

National Pride Projects in Nepal: Sectoral Priorities and Implementation Gaps

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Abstract

In Nepal, National Pride Projects (NPPs) are big, long-term plans that are meant to speed up economic growth, improve infrastructure, make sure energy security, and boost the country's reputation. Even if they are important, there are still worries about how unevenly they are distributed and how slowly they are being put into action. This study examines the sectoral distribution, implementation status, and temporal trends of 27 National Pride Projects in Nepal, employing a descriptive and analytical research design grounded in secondary data. The results show that most of the projects (48.1%) are in the infrastructure sector. This shows that the policy is focused on physical connectivity and economic integration. Energy and agriculture sectors each make up 14.8% of the projects. This shows that there is moderate interest in energy self-sufficiency and food security. On the other hand, there are less projects in the areas of water supply, cultural heritage, and environmental conservation. Most of the projects (70.4%) are still going on, while only 18.5% are finished. This shows a big implementation gap. Cross-tabulation research shows that delays are more common in the agriculture and infrastructure sectors, while energy projects tend to have higher completion rates. The historical analysis reveals a concentration of project initiation at particular intervals, notably in 2068 and 2072 B.S., indicating focused policy impetus but also hinting at possible overextension of administrative and technical resources. The study emphasizes a developmental strategy predominantly dependent on extensive infrastructure, while exposing systemic difficulties associated with project implementation, coordination, and resource allocation. The report indicates that while National Pride Projects embody Nepal's ambitious development vision, enhancing implementation efficiency, balancing sectoral objectives, and bolstering institutional capacity are crucial for ensuring their timely completion and enduring impact.

Keywords: national pride projects (NPPs), infrastructure development, implementation gap

Introduction

In Nepal, National Pride Projects (NPPs) are a group of large-scale development projects that have been carefully chosen and prioritized to change the country's economy, society, and infrastructure. These projects are meant to be important steps toward reaching long-term national goals like economic growth, regional integration, energy independence, food security, and the preservation of cultural heritage. The Government of Nepal has tried to speed up the country's transition to a developing and eventually middle-income economy by focusing on high-impact industries like hydropower, transportation infrastructure, agriculture, water supply, and tourism. Over the past few decades, Nepal has increasingly used megaprojects as a development strategy to get around problems including being geographically isolated, having bad infrastructure, and not having enough industrial capacity. According to National Planning

Commission (2024), 27 national pride projects are running to develop different sectors. The Upper Tamakoshi Hydroelectric Project, the Kathmandu-Terai Fast Track, and significant irrigation systems are all examples of how the government is using natural resources and upgrading transportation to boost economic activity. These programs are meant to do more than just boost productivity and cut down on reliance on imports. They should also create jobs and reinforce national identity by showing off development successes. But even though they are strategically important, National Pride Projects have been plagued by delays, cost overruns, and problems with coordination. A lot of projects are still not finished or are moving slowly, which makes people worry about the effectiveness of government, the ability of institutions, and the management of resources. The concentration of projects in some areas, especially infrastructure, also makes people wonder about the balance of development priorities,

This study critically evaluates the strategic importance and sectoral distribution of Nepal's National Pride Projects while investigating the systemic implementation gaps that hinder their role as catalysts for national economic transformation.

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especially when it comes to social and environmental sustainability. Also, the timing of when projects start shows a pattern of clustering inside certain time frames. This suggests that political will and policy impetus have not always been matched by readiness for implementation. This has frequently led to a "implementation gap," characterized by the initiation of initiatives with elevated expectations that encounter challenges in execution owing to administrative, technical, and budgetary limitations. In this setting, a comprehensive examination of National Pride Projects is necessary to comprehend their distribution across sectors, their implementation status, and the fundamental elements affecting their advancement. The goal of this study is to look at the sectoral allocation, evaluate the stages of project development, and look at how project initiation has changed over time. It aims to shed light on Nepal's development priorities and the main problems that need to be solved in order to make sure that these important national programs are carried out successfully. This study critically evaluates the strategic importance and sectoral distribution of Nepal's National Pride Projects while investigating the systemic implementation gaps that hinder their role as catalysts for national economic transformation."

