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Top photo: Madhesi women demanding access and control over forest resources. This event was organized by National Forum for Advocacy Nepal (NAFAN) in Bara, Nepal

Left photo in the middle position: Entrepreneurship skills increases women's access to financial resources and their voice in decision-making. Bangles making training held at Rajgadh Rural Municipality -5, Malekpur. Photo courtesy: Asuman Nepal.

Right photo in the middle position: An example of exclusive leadership among women Community Forestry Users Group in Dhangedi, Nepal.
Photo courtesy: Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and NRM (WOCAN).

Bottom photo: Public audit of a community forest user group in Singari, Dolakha district.
Photo courtesy: Pranav Bhattachai.

Inside cover-page:

Top photo: Sandbag pilling technique to control the flood, Sapetari, Nepal.
Photo courtesy: Narayan Gyawali, UNR.

Middle photo: Youth participation in local governance in Gorkha Municipality-5 Gorkha. The youths are raising voice against corruption by monitoring development work of Gorkha municipality and advocating for equitable and transparent service delivery. Photo credit: Bhola Bhattachai

Bottom Photo: Madhesi women are asking for access and control of madhesi women over forest resources. This event was organized by National Forum for Advocacy Nepal (NAFAN) in Bara, Nepal.

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Editorial Note

Dear readers,

Namaste!

The dawn of Year 2022 has rekindled hope of recovery as the waves of the weakening COVID-19 epidemic and variants like Omicron demonstrating a slowing down of infection and the human casualty rate. Education institutions, corporate houses, government offices, and cinema halls have been allowed to reopen as an effective COVID safety protocol was instituted. However, at the beginning of the year, the vaccination drive had been affected due to the medical supply shortages in some locales in the country but later was efficiently managed by the government and health institutions, who deserve our special appreciation and gratitude.

Yet, the pandemic has still managed to create a global impact on the livelihood of citizens worldwide due to almost two years of lockdowns, mobility restrictions and economic inflation on essential goods and services. The downfall of economic indicators in many countries fuelled by the price hikes of petroleum products (partly triggered by conflicts between Russia and Ukraine) has impacted every sector in both developed and developing nations worldwide. The political tension and instability in many countries has severely affected the "have-nots", putting the whole idea of participatory development at a crossroad. Poor and marginalized people are not able to take part in their development activities because of accessibility, affordability and usability of any development dividend. For instance, a Dalit woman living in the far remote region of Kamali province cannot think of taking part in any rural municipal planning process unless she is informed well in advance. Here participation further depends on whether she can afford to travel both in terms of cost and distance. There are many unanswered questions before us and significant amount of time has already passed. For example, (i) how a vision-impaired person can take part in the development process? (ii) how a wheelchair-bound person can visit a municipal office and claim his allowance.

In the ever-changing context, NEPAN has urged development professionals to rethink existing participatory development concepts, approaches and models. The theory and practice of participation need to be revisited seriously and redefined within the typology of a development. In line with this, NEPAN, on the occasion of NEPAN Day on 9 April 2022, organized a discourse on "Reframing a Participatory Development Plan". Based on this discourse, the Strategy Plan of NEPAN (2023-2027) has been reviewed and revised in consultation with NEPAN members, which will be rolled out next year. The Strategy has reinforced NEPAN's values on participation by emphasizing the need for bringing the youth on board, networking and collaboration, and ICT. It has also stressed NEPAN's engagement in policy analysis and inputs. Therefore, NEPAN is aiming at developing policy briefs on topics of grave concern that are also of interest to influential policymakers. These policy briefs will focus on such topics as gender and social inclusion, climate change, food and nutrition security and collaborative forestry.

This volume of PARTICIPATION contains scholarly articles on multi-disciplinary fields ranging from food security, agro-ecosystem, psychological tools for humanitarian aid workers, social audit, healthy ageing, relative closeness of the married couple's socio-economic status, and ambiguity in education policy. We thank all authors and reviewers for timely submitting their scholarly articles and unwavering support. Likewise, we extend our heartfelt sincere gratitude to Ms. Saloni Singh, hon'ble Member of Parliament for her enduring gesture of goodwill. One of the articles has addressed issues on project cycle management authored by Prabir Gautam, a NEPAN member who unfortunately lost his life (June 2022) in New York in an automobile accident. We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to him for his genuine interest in the field of participatory development and contribution to NEPAN. May his departed soul rest in peace!

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Reframing the Concept of Participation in the Development Sectors Targeting Marginalised Group of People

ANOJ CHHETRI, PhD

Abstract

This article attempts to address some issues raised through several debates on reframing the concept of Participation. It intends to analyse driving forces of participation towards empowerment and engagement of marginalised group of people. A discourse was held on 9 April 2022 virtually on the occasion of NERAN Day. A total of 50 participants observed the event in which 7 speakers talked about participation on various development sectors: disaster preparedness, education, health, inclusion, CSO engagement, etc. Based on the discourse, learning and hindsight of authors, this article aims to draw attention of local government in order to mobilise civil society organisations (CSO) and promote information communication technologies (ICT) in order to ensure participation of marginalised groups toward their empowerment and engagement. The illustrations presented in the article reframes the concept and provokes further critical thinking towards marginalised peoples' engagement in the development process in the New Normal shaped by COVID 19. It also draws attention of local government and CSOs to work together and engage marginalised people in their own livelihood development by providing targeted support for digital literacy and ICT.

Keywords: Participation, Empowerment, Engagement, CSO, Marginalised Groups

1. Introduction

The concept of "participation" in the development sector dates back a long before the development tools such as rural appraisal introduced in Nepal. In Nepal, traditionally, people get together in a public platform called Chautari where people casually gather and discuss current

development, social, economic and political issues. In true sense, Chautari offers a platform for participation of all people. In the late 1980', the concept of participation and participatory development emerged and flourished with tools of Participatory Rural Appraisal (Chambers, 1994) with

challenges, potentials and paradigm. The concept of participation through PRA tools and technique was buzz word in the CSOs.

Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) has championed the concept of participation over the last 27 years through various project activities, policy debates and dialogues, publications, training, and discussion forums. Originally founded by participatory approaches and strategies, NEPAN followed theory and practices developed by Prof. Robert Chamber. In the 1990s, NEPAN was on the forefront for participatory development values and approach which was partly linked with PRA tools. Over the years, NEPAN has moved away from its original engagement in the PRA because it faded away with the pace of community development and now has rather focused on governance, mutual accountability, participatory research and development, human rights and social justice. That being said, NEPAN has consistently reinforced ideas on the participatory development, networking, and institutional capacity development.

Over the last two decades, NEPAN has made every effort to redefine participatory development and expand its scope through various development paradigm such as inclusive participation, collective participation, etc. In the last two years, NEPAN has however realised that the original concept of Participation is no longer starkly relevant due to worldwide impact of Corona Virus (COVID) 2019. The COVID-19 phenomena has shaped our way of life and as a result, the business modality has changed ways of thinking and working approach. The virtual mode of participation has helped people to cope with the impact of COVID-19, because lockdown and mobility restriction have left people with only choice of virtual communication and participation. However, herein the moot question is whether virtual participation is a real participation as we think of its significance

and whether it has any connection with the accessibility, affordability, usability/ quality of services. Likewise, who could participate in the development process through virtual mode is the crux of the discussion. Hence, this article attempts to deep dive through thinking and arguments made by NEPAN members who had participated in the discourse on "Reframing Participation" on 9 April 2022. The event was organised on the occasion of NEPAN Day that falls on 6 April each year.

2. Results and Discussion

NEPAN members from a range of background put forward their insights on the participation of people in the development process. The insights emanate from their continued engagement in the community development to the policy change process. Basically, the reframing the concept of participation and thereby engagement draws on mutually reinforcing the driving force of reframing participation: a) polity and CSO governance b) social inclusion perspective c) Willpower and or capacity of local government d) CSO space and their engagement e) digital divide f) New Normal shaped by COVID 19. These formative blocks are drawn up based on the consultation with experts and the participation discourse held on 9 April 2022.



Figure: Formative Blocks for Reframing Participation

The reframing participation efforts revolve around these six dimensions. While talking of participation as a concept, it always comes in mind about who takes part in the development and policy influencing process. The views coming from NEPAN members unambiguously suggest that people who are already informed of available opportunity and linked with resources have always privilege to take part in the development process. However, political structure and legislative frameworks guarantee equal right for every citizen to participate and enjoy as equal citizen.

2.1 Polity and CSO Governance

With the promulgation of Nepal's new constitution on 20 September 2015, Nepal introduced federal model of polity and governance. The constitution has ensured provisional guarantees for right to participation. The Directive principles states, "The political objective of the State shall be to establish a public welfare system of governance, by establishing a just system in all aspects of the national life through the rule of law, values and norms of fundamental rights and human rights, gender equality, proportional inclusion, participation and social justice, [...]. It also states the economic objective of the State which shall be to achieve a sustainable economic development, while achieving rapid economic growth, by way of maximum mobilization of the available means and resources through participation and development of public, private and cooperatives, and to develop a socialism-oriented independent and prosperous economy [...]. The state policies relating to development as mentioned in the Constitution under the Part 4 is to enhance local public participation in the process of development works.

The concept of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) emerged with the values enshrined

in the Charter of the United Nations: respect for fundamental human rights, social justice and human dignity, and respect for the equal rights of men and women as the Preamble of the UN Charter sets foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. The globalisation trend and growing inequality in the economic development across the Globe account to the proliferation of CSOs around the World for the promotion of human rights, equality, equity, empowerment, democracy and sustainable development. CSOs represent the voice of the people and contribute in the advocacy and realisation of human rights. They have contributed to the attainment of millennium development goals (MDG), now sustainable development goals (SDG), thereby to the overall index of human development index (Pasha, 2005).

CSOs in Nepal are however being criticized for lack of accountability to the State and citizens. The internal transparency and organisational governance are critical issues within CSOs because a majority of CSOs are family-based. As a result, CSOs—like entities in other sectors in Nepal—tend to have poor governance practices, and generally lack fair elections for executive committees, regular meetings of executive committees, and clear divisions of responsibilities between the board of directors and the management team (CSO, 2014) (p. 29). The changing nature of some CSOs and their governance has at times undermined constitutional provision on proportional inclusion, participation and social justice. The example of which is manifested by political appointment from CSOs and donorship support for some vested agenda.

2.2 Social Inclusion Policies and Strategies

The Part 1 of the Constitution of Nepal has ensured right to equality¹ and Rights of Dalit who have the right to participate in all bodies

of the State on the basis of the principle of proportional inclusion. The Government at various levels have developed their policies and strategies for social inclusion in their projects and programme.

In relation to the social and cultural transformation, the constitution states policies such as, " to make community development through enhancement of local public participation, by promoting and mobilizing the creativity of local communities in social, cultural and service-oriented works. "

Under the Policies relating to social justice and inclusion, States policies should create an atmosphere conducive to the full enjoyment of the political, economic, social and cultural rights, while enhancing the participation of youths in national development, to make their personality development, while providing special opportunity in areas including education, health and employment for the empowerment and development of the youths and provide them with appropriate opportunities for the overall development of the State. The functions, duties and powers of National Women Commission has ensured women's proportional participation in all organs of the State. The functions, duties and powers of National Dalit Commission has ensured proportional participation of Dalits in all organs of the State.

The government of Nepal has formulated exemplary local level social inclusion policies 2021. It has clearly outlined provisional guidelines for local government

to formulate their social inclusion policies and strategies. The strategies 2 of the policy is to provide equal access to marginalised community and enhance their participation in the development process.

2.3 Willpower of Local Government

The Local Government Operation Act, 2074 BS that came into effect since 15 October 2017 has paved a strong legal foundation towards institutionalizing legislative, executive and quasi-judiciary practice of the newly-formed local government. It has spelt out function and scope of local government to mobilise local resources and enhance participation of people in the development process.

The local government regulation and operational procedures has outlined mobilisation of local resources including CSOs in order to support local government in achieving results. However, there is always outcry on the part of CSOs that the appetite of local government is a major barrier for many CSOs to deliver their commitment. One of the major constraints for CSOs to deliver is lack of adequate resource because of dwindling funding support from donor countries, INGO, but working with the local government in terms of fund mobilisation is a real challenge because of governance issues. Increased or adequate funding from government (local) to CSO may enhance the service delivery which otherwise was the responsibility of the government, but this can potentially weaken the 'advocacy' capacity of the NGOs.

-
1. The State shall not discriminate citizens on grounds of origin, religion, race, caste/tribe, sex, economic condition, language, region, ideology or on similar other grounds. It has provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the making of special provisions by law for the protection, empowerment or development of the citizens including the socially or culturally backward women, Dalit, indigenous people, indigenous nationalities, Madhesi, Tharu, Muslim, oppressed class, Pichhuda class, minorities, the marginalized, farmers, labours, youths, children, senior citizens, gender and sexual minorities, persons with disabilities, persons in pregnancy, incapacitated or helpless, backward region and indigent Khas Anya.

2.4 CSO Space and their Engagement

The Constitution of Nepal promulgated in 2015 directs State under the Policies of the State to adopt a single door system for the establishment, approval, operation, regulation and management of community-based and national or international NGOs and to involve such organizations only in the sectors of national need and priority, while making investment and role of such organizations transparent and accountable. It outlines fundamental rights and duties, freedom of opinion and expression under the Article 3 (Government of Nepal, 2016). The legal foundation for the operation of CSOs is laid out by the Social Welfare Act 2049 which requires NGOs to register at the Chief District Office (CDO) and SWC (Kobek, 2004). The Citizen Right Act 2012 (BS) amended 2074 (BS) stipulates, "Freedom of expression at section six and sub-section three allows people to establish organisation" (p. 2).

Nepali CSOs work in a range of areas, including community and rural development; women's empowerment; human rights; public health; environment; youth activities; child welfare; educational development and social inclusion (CSO, 2014) (P. 27). CBOs represent self-help groups, mothers groups, and consumers groups recognized under the LSGA, mobilize resources from local Government authorities to serve communities at the grassroots level.

The social welfare regulation Act 2047 (BS) has outlined role of the state and the stringent conditions to be fulfilled by the CSOs in order to seek funding from donor and support function of the government. It has published its annual policy and program 2020 and one of the activities is to classify NGOs based on multidimensional indicators. It means that the CSO space has gradually shrunken with some tough measures that governments at three levels have consistently imposed.

2.5 Digital Divide

The term 'digital divide' refers to the differences in resources and capabilities to access and effectively utilize ICT for development that exist within and between countries, regions, sectors and socio-economic groups. The digital divide is often characterized by low levels of access to technologies (Singh, 2010: p. 51).

Broadly defined, the digital divide refers to inequalities between the advanced economies and the rest of the world in terms of access and use of information and ICT. The digital divide refers to "situations in which there is a marked gap in access to or use of ICT devices" (Campbell 2001, p.1 and OECD, 2007: p.24).

The relevance of this definition in the light of New Normal is grounded on the accessibility, usability and affordability to digital technologies by marginalised group of people who, in general, do not have ability to meet the expense of computer equipment and Internet usage (Franklyn and Tukur, 2012: p. 40). Chhetri (2015) cites that individual with higher levels of education are typically more open to using ICT such as online interactions (Ebbens, Pieterse, & Noordman, 2008; Streib & Navarro, 2006 cited by Bertot, et al 2010: p.267 and Bertot, 2003).

The policymakers should analyse the factors of digital divide mentioned above amongst individuals, organizations and countries and address broader socioeconomic and cultural challenges for marginalised people by bridging the digital gap with equal educational and economic opportunities and gender equality. The government should invest enough money and utilise the potential of ICTs to implement right policy measures at the right time for comprehensive socioeconomic transformation of marginalised group of people through digital literacy, equity and

equality. The researchers engaged in the ICT policy framework should dwell further in digging out facts and figures on how the digital divide can be abridged in the COVID context particularly in the LDC context (Chhetri, 2020).

2.6 New Normal

With the landfill of COVID-19 in January 2020, the World had already started trending towards working at home, shopping at home, DoorDash and UberEats, Netflix instead of Cineplex, says a University of British Columbia professor and clinical psychologist Steven Taylor (Chhetri, 2020).

In new normal shaped by COVID 19, people living in the far-flung region such as remote districts where there is poor communication infrastructure and where a majority of people are deprived of food security, cannot think of participation through virtual mode. There are many reasons: first of all, they do not have access to ICT. If some of them can access it, it just not affordable to majority of them. Those who can afford are not necessarily can use it due to lack of digital literacy. Just thinking of older age people, people with disability, poor people across ethnicity, one can easily imagine how can these people take benefit through virtual mode of participation. It means that people who are based in the urban areas who have easy and reliable access to ICT infrastructure and resource, who can afford and use technologies are benefitted through virtual participation. However, question are raised whether the virtual participations contributed to engagement of people and built trust and empowered them in the same manner that engagement can be realised through physical meetings.

3. Conceptual Framework of Participation



Looking at the formative blocks above, rethinking of participation is influenced when we have most favourable constitutional provision, policies and strategies, willpower of local government for the mobilisation of CSOs and application of ICT pivots participation and engagement of marginalised eventually as it can potentially minimise the impact of digital divide.



Engagement with CSOs by local government for marginalised people active participation by ensuring accessibility, affordability and usability of ICT products can re-define modality of participation of most marginalised group of people. It entails local government policy shift on ICT resources which allows marginalised people to purchase ICT on subsidized rate and access services that they would need for their livelihood and life-skills. The local government should mobilise CSOs to put in place digital literacy services for engagement of people through digital Apps.

Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Membership of group or any entity ● Attendance in meeting, training, etc ● Resources investment
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sharing of information and knowledge with colleagues, neighbour, etc ● Speak up and raise voices. Be politically informed ● Demand for human rights
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take action utilising information and knowledge ● Invest additional resources and sustain results ● Take follow up action

Figure: Indicator of participation, empowerment and engagement

The re-thinking and reframing of Participation should clearly mean to embody indicators of empowerment and engagement in the current context of political and socio-economic setup. Moving forward from the departure point of participation, engagement of people (all sex, age, caste and so on) should be measure against actions informed by political (power relation) information and knowledge.

4. Conclusion

The last discourse on reframing participation and consultation with NEPAN members responds to continued call for action by

NEPAN members. It explicitly suggests that development practitioners should move beyond conventional mode of participation (physical attendance of people in meeting, workshop, seminar or training). In the context of New Normal reinforced by digital divide, both CSOs and local government, policy-makers and other stakeholders (researchers, academicians, donors, private sectors, think tank) should re-engineer above indicators within formative blocks and develop engagement model. The development programs should consider "indicators of engagement" while thinking of participation of marginalised group to bring desired changes in their livelihood. Moving forward beyond right based approach, an enabling environment for engagement of marginalised groups should be created demonstrating empowerment, benefits and values of engagement, but the enabling environment needs to be ensured by the local government and CSOs along with other stakeholders to facilitate the engagement process. Access to digital resources and digital literacy of marginalised group of people entail policy and provisions to be enacted by local government. Herein comes role of CSO for advocacy and facilitation for effective participation and engagement of all ages, sex, caste and ethnicity.

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Green Homestays: How Potential Are They for Pro-Environmental Actions in the Nepalese Context?

CHET NATH KANEL, PhD Scholar and
Prof. DHARMA RAJ DANGOL, PhD

Abstract

Homestay tourism has been a popular term in Nepal's tourism sector. Since its commercial inception in 1997 from Sirubari village, Syangja district, the homestay development initiatives in Nepal are increasing year by year. And, the households involved in homestay business have reached more than one thousand, which are spreading in all the seven provinces in Nepal. Homestay businesses are particularly booming in rural areas. However, many scholars and practitioners are worried about their sustainability from environmental (green concept) perspectives. With the increasing consumptions of natural resources for developing and maintaining homestays, environmental pressures are obvious. Owing to this reason there are different discourses going on focusing on the environmental or green issues related to homestay/ rural tourism in Nepal. This article brings some community-based empirical reflections on how homestays create, face and address such problems and issues to operate the homestay businesses in a sustainable manner. Methodologically, the views have been collected from Chitwan and Tanahun districts using an ethnographic approach employing the tools such as close observations, focus group discussions and key informant 'balekusan'/interviews. The findings suggest that the homestays could be influential and 'model' actors for demonstrating pro-environmental actions showing green practices in the rural areas if proper attention is given from the very beginning. An integrated approach towards homestay development and rural transformation is nonetheless remains crucial and undeniable.

Keywords: Environment, Green, Homestay, Nepal, Sustainable tourism

1. Introduction

Lately, homestay tourism has, globally, been an emerging tourism typology with great interests and concerns. From tourism

perspectives, it is also considered as an alternative type of tourism.

Special interest tourist groups, who have keen desires to interact with different

traditions and cultures; are particularly attracted towards rural community-based homestay tourism (Baskota, 2012; Kanel, 2010; Lama, 2013; Sedai, 2018). There is a general consensus that homestay tourism always plays notable roles as 'cultural product' in an overall rural tourism system (Kunwar, 2002; Pradhanang, 2002). Although there may be some homestay facilities in urban areas, they may not be able to attract those 'special interest tourist' groups since the urban homestays, generally, cannot offer authentic cultural tastes to the tourists like the rural homestays. Sharma (2019) claims that rural homestays can offer green and organic products (foods, drinks, souvenirs etc.) round the year if proper focus is paid and facilitations are provided. Similarly, Dangol (2007) suggests that ethnic engagement with their rich knowledge and experiences in local ethno-bio & cultural resources (i.e. ethno-botany, ethno-culture, etc.) is always higher. However, for this endeavor, existing knowledge practices should support for their better considerations and exploitation (Pandey, 2011). Kanel (2020; 2021a) also advocates for an eco-friendly homestay practice in Nepal applying different types of green as well as organic practices, despite some 'daunting challenges and pull-factors' (Bhandari, 2013; Bhatta, 2015).

In the same context, a local resident of Chitwan Chepang Hills (CCH), who has been involved in homestay business for the last one and a half- decades or more, explains, "If proper guidelines are given and local code of ethics are developed, the homestay business could be a sustainable green business in the real terms, not only as rhetoric". He also opines that local municipalities have no knowledge about this, and there has been a big gap in the academic or professional-level knowledge and in the local practices.

Eco-tourism or eco-products take care of human, nature and associated environments and they care the lives of rural dwellers in a multiple ways (Ganguly & Grimshaw, 2019; Khatri, 2019; Lo & Janta, 2020; Mohammed & Osumanu, 2022). The Nepal government-developed 'homestay operation guidelines, 2010 (BS 2067)' has also given due importance to environmental aspects (MoCTCA, 2010). Now the provincial governments and some local governments have also developed homestay guidelines for better management of this business. Pro-environment, green and safe tourism practices are recommended in all those homestay operation guidelines (NBS, 2015; Kanel, 2020). The 10-year Strategic Tourism Plan of Nepal (2016-2025) has also given due emphasis on pro-environment tourism in Nepal (MoCTCA, 2016). Likewise, tourism has been considered one of the major economic sectors to fulfill the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by 2030 (NPC, 2021).

However, many homestay practitioners in Nepal have not been able to amplify their 'green' practices to the wider audiences (potential visitors) due to lack of promotional and marketing initiatives. There are obviously many good practices also. Nonetheless, such green practices have also not adequately been documented and expanded as anticipated. There are always big gaps among local practices and national/international expectations (Kanel, 2010, 2019a & 2019b). Critically speaking, gaps also exist in the intent of the guidelines and actual practices in many instances.

Thus, this study has made an attempt to explore pertinent issues associated with sustainable or 'green' homestay concepts and practices including perceptions of locals, practice dilemmas, and applied strategies and measures particularly focusing on rural parts of Nepal, where homestay tourism has taken momentum

for the last ten years or more. It is good to note that domestic tourism in Nepal is flourishing in recent times (Lamichhane, 2022). Domestic tourism has evidently helped thriving Nepal's rural homestay destinations.

The following sections present key questions of the research endeavor, methodological highlights, and major findings with an elaborated discussion on critical issues and concerns. Similarly, some insightful conclusions and implications have also been presented at the end of the article.

2. Key Research Questions

The concept of the study emerged from a joint discussion between the two authors in an interaction regarding the overall PhD studies of the first author. Based on his long experience with ethno-botany and rural-area based agri/agro-tourism in Nepal, the second author of the article incorporated his views and perspectives in the initial draft of the article, and gradually it took a shape of a journal article. The first author spent a prolonged period of about twelve/thirteen weeks in the fields, however, the second author played direct and indirect intellectual advisory roles during the whole research process.

The following 3 questions were set for detailed explorations:

- i) How the homestay operators have understood the issues of 'environment-friendly homestay' concepts?
- ii) How those homestay operators have practiced the 'green concepts of homestay tourism' in real sense? And,
- iii) How do they perceive and have experienced pro-environmental green homestay for its sustainability?

3. Methodology of the Study

This study has tried to bring answers of above inquiries from the homestay

tourism-focused areas of Chitwan Chapang Hills of Chitwan district and Tanahun district's Tanahunsur area of historic Vyasa municipality.

Following relevant literature reviews, an ethnographic approach of the qualitative (QUAL) research method was followed to excavate 'data' from the fields using primarily these three major tools: participant observations; bhailekusaari/un-structured interviews with key persons; and, focus group discussions (FGDs). The study was done between 2019 March to 2021 November. Field studies were completed on an intermittent basis since there were several ups and downs due to covid-19 global pandemic and subsequent adverse effects and impacts on tourism-related studies in Nepal and elsewhere (Kanel, 2021b; Lamichhane, 2022).

For participant observations, long stay was made in the selected homestays, particularly in Chitwan district. Ethnically, four types of homestays (Chapang, Magar, Dashnami and Brahmin/Chhetri) were experienced in Chitwan Hills. Whereas only Mahar homestays were experienced in Tanahun district, where only a very few nights were spent in those Magar homestays. The Tanahunsur homestay provided an extra opportunity of some sort of 'comparative' perspectives. This was not exactly to compare two destinations, but was to give multiple flavors of the homestay participants from two promising destinations of rural Nepal. A total of 9 homestays were closely observed during the process.

Equally, while observing, both 'overt' (direct) and 'covert' (indirect) techniques were utilized, which eased getting more realist data from the fields (Cresswell, 2009; Madden, 2010; Dawson, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Participant's consents were used before proceeding to the research. Academically, a philosophy of 'critical

ethnography' (i.e. looking the issues from minority, marginalized and disadvantaged groups' perspectives) was applied where possible.

The *bhalekuxari* method [*chit-chat*, *konakani*, *guff-guff*, 'unstructured interviews' (George, 2022) etc.] was very helpful to get better insights of the participants. Key informants of those homestays were mostly partaking in such *bhalekuxari/konakani*. The overall themes of the *konakani* were focused revolving around the above three key questions. Additionally, other subsidiary issues were also on the table of the *bhalekuxari*.

Likewise, three FGDs (Dawson, 2013) were held with the male, female and mixed groups of local participants for understanding their views on the green and sustainable concepts as well as practices of those rural community-based homestays. Discussion issues concentrated mainly on the efforts made and possibilities of continuing in the future too. In the same contexts, some difficulties or hurdles for a successful practice of 'green homestay' in Nepal were explored from the research participants.

The following sections highlight the main findings with relevant discussions on the pertinent issues associated with green concept of homestays in Nepal. While doing the discussions, an embedded approach to literature and theoretical consolidations has been maintained.

4. Major Findings, Discussions and Insights

While presenting the findings and subsequent discussions, a logical approach based on the above three questions is followed here. It means that the answers of the participants and reflections of the authors are sequentially presented particularly focusing on: how have they perceived, how have they

practiced; and, how do they see the future from their eyes?

