



BEIJING
+30

CIVIL SOCIETY REPORT ON BEIJING+30



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Civil Society Report on Beijing+30 Review

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to present the Civil Society Organizations' Report on the Beijing+30 Review, jointly prepared by over 90 Civil Society Organizations under the umbrella of the National Network for Beijing Review Nepal (NNBN). As the world marks the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), this review provides an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to achieving gender equality and to evaluate the advancements and obstacles encountered along the way.

This report provides an analysis of Nepal's progress in addressing the critical areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) from a civil society perspective over the past five years. Each chapter is thoughtfully structured into four key sections: the first provides an introduction and an overview of the current status of the specific area of concern; the second outlines the key progress made during the past five years; the third highlights the challenges encountered; and the fourth proposes recommendations for the future. This report is the result of a collaborative effort involving mentors, lead authors, youth contributors and district contributors representing diverse Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Together, they have created a comprehensive and insightful document that captures Nepal's ongoing journey toward achieving gender equality.

The drafting process of this report was highly inclusive, drawing upon feedback and insights gathered from a wide array of consultations. Provincial, national, and virtual consultations were conducted to ensure that the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, including representatives from organizations supporting People with Disabilities (PwD), were integrated into the report. Over 700 representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) and grassroots communities participated in the consultations, contributing valuable input to the report. Additionally, the virtual consultations garnered over 1.3 million views across all 12 Critical Areas of Concern, further amplifying the voices of a broader audience. This collaborative approach significantly enriched the content and ensured lived experiences of diverse population and marginalized communities. By incorporating these diverse voices, the report provides a comprehensive and balanced view of Nepal's progress toward gender equality in the past five years. I believe the true impact of this work lies in its potential to influence policy formulation and implementation by placing feminist perspectives at the forefront of national planning and decision-making processes.

As we approach the conclusion of this important report, I would like to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who contributed to its production. First and foremost, I extend my sincere thanks to the entire NNBN members for their unwavering commitment and active engagement in bringing this document to life. My deepest appreciation goes to the mentors and authors of each chapter, whose tireless efforts to gather data, conduct reviews, and draft the content have been indispensable. This document would not have been possible without your dedication and hard work in leading the desk reviews and facilitating both the consultative and virtual meetings. The inclusive nature of the team, which brought together senior rights activists, emerging scholars, youths and district representatives, has truly been strength of this process, and it is a collaborative spirit I commend highly.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the supporters and partners who led and contributed to the provincial and national-level consultations, virtual meetings, and the production of the Civil Society Report. Saathi, WHR, WFDM/HomeNet South Asia, Tewa, and FEDO took a leading role in conducting the provincial consultations. Their engagement and insights were invaluable in shaping this work. I am especially grateful to UN Women and HomeNet South Asia for their unwavering support throughout this process. I also acknowledge with deep appreciation the Beijing+30 Review lead organizations, including Pourakhi Nepal, Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), Saathi, Center for Awareness and Communication Nepal (CAC Nepal), Didi Bahini, Tribhuvan University (TU), Visible Impact, Marie Stopes International (MSI), Policy Advocacy Network Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (PANAV), Women for Human Rights (WHR), Sabah Nepal, PSR Research and Consultancies, Legal Aid and Consultancy Center (LACC), Forum for Women, Law, and Development (FWLD), Media Advocacy Group (MAG) and Working Women Forum and Women for Democratic Development (WFMD). Also, my sincere appreciation goes to Bandana Rana, member of the UN CEDAW Committee, for her invaluable guidance. A special note of thanks is extended to the report editor, Umesh Pokharel, whose dedication and tireless efforts under tight deadlines were pivotal in ensuring the timely completion of this report.

The recommendations outlined in this report offers a crucial pathway for us, as civil society organizations, to follow. Moving ahead, we will continue to work alongside the Government of Nepal, engaging with them constructively to advance progress toward the realization of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As we stand at the threshold of the Beijing+30 Review, we look forward to a united, active, and committed women's movement, both nationally and globally, as we persist in our shared struggle for equality, development, and peace.



Advocate Sabin Shrestha

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Acronyms

AFIC	: Adolescent Friendly Information Center
BIPAD	: Building Information Platform Against Disaster
BPfA	: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CBS	: Central Bureau of Statistics
CCA	: Climate Change Adaptation
CEDAW	: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPA	: Comprehensive Peace Accord
CSO	: Civil Society Organization
DoIB	: Department of Information and Broadcasting
DRR	: Disaster Risk Reduction
DRRM	: Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
EPA	: Environment Protection Act
FAO	: Food and Agriculture Organization
FCHV	: Female Community Health Volunteer
FNJ	: Federation of Nepali Journalists
GBV	: Gender-Based Violence
GEDSI	: Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion
GESI	: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GoN	: Government of Nepal
GRB	: Gender-Responsive Budget
GRID	: Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development
ICT	: Information and Communication Technology
LDC	: Least Developed Country
LNOB	: Leave No One Behind
MAG	: Media Advocacy Group
MoFAGA	: Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration
MoFE	: Ministry of Forest and Environment
MoHP	: Ministry of Health and Population
MoLCPA	: Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation
MoWCSC	: Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens
NAP	: National Adaptation Plan

NDHS	: Nepal Demographic and Health Survey
NHRC	: National Human Rights Commission
NNBN	: National Network for Beijing +review Nepal (NNBN)
NPA	: National Plan of Action
NPC	: National Planning Commission
NPHC	: National Population and Housing Census
NSO	: National Statistics Office
NTV	: Nepal Television
NWC	: National Women Commission
OCMC	: One-Stop Crisis Management Centre
PCN	: Press Council Nepal
PLGSP	: Provincial and Local Government Support Program
RMNCAH	: Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health Policy
SDGs	: Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRHR	: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TJ	: Transitional Justice
TRC	: Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNHRC	: United Nations Human Rights Council
UNSCR	: UN Security Council Resolution
VAW	: Violence Against Women
WEDF	: Women Entrepreneurship Development Fund
WEP	: Women's Empowerment Program

INTRODUCTION

Country Context

Political Context

Although Nepal has experienced relative stability after the adoption of the constitution in 2015, compared to the past, the country has still been facing political instability. A major crisis occurred on December 20, 2020, when Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli dissolved parliament, leading to widespread criticism and a constitutional crisis.¹ The crisis was resolved by the Supreme Court on February 23, 2021, which reinstated parliament² and paved the way for Sher Bahadur Deuba's appointment as Prime Minister in July 2021.³ Then Nepal successfully held local, provincial, and federal elections in 2022, strengthening democratic governance. Despite this, political instability persisted. In December, 2022, new coalition government led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) was formed.⁴ This coalition faced further turmoil when the Rastriya Swatantra Party withdrew in February 2023, leading to realignment.⁵ The political landscape shifted once again in July 2024, when CPN-UML's KP Oli returned as Prime Minister.⁶ The frequent changes in government reflect the ongoing volatility and shifting alliances within Nepal's political sphere.

Development Context

The Government of Nepal's Fifteenth Plan (2019/20–2023/24)⁷, titled "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali", aims to graduate Nepal from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, align with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and achieve middle-income country status by 2030.⁸ Building on this, the Sixteenth Plan (2024/25–2028/29) intensifies these goals, incorporating the SDGs and committing to LDC graduation by 2026 while aiming for high-income status by 2043.⁹ Both plans prioritize economic growth, social development, and resilience-building.

Women Human Rights Context

Nepal has advanced women's human rights through key legal and policy reforms. These include extending the reporting period for sexual violence cases (2022),¹⁰ amending the Citizenship Act to

1. Chopra, R. (2020, August 12). *Simply put: Nepal crisis — What's at stake*. The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/simply-put-nepal-crisis-whats-at-stake-7115792/>
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4. Poudel, S. S. (2022, December 27). *Pushpa Kamal Dahal heads new government in Nepal*. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/12/pushpa-kamal-dahal-heads-new-government-in-nepal/>
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10. Government of Nepal. (2022). *Act Amending Laws Against Sexual Violence*. <https://hr.parliament.gov.np/uploads/attachments/ky1remr5lbnxneoih.pdf>

support constitutional rights (2022),¹¹ and ratifying the Palermo Protocol¹² to combat trafficking (2020). The National Gender Equality Policy (2021)¹³ and its Action Plan (2023), along with the Social Inclusion Policy for Local Levels (2022), emphasize gender parity and representation. Recent Supreme Court rulings affirm citizenship rights for children of single Nepali mothers and gender recognition based on self-realization (2023).

Similarly, other key developments include gender-sensitive reforms to the TRC Act,¹⁴ strengthened transitional justice efforts with a victim-centered approach, and the implementation of the second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820. This apart, scholarships for children of conflict-affected families and support for female survivors, has been prioritized.

Further, since the adoption of Nepal's 2015 constitution and the shift to federalism, there have been significant efforts in women's political and socio-economic leadership. Key policies, such as the National Gender Equality Policy (2021), aim to reduce gender disparities and promote women's empowerment through affirmative action. The 15th periodic plan (2019/20-2023/24) sets goals to create gender-responsive governance, eliminate discrimination and violence against women, and ensure equal access to resources and opportunities.¹⁵

This apart, during the past five years, Nepal has made notable progress in integrating gender-responsive policies into environmental and climate action, including updated legislation through the Environment Protection Act and Forest Act in 2019, and initiatives like the National Adaptation Plan and Climate Change Policy, which prioritize women's participation in climate resilience efforts. The government has also adopted the GRID framework, promoting inclusive growth and disaster preparedness.

Moreover, over the past five years, Nepal has made remarkable progress in advancing gender equality in the media sector. Key achievements include the appointment of women to leadership roles, such as the chairperson of the Minimum Wage Determination Committee and the board member position at Nepal Television. Female journalists, particularly in investigative reporting, are gaining recognition.

Despite progress, significant challenges remain. Safe houses often lack inclusivity and fail to offer adequate rehabilitation services. The harmful practices such as *chhaupadi* persists, despite being legally prohibited.¹⁶ Gender-based violence (GBV) response mechanisms are hindered by insufficient funding and a lack of comprehensive services. Anti-trafficking efforts are weakened by inactive district committees and the absence of essential provincial and local laws. Moreover, protections against technology-facilitated GBV remain inadequate, responsible journalism is not consistently promoted, and women engaged in commercial sex work receive insufficient attention. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and other humanitarian crises have reversed many hard-earned achievements in gender equality.

Nepal and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, represents a groundbreaking global policy framework aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.¹⁷ This landmark agenda, embraced by 189 UN Member States,

11. नेपाल सरकार (२०८०), नेपाल नागरिकता (पहिलो संशोधन) ऐन, २०७९। [Nepal Citizenship (First Amendment) Act, 2079]. Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. <https://www.moljpa.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/नेपाल-नागरिकता-पहिलो-संशोधन-ऐन-२०७९.pdf>
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15. National Planning Commission. (2019). *The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20-2023/24)*. Government of Nepal. https://npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_plan_English_Version.pdf
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17. United Nations Development Programme. (2020, March 24). *What is Beijing Platform for Action?* United Nations Development Programme Ukraine. <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/what-beijing-platform-action>

established a strategic blueprint across 12 critical areas of concern: poverty, education, health (including sexual and reproductive rights), violence against women, armed conflict, economic participation, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environmental sustainability, and the rights of the girl child.¹⁸ The BPfA has become a comprehensive guide for realizing gender equality worldwide, and it remains a foundational document in the global movement toward a more just and equitable society.

The 30th anniversary of the BPfA offers a significant opportunity to reflect on progress and challenges in achieving gender equality, especially as the global community simultaneously pursues the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Every five years, governments around the world conduct national-level reviews of the BPfA's implementation, working with stakeholders from various sectors, including civil society, the private sector, and the UN, to assess advancements and obstacles.¹⁹ These reviews are essential for fostering inclusive discussions, identifying necessary interventions, and engaging a broad range of actors in the shared goal of gender equality.

Civil society plays a crucial role in the BPfA's monitoring and review process, offering independent perspectives and ensuring accountability in the implementation of the platform's objectives. Organizations, coalitions, and advocacy groups collaborate to produce parallel reports that critically assess the government's efforts, highlight areas needing improvement, and bring marginalized voices into the conversation. This partnership between civil society and government enriches the BPfA review process, making it more inclusive and transparent.

While individual civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nepal initially conducted the Beijing review independently, the formation of the National Network for Beijing Review Nepal (NNBN) in 2009 marked the beginning of unified civil society efforts in submitting the report on the Beijing review. Nepal's civil society has since produced independent review reports in 2010, 2015, and 2020. These reports provide a critical, grassroots perspective on Nepal's progress and challenges, serving as parallel reviews to government submissions. They highlight the need for strengthened action across all 12 critical areas and offer valuable insights into the lived experiences of women and girls throughout the country.

The BPfA review process itself has proven to be an invaluable platform for civil society, allowing for an open critique of the government's progress reports and highlighting systemic issues that require attention. The NNBN's contributions have enhanced the visibility of challenges such as socio-cultural barriers, insufficient funding for gender programs, and the need for sex-disaggregated data to track progress. However, implementing the BPfA in Nepal has not been without its challenges. Limited financial resources for gender equality initiatives, entrenched socio-cultural beliefs, and deep-rooted gender stereotypes continue to hinder progress, underscoring the importance of sustained advocacy, policy reform, and capacity-building efforts.

As Nepal approaches the 2025 BPfA review, there are valuable lessons to be drawn from past efforts, as well as opportunities to strengthen partnerships and create lasting changes in gender equality policy. The anniversary presents a chance to renew commitments, bring new voices into the movement, and engage with the broader framework of international agreements, including CEDAW, SDG, and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

About the Report

This report is an analysis of Nepal's progress in addressing the critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) over the past five years. Each chapter in the report is structured into three main sections: the first section provides an introduction and current status of the specific area of concern, the second section outlines the challenges encountered, and the third section offers recommendations. Developed through a collaborative effort involving mentors, lead authors, youth contributor and district contributor, the report also incorporates insights and feedback

18. United Nations. (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

19. Shreeves, R., & Prpic, M. (2020). *Beijing Platform for Action: 25-year review and future priorities*. European Parliamentary Research Service, Members' Research Service. PE 646.194. http://www.epgncms.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/upload/061d729c-5ca4-4621-850f-9d2791488f63/EPRS_Briefing_Beijing_Platformfor_Action.pdf

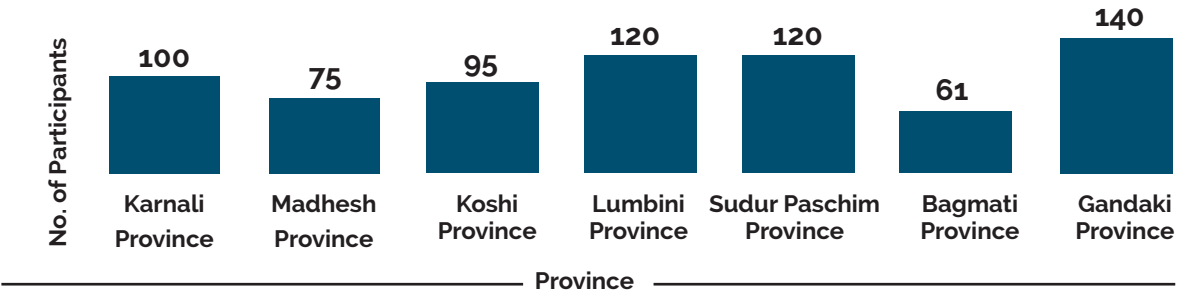
from a series of provincial, national, and virtual consultations. These consultations included perspectives from stakeholders, representatives of People with Disabilities (PWD) organizations, and national-level feedback sessions to ensure inclusivity and comprehensiveness of the report.

● Objectives of the Report

- » To document the current status and achievements of Nepali women in each critical area of concern over the past five years, identifying advancements as well as ongoing and emerging challenges.
- » To provide actionable recommendations to guide Nepal's next five years of efforts in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, supporting the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

● Process and Methodology

The production of the report started with consultations across all seven provinces of Nepal, gathering diverse perspectives from various stakeholders. Following this, 12 teams were assigned to draft chapters focusing on specific critical issues. To support the writing process, a workshop was held to guide the lead authors, co-authors, youth contributors, district contributors and mentors, ensuring they had the necessary tools and direction. Once the initial drafts were completed, further consultations were conducted at both provincial and national levels, allowing for feedback from stakeholders to be gathered and incorporated into the final report. The consultations began with the first meeting in Karnali on August 23, 2024, where 100 participants participated to discuss the BPfA areas of concerns. This was followed by the second provincial consultation in Madhesh on August 29, 2024, with 75 participants, focusing on local issues. In Koshi Province, 95 participants attended on August 30, 2024, followed by Lumbini Province on the same day with 120 participants. Sudur Paschim Province hosted its consultation on September 14, 2024, with 120 participants, while Bagmati Province's consultation took place on September 30, 2024, with 61 participants. Finally, Gandaki Province held its consultation on October 23, 2024, where 140 participants discussed progress and challenges on BPfA's critical areas of concern.



To further enhance the chapter, a series of virtual consultations focusing on specific themes were organized and broadcast live on Facebook. The sessions commenced with a discussion on Violence Against Women on September 19, 2024, followed by Women and the Media on September 20, 2024, and Women and the Economy on September 25, 2024. Additional virtual discussion included Education and Training of Women on September 29, 2024, Human Rights of Women on October 1, 2024, and Women and Poverty on October 2, 2024. Subsequent sessions explored Women and Health on October 4, 2024, The Girl Child on October 5, 2024, Women and the Environment on October 7, 2024, and Women and Armed Conflict on October 9, 2024. Later, the Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women was discussed on October 19, 2024, followed by Women in Power and Decision-Making on October 22, 2024. The virtual consultations provided feedback and perspectives on the draft reports, which were incorporated into the subsequent versions of the report drafts.

The report was produced using a mix of desk research, consultations, and thematic discussions. The desk research involved reviewing various sources such as policy documents, research reports, journal articles, media articles, program reports, government publications. Alongside this, consultations at both the provincial and national levels gathered valuable insights, reflecting regional viewpoints and the perspectives of diverse communities. To make the process more accessible, virtual consultations were held, reaching over 1.3 million views across 12 discussions, which helped ensure the report was inclusive and representative of a wide range of voices.

Women and Poverty

Present Status

- » Nepal's 2015 Constitution guarantees women's rights to property through various articles in the fundamental rights section. Key fundamental rights include the Right to Equality (Article 18), Right to Property (Article 25), Right to Employment (Article 33), Rights Regarding Labor (Article 34), and Right of Women (Article 38).
- » Nepal's poverty rate, as reported by the National Statistics Office, stands at 20.27%, with higher rates in rural areas (24.66%) compared to urban areas (18.34%). According to the Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 2022-23, the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted poverty reduction efforts and increased economic vulnerability across the nation.¹ From a gender perspective, women in impoverished, rural areas are especially impacted, often facing limited access to resources and economic opportunities. High-poverty provinces such as Sudurpaschim (34.16%) and Karnali (26.69%) see heightened gender disparities, as women had to encounter challenges in securing education, healthcare, and financial independence.²
- » Nepal's 15th plan envisions building "a society free of poverty of all kinds," aiming to address and reduce poverty. This includes implementing programs that directly target the poorest groups, creating jobs specifically for people in poverty, and ensuring fair access for disadvantaged communities to the country's resources and opportunities for income.³ Following this, the 16th Plan takes the mission further by focusing on strengthening Nepal's economic foundations. Together, these policies and plans aim to lift people out of poverty while building a stronger, more inclusive economy.⁴
- » Nepal has made some progress in narrowing the gender gap, particularly in poverty reduction. The national poverty rate decreased from 25.4% in 2015 to 16.2% in 2022. This reduction has also been reflected in the decline of women living below the poverty line, thanks to policies that improve access to education, health, and economic opportunities for women. The Government of Nepal aims to reduce the percentage of women below the poverty line to 5.8% by 2030, aligning with its commitments to the SDGs.⁵

1. B360. (2024, February 14). *Over 20 pc of population in Nepal below poverty line*: NSO. B360. <https://www.b360nepal.com/detail/21870/over-20-pc-of-population-in-nepal-below-poverty-line-nso-2024-Feb-14-673700>
2. My Republica. (2024, February 13). 20.27 percent of Nepalis are living under the poverty line. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/20-27-percent-of-nepalis-are-living-under-the-poverty-line/>
3. National Planning Commission. (2020, March). *The fifteenth plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20–2023/24)*. Government of Nepal. https://www.npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_plan_English_Version.pdf
4. Nepal Government. (2085). *साठौ योजना* [Sixteenth Plan, Fiscal Year 2081/82 (2024/25)]. National Planning Commission & Sudharbar. <https://npc.gov.np/images/category/240607021659%E0%A4%B8%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%B9%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8C%E0%A4%82%E0%A4%AF%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%9C%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%BE.pdf>
5. Nepal Planning Commission.(2023). *Sustainable Development Goals (Revised Indicators)* (p. 4). https://npc.gov.np/images/category/231120105017SDG%20%20Indicators_16%20Aug%202023%20update%20d.pdf

- » Some progress has been made in improving women's access to education, health, employment, and legal rights in Nepal. As of the 2021 census, the female literacy rate is 69.4%. 23.8% of women have ownership to property. Maternal health has improved, with the maternal mortality ratio reduced to 151 per 100,000 live births, and the total fertility rate now at 2.1 children per woman.
- » The pro-poor targeted scholarship program has launched for students who are children of martyrs or conflict victims, as well as those who are conflict victims themselves, Dalits, or from highly marginalized or endangered indigenous communities. In the fiscal year 2019/20, a total of 3,288,924 beneficiaries received the scholarship, while 2,604,262 beneficiaries were supported in FY 2020/21.
- » In Nepal, remittances make up nearly 25 percent of the country's GDP. In the fiscal year 2023/24, out of the 741,297 people who obtained labor permits, women accounted for 10.8 percent⁶, up from 5.6 percent in the previous fiscal year.⁷ According to UN Women Nepal, women contribute 11 percent of the total remittance income. Many women use the money they send back home to support their children's education and pay off family debts. Women's remittance contributions play a key role in reducing household poverty and food insecurity, making a positive impact at the local level.⁸
- » During the reporting period, microfinance played a key role to improve their financial independence and social status. By participating in microfinance programs, rural women have gained ownership of assets, stronger decision-making power within their households, increased mobility, and a better social reputation. These programs have provided women with the tools to take control of their lives, start businesses, and support their families, fostering greater economic participation.⁹ MFIs, with 94% of their beneficiaries being female, not only offer loans but also serve as schools of banking, teaching basic financial concepts such as credit, savings, and repayments—skills that were previously unfamiliar to many. This grassroots financial education has created a pipeline of informed and empowered clients, bridging the gap between the unbanked and the formal financial system.
- » The establishment of Gender-Based Violence Prevention Funds across all provinces and local levels has strengthened protections for women. Women with disabilities, making up 2.2% of the population, have received increased support through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017. Similarly, over 200,000 women have received social security allowances in 2022/23.¹⁰

KEY DEVELOPMENT IN 'WOMEN AND POVERTY'

- **Gender Gap Narrowed:** Nepal's national poverty rate dropped from 25.4% in 2015 to 16.2% in 2022, with a goal to reduce women's poverty to 5.8% by 2030
- **Identity Cards for Low-Income Households:** Over 500,000 households in Nepal received identity cards, easing access to government services for poverty alleviation.
- **Micro-Enterprise Development Programme Supports Women:** Since 2018, the GoN and UNDP have supported 172,514 micro-entrepreneurs, with 76% being women.
- **Pro-Poor Scholarship Program in Nepal:** The pro-poor scholarship program provided scholarships to over 3 million students from marginalized groups in 2019/20 and 2020/
- **Remittance Reduces Poverty in Nepal:** Remittance-receiving households in Nepal are 2.3% less likely to fall into poverty, with women contributing 11% of the total remittance income.

6. Government of Nepal/ Department of Foreign Employment 2024.Details about Labor Permit.Tahachal. Kathmandu

7. Government of Nepal/Ministry of Finance 2022.Economic Survey 2021/22.Singhdurbar.Kathmandu.

8. Bhadra,C. 2007. International labor migration of Nepalese women: Impact of their remittances on poverty reduction. Working paper 4407.Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT).

9. Thapa, B. S., &Yadav, A. (2024). Does microfinance affect women empowerment? Evidence from Rautahat District of Nepal. *The Batuk: A Peer Reviewed Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 10(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3126/batuk.v10i1.62294>

10. FWLD. (2021). Nepal's gender-based violence and gender equality funds: The path to effective implementation [Policy brief]. FWLD. <https://nepal.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/np-the-path-to-effective-implementation-english.pdf>

- » Between 2016 and 2024, women-owned businesses make up just 10%, compared to 90% owned by men.¹¹ On a brighter note, a recent IFC study of six commercial banks in Nepal highlights that the country's banking industry leads South Asia in women's representation in the workforce.¹² However, this progress hasn't yet translated into women taking on leadership roles in the sector.

Achievements

» Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Since 2007, Nepal's government has adopted a gender-responsive budgeting approach, which ensures that budgets across all ministries, departments, and agencies consider gender equality. Budgets are now classified as directly gender-responsive, indirectly responsive, or gender-neutral, with a growing focus on gender-specific initiatives.¹³ Starting with only 11.3% in 2007, the allocation for gender-responsive programs reached 43.86% by 2024. With the National Gender Equality Policy introduced in 2021, the government has committed to building a governance system that actively supports gender equality; ensuring resources are dedicated to women's empowerment at every level of government. Nepal's Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) efforts are led by the Ministry of Finance, with support from a Gender Responsive Budget Committee (GRBC) that includes members from various federal ministries. At the local level, the GRB framework is guided by policies like the Local Government Operation Act of 2017. Since Nepal adopted a federal system in 2015, local governments have taken on a larger role in promoting GRB, with female Deputy Mayors often leading committees focused on gender equality and women's development initiatives in their communities.¹⁴ In the last 15 years, there has been an almost four-fold rise in direct gender-responsive budgeting, from 11 percent in 2007/08 to 43.9 percent in 2024/25.¹⁵ The Government of Nepal has made gender-responsive budgeting mandatory at the provincial and local levels.

During the reporting period, microfinance played an important role in empowering rural women, enhancing their financial independence and social status. Through participation in microfinance programs, rural women have gained ownership of assets, greater decision-making power within their households, increased mobility, and improved social reputations. These programs have equipped women with the tools to take control of their lives, launch businesses, and support their families, thereby promoting greater economic participation.

» Pro- Poor Focused Programs

The Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty Alleviation (MoLCPA) in Nepal has been actively working on poverty reduction through the implementation of over 50 programs aimed at supporting low-income and marginalized communities. Recognizing the importance of targeted assistance, the Ministry introduced a system of identity cards in the fiscal year 2022/23.¹⁶ These cards are issued to low-income families, providing them with an official means of identification for accessing government services and benefits. As of the most recent update, the MoLCPA has

- World Bank.(n.d.). Nepal. World Bank.<https://liveprod.worldbank.org/en/economies/nepal>
- International Finance Corporation. (2023). *Women's advancement in banking in emerging South Asian countries: Multi-country report covering Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka*. International Finance Corporation. <https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/2024/women-s-advancement-in-banking-rising-south-asian-countries.pdf>
- Bhul, B. (2022). *Gender responsive budgeting and its implementation efforts in Nepal*. Journal of Management and Development Studies, 31(1), 10–22. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jmds.v31i01.52849>
- Bhul, B. (2022). *Gender responsive budgeting and its implementation efforts in Nepal*. Journal of Management and Development Studies, 31(1), 10–22. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jmds.v31i01.52849>
- Government of Nepal, Ministry of Finance.(2024). *Budget speech of fiscal year 2024/25*.https://www.mof.gov.np/public/uploads/document/file/1724825318_Budget%20Speech%202024_25%20English%20FV.pdf
- Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty Alleviation.(2022/23).*Procedure to distribute Identity Cards to Poor Families*.<https://molcpa.gov.np/department/page/528>

identified 223,330 households in 23 districts and an additional 271,460 households in 15 more districts as eligible for the identity cards.¹⁷ The issuance of these cards is expected to be completed by the end of the next fiscal year. The identity cards will serve as a critical tool in ensuring that government services are efficiently and fairly distributed to those most in need. One of the key programs associated with the identity cards is the “Garib Sanga Bisheshwor (Bisheshwor with Poor) program, which is designed to provide targeted financial assistance and support to impoverished households. By streamlining the process of aid distribution, the identity cards will help to reduce administrative barriers, ensuring that assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries.

» **Support for Women Entrepreneurs**

The Industrial Enterprises Act 2020 includes provisions for incentives to promote women entrepreneurs. Women registering industries in their names receive a 35% discount on registration fees and a 20% discount on registering industrial property like patents, designs, and trademarks.¹⁸ In 2021–22, concessional loans at a 5% interest rate were also made available to micro and medium enterprises, including those run by women returning from foreign employment. However, women-led businesses still face challenges, as they are twice as likely to have their loan applications rejected compared to others.¹⁹

» **Increase in Female Heads of Households**

According to 2021 Census, 31.55 percent of the total households (6,666,937) are headed by female, which is an increase of 5.82 percent since 2011.

» **Economic Participation of Women Increased**

Between 1971 and 2021, the percentage of the female population over the age of ten who are economically active has increased from 29.2 to 60.4 percent. One of the major reasons for the increase in women's economic activity in Nepal is education. Over the years, there has been a significant improvement in women's education in the country. In 1981, only 9.15 percent of Nepali women were literate, which increased to 34.8 percent in 2001 and further to 48.8 percent in 2011. It now stands at 69.4 percent in 2021. The increase in literacy rates has resulted in more women joining the labor force.

Since 2007, Nepal's government has adopted a gender-responsive budgeting approach, which ensures that budgets across all ministries, departments, and agencies consider gender equality. Budgets are now classified as directly gender-responsive, indirectly responsive, or gender-neutral, with a growing focus on gender-specific initiatives. Starting with only 11.3% in 2007, the allocation for gender-responsive programs reached 43.86% by 2024.

Key Challenges

- » **Persistent Gender and Regional Disparities:** Despite significant progress, gender disparities continue to persist, particularly in impoverished and rural areas. Women in regions like *Sudurpaschim* and *Karnali* face substantial barriers to accessing education, healthcare, and financial independence. Rural poverty rates are notably higher.

17. Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty Alleviation.(2021/22).*MoLCPA Annual Progress Summary, FY 2021/22* (para. 5.15). <https://molcpa.gov.np/department/page/523>

18. The Industrial Enterprises Act, 2076 (2020).(2080, Ashwin 25).Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Branch. <https://doind.gov.np/detail/196>

19. Dhakal, M. (2023, December 31). Poor policy backup, cumbersome process disappoint women entrepreneurs. The Rising Nepal. Retrieved from <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/36957>

- » **Low Female Entrepreneurship Rates:** Women face significant challenges in establishing and growing businesses in Nepal. Despite incentives provided by the Industrial Enterprises Act (2020), such as discounts on registration fees and concessional loans, women-led businesses still encounter obstacles. These include limited access to credit, with women twice as likely to have their loan applications rejected compared to men, as well as a lack of institutional support for women entrepreneurs.
- » **Poverty Alleviation and Resource Distribution Gaps:** While the government has implemented several programs aimed at poverty reduction, such as the *Garibsanga Bisweswor* program, challenges remain in ensuring that the benefits of these initiatives are effectively and equitably distributed. The issuance of identity cards to low-income families is an important step, but logistical and administrative barriers could hinder the timely and efficient delivery of support.
- » **Women's Economic Independence and Property Rights:** Although women's access to property ownership has improved, with 23.8% of women owning property, the percentage remains low. Women's financial independence is often constrained by traditional social structures and legal challenges, despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing inheritance and property rights.
- » **Unequal Access to Remittances and Financial Services:** While women contribute significantly to remittances (11% of total income), their role in the formal financial system remains limited. Access to financial services is often constrained by gender, with women facing difficulties in securing loans, owning assets, or engaging in formal financial activities.
- » **Inconsistent Implementation of Gender-Responsive Budgeting:** Despite the substantial increase in gender-responsive budgeting (from 11.3% in 2007 to 43.86% in 2024), challenges remain in ensuring consistent and transparent implementation across all levels of government. Local governments, while taking on a greater role in gender equality, may lack the necessary capacity and resources to effectively execute gender-specific initiatives.

The Industrial Enterprises Act 2020 includes incentive provision for women entrepreneurs, including a 35% discount on industry registration fees and 20% off for registering patents, designs, and trademarks. In 2021–22, concessional loans at 5% interest were introduced for micro and medium enterprises, including those run by women returning from foreign employment. Despite these measures, women-led businesses face significant challenges, with loan rejection rates twice as high as others.

Recommendations

- » **Improve Policy Execution:** It is important to make sure existing policies are put into action properly. This includes regularly checking if the policies are helping the right people and making improvements if needed.
- » **Increase Digital Access for Women:** Expand programs that teach women, especially in rural areas, how to use technology. This will help close the gap in digital skills and open up new job and business opportunities.
- » **Support Climate-Resilient Programs for Women:** Create programs that help women in agriculture adapt to climate change. These programs should help them protect their jobs and keep their businesses running even in changing weather conditions
- » **Support Women's Economic Growth:** Keep providing programs that help women learn skills, manage finances, and start businesses. Make sure these programs are easy to access and truly help women improve their lives.
- » **Consider All Aspects of Women's Lives:** Take into account how factors like ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation affect women, especially those living in poverty. This will help create better solutions for all women.