Statement of the problem

In Nepal, National Pride Projects (NPPs) are big, long-term plans to boost the economy, improve infrastructure, make sure energy security, and boost the country's reputation. Even though there is a strong policy commitment and a lot of money has been put into these projects, they have not made steady progress. A large number of projects are still in the "ongoing" phase, and just a small number have been finished. This makes people worry about how well the plan will work, how much the institution can handle, and how well resources will be used. Also, the fact that most of the projects are in the energy and infrastructure sectors could mean that development goals are out of balance, with less focus on things like protecting the environment, preserving culture, and managing water resources. Also, the fact that many projects start within a few years could mean that administrative and technological systems are overloaded,

which could cause delays and problems with coordination. These concerns underscore an imperative to carefully evaluate the allocation, advancement, and scheduling of National Pride Projects to comprehend the fundamental structural and governance challenges.

Review of literature

Large-scale national development projects are frequently legitimized by classical and contemporary development theories that highlight the significance of strategic investments in surmounting structural economic limitations. Paul Rosenstein-Rodan's "Big Push Theory" (1943) says that coordinated and large investments in important areas are needed to kickstart industrialization and economic progress. Albert O. Hirschman (1958) also came up with the idea of imbalanced growth, which says that investing in priority areas like infrastructure and energy can have spillover effects and speed up development in other areas. These theoretical frameworks offer a robust basis for comprehending Nepal's focus on National Pride Projects (NPPs). Evidence from the real world shows that infrastructure is very important for changing the economy. The World Bank (2019) says that building better roads, energy, and water systems in poor nations greatly increases productivity, lowers trade costs, and makes it easier for businesses to get into new markets. The Asian Development Bank (2020) says that poor infrastructure is a big problem for long-term economic growth in Nepal. This is why large-scale public investments should be a top priority. Mega projects are often linked to problems with implementation, even if they are very important. Bent Flyvbjerg (2014) says that big infrastructure projects generally go over budget, take longer than planned, and don't deliver as many benefits as expected because of optimism bias and poor governance. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016) agrees and says that good governance, openness, and institutional capacity are all important for a project to be successful.

Numerous studies in Nepal have recorded ongoing inefficiencies in the execution of public projects. The National Planning Commission Nepal (2018, 2021) says that many key projects

are behind schedule because of problems with land acquisition, red tape, coordination between agencies, and a lack of technical expertise. The Ministry of Finance Nepal (2022) also says that even though capital spending has gone up over time, the number of projects that are finished is still low, which shows that public investment management isn't working well. Academic studies focused on Nepal corroborate these findings. Bhattarai (2019) contends that inadequate institutional coordination and political instability have substantially impeded the completion of infrastructure projects in Nepal. Shrestha and Adhikari (2020) also found that regulatory bottlenecks, lack of funding, and problems with following environmental rules are the main reasons why hydropower projects take so long. These issues correspond with global insights on megaproject management, however they tend to be more evident in the situations of underdeveloped countries. Another common topic in the literature is sectoral imbalance. Investments in the energy and infrastructure industries are large, but the environmental and social sectors are often not given enough attention. The United Nations Development Programme (2019) says that sustainable development needs a more balanced strategy that combines protecting the environment with growing the economy. The International Energy Agency (2020) also says that Nepal has a lot of potential for hydropower, but delays in projects make it harder for the country to achieve energy security and export capability. Governance literature has also talked about how time affects the start of a project. Researchers observe that political cycles frequently affect the timing of large-scale project announcements, resulting in the concentration of project initiations within brief intervals (Flyvbjerg, 2014). This can put too much strain on institutions and slow down the process of putting things into action. These kinds of things happen in Nepal, where a lot of NPPs were started in a short amount of time, which caused delays and inefficiencies. Overall, the literature reveals that National Pride Projects are important for changing the economy, but they only succeed if there are strong institutional frameworks, balanced sectoral investment, and

efficient ways to put them into action. Existing studies on Nepal show a clear disparity between the goals of policies and the ability to carry them out. This means that a comprehensive analysis of how projects are distributed and how well they are being carried out is needed. "This section bridges classical development theories, such as the Big Push and Unbalanced Growth, with empirical evidence from global and domestic institutions to contextualize the systemic implementation gap in Nepal's mega-project management.