4.1 Environment-Friendly Homestay Concepts: Rhetoric and Reality of Understandings

It is notable that the research site of CCH is more aware on environmental matters since a tourism project, called Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP), worked there for five over years from 2002 to 2007 (UNDP/TRPAP, 2007), which gave emphasis on local people's participation for rural tourism destinations development. During the process, as per the Project, intensive social mobilization with micro-credit supports, tourism-focused skills development training & exposure visits, local infrastructures development, managerial capacity enhancement, forward and backward linkage strengthening, appreciative approach-based (APPA) planning techniques, tourism promotion, branding, and marketing; among others, were done for developing a pro-poor rural tourism destination in Nepal.

The Pro-poor tourism project also gave emphasis on women-friendly tourism, community-based decision-making mechanisms, and orientating and capacitating local people in environment-friendly practices and behaviors for sustainable rural tourism (SRT) development (MoCTCA, 2007; Nepal, 2010). The SRT concepts were the main philosophies of the project which initiated intensive and expansive 'tourism and environment awareness programme' (TEAP).

"TEAP was very famous in TRPAP area, in which all the local people including male, female, school teachers and students were involved in pro-environment tourism teaching-learning processes", says an ex-project staff in CCH. A homestay operator (male) in the same connection says, "Lecture series, rallies, exhibitions, drama, practical sessions, arts

and poster displays, radio and TV programs and so on were the key activities that TRAP project initiated during its tenure. We were oriented towards safe, clean, hygienic and green rural tourism practices."

The Tanahunsur participants also had some sessions on tourism and environmental issues in the beginning of Tanahunsur Tourism, which has also developed a 10-year strategic plan (also called 'Master Plan') in 2021 (Ram Chandra Pokhrel, Former Parliamentarian of the area and the coordinator of Tanahunsur Tourism Plan; Personal Communication, 2021 April).

While talking to the research participants of both the sides, they said that the concept of environment-friendly homestay or rural tourism is to sustain the tourism initiative for longer periods. One homestay operator (lady) at CCH mentioned, "We understand the homestay as the waste-free homestay, clean and green area homestay, and also hygienic and healthy homestay." Likewise, another female participant of the same location, states, "No plastic" in touristic sites is also a good concept for maintaining green tourism". However, another participant (male) gave emphasis on "collecting and burning the plastic and other non-decomposable wastes, if controlling is not possible".

4.2 The Green Homestay Concepts in Practice: Dreams and Dilemmas

In a focus group discussion, one lady said, "We have planted trees in the barren lands and in our courtyards also for a greenery environment in our homestay areas. Likewise, we have put separate bins for different types of wastes: burnable and non-burnable". However, this is not practiced at every household.

In the same context, a participant responded that the "3R" principles, as he learnt from the training, were in practice in the village, although not to a greater extent. The 3R's

are: *Re-use, Recycle, Reduce, Replace, and Regulations*. The project was teaching the locals about these principles and practices. In our observations also, we found that there were small dumps of such wastes for some periods; and they usually burnt out in the morning or evening times in certain days' intervals.

In an informal *bhalakusari*, a local teacher also mentioned that they were forming eco-clubs in the school and managing local wastes through their active participation in school-teachers' guidance. Furthermore, in the observational process, we found an "incinerator" (waste burning kiln) nearby the school and the centre point of the village/settlement, where, school-wastes and other road-side wastes were being collected and burnt.

A homestay owner, male, shared, "We collect all bottles and broken glasses in one place and sell them while the *kawads*' (saleable/recyclable waste collectors) come to our area to purchase/collect. We also earn from the wastes although that is a little money. We call it *Phohor baata mohor*." Likewise, he was supported by another lady respondent adding: "Sir, we use all old bottles for different purposes like putting *raksi* (local alcohol), oil, etc. Some good and attractive bottles are also used for putting different types of masala (spices), e.g. *jeera*, *besan*, *dhaniya*, etc." While holding *kurani* at her kitchen, she showed all those bottles in re-use. It was also interesting to note that some participants were making kerosene lamps (*tuk*) of such re-used bottles.

While visiting a homestay's backside during our lunch time observations, we saw a big pile of dried firewood, which were kept as 'firewood store' for round the year. The owner (male, who used to be a local leader as well) said, "We collect these firewood mainly during winter seasons, and save underneath a shade for the whole year. We hardly cut green and healthy trees for such

firewood purposes. We collect the dried branches and dead trees from jungles; and only in difficult cases, we cut old trees from our farmlands. We are conscious about our environment. We know how forest destruction is hampering our environment in the earth; we know why landslides are increasing year by year; we know why our water-springs are drying-up; and we know why hotter days are coming in our villages too. So, we need to protect our trees, we need to plant more trees; and we need to protect jungles from devastating fires. Who does this if we don't do (*haemile nagire kase game?*). These voices are also in line with the scholar Nepal (2010)'s voices. He states that saving our mountains has been a serious challenge due to rapid climatic changes in the globe in the last few years.

His expressions were denoting that the rural dwellers are committed in words and actions from their level best. Even a Chapang leader, who were previously blamed to be the 'forest-cutters', (Gurung, 2016), confidently said, "Now-a-days we have left *khoriya* system, we save our farmlands and we make our farm-lands fertile by adding green manures and animal dung. We don't go to forests for killing birds and animals now. We save them".

We found a paradigm shift in the slash-and-burn system which used to be a dominant feature in the local farming practices. They are now quite cautious about the 'green' concepts and practices. Local community forestry schemes, strict rules by locals and also by the local governments have also played important roles in managing local natural resources and expanding pro-environment practices in the areas.

4.3 The Future of Sustainable Green Homestays: Challenges and Opportunities

From our observations and interactions it was revealed that saving local natural

resources is a traditional practice of conserving and preserving floral and faunal biodiversities and overall environments. Every home is serious about negative environmental impacts that the present world is facing. Thus, small practices are being continued in the rural and remote parts farthest possible. However, such practices are still challenged by so many hurdles and factors (Kanel, 2009), such as increasing construction works, haphazard excavations by some corrupt and unethical persons (*thekedaars*) also irresponsibility of such culprit persons who are indulged in illegal felling, killings and smugglings also; and so on (Gurung, 2007; Kanel, 2020 & 2021b).

Further, plastic culture is increasing due to over consumerism and 'westernization'. One local shares his experience: "Thirty-fourty years ago it was very hard to see plastic in our villages. But now-a-days we see plastic and empty bottles everywhere. Even, mineral water bottles can also be found in our surroundings. It has been fashionable to use water-bottles instead of clean tap- and boiled waters." Pandey (2011) also asserts that minimum orientations to all village and city-dwellers and tourism stakeholders are important tasks to save our environments and also to operate ethical businesses sustainably.

These observations and discussions lead us to realize that our villages are in great paradox. Use of new types of products wrapped in plastics is in increasing order due to national/global practices; however, all these 'modern' practices are creating havoc from environmental points of views. The villages are becoming 'garbage places'. This is despite the fact that the courtyards of local inhabitants are clean; but the road-sides and bazaar areas are unexpectedly 'dirty' due to unaware and irresponsible travelers and the vehicle staff as well. One local teacher was also blaming that

insiders are aware about the environment and sanitation; but outsiders are not aware, they are not responsible, and they bring lots of garbage and leave/throw everywhere. Similarly, locals preserve the flora and fauna; but outsiders intentionally damage/kill them. We are in difficult and paradoxical situations. We need to be very strict about these garbage-carriers."

5. Conclusions and Implications

The research participants have shared that the environment-friendly sustainable homestay would be possible through various green activities, such as: using alternative energies or hydro-electricity for cooking and heating purposes; planting more plants in the area; protecting existing forest resources; applying organic farm concepts; reducing non-decomposable wastes from the source markets; developing and abiding strict environment and sanitation laws and regulations by local governments; and, intensifying more awareness and capacity development programs for all types of stakeholders in an integrated, concerted and coordinated way.

Similarly, the concept of green homestay is gradually occupying the spaces on locals' minds; however, to make the concepts and 'rhetoric' in reality, lots of efforts are to be made, including awareness building and practice/implementation campaigns.

Likewise, with the gradual strengthening of the local government systems in Nepal, more serious regulatory and participatory actions are to be taken in the days to come. Sustaining green tourism is not associated with tourism sector only, but—being the tourism/homestay an integrated industry—the tourism sector demands more commitments from other sectors as well. In rural area, it relates to various sectors like agriculture, forestry, livestock, wildlife, irrigation, electricity, rural roads, education, health, security, and so on.

The '5R' principles for pro-environmental initiatives are very useful for every destination/place. However, concerned stakeholders' orientations and commitments are lacking at the moment. These principles demand strict actions from top-level government to grassroots-level governments and related organizations.

Greenery development; energy-saving & alternative energy development; and, waste/garbage management are key issues in making the tourism destinations environment-friendly and sustainable in actual practice. Thus, intra- and interdisciplinary partnerships and collaborations are very vital for translating the visions and dreams of green homestay or green tourism into the reality. This is also a crucial task against the backdrop of global climate change and its foreseeable multi-hazardous impacts. More research and action practices would support the 'dreams come true' - as the homestay practitioners seem to be more committed for such practical measures.

Locally developed codes of conduct (CoC), more strict regulatory frameworks, pro-environmental infrastructure development and support systems, encouraging the good practitioner from concerned authorities are some of the emergent implications for the wider applications toward sustainable 'green' homestays in the days to come. At present much progress cannot be expected from these small entrepreneurs, however, they have shown good indications for an exemplified green practice or green culture. They are definitely possible, but require huge efforts. Huge efforts demand high level of commitments and dedicated practices. 'Green' homestays should also be 'evergreen' homestays from the perspectives of 'sustainability'.

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Sustainable Transformation of Agri-food Systems in South Asia: Opportunities and Challenges

GANGA DUTTA ACHARYA, PhD

Abstract

There is growing recognition that agroecological principles and practices have great potential to sustain our food system by conserving and promoting biodiversity, slowing further warming of the globe, offsetting climate change impacts, and enhancing resilience, without compromising agricultural productivity. Hence, it is argued that agroecological solutions are the viable pathway to transform conventional agricultural and food systems towards sustainability.

Based on the reviews and analysis of the latest relevant literature and discourses, we argue in this article that conventional agricultural development and institutional practices are deeply entrenched by reductionist, positivist tradition and techno-methodological conceptions that poorly accommodate the complex epistemological issues of agroecology, hence are the fundamental barrier for effective promotion of these approaches. For better transformation outcomes requires innovations in agricultural and food system research and development governance- both in the public and private domains, embracing participatory, holistic, and transdisciplinary constructivist approaches.

Keywords: Agroecology, Greenhouse Gas, Climate Change, Industrial Agriculture, Food Systems.

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

Agri-food system is conceptualized as the combination of all elements and activities (such as people, environment, institutions, infrastructures, and inputs) related to the production, processing, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food, and the associated outcomes such as

nutrition and health, socio-economic status, and environmental conditions (Caron et al., 2018; HLPE, 2014). Agri-food systems are thus the nexus of human welfare, environmental health, and climate change. Poverty, social inequalities, food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition, degradation of

natural resources, loss of biodiversity, and climate change are in fact, connected with the ways we produce, distribute, and consume food (El Bilal, Callenius, Strassner, & Probst, 2019). Therefore, agri-food systems are at the center of socio-economic and environmental challenges of the world.

Agri-food system accounts on an average one quarter of the total anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which is the main contributor to the global climate change. The production and use of synthetic fertilizer is one of the main features of global agriculture that constitutes the most significant sources of GHG emissions. It is estimated that production of Nitrogen-based fertilizers alone, which are the key pillar of conventional industrial agriculture, is accountable for over 20 percent of GHG emissions connected to agricultural and food system (Dale, 2020), that has triggered global warming and fundamental changes in the pattern of precipitation and temperature. Climate change-induced natural disasters such as drought, floods, storms, and cyclones cause more than 200 billion USD aggregate economic loss in agriculture and related sectors annually (Aron, 2019). The yield loss in field crops is mainly attributable to the variation in temperature, water stresses and the pests and diseases outbreaks. Livestock yield is adversely affected due to diseases/pest outbreaks, potential changes in prices of the feed grains due to declining production and decreasing pasture and rangeland productivity caused by the weather variability.

Even though humans could eat more than 2500 plant species, only three major crops: wheat, rice, and maize, are grown extensively constituting the sources of more than 50% of the calories consumed globally (Miguel A. Altieri & Nicholls, 2020). Pushed mainly by the dominant corporate food system and free-trade agreements, food

is increasingly commodified, subsuming into the market economy, thereby forcing people to move away from traditional largely a localized, and highly diverse consumption practice to an industrial commodity system of universal mass consumption. This has resulted into a drastic shift in our everyday food habits moving away from having a context-specific, diverse and nutrients-rich diets to homogenous, highly processed, micronutrients-poor, and calorie-dense limited food items (Popkin, Adair, & Ng, 2012).

The ongoing pandemic of the novel corona virus (COVID-19) has further raised serious concerns about the sustainability of current agri-food system configuration across the globe. COVID-19 has profound implications not only on healthcare systems and economy but also on all dimensions of the food system-production, processing, and supplies. The virus containing measures that majority of the countries have adopted such as physical distancing, lockdowns, and restrictions on transport, physical movements, and the market closures affected food production, processing, marketing, and consumption (Rasul, 2021a). The outbreak itself is connected to the current unsustainable food system that degraded the natural environment at an unprecedented scale (GAFF, 2022).

On the heels of the harsh impacts of the climate emergency as well as the ongoing global pandemic, and widespread poverty and undernourishment problems, a sustainable, vibrant, and resilient food systems capable of meeting the food and nutrition security needs of ever-increasing population has become one of the most important agendas of global development. Along with this, there is growing recognition that agroecological principles and practices have great potential to sustain our food system by conserving and promoting biodiversity, slowing further warming

of the globe, offsetting climate change impacts, and enhancing resilience, without compromising agricultural productivity. Hence, it is argued that agroecological solutions are the viable pathway to transform conventional agricultural and food systems towards sustainability.

1.2 Agroecology and Transformation of Agri-food Systems

In recent years, agroecological approaches are increasingly recognized in the scientific and political discourses, as credible pathways to transform the conventional agri-food systems towards sustainability and resilience (Miguel A. Altieri, 2018; Caron et al., 2018; Dale, 2020; Davis, Lipper, & Winters, 2022; Eakin et al., 2017; Fernandez, Goodali, Olson, & Méndez, 2013; S. R. Gliessman, 2014; HLPE, 2019b; Sanderson Bellamy & Ioris, 2017; Weber et al., 2020; Wezel et al., 2020). However, agroecology itself is a dynamic and contested concept and represents diverse perceptions regarding its meaning and the ways in which it can contribute to the sustainability of the agri-food system. As multiple definitions and concepts of agroecology exist, different institutions adopt definitions that reflect their own concerns and priorities. Researchers however generally recognize agroecology as a science, a set of practices and a social movement, applicable to every component of the agri-food-system, i.e., from food production through to consumption and all that comes in between (Miguel A. Altieri, 2018; Anderson & Kenan, 2017; FAO, n.d.; Fernandez et al., 2013; S. R. Gliessman, 2014; Wezel et al., 2020).

Agroecology as a science examines and informs functioning of agroecosystems including ecological, biophysical, economic, socio-cultural, and political designs, mechanisms, functions, and relationships of the agri-food system (Akram-Lodhi, 2021). From its roots as a branch of agricultural

science, agroecology traditionally focused on ecological processes of food production at a farm unit and hence tended to provide technological support to food production only. However, in later years agroecological analysis includes socio-cultural, economic, and political aspects of food production and consumption, i.e., an ecology of entire food system (Francis et al., 2003; Sanderson Bellamy & Ioris, 2017). With this, the scientific approach of agroecology has essentially become a transdisciplinary and inclusive, focusing on the integrative study of the complex systems of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption.

As a set of agricultural practices, agroecology offers a systemic and holistic ways to improve agri-food system by minimizing the use of synthetic external inputs and high energy, particularly through harnessing natural processes of beneficial interactions among the components of agroecosystems (Akram-Lodhi, 2021; Wezel et al., 2020). Such practices include nutrient recycling, building soil organic matter, enhancing agrobiodiversity and resources, focusing on crop/animal diversity, rotations, and polyculture for enhancing beneficial interaction, promoting native seeds/breeds, and adopting integrated approaches of nutrient management and pest control. Agroecological practices also emphasize on revitalizing small-scale family farms, application of low energy inputs, promotion of indigenous knowledge, institutionalizing collaborative research with the local people/communities, community empowerment, collective actions, and local markets. In short, agroecology as a practice introduces alternative modes of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption particularly by minimizing the use of external inputs and high energy and aims at bringing about broader changes in entire food system towards sustainability with better socio-economic, nutritional, and environmental outcomes (Rossat & Altieri, 2017).

Finally, agroecology as a social movement emerged as a farmer-led, grassroots countermovement against the modern dominant corporate agri-food systems, emphasizing small-scale family farms and localized production and consumption along with the principles of sustainability and farmers' autonomy in food production (Sanderson Bellamy & Ioris, 2017). Agroecological approaches aim at giving voices to those who have traditionally been marginalized and excluded, thereby increasing their access to and control over productive resources and foods they produce.

1.3 Agroecological Principles with Respect to Agri-food System Transformation

Agroecology is a transdisciplinary field that encompasses ecological, socio-cultural, technological, economic, and political dimensions of entire food system. Agroecological approaches as science, practices or movement follow common principles that govern the agri-food systems

making them environmentally sound, socio-culturally acceptable, localized, and traditional knowledge-based, economically viable, and politically empowering and justifiable. There is a general agreement globally that the pursuit of social equity and justice, human welfare (food security/ healthy diet and employment) and environmental integrity are three basic features of all agroecological approaches (Eakin et al., 2017).

To make the agroecological approaches distinct and concrete, various scholars and agencies have devised number of principles that guide practices and provide measurable criteria for assessment. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), through a multi-stakeholder's consultative process, first developed and described 10 interlinked and interdependent principles as the salient 'elements' of agroecology that are crucial guideline for the agri-food system transformation towards sustainability (Box 1).

Box 1

The 10 salient elements (principles) of agroecology

1. Diversity: promoting and prospering diversities of species, ecological functions, and knowledge, activities, and livelihoods options of various stakeholders of the agri-food systems.
2. Co-creation and sharing of knowledge, practices, science, and innovation: fostering participatory processes of knowledge generation, and sharing, through multi-stakeholder engagements including farming communities for mutual learning between science and society. Agroecology aims at blending traditional and indigenous knowledge, producers' and traders' practical knowledge, and global scientific knowledge.
3. Synergy: enhancing integration and complementarity among different components of agroecosystems and promoting positive ecological interaction for creating synergies.
4. Efficiency: promoting agricultural systems with the necessary biological, socio-economic and institutional diversity and alignment in time and space to support greater efficiency.

5. **Recycling**: using local renewal resources and supporting biological processes that drive the recycling of nutrients, biomass, and water within production systems, thereby increasing resource use efficiency and minimizing waste and pollution.
6. **Resilience**: diversified agroecological systems are naturally resistant to extreme weather events and diseases/pest outbreaks. Similarly, agroecological approaches enhance socio-economic resilience through reducing dependence on external inputs and diversifying and integrating the various components of farm enterprising.
7. **Human and social values**: emphasize human dignity, equity, inclusion, and justice. It aims to empower people to become their own agents of change.
8. **Culture and food traditions**: supports healthy, diversified and culturally appropriate diets based on local tradition and identity, while maintaining the health of ecosystems.
9. **Responsible governance**: strengthening policy and institutional mechanisms to recognize, support, and improve smallholder and peasant producers, ensuring equitable access to land and natural resources.
10. **Circular and solidarity economy**: ensuring proximity and confidence among producers and consumers through a circular and solidarity economy that prioritizes local markets and supports local economic development by creating virtuous cycles.

Adapted from FAO (2018), Wezel et al. (2020)

In an attempt to bringing many different perspectives on agroecological principles together, a report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security

(HLPE) synthesized a wide range of different publications on the theme and consolidated a list of 13 principles of agroecology HLPE (2019a). These 13 principles are listed in Box 2 below.

Box 2: The 13 consolidated principles of agroecology

- recycling,	- inputs reduction,	- soil health,	- animal health,
- biodiversity,	- synergy,	- economic diversification	- co-creation of knowledge
- social values and diets,	- fairness,	- connectivity	- participation.
- land and natural resources governance,	Source: HLPE (2019b)		

Apparently, the 13 principles consolidated by HLPE also correspond with one or more of the 10 elements of FAO, except for the 'resilience' and 'efficiency', which are here considered as expected outcomes of the

system performance from the application of the agroecological principles rather than being principle itself (Wezel et al., 2020). Even though, the principles of agroecology are seemingly generic in nature, they are



not the standard recipes, or dogmatic approaches, rather they are general guidelines and allow to generate diversities of locally adapted practices applicable to contextual circumstances. Therefore, there are number of different farming practices that can broadly be considered as ecological, such as biodynamic, community-based, eco-agriculture, ecological, environmentally sensitive, extensive, farm-fresh, free-range, low-input, organic, permaculture, sustainable, and wise-use etc. (Pretty, 2006).

2. Agroecological Transformation of Agri-Food Systems: Potential and Challenges

2.1 The Framework for the Agroecological Transformation of Agri-food systems

S. Gliessman (2016) conceptualizes a five-level framework of agroecological transitions of the conventional agri-food systems for sustainable outcomes, which is also taken up by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HELP) commissioned by the UN Committee on World Food Security (HLPE, 2019b). We use this framework (Table 1) to analyze the current status, prospect, and challenges of the agroecological transformation of agri-food systems in South Asia.

Table 1: Framework for Agroecological Transition of Agri-food systems

Change process	Transitional goals	Corresponding agroecological principles	Applied to
Transformational	Level 5: A new global agri-food system - localized, inclusive, equitable and justiciable	participation, social values and diets, fairness, land and natural resource governance and connectivity.  Co-creation and sharing of knowledge, practices, and innovations 	Agri-food System
	Level 4 Closing gaps between producers and consumers through development of alternative food networks (localized food markets, short food chain, participatory guarantee systems)		
	Level 3 Redesign agroecosystems (promoting diversities, and integration)		
Incremental	Level 2 Employ sustainable alternatives to the conventional practices (inputs, and technologies)	nutrient recycling, enhancing soil health/ animal health, inputs reductions, promoting diversities, economic diversification, and synergy.	Agroecosystem
	Level 1 Increasing resource-use efficiency within the existing conventional inputs/practices		

The food system transformation framework devised by Glessman is seemingly a linear and deterministic, however, in practice the transformation process is not straight forward, rather it involves non-linear, contextual, and messy process. Therefore, the transitional changes as specified in various levels of the framework should not be understood as unfolding successively and neatly, rather the changes may start at any point and the interventions and improvements may occur simultaneously at different levels (Anderson, Brui, Chappell, Kiss, & Pimbert, 2021). Thus, this framework offers flexibility of analysis depending upon the contextual situations.

The Level 1 and 2 of the transition pathways, tend to be incremental and is primarily limited to the production domains, while the level 3, 4 and 5 involve transformational process and cover the entire food system including production, processing, marketing, and consumption.

2.2 The South Asian Agri-food Systems: current status, transformation potential, challenges, and ways forward

Current Status

South Asia (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) is the region of impressive socio-cultural, environmental, and agricultural diversities. The region has a broad range of topographic variation from high mountains, hills, valleys, to lowlands, river basins, coastal plains and most importantly the Indo-Gangetic area which is the world's largest alluvial plain of fertile soils deposited by the river flood waters. As with the topographic diversities the region has wide variation in climatic conditions from humid tropics in the lowlands to cool temperate climate in the highlands.

The region holds less than 3.5% of the world's land area but provides home to a

quarter of the global population, and hence is the most densely populated region of the world (Enamul Haque, Mukhopadhyay, Nepal, & Shammin, 2022; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, & WHO, 2021; Xue et al., 2021). Moreover, it is one of the poorest regions bearing one-third of the world's poor, with about 70% of them living in rural areas and depending primarily on agriculture (Rasul, 2021b; Rasul et al., 2021).

With just 5% of the global agricultural land, South Asian farmers feed nearly a quarter of the world's population (Rasul, 2021a). Around 65% of the population in South Asia lives in rural area and depend upon agriculture and allied sectors for their livelihoods (Bhandari & Meah, 2021). Moreover, agriculture continues to drive a significant share of the economy in South Asian countries even though contribution of the sector to the national GDP is declining over the years. In 2020, the contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP was the highest in Afghanistan (26.82%) among 8 South Asian countries, followed by Nepal (24.3%), Pakistan (22%), India (16%), Bhutan (15.8%), Bangladesh (12.7%), Sri Lanka (7.4%), and Maldives (5.2%) (Aryal, Rahut, Thapa, & Simtowe, 2021). The region has predominance of small size farm holdings (less than 2 ha).

South Asia accounts for about 30% (70 million) of the global landholdings (570 million), and 85% of them are small size family farms with less than 2 ha, which supply 75% of the food in the region (Bhandari & Meah, 2021; Hamero et al., 2017). Women already constitute 60% workforce of the farming in South Asia, there is increasing trend of outmigration of the working age males from villages towards city centers and abroad leading to growing evidence of the feminization of agriculture in the region (Meah & Puskur, 2021). However, women farmers across the South Asia have been constrained by severe challenges in

accessing productive resources, training, and other extension support services due to deep-seated gender-based inequalities pervasive in the region.

For the last six decades, agricultural policies and programs in South Asia, as elsewhere have greatly been influenced by green revolution (GR) strategies for productivity growth that promoted rapid intensification of farming through excessive use of irrigation, synthetic fertilizers, agrochemicals, and high yielding varieties. There has been enormous constellation of policies, and institutions dedicated to promoting and maintaining economic and policy environment for massive extension of green-revolution technologies for more than six decades, now. Research, studies, and development with respect to this mainstream approach have been generously financed by many of the corporate institutions such as the World Bank and are producing and disseminating highly accessible policy and practice documents worldwide, and thus the knowledge domains of agri-food system have overwhelmingly dominated by green revolution narratives.

The GR strategies have been successful in dramatic increase of yield of major staples particularly wheat, maize, rice, and potatoes. During the period of 1960–2000, developing countries across the globe including South Asia, achieved an impressive growth in the yields of major field crops—wheat 208%, rice–109%, maize–157%, and potatoes–78% (Pingali, 2012). Consequently, overall, food production has been doubled in most of the South Asian countries in last five decades, and hence are now food surplus in the narrow sense that food availability in the region exceeds the current demand (Meah & Puskur, 2021; Pradhan, Warchold, Schönlau, & Kropp, 2021). However, pervasive poverty and systemic inequality, structured mainly by class, caste, ethnicity, and gender as well as the globalization have resulted into an

unequal access to this abundance forcing almost 50% of the regional population deprived of basic food security today. In 2020, nearly 850 million people in the region (almost 158 million more than that of the previous year) have been reported moderately or severely food insecure; and more than 30% of the children below 5 years of age have been stunted due to malnutrition (FAO et al., 2021; WHO, 2020). Even though stunting rates have declined significantly over the years in South Asia, the region still bears more than one third of the global burden (Gillespie et al., 2019).

To sum up, the agri-food system in the South Asia has been facing intertwin challenges of climate change threats along with long-standing development obstacles such as widespread chronic poverty, socio-economic inequalities, limited productive resources, population growth, resources degradation, and poor infrastructure.

Transformation Potential: challenges and ways forward

South Asia is overwhelmingly dominated by smallholder farmers as more than 85% of the South Asian farm households operate in less than 2 ha of agricultural land (Bhandari & Meah, 2021; Herero et al., 2017), which are basically the family farms. It is noteworthy that the green revolution technologies were unsuitable for the millions of smallholder farmers operating in the complex and risk-prone agroclimatic conditions and hence, are practicing the locally adapted indigenous farm practices which are by default ecological in nature. The family farms in general have better environmental and ecological impact, as they favor genetic, species and land use diversity in the given agricultural landscape and are managed with fewer resources (González, León, & López-Estébanez, 2022).

Moreover, though in small scale and scattered, agroecological approaches have

been consciously promoted by civil society organizations, farmers' cooperatives, and associations, and some of the external development partners in many parts of the South Asian region even in the era of massive swing of green revolution. However, there is dearth of substantial documented cases of the adoption of agroecological practices in this region with adequate depth and details.

