



## National Cadet Corps Training: A National Security Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*The National Cadet Corps of Nepal has been linked with national security and the development of youth. Under its motto of **Discipline is the foundation of national service**, the organization functions under the Government of Nepal as well as the Nepali Army, encouraging youth to be more responsible, patriotic citizens. This article analyzes NCC training from a security point of view, illustrating how it not only provides young people with leadership and discipline but also prepares them for the defense of the country when required. To do so, the article relies on primary sources obtained through interviews conducted with instructors and officers of the Nepali Army, and secondary research looking into the subject of NCC's role. Overall, the study demonstrates that NCC is not just a routine drill work; it increases national security consciousness, fosters solidarity, and acquaints youths with the importance of serving the country. Situating these activities in the broader context of national security and protection of citizens, institutions, and sovereignty from within and without, the study highlights the manner in which cadets are being shaped into future guardians of Nepal. NCC, therefore, proves not just a volunteering system, but also a training ground for young people bearing a sound sense of responsibility towards the country.*

### Introduction

A cadet is a student or trainee within various organizations, primarily in military contexts, where individuals undergo training to become commissioned officers. Based on the principle that today's youth are tomorrow's leaders, most countries implement youth development programs that focus on discipline and national service. The idea of giving students military training originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to instill patriotism, discipline, courage, and sacrifice, and to attract young people to military service. Its main objectives were to produce disciplined and hardworking citizens, to train potential recruits for the armed forces, and to cultivate citizens capable of defending the homeland in case of emergency (Karki, 2017).

Although the concept of National Cadet Corps (NCC) is believed to have originated in 1666, its documented history dates back to 1856 and is associated with the Battle of Algiers. After the war, the orphaned sons of British sailors were placed in orphanages, which later formed the Naval Youth Brigade. During World War II, the organization trained young men in telegraphy and signals for the British Navy. The idea of engaging and training young men for military service quickly spread to other countries under the name Youth Corps, eventually evolving globally into the NCC (Kangari, 2020).

### **Establishment of the National Cadet Corps in Nepal**

In line with this global understanding, and to make Nepal's youth disciplined, patriotic, and responsible toward the nation, the Cabinet of His Majesty's Government decided on 2022/06/11 B.S. to establish the NCC in Nepal. A three-member committee was formed under the chairmanship of Deputy Defense Secretary Shri Kshetravikram Rana, with Education Secretary Mr. Shyam Krishna Bhattarai as a member and Deputy Defence Secretary Mr. Gambhirdhwaj Gurung as Member Secretary and Acting Director, to formulate necessary policies and programs until the NCC Act was prepared. (Rastriye Sewa Dak ko Patra Sankhya, 1966). Following these objectives, the Committee held its first meeting on 2022/06/27 B.S. and recommended renaming the organization as the National Student Soldier Service Corps (NSSC). It proposed establishing both a training and an administration branch, enrolling 500 cadets annually (465 males and 35 females) through the Ministry of Education, and obtaining the training syllabus from the Royal Nepalese Army Headquarters.

After discussions, the Council of Ministers on 2022/07/07 B.S. approved the committee's proposal, officially naming the organization the National Cadet Corps (Rastriya Sewa Dal). The final approval was granted by King Mahendra, and the Corps was formally established on 2022/07/22 B.S.

Initially, the training duration was set at three years (2022 B.S.), later revised to two years (2023 B.S.), and finally to one year (2024 B.S.). The curriculum included diverse activities such as drill, physical training, swimming, boxing, horse riding, weapons training, first aid, map reading, hiking, and social and annual camps.

Thus, the NCC was established as a structured youth program aimed at preparing disciplined, capable, and patriotic citizens capable of contributing to the defense and development of the nation. Guided by the principle that "*discipline is the foundation of national service*", the NCC works to bridge the gap between the military and civilian sectors, focusing on developing youth who are mentally, morally, and physically prepared to serve their country. The National Service Corps program run by the Nepali Army is a major government program designed to inculcate discipline, patriotism, and national consciousness in students; the key purpose of the training is to develop their leadership skills, confidence, and a sense of national responsibility (Dal, 2055). Although the NCC plays a vital role in national security, disaster response, and nation-building in Nepal, public awareness about its actual mandate and contributions remains limited. Many Nepali citizens mistakenly perceive NCC as a unit working directly under the Nepali Army, which does not fully reflect its independent role in developing disciplined, patriotic, and socially responsible youth. This lack of understanding

has led to the under-recognition of NCC's contribution to national development. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to raise awareness about the role of NCC and to highlight how NCC-trained cadets contribute meaningfully to strengthening the nation, especially during times of need.