Research question

Examining the literature, the researcher has kept following question in mind.

- What is the sector-wise allocation of national pride projects in Nepal ?
- How are national wide project being implemented?
- What is the relations of project sectors and their progress status?
- What is the temporal trends in the initiation of National Pride Projects?
- What are the key implementation gaps and development priorities reflected in project distribution?

Objectives of the study

General objective

To analyze the sectoral distribution, implementation status, and temporal trends of National Pride Projects in Nepal.

Specific objectives

- To examine the sector-wise allocation of National Pride Projects in Nepal.
- To assess the implementation status (planning, ongoing, completed) of these projects.
- To analyze the relationship between project sectors and their progress status.
- To explore temporal trends in the initiation of National Pride Projects.
- To identify key implementation gaps and development priorities reflected in project distribution.

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Methodology

Research design

This research utilizes a descriptive and analytical framework to objectively assess the landscape of Nepal's 27 National Pride Projects. The research employs secondary data derived from official government publications and project records, utilizing descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and cumulative percentage to carefully examine sectoral distribution, implementation status, and annual initiation patterns. Additionally, a cross-tabulation study is conducted to investigate the precise correlation between the development area and the present status of project implementation. This analytical method makes it easier to compare sectors to find national priorities and show important implementation gaps and patterns of when things start. The study intends to evaluate these quantitative patterns by focusing on the core sectors of infrastructure, energy, agriculture, water, environment, and culture. This will help us better understand the governance and capacity difficulties that come with managing Nepal's mega-projects.

Results

Sector covered by national pride project

1. Projects for energy and hydropower

These projects aim to use Nepal's water resources to make the country energy-independent and help industry thrive. They are very important for Nepal's move to a middle-income country since they provide reliable power for industries and cut down on the need to import energy. The Upper Tamakoshi Hydroelectricity Project (completed) produces 456 MW to help people become energy self-sufficient. The Budhigandaki Hydropower Project is now under construction and will produce 1200 MW to help industries thrive. The West Seti Hydroelectricity Project is in the planning stage and is meant to produce 750 MW and help the Sudurpashchim province grow.

2. Infrastructure for transportation and connectivity

This group comprises international airports and key highway corridors that are meant to make it easier for people to get around in the region

and around the world. These projects are meant to connect the Nepali economy to global markets, make trading easier by keeping supply chains running smoothly, and bring more tourists to the country. International Airports: Gautam Buddha and Pokhara International Airports want to make it easier for people to travel and do business across borders. Highways and Corridors: The Kathmandu-Tarai Fast Track, Postal Highway, and many corridors (Karnali, Koshi, and Kaligandaki) all work to make travel faster and easier on different types of terrain.

3. Projects for irrigation and farming

These projects are all about making farming more productive by making better use of water. They are important for making sure that people have enough food and for helping the economy in rural areas by making sure that agricultural areas like the Terai get enough water. The Sikta, Babai, and Rani Jamara Kulariya Irrigation Projects are meant to improve the infrastructure for irrigation and the amount of food that can be grown. The Mahakali Irrigation Project helps the far-western region stay food secure by giving them the tools they need.

4. Water supply and protecting the environment

These projects deal with important issues including lack of resources and environmental sustainability. They meet fundamental human needs and keep the country's biodiversity safe, which is important for long-term ecological balance and being able to deal with climate change. The Melamchi Water Supply Project aims to solve the long-term problem of water shortages in the Kathmandu Valley. The President Chure-Tarai Madhesh Conservation Program's main goal was to safeguard the ecosystem and the many different kinds of plants and animals that live in the Chure area.

5. Sports facilities and cultural heritage

The main goals of these programs are to protect Nepal's history and make it more well-known in world sports. They boost "national prestige" and bring in tourists for sports and religious events. The Pashupati Area Development Trust and the Lumbini Development Trust want to protect cultural assets and encourage religious tourism. Cricket

A categorization of National Pride Projects highlighting their multi-sectoral focus on infrastructure, energy, and social development as strategic pillars for Nepal's modernization and national prestige.