This paucity is understandable as alternative discourses to green revolution strategies such as agroecology generally confined to the academic circles with limited popular reach and impact. It is only in the recent years that the limitations of the green revolution model of development have surfaced to common parlance with the greater attention of policy makers and other stakeholders along with increasing calls for the sustainable development.

It is noteworthy that the smallholder farmers in the hinterlands generally have limited access to modern extension support services, inputs, and technologies and hence they operate without using costly external inputs. They use the natural processes of nutrient recycling, mixed farming, green manuring, composting, and other indigenous means to maintain the farm productivity. This type of compulsive practices, though are the bliss for sustainability, are not the conscious interventions for the deliberate transformation. For example, when the rural areas are linked with the urban centers, the commercial prospects of farm products push the smallholder farmers 'to produce more' by using high yielding varieties/breeds, and external inputs as like in conventional industrial mode of farming, fueling the unsustainable use of land, water, and resources. In commercial production pockets of peri-urban areas rampant use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation water can be seen in South Asia as else elsewhere. It is noteworthy that without conscious

interventions, the poor and ignorant farmers may avoid using costly external inputs but are not able to reduce other means of environmental degradation such as soil erosion, pollution, and overuse of water.

Hence, there is urgent need to institutionalize deliberate efforts to protect and prosper the unspoiled farmlands of the smallholder farmers in the hinterlands, hills, and rainfed areas of the South Asia for the sustainability transformation. Agroecological approaches variously called as 'alternative', 'sustainable', 'natural', 'low-input', 'low-external-input', 'regenerative', 'holistic', 'organic', 'biointensive', 'biological' etc. (Thompson & Scoones, 2009, p. 392), have been practiced in many parts of the region. All of them, representing thousands of farms and farming environments, are niche innovations that share a vision of 'farming with nature' and promote biodiversity, protect soil from erosion, conserve water, use minimum tillage, and integrate crop and livestock enterprises on the farm units. In later years, government agencies of the region- India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal have also emphasized to promote variety of these approaches. There is huge potential of optimizing and extensively promoting many of these locally adapted agroecological farming practices for sustainable transformation of the agri-food systems in South Asia.

Level 1 and/or 2 of the Gleeson's transition framework may serve as the entry point for this process. Conscious application of the agroecological principles of nutrient recycling, enhancing soil health/animal health, inputs reductions, promoting economic and ecosystem diversities, and building synergy should be done through massive sensitization campaigns, appropriate technology development and technical support services.

Almost all of the agroecological research so far are limited to technical aspects of

agricultural science and cover the principles which are related to 'increasing efficiency' of the conventional inputs/practices (related to Level 1 goals) and developing locally adapted 'sustainable alternatives' required for achieving level 2 transitional goals. Therefore, future agroecological research needs to focus more on socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions of the agri-food systems, adopting a holistic perspective.

Moreover, the agricultural research and development practices in South Asia as elsewhere are deeply entrenched by reductionist, positivist tradition and technomethodological conceptions which is the fundamental challenge to agroecological transformation. The institutional practices are characterized by having a top-down, linear, paternalistic, clientelist, and demobilizing relationship among agricultural scientists, farmers, and other stakeholders. The conventional metrics of performance measurements value only the direct output i.e., the yield, without considering the environmental costs and benefits.

Contrary to this, agroecological approaches demand a distinctly different approach of research and extension, where farmers and local stakeholders take central role in defining research problems and developing solutions alongside the agricultural and social scientists and other stakeholders. They use different- holistic metrics, new framework of performance measurement. Therefore, conventional agricultural research and development institutions require massive reforms to include interdisciplinary/ transdisciplinary, participatory approaches and holistic and constructivist perspectives in their operations so as to address the complex epistemological issues of agroecology in practice. For better transformational outcomes, greater institutional capacities

for articulating technical as well as socio-cultural and political dimensions of agri-food systems should be developed.

One of the basic features of agroecology is the 'community agency' that has foundation on the primary producers' resistances of the mainstream agri-food systems that are environmentally damaging and controlled and shaped by the corporate interests. However, conventional alarmist discourse of 'feeding the increasing population' is so powerfully ingrained among the policymakers and other stakeholders that the 'community agency' is often compromised with the continuous emphasis on 'productivity' limiting it into the narrow sets of technological solutions to address merely the sustainability crisis of the conventional agri-food systems. Overcoming such a threat of cooptation and insidious appropriation of agroecology by the mainstream actors is fundamental for effective transformation.

Therefore, conscious efforts on building the agency of primary producers, and their organizations and promoting grassroots collective action should be the priority of agri-food policies and programs.

3. Conclusion

This article reveals that agroecology offers plausible pathways of transformation of conventional agri-food systems towards an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient food systems. However, there are still some pertinent conceptual as well as structural issues that constrain the wider acceptability of agroecology as a means of sustainable future among the policy makers.

Participation and co-creation and sharing of knowledge are the key to agroecological approaches where farmers and local stakeholders take central role in defining research problems and developing solutions alongside the agricultural and social scientists and other stakeholders.

However, there has been a critical challenge for the conventional agricultural scientists to appreciate indigenous knowledge and expertise and bring them into the center of the innovation processes.

Thus, for better transformational outcomes, it requires novel innovations in agricultural and food system research and development governance- both in the public and private

domains. Furthermore, it requires greater institutional capacities for articulating technical as well as socio-cultural and political dimensions of agri-food systems, and for transdisciplinary associations with grassroots movements that are defying at various scale hegemonic corporate ideas of agri-food systems across the world while offering sustainable alternatives.

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Advancing Federal Health Systems in Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Nepal moved from unitary system with a three-level federal system of government. In the context of federalism, the national health system has its own decentralization process that aimed to reduce persistent disparities and improving easy access to health care services for improved health outcomes. Despite remarkable progress in health sector, the health systems challenges still continue and limited capacity of health institutions to deliver the quality health services is one of the key concerns at the province and local level. With the systematic review of health sector policy and strategic priorities and subsequent participatory consultations with key stakeholders at federal, province, local levels from February to July, 2021, this article primarily aims to explore some of the policy and strategic interventions in advancing federal health systems and synthesizes the progress, challenges, and opportunities in the health sector. In addition, it offers key recommendations on strategic priority actions to meet the ambitious targets of Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the federal context.

Keywords: Health Systems, Universal Health Coverage, Health Equity, Community Participation

1. Introduction:

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. However, access to essential health care services for majority of the populations who are poor and socially disadvantaged has been a major policy debate in developing countries. Therefore,

political leaders, policy makers and external development partners have been raising the unfinished agenda of achieving universal health coverage for years. To this end, more emphasis is needed to enhance meaningful engagement of communities and ensure equitable access to health care services for all.

Historically, health for all has been an ambitious social goal since the 1978

Alma-Ata Declaration. After this important declaration, there is a growing consensus that health is a fundamental human right. And it is broadly based on the principles of equity and community participation. It has also raised critical needs to consider social, economic, cultural and political factors that influences health and well-being of all populations.

In this context, WHO estimates that by 2030, up to 61 per cent of population will not have access to essential health services. More importantly, poor and socially disadvantaged communities are most likely to be excluded from those health services. Every year, a vast majority of the populations are pushed into extreme poverty because of out-of-pocket spending on health.

2. Objectives

In the changing context of federalism, the federalized health structure has suffered from a range of social, political, cultural and structural challenges to ensure equitable access to quality health services. The overall objective of this review was to explore and systematically document the experiences, the progress made so far, challenges and opportunities in advancing federal health systems in Nepal.

3. Methodology

It was primarily a systematic review and exploratory research that includes in-depth review of existing health policy and strategic reports, health survey and evaluation reports, and participatory consultations with policy makers, planners, managers, health care workers, and communities for their perceptions and understanding towards federal health systems in Nepal and its likely effects or impacts on health outcomes.

4. Results

The constitution of Nepal has clearly articulated basic health care as a

fundamental right of its citizens. However, there are still critical needs and challenges of ensuring equitable access to quality health services for all in the federal context. Nepal's new health policy 2019 aims at developing and expanding a health system for all with a particular focus on social justice and good governance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in disruption of essential health services – the full extent is yet not fully known. At the federal level, the government is broadly engaged in developing national policies, budgeting and planning guidelines for provincial and local governments for implementation at local levels.

With the Local Government Operation Act (2017), the local governments can prioritize their health needs for actions. However, they have no specific health policy or strategy yet, and they are more relying on national and/or provincial health policies and strategies. In this context, health systems governance contributes to better performing health systems. It affects the ability of markets, networks and public administrations to contribute to better health outcomes, more equitable distribution of financial burden, and an increase in responsiveness with regards to non-medical expectations of patients.

The role of provincial health ministries is critical in terms of coordinating and facilitating local governments in ensuring implementation of these national guidelines to ensure quality health service delivery at local level. Based on the national health policies and strategies, the provincial governments have developed their health policies and strategies in order to address local health needs and priorities more effectively and efficiently.

On the other side, federalism also presents ample prospects for health sector reform. Due to the proximity of the local

governments to the people, the federal context provides ample opportunities for more effective budgeting and needs-based and evidence-based planning. However, the capacity of local governments in planning and management of health services is still limited.

Hence, the role of development partners is critical in enhancing the capacity of local governments in participatory planning and budgeting processes, training and orientation to health workers in order to improve the quality of essential health services at local level. In this context, WHO can play an important coordinating and facilitating role to ensure its technical assistance is better harmonized and aligned with the strategic priorities at national and subnational levels.

At the local level, there are opportunities for increasing financial resources for health from provincial and local government.

Shifting executive power to local and provincial level is likely to have positive effects on local resource mobilization through participatory bottom-up planning, increased accountability and reduced bureaucracy in decision making.

While federalism aims to strengthen health system, reduce disparities in access to and utilization of health services, and improve health outcomes, there are critical needs of generating new evidence through equity analysis and operational research to identify service coverage gaps, and hence plan for interventions to reach out the poor and marginalized populations.

The WHO recommends supporting and strengthening a health system based on the below framework. This aims to achieve more equitable and sustained improvements across health services and health outcomes at national and sub-national levels.

Figure 1: Health system building blocks (WHO)



Universal health coverage aims to ensure that all populations are able to access health services without any financial hardships. Largely, it includes a range of essential health services, including

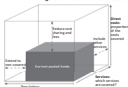
from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. However, the progress towards achieving universal health coverage has been slow

Nepal's commitment to UHC is well reflected in the health policy of 2019 which ensures the provision of free basic health services as a fundamental right of every citizen. The policy envisions providing access to high-quality health services (beyond basic services) in an affordable manner by ensuring financial protection in health.

The UHC can be achieved by gradually increasing the state's investment in

the health sector, increasing per capita expenditure and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure through social health insurance and targeted subsidies. For improved sustainability in healthcare financing, more focus is on increasing investment in the health sector and social health protection mechanisms as part of strengthened health financing system and social health protection mechanisms.

Figure 2: Three dimensions to consider when moving towards UHC



Source: Health Systems Governance, WHO-2018

In this context, one of the strategic objectives of Fifteenth Plan (2019/20-2023/24) is to transform the profit-oriented health sector gradually into a service-oriented sector. This can be achieved by enhancing social accountability of federal,

provincial and local governments, and maintaining effective regulation for easily accessible and quality health services including preventive, promotional, curative and palliative care.

Table 1. Progress on some of the key health indicators

Targets and Indicators	Baseline 2015 ^a	Target 2019 ^a	Progress 2019 ^{ab}	Target 2030 ^a
Percentage of institutional delivery	55.2	70	72.5	90
Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	55.6	69	79.3	90
Under-five mortality rate	38	28	28	20
Maternal mortality ratio	258	125	239	70
Neonatal mortality rate	23	18	16	12
Tuberculosis incidence (per 100,000 population)	158	85	111	20

Source: ^aSDGs Status and Roadmap: 2016-2030; National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal

^{ab}SDGs Progress Report (2016-2019), National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal

5. Discussion

Nepal's health sector strategy (2015-2020) had focused on equitable access to quality health services, health systems reform and multi-sector approach as guiding framework for implementation. Despite significant progress, there are still challenges of reaching the unreached populations, reducing high level of out-of-pocket expenditure for health care, effectively managing medical supplies and ensuring adequate human and financial resources.

Firstly, it is high time to strengthen federal health systems by ensuring effective implementation of national health policies and guidelines, enhancing community engagement and social accountability of the governments and keystakeholders. The new health strategy needs to realistically address health systems issues such as inadequate human and financial resources, poor health infrastructure, delayed procurement and lack of robust supply chain management and weak monitoring and evaluation systems.

Secondly, there are emerging needs of health equity policy analysis to better understand the existing challenges and opportunities of advancing universal health coverage. In this context, health in all policies is a guiding framework to enhance the health and well-being of all populations. Such policies broadly aim to address avoidable social inequalities that contribute to poor health experienced by socially disadvantaged groups in many communities.

Likewise, effective implementation of National Human Resources for Health Strategy (2021-2030), Multi-sectoral Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (2021-2025), National Health Financing Strategy (2021-2030) and other relevant national guidelines should receive high priority agenda for

federal, provincial and local governments.

Additionally, new strategic actions are needed to strengthen Integrated Health Information Management System (IHMS) and promote digital health governance for advancing evidence-informed health policies and strategies for universal health coverage. Furthermore, integration of Geographic Information System (GIS) into local health systems is critical in health assessment and planning health interventions.

Coherent strategies are needed to strengthen national capacity in preparedness and response during health emergencies and other disasters. The safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 are seen as a critical path to ending the pandemic. Moreover, risk communication and community engagement are integral to the success of responses to health emergencies.

As way forward, there are emerging needs of investing more resources on health policy and systems research that seeks to understand how different actors interact in the policy and implementation processes to contribute to policy outcomes. This also greatly helps to draw a comprehensive picture of how health systems respond and adapt to health policies, and how health policies can be shaped by the broader social determinants of health.

Political context greatly matters in terms of prioritising public policies and strategies to ensure equitable distributions of resources in the health sector. And the changing context of globalisation, politics, migration, trade and international funding environment largely influences the landscape of achieving the universal health coverage in the developing countries.

For example, the new policy provisions such as free health care policy, health insurance and health care to senior citizens at the

health facilities are considered as important initiatives of the governments to advance pro-poor health policies so that poor and socially disadvantaged populations can benefit the most in the communities.

In the federal context, the policy making processes are institutionally decentralised and political power is more dispersed at the province and local level. This offers ample opportunities for local governments to appropriately prioritise adequate resources in order to strengthen the resilient health systems for effective delivery of quality health services.

However, the various interests of political leaders and senior government officials may diverge due to differences in political, ideological, technical and socio-cultural beliefs. Therefore, we need to carefully explore how political interests, ideas, and institutions shape the universal health coverage at large and systematically review the ways in which politics can facilitate evidence-informed health care reform.

Political power and commitments across the governments are still in transition in terms of effective implementation of new health policies, strategies and guidelines at all levels. To large extent, there lacks institutional capacity of provincial and local governments for effective implementation of those policies and strategies. Therefore, there are significant political challenges of the local governments to implement universal health coverage policies, strategies and plans.

Despite varied socio-political interests, federal government needs to invest more on capacity development of provincial and local governments in strengthening resilient

health systems for better health outcomes. During local elections, there are often new and promising political commitments for ensuring social safety nets and health care reform at all levels.

With these political commitments, hard-to-reach populations are hopefully able to access health services without any socio-political, economic, cultural and geographical barriers. Unfortunately, many of these commitments are not effectively translated in to actions. Therefore, there are often growing criticisms of the political parties' popular agenda in their manifesto during the elections. Unfortunately, the broader issues of health inequities and social injustice are not adequately addressed yet.

6. Conclusion

Capacity building of provincial and local governments in resilient health systems should be high priority agenda for action. Priority issues around right to health, gender, climate change, migration, environmental degradation, disasters, urban governance, preparedness and response during health emergencies need to be realistically addressed in health policies and strategies.

In order to promote a rights-based approach, new health strategy should particularly focus on whole-of-society approach to address the unmet health care needs of those who are poor, socially excluded and left behind in the communities. The consistent efforts of development partners, civil society and private sectors are needed to advance the resilient health systems and achieve the ambitious targets of UHC and health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

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Healthy Ageing: Situational Assessment on Social Participation and Inclusion of Older Adults in Suryabinayak Municipality, Bhaktapur, Nepal

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Abstract

This research was conducted as an important element of Nepal Redcross Society's five year development plan where ageing is a priority theme of its interventions programme. This article attempts to highlight critical findings and the observations on social participation of senior citizen from a research conducted in Suryabinayak Municipality ward no. 2 (Balkot). This is a cross sectional study conducted in ward number 2 of Suryabinayak Municipality of Bhaktapur district. A mix method research design was applied along with participatory approaches engaging older people and Redcross volunteers. There are different domains through which older people engage socially with others, like through sharing their pension money with household. But when social participation is looked from the perspective of interaction outside the home, the picture is different. For majority the most common interaction outside home was walking around, attending social and religious events, meeting with friends and joining local club, CBOs, village committee, political party. Only a small number of the older people were member of any club or NGOs or political party. While the older people are generally satisfied with their life and felt respected in and around the community they live, the phenomenon, space and opportunity, the physical environment and attitude of younger people offer limited scope for social participation of older people in ward number 2. Generally, the phenomenon of interacting outside the house is limited.

Keywords: Social participation, older people, healthy ageing, Suryabinayak municipality.

1. Introduction

Healthy Ageing is now widely accepted concept or approach for improving the quality of life of an individual when they

progress toward ageing or old age. It encompasses mix of different domains that range from personal and familial, to social

and professional areas such as health and long-term care, participation in employment and in society, or physical security and financial stability. Healthy ageing, like active ageing, emphasizes the need for action across multiple sectors and enabling older people to remain a resource to their families, communities and economies (Rudnika et al., 2020).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out a universal plan of action to achieve sustainable development in a uniform manner and aspires to realize the human rights of all people. It calls for ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are met for every component of the society, at all ages, with a discreet focus on the most vulnerable population group, which includes the older people. Moreover, much earlier in 2002, a global agreement was reached at Madrid, called Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPPA) which offers a comprehensive action plan for governments and civil society, amongst other groups, for building a society for all ages. In this context, government of Nepal developed a Plan of Action for Ageing in 2005 and revised in 2013 in line with international commitments and declarations (GoN 2005).

Similarly, UN has declared the decade of 2021 – 2030 as UN Decade of Healthy Ageing that brings together governments, civil society, international agencies, professionals, academia, the media, and the private sector to improve the lives of older people, their families, and the communities in which they live (United Nations 2021).

Nepal's Senior Citizens Act 2063 BS, defines the senior citizens (older people) as 'a citizen of Nepal having completed the age of sixty years'. About 9% of the total population accounts for 60+ population and the number is projected to be around 20% by 2050 (Bhandari 2020). The increase in the population of older people has given

rise to challenges in both developmental and humanitarian areas in terms of promoting their well-being by meeting their social, cultural, religious, emotional, health, financial and developmental needs.

This article aims to highlight critical findings and the observations on social participation of senior citizen from a research conducted in Suryabinayak Municipality ward no. 2 (Balkot), Bhaktapur district, Nepal. The focus of the study is also made to explore how older adults experience and describe their participation in social (community) activities. The research was conducted as an important element of Nepal Redcross Society's (NRCS) five year development plan where ageing group is defined as priority beneficiaries of its development interventions.

2. Conceptualising Social Participation

It has been widely recognised that social participation is associated to better health and self-satisfaction. Social participation of older people is often used as key measurement indicator for programme interventions for an ageing population. Despite wider appreciation and recognition the value of social participation at older age, its definition, domains and boundaries are evolving. Arrog and Shahboulaghi (2020), and Levasseur, et al. (2019) noted that the concept of social participation is highly valued in old age, yet there is ambiguity and disagreement in the definition and attributes of this concept among the older people. According to them, the defining attributes of the concept of older people's social participation included emphasis on activities that involve or connect with others in the society or community. Such a process is determined by individual desire, ability and personal satisfaction.

Levasseur et al. (2019) further summarised the different works on social participation

that it is also positively associated with decreased mortality, disability, depression and cognitive decline and shorter hospital stays. In more concrete terms, social participation is defined as a person's involvement in activities that provide interaction with others in the society or the community and expresses interpersonal interactions outside the home (Ang, 2018).

Moreover, 'Active Theory' gives dignity to elderly people through knowledge and the power to act (Meda et al. 2019). In this perspective, the active potential of seniors is not measured purely by economic and working productivity, because they have by now left the labour market. The potential of seniors can be expressed in terms of concrete assistance to the family (care), or through engagement in voluntary work or other activities, such as sports, cultural consumption, involvement in social networks and so on. Understanding this fact, promotion of older peoples' participation among themselves and outside through the formations of older peoples' associations (OPAs) or groups are widely practiced now (HAI, 2014).

To sum up, there appeared a consensus among the scholars that social participation is most valuable phenomenon in old age as it is directly linked with better health and overall satisfaction in the life. Therefore paying attention to social participation is of particular importance of any programme design to older people.

3. Methodology

This is a cross sectional study conducted in ward number 2 of Suryabinayak Municipality. A mix methods research design was applied along with participatory approaches engaging older people and NRCS volunteers. The methodology and tools were adapted from the World Health Organisation (WHO) (SAGE manual, 2006) and Age friendly cities project methodology

(2007), which emphasised both the quantitative tools (survey questionnaire) and qualitative tools (focus group discussion, in-depth interviews).

A proportionate sample of n=258 was calculated from age 60 years and above population in ward number 2 for the quantitative study. Proxy were used for those older people could not communicate or explain in the interview by themselves.

For the qualitative data collection eleven focus group discussions (six FGD for over 60 years old; five FGDs for under 60 years old) were conducted to obtain in-depth information on old persons' social participation. NRCS' volunteers, young and from the local area, after receiving a three-day training on data collection were mobilised to collect both the quantitative and qualitative data. Open Data tool Kit (ODK) platform - Kobo Collect -accessing through smart phones was used to collect quantitative data. Data collected at ODK platform was exported to excel, cleaned and analysed by producing some descriptive data such as frequency distributions, mean, and percentages.

4. Type of Data Collected for Social Participation

Apart from the socio-economic profile of the respondents (age, sex, education, living in joint or nuclear family, living single or with other members), other variables of measurements included; pension and its use, how often meets friends and spend time, physical activity, member of any club or social organisation and type of organisation, participation in community activities, feeling in and around the community, and overall satisfaction in life.

5. Findings and Discussion

Almost all the respondents (95.7%) were direct respondents who took part in the survey interview. Only 4.3% old people

took part in the interview through an escort (proxy). There were more women respondents (F 55.47%, M 44.53%) than men. In age grouping also there were more women respondents in the two age brackets (80 – 89 and 90 – 100). More males have formal education than females.

Majority (50%) were currently married while 37% were widowed (M 9.8%, F 27%). 80% of respondents were living in joint family.

Majority (n=148: 58%: M 62; F 86) were receiving one or other types pension (social pension, retirement pension or other).

Table 1: Type of pension received

Type of pension	1. Male		2. Female		Total (N=148)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. Old age allowance	33	22%	52	35%	85	57%
2. Single women allowances		0%	17	11%	17	11%
4. Govt. pension	28	19%	17	11%	45	30%
97. Other (Upadan/gratuity)	1	1%		0%	1	1%
Grand Total	62	42%	86	58%	148	100%

Majority (77%) used their pension for paying for their own health related expenses and for personal use. Over 35% used their pension to support their family and household expenses. Some (4%) of the respondents also contributed to religious, social/charity work.

5.3 Physical Activities and Meeting Friends

For emotional or psycho social wellbeing, sharing the feelings and interacting with

each other is important. Majority are quite active and meeting friends very regularly, but over 20% of the respondents reported none, which means they do not meet their friends and exchange ideas and emotions regularly. But interestingly, data indicated that those who were staying in joint family tend to be less active in meeting friends outside. Generally, women appeared to be less active than male in meeting friends.

Table 2: How often do you meet friends and spend time

	1. Male		2. Female		Total (N=148)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. Every day	65	25.3%	50	19.5%	115	44.9%
2. 1-3 times a week	16	6.2%	22	8.5%	38	14.8%
3. Every months	1	0.3%	2	0.7%	3	1.1%
4. Occasionally	18	7.0%	29	11.3%	47	18.3%
5. None	14	5.4%	39	15.2%	53	20.7%
Grand Total	114	44.5%	142	55.4%	256	100.0%

5.2 Engaging in Social/community Activities

Engaging in social/community activities and developing a sense of belonging are crucial factors for psychosocial health. This process helps reduce the feeling

of loneliness Levasseur et al. (2019). Among the respondents only 25% (N=65) reported being engaged in some sort of social/community activities either being a member of political party or other local institutions.

Table 3: Engage in community/social activities

Responses (multiple)	Male		Female		Total		% of Total cases
	N	%	N	%	N	%	n=65
1. Local club/group (CBO)	6	13.3%	5	17.8%	11	15.0%	16.9%
2. Tola Sudhar Samitee (committee)	7	15.5%	0	0.0%	7	9.5%	10.7%
3. NGO Committee	3	6.6%	1	3.5%	4	5.4%	6.7%
4. Village/Guthi/Temple committee	25	55.5%	22	78.5%	47	64.3%	72.3%
5. School committee	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
6. Political party	4	8.8%	0	0.0%	4	5.4%	6.7%
Total	45	100%	28	100%	73	100%	112.3%

Community participation in the study area was loosely understood as participating in social/family or religious functions, participating in community activities like attending a meeting, organising some common activities, engaging with formal organisations like club or NGO and so on. One of the important elements of social engagement and psychological wellbeing is

regularity of meeting friends and spending time together. The frequency and regularity of such activities declined rapidly by age. Overall pattern of such community or social participation was generally poor. Further research is necessary to fully understand the dynamic around it and the reasons of such poor participation.

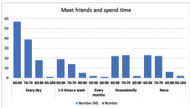


Figure 1: How often do you participate in community activities/events?

FGD participants expressed varied experiences regarding inclusion of older people and social/community participation. While the majority were engaged in social/family events (wedding, religious functions), very few expressed not much interested to attend such functions. Some felt that 'younger generations' do not engage older people in social functions. Almost all expressed lack of community facility such as park or library where they could spend time and meet friends.

"There is no any facility in the community for the old age people" (62 years old female, 70 years old male: FGD participants)

"It would have been easy to spend time, had there been park or library in the ward (community)" (80 years old male: FGD participant)

Most participants expressed that they were not involved in community meetings, ward meetings, clubs or similar events. A day centre for old age people was functional (near temple) where older people spend their time together, listen to teachings of Shree Bhagwat Gita, and also get tea/snacks. But to some this is not easily accessible because of distance. Most of them, however, said that they often engage in religious events.

"No one informs us about the programme, this is the first time I have attended a meeting. Redcross has big building, but

nothing from it (for older people)" (61 years old male: FGD participant).

"... we were a member of DidiBahini Samuha, a group started informally by a group of women at their community. They organized yearly picnic from that group, women in the group listened to her (to each other) carefully and expressed their thoughts with an open heart" (69 and 77 years old females: FGD participants)

While the majority of the younger participants during the FGD for under 60 years of age echoed views of older people on inclusion, few had critical observations regarding inclusion particularly in decision making.

"If the suggestions have nothing bad in it, we follow them. They are rarely wrong in terms of decision making" (55 years old male: FGD participants)

"All decision of older people cannot be accepted, there decision taking ability is deteriorated" (42 years old male: FGD participants)

Engaging and interacting with wider community is also influenced by the community perceptions, socio-cultural norms, reactions and how friendly they were towards older people. When asked to older people how they feel in and around the community towards old age people, the overall response was very affirmative. Only less than 4% of the respondents said that they did not feel respected or supportive (Table 4)

Table 4: Feeling in and around the community towards senior citizens?