### **Literature Review**

"National security then is the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to preserve its nature, institution, and governance from disruption from outside; and to control its borders." (Brown, 1983). In other words, national security, or national defense, is the security and defense of a sovereign state, including its citizens, economy, and institutions, which is regarded as a duty of government. National security management is essential for safeguarding a country's security, stability, and resilience against both internal and external threats.

Recently, there has been growing interest in the role of youth in reinforcing national security management, particularly their potential to contribute to security initiatives, technological advancements, and policy-making (MINDEF, 2020). Globally, the engagement of youth in national defense has been studied in various contexts. Research in Western nations emphasizes the role of youth in cyber defense, military service, and crisis response. In Southeast Asia, studies focus on youth-led security awareness programs, disaster response training, and participation in paramilitary organizations (Sulaiman, 2022). However, there is limited research on how Nepalese youth specifically contribute to national security and the strategic policies that support their involvement.

In light of the above, the NCC focuses on holistic development, fostering character, leadership, sportsmanship, and the ideals of patriotic service. Although it is a national program of the country, it is completely handled and executed under the Nepali Army senior-level management. The program consists of two types of training for the senior and junior divisions. The main objective of these trainings is to create disciplined, loyal, and devoted youths by enhancing their physical and mental capacity. The junior division is for students from grades eight to ten, whereas the senior division takes students from +2 levels. A specific theoretical and practical 100-day syllabus guides the training. Similarly, 79 days of training are performed at respective schools, whereas the remaining 21 days of cadets have a residential camp at a Nepali Army barracks. No money is charged to the students during the programs. Similarly, participants are provided with nutritious food and drinks, along with complete sets of different prestigious uniforms.

During the training period, cadets are trained in different activities such as P.T., drill, aerobics, gun firing (by SLR) and its maintenance, wall-climbing, horse riding, swimming, public speaking, sand-model briefing, cultural programs, sports activities, and many more (gun firing, wall-climbing, and horse riding are only for the Senior. The Army conducts NCC not to enroll cadets into the Army in the future but to transform them into capable, physically robust, responsible, and empathetic citizens who have leadership capabilities. The best performer among the cadets gets an exposure opportunity to visit SAARC countries and Singapore under the youth exchange program and interact with their high-level delegates. So, all in all, the NCC

program is a comprehensive package for "young minds because youth are not only the future of their families but also the future of the nation" (Panta, 2023).

Cadets are made aware of the vital role they play in ensuring national security. Through their commitment to discipline, leadership, and service, they strive to uphold the values and principles that form the bedrock of our nation's defense. (Mishra, 2024) The youth of the nation are the backbone and the most powerful force within the nation. By ensuring diversity in its selection, the NCC embodies the image of diversity, coexistence, and national integration, and also brings out the feeling of nationalism. NCC provides a platform for youth to develop their personality and imbibe in them the importance of discipline in life. Overall, the NCC provides extensive training and knowledge in all relevant fields and is often considered to be the second line of defense (Kumar, 2023).

Regarding the selection of cadets for the NCC, Major A. Rana (interviewee) explained that schools located near the India–China border are given higher priority in NCC training due to their strategic importance, to foster patriotism, national identity, and a strong sense of civic responsibility among cadets. He emphasized that the NCC-trained graduates serve as an important human resource during times of tension, acting as a bridge between the strategic reserve, regular soldiers, and civilian society. In emergency or wartime situations, NCC cadets can be mobilized to support frontline operations by assisting in first aid, logistics, distribution of food and clothing, evacuation support, and communication tasks, either as trained volunteers or auxiliary military personnel. He further noted that senior-division NCC cadets receive specialized firearms training, including handling the 7.62mm Self-Loading Rifle (SLR), to ensure practical preparedness for operational support when required, without the intent of full militarization. He also highlighted that the role of NCC cadets extends beyond wartime preparedness, citing the recent September 8, 2025, protest, during which the Nepali Army was deployed nationwide to maintain security and public order. During this period, NCC students actively supported security forces through assistance in crowd management, logistical coordination, and public safety measures, and after normalcy was restored, they contributed to cleaning public spaces and managing vandalized areas. According to Rana, individuals carrying the identity of NCC cadets are trained to remain mentally resilient and physically prepared to respond effectively to diverse situations, whether during civil unrest, natural disasters, or national emergencies. Overall, the involvement of NCC students reflects a multidimensional approach to national security, where human capital development complements conventional defense strategies and strengthens civil–military relations by producing disciplined, patriotic, and socially responsible youth ready to serve the nation in any circumstance (A. Rana, personal communication, 2025). Government assets that can be mobilized for flood operations across the country are placed according to the zone.