- » **Set up Local Labor Desks:** Although the Local Government Operation Act 2017 says local governments should set up labor desks, many areas haven't done this yet. It's important to focus on setting these desks up so that workers can get help with labor rights and services at the local level.
- » **Include Workers in Informal Sectors in Social Security:** Launch a campaign to make sure workers in informal sectors like restaurants, dance bars, spas, and other similar jobs are included in social security. This will provide them with important benefits and protections that they currently don't have.
- » **Invest in women's economic empowerment programs:** The Nepal government should invest in programs that enhance women's economic empowerment by expanding vocational training, improving access to credit, and supporting women entrepreneurs.

Education and Training of Women

Background

Acknowledging the right to education as a fundamental right of every human being, Nepal's Constitution of 2015, in its Article 31, outlines several provisions related to education rights. It ensures that every citizen has the right to access basic education and guarantees compulsory and free education up to the basic level, as well as free education up to the secondary level. Citizens with disabilities and economically disadvantaged individuals are entitled to receive free higher education, in accordance with the law. The Constitution further ensures that visually impaired citizens are provided free education through Braille script, while those with hearing or speaking impairments are entitled to free education through sign language, as stipulated by law. Additionally, every Nepali community residing in Nepal has the right to receive education in its mother tongue and is empowered to open and operate schools and educational institutions to support this right. In line with the constitutional provisions, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has prioritized the education and training of women to promote gender-responsive human development. This includes policies, strategies, legal frameworks, and institutional mechanisms that align with the constitutional mandate for women's equal rights to access educational opportunities. In line with the constitutional provision, Compulsory and Free Education Act, 2018 was promulgated aiming to establish a "Literate Nepal" (*Sakshar Nepal*) by ensuring that basic education is free and compulsory for children aged 5 to 13.

Due to the constitutional and legal provisions, enrolment, particularly for girls, has increased in primary schools. However, there are still many challenges including high drop-out rates amongst girls, repetition of grades and absenteeism. 9% of girls in primary school repeat grades and 4.1% drop out of primary school. This figure rises to 8.7% in secondary school.¹

Achievements

» Landmark Provision of Free and Compulsory Education

Three years after the promulgation of Nepal's Constitution, the parliament enacted the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2018, which guarantees every child between the ages of 4 and 13 the right to free and compulsory education until the completion of basic education, along with free secondary education. This represents a major paradigm shift, as it is the first time in Nepal's history that education has been made both free and compulsory. While the Constitutions of 1959 and 1962 did not include the right to education, the 2007 Interim Constitution granted free education up to the secondary level, and the 2015 Constitution made education both free and compulsory for all Nepali citizens. One of the most significant provisions of the Act is the scholarship system for students in private schools. The Act mandates that private schools set aside a certain percentage of seats for scholarship candidates: 10 percent for schools with up to 500 students, 12 percent for schools with

1. Girls' Education Challenge. (n.d.). Nepal. <https://girlseducationchallenge.org/countries/country/nepal>

up to 800 students, and 15 percent for schools with more than 800 students. This provision ensures that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to quality education, further supporting the right to education for all.²

» Improved Gender Parity in Enrollment

Nepal has made significant progress in female school enrollment, with gender parity in school enrollment showing improvement, as reflected in the net enrollment rates of 0.99 at the basic education level and 0.93 at the secondary level.³ This progress is a result of various initiatives, policies, and programs aimed at addressing the challenges that girls face in accessing education. The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) and the School Sector Development Program (SSDP) 2016-2024, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are key strategies that the government has implemented to overcome barriers such as early marriage, gender-based violence, and socio-cultural constraints that often hinder girls' education. These programs, supported by the National Education Framework, focus on promoting gender equality and ensuring that girls have the same educational opportunities as boys.

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» Rising Female Literacy Rates

Female literacy in Nepal has shown remarkable growth. By 2021, literacy rates rose to 69% for women, a substantial improvement from earlier decades, though gaps persist compared to men's literacy rates (84%).

» Girl's Access to Technical and Vocational Education

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Strategic Plan (TSSP 2023/2032) that GoN had introduced, aligning with the 2015 Incheon Declaration, aim to eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to education and vocational training for vulnerable groups by 2030. The plan includes strategies to promote geographical, gender, and social inclusion through scholarships and incentives.⁴

» Education Policy Addressing Girls Education's Challenges

The Government of Nepal is implementing several key education policies/plans, including the Nepal School Education Sector Plan (SESP) 2022/23–2032/32,⁵ and the National Education Policy, 2076 (2019),⁶ with a strong focus on gender equality and girls' education. These policies aim to eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to education for girls. For example, the SESP sets a

2. Jha, J. (2019, November 25). Free education by law. Republica. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/free-education-by-law/>
3. Government of Nepal. (2024). *National review report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Submitted for the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)* (p. 40). https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_nepal_en.pdf
4. Government of Nepal. (2022). Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector strategic plan 2023–2032 (p. 47). https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/nepal_TVET%20Sector%20Strategic%20Plan_2023-2032.pdf
5. Government of Nepal. (2022). *Nepal school education sector plan 2022/23–2032/32*. https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/nepal_school_education_sector_plan_2022-23-2031-32_.pdf
6. Nepal Government. (2019). *राष्ट्रिय शिक्षा नीति, २०७६* [National Education Policy, 2076]. Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Government of Nepal. <https://ugcnepal.edu.np/uploads/web-uploadsfiles/National%20Education%20Policy%2C%202076.pdf>

goal to increase access to education for children with disabilities, aiming for 100% enrollment in primary education by 2032. The plan proposes improving physical accessibility to schools, enhancing teacher training to include inclusive pedagogies, and increasing support services for students with special needs. The plan also prioritizes improving the quality of education for all students, with specific targets for reducing school dropout rates and improving learning outcomes.

» **Updated Equity Strategy and Vision for Education**

The Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector, 2014 which has explicitly included activities to promote equity in school education,⁷ is being updated now to further address inclusion issues, and the Vision Paper for Education, 2022 emphasizes gender-sensitive approaches.⁸ Additionally, the Grievance Handling Procedure, 2017 has been established so that gender-based complaints in schools be addressed ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for female students. These initiatives aim to enhance girls' educational access, reduce dropout rates, and tackle barriers such as child marriage and gender-based violence.

» **Establishment of Adolescent Friendly Information Corner**

In order to address gaps in adolescent sexual and reproductive health education, the Adolescent-friendly Information Corner Operation Model Procedure 2077 BS has been introduced. The procedure approved by the Government of Nepal, provides a framework for setting up information corners in schools to support adolescent sexual and reproductive health education. Managed by the Ministry of Education's Centre for Education and Human Resource Development with support from UNFPA and other organizations, the information corner enables students to ask questions and discuss their SHRH concerns.⁹

» **Girls Scholarship Program**

Girls' scholarship programs (GSP) have been established to support girls and children from marginalized communities, aiming to promote educational inclusivity and reduce dropout rates. These scholarships cover a range of demographics, including Dalit students, economically disadvantaged and academically gifted students, children with disabilities, children of martyrs and victims of armed conflicts, students from marginalized communities, and those belonging to endangered indigenous groups. Additionally, the GSP provides specific scholarships for students from Karnali Province, recognizing the unique socio-economic challenges faced by this region. These initiatives seek to ensure that children from vulnerable backgrounds have greater access to education, enabling them to complete their schooling and improve their future opportunities.

» **Increase in Female Teacher Numbers, Despite Slow Progress**

Nepal's educational policies emphasize enhancing gender representation in teaching, particularly at the primary level. Rule 12 of the Education Regulations 2003 (2059 BS) mandates a minimum quota for

The Adolescent-friendly Information Corner, managed by the Ministry of Education's Centre for Education and Human Resource Development with support from UNFPA and other partners, aims to provide a safe space for students to ask questions and discuss their health concerns. These corners will play a crucial role in improving access to accurate, age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information for adolescents, fostering a supportive and educational environment.

7. Department of Education. (2014). *Consolidated equity strategy for the school education sector in Nepal*. [PDF]. <https://www.doe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/47441f6a3f1e62dedb7bb91655b8df92.pdf>

8. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2023). *Concept paper on education*. Singhadurbar, Kathmandu. Retrieved from https://media.edusanjal.com/u/-_watermark-1.pdf

9. RSS. (2021, January 17). *Adolescent-friendly Information Corner Operation Model Procedure 2077 BS approved*. Edusanjal. <https://edusanjal.com/news/adolescent-friendly-information-corner-operation-model-procedure-2077-bs-approved/>

female teachers based on the number of teaching positions in a school. Specifically, primary schools with up to three teachers are required to have at least one female teacher. Schools employing up to seven teachers must include at least two women, while those with more than seven teachers must appoint at least three female educators. These provisions aim to promote gender equity and inclusivity within the education sector. This rule was established to promote gender balance in the teaching workforce. Similarly, The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) for 2016/17-2022/23 (2073/074-2079/080 BS) also acknowledges the low representation of female teachers, particularly in secondary education. Strategy (e) of the SSDP, focused on teacher management and professional development, states that efforts will be made to fill reserved quotas for targeted and marginalized communities and women. Another key area for female educators is Early Childhood Development Centers (ECDs), which play a crucial role in early childhood education across Nepal. The employment of female educators in these centers is particularly important as these teachers often serve as foundational role models for young children in their formative years.¹⁰ This apart, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has implemented provisions to appoint nursing teachers in schools to ensure health surveillance and prevent sexual violence against children. With all these policy provisions, female teacher in school has increased with 54.1% at the primary level (grades 1-5), 43.2% at the combined primary and lower secondary level (grades 1-8), but only 19% at the secondary level (grades 9-12). In Nepal's Early Childhood Development (ECD) program, 99% of educators and facilitators are women.¹¹

» **Bank Khata Chhoriko Suraksha Jiwan Bhariko: A Campaign for Girls Education and Financial Security**

Since 2019, Karnali Province has been running a program called "Bank Khata Chhoriko Suraksha Jiwan Bhariko" to promote gender equality and provide financial security for girls. Under this initiative, a bank account is opened for girls born after July 2019, with an initial deposit of 1,000 rupees from the government. Following that, 500 rupees are deposited monthly until the girl reaches 20 years of age. However, if the girl marries before turning 20 or fails to complete secondary education, she will not receive the accumulated funds.¹² Although the program was included in the government's annual plans, it was discontinued after three years of implementation.¹³ The aim of the initiative was to address gender-based discrimination in schools, reduce child marriage, and improve girls' access to secondary education, while ensuring their financial security for the future.¹⁴ The local representatives and local stakeholders are demanding smooth operation of the initiative.

10. Sigdel, S. (2022, March 9). *हाक्का विद्यालयहरूले ५० प्रतिशत महिला शिक्षक कहिले पाउलान् ?* Setopati. <https://www.setopati.com/blog/264154>
11. Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MoW/CSC). (2021). *A progressive journey to gender equality and women's empowerment: Achievement of Nepal* (p. 29).
12. Office of Chief Minister and Council of Ministers, Karnali Province. (2019). *बैंक खाता छोरीको सुरक्षा जीवन भरि को कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन कार्यविधि* [Bank account for daughters: Guidelines for the operation of the program ensuring lifelong security]. Government of Nepal. https://ocmcm.karnali.gov.np/sites/ocmcm/files/2019-12/%E0%A4%AC%E0%A5%88%E0%A4%82%E0%A4%95%20%E0%A4%96%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%A4%E0%A4%BE%20%E0%A4%9B%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8B.%20%E0%A4%B8%E0%A5%81%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B7%E0%A4%BE%20%E0%A4%9C%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%A8%20%E0%A4%AD%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8B%20%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%AE%20%E0%A4%B8%E0%A4%82%E0%A4%9A%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B2%E0%A4%A8%20%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%A7%E0%A4%BF_0.pdf
13. Yogi, R. (2024, April 26). *कर्णाली सरकारका चर्चित कार्यक्रम अलपत्र* [Karnali government's popular program stalled]. Sajhabisaunee. <https://sajhabisaunee.com/archives/48657>
14. Upadhyay, N. (2024, May 29). *बैंक खाता छोरीको: सुरक्षा जीवनभरिको कार्यक्रम अलपत्र* [Bank account for daughters: A program for lifetime security left in limbo]. Nagarik News. Retrieved from <https://nagariknews.nagariknetwork.com/social-affairs/1437040-1716864719.html>

» **Madhesh Province's Beti Padhau Beti Bachau Campaign**

Madhesh Province has launched the *Beti Padhau Beti Bachau* (Educate Daughter, Save Daughter) campaign to improve girls' education across eight districts. Introduced in 2019, the program provides school-going girls with bicycles to make traveling to school easier and to help them build social connections.¹⁵ Additionally, baby girls born on or after January 15, 2019, are insured under the program, with each insured girl entitled to NPR 125,000 upon obtaining her citizenship certificate to support her education.¹⁶ Beyond financial support, the campaign includes activities to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education, prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in schools, and foster shared responsibility among parents and communities for ensuring education for girls.¹⁷ Despite disruptions caused by COVID-19 and administrative challenges, the program has successfully insured 16,000 girls as of November 2024.¹⁸ However, the initiative has faced criticism over alleged fund mismanagement, particularly regarding the allocation for bicycle purchases.¹⁹

Despite disruptions caused by COVID-19 and administrative challenges, the Beti Padhau Beti Bachau (Educate Daughter, Save Daughter) program has successfully insured 16,000 girls as of November 2024. However, the initiative has faced criticism over alleged fund mismanagement, particularly regarding the allocation for bicycle purchases.

» **GoN's Continuous Focus on Ending Child Marriage**

Nepal's National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage, adopted in 2016, aims to eliminate child marriage by 2030 and has positively impacted girls' education by reducing early marriage, a major barrier to schooling. Provincial governments have also implemented local policies and strategies aligned with the national framework, focusing on raising awareness, promoting girl-friendly schools, and offering incentives to keep girls in education.²⁰ These combined efforts at both national and provincial levels are helping reduce child marriage and improve educational opportunities for girls. In a recent

15. Rastriya Samachar Samiti. (2022, July 4). *Daughter education insurance scheme resumes in Madhes*. Nepalnews. <https://nepalnews.com/s/nation/daughter-education-insurance-scheme-resumes-in-madhes>
- Sharma, B. (2022, August 4). *CIAA files corruption case worth Rs 103 million against six people, claiming irregularities in Madhesh Province's Beti Padhau Beti Bachau campaign*. Republica. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/ciaa-files-corruption-case-worth-rs-103-million-against-six-people-claiming-irregularities-in-madhesh-province-s-beti-padhau-beti-bachau-campaign/>
16. Rai, S. (2019, January 16). *State 2 kicks off Beti Bachau Beti Padhau campaign*. The Kathmandu Post. Retrieved from <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/01/16/state-2-kicks-off-beti-bachau-beti-padhau-campaign>
- The Rising Nepal. (2024, November 13). *16,000 girls insured under Chief Minister Beti Padhau, Beti Bachau campaign*. <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/51891>
17. Government of Nepal. (2076 B.S.). *सुसूच्यमन्त्री बेटी पढाउ बेटी बचाउ अभियान कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन निर्देशिका*, Ministry of Home Affairs. https://aaolahan.moha.gov.np/upload/bc602991dc6aga010938c8dc26d40694/files/%E0%A4%AE%E0%A5%81%E0%A4%96%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%A8%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%A4%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%80_%E0%A4%AC%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%9F%E0%A5%80_%E0%A4%AA%E0%A4%A2%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%89_%E0%A4%AC%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%9F%E0%A5%80_%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%9A%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%89_%E0%A4%85%E0%A4%AD%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%A8_%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%AE_%E0%A4%B8%E0%A4%9E%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%9A%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B2%E0%A4%A8_%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%A6%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%B6%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE_%E0%A5%A8%E0%A5%A6%E0%A5%AD%E0%A5%AC.pdf
18. The Rising Nepal. (2024, November 13). *16,000 girls insured under Chief Minister Beti Padhau, Beti Bachau campaign*. <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/51891>
19. Sharma, B. (2022, August 4). *CIAA files corruption case worth Rs 103 million against six people, claiming irregularities in Madhesh Province's Beti Padhau Beti Bachau campaign*. Republica. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/ciaa-files-corruption-case-worth-rs-103-million-against-six-people-claiming-irregularities-in-madhesh-province-s-beti-padhau-beti-bachau-campaign/>
20. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. (2016). *National strategy on ending child marriage*. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/rules/VRTXhT6sttna3TCjxW8UzzTsl75bK5TZhrGJZc-1625469299.pdf>

initiative to strengthen the existing framework, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens is preparing to introduce the National Strategy to End Child Marriage, 2081.²¹

» **Sanitary Pad Distribution and Menstrual Hygiene: Promoting Gender-Friendly Schools**

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has done some works towards making school gender friendly, although the efforts are limited. One notable initiative is the implementation of the Sanitary Pad (Distribution and Management) Procedure, 2019, which provides free sanitary pads to girls in public schools.²² This effort is part of a larger campaign promoting "dignified menstruation," encouraging communities to challenge menstrual stigma and taboos. In addition, the government has prioritized improving school facilities by constructing separate toilets for girls, offering scholarships, providing cash and non-cash incentives, and distributing day meals to support girls from marginalized communities.

» **Chief Minister Educational Reform Program in Lumbini Province**

The Chief Minister Educational Reform Program in Lumbini Province focuses on improving school infrastructure, enhancing academic quality, and providing targeted educational support to marginalized communities, including freed *Kamaiya* and *Kamlari*, *Badi*, *Gandarva*, and disabled students. This program offers scholarships and resources to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds access and succeed in education.

The government has made efforts to create gender-friendly schools by providing free sanitary pads to girls in public schools. Additionally, it has focused on improving facilities, such as building separate toilets for girls, offering scholarships, and providing incentives and midday meals in some places, to support girls, particularly from marginalized communities to increase their school-attendance.

Key Challenges

» **Inadequate Budget**

Government of Nepal has committed to allocating 20% of the national budget and 4-6% of GDP to the education sector, as outlined in the Dakar Agreement (2000) and the Incheon Commitment (2015). However, in practice, this commitment has not been fully realized. Over the past nine years, the education budget has remained between 10-12% of the national budget. The most recent allocation of 10.95% of the national budget to education reflects a slight decrease from the previous year. Furthermore, only 20.01% of the education budget allocated to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) is gender-responsive. This insufficient funding poses challenges in achieving the constitutional goal of free and compulsory basic and secondary education, as well as addressing gender inequalities in the sector.

» **Impact of COVID-19 on Education**

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted education in Nepal, amplifying existing inequalities, particularly for girls, *Dalits*, and children with disabilities. The shift to online and remote learning platforms, while necessary, highlighted deep digital divides. The 2021-2022 Annual Report from Nepal's Department of Education (DOE) notes that millions of students were reached through these

21. Rastriya Samachar Samiti. (2024, November 16). *National strategy on child marriage in the offing*. The Himalayan Times. Retrieved from <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/national-strategy-on-child-marriage-in-the-offing>

22. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. (2016). *National strategy on ending child marriage*. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/rules/VRTXhT6sttna3TCjixW8UzzTsl75bK5TZhrGJZc-1625469299.pdf>

platforms, but challenges in digital infrastructure, such as limited internet access and a lack of digital literacy, hindered access to education, especially in rural areas. Only 31% of rural households had internet access, making it difficult for many students to participate in online classes.

The 2022 Citizen's Education Report (CER) by ActionAid Nepal emphasizes the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized groups. Around 3.2 million children were out of school due to closures, with girls being particularly affected. The closure of schools and the shift to digital learning further marginalized female students, who often face socio-cultural barriers to education. This disruption increased the likelihood of early marriage and dropout, as families facing economic hardship were more likely to prioritize marriage for girls over education.

» **Gendered Digital Divide**

Despite efforts by the government to improve internet access in community schools, a digital divide remains, especially for girls, who make up a larger portion of students in these schools. A study by Plan International found that 45% of girls in rural Nepal had limited or no access to digital devices for online learning. Overall, while 63% of the population has internet access, only 31% of rural households are connected, highlighting the gap between urban and rural areas. This lack of access to digital resources makes it harder for students, especially girls, to continue their education online. Additionally, challenges like improving teacher skills, adapting the curriculum, and addressing mental health impacts further complicate the shift to virtual learning.

» **Access and Equity Barrier**

Although the net enrollment rate in primary schools is high at 97%, around 770,000 children aged 5-12 remain out of school. Marginalized children, particularly from low-income families, face major disparities in academic achievement, with only 12% meeting literacy and numeracy milestones compared to 65% of children from financially sound families. Social exclusion, disabilities, gender biases, and geographic isolation exacerbate inequities, leaving Dalit children, sexual minorities, and other vulnerable groups particularly disadvantaged.

» **Failures to Meet Quality Standards in Education**

Many students, particularly in grades 3, 5, and 8, do not meet the academic achievement criteria for core subjects like Nepali and mathematics.²³ There is a need for better teaching practices and professional development for teachers to improve learning outcomes.

» **Inadequate Earthquake, Gender- and Disability-friendly Infrastructure**

Only 11% of school buildings in Nepal are earthquake-resistant, a major concern considering the country's vulnerability to natural disasters. In addition to this, many schools lack basic facilities that are crucial for creating a positive learning environment. Most schools do not have gender-friendly or disability-accessible features, such as appropriate access to classrooms, libraries, and toilets.

» **Discrimination to Dalit and Students from Marginalized Communities**

In many schools, particularly in rural areas, discrimination against Dalit students and those from marginalized communities remains a significant issue. Students, who do not conform to traditional gender norms, including sexual minorities, often face bullying, which can lead to school dropout. Unfortunately, most schools lack proper systems to address bullying and harassment, especially against girls and sexual minorities, further hindering their ability to succeed in education.

23. UNICEF. (n.d.). *The challenge*. UNICEF Nepal. <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/education>

» **Perceived Economic Returns of Boys' Education**

Boys are often viewed as future breadwinners, with their education seen as a path to economic stability for the family. In this context, investing in boys' education is expected to generate financial returns, as they are anticipated to support their families and contribute economically. This belief is particularly prevalent in regions where men are more likely to inherit property or take on roles in family businesses. As a result, families may prioritize educational expenses for sons, often at the expense of their daughters' schooling, leading to limited resources, support, and encouragement for girls' education.²⁴

» **Education of Girls as an "Expenditure"**

In many traditional society, educating a girl is seen as a temporary benefit to her family, as she is expected to marry and join her husband's household, shifting any potential economic benefits to her in-laws. As a result, the idea of investing heavily in her education may feel like a "loss" or "expenditure" with no direct long-term benefit for her natal family.

Girls' education may therefore be deprioritized, with families viewing expenses on education beyond basic literacy and numeracy as unnecessary, especially if they hold the belief that a girl's main role is as a caregiver and homemaker.

» **Household Duties, Child Marriage and Cultural Barrier**

- Many girls faced increased household chores and caregiving duties during the pandemic, further limiting their time and ability to engage in online learning. This additional workload frequently took priority over their education.²⁵ Girls, especially those from low-income families or rural areas, often had limited access to devices, internet, and reliable electricity.
- Rate of child marriage is high in the *Tarai/Madhesh* region of the country. Twenty districts in the lowlands of Tarai have a high child marriage rate of 42.2 percent. The child marriage rate in the mountainous region is 33.1 percent. Among provinces, *Madhesh* (42.4 percent) has the highest rate of child marriage, while *Sudurpaschim* (29.1 percent) has the lowest.
- Many families believe marrying off daughters at a young age reduces the family's financial burden and upholds social reputations. This significantly disrupts girls' education, leading to high dropout rates among adolescent girls.
- In *Madhesh* and *Lumbini*, social norms often assign domestic responsibilities primarily to girls, expecting them to manage household chores, care for siblings, and support family businesses. These responsibilities can take precedence over education, resulting in irregular attendance and, ultimately, lower retention rates.
- Cultural restrictions on girls' mobility, reinforced by fears around safety and social reputation, limit their ability to travel to school, especially when schools are located far from home. Many parents worry about the safety of their daughters on the way to and from school, particularly in areas where harassment and violence against women and girls are prevalent.

» **Curriculum Content and Representation**

Textbooks and learning materials in Nepal often reinforce traditional gender roles, depicting men as leaders and scientists, while women are shown in nurturing or domestic roles. This limits girls' aspirations, particularly in fields like STEM. Additionally, the use of male pronouns or roles as the default in textbooks subtly implies that men are the primary actors in society. These gender biases

24. Based on the findings from provincial and national consultations.

25. Maharjan, R. (2023, February 12). *Nepalese girls still don't have equal educational opportunities*. D+C Development and Cooperation. <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/lives-young-women-nepal-are-determined-traditions-and-taboo-even-though-constitution>

restrict girls' ambitions, perpetuating inequality by discouraging them from pursuing diverse career paths and reinforcing harmful stereotypes. Revising textbooks to represent both genders equally is essential to creating an equitable educational environment.

» **Implementation Hurdle and Fund Mismanagement**

While programs like *"Bank Khata Chhoriko Suraksha Jiwan Bhariko"* in Karnali Province and *"Beti Padhau Beti Bachau"* in Madhesh Province have been designed to promote gender equality and improve girls' access to education, their implementation has faced significant challenges. In Karnali Province, the discontinuation of the *"Bank Khata Chhoriko Suraksha Jiwan Bhariko"* program after only three years has left many local representatives and stakeholders demanding its smooth operation to fulfill its goals of reducing child marriage and enhancing girls' financial security. Similarly, the *"Beti Padhau Beti Bachau"* initiative in Madhesh Province has faced allegations of fund mismanagement, particularly in the allocation for bicycles intended to support school-going girls. These issues highlight the need for sustained funding, transparency, and better administrative oversight to ensure the long-term success and impact of such gender-focused initiatives.

Recommendations

» **Increase Resource / Budget Allocation**

Achieving universal access to education with gender parity at all levels requires adequate resources and innovative interventions. Despite the government's vision of providing free and compulsory education, current funding in the education sector remains insufficient. A large portion of the education budget is directed toward operational costs, leaving limited funds for teaching and learning activities. To meet SDG 4 targets and fully implement national policies, the government should allocate at least 20% of the national budget and 4% of GDP to education. Alongside proper allocation, the efficient use of these funds is critical. A significant portion remains unspent, limiting the execution of vital development programs. The government should implement a robust monitoring system with mandatory spending ceilings to ensure that allocated funds are used effectively.

» **Adhere to the SDG Commitments**

To meet the SDG Target 4.5, which aims to eliminate gender disparities in education, the government must take stronger actions to promote equality and inclusion. This includes providing more support, scholarships, and incentives for girls from marginalized groups, such as those from poor households, remote areas, *Dalit* communities, indigenous groups, and girls with disabilities. To achieve these goals, the government should closely review the country's progress, allocate specific budgets for each goal, and strengthen the capacity of provincial and local governments to localize, implement, and monitor these efforts effectively.

» **Align Educational Policy Based on Provincial and Local Needs**

Despite the adoption of federalism in Nepal's Constitution, the development of education policies tailored to each province is still in progress. Given Nepal's socio-cultural diversity and regional disparities in socio-economic development, a centralized education policy is insufficient to address the unique challenges faced by each province. It is crucial for each province to develop its own education policies that reflect local needs and priorities. Provinces should invest in research that provides clear, practical insights, helping to design policies that address local challenges, promote inclusion, and improve education quality for all communities.

» **Adopt Comprehensive Approach to Address Social and Gender Issues**

An integrated and comprehensive approach is necessary from the government to address issues of child marriage, poverty, untouchability, unpaid care work for girls, and trafficking in person. Following

are some recommendations that the State and its concerned institution especially the Ministry of Education are:

- Work towards gender and disable friendly school infrastructure within a reasonable distance of communities.
- Provide adequate scholarship amount which addresses the market needs of public school's required expenses at least.
- Develop vocational training courses and informal skills related to education for school dropout girl students.
- Develop a strong monitoring mechanism to implement the policies that are enshrined in the Constitution, including policies that are made in various other institutions concerning girl's education.
- Ensure adequate and skilled psychological councilors are available in schools and colleges.

» **Safety and Security of Girls in Schools**

To enhance the safety of girls in schools, it's important to introduce self-defense courses, establish clear procedures for investigating and prosecuting cases of violence or abuse, and ensure schools are safe zones. This includes providing safe drinking water, separate hygienic toilets, and access to sanitary pads, creating a supportive and secure environment for girls to thrive.

» **TVET Scholarships**

Expand technical, vocational education and training (TVET) programs to equip girls/women students with practical skills that meet the demands of the job market. For this

- Provide adequate scholarship amount which addresses the market needs of public school's required expenses at least.
- Develop vocational training courses and informal skills related to education for school dropout girl students.
- Develop a strong monitoring mechanism to implement the policies that are enshrined in the Constitution, including policies that are made in various other institutions concerning girl's education.
- Ensure adequate and skilled psychological councilors are available in schools and colleges. Each province should have separate Province specific policies to address relevant issues and problems of each province. An education-related issue-based "pure, empirical or action research" is desirable to strengthen quality education for each of the specific groups of students.

» **Inclusive Education to Address Multiple Inequality and Justice Issues**

The Government of Nepal has recently passed an Inclusive Education Policy with a commitment to ensure universal quality education and adopt the principles of inclusion in education to promote overall education system. For inclusive and quality education girls-friendly and disable friendly school environment, disable inclusive teaching-learning activities in the classroom, including remedial education, as well as subsidiary programs like scholarships, mid-day meal, gender focal person, complain response mechanism, free sanitary pads, girls and inclusive education networks should be in place & managed properly. Hence the government should plan for the gender responsive budget for fostering the sense of justice, strengthening the government accountability and support better alignment of national budget with SDGs.

» **Research and Development**

The government should invest in continuous research and development to promote equality and inclusion in education. This includes conducting research to understand the root causes of gender gaps in education and how socio-cultural practices influence them. Additionally, the government needs to train enough teachers for inclusive education and ensure effective monitoring of these efforts. Support systems, scholarships, and incentives should be enhanced for girls from marginalized communities, including those from poor households, remote areas, Dalit communities, indigenous groups, and girls with disabilities.

» **Infrastructure Development**

Many school buildings are not gender- or disability-friendly, with inadequate infrastructure such as limited access to classrooms, libraries, and toilets. To address this, the government should prioritize upgrading existing school buildings and constructing new ones, particularly in rural areas, to create safe and inclusive learning environments. Schools should also be equipped with essential technological tools, including computers, internet access, and educational software, to enhance digital literacy and modernize teaching methods.

» **Capacity Building of Teachers in Community Schools**

Although teachers in community schools in Nepal receive training from the Government of Nepal, it is not sufficient. In this context, they need additional capacity-building training and exposure opportunities to model schools both within the country and abroad. Such initiatives would enable them to learn and apply new teaching methods, integrate technology effectively, and adopt innovative teaching styles in their daily teaching and learning activities.

Women and Health

Present Status

The Constitution of Nepal in its Articles 35 and 38 ensures rights relating to health and rights of women. Article 35 ensures that every citizen has the right to free basic health services, including emergency care, and the right to access information about their medical treatment. It also guarantees equal access to health services, as well as access to clean drinking water and sanitation. Article 38 focuses on women's rights, specifically the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health. Additionally, it provides women with special opportunities in education, health, employment, and social security through positive discrimination. Nepal also adopted International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action in 1989. The country remains committed to achieving Universal Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal targets 3.7 and 5.6, further reflecting its dedication to improving women's health and rights globally. Further, Nepal also has the Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive health Rights Act, 2018.

Achievements

- » The use of family planning methods among currently married women in Nepal has significantly increased. Between 1996 and 2022, the adoption of any family planning method almost doubled, rising from 29% to 57%. This growth shows the enhanced awareness, accessibility, and acceptance of family planning services. Similarly, the use of modern contraceptive methods increased steadily, from 26% in 1996 to 43% by 2022.¹
- » Nepal has made progress in improving child health over the past decades. Between 1996 and 2022, the number of children under the age of 5 dying decreased significantly, from 118 to 33 deaths per 1,000 live births. Similarly, infant deaths dropped from 78 to 28 per 1,000 live births, and deaths among newborns fell from 50 to 21 per 1,000 live births. These improvements highlight the success of efforts to enhance healthcare services for children and mothers across the country.²
- » Nepal has seen incredible progress in maternal health care over the years. The percentage of women receiving antenatal care from skilled providers for their most recent births has soared from just 25% in 1996 to an impressive 94% in 2022. This achievement reflects improved access to and awareness of essential health services for expectant mothers, ensuring safer pregnancies and healthier outcomes for both mothers and babies.