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Respected	73	28.5%	88	34.3%	161	62.8%
2. Speaking politely	32	12.5%	38	14.8%	70	27.3%
3. Responsiveness to the need of senior citizen	7	2.7%	8	3.1%	15	5.8%
4. Do not feel respected	2	0.7%	5	1.9%	7	2.7%
5. Do not feel supportive		0.0%	3	1.1%	3	1.1%
Grand Total	114	44.5%	142	55.4%	256	100.0%

FGD participants of under 60 years old also expressed their generally positive attitude and views towards older people. Most participants acknowledged and appreciated the knowledge and wisdom of older people which could be good resource to the community.

"We enjoy talking with elderly people" (38 years old male: FGD participants)

Almost all elderly of Balkot area who participated in the FGD felt that they are respected and listened to by everyone.

"We speak with respect, they (other people) also speak with respect. They are very polite, I have not experienced any disrespect so far in my life (80 years and 78 years old male). They greet and show respect" (82 years old female: FGD participant)

Some participants had critical views,

"I don't like when old people who do not want to stay active even when they are physically able" (43 years old male: FGD participant).

"It is difficult to handle old people, they often grumble on everything. They could be looked after better if they behave little

more decently" (46 years old male: FGD participant)

There were mixed responses about the surrounding community and environment from older people in the FGD. Although most felt safe while walking in the morning or evening and no fear of mugging, but often felt unsafe and frightened by fast driving motorbikes and cars.

"Wish they could drive slow and care for walking persons" (78 years old male: FGD participant)

"It is frightening while crossing the road because of fast racing car (and bikes)" (70 years old male: FGD participant)

5.3 Overall Satisfaction in Life

Majority of the older people in the study area were generally happy and satisfied. There were a small number of people who were not satisfied with the life they live. Qualitative data indicated that older men and women who were in financial hardships were unhappy. Similarly, they were unhappy if no one to look after them, daughter/son not living with and not providing support to parents/grandparents, etc.

Table 5: How satisfied are you with your overall life?

	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. Very satisfied	20	7.8%	12	4.6%	32	12.5%
2. Satisfied	80	31.2%	88	34.3%	168	65.6%
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10	3.9%	36	14.0%	46	17.9%
4. Dissatisfied	3	1.1%	5	1.9%	8	3.1%
5. Very dissatisfied	1	0.3%	1	0.3%	2	0.7%
Grand Total	114	44.5%	142	55.4%	256	100%

6. Conclusion

Data suggested that the majority were living in joint family which means despite

some usual dissatisfaction/annoyance while staying in a joint family, they were happy

and have someone who provide basic care (if required) and some company to engage with. But this situation may change as social and family structures are changing more rapidly than before.

This area (ward number 2) is rapidly urbanising with an influx of people from different parts of the country, therefore the community is diverse with different socio-economic status. It might take longer for older people from different areas, background and cultural setting to easily mix up with each other and participate more regularly in common events.

As for the daily routine is concerned, most have 'normal' routine fixed like engaging in household activities, watching TV, using social media, go out and meet friends in tea shops and so on. Only small percentage (12%) of older people in this area were engaged in some sorts of income earning activities.

If the social participation in ward no 2 is considered from the perspective of person's involvement in activities that allows interaction with others within the family and close relatives and expresses interpersonal interactions, ward no 2 provides an interesting insights.

The most important interaction the older persons' with other within the family and close relatives was through sharing their pension (any pension) with household. This also reflects the socio cultural characteristics of Nepalese society where elder person is considered to be head of household or a guardian for the family. Social pension, in other words, financial security is probably one of the best means for older people to get engaged intimately with family (by paying for food, children's school fees and other household expenses) and outside (through participating in religious and other activities i.e. contributing in social welfare activities) (NEPAN 2010).

But when social participation is viewed from the perspective of interaction outside the home, the picture is different. For majority the most common interaction outside home was walking around in the vicinity, attending social and religious events, meeting with friends and joining local club, NGOs, village committee, and political party. But generally, the phenomenon of interacting outside the house appeared limited. Earlier evidence however suggested that there are much wider level of older people participation in social affairs ranging from providing traditional medicine to the society to playing a role of mediator in case of local conflict (NEPAN 2002). Larger proportion of older people had limited (none or occasional) interaction with friends. Only a small number of people were member of any club or NGOs or political party. More research are needed to further expand the understanding on social participation older people.

In conclusion, while the older people were generally satisfied with their life and felt respected in and around the community they live, the phenomenon, space and opportunity (i.e. voluntary work, member in club/NGOs), the physical environment (i.e. open space, walking areas) and attitude of younger people offer limited scope for social participation of older people.

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Declaration: *Other than author (1), rest are staff members of Redcross family. The study was financed by Swiss Redcross through Nepal Redcross Society. Author (1) do not have any conflict of interest.*

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Psychological Tools for Humanitarian Aid Workers in Post-Catastrophe Programmes: Raising the Bar for Sustainable Recovery

EARL JAMES GOODYEAR, PhD

Abstract

Recent global events, specifically the invasion of the Ukraine by Russia and other acts of terrorism, have driven this desk review to identify critical tools for the establishment of frameworks to institute and establish mental health and psychosocial support at the humanitarian organizational level. What now is required is that agencies accept the fact that present day humanitarian operations have become inherently more dangerous. Thus, the possibility of developing a psychological or physical problem because of the nature of humanitarian aid activities has increased along with the rise in levels of disease, injury, kidnapping, and assault. As a result, expressions of traumatic stress have become the norm rather than an exception.

Whether the event that significantly alters the lives and livelihoods of an individual, family, a community, or a country, be it human-induced (violence, an economic downturn or loss of personal rights) or natural events (climatic disasters like floods, cyclones, droughts, earthquakes etc.), knowledge of the elements to address the myriad of psychological nuances that accompany human dysfunctional episodes is critical. Humanitarian aid workers must be equipped with an understanding of the mechanisms to redress the consequences of human suffering while engaging in their sustainable recovery programs. And, ensuring that mechanisms are in place for front-line and support staff, both national and international, to support physical and mental health priorities.

The central focus of this document is to better prepare individuals and institutions engaged in humanitarian activities to engage in greater forethought to the adverse psychological and long-term impact accompanying humanitarian aid workers on the front line of a crisis event.

Keywords: Humanitarian and Trauma Therapy, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

1. Introduction

There are approximately 450,000 professional aid workers throughout the world at any one time, many of whom move from one humanitarian emergency to another. These cycles are a form of self-medication; many aid workers find it comfortable and reassuring to be with others who share similar experiences. They have a familiar refrain, "You get addicted to this work, (because it is) hard to settle back into normal life".

A large part of being human is to recognize that we all have both good days and bad days. We should know that depression is a widespread mental illness that affects an estimated 5 percent of adults worldwide - rooted in everything from societal stressors to chemical imbalances to genetically inherited traits. On a sliding scale of nature versus nurture, depression will manifest itself from a variety of sources. No matter the cause, it is essential to find ways to cope with and combat depression. And for those suffering from stress-related issues, it is critical to know that they need not face their issues solely by themselves. This is where words of assurance can remind us of others that struggled and experienced similar pain and found a better future.

Khalil Gibran, the author of *The Prophet* said, "Sadness is but a wall between two gardens". Gibran is posing that we should be glad for every experience, even if it seems full of pain, because life has a pattern and a purpose. And what seems to us now as "good" or "bad" will be appreciated without judgement as good for our souls.

The tragic loss of life that occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001 was one outcome of horrendous events that became etched into the memories of countless millions of people around

the world. While most Americans were resilient in the face of this tragedy, some experienced depression, grief, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Thus, the events of that day were both a challenge and a call to action for all those responsible for the organization and provision of mental health services. The feelings of loss of our security and well-being - arguably the most crucial abstract ingredients for leading a happy, healthy life - dramatically affected the citizens of the United States. Looking to the future, an understanding of behavioral health consequences delivered by subsequent disasters may help in lessening the shock and impact expected.

2. Crisis Situations - Settling for Humanitarian Trauma

Humanitarian aid workers are an overlooked population within the structure of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) research and assistance. This negligence is an industry-wide failure to address aid workers' psychological health issues. The suspected numbers of death by suicide, diagnosed PTSD, depression, anxiety disorders, hazardous alcohol and drug consumption, emotional exhaustion, and other stress-related problems are impossible to quantify but are considered endemic.

Tools for establishing organizational frameworks for mental health and psychosocial support are readily available. However, the capacity to implement this assistance requires the creation and practice of an open and non-judgmental culture, based on the realistic acceptance that aid work has become inherently dangerous. The possibility of developing a psychological problem because of aid work has increased along with the rise in levels of disease, injury, kidnapping, and assault. As a result, expressions of traumatic stress have become the norm rather than an exception. This commentary outlines the

essential steps and components necessary to meet these requirements.²

Consider your role in assigning a team of aid workers to respond to a rural community on an isolated isle in the Philippines struck by a catastrophic cyclone. Or, responding to the needs of a civilian population caught in a devastating, ongoing conflict of war between a super-power and a smaller nation struggling to retain its democratic authority for self-government and alignment with Western nations. Or, addressing the survivors and victims of an attack at a religious place of worship by another conflicting sect. Not only must a leader of a response to humanitarian crises have a pre-subscribed response plan in hand for addressing the affected population, but also grasp the emotional capacity and fortitude to handle the short-term and long-term effect of humanitarian trauma.

A significant problem in responding to the psychological needs of aid workers is quantifying the problem³. Many humanitarian relief and development agencies working in third-world nations often rely on the services of experienced staff serving in other global assignments to gear up for post-crisis episodes. While usually adept at performing response-related logistical tasks, they may be ill informed on the cultural and socio-economic aspects of the affected population. Leading a team composed of new personalities can add to the escalation of tension affecting the entire relief and recovery intervention.

Post-disaster assessments have shown that it is possible to measure safety and security incidents and statistics in undertaking a post-mortem of a relief intervention.

Regrettably, assessments, usually short-term in nature, do not gather indicators of diagnosed PTSD, suicide, emotional exhaustion, depression, anxiety disorders, hazardous alcohol and drug consumption, and other stress-related problems. In many instances, aid staff are reticent to seek help because of the potential negative impact on their career and carrying a stigma of weakness in meeting the objectives during a crisis episode. As such, organizations engaging in crisis management, in addition to their development programmes, must adopt specific systems to support national and international staff mental health needs.

The following components are considered essential to creating a trusted framework for organizational psychosocial programs from the staff members' perspective:

- Affirm that the psychological well-being of every staff member is a primary concern;
- Include staff members from all corporate hierarchy levels in designing a support system, which builds a culture of staff well-being;
- Define clear lines of authority and procedures for providing psychological assistance;
- Determine and publish who are eligible to receive mental health support, such as permanent staff, volunteers, consultants, national staff, and part-time employees;
- Design and implement administrative procedures to safeguard confidentiality;
- Incorporate meaningful practices created to reduce and mitigate the causes of stress;

2. Macpherson RS, Burke FM Jr. Humanitarian aid workers: the forgotten first responders. *Prehosp Disaster Med.* 2021;36(1):88–94.

3. Research Suggests Mental Health Crisis Among Aid Workers. *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/nov/23/guardian-research-suggests-mental-health-crisis-among-aid-workers>.

- Institute or revitalize a grievance redress mechanism; and
- Identify vulnerable groups based on the complexity of their operating environment and the number of deployments.

While some humanitarian organizations recognize and address staff mental health problems, there remain significant barriers to implementing general mental health support services. Presently, assistance is mostly insufficient, stigma in organizations is still significant, and donor funding for staff wellness is inadequate, especially for national staff.

3. What is Psychological First Aid?

According to Sphere (2011)⁴ and IASC (2007)⁵, psychological first aid (PFA) describes a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support. PFA involves the following themes:

- Providing practical care and support, which does not intrude;
- Assessing needs and concerns;
- Helping people to address basic needs (for example, food and water, information);
- Listening to people, but not pressuring them to talk;
- Comforting people and helping them to feel calm; and
- Helping people connect to information, services and social supports; protecting people from further harm.

WHO (2010)⁶ and Sphere (2011) describe psychological debriefing as promoting

ventilation by asking a person to briefly but systematically recount their perceptions, thoughts, and emotional reactions during a recent stressful event. This intervention is not always recommended. This is distinct from routine operational debriefing of aid workers used by some organizations at the end of a mission or work task.

Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers

PFA is an alternative to “psychological debriefing” which has been found to be ineffective. In contrast, PFA involves factors that seem to be most helpful to people’s long-term recovery (according to various studies and the consensus of many crisis helpers). These include:

- Having access to social, physical, and emotional support;
- Feeling able to help themselves, as individuals and communities; and
- Feeling safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful.

Although people may need access to help and support for a long time after an event, PFA is aimed at helping people who have been very recently affected by a crisis event. You can provide PFA when you first have contact with very distressed people. This is usually during or immediately after an event. However, it may sometimes be days or weeks after, depending on how long the event lasted and how severe it was.

People who need more immediate advanced support include:

- People with serious, life-threatening injuries who need emergency medical care;

4. The Sphere Project Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, Third Edition, 2011. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, 2007.

5. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, 2007.

6. WHO 2010, The World Health Report. 2010.

- People who are so upset that they cannot care for themselves or their children;
- People who may hurt themselves; and
- People who may hurt others.

4. Where Is Psychological First Aid Provided?

You can offer PFA wherever it is safe enough for you to do so. This is often in community settings, such as at the scene of an accident, or places where distressed people are served, such as health centers, shelters or camps, schools and distribution sites for food or other types of help. Ideally, try to provide PFA where you can have some privacy to talk with the person. For people who have been exposed to certain types of crisis events, such as sexual violence, privacy is essential for confidentiality and to respect the person's dignity.

PFA is part of a broader response to large humanitarian emergencies (IASC, 2007). When hundreds or thousands of people

are affected, different types of emergency response measures take place, such as search-and-rescue operations, emergency health care, shelter, food distribution, and family tracing and child protection activities. Often it is challenging for aid workers and volunteers to know exactly what services are available where. This is true during mass disasters and in places which do not already have a functioning infrastructure for health and other services.

Be aware of what services and supports are available so you can share information with people you are helping and tell them how to access practical help. It is not necessary to have a "psychosocial" background to offer PFA. If you are engaged in a crisis, conventional wisdom suggests working in concert with an organization or community group. If you act on your own, you may put yourself at risk, it may have a negative effect on coordination efforts, and you are unlikely to be able to link affected people with the resources and support they need.

5. When Terrible Things Happen - What You May Experience⁷

5.1. Immediate Reactions:

There are a wide variety of positive and negative reactions that survivors can experience during and immediately after a disaster. These include:

Domain	Negative Responses	Positive Responses
Cognitive	Confusion, disorientation, worry, intrusive thoughts and images, self-blame	Determination and resolve, sharper perception, courage, optimism, faith
Emotional	Shock, sorrow, grief, sadness, fear, anger, numb, irritability, guilt, and shame	Feeling involved, challenged, mobilized
Social	Extreme withdrawal, interpersonal conflict	Social connectedness, altruistic helping behaviors
Psychological	Fatigue, headache, muscle tension, stomachache, increased heart rate, exaggerated startle response, difficulties sleeping	Alertness, readiness to respond, increased energy

7. Yasinski, Emma. "Why Psychedelic Drugs May Become a Key Treatment for PTSD and Depression". Smithsonian Magazine. smithsonianmag.com: 05-03-2023

5.2 Common Negative Reactions That May Continue Include:

- Intrusive reactions;
- Distressing thoughts or images of the event while awake or dreaming;
- Upsetting emotional or physical reactions to reminders of the experience; and
- Feeling like the experience is happening all over again ("flashback").

5.3 Avoidance and Withdrawal Reactions:

- Avoid talking, thinking, and having feelings about the traumatic event;
- Avoid reminders of the event (places and people connected to what happened);
- Restricted emotions; feeling numb;
- Feelings of detachment and estrangement from others; social withdrawal; and
- Loss of interest in usually pleasurable activities.

5.4 Physical Arousal Reactions:

- Constantly being "on the lookout" for danger, startling easily, or being jumpy;
- Irritability or outbursts of anger, feeling "on edge"; and
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep, problems concentrating or paying attention.

5.5 Reactions to Trauma and Loss Reminders:

- Reactions to places, people, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that are reminders of the disaster;
- Reminders can bring on distressing mental images, thoughts, and emotional/physical reactions; and
- Common examples include sudden loud noises, sirens, locations where the

disaster occurred, seeing people with disabilities, funerals, anniversaries of the disaster, and television/radio news about the disaster.

5.6 Positive Changes in Priorities, Worldview, and Expectations:

- Enhanced appreciation that family and friends are precious and important;
- Meeting the challenge of addressing difficulties (by taking positive action steps, changing the focus of thoughts, using humor, acceptance);
- Shifting expectations about what to expect from day to day and about what is considered a "good day";
- Shifting priorities to focus more on quality time with family or friends; and
- Increased commitment to self, family, friends, and spiritual/religious faith.

6. Responsibility for Staff Wellbeing

Nearly a decade ago, the Security Management Initiative (SMI; Switzerland) produced a document entitled, "Can you get sued? Legal liability of international humanitarian aid organizations towards their staff." It reviewed the existing laws in four European countries and America demonstrating that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are accountable for the same legal standards as any other group. The paper highlighted that NGOs' responsibilities for staff well-being are a legal and mandatory requirement. Around the same time, a series of lawsuits against aid agencies commenced on behalf of aid workers or the families of aid workers who were kidnaped, assaulted, injured, died, or suffered other violations of their person while working as humanitarians.

In 2015, a Norwegian court found the Norwegian Refugee Council (Oslo, Norway) liable for compensation and to have acted

with gross negligence in the case of Steven Dennis following his kidnapping in Kenya. Because it was the first case of its kind to reach a court ruling, it is considered a watershed moment in which organizations finally recognized they were responsible for staff well-being, including issues of psychological stress and illness suffered while providing humanitarian service.

However, operational stresses associated with delivering humanitarian aid can be dramatic and the resulting problems involving staff mental health are seldom clear cut. Their work's physical consequences can be dangerous, but the constant ethical and moral quandaries that confront them are often cumulative. No matter how hard humanitarian workers try to handle it, constant exposure to death, starvation, and mayhem affect their belief in justice and human rights. Every personal and professional value they hold is under assault.

A significant problem in responding to the psychological needs of aid workers is quantifying the problem. While safety and security incidents and statistics can be measured, definitive data regarding deaths by suicide, diagnosed PTSD, depression, anxiety disorders, hazardous alcohol and drug consumption, emotional exhaustion, and other stress-related problems are difficult to gather. Aid workers still fear seeking help because of the stigma associated with mental illness or substance abuse and the potential negative impact on their career. Also, defining and implementing specific systems to support national and international staff mental health needs remain under-developed and lack attention and resources.

7. Creating a Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

To establish an industry standard, the Antares Foundations and the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; Atlanta, Georgia USA) formed a partnership with NGOs to develop a consensus approach to mitigate stress in aid workers: "The resulting *Guidelines for Good Practice: Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers* was published in 2004 and revised in 2012." The guidelines were developed to:

- Ensure the planning for psychological assistance includes the means to aid national staff;
- Provide all staff with a pre-deployment brief, including an overview of the physical and health dangers they may experience;
- Confirm ways to deliver on-site mental health assistance to staff experiencing stress in the field or appropriate and accessible tele-mental health services;
- Ensure aid workers receive a post-deployment brief, which includes a detailed discussion of the mental health support available and how to obtain it; and
- Ensure line managers have additional assistance, as appropriate, to manage stressful and complex situations.

For several years Antares has been collaborating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to coordinate a series of studies addressing issues of stress amongst humanitarian workers. This has involved several researchers from institutions based in Europe, north America and the rest of the world. The major focus of the group has been a longitudinal study of expatriate humanitarian workers, combined with 4 national staff surveys in Uganda, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, and Jordan.

Humanitarian workers are at significant risk for mental health problems, both in the field and after returning home. The good news is that there are steps that they and their employers can take to mitigate this risk.

The team surveyed 212 international humanitarian workers across 19 NGOs. Prior to deployment, 3.8% reported symptoms of anxiety and 10.4%, symptoms of depression, broadly in line with prevalence of these disorders in the general population. Post-deployment, these rates jumped to 11.8% and 19.5%, respectively. Three to six months later, while there was some improvement in rates of anxiety—they fell to 7.8%—rates of depression were even higher at 20.1%.

Rather than experiencing dangerous or threatening situations, it was continual exposure to a challenging work environment that increased risk for depression. Weak social support and a history of mental illness also raised risks. On the plus side, aid workers who felt highly motivated and autonomous reported less burnout and higher levels of life satisfaction, respectively.

The paper outlines several recommendations for NGOs:

- Screen candidates for a history of mental illness, alert them to the risks associated with humanitarian work, and provide psychological support during and after deployment
- Provide a supportive work environment, manageable workload, and recognition; and
- Encourage and facilitate social support and peer networks.

The wellbeing of humanitarian workers can be overshadowed by the needs of the populations they serve. “It has

been challenging to get mental health care for workers onto the agendas of agencies employing them—and even onto the radar of workers themselves,” says Alastair Ager, one of the research team. “Depression, anxiety and burnout are too often taken as an appropriate response to the experience of widespread global injustice. We want them to know that the work they are doing is valuable and necessary and the situations difficult, but this doesn’t mean they need to suffer⁸.” The study, he suggests, provides “the first robust research evidence to establish the case that good staff care can make a real difference.”⁹

8. Implementation Difficulties

Humanitarian aid workers are an overlooked population within the structure of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) research and assistance. This negligence is an industry-wide failure to address aid workers’ psychological health issues. The suspected numbers of death by suicide, diagnosed PTSD, depression, anxiety disorders, hazardous alcohol and drug consumption, emotional exhaustion, and other stress-related problems are impossible to quantify but are considered endemic.

However, even when adequate structures are in place to assist staff, many aid workers are reluctant to seek help from their organization, often due to stereotypes and biases that result from a diagnosis of psychological illness. Additionally, an aid worker may face a vicious cycle. The intensity, stress, and exposure to violence

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8. Cardoso, B.L., Crawford, C.G., Eriksson, C., Zhu, J., Sabin, M., Ager, A., Foy, D., Snider, L., Scholtz, W., Kaiser, R., Off, M., Rijnen, B. & Simon, W. “Psychological Distress, Depression, Anxiety, and Burnout among International Humanitarian Aid Workers: A Longitudinal Study” *Public Library of Science One*, September 2012, 7(9).
 9. Eriksson, C. B., Lopes Cardoso, B., Foy, D., Sabin, M., Ager, A., Snider, L., Scholtz, W.F., Kaiser, R., Off, M., Rijnen, B., Gotway-Crawford, C., Zhu, J. & Simon, W. “Pre-deployment Mental Health and Trauma Exposure of Expatriate Humanitarian Aid Workers Risk and Resilience Factors”. *Traumatology*, 19(1), 41-48.

may manifest as survivor's guilt or survivor's syndrome. Often, there is an assumption that those who survive the trauma and intensity a complex humanitarian response considers themselves lucky or fortunate. However, they feel guilty for leaving their colleagues and the people they were assisting behind, analogous to how a wounded Marine feels about abandoning their unit during a conflict. The aid worker returns to a world of relative safety, with adequate food and shelter, but cannot forget the devastations of war, natural disaster, or famine.

Even within a robust organizational culture of support and resilience, aid workers may fear to acknowledge that the pressures associated with their work have caused an illness or coping difficulty. They fear the loss of their work. Beyond financial considerations, aid work tends to be a "calling." A mental illness may rob them of the opportunities that define their life and engagement in a profession they love. Thus, it is incumbent that line management is trained to recognize acute and chronic stress symptoms and have the confidence and support to intervene when necessary.

9. The Dilemma of National Staff

Discussions regarding the psychological issues of aid workers include references to national staff. However, they are often generalized because of cultural and legal differences, and the employment of national staff is decentralized within the structure of the host nation. This is problematic because humanitarian organizations currently employ far more national staff than expatriates and are thus at higher risk of violence. According to The Aid Worker Security Database (Humanitarian Outcomes; London, United Kingdom):

National aid workers continue to endure most of the violence in terms

of absolute numbers. The most recent data show that while attack rates have risen for nationals and internationals, the rate increase has been steeper for national staff than for their international counterparts. Furthermore, although national and international staff now have the same overall attack rates, the fatality rates for nationals are higher than for internationals—and the gap has widened considerably in recent years.

Although the initiatives to hire more national aid workers is commendable, it is not morally or ethically responsible for employing increasing numbers of local staff and not providing the same health and well-being benefits as enjoyed by expatriate counterparts. The Duty of Care Paper reports that approximately 50% of international aid organizations "have systems that are not unified, not coherently implemented or not functioning properly, or have no existing unified system when it comes to national staff [mental] and physical health insurance."

According to Collins Dictionary, duty of care is "the legal obligation to safeguard others from harm while they are in your care, using your services, or exposed to your activities." The concept is related to other legal terms such as "ordinary care" or "reasonable care," which essentially mean "what is expected of most people in most cases."

10. Psychedelic Drugs: A Key Treatment for PTSD and Depression

Patients diagnosed with PTSD today, more than 70 years after initial observations, are most likely to be given a cocktail prescription combination of therapy and anti-depressant drugs. The results are mixed with some patients seeing a significant difference in their quality of life while in others will continue without relief from

nightmares, flashbacks, severe guilt, and anxiety.¹⁰ According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, about 6 percent of Americans will be diagnosed with PTSD at some point in their lives, whether they served in the military or not. While PTSD is often associated with traumas from war, it can also refer to symptoms after other traumatic experiences such as being involved in a serious accident, witnessing a death or injury or being the victim of traumatic assault.

Now, certain psychedelic drugs like LSD and psilocybin (an active ingredient in magic mushrooms) that have been banned in the United States are under controlled studies to determine if their limited usage combined with therapy may help patients with PTSD or other mental illnesses. Results have been promising enough for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to designate both treatments as breakthrough therapies - a priority status given to promising drugs designed for an unmet need.

Many patients prescribed anti-depressants experience a range of side effects from upset stomach to insomnia. One of the reasons that psychedelic therapies are so appealing is that they're thought to work with only a few doses - limiting the risk of side effects. Currently, over 200 clinical trials are registered on clinicaltrials.gov to test the effects of psilocybin on conditions like PTSD. Before this medication is available for wider usage, the FDA must recognize the safety and efficacy of this form of treatment.

11. What Lies Ahead ...

The answers to proper psychological support and care for humanitarians require solutions forthcoming from humanitarian staff members and their institutions. At

its core is the creation and practice of an open and non-judgmental culture, based on the realistic acceptance that aid work has become inherently dangerous. The possibility of a mental health problem associated with this work is as real as the increasing possibility of disease, injury, kidnapping, and assault. As a result, forms of traumatic stress have become the norm, not an exception.

Let us remember one of the most devastating cyclones to form in the Indian Ocean made landfall across Bangladesh 30 years ago. The Bangladesh Cyclone of 1991 was classified as a super cyclone that packed deadly winds, powerful storm surge and massive flooding.

The storm developed over the southern region of the Bay of Bengal as a region of thunderstorms that had recently banded together. Thanks to warm, moist air and lack of wind shear, this system quickly organized into a Tropical Cyclone by April 24, 1991. From here, the storm increased in strength, becoming classified as a Severe Cyclonic Storm (equivalent to a Tropical Storm in the U.S., with winds up to 73 mph) by the India Meteorological Department on April 25.

The storm went into overdrive as wind shear decreased further, strengthening to a Super Cyclonic Storm (equivalent to a Category 5 Hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale) with sustained winds of 150 mph by April 29. As the storm traverse the warm waters, a subtropical ridge sunk southward, steering the storm northeastward.