In today's time, we see an ascendant role of the military in disaster response. Some of the reasons for military personnel's increased interest in disaster response are related to the need for capable human resources, public perception, staff morale, relevant training opportunities, and humanitarian operations as a means for the armed forces to diversify their role and expertise. With the increased engagement of military personnel in humanitarian response to both conflict and natural disasters, interaction on the ground between humanitarian

and military personnel has increased and has cast the spotlight on issues related to civil-military cooperation, coordination, and the effectiveness of militarized emergency assistance in general (Nora Ibrahim, 2018). In various other countries, students aged between 12 and 18 are provided with National Service Corps or similar training and are involved in various fields to develop the qualities of good citizens and leadership skills in the youth, and to directly assist the security forces in times of crisis in the country.

In various other countries, students aged between 12 and 18 are provided with NCC or similar training and are involved in various fields to develop the qualities of good citizens and leadership skills in the youth, and to directly assist the security forces in times of crisis in the country. There is a provision that the Chief Patron of the NCC is the Honorable Prime Minister, the Co-Patron is the Honorable Minister of Defense, and the Chief of Army Staff is the Commander-in-Chief. To expand the reach of the NCC, the number of students and schools that provide training each year will be gradually increased to prepare a minimum of 100 volunteer manpower capable of rescue work in each district during a national disaster. 86,624 people have completed the NCC training till now, involving 7,710 male and female students every year.

Overall, by bringing together cadets from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and regional backgrounds, NCC strengthens national integration. The organization also cultivates patriotism, teaches youth to view service to the community and the nation as the highest form of duty (Shrestha, 2025). Although the NCC has been functioning in Nepal for decades and has made significant contributions to youth development, national security, and emergency response, scholarly research on this institution remains limited. A major gap exists in public and academic awareness, as a large portion of Nepali citizens remain unfamiliar with the actual mandate, structure, and role of NCC. Many people still perceive NCC as merely an extension of the Nepali Army, rather than recognizing it as an independent youth development and national service program that supports civil–military cooperation.

From an academic perspective, there is a noticeable lack of empirical and analytical studies that examine NCC from a national security and human capital development perspective. Most existing literature focuses on historical narratives or administrative descriptions, with minimal emphasis on NCC's role in disaster management, civic engagement, leadership development, and social resilience. Furthermore, there is insufficient documentation of field-based insights drawn from NCC headquarters, officers, instructors, and former cadets, which limits a comprehensive understanding of its operational impact.

Another significant research gap lies in the absence of comparative analysis between Nepal's NCC and similar cadet organizations in other countries, particularly in terms of institutional recognition, recruitment incentives, and policy support. In addition, the limited availability of updated publications, official data, and peer-reviewed studies further restricts academic discourse on the subject.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by documenting NCC's contributions through primary field research and personal experience, while also aiming to enhance national-

level awareness and recognition of NCC's role in strengthening Nepal's security and nation-building efforts.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine the role of the NCC in Nepal from a national security perspective and to explore existing perceptions regarding its contribution to nation-building. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study aimed to understand institutional practices, lived experiences, and expert viewpoints rather than to quantify variables statistically.

The study follows a descriptive and exploratory research design, guided by a human security and civil–military relations perspective. This perspective views national security not only through military strength but also through disciplined human capital, civic responsibility, and youth participation in national development.

Primary data was collected through a field visit to the NCC Headquarters at Jagannath Dewal, Kathmandu. During this visit, the author conducted meetings and personal communications with NCC officials, including a Major, a Brigadier General, instructors, and administrative personnel. These interactions provided firsthand insights into NCC training structure, objectives, operational challenges, and contributions during national emergencies and public service activities. The author also examined official documents, training manuals, presentations, archival records, and policy documents available at the headquarters. Observational notes were taken to understand training practices and institutional functioning. Secondary data were collected through an extensive review of books, official publications, Acts, regulations, reports, and academic literature related to the National Service Corps, youth mobilization, and national security in Nepal. These sources helped situate my findings within broader historical and policy contexts. As a former NCC cadet (47<sup>th</sup> Junior Division and 18<sup>th</sup> Senior Division), the author draws upon their own training experiences to enrich the analysis. The author's background provided an insider understanding of discipline, leadership development, patriotism, and civic responsibility fostered through NCC. While incorporating personal experience, the author has maintained academic objectivity to the extent possible. Data has been analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying key themes such as discipline, patriotism, national service, public perception, training effectiveness, and institutional challenges. Data from interviews, documents, and personal experience were triangulated to enhance credibility.

