracy, different political parties put forward their policies and programs and try to win the hearts and votes of the people.

entitled to form a government. In Parliament, there exists a provision for an opposition party to watch and warn the activities of the government. A system having these characteristics is known as a multiparty system.

4. Why are elections necessary in a democracy?

Elections are the foundation of a democracy. In democracy it is the people's

A general election makes government responsive to the people.

responsibility to form and run a government by electing representatives. It is not possible for all the people to run the government by themselves directly. Under the constitution, elected representatives have the right to run the government. Elections are required to elect people's representatives to run the government. Elections provide an opportunity for the people to evaluate the activities of their representatives. Elections are required to be held in order keep representatives responsible to the people.

If there are no periodic and mandatory elections, people's representatives in the government will be arbitrary and irresponsible.

5. How do Nepalese people participate in the governance of their country?

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 has established parliamentary democracy in Nepal. According to the constitution, sovereignty is vested in the people. In other words, the people of Nepal (rich, poor, educated, uneducated, female, male, indigenous people and people of any race or religion) have equal rights to participate in the system of governance. A citizen may participate in Nepalese governance through the following activities:

- a. By voting to elect their representatives.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- b. By being a candidate in the election.
- c. By providing suggestions and help to the activities of the government.
- d. By commenting, criticizing, and peacefully demonstrating on any issue or activities of the government.

6. What elections take place in Nepal where the people cast their votes?

The following are the elections that take place in Nepal:

- a. Election for the House of Representatives.
- b. Election for the officials of Village Development Committee (VDC) and Municipalities.

The general election determines who will hold positions in the national government and the local elections determine the members of local bodies.

7. How is the government formed in Nepal's parliamentary system?

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 has established parliamentary democracy in Nepal. There are two houses in Parliament. The Upper House is called the National Assembly and the Lower House is called the House of Representatives.

There are a total of 205 members in the House of Representatives. Elections held to choose these representatives are called general elections. There is a provision made in the constitution for general elections to be held every five years. General elections are held earlier if the House of Representatives is dissolved for any reason. The political party that secures the majority forms the government. If none of the political parties have a clear majority, attempts are made to form a coalition government. If a coalition government is not formed, then the political party with the highest number of members will form a minority government.

The party that receives a majority in the House of Representatives forms the government.

Chapter – 2

Free and Fair Elections

8. What are free and fair elections?

Free and fair elections are the soul of democracy. It is essential for elections to be impartial, free, and fair, if the true will of the people is to be made known. For elections to be free and fair, voters must be able to vote without fear or threat.

Free and fair elections take place when people are allowed to select the candidates of their choice.

Counting of votes must be performed in a secure and impartial manner. Free and fair elections take place when people are allowed to select the candidates of their choice.

9. What are the criteria used to evaluate free and fair elections?

The following are the criteria to evaluate free and fair elections:

- a. Election laws must be applied equally to all political parties and candidates.
- b. All qualified citizens must get the same opportunity to register their names in the voters' list.
- c. All political parties and candidates must be able to campaign without fear or threat.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- d. All political parties must get an equal opportunity to campaign through government media.
- e. No efforts should be made to get any party or candidate elected through abuse of government resources.
- f. All voters must be free to go to the polling station and to vote secretly.
- g. Necessary information must be given to the voters about all the candidates.
- h. Polling and vote counting must be transparent.

The following questions help determine whether elections were held in a free and fair manner:

- Were all the voters able to cast their vote freely and without fear?
- Did all political parties and candidates get the opportunity to compete fairly for votes?
- Did the election officers perform their duties impartially?

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- i. Local and international monitors must get an opportunity to observe casting and counting of votes.
- j. The role of the government during elections must be impartial and co-operative.