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1. Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP). (2022). *Nepal demographic and health survey 2022: Key indicators report* (p. 17). Ministry of Health and Population. <https://mohp.gov.np/uploads/Resources/Nepal%20Demographic%20and%20Health%20Survey%202022%20Key%20Indicators%20Report.pdf>
 2. Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP). (2022). *Nepal demographic and health survey 2022: Key indicators report* (p. 23). Ministry of Health and Population. <https://mohp.gov.np/uploads/Resources/Nepal%20Demographic%20and%20Health%20Survey%202022%20Key%20Indicators%20Report.pdf>

- » The percentage of live births that are assisted by a skilled provider has increased markedly, from 10% in 1996 to 80% in 2022.³
- » Towards the implementation of Nepal's constitutional and legislative guarantees, the government adopted Regulations on Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights, 2020 and Public Health Service, 2020; Safe Abortion Service Program Management Guideline, 2021; Adolescent Friendly Health Service Operationalization Guideline, 2022 and Disability Friendly Reproductive Health and Safe Motherhood Service Guideline, 2022. Also, an Interim Guidelines for Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health Service in context of the Covid-19 Pandemic, 2020 was adopted.
- » The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) has integrated comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in national curriculum from Grades 6 - 10. Also, a training manual for CSE training and a CSE resource book for teachers were developed and used for both the training of teachers.¹
- » "The GON has expanded Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn (CEONC) sites to all 77 districts of Nepal".
- » The *Bipanna Nagarik Ausadhi Upachar Kosh* provides financial assistance for individuals, including women, suffering from serious illnesses like cancer, kidney failure, and heart disease. Established as a relief mechanism for economically disadvantaged groups, the program ensures that healthcare remains accessible for all.
- » Rising temperatures, erratic weather patterns, and extreme events like floods and droughts exacerbate existing health risks, especially for women who rely on natural resources for their livelihood. In rural areas, women often face physical strain from collecting water and firewood, which increases the risk of musculoskeletal problems and exposes them to environmental hazards. Climate-induced stress can also lead to nutritional deficiencies, affecting pregnant and lactating women. Additionally, women are more vulnerable to reproductive health issues due to poor sanitation and water access, while the psychological impacts of climate disasters contribute to mental health challenges, further threatening their well-being.⁴
- » The Government of Nepal (GoN) has introduced the distribution of free sanitary pads, addressing menstrual health while contributing to the broader campaign of promoting "dignified menstruation." This initiative aims to challenge the stigma and taboos surrounding menstruation. Additionally, the government has taken steps to improve school facilities, such as constructing separate toilets for girls, ensuring better hygiene and privacy.⁵
- » Hospital Based One-stop Crisis Management Center (OCMCs)⁶ have been established in hospitals in all districts to support GBV victims.⁷ However, in practice, OCMCs have not been providing services to those victims who do not file a First Information Report (FIR).

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3. Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP). (2022). *Nepal demographic and health survey 2022: Key indicators report* (p. 26). Ministry of Health and Population. <https://mohp.gov.np/uploads/Resources/Nepal%20Demographic%20and%20Health%20Survey%202022%20Key%20Indicators%20Report.pdf>
 4. UN Women, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), & International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). (2021). *State of gender equality and climate change in Nepal*. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) & United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/11/state-of-gender-equality-and-climate-change-in-nepal>
 5. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. (2016). *National strategy on ending child marriage*. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/rules/VRTXhT6sttna3TCjjxW8UzzTsl75bK5TZhrGJjZc-1625469299.pdf>
 6. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Health. (2016). *Hospital based one-stop crisis management center (OCMC) operational manual 2067*: Unofficial translation, updated 2016 version [PDF]. https://www.nhssp.org.np/NHSSP_Archives/gesi/OCMC_Operational_manual_2067_2016.pdf
 7. Government of Nepal. (2023). *Nepal's seventh periodic report on CEDAW*. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/CEDAW1-1693735406.pdf>

The Helicopter Lifting

To Address High Risk Pregnancy in Remote Nepal

The Helicopter Lifting, launched in 2019 as part of the President Women's Upliftment Programme (PWUP), is an innovative initiative aimed at improving maternal health in Nepal's remote and mountainous districts. This 24/7 service provides life-saving air rescue for pregnant women and lactating mothers facing high-risk pregnancies and postpartum complications, ensuring they can reach medical facilities in a timely manner. With the program focusing on low-income, rural areas, it has made a significant impact in reducing maternal and infant mortality rates by providing free transportation for women who would otherwise not have access to critical healthcare services.⁸

Since its inception, the program has successfully airlifted 701 women and mothers, saving lives and preventing fatalities due to pregnancy-related health issues.⁹ Initially covering 18 districts fully and 29 partially, the program now operates across 34 districts, especially in those with low Human Development Index (HDI) scores. This initiative is widely popular due to its immediate life-saving impact, with the 24/7 service proving essential in areas where health posts lack adequate resources for safe deliveries.

Key Challenges

- » Although CSE is integrated into the national curricula, the subject containing most of the CSE content has become optional for Grades 9 and 10. This effectively reduces the amount of CSE provided through school education, as it may not be taught at all in some schools, and where it is taught, students may choose not to take it.
- » In Nepal, restrictive abortion laws continue to pose significant challenges to women's access to safe abortion services. Even when abortion is legally permitted, women and healthcare providers risk legal prosecution and imprisonment under charges of "illegal abortion." The law also prohibits abortion beyond 28 weeks of pregnancy, even if it is necessary to save a woman's life. Unfortunately, the government has not yet taken the necessary steps to reform the law, which still criminalizes abortion in many cases, nor has it repealed the provisions related to abortion in the National Criminal Code. This lack of legal reform leaves many women without the care and support they need.
- » In line with the recommendation of the WHO Abortion Clinical Guidelines,¹⁰ the Safe Abortion Service Program Management Guideline, 2021 has provisions related to expanding safe abortion services through self-managed abortion and telemedicine,¹¹

The prevalence of infertility among Nepali married couples ranges between 12 and 15 percent. While certain jurisprudence of assisted reproduction (AR) is recognized in laws, Nepal do not have an adequate legal framework concerning the issue of infertility. Despite Supreme Court's order to introduce a law related to AR, including surrogacy, in a petition filed by Pushparaj Pandey and Pravin Pathak in 2015, there is no initiatives made so far in this regard.

8. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC). (2020). *A progressive journey to gender equality and women's empowerment: Achievements of Nepal, 2020*. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/oCz7iCOxqikldQNpREjhO2pbqXilaQl4BhM5scc-1625557539.pdf>
9. Radio Nepal. (2024, October 23). *713 pregnant women receive air rescue under President's Women's Upliftment Program in Karnali*. Radio Nepal. <https://radionepalonline.com/en/2024/10/23/392583.html>
10. World Health Organization. (2022). *Abortion care guideline*. World Health Organization. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/349316/9789240039483-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
11. Ministry of Health and Population, Nepal. (2021). *The Safe Abortion Service Program Management Guideline* (p. 3). Ministry of Health and Population.

however, there is generic reluctance to implement the provisions related to self-managed and telemedicine abortion.

- » Media reports frequently highlight the issue of women giving birth on the road without skilled assistance, reflecting the unsafe delivery practices still prevalent in some areas. However, the government has not taken effective action to address the barriers women face in accessing safe, institutional deliveries. As a result, the right of Nepali women to dignified care during pregnancy and childbirth remains unfulfilled.
- » The prevalence of infertility among Nepali married couples ranges between 12 and 15 percent.¹² While certain jurisprudence of assisted reproduction (AR) is recognized in laws, Nepal does not have an adequate legal framework concerning the issue of infertility. Despite Supreme Court's order to introduce a law related to AR, including surrogacy, in a petition filed by Pushparaj Pandey and Pravin Pathak in 2015,¹³ there are no initiatives made so far in this regard.
- » Although there are several laws in place, such as the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2017), the SMRHR Act, and the Public Health Service Act (2018), they do not guarantee that Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services are treated as essential, especially during humanitarian crises. This gap leaves women, girls, and marginalized communities without critical protection and support for their SRHR needs during emergencies.
- » To end the AIDS epidemic, Nepal has set its national target to reach 95-95-95 by 2030 which simply aims to diagnose 95% of all HIV-positive individuals, provide antiretroviral therapy (ART) for 95% of those diagnosed and achieve viral suppression for 95% of those treated by 2030.¹⁴ However, the progress towards this target is currently lagging behind.
- » In some areas of Nepal, certain cultural practices continue to negatively impact women's health. One such practice involves women participating in rituals believed to help them escape from ghosts or supernatural afflictions. During these rituals, women may be subjected to physical harm and exploitation under the guise of treatment by traditional healers. These practices can lead to both physical injuries and mental health issues. In extreme cases, women may even be subjected to severe forms of abuse, such as being forced to consume harmful substances.¹⁵

Recommendations

- » The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, 2017, the SMRHR Act, and the Public Health Service Act, 2018, should be amended to recognize sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services as essential, including during humanitarian situations, in order to protect and promote the SRHR of women, girls, and other marginalized communities.

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12. Gautam, S. (2022, August 6). *Mind the legal gap: Nepal needs a robust law to institutionalise and regulate assisted reproductive technology*. The Kathmandu Post. <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2022/08/06/mind-the-legal-gap>
 13. Pushpa Raj Pandey v Office of Prime Minister, Ministry of Health and Population including others (writ no. 072-WO-0119) and Prabin Pandak v Office of Prime Minister and others (writ no. 072-WO-0120), decision date: August 25, 2015 (The Supreme Court had gave the decision that surrogacy services should be allowed only after formulating necessary laws) (<https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/sc-quashes-all-surrogacy-petitions/>)
 14. The world is embarking on a Fast-Track strategy to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 and so is Nepal. In order to end the AIDS epidemic, Nepal has set its national target is to reach 95-95-95 by 2030 which simply means by 2030: 95% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status; 95% of diagnosed HIV positive people will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy, and 95% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have a suppressed viral load (UNAIDS, 2015) (file:///C:/Users/dell/Downloads/Nepal-Stigma%20Index-2.0-Report-2022.pdf)
 15. Subedi, G., et al. (2020). *Women's health status in Nepal: Appraising continuity and change*. Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan, 27(2), 78-92. <https://doi.org/10.46521/pjws.027.02.0078>

- » The SRMHR Act should be reformed to fully decriminalize abortion in all cases, and to repeal abortion related provisions from the National Criminal Code.
- » Since there is a generic reluctance to implement the provisions related to self-manage and telemedicine abortion of the Safe Abortion Service Program Management Guideline, 2021, it should be implemented.
- » All levels of government should allocate a dedicated budget for reproductive health services and provide reasonable compensation to victims of offenses committed under the Act.
- » With the prevalence of 12 to 15% infertility among married couples, Nepal should introduce legal framework concerning the issue of infertility and assisted reproduction (AR).
- » The subject containing the content of CSE should be made compulsory in class 9 and 10.
- » In order to end the AIDS epidemic, Nepal has set a national target of reaching 95% by 2030 and should implement the necessary strategies accordingly.

Violence Against Women

Present Status

Violence against women is a pervasive violation of human rights,¹ which denies women's equality, security, dignity, and their right to enjoy all forms of fundamental freedoms.² It refers to various forms of violence, particularly perpetrated against women, stemming from their identity as women. It stems, in one way or another, from the normative role-expectations of women in society and the beliefs. It is an epidemic that is not limited to a specific culture, region, or country.³ It is prevalent in all of society.

The trend of gender-based violence (GBV) in Nepal has been steadily increasing. For example, GBV incidents increased from 19,303 in 2018/2019 to 20,753 in 2022/2023.⁴ During the COVID-19 pandemic, GBV surged significantly, with the National Women's Commission (NWC) recording 604 cases of violence against women in just two months, from March 24 to May 23, 2020, during the nationwide lockdown.⁵

Violence against women in Nepal is deeply rooted in cultural, social, and religious norms that reinforce male dominance and normalize the subjugation of women in families and society. Such attitudes create an environment where violence is often tolerated or justified, based on the belief that men have the right to control women. This mindset fuels various forms of abuse, including restrictions on menstruation, accusations of witchcraft, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other inhumane practices. There are many cases where women in *Chhau* Sheds have been subjected to severe abuse, including rape.

According to the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2022, one in four women (23%) aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, while 8% have faced sexual violence.⁶ Alarming, 6% of women who have been pregnant reported experiencing violence during pregnancy. Similarly, among married women or those with intimate partners, 27% have suffered physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from their current or most recent partner.

Despite high prevalence of violence against women, only 28% of women who have endured physical or sexual violence have sought help. Most women identify their current husband or intimate partner as the

1. United Nations, Eliminate violence against women, most widespread, pervasive human rights violation, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/11/1131047>, (last visited Jul. 10, 2022).
2. World Health Organization, Devastatingly Pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence, <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>, (last visited Jul. 10, 2022).
3. Anushka Nepal, Domestic Violence- An epidemic amidst the pandemic, WOREC, <https://worecnepal.org/content/247/2021-06-07>, (last visited Jul. 10, 2022) [hereinafter Anushka].
4. Nepal Police. (2023). FY 2079–80 annual infographics. Nepal Police. <https://nepalpolice.gov.np>
5. National Women's Commission (NWC). (2020). *First lockdown report (Chaitra, 2076–Baisakha 2077)*. National Women's Commission. https://www.nwc.gov.np/Publication_file/5edca7c05d490_First_Lockdown_Report_%28_Chaitra,_2076-Baisakha_2077%29.pdf
6. DHS Program. (2022). *Nepal 2022 demographic and health survey summary report* (Report No. SR275) [PDF]. <https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR275/SR275.pdf>

perpetrator (81%), followed by former partners (14%), and a smaller percentage cite in-laws, including mothers-in-law (5%). For those seeking support, the majority turn to their own families (63%), neighbors (35%), or friends (25%). Only a small percentage seeks help from the police (7%) or social service organizations (1%), and less than 1% approach religious leaders or lawyers.⁷

It is deeply concerning that 80 percent of sexual violence against women occurs within their own homes.⁸ Among various forms of domestic violence, psychological abuse is the most common, followed by physical, economic, and sexual violence.⁹ Furthermore, the victims are of different backgrounds. Most of them are housewives, followed by those involved in agriculture, labor, business, study, and employment.¹⁰ In the case of sexual violence as well, the victims are of different backgrounds students mostly, followed by those involved in agriculture, housewives, labor, employment, and business.¹¹ These data reflect that women whatever their background, age group, and educational status, have been subjected to violence.

Key Challenges

Nepal has enacted several laws to combat violence against women, including the Domestic Violence (Offense and Punishment) Act, 2009; the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention) Act, 2014; the Witchcraft-related Accusation (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2015; and the Muluki Criminal Code, 2017. These legal frameworks aim to address various forms of violence against women. However, despite these provisions, many women in Nepal continue to face abuse and violence in different forms. The situation is further exacerbated by systemic issues such as the lack of confidentiality for victims, biased and stereotypical public perceptions, inadequate sensitivity among law enforcement agencies, and a pervasive culture of victim blaming. These challenges undermine efforts to protect women and ensure justice. The progress and challenges on violence against women are listed as below:

- » Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person (Especially Women and Children) i.e. Palermo Protocol has been ratified by GoN on 16 June 2020.
- » GoN has enacted Crime Victim Protection Act in 2018 and its Regulation in 2022. Supreme Court of Nepal also has established Victim Relief Fund in June 2020¹² and it has also been established in every district court of Nepal.

Despite the high prevalence of violence against women, only 28% of those who have experienced physical or sexual violence seek help. The majority identify their current husband or intimate partner as the perpetrator (81%), followed by former partners (14%), while a smaller percentage cite in-laws, including mothers-in-law (5%). Among those seeking support, most turn to their families (63%), neighbors (35%), or friends (25%). Only a small fraction seeks assistance from the police (7%) or social service organizations (1%), and less than 1% approach religious leaders or lawyers.

Nepal has only 21 safe houses for GBV victims, which are grossly inadequate, inaccessible, and non-inclusive, particularly for persons with disabilities and LGBTI individuals. These facilities lack essential services such as social rehabilitation and family reintegration. The absence of a comprehensive legal framework further exacerbates the challenges survivors face.

7. DHS Program. (2022). *Nepal 2022 demographic and health survey summary report* (Report No. SR275) [PDF]. <https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR275/SR275.pdf> (pp. 451–458)

8. Nepal Police. (2022). *Annual infographics report FY 2078/79* [PDF]. Nepal Police. https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np/media/filer_public/bc/d0/bcd064f5-284a-492a-b424-def0a6800de2/fy-2078-79-annual-infographics-en.pdf

9. Id.

10. Id.

11. Id.

12. Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD). (2022). *Legal helpline service: Factsheet* (April 2020–June 2022). <https://fwld.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Legal-Helpline-Service-factsheet.pdf>

- » There are only 21 safe houses which are inadequate for the victims of GBV¹³; not disabled-friendly¹⁴ and are not accessible and inclusive to LGBTI. They lack social rehabilitation and family reintegration services. Comprehensive legislation is needed to integrate essential services for victims of gender-based violence (GBV), including immediate relief, medical treatment, psycho-social counseling, legal aid, compensation, and safe housing. Such a unified framework would streamline access to support and ensure survivors receive holistic care and rehabilitation.
- » The National Criminal Code¹⁵ criminalizes practicing social rites and rituals constituting caste-based discrimination. However, it does not criminalize practicing social rites and rituals constituting gender-based discrimination.
- » Despite criminalizing *Chhaupadi*,¹⁶ and dismantling 8,550 *chhaugoths* in two months¹⁷ its prevalence is still persistent. In the survey conducted among 14–19-year-old girls in two local levels of Dailekh district, 77% still actively practice *Chhaupadi*.
- » Out of 753 local levels, only 115¹⁸ have established the GBV elimination fund.
- » Hospital Based One-stop Crisis Management Center (OCMCs)¹⁹ have been established in hospitals in all districts to support GBV victims.²⁰ However, in practice, OCMCs have not been providing services to those victims who do not file a First Information Report (FIR).
- » Nepal Police established 232 Women, Children, and Senior Citizen Service Centers.²¹ Though the establishment is a positive initiation, there is no proper physical infrastructure (equipped with separate victim-rooms, and separate breastfeeding rooms). Also, the number of women officers deployed in the centers is also not adequate.
- » Despite the constitutional guarantee,²² no legislation has been enacted to integrate essential services for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), such as GBV funds, safe houses, and social rehabilitation. This gap leaves federal, provincial, and local governments unaccountable and fails to recognize these services as fundamental rights of survivors.

Nepal Police has established 232 Women, Children, and Senior Citizen Service Centers. While this is a positive initiative, the centers lack proper physical infrastructure, including separate victim rooms and breastfeeding spaces. Additionally, the number of women officers deployed in these centers is insufficient.

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13. Government of Nepal. (2023). *Nepal's seventh periodic report on CEDAW*. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/CEDAW1-1693735406.pdf>
 14. The study by NFD in 2020 found that 67 % of women with disabilities were victims of violence, but the rate of complaints was only 16 %, available at <https://www.khulamantha.com/english/news/8769>
 15. Government of Nepal. (2017). *The National Penal (Code) Act, 2017 (Section 165)*. Ministry of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs. <https://www.moljpa.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Penal-Code-English-Revised-1.pdf>
 16. Government of Nepal. (2017). *The National Penal (Code) Act, 2017 (Section 168)*. Ministry of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs. <https://www.moljpa.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Penal-Code-English-Revised-1.pdf>
 17. Government of Nepal. (2023). *Nepal's seventh periodic report on CEDAW*. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/CEDAW1-1693735406.pdf>
 18. Rastriya Samachar Samiti. (2022, December 4). *GBV prevention fund established in only 115 local levels*. The Himalayan Times. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/gbv-prevention-fund-established-in-only-115-local-levels>
 19. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Health. (2016). *Hospital based one-stop crisis management center (OCMC) operational manual 2067*: Unofficial translation, updated 2016 version [PDF]. https://www.nhssp.org.np/NHSSP_Archives/gesi/OCMC_Operational_manual_2067_2016.pdf
 20. Government of Nepal. (2023). *Nepal's seventh periodic report on CEDAW*. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/CEDAW1-1693735406.pdf>
 21. Government of Nepal. (2023). *Nepal's seventh periodic report on CEDAW*. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/CEDAW1-1693735406.pdf>
 22. Article 21, Constitution of Nepal

- » Lack of comprehensive law to address the issues of cyber-crime is another pressing challenge.²³ Current legal provision addressing different forms of GBV doesn't include direct and indirect forms of technology-facilitated GBV.
- » The Nepalese media have gradually becoming more aware of the risks of inappropriate reporting in cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). For instance, in February 2022, media outlets faced backlash for disclosing the identity of a rape survivor in a high-profile case, prompting them to adopt more sensitive practices.²⁴ However, the majorities of Nepali media remain insensitive to SGBV issues in particular and gender issues in general. In this context, separate legislation or Code of Conduct (CoC) emphasizing responsible journalism should be formulated to prevent sensational reporting of GBV cases, safeguard victim confidentiality, and avoid re-traumatizing survivors or perpetuating harmful stereotypes.
- » The Palermo Protocol, formally known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, has been ratified by Nepal, signifying its commitment to combating human trafficking in accordance with international standards.²⁵ However, several national laws related to anti-trafficking, including the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act of 2007, have not been updated to align with the protocol's provisions. Notably, the definition of trafficking in the Act falls short of the comprehensive scope outlined in the Palermo Protocol, which encompasses exploitation in various forms, such as forced labor, servitude, and organ removal, beyond sexual exploitation and transportation. This lack of alignment creates gaps in legal coverage and enforcement.
- » To effectively implement the Palermo Protocol, provincial and local governments are required to create laws to address human trafficking within their areas. However, as of October 2024, only Lumbini Province has developed legislation to establish and manage service and rehabilitation funds and centers, while Bagmati Province has introduced a Protection Policy. Other provinces and local governments have yet to achieve any concrete progress towards implementation of the protocol.
- » Combating Trafficking in Persons in Nepal requires collaboration across federal, provincial, and local governments, but significant gaps remain. While the National Committee for Controlling Human Trafficking (NCCHT), led by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens, oversees efforts at the national level, district-level mechanisms like the DCCHT have become inactive following the dissolution of Women and Children Offices during the federal transition. Moreover, the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act of 2007 does not mandate the establishment of anti-trafficking committees at provincial

Nepal has ratified the Palermo Protocol, demonstrating its commitment to combating human trafficking. However, national laws, including the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act of 2007, remain outdated and fail to fully align with the protocol. The Act's definition of trafficking excludes key aspects such as forced labor, servitude, and organ removal.

So far, Lumbini Province has enacted laws for rehabilitation funds and centers, and Bagmati Province has introduced a Protection Policy. Other provinces and local governments have made no concrete progress in implementing the Palermo Protocol.

23. Out of 4686 victims of cybercrime 2531 are girls and women, Annual Fact Sheet on GBV, July/Aug 2021 to Jun/July 2022, Nepal Police, available at https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np/media/flu_public/bc/do/bcd064f5-284a-492a-b424-def0a6800de2/fy-2078-79-annual-infographics-en.pdf

24. Pokharel, U. (2022, September 2). *Some do's and don'ts*. The Rising Nepal. <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/16173>

25. United Nations. (2000). *Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

and local levels, leaving these governments without clear obligations or mechanisms to address trafficking.

- » The GoN has not formulated law/policies to prevent violence and exploitation against women involved in commercial sex-work. Similarly, there have been no training or sensitization programs for law enforcement officials on providing protection and support to victims in a gender-sensitive manner.
- » Although commercial sex work is decriminalized in Nepal, it is not reflected in practice, as women involved in prostitution continue to be arrested by law enforcement officials.²⁶ Also, the government has not introduced exit plan for the women who wish to leave the commercial sex-work.

Recommendations

- » Ensure all 753 local levels establish the GBV Elimination Fund.
- » Ensure that the OCMCs provide services to the victims who do not wish to file FIR and that they are not devoid of any services.
- » Enact Umbrella Law on GBV Elimination fund to integrate services related to immediate relief and medical treatment including psycho-social counseling, legal aid, compensation, safe housing, social rehabilitation, and support for victims of GBV.
- » Government should introduce awareness raising programs against Chhaupadi and for the effective implementation of the provision criminalizing Chhaupadi.
- » Enact specific law to address the issues of cybercrime and the issue of technology facilitated GBV or online SGBV.
- » Amend Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007 and other national laws related to anti-trafficking in line with the Palermo Protocol.
- » Legislative amendments are needed to the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act of 2007 to establish anti-trafficking committees at the provincial and local levels, ensuring clear roles and responsibilities for all government tiers and enabling a coordinated response to trafficking in persons.
- » Formulate specific law/policy to prevent violence and exploitation against women involved in prostitution and design training and sensitization programs to law enforcement officials regarding the protection and support to victims in a gender sensitive manner and introduce exit plan by the government for the women who wish to leave prostitution
- » Establish proper physical infrastructure in the Women, Children and Senior Citizen Service Center including separate victim friendly rooms, separate breastfeeding rooms for lactating mothers and deploy adequate number of women officers in the centers.
- » A separate code of conduct should be established to ensure responsible journalism in reporting on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), focusing on preventing sensationalism, protecting victim confidentiality, and promoting gender-sensitive practices to safeguard the dignity of survivors.
- » The government should collaborate with the private sector to combat human trafficking and support the socio-economic reintegration of survivors. This partnership can focus on creating job placement programs, apprenticeships, and skill development initiatives tailored to the specific needs and capabilities of trafficking survivors.

26. Satyal, U. (2019, August 29). Police intensify crack down on sex workers. *The Himalayan Times*. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/police-intensify-crack-down-on-sex-workers>

Women and Armed Conflict

Introduction

The decade long armed conflict left deep scars on Nepali society, resulting in widespread human rights abuses, including enforced disappearances, displacements and gender-based violence from 1996 to 2006. During the decade long conflict, it devastated families and communities leaving women and girls particularly vulnerable with widespread sexual and gender-based violence in war-torn regions both as direct victims and as family members of those killed or disappeared. The armed conflict resulted in 17,886 deceased persons, 1530 disappeared persons, 79,571 displaced persons, 3142 abducted persons, 8935 disabled persons, 9000 widows and 314 women raped.¹

Despite facing physical and emotional trauma, economic hardships, and social exclusion during and after conflict, women played a vital role in maintaining social order and contributing to peace-building. They often took on responsibilities that challenged traditional gender roles, such as joining armed forces, sheltering displaced individuals, and engaging in peace efforts. Additionally, many women became caregivers for injured combatants or assumed the roles of household heads, single parents, and caretakers for elderly relatives.² While these contributions were crucial, they have often been overlooked in the transitional justice process.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) on November 21, 2006³ and the promulgation of the Constitution in 2015 marked significant steps towards peace and stability. The CPA included provisions for transitional justice mechanisms and effective remedies and reparations for victims of the armed conflict. It raised hopes for improved conditions for women and girls who had endured significant sufferings as among the verified 23,610 Maoist combatants, approximately 3,846 (about 20%) were women, although exact numbers remain unclear.⁴ Also, despite the promises of the CPA, implementation of transitional justice mechanisms has been inconsistent and unclear. During this transitional period, impunity remains a significant issue, with weak prosecution mechanisms and poor law enforcement allowing perpetrators to avoid punishments.

1. Ministry of peace and reconstruction, information received from Post Conflict Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Unit 2016
2. Chaulagain, J. (2024). *Women's access to post-conflict peacebuilding processes: Crossing gender boundaries in Nepal from war to post-war era* (Master's thesis, University of Oslo). Department of Theology, University of Oslo. <https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/112157/1/Jeevan-Chaulagain-final-MA-Thesis.pdf>
3. Government of Nepal, & Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). (2006, November 21). Unofficial translation of the *Comprehensive Peace Agreement* concluded between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). United States Institute of Peace. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/nepal_cpa_20061121_en.pdf
4. Thapa, L., & Canyon, D. V. (2017, April). *The advancement of women in post-conflict Nepal (Occasional Paper)*. Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. <https://apcss.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/17-Thapa-The-advancement-of-women-in-post-conflict-Nepal.pdf>

The post-conflict period in Nepal has brought some progress in addressing women's peace and security, with significant achievements like the establishment of a republican federal state, the abolition of the monarchy, and successful army reintegration. However, political instability and a lack of consensus among political parties continue to hinder the effective implementation of policies, including those aimed at promoting gender equality and social inclusion. While Nepal has made efforts with policies like the National Gender Equality Policy 2077 BS, ensuring meaningful inclusion and gender equality remains a challenge.

Achievements

Over the past five years, Nepal has made some progress in addressing the challenges faced by women during and after the conflict. While challenges remain, the country has implemented various legal, policy, and social reforms to include gender-sensitive approaches in peace-building, justice, and reconciliation efforts. This process, though slow and faced with obstacles, has shown progress. During his visit to Nepal in October 2023, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres remarked in the very line. He remarked that Nepal is closer than ever to starting a meaningful transitional justice process.

Legal and Policy Reforms

- » In 2024, the Government of Nepal enacted the Commission of Investigation on the Enforced Disappeared Persons and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act (third amendment), marking a significant milestone in the country's long-standing peace process. President Ramchandra Paudel authenticated this amendment bill following its passage by both houses of the Federal Parliament, with the House of Representatives endorsing it on August 15 and the National Assembly on August 22.⁵ This act is aimed at addressing unresolved cases from the nation's decade-long conflict (1996–2006) and achieving justice for victims. The act that was made to address the demands of civil society and international bodies for a more gender-sensitive approach, included clearer provision for the recognition and redress of sexual violence survivors and a included more inclusive definition of conflict-related human rights violation. The amendments includes⁶ :
 - Explicit inclusion of sexual violence in the scope of reparations.

KEY PROGRESS IN WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT IN NEPAL (2019-2024)

1. **Legal and Policy Reforms**
 - o TRC Act (2024) amendment with gender-sensitive provisions.
2. **Strengthened Transitional Justice**
 - o Enhanced support for women's needs in transitional justice.
 - o Victim-centered approach in peace dialogues and reconstruction.
 - o Implementation of the second NAP on UNSCR 1325 & 1820.
3. **Social and Economic Empowerment**
 - o Scholarships for children of conflict-affected families.
 - o Financial, legal, and psychological support for female survivors, although limited.
4. **Recognition of Women's Roles in Conflict**
 - o Acknowledgment of women's contributions during the Maoist insurgency.
 - o Increased role of women in local and global peacebuilding forums.

5. Post Report. (2024, August 29). *President Paudel authenticates transitional justice bill*. The Kathmandu Post. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2024/08/29/president-paudel-authenticates-transitional-justice-bill>

6. संसद सचिवालय, (2024). बेपत्ता पारिष्टिका व्यक्तिको छानबिन, सत्य बनाउने तथा मेलमिलाप आयोग ऐन, २०७९ लाई संशोधन गर्न बनेको विधेयक [Bill to amend the Enforced Disappearances, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2024]. संसद सचिवालय <https://hr.parliament.gov.np/uploads/attachments/xtiprcyv7hi2jbp4.pdf>

- Establishment of special mechanisms within TRC to address the needs of women survivors.
 - Emphasis on gender-sensitive investigations, especially for women who were victims of rape and other forms of gender-based violence during the conflict.
- » The amendments have been designed to meet international human rights standards and ensure that women who experience enforced disappearances, especially in cases related to sexual violence, are adequately protected and given proper legal redress.
- » The office of the Attorney General has established victim-friendly rooms in 58 out of 77 districts offices. Each of these rooms includes focal persons.⁷

Strengthened Transitional Justice Mechanisms

- » The amended TRC act now better recognizes women's needs in the transitional justice process. Women survivors of sexual violence, enforced disappearances and other conflict-related violence can now report their experiences and receive reparations that address their unique challenges.⁸
- » The provincial consultations as part of the Beijing+30 review, called on improving transitional justice processes in 2024. The consultation emphasized the importance of including women's voices in addressing past human rights abuses, offering them a platform to express their concerns directly. It, according to the participants, strengthened the call for a victim-centered approach in transitional justice (TJ), particularly for women affected by conflict-related violence, sexual violence, and enforced disappearances. The consultation noted that women's participation in peace dialogues, peace committees, and post-conflict reconstruction has grown. The consultation identified grassroots women's organizations and networks being key advocates for justice for conflict-affected women.
- » Reflecting on the implementation of the first National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 and 1820, the GoN approved and put into implementation the second NAP, with a focus on enhancing protection for women survivors of conflict and promoting the meaningful participation of women in peace building process.
- » Nepal became the largest troops contributing nation to UN peacekeeping missions also becoming the top contributor to female troops.⁹ Moreover, security forces conducts regular training on gender issues and UNSCR 1325 and 1820, in which approximately 3,500 Nepali Army personnel have already been trained on the mentioned subjects.

In 2024, the Government of Nepal enacted the third amendment to the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act to address unresolved cases from the nation's decade-long conflict (1996–2006) and ensure justice for victims. The amendment explicitly includes sexual violence within the scope of reparations, establishes special mechanisms within the TRC to address the needs of women survivors, and emphasizes gender-sensitive investigations, particularly for women affected by rape and other forms of gender-based violence during the conflict.