All information obtained through interviews and personal communications was used solely for academic purposes. Proper acknowledgment was done, confidentiality was respected as requested, and ethical standards of research were maintained throughout the study.

### **Results and Discussion**

As mentioned earlier, the NCC was established with the dual purpose of promoting patriotism and contributing to national security. In addition to its military and field duties, the NCC plays an important social role in cultivating responsible and disciplined citizens. A key component of this social dimension is the disaster management training its graduates receive. Cadets

receive comprehensive training, supervised by experienced military personnel, covering all phases of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. This training equips graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support communities during natural or man-made disasters, highlighting NCC's contribution to social resilience and national security.

During the 21-day National Command Center camps, students actively participate in various community service programs, such as cleanup days, environmental awareness campaigns, and public health initiatives. These activities build a sense of civic responsibility and encourage constructive engagement with their communities. In addition to practical services, cultural programs are held every evening, allowing students to learn about the country's diverse traditions, languages, and customs. This community immersion promotes socialization, empathy, and appreciation of cultural heritage, reinforcing the idea that national security is not just about defense, but also about social cohesion.

Awareness programs and interactive sessions are held throughout the camp to broaden students' understanding of contemporary social issues and support their mental and emotional well-being during adolescence. Integrating lessons in the humanities, ethics, and community service, the NCC focuses on holistic development, helping students become aware and socially responsible adults. This experience reinforces the concept of social security, which complements the traditional, militaristic approach to national security by preserving culture, promoting civic values, and encouraging active participation in the well-being of the community.

At its core, the NCC social program ensures that graduates are prepared not only to physically defend the homeland but also to contribute positively to society. Combining disaster management training, community service, cultural engagement, and outreach initiatives, NCC promotes the holistic development of individuals who understand the interconnectedness of social stability and national security. This approach highlights that the nation's security and prosperity depend not only on military readiness, but also on the cultivation of responsible citizens capable of maintaining the fundamental social, cultural, and moral framework of a secure and resilient society. It plays an important political role by promoting national consciousness and civic responsibility among the youth. From the beginning of their training, officers are educated on patriotism, national unity, and the importance of historical milestones that have shaped the nation. Through the recitation of campaigns to unify the country, its political developments, and major historical events, NCC officers develop a deep sense of devotion and loyalty to their homeland, often surpassing that of their peers who have not received such training. This early exposure to political and historical knowledge empowers officers to become informed and responsible citizens, able to understand and contribute to the political process of the country. The impact of NCC training on political awareness is reflected in the career paths of leading graduates. Participation in the National Council of Culture can shape the character of individuals who play important roles in the political and civic life of the country.

The practical importance of this political commitment became clear during Nepal's protests and political movements, such as the events of September 8, 2025. National Leadership Center graduates, especially Gen Z, actively contributed to maintaining public order by volunteering with the military. Their disciplined participation ensured that the political

transition occurred with minimal disruption to public life, reflecting the NCC emphasis on civic duty and organized action.

Through these experiences, students gain first-hand knowledge of the political process, democratic participation, and social responsibility, equipping them to contribute effectively in times of political change. Thus, the political dimension of national leadership centers goes beyond theoretical knowledge; It provides young people with practical skills to serve their country in times of both stability and instability. Integrating historical education, civic training, and practical engagement, the National Leadership Center cultivates politically aware and socially responsible citizens who maintain national unity and actively contribute to the governance and stability of the nation.