10. How can you help in holding free and fair elections?

One can help in the following ways in holding free and fair election:

- a. By standing in line at the polling station on the polling day.
- b. By voting peacefully in one's assigned polling station.
- c. By informing the concerned officer when somebody tries to vote by impersonation.
- d. By informing the polling officer and security staff of any conspiracy to disturb the election.
- e. By offering whatever possible help one can to the election follow up team.
- f. By offering necessary help to the polling officer and security staff assigned for the purpose of elections.
- g. By resisting those trying to influence polling by force or with money.
- h. By not compelling the voters standing in line to vote or not to vote for any specific candidate.

To disturb an election is a crime. One who causes disturbances will be taken into legal proceedings.

Resist those trying to influence voting by force or with money.

Chapter – 3

Voters and Voting Rights

11. What is voting for? Why vote?

Vote casting is necessary for the following reasons:

- a. It is necessary to vote in democracy because participation by the citizen is the governance of the country.
- b. Voting is not only a right, but also a duty. Voting is not only a right but it is also a duty.
- c. We can select our representatives by vote casting.
- d. If we all cast votes, the right person we want can win the election. Participate in the election and cast vote.
- e. There is a possibility of another voter impersonating us if we do not cast our vote ourselves.
- f. We can make government responsible to us through elections.

12. What are the rights and privileges of a voter?

Voters have the following rights and privileges:

- a. Voters have the right to secret voting.

Voters have the right to secret voting.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- b. Voters have a right to vote in favor of a candidate of their choice.
- c. Voters have a right to vote freely in a peaceful environment.
- d. Voters have a right to be informed about the manifestos and programs of a candidate.

13. What duties must a voter fulfill?

Voters must fulfill the following duties:

- a. A voter should not sell his ballot by taking money from someone.

A voter should not sell his ballot by taking money from someone.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- b. A voter should not misuse his ballot.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- c. A voter should not cast his/her vote based on fear, threat, or temptations.
- d. A voter should not compel any other voter to cast vote in favor of any candidate or do so by fraud.
- e. A voter should not attempt to cast his vote more than one time in an election.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

14. What are a voter's rights?

Voting rights are the rights of each voter to cast a vote for a candidate of his/her choice.

15. Who is entitled to vote?

- a. A voter is a person who is entitled to cast a vote. In the context of an election, a voter means a person whose name is included in the final voters' list.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- b. In constituencies where identity cards are required, a voter must obtain an identity card and be listed in the final voters' list.

16. What qualifications must a person fulfill in order to vote?

The following qualifications are required of voters:

- a. Must be a Nepali citizen.
- b. A person having completed eighteen years of age by the end of the month of Chaitra (March), when voters' names are collected for registration in the voters' list.

To be a voter one must be minimum of eighteen years of age and a Nepali citizen.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- c. A person having permanent residence in the concerned election constituency.
- d. He must not be mentally disturbed.
- e. A person who has been sentenced to imprisonment for one year or more is not eligible to vote until one year after the end of the term of sentence.

17. What are the other duties of a qualified voter?

A person having completed the above qualifications must register his/her name in the voters' list. S/he has to obtain an identity card in an election constituency where an identity card is required.

A voter must have his/her name registered in the voters' list.

18. What process is a voter required to follow while registering his/her name in the voters' list?

One has to contact the Village Development Committee (VDC) or ward office of the municipality to register one's name in the voters' list within the month of Baishak (April-May) every year.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

19. How to get a voter's identity card?

One has to contact the concerned team assigned to take photographs in one's constituency and they must take a photograph. After that, one has to obtain his/her identity card by contacting the team assigned to the distribution of identity cards.

In election constituencies where identity cards are required, only voters with identity cards are entitled to vote.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

Chapter – 4

Polling

20. How to find out the date set for polling day?

To find out the polling date one must ask the officers assigned to elections or by visiting district election offices. Radio, television, newspapers, and pamphlets are also sources that publish the date of voting. Likewise, one can contact local bodies,

officers or staff, political party workers and candidates, social workers, intellectuals, and teachers to find out the date of Election Day.

(three illustration appears here in the original booklet)

21. Where should one go for polling?

One has to go for voting to the polling station where his/her name is registered in the voters' list on Election Day during the polling hours.