7. Government of Nepal. (2023). *Nepal's seventh periodic report on CEDAW*. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/CEDAW/1-1693735406.pdf>

8. संसद सचिवालय, (2024). बेपत्ता पारिष्टिका व्यक्तिको छानबिन, सत्य बनाउने तथा मेलमिलाप आयोग ऐन, २०७१ लाई संशोधन गर्न बनेको विधेयक [Bill to amend the Enforced Disappearances, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2024]. संसद सचिवालय <https://hr.parliament.gov.np/uploads/attachments/xtiprcyv7hi2jbp4.pdf>

9. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>

Social and Economic Empowerment of Conflict Affected Women

- » The Government of Nepal has continued to expand its pro-poor scholarship program, targeting children from conflict affected families, including those of female martyrs.¹⁰ This program has helped many young girls receive education and pursue opportunities, creating a pathway for economic empowerment. However, the Conflict Victims Women National Network (CVWN), a network of women conflict victims, has expressed concern that the scholarship program is often limited to those with better networks and access, leaving marginalized groups at a disadvantage.¹¹
- » Both government and non-governmental organizations have been involved in providing psychological support to women affected by conflict, although it is inadequate. This includes;
 - Trauma counseling services tailored specifically to women's needs.
 - Formation of community-based support groups for women survivors to share their experiences and receive mutual support.

Recognition of Women's Contributions during the Conflict

- » Women who actively participated in the Maoist insurgency are now receiving more recognition for their roles in combat, as medics, and in logistical and support roles. While they have gained greater visibility in the public sphere, there is still much work to be done to fully acknowledge and address the violations they endured during the conflict.
- » Women have been crucial in peace-building activities, especially at the local level. Their roles in community mediation, reintegration programs and post conflict healing processes have become more visible in recent years.¹²
- » Nepali women's rights organizations including WHR, have actively participated in global platforms such as the UN Human Rights Council and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), advocating for greater recognition of the needs of women affected by armed conflict. Their engagement in international advocacy has raised the profile of Nepal's efforts to address women and armed conflict and has strengthened support for gender-sensitive policies.

Victim Centered Approach in the TJ Initiative

- » Over the past 5 years, the TRC has emphasized victim centered approach in its policy paper. This has focused on:
 - Ensuring that women victims of sexual violence, enforced disappearance and displacement receive the support they need, including healthcare, financial aid and psychosocial counseling.
 - Providing avenues for women's voices to be heard in all TJ processes, including the establishment of gender-sensitive procedures for documenting testimonies and granting reparations. Its implementation however is lacking.

Conflict Victim Taking an Active Role in Peace Process

In Nepal, conflict-affected women are actively contributing to the peace process through various means. One notable approach is the formation of informal groups of conflict-affected individuals, alongside many women who work independently to advocate for change. A key organization in this movement is the Conflict Victims Women's Network (CVWN), founded by women victims of conflict to champion their rights and amplify their voices. Beyond advocacy, CVWN plays a pivotal role on behalf of civil society organizations (CSOs) in implementing United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, as well

10. <https://www.cehrd.gov.np/infocenter/17>

11. Based on consultation with CVWN

12. Singh, N. (n.d.). Role of women in Nepal's peacebuilding. Centre for Gender and Politics (CGAP). https://www.academia.edu/72496507/Role_of_Women_in_Nepals_Peace_Building?uc-sb-sw=24315886

as the Second National Action Plan (NAP II), for which it serves as the secretariat. Additionally, CVWN submits progress reports on NAP II implementation to the Nepal government, reinforcing accountability and transparency.¹³

Empowerment in War, Loss in Peace: The War-Torn Journey of female combatants

During the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, women combatants experienced significant empowerment as they broke free from traditional roles and societal constraints rooted in Hindu cultural norms. They actively participated in roles typically dominated by men, such as military training, combat, and leadership within the insurgency, while non-combatant women took on public and financial responsibilities in the absence of male family members. The Maoist emphasis on gender equality and the dismantling of caste and class hierarchies provided women with opportunities to challenge patriarchy and oppressive practices like child marriage and polygamy. This period marked a transformative shift in gender dynamics, fostering a sense of agency and collective strength among women, especially through grassroots mobilization and advocacy against social evils.

However, the post-insurgency period revealed the fragility of these empowerment gains. Many female ex-combatants faced social stigmatization, being wrongfully associated with violence and labeled ritually impure, while reintegration efforts largely failed to address their unique challenges. Structural inequalities and traditional norms reasserted themselves, forcing many women back into domestic roles and economic dependency on male counterparts. Inter-caste marriages facilitated during the conflict often resulted in rejection and isolation upon return to civilian life, particularly for lower-caste women. While some non-combatant women retained expanded roles in society, the systemic lack of support for ex-combatants and the persistence of patriarchal practices led to a regression in gender equality.¹⁴

Key Challenges

Despite significant achievements in the past five years, numerous challenges persist in fully addressing the complex and gendered needs of women affected by armed conflict.

- » Despite the passage of the amended TRC Act, which included provisions for gender sensitive approaches to sexual violence, the implementation of these amendments has been slow and continues to face challenges in;
 - Effectively investigating and documenting cases of sexual violence and enforced disappearances, particularly those involving women.
 - Providing reparations that are comprehensive and meaningful for women survivors, including psychosocial support and economic assistance.
- » The TRC and other justice bodies lack adequate gender sensitive mechanisms to collect testimonies and evidence from women, especially those who are traumatized or stigmatized.
- » Women have been underrepresented in leadership roles within transitional justice bodies including the TRC. This exclusion has led to policies and practices that may not fully address or prioritize women's concerns, leading to gaps in transitional justice outcomes for female survivors.
- » Many women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence or human rights abuses still lack access to legal support. While there are legal aid provisions, their reach and capacity are limited, especially for women in rural or marginalized areas.

13. Based on consultation with CVWN secretariat.

14. Based on the information gathered during the provincial and national consultation.

- » Women survivors of sexual violence and gender based violence often face social stigma, which discourages them from coming forward and seeking justice.
- » While TRC act amendments introduced provisions for reparations, the actual delivery of reparations has been inconsistent and often insufficient. These are gaps in the adequacy of reparations, including:
 - Insufficient financial compensation for long-term impact of conflict related violence.
 - Lack of targeted psychosocial support for female survivors, particularly those who have experienced sexual violence or forced displacement.
 - Failure to address the complex needs of women who have been displaced, marginalized or otherwise by the conflict in more holistic ways.
- » Gender responsive budgeting and social protection programs for conflict victims at the local level has not been systematically implemented at the local level, resulting in gender-blind policies that fail to address the specific needs of women affected by the conflict.
- » Despite the Supreme Court in its verdict on two victims' petitions (2 January 2014 and 26 February 2015) directed the government to consult victims and guarantee wider consultations with victims to ensure their active participation and representation in the transitional justice process,¹⁵ there is lack of meaningful consultations. In a case, Advocacy Forum, the Human Rights NGO working on TJ, has claimed such consultation being unprepared, formality and 'fake'.¹⁶
- » Although women have been active participants in peace-building efforts, their representation and leadership in decision-making roles remain limited.
- » The issue of sexual violence during the conflict remains largely unresolved as many cases of rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence were not adequately investigated or prosecuted during the conflict.
- » Although there has been some progress in providing medical and psychosocial services for women survivors of sexual violence from CSO, there is still a lack of specialized services that address their specific needs, such as;
 - Safe spaces for survivors to access legal, medical and psychological care.
 - Programs to reintegrate survivors into society, especially women who were stigmatized for being associated with armed groups during the conflict.
- » Data on women's experiences during and after the conflict is sparse and inconsistent. This lack of comprehensive data on sexual violence, enforced disappearances and other gender specific violations undermines efforts to provide appropriate support and implement effective policies.
- » Wives of disappeared individuals in Nepal face significant challenges in claiming property rights, accessing services, and receiving social security allowances due to the lack of proof of their husbands' deaths. As Nepali inheritance law requires confirmation of death, they are unable to inherit property. Additionally, they are excluded from social security benefits available to other single women, as civil law primarily addresses deceased individuals.¹⁷ Although a recent amendment to the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act aims to address this issue,¹⁸ victims are still waiting for the provision to be implemented.
- » Women who were victims of sexual violence, forced displacement or witnessed atrocities during the conflict often struggle with mental health issues, which has been neglected by the government in providing essential mental health services.

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15. Sarkin, J., & Bhandari, R. K. (2020). Why political appointments to truth commissions cause difficulties for these institutions: Using the crisis in the transitional justice process in Nepal to understand how matters of legitimacy and credibility undermine such commissions. *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 12(2), 444–470. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/huaa001>
16. Advocacy Forum. (2020, February). *Briefing paper on transitional justice consultation*. <https://www.advocacyforum.org/downloads/pdf/publications/tj/briefing-paper-on-tj-consultation-february-2020.pdf>
17. International Centre for Transitional Justice. (2013). *Beyond relief: Addressing the rights and needs of Nepal's wives of the disappeared*. <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Briefing-Nepal-WivesofDisappeared-2013.pdf>
18. संसद सचिवालय, (2024). बेपता पारिष्टका व्यक्तिको छानबिन, सत्य बनाउने तथा मेलमिलाप आयोग ऐन, २०७१ लाई संशोधन गर्न बनेको विधेयक [Bill to amend the Enforced Disappearances, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2024]. संसद सचिवालय

- » The children of conflict affected women, particularly those who were born during or as a result of sexual violence, face challenges related to intergenerational trauma.
- » Despite the increased participation of women in peace and security roles, structural barriers to women's full participation in the justice system and peace processes remain under-represented in key political, judicial and security sectors.
- » Local authorities often lack the capacity to enforce gender specific protections and ensure that women's rights are upheld in place to address gender-based violence and women's rights.

Five- Year Action Plan on Women and Armed Conflict in Nepal

- » Ensure that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) adopt gender-sensitive practices in documentation, investigation, and reparation processes. Develop targeted outreach programs to encourage the participation of women survivors, particularly those affected by sexual violence.
- » Create a dedicated Gender Desk to handle cases involving women and ensure they receive appropriate support. This unit should be staffed by experts in trauma and gender-based violence and trained to work with women survivors in a sensitive and supportive manner.
- » Implement reparations that address the specific needs of women, including livelihood support, scholarships for children of victims, healthcare and housing assistance. Ensure these programs are holistic and focus on long-term recovery.
- » Train counselors in gender-sensitive trauma care that is sensitive to the experiences of women survivors of sexual violence and other conflict related violations.
- » Facilitate the creation of community based support groups where women survivors can share experiences, advocate for their rights and receive the necessary support.
- » Encourage civil society to monitor TJ processes to ensure transparency and accountability, focusing on the inclusion and needs of women survivors.

Recommendations

- » Ensure that all TJ and peace building efforts align with Nepal's commitments to women, peace and security as outlined in the National Action Plan (NAP) related to UNSCR 1325 and 1820.
- » Encourage the inclusion of women in national and local level bodies to strengthen their voices in peace building.
- » Provide support to manage shelters run by government and NGOs for women and girls who are at risk due to violence and build capacity of shelter management staff.
- » Reparation programs should be prompt, adequate and effective and should strive to be transformative, including in design, implementation and impact.
- » Prioritize interests, expectations and demands of conflict affected women and girls through their participation while implementing programs through government and donors support with close involvement of local stakeholders.
- » Prioritize conflict affected women as per their capacity, skill, qualification and age in employment, business and income generating activities undertaken by private sector.
- » The budget must be adequately allocated to ensure effective implementation of the TJ processes.
- » Monitoring and evaluation activities should be efficient, with feedback effectively integrated to enhance implementation.

Women and the Economy

Present Status

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 envisions a fair, prosperous, and just nation built on principles of equality, non-discrimination, inclusiveness, and participation. It guarantees several fundamental rights, including those aimed at promoting women's empowerment and strengthening the economy. Key fundamental rights related to 'Women and Economy' include the Right to Equality (Article 18), Right to Property (Article 25), Right to Employment (Article 33), Rights Regarding Labor (Article 34), and Rights of Women (Article 38). As Nepal is the party of various international women's human rights-related instruments and declarations (CEDAW ratified in 1991, BPFA- 1995, SDGs (2015-2030), UNSCR 1325 & 1820, and so on), the constitutional arrangement follows the essence and spirit of these international instruments.

Achievements

» Broader Definition of Works to Capture Women's Involvement in Different Activities

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has adopted broader definition of productive work, aligned with international standards. This definition goes beyond paid jobs and businesses to include unpaid activities like volunteering, community service, farming, household chores, collecting firewood and water, and caring for family members.¹ Women are at the heart of these unpaid tasks, which play a vital role in maintaining households and communities. By expanding what counts as productive work, this approach shines a light on the crucial contributions women make to the economy.

» Increased Economic Activity and Labor Force Participation of Women

In recent years, more women in Nepal are participating in economic activities. According to the 2011² and 2021³ Censuses, the percentage of women involved in the workforce rose from 45.4% in 2011 to 47.4% in 2021. A larger proportion of women above 10 years are now economically active, jumping from 46.7% in 2011 to 60.2% in 2021. This positive change is driven by several factors. More women are getting educated, with 69.4% of women having access to education in 2021, which improves their job prospects. Additionally, women are becoming more aware of the importance of financial independence and are actively seeking work. Women's rights movements have also pushed for greater recognition of women's economic contributions, which has helped open up more opportunities for women to participate in the economy.⁴

1. International Labor Office. (2013). *19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians: Report of the conference (Report III, ICLS/19/2013/3)*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labor Office.
2. Central Bureau of Statistics. (2014). *National Population and Housing Census 2011*. Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission Secretariat. https://docs.censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Documents/cb13aad9-4fbb-42f3-84a1-714a65337573_UrbanVolume_Part02.pdf
3. National Statistics Office. (2023). *National Population and Housing Census 2021 (National Report)*. Ramshahpath, Thapathali, Kathmandu, Nepal. https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/files/result-folder/National%20Report_English.pdf
4. Based on findings from regional consultations.

» **Policy Provision of Employing at least 33 percent Women in Each State Organs and 5 percent Reservations for Persons with Disabilities(PwDs)⁵**

The Constitution of Nepal guarantees women's right to participate in all state structures, ensuring that 33% of positions in government and parliament are reserved for women. As a result, women now make up 37.3% of the National Assembly, 32.7% of the House of Representatives, 34.4% at the provincial level, and 41% at the local level. Women also make up 47% of the workforce in the health sector and 51% in cooperatives.⁶ In the civil service, women's representation has also increased significantly, rising from 8% in 2003⁷ to 28.17% in 2024.⁸ However, women are still underrepresented in top leadership and senior management roles, with only 13.17% holding positions as legislators, senior officials, and managers.⁹ These figures highlight progress in women's participation but also underscore the need for greater gender equality in leadership positions.

» **Tax Exemption on the Transfer of Fixed Assets in the Name of Women**

To increase women's ownership of fixed assets, the Nepalese government offers a tax exemption ranging from 25% to 50%, depending on the geographical location, when transferring property (land or house) in women's names. Single women receive a 35% tax exemption, and women with disabilities are offered special discounts.¹⁰ As a result, women's ownership of fixed assets has increased. In 2011, 19.7% of households had female ownership of land, house, or both, which increased to 23.8% in 2021.¹¹

To promote women's ownership of fixed assets, the Nepalese government provides a tax exemption of 25% to 50%, depending on the geographic location, when transferring property (land or house) into women's names. Single women are granted a 35% tax exemption, while women with disabilities receive special discounts. As a result, women's ownership of fixed assets has risen, with 19.7% of households having female ownership of land, house, or both in 2011, increased to 23.8% in 2021.

» **Institutionalization of Gender Responsive Budgeting System**

Since 2007/08, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has integrated gender-responsive budgeting into its regular budgeting process.¹² This means that every ministry, department, and commission categorizes their budgets as directly addressing gender issues, indirectly addressing them, or being neutral. Over the years, the share of the budget aimed specifically at gender-related initiatives has grown significantly—from just 11.3% in 2007/08¹³ to 43.86% in 2024.¹⁴ The introduction of the National

5. Access Planet Organization Sep. 2024. Consultation with Organizations of the Persons with Disabilities on Civil Society Report for the Beijing+30 Review.
6. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen. (2021). *National Gender Equality Policy 2077 B.S.* Retrieved from <https://mowcsc.gov.np/rules/National-Gender-Equality-Policy-2077-1729238312.pdf>.
7. Dhungana, P. (2021). *Reservation Policy and Women in Civil Services of Nepal*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364384991_Reservation_policy_and_women_in_civil_services_of_Nepal#:~:text=As%20a%20consequence%2C%20women's%20representation,paper%20as%20we%20move%20forward
8. Dahal, P. (2024, August 12). 24 thousand women employees in civil service. *Kantipur*. <https://ekantipur.com/en/feature/2024/08/12/24-thousand-women-employees-in-civil-service-20-08.html>
9. World Economic Forum 2024. *Global Gender Gap 2024*. Geneva Switzerland. ISBN-13:978-2-940631-89-6 https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2024.pdf
10. United Nations Development Programme. (2016, June 28). *Securing women's land and property rights in Nepal*. <https://www.undp.org>
11. Central Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *National population and housing census 2021*. <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results>
12. Bhul, B. (2022). *Gender responsive budgeting and its implementation efforts in Nepal*. *Journal of Management and Development Studies*, 31(1), 10–22. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jmds.v31i01.52849>
13. Government of Nepal/ Ministry of Finance, 2027. Budget Speech F.Y. 2064/65 B.S. Kathmandu. <https://www.mof.gov.np/site/publication-detail/2362>
14. Government of Nepal/ Ministry of Finance, 2024. Budget Speech F.Y. 2081/82 B.S. Kathmandu. <https://www.mof.gov.np/public/site/publication-detail/3359>

Gender Equality Policy in 2021 has further strengthened efforts to create a gender-responsive governance system at all levels—federal, provincial, and local.

» **Social Security Allowances for Senior Citizen, Single Women and People with Disabilities**

The government provides various social security allowances to support vulnerable individuals, including those who are socially or economically disadvantaged. Senior citizens aged 70 and above receive NRs. 4,000 per month, while Dalit senior citizens and those from the Karnali region aged 60 and above receive NRs. 2,600 per month. Single women aged 60 and above, as well as widows without earning family members, also receive NRs. 2,600 per month. People with disabilities receive NRs. 3,990 if fully disabled and NRs. 2,128 if partially disabled.¹⁵

» **Women's Contribution to Gross Domestic Product Through the Remittance Income**

In Nepal, remittances make up nearly 25 percent of the country's GDP. In the fiscal year 2023/24, out of the 741,297 people who obtained labor permits, women accounted for 10.8 percent,¹⁶ up from 5.6 percent in the previous fiscal year.¹⁷ Many women use the money they send back home to support their children's education and pay off family debts. Women's remittance contributions play a key role in reducing household poverty and food insecurity, making a positive impact at the local level.¹⁸

» **President's Women Empowerment Program Supports Economically Disadvantaged Communities**

The President's Women Empowerment Program, launched in 2016, focuses on supporting socially and economically marginalized women in 34 districts of Nepal. These areas often lack proper transportation and healthcare services and rank low on the Human Development Index. The program helps women build skills, start businesses, and access markets to improve their livelihoods.¹⁹ As part of these efforts, the President's Women's Upliftment Program provides life-saving support for pregnant women in emergencies. Since 2018, this initiative, managed by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens, has saved the lives of 713 pregnant and postpartum women as of October 23, 2024. The program offers free helicopter evacuations to well-equipped hospitals, addressing the lack of medical facilities in remote areas.²⁰ The program has been fully implemented in 18 districts and partially implemented in 29 districts.

» **Implemented 'Empowered Women and Prosperous Nepal' Program**

The program has been implemented since 2023 in Madhesh, Karnali, and Sudurpaschim provinces of Nepal. The program, jointly implemented by four UN agencies, aims to advance gender equality and contribute to the empowerment of women and girls by engaging with men and boys and families and communities.²¹

» **Subsidized Loan for Women Entrepreneurs**

'Integrated Subsidized Loan Scheme'²² was introduced by the government of Nepal in 2015 to provide easy access to finance to women entrepreneurs from commercial banks. Under this scheme,

15. World Bank. (2024, January 17). *Adding a little more to life*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2024/01/17/adding-a-little-more-to-life>
16. Government of Nepal/ Department of Foreign Employment 2024. Details about Labor Permit. Tahachal. Kathmandu
17. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Finance. (2022). *Economic survey 2021/22*. https://www.mof.gov.np/uploads/document/file/1674635120_Economic_Survey_2022.pdf
18. Bhadra, C. (2007). *International labor migration of Nepalese women: Impact of their remittances on poverty reduction (Working Paper No. 4407)*. Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), an initiative of UNESCAP and IDRC, Canada.
19. Government of Nepal. (2024). *National review report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://www.asiapacificgender.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Nepal%20National%20Review%20for%20Implementation%20of%20the%20Beijing%20Platform%20for%20Action%20%282024%29.pdf>
20. Radio Nepal. (2024, October 23). *713 pregnant women receive air rescue under President's Women's Upliftment Program in Karnali*.
21. UN Nepal. (2023). *Empowered women, prosperous Nepal*. <https://nepal.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Empowered%20Women%2C%20Prosperous%20Nepal%20FINAL.pdf>
22. Lahiri, S. (2022). *Government schemes and incentives for women entrepreneurs in Nepal*. Sheatwork. <https://sheatwork.com/government-schemes-and-incentives-for-women-entrepreneurs-in-nepal/>

a businesswoman can receive a maximum of NRs.1.5 million without collateral and a subsidy of 6 percent in the interest.

» **Provision for the Appointment of Female Directors**

Section 86(2) of the Company Act, 2063 mandates the appointment of at least one female director in banks and financial institutions. However, NRB's supervision reports indicate that most banks have failed to comply with this requirement.

» **Collateral-free Loan to Women Entrepreneurs**

'Women Entrepreneurship Development Fund'²³ has been introduced by the government of Nepal since 2015 to help women entrepreneurs meet their financial needs for their business growth. The Ministry of Industry along with the Department of Cottage and Small Industries offers collateral-free loans at a 6 percent interest rate, up to NRs.5 Lakhs to support the rights of women entrepreneurs.

Key Challenges

The Global Gender Gap (GGG) Report 2024²⁴ has ranked Nepal at the 117th position, with a score of 0.664 (out of 146 countries). In the area of Women's economic participation and opportunity sub-index, in 2024, Nepal's ranking is 137 and the score is 0.475, which was 110th and the score was 0.608 in 2018.²⁵ Although the rankings and scores of health and survival (score 0.969 in 2024 and 0.966 in 2018) and political empowerment (score 0.288 in 2024 and 0.185 in 2018) sub-indices have been improved in 2024,²⁶ the ranking and scores of 'women's economic participation and opportunity' and 'educational attainment' (score 0.923 in 2024 and 0.926 in 2018) sub-indices have declined. This shows that women's access to economic resources, opportunities, knowledge and economic decision-making power have decreased in these years. The following paragraphs will further highlight these aspects:

» **Production of Services for Household Consumption is Still Out of the Definition of Economic Work**

Although a broader definition of work has been adopted, many activities performed by women for household maintenance and care—such as cooking, cleaning, repairing, and taking care of children, the elderly, sick, and disabled family members—are still not considered part of economic work. These tasks are repetitive and time-consuming, yet they often go unrecognized.

As a result, women often find it difficult to make time for their personal growth, while their contributions to the economy are frequently overlooked. The 2021 Census highlights this disparity, showing that of the 1,967,486 people who reported doing household chores, 87.8% were women. Similarly, of the 673,267 people involved in family care, 77.5% were women.

» **Gap in Labor Force Participation Between Women and Men**

Although women make up a larger share of the working-age population in Nepal, fewer women are considered "working" compared to men. According to the 2017/18 Nepal Labor Force Survey, women make up 55.6% of the working-age population,

Although a broader definition of work has been adopted, many activities performed by women for household maintenance and care—such as cooking, cleaning, repairing, and caring for children, the elderly, sick, and disabled family members—are still not recognized as economic work. These tasks are repetitive and time-consuming, yet they often go unnoticed and unacknowledged.

23. Lahiri, S. (2022). Ibid.

24. World Economic Forum 2024. Global Gender Gap 2024. Geneva Switzerland. ISBN-13:978-2-940631-89-6 https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2024.pdf

25. World Economic Forum. (2018). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2018*. Re https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf.

26. Ibid, 2024

but only 26.3% are in the labor force, compared to 53.8% of men.²⁷ The 2021 National Census showed a slight improvement, with 60.2% of women aged 10 and above being economically active, compared to 71.2% of men. However, many women are not part of the paid workforce because they are occupied with unpaid household and caregiving duties. As a result, despite being the majority, women's economic contributions often go unrecognized.

» **Gender Pay Gap**

Despite constitutional provisions, the Labor Act of 2017, and Nepal's commitment to the SDG target of gender equality (SDG 5.1), a significant pay gap persists between men and women. According to the Nepal Labor Force Survey (2017/18), women earn 30% less than men for doing the same work. On average, men earn NRs. 19,464 per month, while women earn only NRs. 13,630. The pay gap is even more pronounced in rural areas, where it reaches 33.8%. In some fields, such as plant and machine operators and assemblers-, and professionals-, the pay gaps are 46.5 percent and 42.6 percent respectively.²⁸

» **Inadequate Financial Resource Allocation for Gender Equality**

The budget allocated for the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens in FY 2024/25 is only 0.09 percent of the total national allocations (MoF, 2024).²⁹ Similarly, the budget allocated for the National Women's Commission is NRs. 81 million only.³⁰ According to the SDGs allocation of financial resources in the FY 2024/25, 0.05 percent of the total national budget has been allocated to Goal 5: 'Gender Equality'.³¹

» **More Women in Informal Employment**

In Nepal, around 0.5 million youth enter the labor market each year (National Census, 2021). Due to a lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector, most of the labor force is employed in the informal sector (62.2% - NLFS, 2017/18), where women make up the majority (66.5%). This sector is unincorporated and not registered with formal entities, preventing workers from accessing social security benefits. Even among those employed in the formal sector (37.8%), the majority (59.2%) are still engaged in informal employment.³² Of the total employed women, 90.5 percent are in informal employment (NLFS, 2017/18),³³ which is more risky, unsafe, and insecure for women.

» **Feminization of Agriculture**

Agriculture has been the backbone of Nepal's economy, employing 50.1 percent of the population (Census, 2021). Women constitute 56.9 percent of agriculture, fishery and forestry skilled workers. However, agriculture still relies mostly on subsistence farming. Only less than 10 percent of holdings sell their products in markets.³⁴ Due to the absence of male members in the family,³⁵ urbanization etc., the total responsibility of agriculture has been shifted to women and children. According to

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27. Government of Nepal/National Planning Commission/ Central Bureau of Statistics/International Labor Organization (2019). Nepal Labor Force Survey 2017/18. https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/20/bNLFS-III_Final-Report.pdf
 28. Government of Nepal/National Planning Commission/ Central Bureau of Statistics/International Labor Organization, 2019. Nepal Labor Force Survey 2017/18. https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/20/bNLFS-III_Final-Report.pdf
 29. Government of Nepal/ Ministry of Finance, 2024. Budget Speech F.Y. 2081/82 B.S. Kathmandu. <https://www.mof.gov.np/public/site/publication-detail/3359>
 30. Ibid.
 31. Ibid.
 32. Informal employment includes employers, own-account workers, piece-rate workers who are home-based workers, and contributing family workers who are employed in informal sector establishments, as well as employees and paid apprentices/interns who do not have paid annual leave or sick leave benefits and whose employers do not contribute to their social security (NLFS, 2017/18: 28).
 33. NLFS 2017/18 *ibid.* https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/20/bNLFS-III_Final-Report.pdf
 34. Mishra, K. (2023, February 23). *Impediments in the agriculture sector of Nepal*. Nepal Economic Forum. <https://nepaleconomicforum.org/impediments-in-the-agriculture-sector-of-nepal/>
 35. According to National Census 20021, a total of 2.19 million persons are living abroad. Of them 82.2 percent are men and 17.8 percent are women.

a research,³⁶ the average workload for women in agriculture was 86.50 hours per week compared to 55.52 hours per week for men. In the absence of alternative employment opportunities, lack of technical knowledge, household chores, and care responsibilities, there is a high concentration of women in the agriculture sector (64.8 percent in 2021).

» **Lower Access to and Control Over Productive Resources**

Women's access to fixed assets (land or house or both) has increased in 2021 (23.8 percent), however, since the fixed assets are generally not inherited by women,³⁷ they hardly have any control over those assets. Although the Constitution of Nepal has granted equal rights to inherit parental property and the Supreme Court has also ordered³⁸ that a married daughter will inherit parental property, however, these provisions have not been implemented properly. As a result, women's access to institutional credit, education, vocational training, etc. has been limited.

» **Feminization of Poverty**

In Nepal, poverty has been reduced from 25.2 percent in 2010/11 to 20.3 percent in 2022/23 (Nepal Statistical Office, 2024).³⁹ Poverty is more acute in rural areas (24.7 percent) than in urban areas (18.3 percent). In Sudurpaschim (34.2 percent) and Karnali (26.7 percent) provinces it is more severe than in other provinces of Nepal (NSO, 2024). However, the brunt of poverty falls disproportionately on women across any region. Unequal distribution of productive resources and opportunities, lower educational status of women than men (the gap in average literacy between women and men is 14.2 percent), weak bargaining power in the labor market, multiple work burdens, pay gap between women and men, single women headed household, high involvement in the informal sector and more specifically in informal employment and feminization of agriculture –all contribute to 'feminization of poverty' in Nepal.

According to Dr Chandra Bhadra, in Nepal feminization of poverty is the leading cause of women's migration for work beyond borders.

» **Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Women Home-based Workers**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal's economy contracted by 2.12 percent in the fiscal year 2019/20.⁴⁰ The pandemic severely impacted the informal sector, especially women workers in home-based, piece-rate, and self-employed jobs. In Nepal, over 1.4 million home-based workers make up 19.2 percent⁴¹ of the total workforce, with women constituting 60.02 percent⁴² of this group.

Agriculture has long been the backbone of Nepal's economy, providing employment for 50.1 percent of the population, according to the 2021 Census. Within this sector, women play a crucial role, constituting 56.9 percent of the workforce in agriculture, fishery, and forestry. However, much of Nepal's agriculture is still dependent on subsistence farming, with fewer than 10 percent of agricultural holdings selling their products in markets. As urbanization continues to grow, with 66.17 percent of the population now living in urban municipalities, many men have migrated to cities for work, leaving women and children to take on the bulk of agricultural responsibilities.

36. Lamichhane B., Thapa, R., Dhakal, S.C., and Devkota, D. (2022). Feminization of Agriculture in Nepal and its Implications: Addressing Gender in Workload and Decision Making. Turkish Journal of Agriculture –Food Science and Technology. 10(12):2484-2494. DOI:10.24925/turjaf.v10i12.2484-2494.5486 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366578065_Feminization_of_Agriculture_in_Nepal_and_its_implications_Addressing_Gender_in_Workload_and_Decision_Making

37. In many cases, men tend to keep the fixed property in the woman's (wife's) name to avoid sharing property with brothers and also to take the benefit of tax subsidy.

38. Anmol, A. (2024, May 16). सम्पत्तिमा महिला स्वामित्व [Women's ownership of property]. Ekantipur. Retrieved from <https://ekantipur.com/opinion/2024/05/16/womens-ownership-of-property-19-45.html>

39. Government of Nepal/ Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers/ National Statistics Office 2024. Nepal Living Standard Survey IV 2022-23. Summary Report. Thapathali. Kathmandu.

40. Government of Nepal/Ministry of Finance (2021). Economic Survey 2020/21. Singh Durbar. Kathmandu. [https://www.mof.gov.np/uploads/document/file/1633341980_Economic%20Survey%20\(Engslish\)%202020-21.pdf](https://www.mof.gov.np/uploads/document/file/1633341980_Economic%20Survey%20(Engslish)%202020-21.pdf)

41. NLFS 2017/18 ibid. https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/20/bNLFS-III_Final-Report.pdf

42. .NLFS 2017/18 ibid. https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/20/bNLFS-III_Final-Report.pdf

These women, often at the lowest level of the supply chain, were hit hardest by the crisis. Many faced canceled orders, delayed payments, and were forced into deeper economic hardship, often taking on additional debt to support their families. Numerous women lost their jobs or were forced to change careers.⁴³

Recommendations

» Recognize Unpaid Household and Care Work

In Nepal, women carry out 85 percent of daily unpaid care work and this is one of the main reasons for them being outside the labor force (ILO, 2023)⁴⁴. One of the strategies of the National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) is measuring the economic contribution made by women in the national economy through the economic valuation of domestic and care works. One of the targets (5.4) of SDG 5 is to recognize the value of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by women. Therefore, according to NGEP and SDGs commitments, economic valuations of unpaid domestic and care works including volunteer services should be done to make it visible in the national economy by developing an appropriate methodology.