This powerful cyclone impacted the city of Chittagong, Bangladesh, just after midnight on April 29, making it even harder to detect tornadoes and flying debris associated with

10. Yasinski, Emma. "Why Psychedelic Drugs May Become a Key Treatment for PTSD and Depression". *Smithsonian Magazine*: [smithsonianmag.com](https://www.smithsonianmag.com): 05-03-2022

the storm. The hilly nature of the city helped to weaken this behemoth of a storm, but damaging scars were left in the storm's midst before it dissipated on April 30.

Damages stemmed from massive storm surge that struck during high tide. At its peak, the surge piled up to 20 feet high on top of 18 feet of higher-than-normal tide waters. The storm surge coupled with winds more than 140 mph led to the deaths of 138,000 people with damages upwards of \$1.7 billion U.S. in 1991 (equivalent to more than \$3 billion in 2021). In Chittagong, livestock was decimated and up to 90% of homes were destroyed. This cyclone was so devastating that it is known as the fifth deadliest storm cyclone on record. In the aftermath, the U.S. and many other countries provided disaster relief in the wake of this detrimental storm.¹¹

The author, working in Bangladesh for a humanitarian agency at the time of this major catastrophe, was greatly affected by the extent of loss of lives and livelihoods in a matter of hours. This event, replayed to hundreds of disaster preparedness trainees in countries around the vulnerable world, served as a vivid reminder of both man's vulnerability to nature as well as our ability to recover and rebuild from among the ashes.

Another case in point is actions to follow the Russian invasion and the war in Ukraine. If the destruction of so much of Ukraine's infrastructure is put into a "disaster" framework, then the natural disaster response and disaster recovery offer a plethora of lessons. And this invasion—with its increasingly indiscriminate targeting of physical, natural, and human infrastructure—has created a real disaster. It is a man-made disaster relating to conflict, not a natural

one relating to weather or earthquakes, but some of the lessons hold. History will record this conflict and shall attest to those responsible for crimes against humanity.

A global challenge ahead is creating mechanisms for the several million or more refugees so they can return home. Conflict-related forced displacement tends to be longer term than natural disaster-related displacement, which is often short-term in nature. Ukraine will face its own challenges, including the wholesale destruction of homes, schools, medical facilities, and places of work.

Caring for those suffering from the physical and mental trauma caused by the Russian invasion are not only the Ukrainian people themselves but also humanitarian aid staff. Post-traumatic stress is a terrible outcome of war, and the challenge of making the population feel safe and secure, and the caregivers able to cope with firsthand witness of horrific war crimes is a daunting, but not insurmountable task.

Perseverance is a word I have used during my career in international development and disaster risk management. Considering that falling to obstacles as not a viable option has given me a mindset that challenges can be seen as opportunities, part of a new learning curve. Once you begin to judge both obstacles and opportunities as chances to expand your portfolio of coping skills, you have mastered perseverance.

As Winston Churchill said,

Success is not final, failure is not fatal.

It is the courage to continue that counts.

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Understanding Participation in Social Audit Process of a Community School: A Case Study

PRANAV BHATTARAI

Abstract

This article explores overlaying research questions of how contextual factors and power dynamics influence stakeholders' experiences of participation in social audit process. It is field-based research for a single unit of analysis of a case of a community school. Field information was collected using multiple sources such as discussion and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, available research documents and review of empirical studies. The selection of a community school in Kathmandu was purposive because the school has a history of conducting social audit over the years. School's participatory culture of organizing social audit regularly has been an enabler for participation of stakeholders. Formation of social audit committee and conduct of social audit report sharing program every year has created positive impact on the stakeholders. Knowledge and resource asymmetry among stakeholders played the role of barrier for some participants especially students and parents while other group of stakeholders especially teachers and those with good education and better socio-economic background were empowered to participate actively in the process. To sum up, four layers of influence created by institutional participatory culture, design process of social audit, knowledge and resource asymmetry among stakeholders have positively or negatively influenced the participation process.

Keywords: Social Audit, Participation, Power Dynamics, Knowledge.

1. Introduction

Social Audit is a process in which, details of resource, both financial and non-financial, used by public agencies for development initiatives are shared with the people, often through a public platform (Dwivedi & Singh, 2010). Social audit has been understood and practiced as a platform where citizens can

assess the use of resources and quality of public services being delivered by a public entity to ensure accountability, transparency and effectiveness in resource management and public service delivery. Social audit has been practiced globally as a tool for a systemic evaluation of an institution or

a public service agency in participation of concerned beneficiaries. Social audit is intended to analyze every risk factor and give recommendations for possible means for their mitigation (Nikonova & Sucharev, 2002). Besides systemic assessment of an institution, social audit as a mechanism is more concerned with social contribution or impact of activities of an agency.

In Nepal's context, social audit started getting momentum with initiatives from civil society organizations in years after democratic restorations in early 1990s. Practice of social audit entered government sector formally in late 2000. This initiative got formally institutionalized during 2008 in education sector with Department of Education enacting social audit directives for schools (DoE, 2008). The social audit directives were amended in 2014. The Education Regulations (MoE, 2016) provisions that each community school should conduct social audit annually. A seven-member committee comprising of chair of Parent Teacher Association as a coordinator of Social Audit Committee (SAC) is fully responsible to organize social audit. Preamble of the social audit guidelines clearly states that need of annual review and assessment of overall school performance has been realized with engagement of stakeholders in the process for generating ownership and make school activities accountable and transparent with efficient use of resources to ensure quality of education. Social audit guidelines (DoE, 2008) envision that one of the objectives of social audit is to engage stakeholders and to promote accountability and transparency in the operation of community schools.

Participation is an umbrella term that describes the activities by which people's concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues (Nabatchi, 2012; Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014; Roberts, 2008).

This definition tries to define participation as a way and a process for citizens to claim their stake in discussions with their concerns, needs and interests heard and responded on issues of public interest and matters. Going a step further, some authors (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014) define participation as being direct and indirect. They argue direct form of participation is the best because it encourages stakeholders and citizens to get personally involved and actively engaged in the process for providing input, making decisions and solving problems while in indirect forms of participation citizens try to influence or affect decisions through their representatives. Use of participatory tools like social audit is designed to serve as direct form of participation where citizens and stakeholders discuss jointly and try to influence decisions (Ragni, 2017). Even within the form of direct participation, authors have tried to classify them into different categories. Direct participation can happen in many ways and occur in many different contexts. Over the last two decades, direct participation has three main forms—thick, thin, and conventional—each of which encompasses a wide variety of processes and activities that share common features. Participation has been understood and practiced in different sector including social audit in various forms and modes. Participation of parents and students in social audit of community schools has been more ritual with token representation (*ibid.*). Token representation can be linked with conventional mode of participation. Implementation of social audit in a more ritual manner just to meet the legal and policy requirements has limited opportunities for interactive and deliberative discussion among participants (Timalina, 2015).

2. Methods of Study

I have used case study as strategy of inquiry, and it is field-based research for a

single unit of analysis of a case. As Gerring (2004) states that case study research is an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time. During the research process, I collected information through multiple sources such as discussion with stakeholders, available research documents and review of empirical studies on the topic. I used multiple sources of gathering information with the help of discussions, document reviews and semi-structured interviews with the parents, student, teacher as participants. I chose Gram Sikshya Secondary School in Kathmandu. The selection was purposive because the school has a history of conducting social audit over the years and engaged a wide range of stakeholders in the process. Regarding selection of participants, it was also purposive.

3. Findings and Discussions

I have presented a case study of five key stakeholders whose individual experiences of participation in the social audit process has been positively or negatively influenced by participatory institutional culture, design process of social audit as contextual factors and power dynamics created by knowledge/information and unequal socio-economic conditions. The findings have explicitly reflected those participants with little knowledge/information about issues in the school and those coming from poor socio-economic background were not able to participate in the process as actively as teachers and ward chairperson. The findings have also opened up new dimensions of participation on how unequal power relations gives some privilege to a group of participants making them more confident and empowered to participate while depriving other group of their capacity to participate in the process on equal footing. Analysis of stakeholders'

experiences demonstrated how contextual factors of institutional participatory culture and social audit design process including power dynamics of socio-economic status and knowledge asymmetry influences the participatory process in the social audit. With contextual factors and unequal dynamics from the findings, the article has identified the insufficient knowledge and unequal socio-economic conditions of participants as barriers and institutional participatory culture and design process of social audit as enablers for participation of stakeholders in the social audit process.

3.1 Institutional Participatory Culture and its Positive Impact on Participation

The research has identified four layers of influence that worked as negatively as barriers or positively as enablers for participation experiences of stakeholders in the social audit process. Institutional participatory culture and design process of social audit impacted positively on participation of stakeholders in the process. It was found that school's participatory culture of conducting social audit on regular basis was an enabler for participation of the stakeholders. Formation of social audit committee and conduct of social audit report sharing program every year created positive impact on the minds of stakeholders because it provided a forum for them to at least participate in the process. Participatory institutional culture was an enabling factor for the participation. Research participants experienced that social audit is a regular part of the business at school that happens every year where they must participate and contribute to the discussion.

However, their contribution to the discussion during the social audit process was more limited and lacked two-way exchange of ideas and information. Sharing of rights and responsibilities and other crucial information with the citizens and stakeholders is the most important step toward the legitimate

citizen participation in terms of active and meaningful participation (Arnstein, 2010). Research participants especially student and parent representatives shared that they were not informed of their roles and responsibilities in the social audit process which constrained their engagement and participation in a more meaningful way. School's practice of organizing social audit for the last three years in a way made the participants familiar with the process but lack of information sharing and empowering them on their responsibilities equally deprived them of opportunities for active participation in the social audit.

Charles & et al state that participation of stakeholders in the social audit process is positively influenced by contextual dimension of organization's participatory culture. Research participants felt that institutional participatory culture during social audit acted as enabler for stakeholder's participation in different phases of social audit implementation process. Thus, participatory culture adopted by the school was an enabler for stakeholders' participation while lack of proper design process of social audit in terms of communication, systematic, inclusive representation of key stakeholders was found a barrier for ensuring meaningful participation of stakeholders. Institutional contexts of participatory culture and social audit design process helped promote physical participation to an extent but was more a kind of ritual representation of stakeholders without active participation and two-way collaboration.

3.2 Ritualized Participation: The Rules of the Game

Practice of social audit was found to be more of a ritual process in terms of participation contrary to what Social Audit guidelines state. Social audit practice has been found explicitly against the provisions of the social audit guidelines from participation

perspective. Research participants shared that existing social audit guidelines doesn't have any incentive of reward and punishment approach. Devoid of such incentive structure has encouraged especially parents and students to be less interested in participating in social audit process making participation more a ritualized devoid of any consultation and two-way exchange of ideas and thoughts. Ritualized form of participation, as Arnstein (2010) calls it a kind of 'manipulation' by powerholders who invite participants in the process as committee members who are hardly consulted and heard off in the process.

A teacher, member of social audit committee, as the research participant, observed a different dimension on why participation has been ritualized. Lack of technical knowledge on how social audit needs to be conducted was one of the reasons for ritualizing participation, engagement and consultation during the social audit practice in community schools. Their observation shows that school authority and social audit committee members lacked adequate orientation and capacity development on the social audit procedure from the perspective of citizen participation and collaboration.

Audit committee members shared that they did not have any training and orientation on the technical aspect of social audit on why citizen participation should be active and consultative. The other reason, as student and parent representative shared, lack of knowledge and sensitization on technical and procedural dimensions of social audit created barriers in making the social audit practice participatory, engaging and consultative. Thus, lack of awareness building on the technical aspect to the social audit committee members contributed to ritualizing the social audit practice. When there is no sufficient technical knowledge among the implementers of accountability

tools, implementation of such accountability tool runs the risk of being limited to mere formality or rituality (WB, 2012). Thus, the participation of citizens and stakeholders in the social audit process has run the risk of being ritualized with set rules of the game.

3.3 Participation without Mutual Collaboration and Consultation

Social Audit aims at improving transparency and accountability with active participation of the key stakeholders by creating bottom-up demand for governance (McNeil & Malena, 2010). Social audit as an accountability tool also has the potentials of catalyzing collaboration and consultation among stakeholders for improved governance. Research participants shared that their lack of knowledge on the topic and issues about the school discouraged them from collaborative and consultative approach in the social audit process. Physical participation was ensured to an extent which substantially limited collaboration and consultation among the participants. Participation and engagement in any context lead to better informed decisions only when there is a wider range of information inputs and knowledge exchange among stakeholders in the process (Chailles et al., 2017).

Parent and student representatives as research participants shared that neither social audit was taken and understood as a tool to provide a forum for among stakeholders for interaction and collaboration on different issues relating to school affairs nor was it practiced as a mechanism to further the collaboration for improved governance in the community school. SAC coordinator did not seem to fully internalize the potentials of social audit as a tool to improve governance, accountability, and transparency through deliberative and consultative process. My observation of the social audit process also triangulated with experiences of my

research participants as majority of the participants remained passive and silent during the process. Parents and students present in the social audit event did not deliberate on the issues. The reason behind non-participation in terms of collaboration and deliberation was because of lack of information and knowledge about the different issues of the school and entire social audit process.

Social audit is a tool of collaborative governance (Arsell & Gash, 2008) because it provides a forum where teachers, parents, school management committee can discuss issues collaboratively to find solutions to problems in teaching learning environment of the school. However, this potential has remained untapped because of ritualized participation of stakeholders in the social audit process. Research participants shared that ritualized practice of social audit has hindered the meaningful participation of stakeholders especially parents and students, depriving them of engaging in critical discussion on finding solution to different issues confronting the school in regard to school governance and accountability. Collaborative governance theory (ibid.) reiterates that social audit provides opportunities for critical collaboration among the stakeholders. Interviews, document reviews and observation of the process showed that institutional design process of social audit was a kind of ritual practice where stakeholders were not selected from the perspective of who can actively contribute to the discussion. Ritual selection of participants was a barrier for active and interactive participation of stakeholders in the process.

3.4 Unequal Socio-Economic Status: A Constraint on Participation

Unequal socio-economic status of participants was a barrier for participation in the social audit process. Participants

especially student and parent representatives coming from poor socio-economic conditions had to skip social audit meetings and discussions because of their priority for livelihood. Unequal social-economic status created unequal power dynamics among participants. Teacher, SAC coordinator and ward-chairperson came from good socio-economic background compared to parents and student representatives. Their poor socio-economic background limited their participation in social audit process because they had other pressing priorities for livelihood rather than taking part in social audit. Because of other daily needs and livelihood issues, they had to skip meetings and give up participation. Power and resource imbalances among stakeholders affect the incentives of groups to participate in the collaborative process (Gurton & Day, 2003). Research participants unanimously accepted that poor financial status was a barrier to their participation in the process because they failed to attend meetings and discussions. Thus, asymmetrical financial status and background of stakeholders of social audit perpetuated a kind of unequal power relations among them making them unable to participate equally in the process.

Majority of parents who send their kids to the community school are from low socio-economic background. Many parents can't attend school programs like social audit because they are busy with their works which is more important to their family than the activities that take place in school. A teacher representative in SAC shared that socio-economic status of the participants was an important and crucial dimension behind (dis)encouraging active participation and engagement of stakeholders in the social audit process. Majority of the parents face daily livelihood issues because of which participating in social audit hardly becomes a priority for them. In terms of resources and financial condition,

unlike parents and students, stakeholders like teachers and SAC coordinator are comparatively better off and socially also influential who can afford to participate in the process with active engagement and contribution. But resource asymmetry among stakeholders was disempowering for some stakeholders whereas economically better-off stakeholders were found to be more active and dominant during the discussion in various SAC meetings and the social audit process.

A parent representative in SAC shared that she remained a shy and silent participant all the time. The reason behind her shyness and passivity was also her poor knowledge and information about social audit and her poor economic condition. In one of the meetings, she was requested by the SAC coordinator to share her thoughts, but she could not say anything. A feeling of hesitation was smoldering inside her that demotivated her from speaking up in front of the socially influential person like teacher and ward chair. Participants will be much more likely to engage in earnest deliberation when alternatives to it—such as strategic domination or exit from the process altogether—are made less attractive by roughly balanced power (Fung & Wright, 2001). She shared that her hesitation and fear were also tied to unequal power relations because some ward chair and teacher belonged to better socio-economic class who were also knowledgeable about issues happening in the school. Research participants especially parents and students unanimously shared a common perspective on their incapability to actively participate and influence discussions in social audit process because of their unequal power relations owing to poor socio-economic conditions.

The discussion reinforces a strong correlation between resource asymmetry (socio-economic status) of participants

which also limited the chances of meaningful and active participation. If there are significant power/resource imbalances between stakeholders, such that important stakeholders cannot participate in a meaningful way (Ansell and Gash, 2008). The dimension of resource asymmetry based on socio-economic status and unequal power relations created by it became detrimental to active participation of stakeholders and the barriers they face during deliberation in the social audit process.

4. Conclusion

Institutional participatory culture played as an enabler for parent and students to participate in the SAC meetings and social audit process. - Social audit design process was found not to have taken into account the ground rules and protocols of proper selection of key stakeholders, communication, systematic follow-up, inclusive representation of stakeholders including sensitization of stakeholders on why social audit is being organized and what is expected out of them in the process. Thus, poor institutional design process of

social audit has performed as a barrier for meaningful and constructive participation of parents and students. Another key barrier for equal participation was identified as knowledge variation among stakeholders. Parents and students did not know anything about social audit, its importance and other issues related to school. Knowledge variation among research participants has created unequal power relations depriving them of participating in the process on equal footing.

Unequal socio-economic conditions performed the role of a barrier for equal participation of certain group of stakeholders in social audit process. In the case of parents and students, they belonged to low socio-economic background whose livelihood depended on menial jobs and daily works. The findings explicitly indicate when stakeholders don't belong to symmetrical socio-economic background, it tends to create unequal power relations among them. Prevalence of such unequal socio-economic status disempowered a group of participants from actively participating and engaging in the process while significantly leveraged the other group of participants.

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Civil Society Critics on Public Education Policies in Nepal: A Tools for Right to Education or Overturning Inconsistencies

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Abstract

This qualitative enquiry explores a critical perspectives of education policies in Nepal from CSO (Civil Society Organization) point of view. It is mainly based on the analysis of the public discourse organized by the National Campaign for Education (NCE) Nepal with the objectives of reviewing constitutional provisions related with education and its alignment at federal, provincial and local level. The review revealed the lack of alignment, inconsistencies, and ambiguities in education policies at different levels. Findings of review suggests the needs to harmonize policy frameworks at three levels of the government and efforts to align the right to education with the spirit of the constitutional provisions. The analytical review might also be significant to cater to the needs to identify and reform the initiatives on the realization of right to education at the level of the local government and other stakeholders supporting the government efforts in the sector to institutionalize provisions of policy framework and realization of the rights provisioned in the framework.

Keywords: Right to Education, Education Policy, Sectoral Plan, Transformative Education

1. Introduction

The Constitution of Federal Republic of Nepal (2015) has recognized education as a fundamental right to every citizen and provided autonomy to local government particularly for managing basic and secondary education. It has provisioned the right of access to free and compulsory basic education and free education up to secondary level. In line with the spirit of the Constitution, Free and Compulsory

Education Act 2018 has been formulated at the federal level (McEST, 2018). The Free and Compulsory Education Act (2018) aims at ensuring easy and equal access to education on the ground of basic human rights and fundamental rights as conferred by the constitution. The national planning commission in the review of Sustainable Development Goals rightly presented that there has been an important

progress in SDG4 in terms of formulating policies at federal level, however, rapid improvements in terms of implementing policies are needed, particularly in learning outcomes, quality of teaching, expansion of vocational education and general literacy and numeracy (NPC, 2020 a). Hence, the Free and Compulsory Education Act (2018) attempts to address gap in learning outcomes, quality of teaching, and expansion of vocational education.

However, the current investment in education sector and efforts appear to be inadequate to increase the access to marginalized children for quality education and learning (NCE, 2020) because underinvestment in education has challenged to ensure equal access to technical, vocational and higher education to needy people. It cannot help government to produce qualified, competent and employment oriented human resources, manage qualified and well-trained teachers at all levels. Besides, it is yet to mainstream vocational and technical education in the overall education system, reduce the disparity between private and public education, and to stop brain drain from the country (NGO Federation, 2020, p. 19). The constitutional spirit seems to promote good governance, social justice, economic equality, peace and prosperity. 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepal' as buzz words proclaimed by the government of Nepal and adopted by National Planning Commission as the guiding principle of the 15th periodic plan (2076/77 to 2080/81) is presented as the efforts given to promoting well-being and prosperity of people. However, the changes in the well-being of people are not visible at the community level. For example, the state seems to be less successful in creating employment opportunities in Nepal as the annual outmigration of youths of age group 18 to 35 continues (Govt, 2020). Most of the youths are from marginalized and deprived communities working in Malaysia

and gulf countries. One-quarter of the total national GDP has been contributed by the remittance of those labor migrants.

On the one hand, the constitutional provisions guarantee equal access to basic education for every citizen and explicitly states that "every citizen shall enjoy the right to receive free and compulsory education from the State up to the basic level followed by free secondary education". On the other hand, the lack of access and poor quality of education has compelled most of the youth people to migrate abroad for low paid manual work. In addition to the rights relating to education under article 31, there are constitutional provisions made for different marginalized groups and communicate such as article 38 in relation to the women, article 39 in relation to the children, article 40 in relation to Dalits, and article 42 in relation to the indigent citizen. Constitution of Nepal (2015) has further made provisions in Article 51 under policies relating to the basic needs of the citizen under policies of the state. Based on the Constitutional spirit and provision, it is imperative for three levels of government to ensure a harmonized education policies and laws in place for implementation without any hurdle and barriers. As a recent example, the government has formulated National Education Policy to guide the education sector in the federal Nepal (MoEST, 2020). This is definitely a milestone in the education sector, but there is apparent confusion and contradiction causing unjustified delay and interference in the preparation of education policy and laws at the provincial and local levels. There is also duplication in the policy development and implementation because of the delay in formulating policy at the federal level. The right to education has been declared as the fundamental rights of all the citizen but at the same time the government policies have resulted in increased profit making private institutions which has resulted into

two different stream of education: one offered by the private institutions which, as many parents consider, is more responsive and therefore has been matter of attraction, and prestige and the government aided schools which have been continually been squeezed in the ratio of the enrollment ratio. This has created more desperate needs and elevated the importance of the policy development and the implementation process at the provincial and local levels should ensure the quality of education and ownership including the provisions for quality teacher, effective teacher management.

The schedule 8 of the Constitution has granted jurisdiction to the local government for education management up to the secondary level whereas schedule 9 provisions education, sports and newspapers as a common jurisdiction of federal, province and local level governments that overlaps in terms of the jurisdiction. Consequently, the overlapping jurisdiction has overshadowed the sole jurisdiction of the local governments in education management. This kind of overlapping has not only created confusion among the stakeholders but also provides space to all the levels of the government to point at each other in relation to the implementation of the education policies in the given context. There has been tendency in the federal level government to retain the power and authorities for the education, irrespective of the constitutional provisions and it has led to the situation that makes the federal government engagement profoundly visible. The National Education Policy 2078 stipulates roles of provincial government as regulating and facilitating body, but in practice the federal government itself is playing active roles in the implementation of programs.

In this context, this paper presents analytical overview of the inconsistencies and

ambiguities in educational policies on equitable access to education in the federal context. In doing so, the results are drawn from the meta-analysis of the existing education policies and thematic analysis of the comments and reflections of local stakeholders during the education discourse organized by National Campaign for Education (NCE) Nepal. The discourse was organized in the Parbat and Kaski districts in February and March 2021 respectively with the objectives of drawing on experiences and reflection of local government representatives including mayors, deputy mayors, chairperson and vice chairperson, bureaucrats, and other local stakeholders. Field notes developed from the discourse were used to complement the metanalysis and draw conclusions on the analysis of the constitutional provisions, provincial and local level laws and policies, and their alignment with each other. In order to validate the analysis from the discourse selected members of NECs who participated in the meeting were invited for a debrief and made comments on the analysis.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1 Ambiguity in Education Policy Interpretation

The free and compulsory educational provisions guaranteed by the Constitution upto secondary level is further elaborated by the Free and Compulsory Education Act (2075 BS). Despite those constitutional provisions, the ground reality appears to be undergoing through unclearity and confusion with what was proclaimed in the legal framework. At the local level, even the public schools charge various types of fees owing to inadequate financial and human resources as the fund provided by the government is not sufficient to fulfill the teacher quota, provide teaching learning materials. Though the school leaders claim that charging fee from parents/

student is their compulsion because of inadequate funding to public school, this practice has challenged the notion of free and compulsory education as enshrined by the Constitution of Nepal. On the other hand, it is unfortunate that education policies at the three levels remain silent about the role of private actors' roles and the monitoring of the private actors in education. During the consultation a female parent from Kaski district shared that *'by and large, ambiguity exists in the education policy regarding the provision of free education due to the compulsion of private schools to charge fees, hence it has questioned the fundamental right of people to free, equitable and quality education. This obviously stands against the principles envisioned in the preamble of the Constitution'*.

The public schools which are collecting fees due to low budget allocation of the government because the decreasing trend of educational budget is insufficient for managing schools. Share of education budget has been rapidly decreasing since last decade from 17% in 2013 to 10.93% in 2021. The average financing gap to achieve the SDGs is estimated to be NRs 585 billion per year for the entire period of 2016 to 2030 (SSDP, 2016). It is an average 8.8% of GDP for 2016-19, 12.3% of GDP for 2020-22, 13% of GDP for 2023-25, and 16.4% of GDP for 2026-30 respectively. The overall annual financing gap is estimated at 12.8% of GDP throughout the period of 2016 to 2030 (NPC, 2020). On the other hand, under the notion of free and compulsory education, there is ambiguity created by the educational policies. Constitution clearly articulates about free education, not providing space for private providers of education which is further clarified by Free and Compulsory Education Act at the national level. However, the province and local education policies still consider the private providers of education and have

some provision relating to it. These are two conflicting phenomena that appear in education at the local level because of contradicting policies of the government.

2.2 Evidence of Policy Coherence and Ambiguity

The cooperation, coordination and coexistence among the three levels of government is the main hallmark of federalism as enshrined in the Constitution. The views expressed by the CSO representatives highlighted the needs for the same level of cooperation, coordination and coexistence in the Act, plans and policies of all levels of government. However, due to delay in the formulation of the Federal Education Act, reflection of cooperation, coordination and coexistence could not take place in the provincial and local level policies. As a result, adhering by the previous education Act and rules do not support current roles, jurisdictions and prerogatives of three levels of the government. In this backdrop, the education discourse has captured reflection of one of the officials who was participating in the workshop representing the Education Development and Coordination Unit (EDCU). He mentioned that *'the Federal Education Policy has ignored local level innovativeness and best practices [...] appear as instructive in nature, so it does not respect principle of cooperation and coexistence as envisioned by the federalism'*. This evidently indicates that the federal, province and local levels government demonstrate both overlapping and exclusive rights, jurisdiction and roles and responsibilities for education management. This has further been made complicated by the lack of clarification in the roles and responsibilities of the three governments in the Federal Education Plans and Policies. It is the crux of the issue which is hindering the public education strengthening endeavors. A

former District Education Officer (DEO) with long professional experience in the sector stated that Constitution has bestowed responsibility of education upto secondary level upon the local level government, however, the Local Government Operation Guideline shared by the federal government provides education responsibility only upto Grade 10 at the local level. Thus, there is apparently overlapping roles and responsibilities for grade 11 and 12 in these two documents which illustrate how education policies have provided different information in different policies and that sometime contradicts with each other. This not only made the implementation of the right to education initiatives complicated to implement but also provides space to the authorities to escape from their responsibilities by showing other levels when things get complicated to implement but at the same time claim the responsibilities when things are smooth.

In course of the policy reflection and authorities shared examination as another issue. A female teacher at a community school in Kusma Municipality shared that dilemma in terms of the administration of the examination of grade 10, 11 and 12 which are provisioned under the jurisdiction of the local government whereas such examinations are still managed by the federal government.