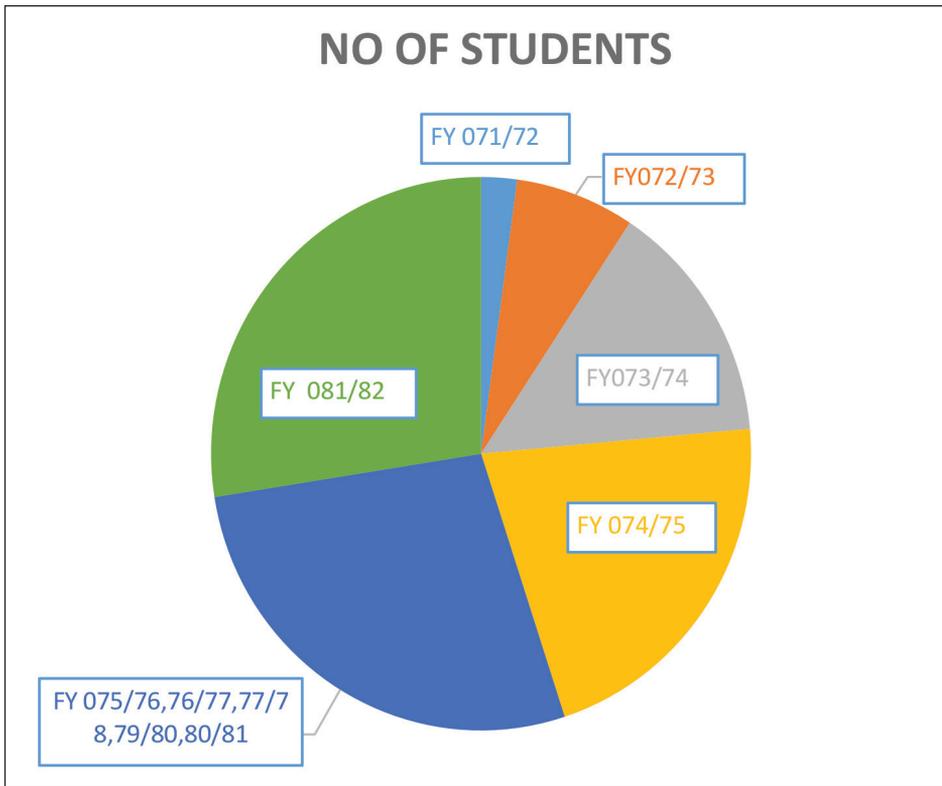
In essence, the political role of the NCC reinforces a broader vision of national security, showing that the nation's security and development require not only military readiness and social service, but the active participation of informed and disciplined citizens in political life contributes significantly to the economic dimension of national security by promoting skills, discipline, and awareness, thereby indirectly enhancing the economic stability of the country. A nation's economy is inextricably linked to its security, as instability, natural disasters, and social unrest can disrupt the efficient functioning of production, trade, and markets. NCC graduates are trained to effectively respond to crises, such as natural disasters, floods, and other emergencies, providing needed support to communities while minimizing potential economic losses. Their participation in disaster management, first aid, and relief operations ensures the rapid resumption of economic activity after disruption, contributing to the resilience of local and national economies.

In addition, the NCC training instills values such as time management, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving, thereby increasing student productivity and career prospects. These skills prepare young people to be disciplined and responsible members of the workforce, promoting economic growth and stability. For example, students participating in community service programs, environmental protection projects, and public awareness campaigns gain practical experience in efficiently organizing and managing resources, a set of skills that translate into future careers and entrepreneurial ventures.

During national or local crises, students at the NCC often assist with logistics, resource allocation, and assistance to government and non-government organizations. Their contributions reduce the burden on the civil service, allowing better resource allocation and the smooth running of the economic system. By filling staff shortages in the event of an emergency, cadets help maintain the continuity of trade, transportation, and public services, mitigate potential economic losses, and ensure the sustainability of national productivity.

At its core, the economic impact of the NCC is indirect but profound. By equipping youth with practical skills, instilling discipline, and providing humanitarian assistance in emergencies, the NCC enhances the nation's ability to maintain economic stability in the face of challenges. This approach highlights that national security is not limited to defense or social order, but also includes the protection of the economic foundations that underpin the country's growth and prosperity. Through this multifaceted contribution, the NCC prepares citizens to

support national security and economic resilience, thereby contributing to the creation of a more stable and secure society. NCC training develops discipline, leadership, health awareness, and civic responsibility among youth. These qualities reduce social instability, crime, and youth delinquency—key internal security threats. By shaping responsible citizens, NCC strengthens the social foundation upon which state security rests.



*Figure. Number of students participating in NCC*  
*Source: Presentation prepared by the NCC Headquarters team*

The graph illustrates the number of students participating in training programs over multiple fiscal years. In FY 071/72, the number of students was 600, marking the beginning of the program. The following year, FY 072/73, saw a significant increase to 2,000 students, showing a rapid growth in participation. This upward trend continued in FY 073/74 with 4,000 students and further rose to 6,000 students in FY 074/75, reflecting the growing popularity and reach of the training programs.