» Redistribute and Reduce the Household Work Burden of Women

Nepal's SDG Progress Report 2016-19 mentions that women on average spend 6 hours daily on domestic work.⁴⁵ In rural areas and among women-headed households (31.55 percent in 2021), the domestic work burden would be much higher. Therefore, it is necessary to redistribute and reduce the household work burden of women through the provision of the public care system, easy access to public services (water supply and sanitation, electricity, etc.), promoting the use of time-saving devices by reducing their prices, promotion of shared responsibility within the households and social protection policies. This will also boost women's participation in the labor market.

» Emphasize on Implementation of Existing Laws and Policies with Adequate Budget Allocations

As per the constitutional provision, labor Law, and target 5.1 of the SDGs, the policy 'equal pay for the work of equal value' should be strictly implemented and followed-up in both agriculture and non-agriculture sectors. This should be regularly monitored by the government and other concerned labor rights organizations. In addition to this, equal rights to parental property, decent work and employment for all, GBV-free working environment in all fields should be implemented effectively with sufficient budget allocations. The government of Nepal should also make a provision of a reward and punishment system in this regard.

The feminization of poverty in Nepal is characterized by the disproportionate impact poverty has on women, despite a reduction in overall poverty rates. While poverty is more severe in rural areas and certain provinces, women across all regions face greater challenges. Contributing factors include unequal access to resources, lower education levels (with a literacy gap of 14.2% between women and men), limited bargaining power, multiple work burdens, and a significant presence in the informal sector and subsistence agriculture. Additionally, women-headed households, particularly lone mothers, experience higher poverty rates.

43. HomeNet South Asia (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Women Home-based Workers in South Asia. February 2020 –August 2021.IDRC. CRID. Canada. <https://hnsa.org.in/sites/default/files/covid-19-docs/impact-of-covid-19-on-women-home-based-workers-in-south-asia-final-report.pdf>

44. International Labour Organization. (2023). *Decent work*. International Labour Organization. <https://www.ilo.org>

45. Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission. (2019). *Sustainable development goals progress assessment report 2016–2019*. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/np/UNDP-NP-SDG-Progress-Review.pdf>

» **Enhance the Capacity of Smallholding Women Farmers**

By 2050, the world's population is projected to reach 10 billion (FAO, 2024), with regions like Asia experiencing the highest growth rates.⁴⁶ This is expected to pose a significant challenge to food security and nutrition. Since women constitute around 65 percent of the workforce in agriculture, it is very important to enhance the capacity of small women farmers through access to resources and services, land, technical skills, vocational training, finance, and other inputs. This will improve the managerial capacity of women farmers and they can make appropriate decisions about cropping patterns, preserving and storing food products, maintaining nutrition, and contributing to food security.

» **Promoting Women's Employment in the Formal Sector**

To increase women's participation in formal employment, it is essential to create or expand opportunities in the formal sector. Special priority should be given to women with disabilities, socio-economically vulnerable women, survivors of human trafficking, and gender and sexual minorities. The government must also work to reduce informal employment within both formal and informal sector enterprises. This can be achieved by bringing all employees under social security schemes and raising awareness to prevent exploitation and safeguard their rights.

» **Continuation and Expansion of Women's Economic Empowerment and Support Programs**

To address the financial needs of socio-economically marginalized women, programs like the Integrated Subsidized Loan Scheme, Women Entrepreneurship Development Fund, and President's Women Empowerment Program should be sustained and expanded to include women with disabilities and individuals from gender and sexual minority groups. Additionally, enhancing access to finance for small women entrepreneurs through grants, subsidies, and seed money is essential, alongside efforts to overcome socio-cultural barriers that hinder their participation.

» **Enhance the Capacity of Women Informal Workers- Home-based, Piece-rate and Own-account Workers**

Strengthen the capacity of women informal workers, particularly home-based and own-account workers, by organizing them into groups, cooperatives, and networks. These collective platforms will enhance their bargaining power, enabling them to advocate for social protection and benefits while building resilience to various crises, including financial, economic, environmental, social, or health-related shocks. Collaborating with organizations and networks such as HomeNet South Asia, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), and SAARC Business Association of Home-Based Workers (SABAH) Nepal, which focus on the socio-economic empowerment of women informal workers, can significantly contribute to achieving this goal.

46. Shimizu, K. (2024). *Better life: Farming cooperatives promote gender equality in Nepal*. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org/news/countries-good-practices/article/en/c/1682798/>

Women in Power and Decision-Making

Background

The promulgation of a new constitution in 2015, transition to federalization process and the two general elections (in 2017 and 2022), generated optimistic changes in Nepali women's leadership in political and socio-economic fields. Policies and plans such as the National Gender Equality Policy (2021) - which emphasizes temporary special measures, aligned with constitutional affirmative action to reduce gender disparities and advance gender equality and women's empowerment, reaffirm these commitments.

The Government of Nepal (GoN) implemented the 15th periodic plan (2019/20–2023/24) with a focus on creating an environment where women can live with dignity through gender-responsive governance. The plan prioritized ending all forms of discrimination, violence, and exploitation against women while ensuring equal access to resources, opportunities, and leadership roles. Key targets included raising the Gender Development Index (GDI) from 0.897 to 0.963 and reducing the proportion of women experiencing violence (physical, psychological, or sexual) in their lifetime from 24.4% to 13%.¹

Based on experience from 15th periodic plan, the 16th periodic plan (2024/25–2028/29) sets even more ambitious goals. It aims to increase the Women Development Index from 0.885 to 0.967 and reduce the Women Inequality Index from 0.495 to 0.225. The Gender Employment Ratio is targeted to improve from 1:1.7 to 1:1.2, reflecting greater workforce participation by women. Additionally, the percentage of households with property registered in women's names is expected to rise from 23.8 per thousand to 35.0 per thousand, enhancing women's economic ownership and empowerment.²

Current Status of Women in Power and Decision-Making

A closer examination reveals significant voids hamper gender parity at leadership and decision-making levels. In 2022, Nepal scored 0.88 on the UNDP's Gender Development Index (GDI), highlighting persistent disparities. Similarly, the 2022 Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2022 revealed that 23% of women aged 15–49 experienced physical violence since the age of 15. According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2023, Nepal ranked 116th out of 146 countries, with a score of 0.659 (where 0 represents complete inequality and 1 signifies full equality).³ Positive changes are evident primarily in the Health and Survival domain (2023: 0.969; 2022: 0.965), followed by Political Empowerment (2023: 0.276; 2022: 0.247). But this is a decline from 2022 where it ranked 96th.

1. National Planning Commission. (2019). The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20–2023/24). Government of Nepal. https://npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_plan_English_Version.pdf
2. National Planning Commission. (2024). सोह्रौ योजना (आ.व. २०८१/८२–२०८५/८६) [Sixteenth Plan (FY 2024/25–2028/29)]. Government of Nepal. <https://npc.gov.np/images/category/240607021659%E0%A4%B8%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%B9%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8C%E0%A4%82%20%E0%A4%AF%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%9C%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%BE.pdf>
3. World Economic Forum. (2023). *Global Gender Gap Report 2023: Nepal*. https://widgets.weforum.org/GGGR/edition-23-ranking/pdf/2023/gggr_index_2023_098_NPL.pdf

The narrative that inclusive and feminist leadership across sectors are undeniably fundamental if transformation is to take place⁴ is reinforced by evidences of disproportionate representation of Nepali men in leadership positions. Women's leadership across four key domains is examined in the following paragraphs:

Women in Power and Decision-Making in the Political Domain

Election Act/Level	Mandate	Percentage of Women Elected in 2022	Comparison with Previous Election
Federal Parliamentary Election Act, 2073 (2017)	33% representation for women	33.09%	Slight increase (32.7% in 2017)
Provincial Assembly Members Election Act, 2074 (2017)	50% women on party shortlists	36.36%	Increase from 34% in 2017
Local Level Election Act, 2017	50% women in leadership roles	41.21%	Little change (41% in 2017)

(The table is based on the information provided in the text)

The Federal Parliamentary Election Act, 2073 (2017) ensures 33% representation for women in federal bodies. Consequently, in the 2022 general election, at the federal level, altogether 91 (33.09%) women were elected to the federal House of Representatives (HoR) – 9 from first-past-the-post (FPTP) and 82 from proportional representation (PR). This is a slight improvement compared to the 2017 election, where 90 (32.7%) women were elected; 6 through FPTP and 84 from PR. The Provincial Assembly Members Election Act, 2074 (2017) mandates that at least 50% of candidates on party shortlists must be women. At the provincial level, 36.36% of the elected members were women, compared to 34% in 2017. The Local Level Election Act 2017 (sub-section 4 of section 17) also mandates that 50% of the chairpersons/chief, vice-chairpersons, or deputy chiefs of villages/municipalities, as well as the chief and deputy chief of district coordination committees, must be women (Local Level Election Act 2017).⁵ The five year period manifested little change at local levels, with only 41.21% women elected in 2022 compared to 41% in 2017.

Despite maintaining a steady presence, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions. In 2022, of the 753 local governments' mayor/chairperson posts, 96.68% were occupied by men and only 3.32% were women. Meanwhile, women occupied 75.43% of deputy positions - this is also a decline from 98% in the 2017 elections. Within these the representation of Muslim, *Madhesi* and Indigenous *Janjati* group women lags further behind.

These regressions are primarily attributed to political maneuvering and party coalitions⁶ observed during the 2022 elections. Political parties argued that the legal provision requiring the positions of Mayor/Chairperson and Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairperson to be held by individuals of different genders applied only when the same party nominated candidates for both positions. In cases where two parties formed a coalition, both parties nominated male candidates for the positions of Mayor/Chairperson and Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairperson. As a result, both roles were often occupied by men.

4. Global virtual inter-generational event on diverse and inclusive leadership, 21 September 2020

5. Timilsina, K. P. (2024). Women's participation in local governments of Nepal: Assessing local elections of 2017 and 2022. *Prithvi Academic Journal*, 7, 150–158. <https://doi.org/10.3126/paj.v7i1.65772>

6. Example: Nepali Congress and Janata Samajwadi Party in Nepalgunj formed a coalition. As a result, Mr. Prashant Bista of the Nepali Congress was elected as the Mayor on behalf of the alliance, while Mr. Kamarudhin Rai of Janata Samajwadi Party was elected as Deputy Mayor. Similarly, due to coalition in Khotang rural municipality, Udim Bahadur Rai of CPN Maoist was elected as the Chairperson, and Mr. Rupesh Rai of Nepali Congress was elected as the Vice Chairperson. (NWC, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Local Level Election 2079, 40).

Undermining women in decision-making positions is further categorically evidenced by the new cabinet of 22 Ministers, formed in July 2024 with just 2 women, 5 *Madhesi* and no Muslim representations, by the coalition government of the Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) and the Nepali Congress (NC) -- two of the oldest parties in the country. This reflects the blatant disregard by political parties and their leaders for the national and international commitments to ensure gender parity at leadership levels.

Women in Power and Decision-Making in the Economic Domain

The World Bank data indicates women's leadership in the business sector remains low and 'the share of female business⁷ owners for Nepal falls in the lowest quintile of all economies for which there are data.' Data compiled from data points between 2016 and 2024 indicate only 10% women businesses vis-à-vis 90% men.⁸ On a positive note, a recent IFC study⁹ (of 6 commercial banks of Nepal) indicates 'Nepal's banking industry is a leader in South Asia when it comes to women's representation in commercial banks' workforce'. However, the study indicates these are yet to materialize in leadership roles.

Examining female participation in banking reveals women make up 42% of the total workforce in commercial banks in Nepal, with 23% represented in senior management roles.¹⁰ Key challenges they face include societal expectations to balance work with unpaid care duties, unfair evaluations, toxic work environments with microaggressions and disrespect, and a lack of support from leadership and management in addressing these issues. An earlier analytical report on 'Women in Business' by the Central Bureau of Statistic in 2021, also highlights this plight noting there are 29.6% female managers compared to that of 70.3% of male managers.¹¹

Challenges pertaining to women in leadership position in the economic sector is evidenced by the disproportionate presence of women in the Federation of Nepal Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) – an umbrella organization of Nepalese private sector which consists of only one woman out of the 7 Executive Committee Office Bearers. The remaining committees paint a dismal picture - Province group (ex-officio) (female: 0; male: 7), Province Group (female: 0; male: 8), Associate Group (female: 1; male: 18), Commodity group (female: 2; male: 12), Industry Commerce Group (female: 1; male: 17) further underscoring the gender gaps.¹²

The wage gap between men and women remains a persistent plight across all levels and sectors, with women earning 29.45% less than men, despite having equivalent levels of education.¹³

On a positive note, a recent IFC study of six commercial banks in Nepal reveals that the country's banking industry is leading South Asia in terms of women's representation in the workforce. With women comprising 42% of the total workforce and 23% in senior management roles, However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that these gains translate into leadership positions at the highest levels.

7. Share of business is calculated as the proportion of female or male newly registered limited liability company owners out of the total number of newly registered limited liability company owners in the economy in the calendar year.
8. World Bank. (n.d.). Nepal. World Bank. <https://liveprod.worldbank.org/en/economies/nepal>
9. International Finance Corporation. (2023). *Women's advancement in banking in emerging South Asian countries: Multi-country report covering Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka*. International Finance Corporation. <https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/2024/women-s-advancement-in-banking-rging-south-asian-countries.pdf>
10. International Finance Corporation. (2024). *Women's advancement in banking: Findings & recommendations for Nepal*. <https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/2024/women-s-advancement-in-banking-findings-recommendations-for-nepal.pdf>
11. Tuladhar, S. (2023, September). Nepal's position: *Women, business and law 2023*. Nepal Economic Forum. <https://nepaleconomicforum.org/nepals-position-women-business-and-law-2023/>
12. Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. (n.d.). *FNCCI Executive Committee (2023–2026)*. <https://fncci.org/executive-committee>
13. Central Bureau of Statistics. (2019). *Report on the national labour force survey 2017/18*. Ministry of Finance and Government Affairs. <https://mofaga.gov.np/news-notice/2549>

Women in Power and Decision-Making in the Bureaucracy

The reservation policy brought about by the Government of Nepal in 2007 has helped expand opportunities for women in the civil service, with the number of women in the civil service growing steadily. High-level policy-making positions remain predominantly occupied by men, particularly those from the *Khas* and *Arya* caste/ethnic group. Despite the reservation policies, as of a 2020 report¹⁴ only 25.94% female and 74.06% males are represented in the civil service of Nepal. Data depicts the civil service as predominantly *Khas Arya* (63.50%), with only 0.60% Muslim, 2.50% Dalit, 15.40% Madhesi and 19.5% indigenous people representations. A more recent data (2022/23) indicates women in civil service increased to 28.17% (24,094) out of the total 85,520 civil service employees. Ministries such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Communication and Technology, Ministry of Water Supply are currently headed by women Secretaries, 8 out of the 77 districts have women Chief District Officers, and a Deputy Auditor General Director is also heading the Office of the Auditor General.¹⁵ In the security sector, women presently make up 11.78% of police officers, 9.76% of the Armed Police Force, and 9.4% of the Nepali Army.¹⁶ This has also become possible due to the positive discriminations policies. While the reservation policy is bringing positive changes, the need for greater inclusivity in terms of gender and caste/ethnicity requires sustained attention.

Women in Power and Decision-Making in the Public domain

As per the data up to 31 December 2023, the registration status of medical doctors in Nepal is currently 37.89% female doctors out of the total 34,910 medical doctors registered. A comparative look at the change in the past five years evidences only nominal increase from the 36.98% female doctors as of December 2019. The number of registered female medical specialists is lower, and shows no increment in the past five years (2019: 28.7%; 2023: 29%).¹⁷

The media sector has seen positive changes with an increasing number of women journalists over the years, though their representation remains limited at decision-making levels. According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), out of 13,077 journalists affiliated with the FNJ, 18% are women. Many women journalists are more commonly found covering the entertainment sector rather than informational content.¹⁸

The number of women journalists is estimated to have increased by almost 100 percent in the period between 2004 and 2014.¹⁹ The percentage of women journalists

As of December 31, 2023, female medical doctors make up 37.89% of the total 34,910 registered medical doctors in Nepal. A comparison with data from five years ago reveals only a slight increase from 36.98% in December 2019. The number of registered female medical specialists remains lower, showing no significant change over the past five years (2019: 28.7%; 2023: 29%).

14. Bhul, B. (2021). Representative bureaucracy: The Nepalese perspective. *Prashasan*, (134), 198. Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. Retrieved from <https://mofaga.gov.np/news-notice/2549>
15. eKantipur. (2024, August 12). *24 thousand women employees in civil service*. eKantipur. <https://ekantipur.com/en/feature/2024/08/12/24-thousand-women-employees-in-civil-service-20-08.html>
16. Basnet, B. (2024, August 12). *Secure gains made in women empowerment*. Rising Nepal. <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/49203#:~:text=Presently%2C%20women%20make%20up%2011.78,policies%20introduced%20by%20the%20constitution>
17. Public Health Update. (2024, January 1). Registration status of medical doctors in Nepal. *Public Health Update*. <https://publichealthupdate.com/registration-status-of-medical-doctors-in-nepal/>
18. Pokharel, U., Pandey, L., & Acharya, B. B. (Eds.). (2024). *Vibrant Information Barometer: National report Nepal* (p. 22). The Asia Foundation. https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Nepal_Vibrant-Information-Barometer.pdf
19. Seshu, G. (2014). *The stories women journalists tell: Women in media in South Asia*. International Federation of Journalists. https://issuu.com/ifjasiapacific/docs/women_in_media_in_south_asia

holding senior posts such as executive to mid-level editors, bureau chiefs, and others is recognized as low.²⁰ 'Female Journalist in Nepal', a study conducted by *Sancharika Samuha* reveals that only 25 percent journalists around the country are women. Out of this 47.8 percent work in FM Radio and only 11 percent are in editorial leadership.²¹

In the legal sector, a recent report by the International Bar Association (2024) notes only 12% lawyers are women (approximately 2,200) as of 2020, with women lawyers commonly facing gender stereotypes.²² The title of 'senior advocate' (awarded by the Nepal Bar Association after a lawyer has served for at least 15 years) has only been awarded to 30 women, compared to 660 men. This is already limiting women lawyers' opportunities to leadership positions.

Women led civil society organizations (CSOs), including those working with and targeting marginalized groups such as, survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV), *Dalits*, indigenous groups, persons with disability, LBTIA+ continue to collaborate and build stronger voices for women and marginalized women's rights and empowerment. Nevertheless, increasing funding limitations for CSOs, tighter control on social media contents, and arrests and reprisals against activists and critics (e.g. Ruby Khan, a woman human rights defender in October 2021) underline the narrowing civic space for women²³ leaders and activists.

Achievements

- » Legislative and policy frameworks have yielded minor gains for representation of women, particularly at the federal levels.
- » The past five years have generated positive development in the civil service with a gradual increase in women representation. During this period Nepal has witnessed the first female Chief Secretary, the first Foreign Secretary and more recently the appointment of a female Foreign Minister.
- » At the international level, Ms. Bandana Rana was re-elected a CEDAW committee member with 146 votes, in June 2024.
- » Presently there are approximately 11% of women judges (43 women out of 402 judges) in all three layers of the court system in Nepal. Specifically, there are three judges in the Supreme Court, 23 in High Court and 18 judges in District Court. This marks a notable increase from 2015 when the representation of women judges was less than 3%, with only eight women among 338 judges.²⁴
- » Women's representation in the commercial banks' workforce is 42%, making Nepal a leader in South Asia.

Key Challenges

- » Political machinations and political parties and leaders' lack of adherence to legal provisions regarding women, including intersectionally marginalized women, is resulting in conspicuously low representation of women in the political arena. According to the Commission's instructions, the number of women and inclusive candidates should have been 29,160. However, an examination of the actual number of women's candidacies reveals a significant shortfall, with only 6,823 women candidates.²⁵

20. Media Policy (2022, May). *Media policy reviews and recommendations*. <https://mediapolicy.org.np/2022/05/media-policy-reviews-recommendations/3312/>

21. Nepal Outlook. (n.d.). *Women in Nepal: Gender data*. <https://nepaloutlook.com/women-nepal-gender-data/#:~:text=Information%20and%20data%20below%20will,it%20was%20only%2013.84%20percent>

22. Brickman, S., Franceschi, K., Pruitt, E., & Valentine, A. (2023). *International training of women lawyers in Nepal*. New Perimeter. <https://www.newperimeter.com/export/sites/new-perimeter/downloads/projects/IBA-Nepal-Report.pdf>

23. CIVICUS. (2024, October). *Nepal: October 2024*. <https://civicus.org/documents/nepal-october-2024.pdf>

24. Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nepal. (2024, March 10). *How "Access to Justice" contributes to strengthening gender equality*. <https://www.norway.no/en/nepal/norway-nepal2/news/access-to-justice-womens-rep/#:~:text=At%20present%2C%20approximately%20there%20are,18%20judges%20in%20District%20Court>

25. National Women Commission. (2023). *Gender equality and social inclusion in local level election 2079*. National Women Commission. <https://nwc.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/GESI-Report-Eng-final-web-version.pdf>

- » Article 76 (g) of the constitution explicitly states, "The President shall, on recommendation of the Prime Minister, constitute the Council of Ministers comprising a maximum of twenty-five Ministers including the Prime Minister, in accordance with the inclusive principle, from amongst the members of the Federal Parliament." Nepal's new 21-member Cabinet (July 2024) underscores a severe underrepresentation of women in public positions, with only two women (both from Khas Arya communities), Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba and Ms. Bidhya Bhattarai, included in the 22-member Council of Ministers. This marks a regression from the previous term, where women held 4 out of 20 positions; Women's representation in the Cabinet thus dropped from 20% to a concerning 9%. This disregard for ensuring the constitutional mandates for inclusion is further evidenced by recent nominations of 19 envoys who are predominantly male and Brahmins (Khas Arya communities).
- » The first systematic study²⁶ on Violence against Women in Politics conducted by UN Women reveals that 30.9% of the 648 Locally Elected Women Representatives (LEWR) experienced some form of violence related to their political activity during their term in office. The report further supports the analysis that women are predominantly token representatives, as many LEWRs reported being expected to act as "rubber stamps" with minimal decision-making power.
- » Information from federal, provincial and local level consultations indicate misinformation and disinformation are widespread and widely employed for character assassination of women in politics, and women in decision-making positions across different sectors. These include both online and offline violence - from within households to institutions and outside - deterrent to women's leadership opportunities.
- » According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are approximately 64 female officials compared to 245 male officials engaged in the foreign-service, underscoring a persistent underrepresentation of women in these critical roles. The representation of female diplomats is notably limited. The appointments of women for decision making levels in the Foreign Service paints a bleak picture. Between 2019 and 2022, only five female ambassadors out of 33 served the nation; the percentage of female ambassadors has decreased from 15.15% to 9.09% in the given period.²⁷ Despite Nepal's commitment to women's rights and empowerment in its foreign policy, there is a significant lack of women in foreign policy planning, decision-making and implementation.
- » As of November of 2024, Nepali Army has some 5,914 soldiers including 649 female soldiers serving in 11 different missions around the globe. Over the past 20 years, the number of women joining and holding positions in Nepal's security forces has been growing. In organizations like the Nepal Police, Nepal Armed Police Force, and Nepal Army, 20% of the open seats are reserved for women as part of the 45% of seats set aside for people from excluded groups.²⁸ Currently, women make up 9.17% of the Armed Police Force and 11.6% of the Nepal Police.²⁹ It is important to mention that Meera

Finance poses a significant challenge for female political candidates in Nepal. There is immense pressure to spend large sums on campaigns, yet political parties have limited capacity to support candidates in fundraising, and are often unwilling to support female candidates. This results in women having less access to funds compared to men, creating barriers to their effective participation and leadership in politics. Finance remains a critical challenge for women's leadership in the areas of business and enterprise.

26. 'UN Women (2022) 'INVISIBLE' VIOLENCE, VISIBLE HARMS. Violence against Women in Politics in Nepal: the Experience of locally elected representatives (<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/np-VAWP-Nepal-Report-2512-s.pdf>)
27. Shakya, A. (2024, January 8). *Nepali women in foreign policy*. The Kathmandu Post. <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2024/01/08/nepali-women-in-foreign-policy>
28. Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens. (2020). *A progressive journey to gender equality and women's empowerment: Achievements of Nepal* (p. 21). Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens. Retrieved from <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/oCz7iCOxqikldQNpREjhO2pbqXilaQlz4BhM5scc-1625557539.pdf>
29. Nepal Government. (2023). *Annual progress report (Rastriya Kitabkhana (Prahari))*. Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration.

Chaudhary, Dr. Asha Singh and Kiran Bajracharya have been promoted to the rank of Additional Inspector General of Nepal Police (AIG) in 2023 marking a significant milestone in the country's security forces' journey toward gender equality and women's empowerment.³⁰

- » Finance poses a significant challenge for female political candidates in Nepal. There is immense pressure to spend large sums on campaigns, yet political parties have limited capacity to support candidates in fundraising, and are often unwilling to support female candidates. This results in women having less access to funds compared to men, creating barriers to their effective participation and leadership in politics. Finance remains a critical challenge for women's leadership in the areas of business and enterprise.
- » Women from marginalized groups, including the intersectionally marginalized, face barriers in competing for public service commission positions due to insufficient qualifications. Lack of educational opportunities, language proficiency, and relevant social networks contribute to their limited access to opportunities.
- » While the Constitution and the Civil Service Act of 2007 provide a legal framework for inclusion, the recruitment patterns indicate that not all eligible groups benefit equally. More women from Khas Arya backgrounds are recruited compared to other groups, and representation of certain marginalized groups remains negligible, highlighting that legal provisions alone are insufficient to ensure effective inclusion. Such marginalization will dismantle all efforts made towards gender and inclusion.
- » There is a substantial knowledge gap regarding constitutional provisions for representation. Around 40% of women, compared to 21% of men, reported having no knowledge of various reservation provisions. Dalit women, Muslim women, Madhesi women exhibit the least knowledge about these provisions.³¹
- » Discriminatory social norms, values and institutions continue to challenge women progressing towards leadership and decision-making positions, while inequitable power relations and microaggressions within institutions and systems continue to disadvantage deserving candidates. The absence of regular evidence-based policy research for identifying and building women and intersectionally marginalized women leaders' agency – knowledge, skills and abilities, further inhibit women's leadership opportunities and space.

Recommendations

- » Invest in mixed and multi-method research and real time data to highlight the positive impacts of women's leadership and the impacts they have generated. These need to be regularly and widely disseminated through various platforms to lobby and pressure for women in power and decision-making positions so as to avoid relapses across diverse fields.
- » Invest in building women's alliances across parties and different domains for building women's leadership. Use the platform to change the narrative, for instance, deconstructing that men make better leaders while women lack confidence and capacities; promoting the visibility of women leaders across different domains and their positive impacts at family, community, institutional and national levels; employing evidence-based slogans for lobbying and pressuring for women representation in decision making positions, etc.
- » Measure online and offline sexual and gender-based violence against women in politics and other domains. The need is to examine those in decision-making positions, or moving along the path and determine elements hindering and undermining their progress. A three-pronged approach is suggested which involve, (i) Clear defining of online and offline violence, followed by regular

30. Republica. (2024, March 27). *For the first time, three female AIGs to work together in Nepal Police*. My Republica. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/for-the-first-time-three-female-aigs-to-work-together-in-nepal-police/>

31. Hachhethu, K. (2023, July). *Prospects for democratic consolidation: Elite circulation and inclusion in local elections 2022*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). <https://kms.pri.gov.np/dams/?r=20050&k=645eab8969>

monitoring and measuring types of violence (online and offline) they encounter, along with use of automated techniques and well-trained human team to measure online violence;³² (ii) Policy efforts to adopt legislation that target violence against women in politics, especially online violence, and policy framework that includes online violence against women in politics in political and digital literacy efforts; and (iii) Ensuring safety mechanisms through government institutions, private sector (including social media platform) and CSOs for mapping and tackling violence against women in politics and decision making levels.

- » Lobby for budgetary allocation from government and external development partners for awareness raising, capacity and competence building through mentorship programs, and developing and employing advocacy tools to promote women, including intersectionally marginalized women, to positions of power and decision making.
- » Mobilize a joint government-CSO monitoring body to regularly monitor and track progress and challenges to women in leadership positions. Similar effort should be replicated across all 7 provinces, and findings regularly disseminated via social medial platforms for influencing transformation.

32. Phillips, H., Bergia, A., & Grimà Algora, R. (2024, February). *Strengthening democracy by reducing threats to women in politics: A review of explanations and solutions to online violence against women in politics*. Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Strengthening-democracy-reducing-threats-women-politics.pdf>

Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women

Present Status

The protection and realization of women's rights in Nepal are guided by various national and international frameworks aimed at ensuring gender equality and justice. Key international instruments include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5. Nepal's Constitution includes 'Rights of Women' (Article 38) as one of the fundamental rights. The article guarantees women with equal rights to lineage without gender discrimination and safeguards their right to safe motherhood and reproductive health. The article strictly prohibits all forms of physical, mental, sexual, psychological, or cultural violence and oppression, mandating punishment for offenders and compensation for victims. It ensures women's access and participation in state structures through proportional inclusion and offers special opportunities in education, health, employment, and social security through positive discrimination. Additionally, it upholds equal rights for both spouses in property and family matters. These provisions reflect Nepal's commitment to gender equality, addressing historical disparities and fostering an equitable society.

To achieve the constitutional provision, various institutional mechanisms have been established at the federal, provincial, and local levels. These include the National Women's Commission, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens, gender focal points in multiple ministries. Local bodies such as Women Development Units in 753 municipalities, Women and Children Service Centers in police offices across all 77 districts, and rehabilitation centers for victims of trafficking and domestic violence also play important roles. Legal aid services, including free legal support and the establishment of judicial committees in municipalities, further enhance women's access to justice. These institutions in federal, province and local level and independent commissions are presented as below:

Federal Level Institutions

Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC)

MoWCSC formulates, implements, monitors, and evaluates policies and programs focused on women's empowerment, rights, and welfare. The ministry has worked in aligning national programs with international commitments on gender equality.¹ Further, it is responsible to ensure the protection for vulnerable women, including those facing gender-based violence and supports empowerment and skills development by strengthening legal frameworks. Also, it offers various support services, including legal assistance, psychosocial counseling, and safe housing for survivors of violence.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was officially established on February 10, 2015, under the Enforced Disappearances Inquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2014, with the aim of

1. Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. (n.d.). *Official website*. Government of Nepal. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/en/#>

addressing human rights violations committed during Nepal's civil conflict from 1996 to 2006.² The TRC was designed to fulfill the commitments made in the Comprehensive Peace Accord and the Interim Constitution. On August 14, 2024, the House of Representatives of Nepal endorsed an amendment to the TRC Act after more than a year of deliberations. This amendment seeks to improve the TRC's capacity to address human rights violations, with particular attention to women who were victims of sexual violence during the conflict. Women survivors of wartime sexual violence have faced significant challenges in accessing justice and reparations, and the TRC's efforts in providing redress have often been criticized for delays and inadequate support. Many women continue to feel excluded from the process, and their experiences have frequently been sidelined in post-conflict justice mechanisms.

Cyber Bureau

The Cyber Bureau in Nepal, established under the Nepal Police, plays a crucial role in addressing cybercrimes, including online harassment and gender-based violence, ensuring a safer digital environment for women.³ Despite its efforts, challenges persist, including gaps in legal provisions for online gender-based violence and cultural norms that discourage women from reporting these crimes, highlighting the need for increased awareness and education, especially in rural areas.

Human Trafficking Bureau

Nepal's Human Trafficking Bureau, established within the Nepal Police, leads national efforts to combat human trafficking, including people smuggling and transnational trafficking.⁴ It coordinates with law enforcement, NGOs, and international organizations to investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes, rescue victims, and provide support services like legal aid and counseling. The Bureau also conducts awareness programs to educate vulnerable populations about the risks of trafficking and promotes safe migration practices. Despite its efforts, challenges remain in victim support, law enforcement, and public awareness.

Women, Children and Senior Citizen Service Directorate (WCSCSD)-Nepal Police

The WCSCSD Directorate in Nepal police focuses on safeguarding the rights and welfare of women, children, and senior citizens, with a strong emphasis on women's advancement.⁵ It addresses issues like sexual offenses, domestic violence, polygamy, child marriage, and harmful social practices such as witchcraft accusations and untouchability. The Directorate coordinates for the services such as shelters, legal assistance, medical care, and counseling to survivors, while also running awareness campaigns and training police officers. However, challenges like budget constraints, understaffing, and insufficient coordination with other stakeholders hinder its effectiveness in providing timely and comprehensive support.