Stadiums: The Mulpani, Girija Prasad Koirala, and Gautam Buddha International Cricket Stadiums are all examples of projects that are trying to build modern sporting facilities. "A categorization of National Pride Projects highlighting their multi-sectoral focus on infrastructure, energy, and social development as strategic pillars for Nepal's modernization and national prestige."

Table 1.1 Sectors where maximum mega project lunch

	Frequency	Percent
Agriculture	4	14.8
Culture	2	7.4
Energy	4	14.8
Environment	1	3.7
Infrastructure	13	48.1
Water	3	11.1
Total	27	100.0

Author (2025)

The way the government has planned and distributed National Pride Projects (NPPs) in Nepal shows that they see large-scale physical connectivity and energy infrastructure as the main drivers of national growth. The Infrastructure sector has the most "mega projects," with 13 of them making up 48.1% of the entire project portfolio. This focus on building international airports, major highway corridors, and fast tracks to connect the domestic economy and boost regional trade shows a state-led approach to growth. The government wants to lower logistical costs and connect the high-potential rural areas with the metropolitan economic hubs by building these transportation networks. After infrastructure, the Agriculture and Energy sectors each make up 14.8% of the projects. This shows a dual focus on food security and energy independence. The four main agricultural projects are based on transformative irrigation plans that aim to modernize farming in the Terai and mid-hill areas. The energy projects, on the other hand, focus on using Nepal's huge hydroelectric potential to make the country self-sufficient and help industry grow. Water Supply (11.1%), Cultural Heritage (7.4%), and Environmental Conservation (3.7%) are some of the most important areas, however they

get far less money for projects. The cumulative data shows that physical infrastructure gets almost as much investment and political attention as all other sectors combined. This shows that the government is betting on "brick-and-mortar" development as the fastest way to reach middle-income status. "Strategic prioritization of physical infrastructure and energy as the dual engines of Nepal's economic transformation."

Table 1.2 The progress of project work

	Frequency	Percent
Planning Phase	3	11.1
On going	19	70.4
Completed	5	18.5
Total	27	100.0

Author(2025)

The implementation status of the National Pride Projects (NPPs) shows that most of the projects are still in the execution phase, and only a small number have been finished. The data shows that a large majority of the projects, 70.4% (n=19), are now listed as "Ongoing." This shows that a lot of work is being done in many strategic areas, but it also highlights the "implementation gap," which is a problem that regularly comes up in discussions about national development. On the other hand, only 18.5% of the 27 projects have been finished (n=5). This shows how hard it is to get high-priority investments from construction to operational state.

Additionally, 11.1% (n=3) of the portfolio is still in the "Planning Phase," which means that almost 10% of the most important projects in the country have not yet started to be built. This statistical distribution indicates a developmental landscape characterized by "active but stalled" progress; although the government has effectively mobilized numerous mega-projects, the administrative and technical capacity to finalize these initiatives continues to pose a substantial challenge. So, the high number of ongoing projects is a quantitative sign of the operational delays and governance problems that are still getting in the way of Nepal's infrastructure aspirations.

Strategic prioritization of physical infrastructure and energy as the dual engines of Nepal's economic transformation.

A statistical overview of the project lifecycle, highlighting the 'implementation gap' where over 70% of initiatives remain ongoing compared to a low completion rate.

Comparative analysis of sectoral performance, highlighting Infrastructure’s dominance in active projects versus Energy’s higher relative completion rate.

"A statistical overview of the project lifecycle, highlighting the 'implementation gap' where over 70% of initiatives remain ongoing compared to a low completion rate."

Table 1. 3 Status development on different sectors

Status of development * Area of development Crosstabulation								
		Area of development						Total
		Agriculture	Culture	Energy	Environment	Infrastructure	Water	
Status of development	Planning Phase	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
	On going	4	2	1	1	9	2	19
	Completed	0	0	2	0	2	1	5
Total		4	2	4	1	13	3	27

Author (2025)

Temporal analysis reveals that over 40% of National Pride Projects were clustered within just two peak years (2068 and 2072 B.S.), creating an administrative bottleneck that outpaced Nepal’s institutional execution capacity.