The ongoing interaction and discourses reveal ongoing debates in terms of curriculum development as well. The role of local government in the development of local curriculum is not well explained by the Federal, Province and local Education Policies.

2.3 Programs and Plans

The 15th five-year plan reflects the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP-2016-2023) which is currently being put into

effect. This plan has given a special priority to achieving gender equality in education, and it also expects to increase the enrolment of girls in early childhood education as well as retention rates. Similarly, Nepal has developed National Framework for Education 2030 and National Strategy for the Development of Education Statistics (NSDES) (NPC, 2020).

Nepal has also set out its national SDG roadmap with goals, targets and policy strategies to achieve the SDG goals by 2030 (NPC, 2017b). The SDG National Framework of Action has been developed to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all Nepalese people. This framework aims to bring all three levels of government in line with the constitutional provision of cooperation, co-existence and coordination. In particular, it guides local government to develop SDG4 implementation plan at the province level and SDG4 Action Plan at the local level. However, the spirit of SDG4 is yet to be fully localized at the province and local levels (NPC, 2020) due to ambiguity and lack of coherence in terms of roles, responsibilities and jurisdiction.

2.4 Inconsistency with Sustainable Development Goal 4

Education policies formulated at the province and local levels should be instrumental in contributing to the achievement of the SDG4. However, the province and local levels education policies are not compatible with the National Framework of Sustainable Development Goals as per the outcome of the discourses. Review of the policies and the framework indicates that collaboration, coordination and communication among the three levels of government i.e. federal, province and local are poorly defined in the framework. Execution of the framework requires inter-governmental and inter-ministerial collaboration and coordination which was not defined by the framework. A part from this, the linkage with local

curriculum, monitoring mechanism for framework implementation, vision for local and inclusive education etc. are the missing threads between the local level education policies and the SDG4 National Framework. Apart from this, there is also the knowledge gap regarding the roles and responsibilities of local government in the adoption of the framework. It was reported by local government officials that they are unaware about the SDG targets and indicators at the local levels. In this respect, a government official from Parbat district shared that *localization of the SDG targets and indicators has yet to be made in true sense, consequently there is a great deal of confusion at the local level in aligning SDG with the local level plan and policies. This contradicts with the government commitments and claims in the localization of SDG in national and international platforms on the implementation of SDGs.*

The above statement has reinforced the points made by officials that education policies lacking consciousness of SDG4 indicators and targets at the province and local levels did not receive much attention in ensuring education for children with disabilities, child-friendly education, education for the protection of human rights, and education to help them become global citizens.

The province and local levels government and legislative bodies should play key roles in integrating the SDGs and the attendant principles into their respective areas of responsibilities. The provincial and local levels planning need to be institutionalized by mainstreaming SDGs (NPC, 2020, p. 82).

2.5 Ambiguity in Teachers' Management

The participants in the discourse have raised some issues related with the teachers' management. The policy incompatibility is attributed to ineffective teacher's management which has a

bearing on the accountability of teachers to quality education. The local government are responsible for ensuring quality of school education, however, the teacher management including the salary of the teachers is managed by the federal level government which resulted into difficult to holds the teachers accountable for the quality education efforts by the local government.

This is crux of the problem is lack of accountability of teachers towards the local government which has posed questions on the monitoring of teachers by the local government. While the Constitution provides responsibility of the school education management to the local government, the prime actors of school education i.e., teachers are not made accountable towards the local government through prevailing policy framework. Thus, this dismal situation is deteriorating public education environment. Apart from above issues, there is another case of policy incompatibility related with social audit, formation of the School Management Committee (SMC), fund raising at the local level for education sector. An official lamented that *There are some examples at the local level of nominating ward chairperson as SMC chairperson, this contradicts with the policy provisions on electing the chairpersons from among the parents and naturally leads to the local government influence on the school management. There is no consensus on how to implement policy and rights enshrined in the policy framework.*

The current policy outlines provisions, roles and responsibility of the federal government for human resources projection. As per the policy provision, the provincial government is responsible for setting education standards whereas the local government is responsible for the management of teachers and employers. These responsibilities are

currently attributed to Teachers' Service Commission (GoN, 2074 BS). These provisions are explained in none of the federal policy, provincial policy or local policy. Apart from this, it is mentioned in the federal regulations that the management and performance of qualified and capable subject teachers in all the schools will be linked with the learning achievement. It is said that the training of human resources related to the education sector will be managed as per the federal and province levels policies (GoN, 2077/78).

While the local level government is responsible for teachers' management, the responsibility for performance appraisal does not fall within the realm of local government. In addition, there is no common understanding among three levels of governments on specialized education, hence there is anomaly on inclusive education as well; for example, people with disabilities are not able to attend schools of the local government areas. Likewise, provisions on community library, community information center, community learning center are mentioned in the federal policy but the local level policy framework is silent on these aspects.

2.6 Ambiguity in Revenue Generation

The Constitution has clearly stipulated the sources of revenue generation at different levels of government. One of the major sources of revenue is tax collection. However, there is ambiguity in the revenue generation frontier too due to duplicated tax collection approach. Therefore, the confusion and controversial tax collection environment have left local and provincial government with no other than resorting to the federal level government. For instance, the taxation regime for service charge covering penalties and fines, tourism royalty, entertainment tax etc. fall within the jurisdiction of federal, province and local government. Similarly, there is no clear

provisions of tax collection based on the nature of revenue and taxation headings of three levels of government. In the absence of clear revenue generation guidelines, taxes are currently being collected at the federal level. The gap in the policy provision has constrained local government in generating sufficient revenue resulting into low educational investment by the province and local governments (GoN, 2074 BS).

2.7 Threat to Principles of Federalism

The main idea of federalism is linked with the normative parameters, justified primarily by the liberty, promotion of democracy and active citizenship (Weinstock, 2001). Federal plans and policies should be harmonized by the considerations of equity and autonomous government. However, the federal context make it sometimes difficult to achieve efficiency and shared political identity. In the federal system, institutional mechanisms are established for building social trust among the different actors in the society. However, lack of trust among actors hurdles in exercising the notion of federalism including in policy making and its implementation. As explained by the Kyle Scott's Theory of Federalism (Fera, 2012), the three parameters i.e. liberty, democracy and active citizenship even in the case of Nepal have intended to create a policy inefficiencies. Review of the policies of the government shows that there is clear ambiguity among the policies which is bound to create new divisions in the idea of federalization threatening the right to self-determination as envisioned by the federalism.

The basic principle of Nepal's federalism relies in the cooperation, coordination and co-existence. Federalism allows the plans and policies preparation as well as decision making level at the community level so that it is possible to practice deliberative democracy (Kincald, 2013). In doing so, the coherence amongst the policies at different

levels is required. Else, it creates chaos, weakens equitable distribution of resources and results inefficiency.

The policy-making process in Nepal is more dominant from Elitism where interest groups has dominant role on it. According to the elite theory, policy is a purposive course of action adopted by those in power in the pursuit of certain objectives (Sapru, 2012). The theory explains that power is concentrated in the interest group. This relates with the Nepal's policy making process that though the constitution envisions every level of governments should be autonomous but in the practice policy hold lies with the federal government as some guiding policies are yet to be enacted by the Federal government such as Federal Education Act and Regulation to implement Act relating with the Free and Compulsory Education 2018.

3. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The Constitution of Nepal has granted education related rights with roles and responsibilities to the local governments; hence the local governments are in the process of formulating local education laws and policies. However, there are issues and challenges in this process. The major challenges are due to lack of alignment between different policy provisions, lack of shared understanding by different stakeholders and lack of mechanism that can effectively coordinate and resolve the issues of diverse interpretation and claim. As a result, the education policy formulation and implementation of the constitutional provision at the local level has been affected. The government and CSO stakeholders are concerned about it because of some anomalies in the prevailing policy directives and its consequences on the right to quality education. It is believed that education policies must address the present and future needs of individuals,

families, communities, and countries, therefore account the aspirations of people should be considered based on the true spirit and essence of the Constitution. Local education policies need to be formulated by adopting integrated approach in line with the national / local laws, policy, requirements, and context. While the federal government has initiated formulation of many policy instruments both at three levels of government through an integrated approach, the government should however continue to work at reinforcing synergy and managing coherence, consistency and policy harmony. These education policies are also expected to contribute to the attainment of national targets and SDG4 by reinforcing synergy (NPC (2020, p 79).

Some of the challenges that the government approach is facing are navigating through the federal transition pathways, and the incentives and investment for consolidating gains made by the political changes. In the hindsight, the following observations are made for the government to take forward and further validate and consolidate amid education stakeholders:

- First of all, there is need at federal level to promote broad-based ownership of the integrated approach among all stakeholders who could streamline education policies and provisions and draw clear roles and responsibilities within well-defined jurisdiction which can create and strengthen enabling environment for reviewing existing policies and enhance coherence and compatibility by removing ambiguous clauses and roles.
- The provincial and local governments need to be well equipped with informed policies, provisions, resources and capacities to manage school education system. The officials and stakeholders can only implement their roles effectively when they are capacitated

on the implementation of the existing policy provisions.

- Establishing a mechanism at the planning level such as at National Planning Commission to ensure periodic review of the integrated approach and policy implementation process and adjust/ revise them in a timely manner can be helpful to get better insights on the areas of challenge and opportunities.
- The way constitution has made provisions of the right to education as the shared responsibility for all

three level of the government, it becomes imperative for three levels of government to ensure harmonized education policies and laws in place for implementation and ensure sound coordination mechanism among them. The harmonious effort needs to be translated to the operational level to the dissemination of the plans and policies formulated at the federal level so that province and local governments could own it and harmonize their respective plans and policies in line with the federal policies and plans.

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Promoting Civil Society Organization's Governance Through Capacity Building: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

This paper offers a critical review of the prevailing capacity-building approaches in the context of civil society organizations and asserts that the deficit model of capacity building best serves the essence of the empowerment theory since it considers the internal and external factors while assessing the capacity with the engagement of stakeholders and helps design tailor-made capacity-building interventions. Analyses are based on the literature review – both from academia as well as those of development organizations helping build the capacity of civil society organizations. Descriptive analysis of the findings infers that the one-size-fits-all approach doesn't help build the capacity of civil society organizations that vary in size and volume. It is found that existing organizational capacity assessment tools share a common weakness of not assigning relative weightage to the capacity dimensions. Based on the outcome of the extensive review, it can be concluded that capacity building has a significant contribution to organizational governance that comprises an improvement in quality of service, engagement of stakeholders in decision-making, and increasing accountability provided that the capacity building considers visible and invisible organizational culture, internal and external factors across individual, administrative and institutional levels while designing the intervention.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Enabling Environment, Governance, CSOs

1. Introduction

1.1 Putting the Capacity Building and Civil Society Organization's Governance into Context

Capacity building is a widely used approach across sectors. Capacity building is one of the most fashionable (Hubbard & Light, 2004) terms, and the interest in this

topic has continued to rise (Akol, Brunie, Kalema-Zikusoka, Petruney, & Wamala-Mucher, 2014) across sectors and nature of organizations. Also, the concept of capacity-building has been used widely in civil society organizations, Healyb, Kapucua, & Tolga (2011) have further noticed that even

academia is increasingly concerned about capacity-building and the CSO's promise for achieving higher levels of organizational effectiveness as a result of the interventions made in the capacity-building.

Concerns like who initiates the capacity building and for what purpose determine the approaches, methods, and subsequently, the effectiveness of the initiatives. Concerning the capacity building of the nonprofit sector, a part of civil society organizations and donor programs are considered to contribute significantly. To build the capacity of CSOs donors have designed and implemented various combinations of the initiatives. Apart from direct funding to the CSOs, these initiatives include advocacy for legal and regulatory reform, partnerships, and coalition formation for program implementation (Howell & Pearce, 2000). In addition, Ajaz (2010) reinforces this claim that growing concerns among donors that the failure of the projects and programs is due to the poor capacity of functionaries encouraged them to invest in capacity building, which in some cases, according to Harden-Davies & Vierros (2020) is the results of international legally-binding agreements. Pieces of evidence suggest that capacity building has remained a priority, but with different nomenclatures. Though all four High-Level Forums of OECD on Aid Effectiveness held in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2011 emphasized the capacity of partners as a core principle, Akol, Brunia, Kalema-Zikusoka, Petruney, & Wamala-Mucheru (2014) argue that it is not a new phenomenon, rather has been labeled as capacity development, strengthening, or enhancement (Brough & Potter, 2004) at different times by different scholars and practitioners.

Donor's initiative, however, is not free of criticism. Antlov, Brinkerhoff, & Rapp (2010) are among those who made an even strong argument that capacity building

has followed the 'supply creating demand' approach, and civil society organizations that widely implement donor-designed programs, including capacity building initiatives, fail to articulate their immediate capacity needs.

The governance of CSOs is a growing concern of academia and development practitioners. Higher the understanding of CSO as an apparatus for policy intervention and the subsequent flow of growing funding to the sector higher is the concern about CSO's functioning at the individual and collective front (Cairns, Harris, & Young, 2005). Since it is claimed that CSOs are vehicles to hold the government to account apart from serving their constituency in many ways, the way CSOs are themselves governed is gaining attention. Despite the claim to have possessed sufficient evidence of civil society organizations enabling the community to engage with government (Agostino & Kloby, 2011), the extent to which the spillover of the investments in CSO's capacity manifests in the community capacity in an attributable manner, is a vital issue while assessing the contribution of capacity building in promoting governance.

CSO's contribution to democratic governance has been applauded (Antlov, Brinkerhoff, & Rapp, 2010). They are believed to have provided community members the opportunity to voice their concerns and take appropriate action on those pertinent issues. Agostino & Kolby (2011) claimed scholars have argued that democratic governance resulting in informed decision-making (Callahan, 2007; Cohn-Berman, 2005) depends largely on citizen involvement. Similarly, citizen involvement is considered a key to capacity building (Cuthill & Fein, 2005), and increased trust in the institution (Keele, 2007). It applies equally to CSOs' context as well since they claim to continue serving the beneficiaries (target groups/stakeholders)

and the state of citizen engagement determines the extent to which CSOs fulfill the downward accountability. Hence, how CSOs effort in building community capacity bounces back towards CSOs organizational capacity by holding them to account (in terms of transparency, accountability, rule of law, etc.) is another concern. Agostino & Kloby (2011) considers that reciprocal readiness of civil society and the community is important for the effective engagement of the community in governance. They believe that while CSOs should continue serving as a resource and willing partner to citizens, citizens on the other hand should remain purposefully engaged with the CSOs.

Investment in an organization's capacity building is a deliberate effort that intends to achieve a tangible result, particularly improved performance. As Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stolk (2018) argue, organizations invest in capacity development with a purpose. Cairns, Harris, & Young (2005) add to this. They argue that most scholars, interested in organizational capacity are more concerned about the results. They further add that capacity building intends not only to help organizations deliver quality results efficiently but also to be environmentally sensitive by dealing with external as well as internal environments. In addition to the present understanding of taking capacity building within the scope of the organizational sphere, Antlox, Brinkerhoff, & Rapp (2010) opine that enabling CSOs to address their capacity constraints is essential so that they can contribute to democratic consolidation and its continued progress. It implies that investment in capacity building not only contributes organizations to delivering effective and efficient services but also contributes to strengthening democracy and governance.

Woodhill (2010) consider that the capacity determines the state of governance. He

believes that the notion of governance deals with the way various stakeholders such as communities, organizations, nations, and the international community interacts making decisions for the common good. However, the extent to which the legal environment is enabling in the country context determines the opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between government and CSOs (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2003).

Though capacity-building is claimed to have contributed significantly to growth and governance, there is a need to see whether the contribution of capacity building towards governance is one-way traffic or whether they reinforce each other. While referring to the cases of universities, Asu-Okang, Egbula, & Wonah (2019) claims that building the capacity of an organization promotes good governance, the absence of which results in weak programs and poor service delivery. Similarly, Hubbard & Light (2004) argue that organizational capacity contributes to achieving programmatic outcomes.

There is a concern about the conditions when the capacity-building efforts better contribute to the performance, an element of civil society governance. To assess how capacity building promotes governance of CSOs I reviewed literature from academia and development organizations from different sectors and levels – national as well as international, bilateral as well as multilateral organizations. I used Mindjet Mindmanager software to organize ideas and themes were generated to capture the essence of reviewed literature. Based on the findings of the literature review, this article highlights the conditions that promote CSO governance and their effectiveness. Unlike the common understanding that all capacity-building efforts contribute to better organizational governance, this article challenged this perception, investigating

the reasons for the capacity-building interventions' failure in doing so.

This article proceeds as follows. The next section describes and contextualizes capacity-building and its contribution to the CSO governance debates. This is followed by the finding and discussions section where various challenges are discussed that capacity-building initiatives need to address for it to promote organizational governance. The conclusion section highlights policy and programmatic implications, particularly how development organizations, including civil society organizations, better design their capacity-building program to promote governance.

1.2 Despite its Widespread Use, the Capacity-Building Concept Suffers Conceptual Contestation Emerging from Contextualization.

Though the term capacity building is used in different sectors, and even with different connotations, the term conceptualized in numerous sectors including CSOs, shares some common features. For Agostino & Koby (2011) capacity building of CSOs meant to enable them to be better organized and engage with government, and effectively interact with the community so that the needs of both communities and individuals are better addressed. This notion of capacity includes the synergistic effects of individual competencies and organizational capabilities to advance an organization's mission (Calms, Harris, & Young, 2005). Similarly, EuropeAid defines capacity as the manifestation of three types of ability that include performing tasks and producing outputs, defining and solving problems, and making informed choices (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stolk, 2018). This notion leads to a belief that the capacity as conceptualized in other contexts is valid to CSOs as well since CSOs, key players of the CSO landscape, constitute a group of people working for mutual as well as public benefits and consequently engage various

stakeholders, including the governments across sectors and levels. It implies that the idea of building organizational capacity is applicable across sectors and types of organizations.

It is not uncommon that many terms in the development landscape suffer from contextual conceptualization, particularly regarding the politics and positioning of the concerned organization. Despite significant effort and investments, capacity building has remained a vague term (Acquaye-Baddoo, Fowler, & Ubeis, 2010). Capacity is perceived differently across organizations, as sectors have varied sets of motivations. Since culture is a primary determinant of organizational capacity, a multidimensional notion, it has a substantial impact on how the idea has been operationalized (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stolk, 2018).

Whether organizational capacity constitutes an enabling environment is also a subject of argument. One school of thought considers organizational capacity inclusive of enabling environment, external to the direct influence of the organization, whereas the other school of thought considers it to be the capacity that is within the sphere of direct organizational influence. According to Yu-Lee (2002), an organization's ability to carry out its activities or the enabling variables that permit an organization to carry out its functions and realize its goals is influenced by the environment. The enabling factors include a legal and regulatory framework that influences the capacity of CSOs to function (Brinkerhoff, Hans, & Rapp, 2010). To be specific, since the capacity of CSOs to sustain themselves without external support depends on how the value is placed on charitable giving and cross-border philanthropy the extent to which the legal framework is inclusive of this factor also influences the CSO capacity. On the other hand, Eisinger (2002) considers organizational capacity as the

sum of processes, management practices, or attributes that collectively supports an organization to fulfill its mission.

Some scholars consider the broader human system as a beneficiary of the capacity. According to OECD (2006), capacity is manifested in the collective ability of individuals, organizations, and society to manage their affairs successfully, but Acquaye-Baddoo, Fowler, & Ubels (2010) consider that capacitated human system can perform, sustain itself, and self-renew.

It implies that capacity is not a static state or quality. The skills to act and self-organize, generate growth results, relate, adapt and self-renew, and integrate are five distinct but interrelated essential characteristics that are thought to be present in all organizations and systems (Baser & Morgan, 2008).

Another way of defining capacity is based on distinctions between the levels that get benefits from the capacity. In addition to three levels (individual, organizational, and institutional) of capacity, the United Nations Development Program distinguishes capacity by types: functional and technical. This distinction is problematic since it still depends on the organizational context of how the functional and technical skills are operationalized. For example, some organizations might consider monitoring and evaluation as technical skills, but for some, it might be functional skills. On the other hand, Acquaye-Baddoo, Fowler, & Ubels (2010) while quoting Morgan (2006), consider the overall capacity of a system constitutes the competencies (i.e., specific abilities of individuals), and capabilities (i.e., specific abilities of the organizational sub-system).

Capabilities, competence, and capacity are somewhat considered synonymous in general, but scholars have elaborated on the distinction between these three seemingly

similar terms. What Cairns, Harris, & Young (2005) share about the distinctions between organizational capacity and organizational competencies or capabilities as proposed by Franks sounds easy to follow in the CSO context. According to Frank, capability refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the individual or group and their competence to fulfill their responsibilities, whereas capacity refers more broadly to the overall ability of the individual or group to perform the responsibilities. This distinction implies that capacity, not the capabilities or competencies, is more prominent for the organizations to perform better.

Whether it is explicit or implicit, the capacity dimensions include governance as well. While conceptualizing the organizational capacity, Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stolk (2018) propose four key elements that include governance, culture, leadership, and infrastructure. They have explicitly mentioned governance as one of the capacity dimensions. On the other hand, the European Commission considers that the six-box model best captures the capacity dimensions: structure, leadership, internal relationship, rewards, coordinating and control instruments, and strategy (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stolk, 2018). Though this definition doesn't explicitly mention governance as one of the capacity dimensions, the way the European Commission conceptualizes capacity as a key factor to transform inputs to outputs implicitly considers governance a vital element in converting the resources to its deliverables, one of the key elements of governance. However, the extent to which these elements carry relative importance is subject to the organization's maturity, mission, priorities, portfolio, and stakeholder community (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stolk, 2018).

What framework better explains the organizational capacity also depends on

the key elements –internal and external to the organization. Dynamics between individuals and organizations generate complexities that have to be well taken into consideration while developing the framework. Kaplan (2000) supports the idea that an organization involves individuals. Being complex in themselves their relationships are also complex too. Fowler & Ubels (2010) think that capacity building has to thus respect this complexity as much with individuals and with small groups, as with the larger system.

The use of seemingly similar terms has given an impetus to a concern about whether capacity building, capacity development, or capacity strengthening means the same thing. Despite having been predominant in the development strategies for a long, Brough & Potter (2004) believe that capacity development, strengthening, or enhancement are synonymous with capacity building, a term that Eade (2007) and Kaplan (2000) consider a sophisticated synonym for more training or short-term skills building, yet widely accepted. Cairns, Harris, & Young, (2005) also have the same opinion that capacity-building is a broad term and those who use it often do not distinguish building organizational capacity from building capacity at the individual, community, or institutional levels, rather they see it as action or process which improves abilities to perform. The term capacity building is found to be organizational culture-sensitive as well. While the UN agencies call it 'capacity development' the European Union calls it capacity building. Despite this, capacity building is an umbrella term for capacity enhancement, capacity strengthening, and capacity development.

However, as Acquaye-Baddoo, Fowler, & Ubels (2010) argue, it is not necessary to make this distinction between capacity building, capacity development, and capacity-strengthening a vague and

complex. Rather, they advocate emphasizing the 'why' part of capacity building. They believe that capacity building should not be vague since it is an inherently relational and living phenomenon that always deals with a concern: capacity for what? They argue that any living system interacts with its environment in a two-way relationship and thus becomes a part of politics.

2. Findings and Discussion

2.1 The Capacity-Building Framework Needs to Consider the Interplay Between Both Internal and the External Environment

Once the capacity is considered contextual and is subject to the constant interplay with the external environment the static framework may not best support making capacity-building work. As Kaplan (2000) argues, a paradigm shift is required to understand and develop an organization's capacity if it is intended to yield the best results of the capacity-building intervention. Shifting 'from static framework to developmental reading' needs a full-fledged commitment toward its inherent openness to the environment as well as working with complexity in processes of human change. Fowler & Ubels (2010) believe that the extent to which the cultural aspects (which exist and operate unconsciously) in organizations manifest in their behavior should be taken into consideration. However, they also firmly believe that the elements (vision, culture, structure, and skills) are necessary, but the mere presence of these elements is not sufficient for making any organizational capacity. This implies that the capacity framework needs to observe both visible as well as invisible elements (that are observable only through the effects they have).

The locus of the capacity-building framework has to take different levels of human organizing into account. The

levels of such organizing vary in many respects. It could be dealing either with individual capabilities, organizations, or the sector as a whole. The locus further could be distinguished across sectors and levels of governance: micro (communities), meso (Palika/province), and macro (the nation-state). While highlighting the case from Bhutan, Visser (2010) suggests that capacity-building efforts be effectively linked across levels by taking a broad view of how individuals could be supported in dealing with wider organizational, network, or institutional dimensions, and work with the formal institutions (regulatory frameworks), and informal institutions (cultural values) as well. A framework proposed by Cuthill and Fein (2005) also emphasized capacity-building as a collaborative local action requiring the engagement of local government. Since the capacity dimensions do not exist in isolation and organizations have a clear purpose for capacity building (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stoik, 2018), the capacity-building framework should be tailor-made (Akoi, Brunie, Kalema-Zikusoka, Petruney, & Wamala-Mucheri, 2014) considering three levels of human organizing (i.e., individual, institution, and the sector as a whole).

2.2 Assessing Capacity Deficit is the Best Approach to Make the Capacity-building Effective

Understanding the options and consciously choosing the best one to build the capacity is not easy. This difficulty has political and practical dimensions (Cairns, Harris, & Young, 2005). Since the CSOs are supposed to achieve radical social and economic changes for the society, more specifically for the marginalized segment of the society, and the capacity building is considered as a building block towards that end, a lack of clarity on the purpose brings that ideological and practical dilemma in designing capacity building initiatives.

The deficit model (Harrow, as quoted by Cairns, Harris, & Young, 2005) is a common approach where capacity building is designed to fill gaps irrespective of how the organizational capacity has been understood by different organizations. Some well-known tools for organizational capacity assessment aim to facilitate identifying the capacity deficit. However, the number of capacity domains varies among different tools. McKinsey's Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) includes 10 capacity areas: aspirations; strategy; leadership, board, and staff; funding; culture; innovation and adaptation; marketing and communications; advocacy; business processes; infrastructure; and organizational culture (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stoik, 2018). On the other hand, MCF tools include 4 capacity domains (Connolly, et al., 2003) such as leadership, adaptive, management, and operational/technical capacities. While both tools largely share similarities, the MCF tool focuses on fewer capacity components than OCAT. In addition, the capacity assessment methodology user's guide of UNDP has 13 capacity domains, including 8 core functional domains and 5 cross-cutting functional domains (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staaij, & Van Stoik, 2018). One commonality exists between all three tools: proportional weightage of each capacity dimension is not assigned.

Since capacity building is not invested just for the sake of doing it, its benefit is a key concern for all stakeholders. For some, capacity itself might be synonymous with organizational effectiveness. However, Healyb, Kapucua, & Tolga (2011) argue that though capacity correlates well with effectiveness, they should not be considered synonymous. Akoi A., Brunie, Kalema-Zikusoka, Petruney, & Wamala-Mucheri (2014) are cautious if there is enough evidence of its proven impact on the development progress, the capacity-building efforts are found to

have a significant positive impact (Healyb, Kapucua, & Tolga, 2011; McKinsey & Company, 2001; Cairns, Harris, & Young, 2005) not just on organizational operations, but also on sustaining improvements over time (Eisinger, 2002; Bies & Milesen, 2005)

The capacity-building effort may not necessarily generate improved organizational effectiveness in the civil society organization. McKinsey & Company (2001) emphasized the conditions for capacity building to have a positive impact on organizational effectiveness. It emphasized that capacity-building efforts should be employed systematically across the levels of the organization avoiding doing it in silos. For McKinsey & Company (2001) systematic capacity building means it is individualized, holistic, and adopts sustained approaches, which they consider creates positive impacts within civil society organizations.