"As I reflect on our collaboration with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), I am reminded of the critical role that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) played in advocating for the rights of women who were victims of sexual violence during Nepal's armed conflict. When the TRC draft bill was under deliberation in 2024, we, along with fellow advocates, worked relentlessly to ensure that the TRC would address the specific needs of the survivors, including justice and reparations"

- Adv. Anita Neupane Thapaliya

2. Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (n.d.). *Introduction*. Government of Nepal. <https://trc.gov.np/en/pages/2/70332091/>

3. Nepal Police. (n.d.). साइबर ब्यूरो - परिचय [Cyber Bureau - Introduction]. https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np/other_links/detail/cyber-bureau/

4. Interpol. (n.d.). *Fighting organized crime in Nepal*. Interpol. <https://www.interpol.int/fr/Qui-nous-sommes/Les-pays-membres/Asie-Pacifique-Sud/NEPAL>

5. महिला, बालबालिका तथा ज्येष्ठ नागरिक सेवा निर्देशनालय (n.d.). महिला, बालबालिका तथा ज्येष्ठ नागरिक सेवा निर्देशनालय, नेपाल प्रहरी. <https://cid.nepalpolice.gov.np/cid-wings/women-children-and-senior-citizen-service-directorate/>

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Units

GESI Units in Nepal are established within various ministries and federal institutions to promote gender equality and social inclusion. Their primary role is to develop and integrate gender-sensitive policies, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for women and marginalized groups. These units assess the impact of government programs on these vulnerable communities, provide regular training to government staff on GESI principles, and collaborate with civil society organizations. By focusing on inclusive development, GESI Units contribute to creating a more equitable and socially just society.

Women and Social Affairs Committee of the Federal Parliament

The Women and Social Affairs Committee of the Federal Parliament focuses on women's rights and gender-sensitive legislation in Nepal.⁶ It ensures that gender equality is prioritized in legislative processes and monitors the implementation of policies supporting women and marginalized communities. However, the committee faces challenges such as inadequate funding, lack of administrative support, limited political will, and insufficient expertise among its members, which can hinder its ability to effectively influence policy.

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Ministry of Health and Population – Safe Motherhood Program

The MoHP's Safe Motherhood Program aims to improve maternal health services in Nepal by ensuring pregnant women have access to essential healthcare, including prenatal care, skilled birth attendance, and emergency obstetric care.⁷ The program seeks to reduce maternal mortality, promote reproductive health education, and enhance family planning and nutrition to improve overall health outcomes for women and reduce preventable deaths during pregnancy and childbirth.

National Child Rights Council (NCRC)

The National Child Rights Council (NCRC) in Nepal established under the Act Relating to Children, 2018, works to protect children's best interests in line with national and international standards.⁸ It focuses on creating a safer environment, particularly for girls facing gender inequality, and addresses issues like missing children, as highlighted in its 2021 report, which recorded 335 missing child cases. The Council emphasizes ongoing efforts to fully realize children's rights and promote gender equality.

Provincial Level Institutional Arrangements

Provincial Ministries

At the provincial level, the government formulates and implements policies, programs, and budgets aimed at women's empowerment, gender equality, and social inclusion, working to advance women's rights and opportunities. The provincial ministries play a crucial role in localizing national gender policies, ensuring they are adapted to regional contexts, and coordinating with local governments to address gender-related issues.

6. Women and Social Affairs Committee of the Federal Parliament. (n.d.). *Women and social affairs committee members*. <https://hr.parliament.gov.np/en/committees/Women-And-Social-Affairs-Committee/members>
7. Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal. (2020, January). Safe motherhood and newborn health road map 2030. Nepal Health Sector Support Programme. <https://nhssp.org.np/Resources/SD/SMNH%20Roadmap%202030%20-%20January%202020.pdf>
8. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, & National Child Rights Council. (2019). *State of children in Nepal 2019*. <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/1588671135status%20report%20ENGLISH.pdf>

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Units

The government has established GESI Units at all administrative levels as cross-cutting entities to integrate gender considerations into policies, plans, and budgets of provincial line ministries and departments (PLGSP, 2021). These units also play a vital role in collecting and utilizing gender-disaggregated data to guide decision-making, ensuring that gender equality is effectively embedded into government initiatives and strategies.

Local-Level Institutional Arrangements

District Courts

District courts provide legal avenues for women to seek justice and address gender-based discrimination. As institutions that uphold the rule of law, district courts are responsible for adjudicating cases related to family law, domestic violence, sexual assault, and property rights, all of which are crucial for promoting gender equality.

District Legal Aid Committee (DLAC)

In Nepal, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has established 75 District Legal Aid Committees (DLACs) under the Legal Aid Act, 1997, to provide legal assistance and promote access to justice, particularly for marginalized groups, including women.⁹ While these committees are meant to be operational in all 77 districts, two districts have yet to establish their DLACs. Furthermore, delays in amending the Legal Aid Act have hindered the committees' effective operation and coordination.

Women and Children Service Centers

Women and Children Service Centers (WCSCs) have been established across all 77 districts of Nepal within district police stations to provide support to women, children, and marginalized groups, including survivors of violence. Currently, 240 WCSCs are operational nationwide, but their effectiveness is hindered by budget constraints and insufficient human resources.

Court Paid Lawyers

The Government of Nepal has established a system for court-appointed lawyers to provide free legal aid to offenders in district courts, high courts, and the Supreme Court. This system is primarily governed by the Legal Aid Act of 1997 and the Constitution of Nepal (2015), with Article 20 guaranteeing the right to free legal aid for indigent individuals, ensuring access to justice for those unable to afford legal representation. However, challenges persist, including low awareness among women and marginalized groups,¹⁰ inadequate skills among legal personnel, and limited resources.

Hospital-based One Stop Crisis Management Centers (OCMCs)

One-Stop Crisis Management Centers (OCMCs) are vital facilities established in Nepal to combat gender-based violence (GBV) and provide integrated support to survivors, particularly women and marginalized groups. These centers offer essential services under one roof, including medical care, legal assistance, psychosocial counseling, and safe housing. Hospital Based One-stop Crisis Management Center

The Government of Nepal has set up a system for court-appointed lawyers to provide free legal aid in district courts, high courts, and the Supreme Court. This system is mainly governed by the Legal Aid Act of 1997 and the Constitution of Nepal (2015). Article 20 of the Constitution guarantees the right to free legal aid for those who cannot afford it, ensuring access to justice. However, challenges remain, such as low awareness among women and marginalized groups, insufficient skills among legal personnel, and limited resources.

9. Law Associates Nepal. (2005, September 2). *Study of the current legal aid system in Nepal*. USAID. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadj826.pdf

10. The Kathmandu Post. (2020, February 11). *Courts hire lawyers to work pro bono, but litigants don't know they're there*. The Kathmandu Post. <https://kathmandupost.com/gandaki-province/2020/02/11/courts-hire-lawyers-to-work-pro-bono-but-litigants-don-t-know-they-re-there>

(OCMCs)¹¹ have been established in hospitals in all districts to support GBV victims.¹² However, in practice, OCMCs have not been providing services to those victims who do not file a First Information Report (FIR).

Ward Committees

The Ward Committee in Nepal has a crucial role in promoting gender equality and addressing women's issues in local governance. The committee requires to ensure women's participation in community planning, offers immediate help to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), and advocates for gender-sensitive policies. However, challenges such as limited capacity, inadequate funding for gender initiatives, and patriarchal attitudes within communities hinder its effectiveness.

Judicial Committees

In Nepal, Judicial Committees at the local level, established under the Local Government Operation Act 2017 (LGOA), play a key role in addressing gender-based discrimination and advancing women's rights.¹³ They handle cases related to domestic violence, discrimination, and other gender-related issues, offering a platform for women to seek justice through mediation and legal action. These committees contribute to empowering women and promoting gender equality. However, challenges such as insufficient training in gender-sensitive dispute resolution, lack of clear procedures for activating the GBV elimination fund, coordination gaps between departments, and political interference undermine their effectiveness. These issues hinder the committees' ability to deliver fair justice and address gender-based violence effectively.

Independent Commissions

National Women Commission (NWC)

The National Women Commission (NWC) of Nepal was established on March 7, 2002, under the National Women Commission Act, 2007. Its primary mission is to protect women's rights, promote gender equality, and advocate for policies that address women's issues while ensuring their equal participation in decision-making.¹⁴ As a constitutional body, the NWC plays an advisory role to the government, monitors gender equality compliance, and works to enhance women's advancement nationwide. Elevated to an autonomous constitutional body in 2015, the NWC continues to advocate for legislative reforms and supports programs aligned with Nepal's commitments to gender equality.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nepal, established as an independent constitutional body in 2000, has an important role in promoting and protecting human rights. The NHRC monitors human rights conditions, investigates violations, and recommends legal and policy reforms to enhance protections for women and marginalized groups.¹⁵ As a signatory to international treaties like the ICCPR and CEDAW, the NHRC also engages in research and public awareness campaigns to promote women's rights. However, it faces challenges such as budget constraints and limited human resources, which affect its operational efficiency.

11. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Health. (2016). *Hospital based one-stop crisis management center (OCMC) operational manual 2067*: Unofficial translation, updated 2016 version [PDF]. https://www.nhssp.org.np/NHSSP_Archives/gesi/OCMC_Operational_manual_2067_2016.pdf
12. Government of Nepal. (2023). *Nepal's seventh periodic report on CEDAW*: Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/CEDAW1-1693735406.pdf>
13. Nepal Law Society. (n.d.). *Judicial committees in Nepal: A closer look*. The Asia Foundation. <https://nepallawsociety.org/uploads/attachments/py45jbbbei5e4whqp.pdf>
14. National Women Commission. (2024, September 11). *About the commission*. National Women Commission. <https://nwc.gov.np/en/about/background/>
15. National Human Rights Commission Nepal. (n.d.). *About us*. National Human Rights Commission Nepal. <https://www.nhrcnepal.org/aboutus>

National Indigenous Commission (NIC)

The National Dalit Commission (NDC) and the National Indigenous Commission (NIC) has important role in advancing the rights of marginalized communities, particularly Dalit and indigenous women in Nepal. These commissions address the intersectionality of caste, ethnicity, and gender, working to eliminate discrimination and promote inclusion. The NDC focuses on combating caste-based violence, while the NIC advocates for the socio-political and economic inclusion of indigenous women.¹⁶

Muslim Commission

The Muslim Commission of Nepal, established under the Constitution and the Muslim Commission Act of 2074 BS, works to protect and promote the rights, identity, and culture of the Muslim community. It focuses on policy, legal, and institutional reforms for the community's empowerment and advocates for the rights of Muslim women, emphasizing their education, participation, and socio-economic advancement. The Commission also monitors the implementation of policies, formulates special programs for the development of disadvantaged Muslims, and conducts research on their language, culture, and history.¹⁷ Through these efforts, it plays a key role in enhancing the well-being and rights of the Muslim community in Nepal.

Tharu Commission

The Tharu Commission is another institution that contributes in advocating for the rights of Tharu community in general including women and girls from the community. It monitors human rights conditions, investigates violations, and promotes legal reforms to protect women and girls. The Commission also engages in research, public awareness campaigns, and education to advance gender equality and ensure the implementation of policies that align with international standards, despite facing challenges like budget constraints and limited resources.¹⁸

Achievements

- » On August 14, 2024, the House of Representatives endorsed the TRC bill, amending the Enforced Disappearances Inquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act (2014). The amended act continues to advocate for the rights of women victims of sexual violence during the conflict. However, its implementation has faced criticism, primarily due to delays and insufficient support, which have hindered the timely resolution of cases and the provision of justice for the victims.
- » The Constitution of Nepal provisions for the election of one woman as either the Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, ensuring that they represent different political parties. Additionally, the Constitution guarantees women's representation in the positions of President and Vice President. These provisions have continued to be upheld after 2020, ensuring women's participation in key leadership roles at the national level.
- » The Local Governance Operation Act 2074 has mandated the representation of women in self-governing local units as either Mayors or Deputy Mayors. This has been reflected in the local elections, with the representation of women ensured in 700 out of 753 local units as Deputy Mayors. This provision remains in effect beyond 2020, promoting gender inclusion in local governance.
- » Gender Focal Points have been appointed in each Government Ministry, a provision that has continued after 2020. These focal points are instrumental in ensuring that gender-sensitive policies and initiatives are implemented across various sectors

16. National Dalit Council. (n.d.). *हाम्रो बारेमा* [About us]. National Dalit Council. <https://ndc.gov.np/pages/about-us?lan=np>

17. Muslim Commission Nepal. (n.d.). *Introduction*. Muslim Commission Nepal. <https://muslimcommission.gov.np/pages/66412406/>

18. Tharu Commission. (n.d.). *हाम्रो बारेमा* [About us]. Tharu Commission. <https://tharucommission.gov.np/about-us>

- » In the Local Judicial Committee, a three-member committee headed by a Deputy Mayor has been established to adjudicate, arbitrate, and refer cases to mediation centers at the local level. This practice of gender-inclusive local justice administration has continued beyond 2020, promoting women's access to justice and decision-making at the community level.

Key Challenges

- » **Dissolution of District Women and Children Offices:** The closure of Women and Children office at all the district levels has created the difficulties for women in assessing the facilities for advancing the socio-economic political rights of women.
- » **National Women Commission (NWC):** The commission's effectiveness is limited by its centralized operations, which restrict its reach to provincial and local levels, undermining federal governance values. This apart, political bias in the appointment of members from political affiliations further compromise its impartiality and ability to deliver on its mandate.

National Women Commission (NWC)'s effectiveness is limited by its centralized operations, which restrict its reach to provincial and local levels, undermining federal governance values. This apart, political biases in the appointment of members from political affiliations further compromise its impartiality and ability to deliver on its mandate.
- » **Delayed Implementation by Government Departments:** Departments tasked with addressing women's issues, including gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming, are not effectively implementing their mandates, limiting their impact.
- » **Limited Representation in State Mechanisms:** Women's representation in government remains nominal, with proportional representation only in the legislature, minimal inclusion in the executive, and no provisions for the judiciary.
- » **Lack of Qualitative Representation:** Increased quantitative participation of women in elected bodies has not translated into impactful leadership or decision-making roles.
- » **Inadequate Budget Allocation:** The absence of gender-specific budget provisions has led to unequal and insufficient allocation of resources for women's issues, particularly at the local level.
- » **Coordination Deficits Across Government Levels:** Weak coordination and unclear mechanisms between federal, provincial, and local governments result in fragmented policy implementation and ineffective resource allocation for gender equality initiatives.
- » **Limited Institutional Resources:** Funding and staffing constraints across institutions hinder the implementation of comprehensive gender-focused initiatives and the capacity to respond to increasing service demands.
- » **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Inefficiencies in bureaucratic processes delay investigations and judicial actions related to women's rights violations, impeding timely support and justice for victims.
- » **Healthcare Infrastructure Gaps:** Insufficient infrastructure and shortages of skilled personnel, especially in rural areas, limit the quality and availability of maternal and reproductive health services under the Safe Motherhood Program.
- » **Limited Integration of GESI Units:** The isolation of GESI units within specific departments and a lack of specialized gender expertise limit their capacity to influence broader sectoral policies and integrate gender issues effectively.

Recommendations

Enhance Oversight Mechanisms:

- » Strengthen the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms in commissions, judicial committees, women's cells, and units to ensure accountability and efficient operation.

Expand National Women Commission (NWC)'s Reach:

- » Establish branch offices of the NWC at provincial and local levels to make it more accessible and approachable for women and marginalized groups.
- » Revise appointment procedures to minimize political biases and enhance impartiality and governance.

Integrate Gender Perspectives in Legislation and Policies:

- » Sensitize government officials and strengthen institutional mechanisms to integrate gender perspectives into legislation, plans, and policies.
- » Foster collaborative approaches among government and non-governmental organizations, women-based organizations, and stakeholders to implement action-oriented plans promoting gender equality.

Mobilize Key Women-Focused Organizations:

- » Prioritize the perspectives of Women Ministries, Women Intergovernmental Organizations, and Women Civil Society Organizations to influence other parts of the government in advancing gender mainstreaming across all state mechanisms.

Strengthen Liaison Among Key Bodies:

- » Enhance collaboration between the Women Ministry, NWC, government bodies, and intergovernmental organizations to expand gender mainstreaming at the policy level.
- » Activate and recruit gender desks under various government institutions, including health workers and justice actors, with clear terms of reference (TOR) to bridge gaps and promote gender responsiveness.

Improve Government Coordination:

- » Establish clear coordination mechanisms between federal, provincial, and local governments to align policies, programs, and resource allocation, fostering more effective gender equality initiatives.

Strengthen Women and Children Development Units:

- » Build the capacity of women and children development units to improve coordination, ensure gender-responsive planning, and enable effective decision-making processes.

Human Rights of Women

As a signatory to several international human rights treaties, Nepal is committed to promoting gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, which serve as key frameworks for advancing women's rights and addressing gender-based discrimination.¹ Nepal is also a party to other significant treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR²), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR³), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD⁴), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD⁵), among others. These commitments highlight Nepal's obligation to uphold and protect the rights of women and marginalized groups.

The Constitution of Nepal⁶ adopted in 2015 further strengthens this commitment by embedding these international principles within its domestic legal framework. The Constitution of Nepal stands as a progressive document that explicitly recognizes and incorporates the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. Specifically, the Constitution of Nepal guarantees the rights of women⁷, including other rights like the right to live with dignity⁸, the right to equality⁹, the right against untouchability and discrimination¹⁰, the right to justice¹¹, and the right to social security¹² as fundamental rights.

Achievements

» Extended Reporting Time for Sexual Violence Cases:

The National Penal Code, 2017, was updated in 2022 to extend the time allowed for reporting cases of sexual violence, including rape. As per new amendment, if the victim is a minor, they are permitted to file a report within three years of reaching the age of 18. For adult victims aged between 18 and 70, the statute of limitations allows reporting within two years from the date of the offense. The amendment also gives people over 70, those with intellectual disabilities, and people with other disabilities three years from the date of the offense to report.¹³

1. United Nations. (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>
2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (Ratified by Nepal on 14 May, 1991)
3. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (Ratified by Nepal on 14 May, 1991)
4. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965 (Ratified by Nepal on 20 January, 1971)
5. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 (Ratified by Nepal on 7 May 2010)
6. The Constution of Nepal, 2015 which came into effect from Septemner 20, 2015
7. Ibid, Article 38
8. Ibid, Article 16
9. Ibid, Article 18
10. Ibid, Article 24
11. Ibid, Article 42
12. Ibid, Article 43
13. Government of Nepal. (2022). *Act Amending Laws Against Sexual Violence*. <https://hr.parliament.gov.np/uploads/attachments/ky1remr5lbnxneoih.pdf>

» **Citizenship Act's Amendment**

In 2022, changes were made to the Nepal Citizenship Act and Regulation to align with the 2015 Constitution. Now, children born to single Nepali mothers can receive citizenship by descent, but only if the mother signs a declaration saying the father's identity is unknown.¹⁴ If this declaration is later found to be false, the mother will face criminal charges. The amendment also allows children to receive citizenship if one parent has citizenship by birth and both parents are Nepali citizens.

» **National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan**

The National Gender Equality Policy, 2021, and its 2023 Action Plan are being implemented across all levels of government in Nepal to promote equal opportunities, access, and benefits for everyone. The policy also aims to reduce the gender pay gap, especially in women's unpaid and low-paid work.¹⁵

» **Women's Increased Literacy and Access to Assets**

According to the National Population and Housing Census, 2021,¹⁶ the literacy rate of women has increased from 57.4% in 2011 to 69.4% in 2021. The Land or house ownership of women has also increased from 19.7% in 2011 to 23.8% in 2021.

» **Improved Representation in Governance**

The representation of Women in the Federal Parliament is 34.1% (House of Representatives 33.5% and National Assembly 37.5%), 36.4 in Provincial Assemblies, and 41.2% in the local level.¹⁷ This is a slight improvement compared to the 2017 election, where 90 (32.7%) women were elected; 6 through FPTP and 84 from PR.

» **Model Social Inclusion Policy for Local Level eEmphasize Ending Discrimination**

In 2022, the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) developed a *Model Social Inclusion Policy for Local Level*. The priority areas of this policy include the ending of social discrimination and harmful social practices such as child marriage, gender-based violence, untouchability, the dowry system, the *Haliya* system, the *Chhaupadi* system, child labor, and human trafficking.¹⁸

» **Ratification of the Palermo Protocol**

The Government of Nepal ratified the Palermo Protocol in June 2020, and the major objective of the protocol is to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons.

The National Penal Code of 2017 was amended in 2022 to extend the statute of limitations for reporting cases of sexual violence, including rape. Under the new amendment, victims who are minors can file a report within three years of turning 18. For adult victims aged 18 to 70, the law allows reporting within two years from the date of the offense. Additionally, the amendment grants victims over 70 years old, as well as individuals with intellectual or other disabilities, three years from the date of the offense to file a report.

14. नेपाल सरकार (२०८०) नेपाल नागरिकता (पहिलो संशोधन) ऐन, २०७९. [Nepal Citizenship (First Amendment) Act, 2079]. Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. <https://www.moljpa.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/नेपाल-नागरिकता-पहिलो-संशोधन-ऐन-२०७९.pdf>
15. Government of Nepal. (2024). *National review report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. <https://www.asiapacificgender.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Nepal%20National%20Review%20for%20Implementation%20of%20the%20Beijing%20Platform%20for%20Action%20%282024%29.pdf>
16. National Statistics Office. (2023). *National population and housing census 2021 (National report)*. https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/files/result-folder/National%20Report_English.pdf
17. Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens. (2024). *Gender equality in Nepal: Facts and figures*. <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/Gender-Equality-Report-1715242038.pdf>
18. Himalayan News Service. (2022, January 23). *Model social inclusion policy for local levels*. The Himalayan Times. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/model-social-inclusion-policy-for-local-levels>

» **Progressive Supreme Court Verdict**

In 2023, the Supreme Court of Nepal ruled that if there is no physical and emotional connection between the child and the alleged father in their life, the father should be deemed non-identified. The verdict explicitly states that officials should rely on an applicant's self-declaration to determine if a father is "identified" or "not identified" when issuing citizenship. If the biological father or his family members doesn't accept the applicant as their child, officials should consider the father "not identified." In cases where someone seeks citizenship under their mother's name alone citing the 'non-identification' of the father, the responsible office must facilitate the grant of citizenship.¹⁹ Also, the Supreme Court of Nepal recently ruled that individuals should be allowed to change their gender based on self-identification, irrespective of the sex assigned to them at birth.²⁰

» **Women's Increased Presence in Civil Service**

A recent data (2022/23) indicates women in civil service increased to 28.17% (24,094) out of the total 85,520 civil service employees. Ministries such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Communication and Technology, Ministry of Water Supply are currently headed by women Secretaries, 8 out of the 77 districts have women Chief District Officers, and a Deputy Auditor General Director is also heading the Office of the Auditor General.²¹

» **Integrated Subsidized Loan for Women Entrepreneurs**

The Integrated Subsidized Loan Scheme was launched by the Government of Nepal in 2015 to facilitate easy access to financing for women entrepreneurs through commercial banks. Under this scheme, women can receive loans of up to NRs. 1.5 million without collateral, along with a 6 percent interest subsidy on the amount charged by the bank. This initiative aims to empower women in business by reducing financial barriers and promoting entrepreneurship.

Key Challenges

- » Although Nepal has amended the Citizenship Act, 2006, and its regulations to align with the Constitution of Nepal, 2015, the constitution still has discriminatory rules in article 11(5)²³, 11(6)²⁴, and 11(7)²⁵. These rules limit Nepali women's ability to have an independent identity and prevent them from passing on citizenship to their children or husbands through marriage. The act states that if a father's identity is unknown or untraceable, a woman can only pass citizenship to her child by descent if the child has lived in Nepal. Additionally, the mother must provide a self-declaration stating that the father's identity cannot be determined. If this declaration is later proven to be false, the woman could face legal consequences, including up to three years of imprisonment.²⁶ In

19. Kristina Maharjan and Bindiya Maharjan V. Government of Nepal et. al. 2023 (Writ No. 078-WO- 0853)
20. Rukshana Kapali V. Government of Nepal et al. (Writ No. 077-WO-0973) https://supremecourt.gov.np/court/public/media/2024_07/ead03a6f2a77e50b62cfe6ae08270cf6.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawEW4pNleHRuA2FlbQlxMAABHR7FwLEeg4-SYVlhB_YnWm9cgltoBKWqzsRljZhvl3gZwLQdXqbYukQIQ_aem_1kgmeEBtXJjsZBsP8wigYw
21. eKantipur. (2024, August 12). *24 thousand women employees in civil service*. eKantipur. <https://ekantipur.com/en/feature/2024/08/12/24-thousand-women-employees-in-civil-service-20-08.html>
22. Lahiri, S. (2022). *Government schemes and incentives for women entrepreneurs in Nepal*. Sheatwork. <https://sheatwork.com/government-schemes-and-incentives-for-women-entrepreneurs-in-nepal/>
23. Ibid, Article 11(5) A person who is born in Nepal to a woman who is a citizen of Nepal and has resided in Nepal and whose father is not traced shall be provided with the citizenship of Nepal by descent. Provided that in case his or her father is held to be a foreign citizen, the citizenship of such person shall be converted into naturalized citizenship as provided for in the federal law.
24. Ibid, Article 11(6): A foreign woman who has a matrimonial relationship with a citizen of Nepal may, in case she so desires, acquire the naturalized citizenship of Nepal as provided for in the federal law.
25. Ibid, Article 11(7): Notwithstanding anything contained elsewhere in this Article, in the case of a person born to a woman who is a citizen of Nepal and married to a foreign citizen, the person may acquire the naturalized citizenship of Nepal in accordance with the federal law in case he or she has permanently resided in Nepal and has not acquired the citizenship of a foreign country. Provided that in case such person's mother and father both are citizens of Nepal at the time of acquisition of citizenship, such person born in Nepal may acquire the citizenship of Nepal by descent.
26. Section 21(3C), the Nepal Citizenship Act, 2006

addition, the law states that if the father is a foreign citizen, the child's citizenship is changed to naturalized citizenship. However, this rule does not apply to single Nepali fathers. Another discriminatory provision is that foreign women/girl married to Nepali men can acquire naturalized citizenship as soon as they give up the citizenship of their country of origin but there is no such provision for foreign men married to Nepali women. Furthermore, a child born to a Nepali woman and a foreign man can only receive naturalized citizenship. In contrast, children born to Nepali men with a non-Nepali spouse automatically receive citizenship by descent.²⁷ Thus, these patriarchal and discriminatory nationality laws unjustly disregard Nepali women's autonomy and independent identity.

The amendments to the Nepal Citizenship Act and its 2006 Regulation do not guarantee the right of transgender or intersex individuals, who were previously granted citizenship as male or female, to amend their gender and name on their citizenship documents. As a result, only a limited number of individuals from LGBTIQ community have been able to exercise this right.

- » Nepal has not yet become a party to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- » The amendments to the Nepal Citizenship Act and its 2006 Regulation do not guarantee the right of transgender or intersex individuals, who were previously granted citizenship as male or female, to amend their gender and name on their citizenship card. As a result, only a limited number of individuals from LGBTIQ community have been able to exercise this right.²⁸
- » Gender and sexual minorities are subjected to an invasive and humiliating medical examination process for gender identification to obtain citizenship under the "other" category in practice.²⁹
- » Although the law allows either the mother or father to register the birth of a child,³⁰ a police report is required if the father is missing or unidentified.³¹ However, no such document is needed for the father when registering the child.
- » Despite the adoption of the Palermo Protocol by GoN in 2020, the domestication of laws related to anti-trafficking³² including the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007, is significantly delayed.
- » The National Civil Code³³ explicitly states that if a woman is proven to have conceived a child through physical intercourse with a man, their marriage will automatically be considered valid. This provision clearly violates a woman's right to freely choose and consent to marriage.
- » There is absence of a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women in existing legislation. Current laws fail to adequately address the elements of direct and indirect discrimination, as well as the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization faced by women in both public and private spheres. This legislative gap disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, including Dalit women, women with disabilities, displaced women, and women from religious minorities, LBTI women, indigenous women, *Madhesi* women, economically disadvantaged women, and women living in rural areas.³⁴

27. नेपाल सरकार, (२०२३) नेपाल नागरिकता ऐन, २०६३ लाई संशोधन गर्न बनेको विधेयक. <https://hr.parliament.gov.np/uploads/attachments/8zpd7uhoplj4xcbi.pdf>

28. Based on the findings from BPFA+30 national- level consultation

29. Human Rights Watch. (2024, February 15). "We have to beg so many people". <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/15/we-have-beg-so-many-people/human-rights-violations-nepals-legal-gender>

30. The National ID and Civil Registration Act, 2020 and the National ID and Civil Registration Regulation, 2021

31. Necessary Documents to be included in Birth Information Form, Annex 10, the National ID and Civil Registration Regulation, 2021

32. Foreign Employment Act 2007, Immigration Act 1992, Labor Act 2017, Passport Act, 2019, Organized Crime (Prevention) Act 2014, Assets and Goods related to Offence (Freeze, Control and Confiscation) Act, 2014, Legal Aid Act 1997, Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 2000, Mutual Legal Assistance Act 2014

33. Section 74(1) of the National Civil Code, 2017

34. Based on the conclusion of the provincial consultations

- » Despite criminalizing *Chhaupadi*,³⁵ and the government's campaign which resulted in dismantling more than 8,550 *Chhaupadi* Goths (menstrual sheds where women and girls live during their period) in two months,³⁶ the deeply rooted cultural belief³⁷ is still persistent.³⁸ The major issue underlying this situation is that victims often cannot file a legal complaint against their family members. In rare cases when women gather the courage to stand up against their families, they do not receive the necessary social and legal support to continue their fight.³⁹
- » The Government of Nepal has failed to formulate laws and policies to prevent sexual violence, exploitation, and forced labor against women who are involved in commercial sexual activity. As a result, they are afraid to report violence or seek medical treatment for fear of being arrested or mistreated by police officers.⁴⁰
- » The government's lack of an exit plan for women seeking to leave commercial sex work is concerning.⁴¹ Also, derogatory words such as "*Besyagaman*" and "*Besyabritti*" in the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2064 have not been removed.
- » The statute of limitations on the registration of sexual violence cases has not been fully removed, which impedes access to justice for survivors.⁴²
- » According to data from the Nepal Police for the year 2021/22, cybercrime has been steadily increasing. Complaints filed with the Cyber Bureau indicate that 142 girls and 2,389 women were reported as victims of cybercrimes in Nepal. However, there is a lack of comprehensive legislation addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV).⁴³
- » There is a notable underrepresentation of women from marginalized groups, including Dalit, Madhesi, and Indigenous communities, religious minorities, LGBTI individuals, women from geographically disadvantaged regions, women with disabilities, and displaced women, across all sectors.⁴⁴
- » The government has failed to enact a law to implement the special opportunity provision under the fundamental rights of women⁴⁵ as per Article 47 of the Constitution.
- » Despite legal equality, women, particularly married daughters, are still not considered as an independent coparcener to the ancestral property in practice.⁴⁶

The government's lack of an exit plan for women seeking to leave sex work is concerning. Also, derogatory words such as "Besyagaman" and "Besyabritti" in the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2064 have not been removed.

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- 35. Section 168(3) of the National Criminal Code, 2017
 - 36. MoWCSC, A Progressive Journey to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Achievement of Nepal, 2021, p. 38, available at <https://mowcsc.gov.np/downloadfiles/oCz7iCOxqikldQNpREjhO2pbqXilaQlZ4BhM5scc-1625557539.pdf>
 - 37. U.S. Department of State. (2023). *2023 country reports on human rights practices: Nepal*. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/nepal>
 - 38. Aawaaj News. (2024, January 25). Even seven years after illegalization, Chaupadi continues unabated. Aawaaj News. <http://aawaajnews.com/social-development-news/even-seven-years-after-illegalization-chhaupadi-continues-unabated/>
 - 39. The Kathmandu Post. (2024, April 25). The return of the Chhau. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/editorial/2024/04/25/the-return-of-the-chhau>
 - 40. Online Khabar. (n.d.). *Sex workers in Nepal: A struggle for human rights*. Online Khabar. <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/sex-workers-in-nepal-human-rights.html>
 - 41. Forum for Women, Law, and Development. (2024, January). *Civil society's submission for list of issues on 7th periodic report of Nepal*. Forum for Women, Law, and Development. <https://fwld.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Civil-Societys-Submission-for-List-of-Issues-on-7th-Periodic-Report-of-Nepal-1.pdf>
 - 42. Equality Now. (2022, July 14). *Demanding justice in Nepal: How statutes of limitations impede access to justice for survivors of sexual violence*. Equality Now. https://equalitynow.org/news_and_insights/demanding-justice-in-nepal-how-statutes-of-limitations-impede-access-to-justice-for-survivors-of-sexual-violence/#:~:text=Update%3A%20On%20July%2014%2C%202022,to%20up%20to%20three%20years
 - 43. Nepal Police. (2022). *Annual fact sheet on gender-based violence: July/Aug 2021 to Jun/July 2022*. Nepal Police. https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np/media/filer_public/bc/d0/bcd064f5-284a-492a-b424-def0a6800de2/fy-2078-79-annual-infographics-en.pdf
 - 44. Based on findings from province level consultations.
 - 45. Article 38(5) of the Constitution of Nepal, 2015
 - 46. Dang District Court in 11th July, 2023 held that partition right of married daughter is not an absolute right and held that it is a relative right, consequently denying them their partition right in ancestral property.