The crosstabulation of project status against the specific areas of development provides a nuanced view of sectoral progress, revealing that the "ongoing" nature of Nepal’s National Pride Projects is most concentrated within the infrastructure and agricultural sectors. Almost half (9 out of 19) of the projects that are presently being worked on are in the Infrastructure sector. The next most common industry is Agriculture (4 out of 19). This means that these industries have moved from idea to building, but they also contain the most projects that could be delayed. On the other hand, the Energy sector has a more balanced lifespan distribution. It has the highest success rate for finality, with two projects finished, one still going on, and one still in the planning stage. The data also shows substantial holes in the progress of several areas of growth. For example, there are no finished projects in the Environment and Culture sectors; all of the projects are still in the "ongoing" stage. The Planning Phase is just for the Infrastructure (n=2) and Energy (n=1) sectors. This shows that the national pipeline for new mega-projects still favors physical and electric utilities above social or environmental areas. In general, the crosstabulation shows that Infrastructure is the most ambitious sector in terms of scale. However, the Energy and Water sectors have shown a higher tendency to reach completion, while the agricultural and environmental portfolios are still heavily locked in the implementation stage without any recent finalization. "Comparative analysis of sectoral performance, highlighting Infrastructure’s dominance in active projects versus Energy’s higher relative completion rate."

Table 1. 4 Years of project initiation and lunch

	Frequency	Percent
2057.00	2	7.4
2058.00	1	3.7
2062.00	1	3.7
2064.00	2	7.4
2066.00	1	3.7
2067.00	2	7.4
2068.00	5	18.5
2069.00	2	7.4
2070.00	2	7.4
2071.00	1	3.7
2072.00	6	22.2
2073.00	1	3.7
2074.00	1	3.7
Total	27	100.0

Author (2025)

The year each of the 27 National Pride Projects (NPPs) started shows a non-linear and very concentrated pattern of policy-driven project designation. As seen in the table, the years 2068 B.S. and 2072 B.S. were the two best years for starting new projects, with five (18.5%) and six (22.2%) projects starting in those years. These two years alone made up more than 40% of the whole NPP portfolio, showing that there were some times in history when the will to improve infrastructure grew much stronger. By the end of 2068 B.S., the total percentage had already gone over the midway point (51.9%), and by 2072 B.S., it had reached 92.6 percent. This means that most of the National Pride Projects were planned and officially started in a short five-year period. Outside of this busy time, projects started up only occasionally and in small numbers. For example, only two projects were started in 2057 B.S., 2064 B.S., 2067 B.S., 2069 B.S., and 2070 B.S. Other

years, such 2058, 2062, 2066, 2071, 2073, and 2074 B.S., only had one project apiece, which was only 3.7 percent of the total. Importantly, the statistics shows that no new National Pride Projects started after 2074 B.S. This distribution pattern has significant consequences for comprehending delays in implementation. The fact that several projects were launched in a short amount of time probably put too much stress on Nepal's institutions, technology, and finances all at once. This years showed that policies were stable, they also showed that Nepal's public sector project management system couldn't handle and carry out caused resources to be spread out, made it harder for agencies to work together, and made oversight weaker. In other words, the same concentration that showed political enthusiasm also caused the "implementation gap" that was seen in most industries. This was because several big initiatives were competing for the same limited bureaucratic attention, skilled workers, and budgetary allocations at the same time. So, even if the peak initiation a lot of high-stakes infrastructure projects at the same time. "Temporal analysis reveals that over 40% of National Pride Projects were clustered within just two peak years (2068 and 2072 B.S.), creating an administrative bottleneck that outpaced Nepal's institutional execution capacity."

Discussion

The results of this study give us valuable information on how Nepal plans to grow, as shown by the design and execution of National Pride Projects (NPPs). Infrastructure projects make up almost half (48.1%) of the total portfolio, which shows that the government is leading development and putting a lot of emphasis on physical connectivity as a way to boost economic growth. This is in line with classical development theories like the "Big Push" model by Paul Rosenstein-Rodan (1943) and the uneven growth strategy by Albert O. Hirschman (1958). Both of these ideas say that investing heavily in certain areas can lead to bigger changes in the economy. In Nepal, investments in highways, airports, and corridors are anticipated to diminish transaction costs, improve market integration, and mitigate regional inequities. But the report also shows that there is a big gap in implementation, with only 18.5% of projects finished and 70.4% still continuing on. This finding aligns with international evidence about megaproject performance, notably the research