What is focused on in the capacity development intervention also determines the extent to which the expected level of effectiveness is achieved and whether the results are going to sustain. Though technical knowledge - expertise in knowing and doing - is important, explicit knowledge and hard expertise are not enough to bring effectiveness (Acquaye-Baddoo, 2010). Acquaye-Baddoo (2010) further highlights that effectiveness of capacity-building intervention depends on two things - knowledge of capacity-building practitioners, on which the intervention relies, and the relationship between the core capabilities areas that together make up the capacity.

2.3 Capacity-building Promotes Organizational Governance Provided It Addresses Some Inherent Challenges

Several challenges hinder capacity development. Poor attention to the recipient

organization's readiness (Pearson, 2011) is one of the challenges besides the supplier's poor ability to facilitate effective capacity building (Eade, 2007). Lack of consensus on the approaches and what constitutes best practices for capacity building is also one of the challenges. It is prevalent not only among capacity-building practitioners but also between its providers and recipients (Akol, Brunie, Kalema-Zikusoka, Petruney, & Wamala-Mucheri, 2014). Similarly, failure in identifying the real need for capacity building also hinders capacity building. Eade (2007) and Kaplan (2000) argue that many practitioners fail to differentiate between perceived or assigned and real needs for capacity building. They believe that the generalization of the term as a more acceptable and sophisticated synonym for mere training or short-term skills-building itself poses a challenge to capacity building (Brough & Potter, 2004). As a result, most capacity-building initiatives focus more on technical knowledge (Acquaye-Baddoo, 2010). Hence, the 'deficit model' helps identify the real needs of the organization and design appropriate means of capacity building.

The extent to which the learning is informing the capacity-building as such also determines its effectiveness (Akol, Brunie, Kalema-Zikusoka, Petruney, & Wamala-Mucheri, 2014). However, scholars doubt if the learning from one capacity-building initiative has been applied in the next course of similar action. UNDP (2009) realizes that

"...in the constantly evolving cycle of the [capacity building] process,

Mistakes are as useful to learning as successes", which demands that

successes, as well as failures, are unpacked to determine what can

be replicated, what can't, and why".

Since the capacity assessment tools are inherently reflective and the regular review and reflection on the status of organizational capacity are embedded into it the learning from the capacity-building efforts can easily be incorporated into the next phase of capacity-building initiatives.

If rooted in the local context, the capacity-building initiative gains relevance. The beneficiaries of the capacity-building should have space not only to identify their needs (which informs the approach and content of the capacity-building intervention) but to capture the learning and experiences. However, Kaplan (2000) has experienced the opposite, where instead of what the situation demands, many times capacity building practitioners deliver what is most easy for them to deliver. Akol, Brunia, Kalema-Zikusoka, Petruney, & Wamala-Mucheru (2014) consider this phenomenon as a result of failure to objectively assess capacity needs and see if those engaged in the process have competencies in building capacity. In addition, they have experienced that the beneficiaries are not consulted to share their experience with the capacity-building efforts, rather it is the views of the outsiders (such as capacity-building providers, external evaluators, or scholars). So, engagement of key stakeholders in the systematic capacity assessment process is a must to avoid this challenge.

Context sensitivity, particularly in linking broader context to the domestic issues (internal to the organization), enables organizations to perform well after capacity-building support. Capacity building is meaningful, effective, and resource-efficient when it best links local realities to international policies and practices to create synergies (Harden-Davies & Vioros, 2020).

Since CBOs vary in size and therefore require different approaches and methods for their capacity building (Healyb, Kapucua,

& Tolga, 2011) understanding the context is a key to identifying support, what organizational capacity-building is required for different organizations (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staa], & Van Stoik, 2018). Understanding the context includes understanding the agency's capacity for capacity building as well. Though CSOs have a need for their capacity building, the absence of strong desire and ability to utilize what has been gained through the capacity building fails the organization benefitting (Healyb, Kapucua, & Tolga, 2011) from the investment in capacity building.

Context sensitivity of the capacity building requires that CSOs can navigate the external factors successfully. Since the extent of operational and political space (Brinkerhoff, Hans, & Rapp, 2010) across sectors and levels becomes a critical external determinant towards ensuring horizontal as well as vertical accountability (Brinkerhoff, 2005) the ability to successfully analyze these factors ensures the capacity building and its sustainability. In addition to the external environmental factors (such as funding trends, and beneficiaries' needs) that determines if CSOs can participate in capacity-building interventions (Healyb, Kapucua, & Tolga, 2011) there is a need to consider various interdependent dimensions of capacity (Cox, Jolly, Van Der Staa], & Van Stoik, 2018) while planning for capacity building intervention.

The empowerment approach considers action-learning as the best means for building capacity since it is believed to support an organization master itself by reflecting on its actions and the environment. Cairns, Harris, & Young (2005) further believes that action research can best support organizations to excel beyond building competencies and skills in individual as preferred in the 'deficit model' of capacity building and empower them in a true sense so that they will be able to

retain their organizational autonomy from the powerful funders.

The readiness of an organization for change is one of the preconditions for the longer-term capacity building of an organization since it requires developing sophisticated processes, functions, and structures for improved organizational functioning (Cairns, Harris, & Young, 2005). However, the short-term and project-based nature of the capacity building (Harden-Davies & Vierros, 2020) failed to generate this readiness on the part of the recipient organization as well as the donor for their lack of commitment to long-term external funding. Whether capacity-building support comes from government agencies or non-governmental organizations, the issue of maintaining the independence and distinctiveness of CSOs (Cairns, Harris, & Young, 2005) is as important as developing their capacity through partnerships.

The effectiveness of capacity building requires organizations to define their goal in explicit terms (Bishop, 2007) and the baseline performance measures (McKinsey & Company, 2001; Wing, 2004) along with an appropriate framework to evaluate the capacity building. The absence of these will make capacity-building a risky venture not only for funders who prefer visibility of their investment (Brown, 1980) but also for the organization whose governance including the results of capacity building is under surveillance radar. In addition, the disconnect between capacity-building providers and the CSOs about what to invest more in makes it difficult to design it from the long-term perspective, and subsequently in gaining a commitment to funding.

3. Conclusion

Since capacity-building is a common approach across sectors both practitioners as well as scholars are concerned about its

results. Growing investment from donors in training, workshops, and advocating for an enabling environment has even raised this concern further as to what extent the capacity building has supported enhancing governance in CSOs that are supposed to advocate for good governance. Despite the varied understanding of the elements and the framework of capacity building, there is a wider agreement that it should consider both the elements – internal to the organization as well as the external environment that influences an organization's ability to use its capacity for the common good. In addition, there is a common understanding that all three levels of capacity (individual, organizational and institutional) are to be considered for capacity building. Since assessment of capacity through a systematic process helps identify the gaps 'the deficit model of capacity building' better helps capacity building intervention in many ways: firstly, to assess the current status, secondly, to design a realistic plan for capacity building that is informed of the ground reality, thirdly to engage key stakeholders periodically in learning from the capacity building intervention, all of which is seen as lack of effort to build capacity which is labeled as 'supply-driving the demand' model. Engagement of stakeholders in assessment and periodic review helps gauge organizational readiness as well as in customizing the capacity-building support since the 'one-size-fits-all' approach doesn't help CSOs with varying sizes and capacities. Despite a range of organizational capacity assessment tools being in place, the number of elements of organizational capacity somehow differs from tool to tool. Similarly, these tools have weaknesses in assigning relative weights of these elements to the organizational capacity. In addition, many scholars and practitioners agree that capacity building has a significant positive contribution to

promoting organizational governance, including the improvement in the quality of service, engagement of stakeholders in decision-making, and increasing accountability among others. From the

empowerment theoretical perspective, capacity-building effort needs to focus on the action-learning to help the organization gain mastery of itself through the reflection of its actions and the environment.

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Relations of Married Couple's Socio-demographic Status with their Parents

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Abstract

This study is about the attributes of different households which together come into the married couple to unite into wedlock. There are studies at the global context about the mate preferences or choice of the would be relatives. However, such studies are very scanty in the Nepalese context. The purpose of the study was to examine the relative closeness of the wife and husband side parental attributes into the household of married couple. A total of seventy of five married couple and their either side parents' socio-economic and demographic information were taken using semi-structured questionnaire. Data were collected in Thakre Rural Municipality, Dhading district of Nepal during February to April of 2022 from the selected respondents using face to face interview. The data were analyzed in terms of frequency, mean and such other descriptive statistics. Finding of the study revealed that the male counterparts were elder in age structures in all three sides while the wife side parents were having better off in terms of structures of houses and landholding sizes. It has further verified that the boys have been able to marry with the girls whose parents have higher economic status than their own parent. This study is helpful in understanding the current pattern of marriage as well as socio-economic attributes brought together by the married couple as carryover from their respective parental houses.

Keywords: couple, wife, husband, parent, marriage

1. Introduction

Marriage is a formal union, social and legal contract between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically and emotionally. The contractual marriage agreement usually implies that the couple has legal obligations to each other throughout their lives until they decide to

formally divorce. The Hindu society and culture considers marriage to be more than just a simple bond between two individuals; marriage is a bond between several families and a continuity of the family line of descent (Ghimire, 2003). Marriage has in most cases been taken as an indispensable life event

for sexual activity, procreation and family formation. But, in addition to its customary utility, it has been an essential vehicle for socio-economic re-integration. Had marriage not been there, the psychological distance between people of different castes and classes would have been even wider. Marriage has brought together people from different social psychological mentality, economic conditions, cultural rituals, geography, class, caste and ethnicities to create a new family set up. Mate selection is one of the important life event in an individual's life. This event is considered irreversible in south Asian societies where ties of marriage is not easily broken. The selection of mate is thus taken so seriously to match one's social, economic, lifestyles and preferences so that no party would regret after marriage. Generally the parent envisions their offspring better wealth, occupation, resources and prestige than their own. They help the offspring take right decision so that the children would gain happy and prosperous conjugal life. They prefer slightly better socio-economic status of the would be mate so that their later generation will not regress in any aspect of life chances. Conventionally, marriage was within the strict control of the boys' and girls' family and relatives. They would decide who would best fit to whom as their life partner and the either side would accept the decision. The main criteria of selection from the male side was the behavior and appearance of the girl while that from the female side was the wealth of the household, social standing and industriousness of the boy. People always prefer to have marriage within the similar socio-economic strata to avoid potential mismatch in social statuses and conflicts between boy and girl's side after marriage. The most rigid social criteria was within the same caste and religion, but not within the same clan to avoid risk of potential inbreeding and regression of the progenitors.

This study is based on the premise that marriage is one of socio-economic connector. The bride and groom from different class, caste and socio-psychological attitudes are bounded together in a single conjugal life. If there had not been necessity of binding together through this bond which is called marriage, the disparity would be still higher than it is. The people of poor socio-economic class hesitate to interact with the higher, on the other hand people of higher classes do not like to get together with the lower ones. But, through marriage the people come closer physically, emotionally and psychologically. This closeness is one of the connector in society in between hierarchically different people from various geographical territories and even nationalities and religious faiths.

Inter-caste marriage has been perceived as one of the most practical ways to blur caste lines and render them irrelevant. It is also considered as the means of social inclusion as it helps increase inter-caste cooperation and integration between Dalits and non-Dalits (NPC, 2007). There are debates and dissensions among Dalits and non-Dalits scholars regarding the nature and impact of incentives on the inter-caste couple (Biswakarma, 2013).

This study will be focused to assess the extent of socio-economic integration that has created by the conjugal life of the bride and groom of the different socio-economic background. By tracing out each married couple's background in terms of their natal family, the present study would contribute to what extent this social connector (marriage), is contributing for creating a new, unique and interesting family set up. Since Nepalese society is having multitudes of hierarchies in terms of class, caste, religion, rural-urban, geography and other background characteristics like several other south Asian cultures and societies, this study would intend to figure out to

what extent the marriage has contributed to social cohesion. There are several studies carried out in terms of mate selection criteria over the developed, developing and south Asian context. However, there is dearth of scientific investigation on the role of different background of couple in creating a socioeconomic re-integration of people in contributing to develop a new family setup.

In Nepal, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are considered social taboos and are strongly discouraged by the orthodox society. It has promoted marriage within the same socio-economic status. However, in the present times, this social institution has been highly liberalized. The youths not only in the cities but also in the rural remote locations, due to the effect of socio-cultural liberalization and globalization, has been left with the choice and decision to the boys and girls. Along with marriage, other marital relationships like divorces, love marriage, inter-caste marriage, living together before marriage, widow marriages etc are generally in par with the modern and western societies.

2. Research Methods

The study was conducted during February to April 2022 in Thakre Rural Municipality of Dhading district. Both quantitative and qualitative information were taken. The quantitative information collected by using semi-structured questionnaire set while the qualitative type of information taken by in-depth interview through checklist. The questionnaire consisted of information regarding the age, age at marriage, number of offspring, type and process of marriage of the respondent couple as well as their parents in both sides (wife and husband). Whatever information were taken of the respondent couple, such information were also taken of the wife side parent and husband side parents. Qualitative checklist was used to take in-depth interview from

selected respondents from among the sampled respondents. A total of 75 ever married couple respondents for quantitative study and a total of 5 respondents for qualitative study were taken for this study. The quantitatively collected data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 version software in the form of frequency table, mean (average) and range and such descriptive statistics.

3. Major Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the collected data implies the following result in case of marriage of the respondent and their wife and husband side parents. The below are the major findings of the study (data not shown).

- All the respondent couples are local of the Thakre Rural Municipality, Ward no 3, however, for employment and for other reasons, few families are currently out of the rural municipality. Those scattered out of the usual place of residence are living in Barsa, Kathmandu, Banepa and other places. The husband side parent are relatively closer to the Thakre-3, but the wife side parent are extended over a wider areas like Chitwan, Kathmandu, Kavre, Nuwakot, Makawanpur, Tanahun, Udaypur etc. It indicates that the girls have come from wider areas to this place after getting married. Hence, marriage has acted well as a geographical connector.
- Marriage within the same caste (intra-caste) is considered norm in Nepalese society and different caste (inter-caste) marriage is strongly discouraged. The proportion of inter-caste marriage has grown recently in the study area but not quite high though. Almost 8 percent of the respondent couple has done inter-caste marriage while all other couple and their parents have performed intra-caste marriages. The proportion

of inter-caste marriages in the parental generation of either side (wife side and husband side parent) were well below....percent.

- The trend of performing love marriage is growing in the study area reaching upto 35 percent of the total marriages. Since the study area is well connected and highly accessible to national headquarter-Kathmandu, the trend of getting united into wedlock by one's own choice of the life partner is high. This trend was quite low in the parental generation of either side.
- It seems that whether love or arrange marriages, the trend of elopement is low. It means that the youths usually make choice of their potential mate, they report the same in the own family and convince the respective parents. Later on they perform marriage on ritual basis. Hence, most marriages even if started from love affair will end up in arrange marriage.
- The caste/ethnic disaggregation of the study population represents almost 45 percent of the Brahmin Chetri, 30 percent Janajatis and 25 percent Dalit's with slight variation in each case of marriage of either side parent. Hence, there is dominance of Brahmin Chetri, followed by Janajatis and Dalits. In case of religious composition of the study population, overwhelming majority are of Hindus, followed by the Buddhist and Christians representing 85 percent, 10 percent and 5 percent respectively.
- The average number of years of marriage of the respondent couple is 11 years, while the average number of years for marriage of both side parents (wife side as well as husband side) is 40 years. The mean age of the husband in married couple as well as in the wife side and husband side parent is more

than the female counterparts. This may be due to that Nepalese people prefer to marry with the girl which is younger in age than the husband. This social mentality is carried over from parental generation up to the present time couples.

- The married couples have in an average two offspring while the either side parents have at least 5 offspring on an average. This figure clearly shows the decreasing number of offspring in the successive generations. However, the respondent couple being towards the age of 30 years both on an average, can have other offspring if they have not done family planning already (information regarding family planning was not taken though).
- Corollary to the above finding, the proportion of couple following the social ritual for engaging in marriage has reduced with consequent rise of the elopement. Elopement occurs when the couples agree to tie the nuptial knots but the parent would not permit them to engage in marriage, and then they perform marriage even without the consent of the parents, which is on rise these days. This may be due to that rural community is still dominated by the traditional marriage system that promotes homogeneity between bride and groom side.
- The average mean age of the married couple is 29 years for the wife and 32 years for the husband. The mean age of wife side mother is 58 years while the wife side father is 61 years. On the other hand, the completed mean age of the husband side mother is 59 years and husband side father is 62 years.
- The average age at marriage of the respondent couple is 18 years for wife

and 21 years for the husband, while the age at side marriage of both mothers was 16 years and both side father was 18 years.

- The built in structure of the residence (house) which is one of the basic socio-economic indicator has connection with the married couple more to the wife side parent while the husband side parent live more in the Kacchi houses. It further verifies the fact that the boys would like to marry with the girl whose parents have higher economic status than their own parent.
- Size of acreage (landholding size) is another socio-economic indicator which indicates that the wife side parents are having more landholding size consequently higher economic status than the husband side parent. In case of Nepal, the bride side as well as groom side parent would prefer the would be keen having higher economic status than their own. However, the bride side parent might have done trade-off of the economic status of the

groom side parent for the education, employment and potentiality of the boy.

4. Conclusion

This study was carried out by taking a sample size of 75 married couple and their either side parent (wife side and husband side) which has facilitated comparison of marriage trend in between generations. It witnessed that rural community is growing more generous towards the love marriages but the inter-caste marriage is still more restricted. It sounds that more of the geographical combination by the marriage has been done rather than in terms of other social, caste and religious combination. While analyzing the household wealth of the all three sides (married couple, wife side and husband side parents) indicates that the boys have got marriage with the girl whose parents' economic status is better than their own parents. The influence of economic condition of the parent in low is also reflected in the economic situation of the married couple by having better household wealth in terms of landholding sizes and kind of houses.

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Assessing the Flood Resilience Frameworks in Nepal

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Abstract

Flood is one of the most common natural disasters affecting Nepal. The principal and most destructive type of flooding is from rivers including monsoon and flash flooding from heavy rainfall in mountainous areas. On an average, floods cause over 175 deaths each year and average annual economic losses exceeding USD 140 million. The government of Nepal and other stakeholders (NGO, INGO, UN and private sectors) have put their efforts to reduce the losses of life and livelihoods and strengthen disaster resilience. There are several disaster risk reduction and management acts, policies, plans, directives, approaches and frameworks with remarkable progresses made for reducing disasters risks in Nepal. This paper is mainly focused on assessing common flood resilience frameworks used in Nepal. The general objective of the paper is to review and reflect on the flood resilience frameworks in Nepal and its implications in the development practices. Accordingly, it is based on the study that entailed an in-depth review of the published documents and disaster risk reduction framework, approaches and water induced policies of the government of Nepal and subsequent field data collection. The primary data were collected from six key informant interviews and eight focus group discussions in three communities of Saptari district and three communities in Nawalparasi-west district in Nepal. Four cases as the framework and approach were reviewed and primary data generated were verified. Sendai Framework and nine minimum characteristics for disaster risk management are found useful frameworks, however these are general frameworks and do not cover all the aspects of the floods. Six pillars of flood resilient community framework are found dedicated to the flooding, but this framework also needs to be further validated through government and multi-stakeholders' consultation. The paper highlights that below discussed and reviewed frameworks and approaches are beneficial and useful for flood risk management, however, there is need of assigned government authority to monitor, review-reflect, coordination, communication and reporting for further improvements in the flood risk management in Nepal. A flood risk reduction and management framework are necessary to address the needs of flood prone municipalities and communities in Nepal.

Keywords: Flood, Resilience, Frameworks, Disaster Risk Reduction

1. Introduction

Flood is one of the most frequently occurring devastating disasters in Nepal. On an average, river flooding affects the lives of 21 million people, causes the reduction of US\$ 521 billion GDP (T. Luo, Robert S. Young, P. Belg, 2015), and inflicts internal displacement of several thousand people annually (Wilner, S.N., Otto, C. & Levermann, A, 2018). Flood-led disasters are increasing in frequencies and magnitudes together with more extreme events in recent decades as an impact of the rising global temperature all over the world, which needs an integrated approach that addresses social protection, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and climate change adaptation. When compared to the other natural hazards, floods affect more people globally; they can literally 'wash away' overnight what communities have gained over years in terms of growth and development (De Bruijn, 2004; Gersonius et al., 2010).

In Nepal, floods are expected to affect 156,600 people every year (WRI, 2010). The annual flooding affects the communities and households with more poverty and marginalization (Myron B Fiering, 1982). The losses from the annual flooding in Nepal are considered a serious problem to the government as well as to the ordinary people. Every year, it becomes a hotcake of discussion to the government, security agencies, and victims. Agricultural lands in the Terai regions have been degraded in Nepal through regular floods and inundations (MoHA- 2022). Koshi and Narayani rivers are big rivers in Nepal which causes floods almost every year and damages the lives and livelihoods of the rural communities along the flood plains. The Koshi and Narayani river basins flow from the northern Himalayas down to the Ganges River in the Bihar of India. People living on the banks of these river basins are among the people who have very low socio-economic characteristics

(Nepal, P, Khanal, N.R., Sharma, B.P.P., 2018). Their impoverished condition of living is attributed due to floods especially during the monsoon season that starts in June and ends in September in Nepal. Other disasters such as drought also prevails after the end of monsoon rains compounding the environmental shocks and stresses to the vulnerable.

Community is resilient to flood when it can sustain the critical functions as well as function the critical systems under flood stress caused by adaptation to change in the economic, social as well as physical environment and also, be self-reliant if external resources are cut off or limited. (Frankenberger, T., Mueller M., Spangler T., and Alexander S., 2013). Resilience is the extent to which communities can successfully combine collective actions and social capital in response to flood shocks and stresses. Social capital is observed as one of the key capacities at the household level that has a direct bearing on flood resilience. A community is a group of the households who live together and share and celebrate the similar culture, language, and economic livelihoods (N. Gyawali, D. Devkota, P. Chaudhary, A. Chhetri, and N. R. Devkota, 2020). The households discuss, interact, and work together to respond to any kind disasters including floods with bonding, linking, and networking actions that help to mitigate, response and recover from the adverse impacts of floods.

Flood resilience implies either withstanding the flood wave (resistance) or quick recovery with limited impact after being exposed to flood water (De Bruijn, 2004; Gersonius et al., 2010). Flood resilience frameworks are necessary to systematize the analysis of complex topics such as resilience. Many frameworks have been proposed to conduct resilience analysis and still many more will be introduced. While there is no harm in bringing new frameworks, the high

learning cost of these frameworks often reduces them to a theoretical exercise with limited applicability. Frameworks should be useful and support the achievement of intended goals of the development practices. The framework employs a holistic and dynamic systems-based approach that conducts a retrospective analysis of resilience by strengthening the existing elements, stakeholder, and conditions of the frameworks. Under this context comprehensive research was done with the objective to review and reflect on the flood resilience frameworks in Nepal and its implications in the development practices. The paper has explored and discussed on primary data and information from the fields in Saptari and Nawalparasi-west districts of Nepal and verified with community perspectives. The other objectives of this research were to identify the flood resilience frameworks practiced by the community people and followed by local government in Nepal, and to highlight the discourse in the paper about the trade-off of each flood resilience framework, and how National and Municipal governments interests are all served, especially with respect to flood preparedness, response and recover.

2. Methodology

The study entailed an in-depth review of the published documents and DRR and water induced policies of government of Nepal and subsequent field data collection. In the primary review of data, qualitative sources were collected and analyzed following seven steps:

Step 1: Exploring facts and evidence

Step 2: Initiating the search and exploration

Step 3: Storing and organizing information

Step 4: Selecting/deselecting information

Step 5: Expanding the search and exploration to include O=one or more MODES (Media, Observation(s), Documents, Expert(s), Secondary Data)

Step 6: Analyzing, synthesizing and comparing information, and

Step 7: Presenting and summarizing the conclusion.

These seven steps are multidimensional, interactive, emergent, iterative, dynamic, holistic, and synergistic; being fundamental tenets of social science research (Ormwuegbuzie et al. 2010).

Figure 1: Maps showing study area (map source: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/nepals-new-political-map/>). The study was done in three communities of Saptari district and 3 communities in Nawalparasi district in Nepal (Table 1).



Table 1: Description of Study Areas and Communities

Districts	Municipality	Community	Coordinates
Saptari	Saptakoshi	Sakhubari	86.95693°E; 26.7292°N
	Harunamagar	Bianpur	86.80099°E; 26.4550°N
	Kankalini	Gobangaraha	86.87519°E; 26.46067°N
Nawalparasi	Susta	Narsahi	83.834728°E; 27.417191°N
		Susta	83.869586°E; 27.358502°N
		Ratangunj	83.850313°E; 27.379677°N

2.1 Primary Data Collection

Visits to Nawalparasi and Saptari districts of Nepal were made to collect primary data and information regarding disaster risk reduction and management at local levels. During the visits, six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in participation of 8 to 12 community people in each FGD were carried out. The age group of the participants ranged between 20–70 years with an average 70% male and 30% female participation. FGD covered discussion on vulnerabilities of the communities, their mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery efforts, support from local government with regards to disaster risk reduction and management, change in the disaster governance in the federal structure of the country and establishment of municipalities, appropriateness, and efficiency of the government efforts in disaster risk reduction and management and the impact of disaster governance. Each FGD took approximately two hours to complete.

Similarly, 8 Key Informant Interviews (KIs) were carried out with 5 community leaders representing 1 female and 4 male, 1 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) expert male and 2 male government officials that continued for about 1.5 hours. The FGDs and KIs were based on check-list prepared in semi-structured format to facilitate discussion/interview, and the response

were transcribed with support of a note taker.

3. Results and Discussion

The paper discusses on flood resilience frameworks and reflect the current situation and future scenario of the flood risk management in Nepal. The authors of the paper understand that there are no specific government suggested framework designed for flood risk management. In Nepal, the flood hazards and risks are taken as one of the many hazards and risks of Nepal and viewed it broadly as other general disasters. The cases discussed under results and discussion sections are some common frameworks used in Nepal by different stakeholders. There are other frameworks too, not limited as discussed in this paper only. The paper does not undermine to other remaining frameworks which are not discussed in this paper.

3.1 Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy Trend in Nepal

There are several policies for disaster management but there is lack of coordination and awareness among the government agencies and officials that who is responsible for what during a disaster. Originally formulated in 1982, the Natural Disaster Relief Act (NDRA) also known as the Natural Calamity Relief Act (NCRA) was the first DRR policy in Nepal, and paved the way forward for DRR policy (Jones et al.

2014; Nepal et al. 2018). With changes in governance system, increased knowledge in DRR and needs for addressing different aspects of disaster other than relief were realized. The Government of Nepal has formulated number of acts, regulations, plans, policies and frameworks that have been directly or indirectly supportive in DRRM. Thus, evolution of DRRM was seen as follows:

- Natural Calamity (Relief) Act, 1982
- National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management, 1996
- Local Self Governance Act, 1999
- National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management in Nepal, 2009
- National Strategy for DRM, 2009
- Three Year Interim Plan 2007-2010
- National Disaster Response Framework, 2013
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, 2017 (replaces Natural Calamity (Relief) Act, 1982).
- Local Government Operation Act, 2017
- National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2018
- Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Plan of Action 2018-2030
- National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy, 2018

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2017) replaced the 1982 Natural Calamity Relief Act, which did not cover the broader spectrum of hazard mitigation and disaster risk reduction and management. Formed a few days before the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, the bill covered a range of disasters including health emergencies, famine, industrial accidents, and pollution, as well as weather-related disasters and

earthquakes. It also involves pathways for creation of more powerful institutional arrangements to deal with disasters. This stems in part from lessons learnt after the 2015 earthquake, which constituted a particular lack of coordination between different arms of government.