From FY 075/76 through FY 080/81, the number of students stabilized at 7,704 per year, indicating a period of consistent enrollment. However, it is notable that in FY 077/78, trainings could not be conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which temporarily disrupted the program’s continuity. Despite this interruption, the program continued effectively in the following years, maintaining high participation rates.

By FY 081/82, the number of students remained at 7,704, demonstrating the program's sustained capacity to attract and train participants. Overall, a total of 82,184 students have been trained since the inception of the program. This graph highlights both the initial growth phase, the steady participation period, and the resilience of the training programs in overcoming challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting their long-term impact and importance in student development.

### **Challenges**

Although the NCC has achieved remarkable success in training disciplined, patriotic, and responsible youth, it still faces many structural and administrative challenges that limit the realization of its full potential.

A common challenge, as Brigadier General Mahesh Basnet has pointed out, is the lack of formal recognition and privileges for NCC graduates when recruiting into the Nepali Army and other security forces. In many countries, such as India and Sri Lanka, NCC graduates receive preferential treatment, bonus points, or reserved places during their recruitment into the armed forces due to their discipline and prior training. However, even students who complete basic and advanced training in Nepal do not get this benefit. This lack of incentives discourages potential candidates from joining the NCC and dampens the enthusiasm of those who have completed the program (M.Basnet, personal communication, 2025).

Another major challenge is financial constraints. Despite being a national program overseen by the Nepali Army and the Ministry of Defence, the NCC operates on a limited annual budget. This lack of funding restricts recruitment, training materials, transportation, and modern facilities, preventing the corps from accommodating a growing number of interested students from across the country.

Although the NCC program has expanded to include all 77 districts, many lack adequate infrastructure and qualified trainers. Training standards vary significantly between urban and rural areas, undermining overall effectiveness. Furthermore, some remote schools are either unaware of the opportunities offered by the NCC or lack the necessary coordination to implement them.

While the current 100-day course is effective in instilling basic discipline and leadership, it is inadequate for developing advanced physical and technical skills. In addition, the senior-level shooting training is too short and insufficient to build confidence and proficiency. Compared to the international standards of the NCC, the curriculum and course duration in Nepal are limited. More needs to be done to translate the learnings of the cadets.

While the body instills discipline and leadership, there is no institutional link that enables trained youth to apply their skills in national service, public employment, or disaster management. This results in the underutilization of qualified and national human resources.

### **Recommendations**

The Government of Nepal and the Ministry of Defense should formally acknowledge the NCC certificate during the recruitment process of the Army, police, and other Nepali government

agencies, since the NCC graduates demonstrate physical fitness, patriotism, and leadership skills, qualities needed for national service. Giving bonus points, priority in selection, or quotas would encourage greater participation and ensure that candidates with strong moral character and discipline are recruited to public institutions.

The national budget allocated to the NCC should be increased. Investments are needed in physical infrastructure, equipment, digital classrooms, and teacher training. Adequate funding will allow standardized procedures across all 77 districts and support the use of digital tools and virtual simulations for theoretical instruction.

For programs such as YEP and Leadership Camps should be transparent and merit-based. A formal evaluation system should be implemented, taking into account performance, disciplinary record, and communication skills, so that Nepal's representatives abroad reflect their country's excellence.

Fourth, the training period should be increased from 100 days to 150-180 days, with the addition of additional training modules in disaster management, civil responsibility, first aid, technology, environmental protection, and knowledge of national policies. In addition, rifle and self-defense training for senior officers should be expanded and updated to increase their technical proficiency and confidence.

Fifth, the NCC should improve its coordination with educational institutions. Schools and universities can schedule academic support during training and provide qualified teachers as coordinators. To maintain high standards across the country, teachers should receive regular professional development courses.

Another key recommendation is to include young people trained in national leadership centers in national development programs. Graduates can be mobilized for community service, disaster relief, environmental protection, and civic awareness campaigns, ensuring that their disciplinary and leadership skills directly benefit the country. Should offer career-oriented certifications recognized by government agencies—for example, certifications in leadership, civic education, or community service—that can employ graduates in both the public and private sectors.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the NCC has emerged as an institution with the potential to bring together youth to fulfil their duties towards the country with a spirit of patriotism. Through its structured training system, it has been working with an aim develop young people into responsible citizens. The NCC has the potential to transform the youth into disciplined, skilled, and patriotic citizens. Realizing this vision requires political recognition, increased funding, transparent governance, and curriculum modernization. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing these recommendations, the NCC can strengthen its position as a cornerstone of national unity, discipline, and security, empowering Nepali youth to serve their country with pride, competence, and determination.

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