- » If a divorce is caused by the wife, the husband is not obligated to provide a partition share or alimony to her. However, if the divorce is caused by the husband, the wife is still required to provide such support to him.⁴⁷ This provision is inherently discriminatory against women.
- » Despite numerous landmark Supreme Court verdicts like granting citizenship in the name of mother⁴⁸, granting citizenship to street children,⁴⁹ procedural hurdles have impeded the implementation of these rulings.
- » While the constitution guarantees gender equality, it primarily focuses on binary gender concepts, neglecting the specific needs and rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LBTI) women. This exclusion leaves LBTI women vulnerable to discrimination, exclusion, and violence.⁵⁰
- » In 2023, INSEC reported 45 human rights violations against women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in Nepal, with abuses from both state and non-state actors. State forces were responsible for 26 incidents, including arrests, restrictions on assembly, beatings, and inhuman treatment. Non-state actors contributed 19 violations, including beatings, women's rights violations, threats, caste-based discrimination, and further restrictions on assembly.⁵¹

Recommendations

- » Adopt a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women in the legislation to encompass elements of direct and indirect discrimination, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination in public and private spheres especially multiple discrimination faced by Dalit women, women with disabilities, displaced women, women from religious minorities, LBTI, indigenous women, Madhesi women, poor women, and rural women.
- » Eliminate the statute of limitations on the registration of cases of sexual violence to ensure survivors have the right to seek justice without time constraints.
- » Repeal or amend the discriminatory provisions of the National Civil Code, 2017 that prevent women from claiming their property rights upon divorce.
- » Nepal should amend discriminatory provisions in the Citizenship Act, 2006, and the Constitution, particularly Articles 11(5), 11(6), and 11(7), to ensure that Nepali women have equal rights to pass citizenship to their children and spouses, eliminating gender-based restrictions and safeguarding women's autonomy and independent identity.
- » Develop a comprehensive law addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence, ensuring protection for women and girls in the digital space.
- » Introduce legal provisions that allow transgender or intersex individuals to amend their gender and name in citizenship documents without invasive medical examinations.
- » Expedite the domestication of laws related to anti-trafficking to align with the Palermo Protocol and remove derogatory terms from legal texts.
- » Implement awareness campaigns to challenge and change cultural beliefs that perpetuate discrimination against women, such as the practice of *Chhaupadi*.
- » Ensure that women from marginalized communities, including Dalit, Madhesi, and Indigenous women, are represented in decision-making processes at all levels.
- » The Nepal government should implement a comprehensive protection program specifically for women human rights defenders (WHRDs), ensuring their safety from both state and non-state actors. This program should include training for law enforcement on respecting the rights of WHRDs, establishing rapid response mechanisms for reported threats or abuse, and creating safe reporting channels where WHRDs can seek protection without fear of retaliation.

47. National Civil Code, 2017, Section 94 and Section 99

48. Kristina Maharjan and Bindiya Maharjan V. Government of Nepal et. al. 2023 (Writ No. 078-WO- 0853)

49. Kumar Joshi, Advocate Sabin Shresth on behalf of FWLD, Advocate Reena Pathak v. Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers et.al. 2023 (Writ no. 078-WS-0037)

50. Based on findings from provincial consultations.

51. Informal Sector Service Center. (2024). *Nepal Human Rights Year Book 2024* (p. 6). https://www.insec.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RS104814_Nepal-Human-Rights-Year-Book-2024-English.pdf

Women and the Media

Present Situation

Nepal's media landscape has undergone significant changes over the past five years. With the advancement in the information technology, the number of online media outlets has increased significantly. The production of various content on YouTube has brought both opportunities and challenges. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic has also been profound on Nepali media, affecting women journalists as well.

According to the 48th Annual Report of the Press Council of Nepal for Fiscal Year 2079/080 BS, there are 730 daily newspapers, 31 bi-weeklies, 2,885 weeklies, 401 fortnightlies, 605 monthlies, 58 bi-monthlies, 111 quarterlies, and 38 other registered newspapers. Additionally, 4,061 online media outlets are registered with the Council. The Department of Information and Broadcasting also lists 243 licensed television stations and 1,186 licensed radio stations. Weekly newspapers have been almost entirely replaced by online platforms.¹

According to the *Sancharika Samuha Nepal*, the women journalists constitute of 25 percent of total journalists in the country. According to the study, 2.4 percent of women are editors-in-chief and 26.6 percent are working as reporters.² Similarly, if we look at the beat covered by women journalists, more women journalists are covering relatively 'soft' beats. However, women have begun showing a strong presence in other beats as well. According to a 2022 study report on the status of women journalists covering foreign affairs and security issues conducted by the Media Advocacy Group, the highest number of women journalists — 23.9 percent — are working in social beat. In comparison, 19.5 percent cover gender and women's issues, 13.3 percent cover political news, 11.1 percent report on health news and 6.6 percent work in foreign affairs and security issues.³

During the COVID-19 pandemic, female journalists faced profound psychological challenges rooted in fear and uncertainty. The looming threat of contracting the virus while reporting weighed heavily on them. Many described the constant worry: "What if I get COVID? What if I infect my family?" This anxiety lingered in every decision they made, with 39% of participants naming safety concerns as their greatest stressor. Job insecurity added another layer of fear. The thought of losing their livelihood haunted them, leading to sleepless nights. "Will I be fired? How will I pay for my family's needs if my salary is delayed or my job disappears?" they asked. For 24%, this financial strain brought a crushing sense of helplessness. Others spoke of feeling undervalued, especially when working without pay. 10% of journalists recounted the

1. प्रेस काउन्सिल नेपाल, (२०८०), ४८औं वार्षिक प्रतिवेदन: आ.व. २०७९/८०, सञ्चारग्राम, तिलगङ्गा, काठमाडौं, नेपाल: प्रेस काउन्सिल नेपाल | <https://www.presscouncilnepal.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/%E0%A5%AA%E0%A5%AE-%E0%A4%94%E0%A4%81-%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B7%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%95-%E0%A4%AA%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%A4%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%B5%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%A6%E0%A4%A8-.pdf>
2. Sancharika Samuha Nepal. (2015). *Status of women journalists in Nepal*. <https://sancharika.org/2023/09/481/>
3. Lama, S., Basnet, B., & Bastakoti, N. R. (2022). *A study on the status of Nepali women journalists covering foreign affairs*. Media Advocacy Group. <https://mag.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/A-Study-on-The-Status-of-Nepali-Women-Journalists-Covering-Foreign-Affairs.pdf>

sting of their hard work going unnoticed, leaving them frustrated and demoralized. Similarly, a lack of support from their families amplified their emotional burden, with another 10% struggling to balance their professional commitments with the weight of disapproval at home. For some, the pandemic's impact was even harsher. 10% lost their jobs, forcing them to confront an uncertain future, while 6% shared how isolation during quarantine stirred fears about their mortality: "What will happen to my children if I don't survive?"⁴

Furthermore, Online gender-based violence too has become widespread.⁵ In a study conducted by MAG on the status of online violence against women journalists in 2022, as many as 88.6 percent of participants reported having experienced online violence. The highest incidence of this violence was perpetrated by colleagues within the office (41.3 percent) and outside the office (31.7 percent).⁶

Media coverage has seen minimal progress in terms of presenting women as news sources, amplifying their voices, or prioritizing women's issues. However, some online platforms and daily newspapers have shown more sensitivity when covering violence and sexual crimes against women, with continued follow-up on such stories. Recent high-profile cases, such as the rape allegations against actor Paul Shah and cricketer Sandeep Lamichhane, highlight this trend. Mainstream media outlets like Kantipur, Nagarik Daily, Annapurna Post, Setopati, Online Khabar, Ukera.com, and other online platforms continued to report on these incidents, with their coverage being notably balanced and victim and survivors-friendly.

The media has gradually become more aware of the dangers of inappropriate reporting, including the insensitive use of photographs, revealing the identities of victims or survivors, and sensationalizing cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). For instance, in February 2022, various media outlets—ranging from online platforms to print—publicly disclosed the name, photographs, and personal details of a rape survivor in a high-profile case involving a Nepali actor. This breach of confidentiality sparked widespread criticism, highlighting the media's failure to uphold ethical standards in protecting the survivor's identity. In response to the backlash, many media outlets revised their approach, adopting more sensitive practices in handling such cases in subsequent coverage.⁷ Another striking example of the cost of media insensitivity was the controversy surrounding actor Paul Shah, accused of rape. Shah was invited to recount his prison experience on the television show *What the Flop*, which aired on Kantipur Television on November 9, 2023. The episode sparked widespread outrage for glorifying a heinous crime like rape, reducing it to a subject of humor. The public backlash forced the removal of the episode from YouTube, and ultimately, the production and broadcast of the entire program were permanently halted. This incident became a significant turning point, signaling an initial step toward fostering greater gender sensitivity in Nepalese media.⁸

The digital age has led to the sensationalization of sexual crimes on online platforms, with some media reports focusing on the perpetrators while exposing the identities of victims, including children. This kind of coverage often re-victimizes women and girls, violating their privacy and causing additional emotional and social harm. Such sensationalized reporting can discourage survivors from seeking justice and further perpetuates their suffering.

Although women hold a significant presence in Nepal's political landscape, their visibility in mainstream media remains dismally low. Women politicians receive minimal coverage, and female journalists account for only a small fraction of bylines. Media monitoring by MAG revealed that women politicians received

4. Basnet, B., & Lama, S. (2020). महिला पत्रकारमा कोभिड-१९ को असर [Impact of COVID-19 on women journalists: Study and analysis]. Media Advocacy Group (MAG). <https://mag.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Women-Journalist-Study-and-analysis.pdf>
5. Pokharel, U., & Pandey, L. (2024). *Vibrant Information Barometer: National Report, Nepal* (B. B. Acharya, Ed.). IREX. https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Nepal_Vibrant-Information-Barometer.pdf
6. Basnet, B., & Lama, S. (2020). महिला पत्रकारमा कोभिड-१९ को असर [Impact of COVID-19 on women journalists]. मिडिया एडवोकेसी ग्रुप (MAG). <https://mag.org.np/publications/impact-of-covid-19-on-women-journalist-study-and-analysis/>
7. Pokharel, U. (2022, September 2). Some do's and don'ts. The Rising Nepal. <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/16173>
8. Ratopati. (2023, July 20). Sandeep Chhetri's program 'What the Flop' closed. Ratopati. <https://english.ratopati.com/story/29042>

just 5.84% of the coverage in mainstream media, based on an analysis of 6,382 news items, features, editorials, and other materials. This underrepresentation persists despite women comprising 33% of Federal Parliament and Provincial Assembly members and 42% of local government representatives. The disparity extends to journalistic contributions as well. A 2020 study by Freedom Forum, spanning 15 online and print outlets, found that women authored only 16% of bylines. Even more striking, women were cited as sources in just 13% of the news analyzed. These figures highlight the persistent gender imbalance in both political media representation and the journalistic profession itself.

Although there has been progress in women's representation in the media industry overall, a noticeable gender gap remains among media professionals. Out of 13,044 journalists affiliated with the FNJ, only 2,360 are women making up 16 percent in total.⁹ A study conducted by the *Sancharika Samuha Nepal* in 2016 showed that the participation of women in media is around 25 percent.

Achievements

- » The Ministry of Communications, Information, and Technology has been implementing the National Mass Media Policy introduced in 2016. The Advertising Act and Regulations have been formulated and put into effect. The government has also introduced the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the media sector. Mass media regulatory bodies are undergoing restructuring, and new laws are being drafted in line with the constitution.
- » The Media Council Bill is currently under discussion in Parliament, while the Public Service Broadcasting Bill was authenticated by the president on October 8, 2024.¹⁰
- » A woman was appointed as the chairperson of the Minimum Wage Determination Committee for the second time, with two women serving as members on the committee.
- » Two district chapters of the Federation of Nepali Journalists now have women chairpersons, which had not been the case before.
- » Currently, a woman has been serving as a board member of Nepal Television.
- » The number of women journalists in investigative reporting, especially in exposing corruption, has grown, and their work is being recognized. For example, journalist Deepa Dahal received the Tanka Prasad Ramadevi Pathak International Award and the Barbara Foundation Investigation Award for her reporting on corruption. Other journalists like Bidya Rai and Bhrikuti Rai are also making their mark in this field.
- » More women journalists are being assigned to mainstream reporting roles, with their increasing presence in politics, economy, and sports. It is important to note that female journalists in the economy field have also formed the Female Economic Journalists Association (FEJA), which has 75 members.
- » Issues affecting women, such as rape, violence against women (VAW), gender-based violence (GBV), and marital rape, have started receiving significant attention in the media, which was not the case in the past.

Over the past five years, Nepal has made remarkable progress in advancing gender equality in the media sector. Key achievements include the appointment of women to leadership roles, such as the chairperson of the Minimum Wage Determination Committee and the board member position at Nepal Television. Female journalists, particularly in investigative reporting, are gaining recognition. Similarly, new policies have considered gender dimensions. Furthermore, the increasing presence of women in mainstream reporting and new technologies, such as online news portals and podcasts, highlights the sector's evolving landscape.

9. Federation of Nepali Journalists. (n.d.). Numbers of members. <https://www.fnjnepal.org/nepal/page/members-data>

10. Freedom Forum. (2024, September 11). Nepal brings PSB law to cheer media development. Freedom Forum. <https://freedomforum.org/nepal-brings-psb-law/>

- » In the context of policy and law, the *Act to Regulate Advertising, 2076 (2019 AD)* includes a provision that gender discrimination should not be encouraged, and discrimination on the basis of gender is prohibited. The Act ensures the participation of at least one woman on the Advertising Board.
- » The *Advertising Code of Conduct, 2076* stipulates that advertisements should not reflect gender discrimination and women should not be portrayed as sexual objects, consumable items, luxurious goods or mere means of entertainment.
- » A new provision has been established for public welfare advertisements funded by the government, offering an extra 25 percent compensation to woman-operated radio stations or newspapers that create employment opportunities for women.
- » The *Women's Responsible Communication Directive, 2076 BS*, issued by the Press Council Nepal, outlines what journalists and broadcasters should and should not do. As part of the journalistic code of conduct, the Directive also allows for complaints and actions against media outlets that promote gender-based violence.
- » The *Cyber Security Policy, 2080* has taken a long-term approach to creating a safe and resilient cyberspace.
- » The *Guidelines for Regulating the Use of Social Media, 2080* prohibit the publication, broadcasting, or endorsement of obscene words, pictures, audio, video, animation, or sexual abuse through cyberbullying.
- » A Bill introduced to integrate and amend the *Media Council Bill, 2080*, currently under discussion in Parliament, ensures the participation of women on Boards and other committees.
- » The *Public Service Broadcasting Bill, 2077* mandates the inclusion of women on the Board.
- » Preparations to amend the regulations of state-owned media organizations—*Gorkhapatra, Radio Nepal, Nepal Television, and the National News Agency*—to provide reservations for women have reached the final stage. These regulations state that 33 percent of participants must be women.
- » The training and support provided by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists, *Sancharika Samuha Nepal*, Media Advocacy Group and other thematic journalist organizations have helped increase the number of female journalists and improved their professional skills. These efforts have also helped address the challenges faced by female journalists.
- » More women are adopting new technologies, with an increasing number running their own online news portals and hosting podcasts.

Key Challenges

- » During the COVID-19 lockdown, many major media outlets paused their print editions and switched to online operations. As work slowed down, many female journalists were forced to take unpaid leave. Those who continued working faced the challenge of balancing their jobs with home responsibilities, such as managing their children's online classes. In addition to these pressures, they experienced financial difficulties due to delayed salaries and reduced pay.
- » While the media has started to cover issues related to women, the coverage remains inadequate. On digital platforms, there is a concerning trend of sensationalizing Violence Against Women incidents and exposing victims, including women and children, in ways that can be harmful.
- » Promoting a positive image of women has not become a priority in the mass media
- » A significant disparity in responsibilities still exists within media houses, with very few women journalists in decision-making roles.
- » There is gender-based discrimination in remuneration for female journalists, with some not receiving regular payments.
- » While the number of women entering journalism has increased, the number of those remaining in the profession long-term is low. Female journalists are leaving the field, and as a result, the number of experienced women journalists has decreased.

- » Technology has brought both opportunities and challenges for women. One growing concern is the increase in online trolling, often targeting women based on their opinions and expressions.
- » From a gender perspective, the lack of content regulation on social media platforms, including YouTube, has disproportionately affected women. Misinformation, especially gender-based false narratives, can spread quickly, targeting women with harmful stereotypes, harassment, and defamation. Without laws to control content, women are vulnerable to online abuse, including misogynistic trolling and the distortion of their voices or actions.
- » The absence of an 'in-house gender policy' in media houses has resulted in a non-gender-friendly work environment, causing some female journalists to leave the profession.
- » The *Information Technology Act* addressing cybercrime has not been passed despite being registered in Parliament, leaving cybercrime unaddressed in the legal framework. For those under legal jurisdiction, the Electronic Transactions Act is used instead.
- » Content published and broadcast in the media has not been monitored from a gender perspective, leaving the issues of code of conduct violations unaddressed.
- » Along with other women, female journalists are also affected by digital violence and media houses lack mechanisms to address it.
- » The media and digital literacy among women remains low. This has made it difficult to fight against fake and misleading information.
- » Despite some positive progress, the media often depict women as vulnerable and helpless, reducing them to objects. Women are rarely portrayed as change agents, achievers, successful politicians, or strong leaders. Instead, their roles are often limited to passive, stereotypical images, missing the opportunity to showcase their strength and impact in society.

Recommendations

- » New laws related to mass media should be formulated and amended quickly in line with the spirit of the Constitution of Nepal and the National Mass Media Policy.
- » At least 33 percent participation of women journalists in the media must be ensured.
- » Given the increase in digital violence against women, the formulation of cyber security laws is urgently needed.
- » An 'in-house gender policy' should be formulated and implemented in media houses to address violence within the media.
- » Media persons should undergo gender sensitivity training, and technical and thematic training should be arranged to enhance the capacity of women journalists and media workers.
- » Sexual violence in the workplace should be completely prohibited, and media houses should foster a women-friendly environment.
- » A mechanism should be established within the *Media Council* to monitor content published and broadcast in the media for gender sensitivity.

Women and the Environment

Present Status

Article 30 of Nepal's 2015 Constitution grants citizens the right to a clean and healthy environment and the right to compensation for harm caused by pollution. However, achieving these constitutional rights faces many challenges.¹ Nepal is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to natural disasters, ranked as the 10th most affected by climate change according to the Climate Risk Index.²

Nepal ranks 139th out of 182 countries in terms of its vulnerability to climate change, considering factors such as exposure, sensitivity, and the ability to adapt.³ Despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, with a per capita emission of 1.94 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, Nepal ranks 161th out of 190 countries for per capita emissions.⁴ However, the country faces significant environmental challenges, particularly with air pollution. Nepal ranks 3rd out of 240 countries for the severity of life expectancy reduction due to air pollution, where the average reduction is 4 years, and in the southern Terai region, it can be as high as 7 years.⁵ These rankings reflect Nepal's vulnerability to climate risks.

Approximately 80% of Nepal's population faces risks from natural and climate-induced hazards. Extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, and heavy rainfall, are becoming increasingly frequent and severe, leading to significant social and economic impacts. In 2023, Nepal experienced one of its worst environmental years, with over 5,500 forest fires.⁶ On April 19 alone, a record-breaking 2,800 fires were reported, causing Kathmandu to become one of the most polluted cities globally, according to the Air Quality Index.

1. Constitution of Nepal. (2015). *Constitution of Nepal, 2015, Article 30: Right to clean environment*. Government of Nepal. <https://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/archives/category/documents/prevailing-law/constitution/constitution-of-nepal>
2. Eckstein, D., Kunzel, V., & Schäfer, L. (2021). *Global Climate Risk Index 2021: Who suffers most from extreme weather events? Weather-related loss events in 2019 and 2000-2019* (p. 13). Germanwatch e.V. https://www.germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202021_2.pdf
3. Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. (2022). *Country index*. Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/>
4. Boyle, R. (2024, July 16). *Greenhouse gas emissions in Nepal: Overview of greenhouse gases and emissions per capita in Nepal*. Emission Index. <https://www.emission-index.com/countries/nepal>
5. Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago. (2022). *Air Quality Life Index (AQLI)*. Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago. <https://aqli.epic.uchicago.edu/the-index/>
6. Poudel, A. (2023, December 31). *Yearender 2023: Changing climate raises alarm in Nepal*. The Kathmandu Post. <https://kathmandupost.com/special-supplement/2023/12/31/yearender-2023-changing-climate-raises-alarm-in-nepal>

Achievements

» Gender Equality Now Central to Climate Action Plans

The Government of Nepal (GoN) outlined three strategic objectives for addressing gender issues within environmental action. These are: (a) ensuring women's active participation in environmental decision-making across all levels, (b) incorporating women's concerns and viewpoints into relevant policies and programs, and (c) creating methods to evaluate how development and environmental policies impact women.⁷ The Government of Nepal (GoN) has integrated these objectives into its laws, policies, and programs focused on environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation.

» Gender Responsive Climate policies on the Ground

As a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Climate Agreement 2015,⁸ Nepal has committed to global climate action. In 2019, the government updated the Environment Protection Act (EPA) and the Forest Act, replacing previous legislation. The EPA mandates that all levels of government (federal, provincial, and local) prioritize women in the development and implementation of climate change adaptation plans.⁹ Additionally, the Act establishes a National Council for Environmental Protection and Climate Change Management, chaired by the Prime Minister, with at least three women members, including one professor in forest and environmental sciences and two others with relevant expertise. The Forest Act of 2019 also requires forest user groups to allocate a portion of their annual revenue to initiatives focused on poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and entrepreneurship development.¹⁰ This apart, Nepal government's Climate Change Policy 2019 emphasizes the importance of including women, particularly from marginalized communities, in climate resilience and adaptation efforts. One of the 7 objectives of the policy is to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) into climate change mitigation and adaptation programs.

KEY PROGRESS FROM THE LAST FIVE YEARS

- Integration of gender equality in climate action plans and environmental policies.
- Updated Environment Protection Act (EPA) and Forest Act mandating women's participation in climate adaptation and forestry sector.
- Empowerment of marginalized communities through the National Ramsar Strategy and Ten-Year Strategy on Gender and Social Inclusion.
- Women's involvement in decision-making roles in forestry and wetlands management.
- Gender-sensitive provisions in the National Disaster Response Framework (2013).
- Continued incorporation of gender dimensions in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA).
- Endorsement of the Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development (GRID) framework.

7. United Nations Women. (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (pp. 158-164). https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA_E_Final_WEB.pdf
8. United Nations. (2016, April 22). *List of parties that signed the Paris Agreement on 22 April*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/04/parisagreementsignatures/>
9. Law Commission of Nepal. (2021, January). The Environment Protection Act 2019, section 24. Law Commission of Nepal. <https://lawcommission.gov.np/np/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%A4%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%A3-%E0%A4%B8%E0%A4%82%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B7%E0%A4%A3-%E0%A4%90%E0%A4%A8-%E0%A5%A8%E0%A5%A6%E0%A5%87%E0%A5%AD%E0%A5%96.pdf>
10. Government of Nepal. (2019). *The Forest Act, 2019 (Section 22)*. <https://lawcommission.gov.np/np/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/--.pdf>

» **Ten Years Strategy and Action Plan focuses on Empowering Women and Marginalized Groups in Local Climate Adaptation**

The Ten-year Strategy and Action Plan on Climate Change-related Gender and Social Inclusion (2020-2030) was developed to align with key provisions of the Climate Change Policy 2019. Its goal is to ensure that gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion are integrated into all climate change policies, plans, budgets, and programs at every level. The plan focuses on embedding these principles into local-level climate adaptation efforts. It also highlights the importance of collecting and analyzing data on the social and gender impacts of climate change to guide policies. Additionally, the strategy aims to promote gender-responsive technologies that improve resilience and provide disadvantaged groups with better access to climate solutions.

» **Formulation of National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2021-2050**

Nepal also formulated National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2021-2050, which addresses climate change adaptation while considering the distinct vulnerabilities and needs of both women and men. Similarly, the National Agroforestry Policy 2019 promotes agroforestry practices that benefit both genders equally.

» **Women' Share of Decision Making within Nepal's Forestry Sector**

Nepal's National Forest Policy 2019 mandates women's involvement in decision-making roles across the forestry sector, including in design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and resource allocation. The policy specifies that women will hold half of all decision-making positions in forest sector organizations. It also ensures that all strategies, laws, budgets, programs, and practices will be developed and implemented with active participation from women.¹¹

» **Nepal's Ramsar Strategy Targets Empowerment of Marginalized Wetlands Communities**

The National Ramsar Strategy and Action Plan (2018-2024) emphasizes social and gender inclusiveness in wetlands management by incorporating provisions from Articles 4.7, 5.2.10, and 5.2.11 of the National Wetlands Policy (2012). These provisions aim to recognize and promote traditional knowledge, skills, and practices of wetlands-dependent communities while ensuring gender equity in planning and management processes. Marginalized and indigenous groups such as the *Majhi*, *Jalahari*, *Jhagad*, *Tharu*, and *Mallah*, who rely on wetlands for food and income, have historically been excluded from decision-making. The strategy seeks to empower these communities by integrating their voices, enhancing their wellbeing through sustainable enterprises, and fostering inclusive development in wetlands management.¹²

» **Disaster Response Framework 2013 acknowledges specific vulnerability of Women and Marginalized Groups**

The National Disaster Response Framework (2013) of Nepal also prioritizes the needs of women, girls, and marginalized groups during disasters, acknowledging their specific vulnerabilities. It includes gender-sensitive provisions, such as providing nutrition support to children under five, pregnant and lactating women, and ensuring safe spaces during evacuations. The framework emphasizes the protection of vulnerable groups and the promotion of women's safety in emergency settings.

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11. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Forests and Environment. (2019). *National Forest Policy 2019*. <https://www.mofe.gov.np/uploads/documents/ban-niti1554873640pdf-6074-801-1658747050.pdf>

12. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Forests and Environment. (2018). *National Ramsar strategy and action plan, Nepal (2018-2024)* (pp. 8-9).

It also underscores the importance of ensuring that women and marginalized populations receive adequate support during disaster response and recovery efforts.¹³

» **Incorporation of Gender dimension in the EIA**

In 2005, the Government of Nepal (GoN) developed manual to address gender issues in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), reinforcing its commitment to integrating gender considerations into environmental decision-making. This approach continues today, reflecting Nepal's ongoing dedication to gender inclusion in environmental and climate action policies.

» **GRID Framework Endorsed**

Nepal has adopted the Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development (GRID) approach to promote sustainable development by addressing key challenges such as slow job creation, climate change vulnerability, and infrastructure gaps. This approach was formally endorsed by the Government of Nepal and 16 development partners through the Kathmandu Declaration on GRID in September 2021.¹⁴ The GRID policy framework aims to tackle a range of pressing issues faced by Nepal, including slow domestic job creation, high vulnerability to climate change and environmental degradation, low rates of social and economic inclusion, and significant gaps in infrastructure. The focus of the approach is not only on mitigating the impacts of climate change but also on building resilience in both urban and rural areas, particularly in Nepal's mountainous regions.

Key Challenges

- » When discussing emerging issues, it is crucial to highlight the message delivered by the UN Secretary-General during his visit to Nepal in 2023. His statement from Mount Everest serves as a stark warning about the climate change crisis. He emphasized, "The world cannot wait!" underscoring the urgent need to address the climate crisis in the Himalayas. The impact of climate change on the Himalayas and the mountain economy are deeply interconnected, and Nepal has placed significant focus on tackling this critical issue.
- » Nepal is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, floods, and glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). Climate change is making these events more frequent and intense, threatening the safety, livelihoods, and economic well-being of the population. According to the World Bank, climate-related disasters cost Nepal around \$270 million annually, with the impacts of floods, landslides, and droughts affecting agriculture, infrastructure, and people's livelihoods.¹⁵
- » The monsoon season (June to September) brings heavy rains that trigger frequent floods and landslides, affecting over 1.7 million people annually and causing over 300 fatalities each year, according to Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA). In particular, the fragile mountainous terrain makes the country more vulnerable to landslides and floods, which have become more frequent and severe due to erratic weather patterns.¹⁶
- » Despite progress in integrating gender-responsive approaches into climate policies, women, especially those from marginalized communities, continue to face significant challenges in adapting to climate change. In Nepal, around 60% of women are engaged in agriculture, a sector highly sensitive to climate change (World Bank). However, many women, particularly from marginalized

13. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Home Affairs. (2013). *National Disaster Response Framework (NDRF)*. https://un.org.np/sites/default/files/doc_publication/2020-11/NDRF_English%20version_July-2013.pdf

14. The World Bank. (2021, September 24). *Government of Nepal and development partners join forces on Nepal's green, resilient, and inclusive development*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/24/government-of-nepal-and-development-partners-join-forces-on-nepal-s-green-resilient-and-inclusive-development>

15. The World Bank. (2022, March 28). *In Nepal, 2 major climate disasters in a single year highlight the need to build resilience*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/03/28/in-nepal-2-major-climate-disasters-in-a-single-year-highlight-the-need-to-build-resilience>

16. MoFE. (2021). *Vulnerability and risk assessment and identifying adaptation options in GESI, livelihood and socio-economic sector in Nepal*. Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal. https://mofe.gov.np/old/downloadfile/GESI%20Livelihood%20&%20Socio_VRA%202021_1633773067.pdf

groups, rely on subsistence farming, which lacks climate resilience measures. Furthermore, female farmers receive less than 10% of extension services, leaving them without essential support to adapt to changing climate conditions (Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO). Additionally, women are underrepresented in decision-making processes, with only 14% of local government bodies in Nepal having female members (National Election Commission, Nepal), limiting their influence in climate-related policies.

- » The impact of climate change is also compounded by limited access to healthcare for women during climate-induced disasters. According to UN Women, 74% of rural women in Nepal report facing challenges in accessing healthcare during such events.
- » Furthermore, women are more likely to experience gender-based violence and insecurity during extreme weather events, as they often have limited access to safe shelters and relief resources.¹⁷
- » The economic impact of climate change is becoming increasingly severe, straining Nepal's national economy. The damage to infrastructure, loss of agricultural productivity, and escalating healthcare costs are major contributors to this economic burden. For example, floods and landslides, which have become more frequent due to climate change, disrupt infrastructure and agricultural activities. Additionally, rising healthcare costs due to climate-induced health issues are further draining resources.¹⁸ Also, there is a considerable financing gap, particularly in securing funds for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Recommendations

- » Reframe the portrayal of women and marginalized groups in sectoral and climate change discourses, and recognize them not merely as a vulnerable group but as key contributors and agents of change.
- » Develop gender-responsive climate financing mechanisms for promoting gender-sensitive and gender-responsive practices and innovations.
- » Develop a comprehensive capacity development package to help build women's agencies and recognize the contributions of women and marginalized groups in dealing with the impacts of climate change.
- » Support the development of GEDSI-integrated monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems for knowledge production, and generate disaggregated data based on sex, gender, social and economic groups.
- » Building climate resilience in communities, particularly with an emphasis on empowering women and ensuring their meaningful participation, is essential for effective environmental protection and adaptation strategies. Here's a comprehensive approach to enhance the capacity of women while considering intersectionality and diversity:
- » Develop inclusive programs that address the unique needs and perspectives of women from various backgrounds, including indigenous groups, Dalit women, women with disabilities, and those in marginalized communities.
 - Ensure diversity in participation by actively recruiting women from different socio-economic, cultural, and geographical contexts.
 - Ensure that women's voices are included in disaster risk reduction planning, response, and recovery efforts at the community, local, and national levels.
 - Establish all-women committees to lead disaster response initiatives and ensure that their perspectives are prioritized.
 - To effectively combat climate change and build community resilience, Nepal needs international collaboration that provides not only financial resources but also technology transfer, capacity building, and knowledge sharing.

17. State of Gender Equality and Climate Change in Nepal report published by UN Women in 2021.

18. The World Bank. (2022). Nepal: Country Climate and Development Report. Washington, DC.

The Girl Child

Present Situation

Despite legal protections and international commitments, gender inequality, particularly regarding the girl child, remains a significant challenge in Nepal. Article 39 of the Constitution of Nepal, 2015 enshrines the rights of children as a fundamental right. It guarantees every child the right to a name, birth registration, identity, education, health care, and an environment conducive to growth. Additionally, the article prohibits child labor in hazardous work, child marriage, trafficking, and all forms of exploitation and abuse, whether physical, mental, or sexual. The constitutional provisions align with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Nepal ratified in 1990.

Despite progressive laws, many girls face significant disadvantages from the moment they are born, simply because society often prefers sons over daughters. This preference can lead to neglect in essential areas such as nutrition, healthcare, and education. According to the National Health Survey 2022, 27% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 have a short stature, and 26% are underweight, largely due to poor nutrition.¹ These challenges are even more pronounced for girls from marginalized communities, including *Dalit*, *Madhesi*, Muslim, and indigenous groups, who experience multiple layers of discrimination. These inequalities hinder their well-being and limit their opportunities for a better future.