of Bent Flyvbjerg (2014), which emphasizes the common occurrence of delays and budget overruns in massive infrastructure initiatives. In Nepal, the enormous number of projects that are still continuing on implies that not only is development happening, but also that there are systemic problems with how projects are carried out. The National Planning Commission Nepal and the Ministry of Finance Nepal have both said that bureaucratic delays, insufficient coordination between agencies, problems with buying land, and a lack of technical skills are likely to blame for this pattern. The sectoral analysis shows that development priorities are not balanced. Infrastructure, energy, and agriculture get a lot of attention, but areas like the environment (3.7%) and cultural heritage (7.4%) don't get as much. This uneven distribution makes people worry about how long Nepal's development model will last and how open it is to everyone. The United Nations Development Programme (2019) says that for development to last, it needs a balanced mix of economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being. The narrow emphasis on environmental and cultural sectors in NPPs may thus hinder overarching sustainable development objectives.

The cross-tabulation results give more depth to the analysis by showing how implementation works in different sectors. Infrastructure and agriculture projects make up most of the "ongoing" category. This means that these sectors not only get the most money, but they also have the most trouble putting their plans into action. On the other hand, the energy sector does better overall, with a higher percentage of projects that have been finished. This could be because there are clearer rules, better ways to get money, and more experience in building hydropower plants. The lack of finished initiatives in the culture and environment sectors, on the other hand, shows that institutions aren't paying enough attention to them and may not be giving them enough importance.

Another important discovery is that many initiatives started around the same time, especially in the years 2068 and 2072 B.S., which together make for more than 40% of all projects. This pattern indicates that political dedication to growth was significantly concentrated at particular intervals. But this kind of clustering may have pushed administrative and technological resources too far,

Bridging the implementation gap: A critical analysis of the tension between Nepal's ambitious developmental policy and its systemic institutional execution capacity.

causing delays and inefficiencies. As mentioned in the research on megaproject governance, quickly adding new projects to a portfolio without also increasing implementation capability can lead to challenges with coordination and resource fragmentation (Flyvbjerg, 2014). The situation in Nepal is similar, where ambitious policy choices were not fully supported by institutions that were ready.

In general, the conversation shows a big problem with Nepal's National Pride Projects: there is a big difference between desire and execution. The strategic focus on infrastructure and energy is in line with known development theories and global practices. However, the ongoing implementation gap and sectoral imbalance show that there are problems with governance and capability. To deal with these problems, we need to make institutional frameworks stronger, improve project management techniques, make sure that stakeholders work together better, and take a more balanced approach to sectoral investment. In conclusion, the findings indicate that National Pride Projects possess substantial potential to catalyze Nepal's economic development; nevertheless, their efficacy is contingent upon the nation's capacity to progress from project start to timely and efficient completion. If the structural problems found in this study aren't fixed, the initiatives may not have a big impact on development, even though a lot of money and attention has been put into them. Bridging the implementation gap: A critical analysis of the tension between Nepal's ambitious developmental policy and its systemic institutional execution capacity."

Conclusion

This study looked at how National Pride Projects (NPPs) in Nepal are spread out throughout different sectors, how well they are being carried out, and how they are changing over time. The results show that Nepal's development strategy is mostly focused on expansion through infrastructure, with about half of the projects in the infrastructure sector, followed by energy and agriculture. This shows that the policy focuses on improving physical connections, energy independence, and economic integration. The survey also finds a big discrepancy in how well things are being put into action. Most projects are still in the "ongoing" phase, and just a small number have been finished. This means that even when starting a project has been easy, finishing it and carrying it out are still big problems. There

are also differences between sectors, with not much attention paid to protecting the environment and preserving cultural assets. Also, the fact that a lot of projects started at the same time shows that political zeal hasn't been backed up by enough institutional and technical competence, which has caused delays and inefficiencies. In conclusion, the study finds that National Pride Projects are an ambitious and important development strategy, but they are not very effective because of problems with governance, limited capacity, and unbalanced sectoral objectives.

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