22. Can a voter vote at any polling station?

There is no right to cast vote in any polling station. One has to go for polling only to the polling station where his/her name is registered in the voters' list.

23. How does a voter know which polling station is his or hers?

One can find out about one's polling station by asking the officers assigned to elections or the workers of political parties, social workers, women activists, teachers, intellectuals, village development committee's officers and other officials.

24. How to cast vote in a polling station?

Following are the steps to be followed for a voter to cast vote in a polling station:

- a. One has to reach the polling station during the time fixed for polling.
- b. In a constituency where identity cards are required, a person has to carry his/her identity card.
- c. It is advisable to carry citizenship certificate or any other paper for identity in areas where identity cards are not required.
- d. When going to the polling station, one must stand in line with fellow voters in the ward.
- e. One has to show his/her identity card if identity cards are required in that election constituency. In some constituencies, voters are restricted from voting without an identity card.
- f. A voter has to check carefully whether or not the signature of the polling officer appears at the bottom of a ballot s/he has received for voting. If it does not appear, the voter has to ask the officer for his signature.
- g. After entering the polling station, one has to mark the box of the election symbol of the candidates s/he has chosen. S/he has to drop the ballot into the ballot box after folding it.

One has to produce his/her identity card if identity cards are required in that election constituency. In certain constituencies, voters are restricted from voting without an identity card.

One has to stamp "swastik" symbol in a ballot. One should not use a thumbprint.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

25. What is an election symbol?

An election symbol is a symbol on the ballot that identifies a political party or a candidate in the election.

26. What is a ballot?

A ballot is a special type of paper given to a voter for voting in a polling station. The election symbols of the candidates are printed on the ballot.

27. How to stamp a ballot?

One has to stamp the symbol of "swastik" on a ballot. One should not use a thumbprint.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

28. Is it legal to carry the ballot outside the polling station without casting it into the ballot box?

One has to drop the ballot into a ballot box. One is not allowed to carry the ballot outside the polling station.

29. What is the method for a blind or incapable person to cast his or her vote?

A person who is blind or incapable to vote by oneself can cast his/her vote with the cooperation of an election officer.

30. What are the conditions under which a ballot will be declared invalid?

A ballot is declared invalid on the following grounds:

- a. If it does not contain the signature of the concerned election officer.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- b. If it does not have the "swastik" symbol as required, or it contains any other sign.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- c. If the "swastik" symbol is not stamped clearly.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- d. If the ballot is marked in places other than in the box for election symbol of the candidates.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- e. If the ballot is returned to the voting officer.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- f. If the mark is not clear to signify definitely to which candidate the mark has been given.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- g. If the mark is placed in more than one box.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

- h. If a ballot from one polling station is dropped in a different polling station.
i. If it is a fake ballot.
j. If money, paper or other things are attached to the ballot.

(illustration appears here in the original booklet)

Chapter – 5

Election Commission

31. What is the Election Commission?

The Election Commission is the body that conducts elections for Parliament and local bodies. It is an independent body. A provision is made in the constitution for the Election Commission.

32. What are the functions of the Election Commission?

The main functions of the Election Commission are as follows:

- a. To hold elections for Parliament and local institutions.
- b. To prepare the voters' list.
- c. To arrange for the distribution of voters' identity card.
- d. To register political parties for the purpose of election.
- e. To make rules, regulations, and directives required for holding fair elections.
- f. To provide training and conduct awareness programs in matters related to elections.

33. What is a District Election Office?

District level offices have been established to support the Election Commission in matters related to the performance of elections.

34. What are the functions performed by a District Election Office?

The functions of the district election office are as follows:

- a. Extends co-operation to the Election Commission in its functions to perform elections.
- b. Provides such services as preparing the list of voters and keeping them up-to-date.
- c. Represents the Election Commission at the district level office.

35. How to get information about the elections in those districts where District Election Offices are not yet opened?

In those districts where district level election offices are not opened, election departments in District Administrative Offices shall provide information about the elections.

(this appears on the back page of the original booklet.)

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