According to the National Health Survey 2022, 27% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 have a short stature, and 26% are underweight, largely due to poor nutrition. These challenges are even more pronounced for girls from marginalized communities, including Dalit, Madhesi, Muslim, and indigenous groups, who experience multiple layers of discrimination. These inequalities hinder their well-being and limit their opportunities for a better future.

This early discrimination sets the stage for even greater disparities as girls grow older. In many remote areas and marginalized communities, where poverty is pervasive, girls are often expected to handle household chores and care for younger siblings, sacrificing their own education and development. Despite the existence of laws² such as the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 2000 and the Labour Act of 2017—all of which explicitly prohibit child labor—approximately 1.1 million children in Nepal, or 15.3% of those aged 5-17, are still engaged in child labor.

As girls transition into adolescence, the discrimination they face intensifies, further compromising their freedom of speech and mobility. Traditional and cultural restrictions dictate their way of dressing, social interactions, movements, and decisions. Menstrual taboos exclude them from family and religious activities,

1. Ministry of Health (2022). *Nepal demographic and health survey 2022: Key indicators report* (p. 22). Ministry of Health and Population. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/PR142/PR142.pdf>
2. International Labour Organization. (2022, December). *Child labour and social protection in Nepal (Policy Brief)*. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-kathmandu/documents/publication/wcms_864661.pdf

taking a heavy toll on their self-esteem and perpetuating these biases. Menstrual hygiene management remains a pervasive concern affecting girls' health and education, with about one in four adolescent girls missing school.³ Research conducted by Nepal Police indicates that girls are more likely to be victims of cybercrime than boys. The annual⁴ fact sheet on Gender-Based Violence (July 2021 to July 2022) reported that approximately 142 girls and 41 boys were affected by cybercrime during this period. Sexual violence among *Dalits*, *Madhesis*, and indigenous women are alarmingly high.⁵ Intersectional caste and gender-based violence often goes unreported, perpetuating silence and impunity while placing the burden of shame on *Dalit* survivors instead of the non-*Dalit* perpetrators.

Child and forced marriages, despite being illegal, remain prevalent in some areas⁶, with 8% of women aged 20-24 married before 15 and 33% before 18. Among women aged 18-49, 37.3% were married before 18, including 10.8% before 15. These marriages often lead to early pregnancies, which increase health risks and deepen their dependency on male counterparts, making it difficult for them to escape the cycle of poverty. Recent research reveals that Nepal has over 200,000 young girls under the age of 19 who are already mothers, despite the legal marriage age being set at 20.

As the girl child grows into adulthood, the discrimination they faced continues to affect their lives. They often have less access to jobs, earn lower wages, and are excluded from decision-making, both at home and in society. Many women also shoulder the burden of unpaid care work, such as taking care of children and household responsibilities. On top of this, they face significant barriers in the workplace, including gender-based violence and harassment. These challenges reinforce their unequal status and limit their opportunities for advancement.

Trafficking remains another critical issue in Nepal. The National Plan of Action (NAP) 2012-2022 against trafficking contributed to prevent trafficking through education and awareness campaigns.⁷ It also ensured protection and rehabilitation for girls at risk, including safe shelters and legal support. Cybercrime against girls is also becoming a growing concern.

A survey conducted by Yuwalaya⁸ in Kathmandu valley revealed that nearly half of adolescents experienced emotional control, 20% faced physical violence, and over 15% reported sexual coercion in dating relationships.

As girls in Nepal transition into adolescence, the discrimination they face becomes more pronounced, severely limiting their freedom of speech and mobility. Traditional and cultural norms dictate how they dress, who they interact with, where they go, and the decisions they can make. Similarly, as girls transition to adulthood, they face limited access to jobs, lower wages, and exclusion from decision-making roles both at home and in society. Many women bear the burden of unpaid care work, managing children and household responsibilities. Additionally, workplace barriers such as gender-based violence and harassment further reinforce their unequal status and restrict their opportunities for progress.

3. Factors for Girls Missing School_final.pdf (wvi.org)

4. Shrestha, D., & Pradhan, S. (2023, May 29). *Growing wave of online child sexual abuse in Nepal: A legal analysis*. Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD). <https://fwld.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Growing-Wave-of-Online-Child-Sexual-Abuse-in-Nepal-A-Legal-Analysis-.pdf>

5. Amnesty International. (2024, May 10). *Nepal: "No-one cares": Descent-based discrimination against Dalits in Nepal* (Index No. ASA 31/7980/2024). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa31/7980/2024/en/>

6. Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). (2020). *Nepal multiple indicator cluster survey 2019: Survey findings report*. Central Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF Nepal. <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/11081/file/nepal%20mics%202019%20final%20report.pdf>

7. Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen. (2012). *National plan of action against trafficking in persons, especially trafficking in women and children 2012*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen.

8. A 2018 Yuwalaya survey in Kathmandu Valley revealed that nearly half of adolescents experienced emotional control, 20% faced physical violence, and over 15% reported sexual coercion in dating relationships, with mutual victimization influenced by Nepal's patriarchal culture.

Achievements

- » Over the last five years, there have been notable achievements in improving the lives of girls in Nepal. A significant milestone is the increase in literacy rates among girls, with young women aged 15-24 ((at 93.25 % in 2021).⁹ Also data shows primary education enrollment now almost equal between boys and girls.¹⁰ This progress is the result of various initiatives, such as establishing girl-friendly schools, providing sanitary pads to ensure girls' comfort and attendance, and increasing parental awareness of the importance of girls' education.¹¹ Life skills training programs have also been introduced to empower girls with the tools they need to navigate challenges in life.
- » To combat child marriage in Nepal, where 5.3 million child brides exist—including 1.2 million married before age 15, and 33% of girls were married as children (according to 2019 data)—targeted interventions and policy enforcement have been implemented. During the review period, Nepal has been implementing the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2016), aiming to eliminate child marriage by 2030 through education, healthcare, legal reforms, and promoting girls' empowerment.¹² The strategy focused on strengthening laws, integrating anti-child marriage programs into national and local plans, and involving children, adolescents, and men in the effort. It challenges harmful social norms and works to ensure that at-risk children, especially married girls, have access to education, healthcare, and services. Another initiative to address child marriage during the period is continuation of national campaigns, including *Girls Not Brides*, to raise awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage and emphasize the importance of girls' education and empowerment.
- » Madhesh Province has been implementing the *Beti Padhau Beti Bachau* (Educate Daughter, Save Daughter) campaign to improve girls' education across eight districts. Introduced in 2019, the program provides school-going girls with bicycles to make traveling to school easier and to help them build social connections.¹³ Additionally, baby girls born on or after January 15, 2019, are insured under the program, with each insured girl entitled to NPR 125,000 upon obtaining her citizenship certificate to support her education.¹⁴ Beyond financial support, the campaign includes activities

An example of a girl-child focused insurance program at the local level is the initiative by Rohini Rural Municipality (RM) in Rupandehi district. The RM deposits NPR 20,000 (approximately USD 150) for each girl child, with an option for parents to voluntarily increase the amount. The accumulated funds will be made accessible to the girl when she reaches adulthood.

9. Trading Economics. (n.d.). Nepal - Literacy rate, youth female (% of females ages 15-24). World Bank data. Trading Economics. <https://tradingeconomics.com/nepal/literacy-rate-youth-female-percent-of-females-ages-15-24-wb-data.html>
10. Ghimire, K. (2024, January 4). *The struggle and triumph in Nepal's girls' education*. Online Khabar. <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/girls-education-nepal-struggle.html>
11. Based on the findings from provincial consultations.
12. महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालय (२०७२), बालविवाह अन्त्यका लागि राष्ट्रिय रणनीति, २०७२ [National strategy to end child marriage, 2072] सिंहदरबार, नेपाल: महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालय https://nepal.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B2%20%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B9%20%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%F%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%81%E0%A4%A6%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%A7%20%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8B%20%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%A3%E0%A4%A8%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%A4%E0%A4%BF%2C%E0%A5%A8%E0%A5%A6%E0%A5%97%E0%A5%A8_0.pdf
13. Rastriya Samachar Samiti. (2022, July 4). *Daughter education insurance scheme resumes in Madhes*. Nepalnews. <https://nepalnews.com/s/nation/daughter-education-insurance-scheme-resumes-in-madhes>
- Sharma, B. (2022, August 4). *CIAA files corruption case worth Rs 103 million against six people, claiming irregularities in Madhesh Province's Beti Padhau Beti Bachau campaign*. Republica. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/ciaa-files-corruption-case-worth-rs-103-million-against-six-people-claiming-irregularities-in-madhesh-province-s-beti-padhau-beti-bachau-campaign/>
14. Rai, S. (2019, January 16). *State 2 kicks off Beti Bachau Beti Padhau campaign*. The Kathmandu Post. Retrieved from <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/01/16/state-2-kicks-off-beti-bachau-beti-padhau-campaign>
- The Rising Nepal. (2024, November 13). *16,000 girls insured under Chief Minister Beti Padhau, Beti Bachau campaign*. <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/51891>

to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education, prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in schools, and foster shared responsibility among parents and communities for ensuring education for girls.¹⁵ Despite disruptions caused by COVID-19 and administrative challenges, the program has successfully insured 16,000 girls as of November 2024.¹⁶ However, the initiative has faced criticism over alleged fund mismanagement, particularly regarding the allocation for bicycle purchases.¹⁷

- » Additionally, some local governments have launched a girl child insurance program, offering financial support and essential services to help newborn girls grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. For example, Rohini Rural Municipality in Rupandehi district has launched a Girl Child Insurance Program where the rural municipality deposits NPR 20,000 (approximately USD 150) for each girl child, with an option for parents to voluntarily increase the amount.¹⁸ The accumulated funds will be made accessible to the girl when she reaches adulthood.
- » Since 2019, Karnali Province has been running a program called "Bank Khata Chhoriko Suraksha Jiwan Bhariko" to promote gender equality and provide financial security for girls. Under this initiative, a bank account is opened for girls born after July 2019, with an initial deposit of 1,000 rupees from the government. Following that, 500 rupees are deposited monthly until the girl reaches 20 years of age. However, if the girl marries before turning 20 or fails to complete secondary education, she will not receive the

KEY PROGRESS DURING 2020- 2024

- Increased literacy rates and equal primary education enrollment for girls.
- "Betri Bachau – Betri Padhau" campaign boosts girls' education in Madhesh.
- Implementation of "Bank Khata Chhoriko Suraksha Jiwan Variko" campaign in Karnali province
- Girl Child Insurance Program ensures future financial support.
- Local governments strengthen child protection with helplines and safer homes.
- National Strategy Against Discriminatory Sex Selection (2018-2028) launched.
- Gender-Based Violence Prevention Funds and Crisis Centers established and operationalised.
- Legal reforms raise marriage age and support Safe Motherhood.
- Scholarships and nutrition programs enhance access to education for marginalized girls.
- National strategy to eliminate child marriage by 2030.
- Multi-Sector Nutrition Program targets adolescent girls' health.
- Inclusive education efforts for girls with disabilities and LGBTIQ community.

15. Government of Nepal. (2076 B.S.) मुख्यमन्त्री बेदी बहाउ बेदी बचाउ अभियान कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन निर्देशिका Ministry of Home Affairs. https://aaolahan.moha.gov.np/upload/bc602991dc6aga010938c8dc26d40694/files/%E0%A4%AE%E0%A5%81%E0%A4%96%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%A8%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%A4%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%80_%E0%A4%AC%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%9F%E0%A5%80_%E0%A4%AA%E0%A4%A2%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%89_%E0%A4%AC%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%9F%E0%A5%80_%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%9A%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%89_%E0%A4%85%E0%A4%AD%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%A8_%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%AE_%E0%A4%B8%E0%A4%9E%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%9A%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B2%E0%A4%A8_%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%A6%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%B6%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE_%E0%A5%A8%E0%A5%A6%E0%A5%AD%E0%A5%AC.pdf
16. The Rising Nepal. (2024, November 13). 16,000 girls insured under Chief Minister Beti Padhau, Beti Bachau campaign. <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/51891>
17. Sharma, B. (2022, August 4). CIAA files corruption case worth Rs 103 million against six people, claiming irregularities in Madhesh Province's Beti Padhau Beti Bachau campaign. Republica. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/ciaa-files-corruption-case-worth-rs-103-million-against-six-people-claiming-irregularities-in-madhesh-province-s-beti-padhau-beti-bachau-campaign/>
18. The Kathmandu Post. (2024, January 2). Rural municipality starts girl child insurance program. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2024/01/02/rural-municipality-starts-girl-child-insurance-program>

accumulated funds.¹⁹ Although the program was included in the government's annual plans, it was discontinued after three years of implementation.²⁰ The aim of the initiative was to address gender-based discrimination in schools, reduce child marriage, and improve girls' access to secondary education, all while ensuring their financial security for the future.²¹ The local representatives and local stakeholders are demanding smooth operation of the initiative.

- » The formation and implementation of Inter-Generational Feminist Forums (IGFF) have also created platforms for dialogue and advocacy, amplifying the voices of young girls. Girls' participation in child networks and clubs has increased, fostering leadership and community involvement.²²
- » The results of the 2021 national census reveal a concerning trend of a decreasing number of baby girls compared to boys. Of the total 412,935 newborns, 218,074 (52.8%) were boys, while 194,861 (47.3%) were girls (Census, 2021).²³ Media reports suggest sex-selective abortion drives Nepal's newborn sex ratio imbalance.²⁴ To address this challenge, the Nepal government introduced the National Strategy Against Discriminatory Sex Selection (2018–2028). This ten-year strategy aims to eliminate sex-selective abortions and improve the social standing of daughters.²⁵
- » To combat gender-based violence (GBV), provincial and local governments have established GBV Prevention Funds and provisioned hotline numbers for assistance in case of violence against children. The establishment and operationalization of child safer homes, supported by provincial and local governments, provides refuge for vulnerable girls. The implementation of a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against girls has also been instrumental in protecting their rights, contributing to a noticeable decrease in forced child marriages.
- » The judiciary has also played a crucial role, with landmark Supreme Court judgments on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » Legislative measures have further strengthened protections, including the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act 2018 and Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Regulation, 2020²⁶ and the establishment of One-Stop Crisis Management Centers (OCMC) in all 77 districts. Other significant legal advancements include the Civil Code and Penal Code 2017, setting the legal marriage age at 20 years, increasing statute of limitations for rape cases, and legalizing same-sex marriage and recognizing the rights of the LGBTIQ community.

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19. Office of Chief Minister and Council of Ministers, Karnali Province. (2019). बैंक खाता छोरीको सुरक्षा जीवनभरिको कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन कार्यविधि [Bank account for daughters: Guidelines for the operation of the program ensuring lifelong security]. Government of Nepal.
https://ocmcm.karnali.gov.np/sites/ocmcm/files/2019-12/%E0%A4%AC%E0%A5%88%E0%A4%82%E0%A4%95%20%E0%A4%96%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%A4%E0%A4%BE%20%E0%A4%9B%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8B.%20%E0%A4%B8%E0%A5%81%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B7%E0%A4%BE%20%E0%A4%9C%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%A8%20%E0%A4%AD%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8B%20%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%AE%20%E0%A4%B8%E0%A4%82%E0%A4%9A%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B2%E0%A4%A8%20%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%A7%E0%A4%BF_o.pdf
 20. Yogi, R. (2024, April 26). कर्णाली सरकारका चर्चित कार्यक्रम अलपत्र [Karnali government's popular program stalled]. Sajhabisaunee. <https://sajhabisaunee.com/archives/48657>
 21. Upadhyay, N. (2024, May 29). बैंक खाता छोरीको: सुरक्षा जीवनभरिको कार्यक्रम अलपत्र [Bank account for daughters: A program for lifetime security left in limbo]. Nagarik News. Retrieved from <https://nagariknews.nagariknetwork.com/social-affairs/1437040-1716864719.html>
 22. Intergenerational Feminist Forum. (n.d.). About Intergenerational Feminist Forum. <https://igffnepal.org/about/>
 23. Dulal, T. D. (2024). Situation of gender-biased sex selection in Nepal. *Patan Gyansagar*, 6(1), 142.
 24. Gorkhapatra. (2023, April 10). लिङ्ग पहिचानको असर: छोरीभन्दा छोरा बढी जन्मिए [The impact of gender identification: More sons born than daughters]. *Gorkhapatra*. <https://gorkhapatraonline.com/news/60459>
 25. Shahi, D. J. (2023, August 8). विभेदपूर्ण लिङ्ग छनौट र गर्भपतन अन्त्य गर्ने रणनीति: होला त प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयन [Strategies to end discriminatory sex selection and abortion: Will implementation be effective?]. *Setopati*. <https://www.setopati.com/social/279073>
 26. Government of Nepal. (2020). *The right to safe motherhood and reproductive health regulation, 2020*. <https://publichealthupdate.com/the-right-to-safe-motherhood-and-reproductive-health-regulation-2020/>

- » Additionally, the government has introduced scholarships for girl children and the 'Bal Posan Bhatta' (child nutrition allowance) scheme to support their well-being. The provision of 'Bal Kalyan Adhikari' (Child Nutrition Welfare Officer) in all 753 local government units, laws against child marriage and child labor, and the enactment of the 'National Child Policy 2080', all indicates sign of the progress made in securing a better future for girls in Nepal.
- » Similarly, implementation of Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan (2020- 2023)) contributed to increased access to education and healthcare, reduce gender-based violence, and increase girls' workforce participation through targeted policies.
- » The third Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan (MSNP) for eight years from the 2023 to 2030,²⁷ (MSNP) targets adolescent girls by tackling issues like anemia and malnutrition through fortified foods, supplements, and health education, promoting healthier development. Complementing this, the Girls' Scholarship Program offers financial aid to marginalized girls, including *Dalits* and those with disabilities, covering school expenses to enhance access to education.
- » The Government of Nepal (GoN) is working to create gender-friendly schools including through providing free sanitary pads to girls in community schools. The GoN introduced the Sanitary Pad (Distribution and Management) Procedure, 2019, to manage the distribution.²⁸ This is part of a broader campaign to promote "dignified menstruation" and challenge menstrual stigma. Additionally, the government has focused on improving school facilities, such as building separate toilets for girls, offering scholarships, and providing cash and non-cash incentives, along with day meals for marginalized communities.

Key Challenges

- » **Lack of Social Acceptance of Equal Property Rights:** One of the major challenges facing girls and women is the ongoing lack of social acceptance regarding equal property rights, which continues to disadvantage them and restrict their opportunities for empowerment and economic independence.
- » **Complex Citizenship Process:** The process of obtaining citizenship in the mother's name remains lengthy and complex, creating significant barriers for many girls in their personal and professional development. These challenges limit their opportunities for social participation and economic advancement.
- » **Gap in enforcement of child protection laws:** Despite the existence of laws designed to protect children, including the Act Relating to Children (2018) and the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (2000), gaps in enforcement remain. These gaps particularly affect girls, who are often forced to work in domestic labor or agriculture. The National (Muluki) Civil Code of 2017 also addresses family law, but challenges in enforcing regulations related to child marriage persist, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. The 2019 National ID and Civil Registration Act, while essential for enabling access to education, healthcare, and legal services, faces challenges due to cultural biases that may hinder the registration of girl children.
- » **Menstrual Stigma and Social Exclusion:** The social stigma surrounding menstruation continues to isolate girls, negatively affecting their self-esteem and limiting their ability to engage in daily activities, attend school, or participate in social and religious events.
- » **Online Exploitation and Lack of Digital Literacy:** The rise in online sexual exploitation and abuse targeting girls is a growing concern. Many girls lack equal access to digital platforms and

27. The Rising Nepal. (2024, September 19). NPC launches Rs. 189 billion 8-year nutrition plan. *The Rising Nepal*. <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/49196>

28. The Himalayan Times. (2020, January 2). Free sanitary pads for adolescent schoolgirls. *The Himalayan Times*. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/free-sanitary-pads-for-adolescent-schoolgirls>

cyber-security education, leaving them vulnerable to online threats.

- » **Child Labor and Gender-Based Discrimination:** Child labor remains a persistent issue, with many girls forced into work at a young age, depriving them of education and other opportunities for development. Gender-based discrimination and social taboos further limit girls' rights and freedoms. There are no effective mechanisms in place to break harmful traditional social norms, and the rate of eloping marriages is on the rise, often leading to further challenges for young girls.
- » **Inefficiencies in Reporting and Response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** The reporting and response mechanisms for gender-based violence (GBV) are often delayed, and there are gaps in the roles and responsibilities across the three tiers of government, leading to inefficiencies in addressing these issues. Services at One-Stop Crisis Management Centers (OCMCs) still need to improve further, with trained and skilled human resources to provide adequate support. There is also need to public awareness regarding available services and resources for girls.
- » **Lack of Reliable Data:** The absence of reliable, evidence-based data makes it difficult to identify trends, measure the impact of interventions, and develop effective policies for girls. Without accurate data, decision-making is impaired, resource allocation is inefficient, and issues remain inadequately addressed, hindering progress in improving girls' lives.
- » **Sex-Selective Abortion and Gender Bias:** Sex identification and sex-selective abortion, particularly against girls, remain major issues in Nepal. The 2021 Census reveals a skewed sex ratio at birth of 112 boys for every 100 girls, with the disparity being most pronounced in Madhes province, where the ratio is 118. This imbalance is likely to lead to long-term social consequences, including lower marriage rates, increased human trafficking, and higher rates of gender-based violence.²⁹
- » **Gender Bias in Education Materials:** Another challenge is the biased portrayal of women and girls in school textbooks. While the curriculum includes topics on gender equality and girls' rights, and efforts have been made to remove gender stereotypes from textbooks produced by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), these textbooks still contain gender-biased representations. Women and girls are often underrepresented and are portrayed in secondary roles.³⁰ Historical and social contexts are presented with a stark gender bias, acknowledging only a handful of female figures and often positioning them alongside male counterparts, without exploring their unique contributions. Female characters in literature are predominantly passive, subordinate, or supportive, and rarely lead narratives. Additionally, curriculum lacks intersectional representation, overlooking diverse identities among women.³¹ This limited portrayal affects young girls' self-image and ambitions, as role models who reflect their own potential are largely absent.
- » **Commercial Sexual Exploitation:** The issue of commercial sexual exploitation is another pressing concern in Nepal. Social awareness campaigns, strengthened border security, and stricter enforcement are crucial to reducing the exploitation of girls. The study by New Era (2019) has revealed

Despite CDC's efforts to promote gender equality, textbooks in Nepal's curriculum still portray gender bias. Women and girls are often underrepresented and depicted in secondary roles. Historical contexts highlight few female figures, usually alongside male counterparts, without emphasizing their individual contributions. Female characters in literature are typically passive or supportive, rarely taking the lead. The curriculum also lacks intersectional representation, which limits girls' self-image and aspirations by offering few relatable role models.

29. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). (2024, July 14). *Future-proofing Nepal's population strategy*. <https://nepal.unfpa.org/en/news/future-proofing-nepals-population-strategy>

30. Based on consultation with CSO members working in education sector in Nepal

31. Chand, P., & Shrestha, P. (2021, April 5). *How the Nepali education system furthers gender inequality*. The Record Nepal. <https://www.recordnepal.com/how-the-nepali-education-system-further-gender-inequality>

that there are approximately 1,650 minors working in adult entertainment venues in the Kathmandu Valley. Minors make up about 17 percent of the workforce across the entire adult entertainment sector. The majority of these workers, 62 %, started their employment at a young age.

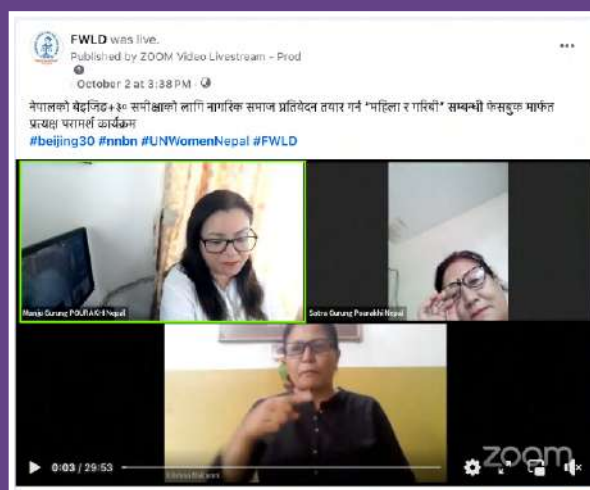
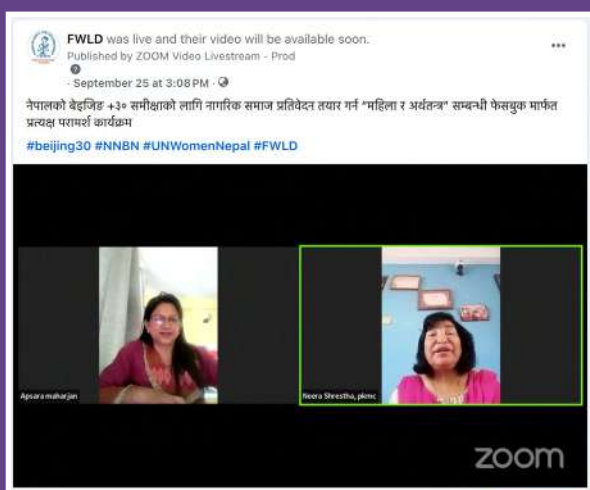
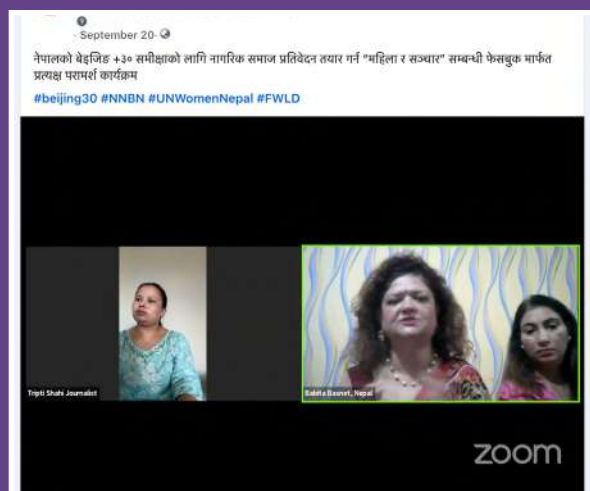
- » **Challenges for Girls with Disabilities and from LGBTIQ Community:** Girls with disabilities and those from the LGBTIQ community face additional challenges, including discrimination and limited access to education. Although the Disability Rights Act and the GESI Policy promote inclusive education, barriers such as inaccessible infrastructure and social stigma still limit their full participation in society.

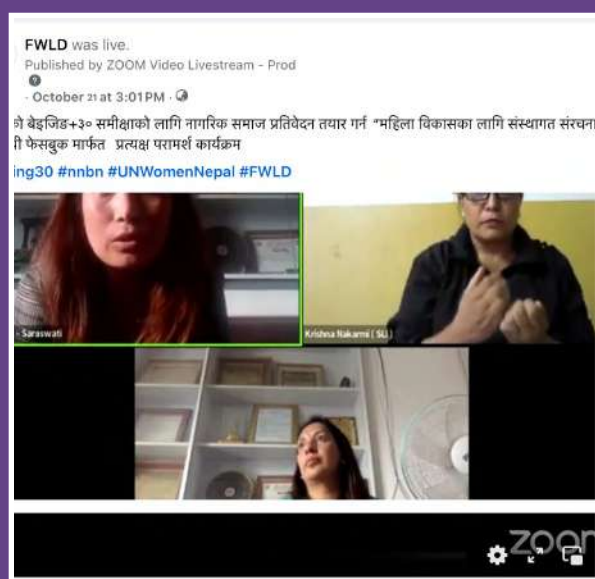
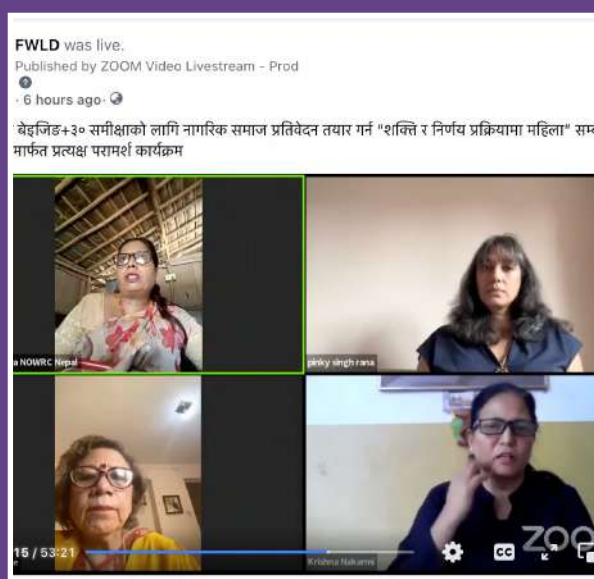
Recommendations

- » **Integrate Girl Child Rights into School Curricula:** Introducing girl child rights into school curricula will promote awareness and foster a supportive environment from an early age. This will help instill values of equality and empowerment, creating a foundation for social change
- » **Simplify Legal Processes for Citizenship and Other Legal Documents:** Educating local authorities on the complexities of obtaining legal documents, including citizenship in the mother's name, will help streamline processes. Ensuring that girls have access to necessary services like healthcare and education requires simplifying these legal procedures.
- » **Build Capacity for Inclusive Support:** Strengthening the capacity of local communities to support girls, particularly those with disabilities and from the LGBTIQ community, is essential. Mobilizing diverse groups ensures that all girls receive the care, attention, and resources they need to thrive.
- » **Increase Girl-Focused Programs:** Expanding girl-focused programs, such as life skills training, scholarships, and opportunities in non-traditional fields like science and technology, will empower girls and expand their future prospects. These programs should emphasize leadership skills and encourage girls to pursue careers in male-dominated sectors.
- » **Raise Awareness about Cyber-Security and Protection:** Increasing awareness about cyber-security, human trafficking, and child labor is critical in protecting girls from various forms of exploitation and harm. Public awareness campaigns, street dramas, and grassroots interventions can effectively communicate key messages to communities, creating safer environments for girls.
- » **Develop Online Safety Guidelines and Regular Policy Reviews:** Local governments should develop comprehensive online safety guidelines to protect girls from digital exploitation. Conducting regular reviews of existing laws and policies will help address emerging challenges and ensure that protective measures remain effective.
- » **Ensure Civic Space and Advocacy for Girls' Participation:** Ensuring civic space for girl children, engaging in lobbying, and advocating for their active participation in decision-making processes are crucial steps. Creating reliable and accessible services will empower girls to make their voices heard.
- » **Collect Disaggregated Data and Foster Coordination:** Collecting and analyzing disaggregated data is essential for understanding the specific needs of girls and measuring the effectiveness of interventions. Facilitating open dialogues and fostering collaboration between the government, civil society organizations (CSOs), and local communities will ensure comprehensive, coordinated efforts to protect and empower girls.
- » **Offer Skill Development for Professionals in the Girl Child Sector:** Offering training and skill development for professionals working with girl children will increase their capacity to provide effective support. Professionals should be equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to advocate for the rights and well-being of girls.
- » **Formulate Clear Laws and Raise Awareness in Communities:** Clear and enforceable laws protecting girl children are essential for ensuring their rights. In addition, raising awareness within families and communities about gender equality and the importance of supporting girls' development will contribute to a more supportive and equitable environment for all girls.

ANNEX I: VIRTUAL CONSULTATION DIALOGUE PROGRAM

The virtual consultation dialogues were broadcast live on the official Facebook page of the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD). To date, these dialogues have been viewed by over 1.3 million viewers.





ANNEX II: PROVINCIAL LEVEL CONSULTATION



Province : Karnali | Date : August 23, 2024 | Organized by : Saathi |



Province : Madhesh | Date : August 29, 2024 | Organized by : Saathi |



Province : Koshi | Date : August 30, 2024 | Organized by : Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) |



Province : Lumbini | Date : September 11, 2024 | Organized by : FWLD |



Province : Sudurpachhim | Date : September 15, 2024 | Organized by : Women for Human Rights (WHR)/Single Women



Province : Bagmati | Date : September 30, 2024 | Organized by : Tewa |

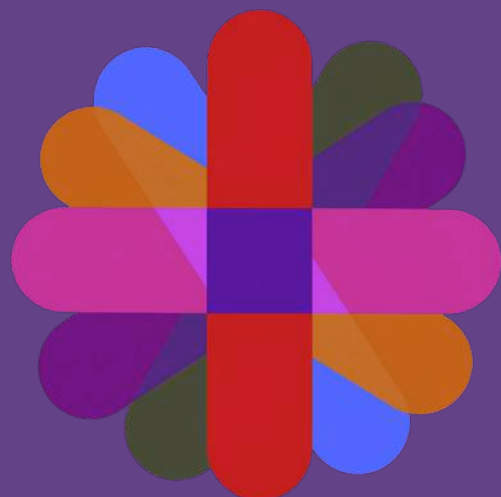


■ Province : Gandaki | Date : October 23, 2024 | Organized by : WFDM and HomeNet South Asia |



Consultation with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities for the
Civil Society Report on Beijing+30 Review
Date : September 20, 2024 | Organized by : Access Planet and FWLD





BEIJING +30

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