Legal policies, frameworks, guidelines and directives are very important, which bind all the stakeholders including government, civil society and private sectors for enforcing the given scopes, roles and responsibilities about flood risk management in Nepal. The policies also help to clarify the roles and responsibilities at the time of disaster for mitigation, preparedness, response and recover from the disaster. There are several policies and guidelines in disaster risk reduction and management, however there are no dedicated policies and guidelines for flood risk management. All disasters are seen in a basket view and the policies, acts, regulations, frameworks etc. are generalized. The most flood prone local governments too do not have designated specific roles and responsibilities for flood risk management. During the Key Informant Interview, chairperson of the Susta municipality said that *"there is no any specific plan or policies for flood preparedness activities, we are just supposed to support communities for relief items distributions when we have any types of disaster"*. This municipality is very prone to flood, it would be great, if government of Nepal formulated specific policies for flood risk management. The DRRM Act (2017) directs for preparedness, but there are more financial and administrative challenges. The local leadership and communities also propose for a higher share of the budget for compensation to the affected rather than increasing the preparedness budget". The DRR expert and government officials also informed that they know there are different policies, regulations and framework for DRRM,

but they have a very basic knowledge regarding those policies which they heard during the trainings or orientations. All the three tiers of the government have DRRM responsibilities but there is also no clear-cut designated roles and responsibilities among them for responding to a disaster situation. There are some dilemmas and conflicts about the roles of provincial and local government at the time of responding to the disaster including flood, which affects the communities further vulnerable to the risks and hazards from the disaster and the magnitude of the impacts are compounded (JOM, 2019). Participants of the FGD of Nawalparashi districts also support discourse about the dichotomy role of the governments -federal, provincial and local.

3.2 Nine Minimum Characteristics of Disaster Resilient Community

Nine minimum characteristics of disaster-resilient communities in Nepal are developed that should be included as a minimum component in community-based disaster risk reduction programming (MoFALD, 2013). The framework was designed in consultation with Government of Nepal, INGOs, NGOs, UN, donors and Red Cross / Red Crescent movement. The characteristics do not suggest any specific modalities, activities, and processes for how each CBDRR programming should achieve these characteristics. Nine minimum characteristic includes- Organizational base at municipal, ward and community level; access to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) information; multi-hazard risk and capacity assessments; community preparedness / response teams; Disaster Risk Reduction / Management plan at municipality level; Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Funds; access to community-managed resources; local level risk / vulnerability reduction measures, and community based early warning systems (MoFALD, 2013).

The nine minimum characteristics were designed in participatory manner in consultation with multi-stakeholders. This is considered as holistic disaster management framework. The framework has all components and very relevant to tackle or respond to any disasters at the community level. The framework discusses about establishing local DRR institutions, access to DRR information, task forces for responding the disasters, vulnerability mapping, emergency funds, early warning systems and role of each stakeholder at the local level. During the focus group discussion, the participants of Sakhubani, Saptari shared that "they are not aware about the framework as such, but all these nine characteristics are relevant and useful for responding to any disasters. The participants also shared that they have not been informed about any livelihood components for early recovery from the disasters. They believed, the poor and marginalized group of people, livelihoods options are very important for being resilient after hit by the disasters and need to be included any framework". The framework was developed during the Flagship 4 and supported by the donor funded project. The framework is loose guidelines, but not mandatory, and there are no responsible stakeholders at government level. This is also general framework for disaster management and not focused to the floods. Most of the characteristic can be applied to flood risk management, however safety net and livelihoods options are missing in the frameworks considering the niche of the community needs at the time of disaster risk management. The evaluation of the framework too highlights that in order to move beyond disaster preparedness and towards resilience there is a need to begin to address underlying poverty through the strengthening of livelihoods (Owen K.J et. al., 2017). Community is not resilient to disaster unless their livelihoods are resilient.

Households with livelihood resilience will contribute to community and regional livelihood resilience. Transformational changes in certain communities may help the region as a whole to become more resilient through increasing the diversity of livelihoods (Fikret B & Helen R, 2013).

3.3 Sendai Framework for Disaster Resilient Community

The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) is an ambitious agreement that sets out the overall objective to substantially reduce disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries. It pursues the following goal: *"Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience."*

The Framework recognizes that the strong commitment and involvement of political leadership in every country is crucial. State level governments share their responsibility to reduce disaster risk with other stakeholders such as local government, the private sector and other non-State actors. It puts in place 4 clear priorities for action and 7 global targets for the substantial reduction of disaster risk. The four priorities include (a) understanding disaster risk, (b) strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, (c) investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and (d) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction (UNISDR, 2015).

The Sendai Framework clearly states that in order to reduce the frequency and impact of disasters, what is required is to better understand disaster risk and to improve risk governance so that existing risks are reduced, and the creation of new risks is minimized (Mizutori M, 2020). This is broad framework in general and focused on disaster risk reduction, understanding risk of multiple disasters, mainstreaming DRR into development process and partnership of government, private sector, and civil society (Whole-of-Society Approach). This is owned by the national government through Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA). There are priority areas and target for the government, and it is shown that there are good improvements in the target as well, however, there is dichotomy in the roles of the three tiers of the governments. The provincial and local government are not aware about the framework, neither there are any specific roles or scope for them. During the key informant interview with Mayor of Hanumannagar Kankalini municipality, he mentioned that "I have heard about it but not sure what to do with the framework and who is responsible for what and where are the resources. We need the concise policies with actions and resources. We have limited human resources and technical expertise for managing all kinds of the disaster. My municipality is very prone to flood, and it occurs every year, so that I was looking for focused plan and policies for flood risk management. I know, we are autonomy institution, and I am planning to have separate policies and guidelines to cope, withstand and recover with the impact of flooding".

The government officials during KII also shared that municipalities share the flood affected population, damages and losses data and updates on the relief and recovery activities. However, they are unaware about the SFDRR priorities

and targets. Hanumannagar Kankalini and Saptakoshi municipalities have localized the BIPAD portal however, they do not have authority and access the disaster related data in the system. Capacity building and engagement of local governments in localizing SFDRR is very necessary to achieve the goals and targets in a sustainable way. Nepal is currently focusing on the capacity building of province and local level governments on DRRM that include technical, formulation of relevant policy and legal documents and mainstreaming and integrating DRRM in development plans and programs from central to local level (MoHA, 2022).

Focus group discussion participants in Bisanpur, Sapatari expressed that they know there are several policies and plans for DRRM but how this helps the needy people, we don't know, they questioned policies for whom. Some of the preparedness activities are carried out by non-government organizations. Post flood relief are biased and accessible to those near to the governing officials. This discourse indicates that there is no accountability, ownership and clear roles and responsibilities of the concerned stakeholders. There should be dedicated authority for monitoring, review/reflections, coordination and reporting for meaningful use of such frameworks.

3.4 Six pillars of Community Flood Resilience

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) as an international humanitarian organization has developed Six Pillars Approach to define what does a community need to be resilient to the flood (LWR 2018). The framework is developed with the learning and reflection of Transboundary Flood Resilience (TBR) in Nepal and India for more than 10 years. Floods destroy livelihoods, property and lives and exacerbate problems in already

struggling communities. Without the means to be prepared for and recover from such losses, reoccurring floods can keep people entrenched in poverty, forcing them to continuously start over from scratch. Ultimately, flood resilient communities have the means to absorb the impacts of floods because they are prepared beforehand and are equipped to recoup any losses afterwards. Should a flood take away their means of making a living or feeding their families, they are able to adapt their ways and resources to make ends meet. In some cases, these communities transform, adopting fundamental changes to their lives and institutions that significantly and sustainably reduce their vulnerabilities to floods. In order to build these attributes and enhance their absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities, a flood resilient community depends on six things, a community needs- a) an Early Warning System (EWS) (b)community-based Disaster Risk Reduction (CB DRR) Institutions (c)Disaster Resilient (DR) Infrastructures, (d) Safety Nets, (e)Flood Resilient (FR) Livelihoods, and (f)public - Private Support (LWR, 2018).

LWR developed the framework from its learning in two river basins – Koshi and Narayani in Nepal and India. The framework has identified the pillars, which describe what needs to be a resilient community. These flood resilient communities have an EWS, CB DRR institutions, DR infrastructure and safety nets to help them absorb the impacts of a flood through well-planned, well-trained, and well-resourced preparation and recovery efforts. Their community members can adapt their livelihoods in ways that allow them to continue earning a living even after a flood as well as to increase their food security and incomes to be better prepared for the next flood. Their relationships with the public and

private sectors have transformed to afford them the long-term support they need to sustain their absorptive and adaptive capacities as well as the freedom to make progress towards improving their quality of life. During the Key informant interview with the Mayor of Saptakoshi, Saptari it was learned that six pillar approach is very useful because this is focused to the flooding, which is the major disaster in the municipality. The key informant also highlighted that they will be developing three communities as flood resilient model communities this year through applying six pillars approach. It is our hope that with proper contextualization, the six-pillar model will help local governments, development practitioners and flood-vulnerable communities plan and design new initiatives as well as reassess past or ongoing ones to build flood resilience in development contexts. The six pillars framework has also helped the municipality in Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) planning at local level focused to the flood vulnerable people". The participants of the focus group discussion from the Narsahi mentioned that this is good approach because it is integrated as per the need of the community to mitigate, preparedness, response and recover from the impact of flooding. This framework has also safety nets and livelihoods options which are primary factor to quickly recover from the impact of flooding. The communities of Saptari and Nawalparasi who have been living along the flood plains of Koshi and Narayani rivers from ages shared that the government and development agencies are more focused on disaster preparedness and response prioritizing CBDRR and early warning. However, to make communities resilient it is necessary to make their livelihoods and infrastructures resilient. The six pillars of resilient community framework is community focused because it covers

livelihoods and safety nets aspects of the most marginalized and flood vulnerable people (LWR 2018). The participants of FGD and KI from the Saptari and Nawalparasi-west districts discussed that the application of this framework is very contextual in Koshi and Narayani river basin. The framework was designed with limited stakeholders and partners engagement. There is need of a big discourse on ownership and accountability and involvement of multi-stakeholders including national and local governments.

4. Conclusion

Nepal has developed some DRR frameworks or approaches, policies, strategies, and plan relating to disaster risk reduction and management, but very few frameworks or approaches focused to flood disasters are developed. The government is dedicated to implement some of the frameworks such as SFDRR and nine minimum characteristics, but it is still unclear how these frameworks and policies will transfer to the new federal system and engage the target communities and stakeholders at the local level.. Several issues remain uncertain given the introduction of a new federal system of government as well as the recent promulgation of the 2017 DRRM Act. Under the 2017 DRRM Act, the roles and responsibilities of three different government is still not clear enough to carry out the responsibilities independently. The policy formulation and institutional setup does not give expected output unless there is ability and competence to operationalize the intent of the relevant frameworks, acts and policies (Nepal et al. 2018). Different research and studies have also highlighted the need of technical capacity building of the local government, resource allocation and finances for formulation of relevant local frameworks, plan and policies for disaster risk management (Hayes et al. 2020; IOM 2019; The Asia Foundation 2019).

Defining clear roles and responsibilities, creating ownership and accountability are crucial for effective management of any frameworks, act, plans and directives. There should be dedicated institutions for technical backstopping, strong monitoring, coaching, mentoring, review reflections and reporting mechanism in all three tiers of the government for mainstreaming DRRM.

Six pillars approach is holistic and dedicated to the flood risk management. The rural communities have appreciated because the framework also includes safety nets and livelihoods which are very crucial to quickly recover from disasters. However, this framework needs further validation in the field and should build the ownership and accountability from the local government. The major point is such that these frameworks need to be promulgated to all three tiers of governments with clear roles and responsibilities. More technical and managerial supports are needed to local government as the implementer and responder to disaster situations. These frameworks should be flexible and revised based on the learning through a bottom-up process. Focused to particular disasters like flooding and its risk and vulnerability assessment, quantifying risk, database for vulnerable (or affected) households, mapping and tracking of available external support, coordinated approach in preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery and also planning and preparing for worst case scenario will certainly enable the local government and its localization. The general frameworks for DRRM at national level is very effective. The government should also categorize the districts and municipalities based on the vulnerabilities and disasters scenarios. Localized frameworks to address the hazards, risks, vulnerabilities and disasters of the local government and communities need to be prioritized.

The paper highlights that above discussed and reviewed frameworks and approaches are beneficial and useful for flood risk management, there are no specific recommended framework, neither it is necessary that there is need of government authority to monitor, review-reflect, coordination, communication and reporting for further improvements in the flood risk management in Nepal. A flood risk reduction and management framework is crucial to address the needs of flood prone municipalities and communities in Nepal, however this needs to be flexible and dynamic based on the rural context of Nepal.

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Financial Self-Sufficiency in “Self-Governed” and “Jointly-Governed” Irrigation System in Inner Terai of Nepal

NARAYAN PRASAD BHATTA, PhD

Abstract

Water resource is considered strategic natural resource for change. It is globally shrinking and becoming scarce resources to meet the demand for human utilization. The efficient management to meet the increasing demand is currently one of the important issues. Irrigation is a major source of water supply for agricultural production as it boosts agricultural productivity and faster economic growth. Nepal has massive water resources for surface irrigation development, but Nepal is making use of less than 8.0 percent of its water resources potential. In this context, a research was conducted in June 2018 as partial fulfillment of PhD in Rural Development (Dissertation on Governance and Sustainability of Irrigation Systems). The financial self-sustainability intends to measure the sustainability of the irrigation institutions in terms of performance. The research findings imply that of self-governed irrigation systems generated revenues from water taxes and performed all the maintenance tasks in a cost effective manner compared to the jointly-governed irrigation systems canals. The research concludes that financial self-sufficiency is higher in self-governed irrigation systems in comparison to jointly-governed irrigation systems.

Keywords: self-sufficiency, Efficiency of revenue, Efficiency of cost, Finance

1. Background of the Study

Water consumption is steadily increasing due to fast population growth, global warming, industrial development, faster economic growth, boost agriculture produces. Establishment of a sound governance mechanism is a must to utilize the available stock of water. Water is a strategic natural resource to drive change

(Upadhayay, 2012). Water is an essential resource for all life span. Water resources are globally shrinking and becoming scarce resources for development. Asia faces a daunting water crisis that threatens its economic growth (Chellaney, 2011). The efficient management of water resource to meet the increasing demand

is currently becoming one of the important issues. Agricultural production depends on the availability of irrigation facilities and its proper management (DoI, 2016). Questions have arisen whether irrigation is capable of continuing the high level of agricultural production in the long term without damaging the environment or not (Pereira, Gillies, Jensen, Feddes & LeSaffre, 1996).

A large number of studies have been conducted on irrigation management, but it has not been studied the comparison between governance and sustainability of irrigation systems. Hence, this study was conducted to compare the governance and sustainability between self-governed and jointly-governed irrigation systems. Hence, the researcher posed this as a research topic. Against the above backdrop, the research question is: How do proper operation and maintenance practices lead to the financial self-sustainability of the irrigation systems?

2. Objective

This academic research intends to address the following objective: compare the financial self-sustainability of the self-

managed and jointly managed irrigation systems.

3. Methodology

The study began with a research question: under which governance arrangements, do farmers have the best financial sustainability of self-governed irrigation systems upon the jointly-governed irrigation systems? This study used both descriptive and analytical research design. Quantitative information was used to investigate the problems or issues by reviewing the audit report, meeting minutes, water users' association constitution and bylaws documents.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Financial Efficiency of Revenue

The efficiency of revenue operation (regular internal) income over the expenditure is important aspects for the financial sufficiency of the irrigation system. The financial sustainability of the irrigation system can be possible if the total annual current income covers the total annual expenditure in the irrigation systems which is shown in the following formula (Sener, Yuksel & Konukcu, 2007).

$$\text{Efficiency of Revenue} = \frac{\text{Total Operating Income}}{\text{Total Command Area}}$$

Table 1: Efficiency of Revenue (NPR per ha)

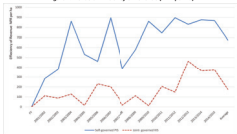
FY	Self-governed Panchakanya Irrigation System (PIS)			Jointly-governed Khageri Irrigation System (KIS)		
	Total Operating Income (NPR)	Total Command Area (ha)	Efficiency of Revenue (NPR per ha)	Total Operating Income (NPR)	Total Command Area (ha)	Efficiency of Revenue (NPR per ha)
2001/02	170,401.50	600	284	435,905.79	3900	111.77
2002/03	225,752.92	600	376.25	341,300.50	3900	87.51
2003/04	516,186.63	600	860.31	504,321.84	3900	128.54
2004/05	319,325.83	600	532.21	59,568.00	3900	15.27

2005/06	276,938.40	600	461.56	902,534.79	3900	231.42
2006/07	536,766.77	600	894.61	781,315.00	3900	200.34
2007/08	233,689.00	600	389.48	67,860.98	3900	17.4
2008/09	346,836.50	600	578.06	435,905.79	3900	111.77
2009/10	516,186.63	600	860.31	48,202.00	3900	12.36
2010/11	446,864.68	600	744.77	801,333.00	3900	205.42
2011/12	537,440.63	600	895.73	579,055.29	3900	148.48
2012/13	498,281.68	600	830.47	1,806,969.91	3900	463.33
2013/14	525,439.68	600	875.73	1,414,020.00	3900	362.57
2014/15	519,625.55	600	866.04	1,446,000.00	3900	370.77
Average	404,981.17	600	674.97	687,223.12	3900	176.21

Field Study, 2016

Table 1 shows that the average efficiency of Revenue was found to be NPR 674.97 per ha in self-governed PIS while jointly-governed KIS, it was found to be NPR 176.21 per ha. Figure 1 displays the trend of the efficiency of revenue of both irrigation systems.

Figure 1: Trends of Efficiency of Revenue (NPR per ha)



Field Study, 2016

Figure 1 shows the trend in the efficiency of revenue of both irrigation systems. The average efficiency of revenue was found higher (NPR 674.97 per ha) of the self-governed PIS than the jointly-governed KIS (NPR 176.21 per ha). It shows the efficiency of revenue was better in the self-governed PIS in comparison to the jointly-governed KIS.

3.2 Efficiency of Cost

The efficiency of cost is shown in the following formula (Sener, Yukseal & Konukcu, 2007).

$$\text{Efficiency of Cost} = \frac{\text{Total Operating Expenses}}{\text{Total Command Area}}$$

Throughout the field study key informants were inquired about the efficiency of the cost of the systems and in this regard, their response is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Efficiency of Cost (NPR per ha)

FY	Self-governed PIS			Jointly-governed KIS		
	Total Operating Expenses (NPR)	Total Command Area (ha)	Efficiency of Cost (Percent)	Total Operating Expenses (NPR)	Total Command Area (ha)	Efficiency of Cost (NPR per ha)
2001/02	82,403	600	137.34	429,644.43	3900	110.17
2002/03	120,667.53	600	201.11	151,415.57	3900	38.82
2003/04	506,368	600	843.61	370,980.08	3900	95.12
2004/05	439,609.48	600	732.68	414,539.30	3900	106.29
2005/06	282,989.00	600	471.65	93,407.00	3900	23.95
2006/07	87764.00	600	146.27	804,023	3900	206.16
2007/08	51,411.00	600	85.69	540,591	3900	138.61
2008/09	209,536.00	600	349.23	73,981	3900	18.97
2009/10	506,368.00	600	843.61	216,628	3900	55.55
2010/11	492,026.00	600	820.04	134,448	3900	34.47
2011/12	672,623.00	600	1121.04	266,554	3900	68.35
2012/13	512,890.00	600	854.82	760,336	3900	194.96
2013/14	475,069.00	600	791.78	2,276,598	3900	583.85
2014/15	458,988.00	600	764.98	466,628	3900	119.65
Average	349,879	600	583.13	500,012.38	3900	128.21

Field Study, 2016

Table 2 shows that the highest efficiency is the cost NPR 854.82 per ha in the self-governed PIS in FY 2012/13 whereas in jointly-governed KIS, the highest efficiency of cost was 583.85 percent.

The average efficiency of cost was found

NPR 583.13 per ha in self-governed PIS whereas in jointly-governed KIS, it was found NPR 128.21 per ha. The average efficiency of cost was higher in self-governed PIS in comparison of jointly-governed KIS. Figure 7.3 displays the trend of the efficiency of the cost of the irrigation systems.

Figure 2: Efficiency of Cost (NPR per ha)



Field Study, 2016

Table 2 shows that the highest efficiency is the cost NPR 854.82 per ha in self-governed PS in FY 2012/13 whereas in jointly-governed KIS, it was NPR 583.85 per ha. The average efficiency of cost was higher (NPR 583.13 per ha) in self-governed PS whereas in jointly-governed KIS, it was NPR 128.21 per ha.

3.3 Effectiveness of Fee Collection

Economic indicators deal with how much fee collected from farmers, yearly maintenance and operation expenditure and whether system self-sufficient or not (Sener, Yüksel & Konukcu, 2007). Effectiveness of fee collection represents how a portion of

fees collected from water users, whereas financial self-sufficiency represents the collected fees from water users either sufficient or insufficient for operation and maintenance cost in each year. Sener, Yüksel and Konukcu (2007) stated that the effectiveness of fee collection is calculated, dividing the total collected fee by total fee to be collected as the succeeding procedure:

$$\text{Effectiveness of Fee Collection} = \frac{\text{Total Collected Fee}}{\text{Total Fee to Be Collected}} \times 100$$

In field studies, about the effectiveness of fee collection systems, key informants were enquired, and their response is summarized in the Table 3.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Fee Collection (Percent)

FY	Self-governed PS			Jointly-governed KIS		
	Total Collected Fee (NPR)	Total Fee to be Collected (NPR)	Effective-ness Fee Collection (Percent)	Total Collected Fee (NPR)	Total Fee to be Collected (NPR)	Effective-ness Fee Collection (Percent)
2001/02	170,401.50	1,086,000.00	15.69	435,905.79	1,209,000.00	36.06
2002/03	225,752.92	1,086,000.00	20.79	341,300.50	1,209,000.00	28.23
2003/04	516,186.63	1,086,000.00	47.53	501,321.64	1,209,000.00	41.47

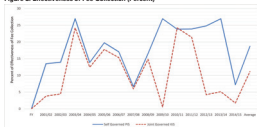
2004/05	379,325.83	1,086,000.00	29.40	59,569.00	1,209,000.00	4.93
2005/06	276,938.40	1,086,000.00	25.50	902,534.79	1,209,000.00	74.65
2006/07	536,766.77	1,086,000.00	49.43	781,315.00	1,209,000.00	64.62
2007/08	233,889.00	1,086,000.00	21.52	67,860.98	1,209,000.00	5.61
2008/09	346,836.50	1,086,000.00	31.94	439,905.79	1,209,000.00	36.06
2009/10	516,886.63	1,086,000.00	47.53	48,202.00	1,209,000.00	3.99
2010/11	446,864.68	1,086,000.00	41.15	801,333.00	1,209,000.00	66.26
2011/12	537,440.63	1,086,000.00	49.49	579,055.29	1,209,000.00	47.90
2012/13	498,281.68	1,086,000.00	45.88	1,806,999.91	1,209,000.00	149.46
2013/14	525,439.68	1,086,000.00	48.38	1,414,020.00	1,209,000.00	116.96
2014/15	519,625.55	1,086,000.00	47.85	1,446,000.00	1,209,000.00	119.60
Aver age	404,981.17	1,086,000.00	37.29	134,722.32	1,209,000.00	11.14

Field Study, 2016

The effectiveness of fee collection and water tax of self-governed PS was 37.29 percent which is better than the jointly-governed KIS, i.e., 11.14 percent. Trends in

the effectiveness of fee collection of the two irrigation systems are demonstrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Effectiveness of Fee Collection (Percent)



As shown in Figure 3, the effectiveness of the fee collection percent was better in self-governed PS from 2001/02 to 2014/15 FY than the jointly-governed KIS.

3.4 Financial Self-Sufficiency

Financial indicators deal with how much fee collected from water user, yearly

operation and maintenance expenditure and whether system financially sufficient or not. Sener, Yuksel & Konukcu (2007) stated that the financial self-sufficiency indicates the revenue from the irrigation over the expenditure for operation and maintenance is calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Financial Self-Sufficiency} = \frac{\text{Total Annual Fee Revenue}}{\text{Total Annual Expenditure}} \times 100$$

Regarding the financial self-sufficiency, it indicated that the self-governed PIS was more financially sufficient (115.75 percent) than the jointly-governed KIS (24.05 percent). Due to sole responsibility of

farmers and more ownership bearing in self-governed PIS, they were able to collect a good amount of water taxes. In field studies key informants were inquired about the financial self-sufficiency (effectiveness of fee collected) of the systems, their response is summarized in Table 4.

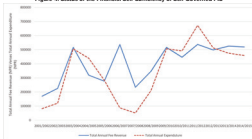
Table 4: Financial Self-Sufficiency (in Percent)

FY	Self-governed PIS			Jointly-governed KIS		
	Total Annual Fee Revenue (NPR)	Total Annual Expenditure (NPR)	Self-Sufficiency (Percent)	Total Annual Fee Revenue (NPR)	Total Annual Expenditure (NPR)	Self-Sufficiency (Percent)
2001/02	170,401.50	82,403.00	206.79	435,905.79	96,628.00	2621.52
2002/03	225,792.92	120,667.53	187.09	341,300.50	414,462.94	82.411
2003/04	516,186.63	506,168.00	101.98	501,321.64	355,506.78	141.02
2004/05	319,325.83	439,609.48	72.64	50,569.00	395,905.78	15.046
2005/06	276,938.40	282,989.00	97.86	902,534.79	804,032.50	112.25
2006/07	536,766.77	87,764.00	611.60	781,315.00	540,591.00	144.53
2007/08	233,689.00	51,411.00	454.55	67,860.98	73,981.00	91.73
2008/09	346,836.50	209,536.00	165.53	435,905.79	216,628.00	201.22
2009/10	516,186.63	506,168.00	101.98	48,202.00	134,448.00	35.85
2010/11	446,864.68	462,026.00	96.82	1801,133.00	266,554.00	300.55
2011/12	537,440.63	672,623.00	79.90	579,055.29	1,118,500.00	51.77
2012/13	498,281.68	512,890.00	97.15	1,806,999.91	760,336.60	237.66
2013/14	525,439.68	475,069.00	110.60	1,414,020.00	2,276,968.00	62.10
2014/15	519,625.55	458,988.00	113.21	1,446,000.00	466,628.00	309.88
Average	404,98117	349,879.43	115.75	134,722.32	560,062.14	24.05

Field Study, 2016

DoI (1997) stated that if the WUA rate is able to increase the Irrigation Service Fee (ISF) collection, efficiency of summer paddy is ensured, then its current rate

can be decreased. Trends in the financial self-sufficiency of self-governed PIS is demonstrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Status of the Financial Self-Sufficiency of Self-Governed PIS

Field Study, 2016

The sufficiency level was decreasing due to the land plotting for *gharedi* (land allocated for the purpose of houses), change occupation and reluctant with farming jobs in the self-governed PIS and jointly-governed KIS. As the financial

viability of WUA was critically valued for the sustainability of the institution, the WUA raised enough resources to cover the operating expenses. Trends in the financial self-sufficiency of jointly-governed KIS is demonstrated in Figure 5.

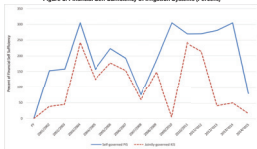
Figure 5: Status of the Financial Self-Sufficiency of Jointly-Governed KIS

Field Study, 2016

The collection of ISF in the jointly-governed RIS was low, resulting in reduced budgetary provisions for operation and maintenance. Thus, in turn, has triggered deferred maintenance and unreliable irrigation. It covers the operation and maintenance cost

of the infrastructure leading to deterioration of the asset and declining service levels with subsequent reduction in recovery of ISF. Trends in the financial self-sufficiency are given in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Financial Self-Sufficiency of Irrigation Systems (Percent)



Field Study, 2016

The financial sustainability is to measure the sustainability of the irrigation institutions in terms of performance. The financial sustainability can be used to plan what to do at that moment in the days to come. The financial sustainability is measured for assessing the efficiency of an institution. This is used to determine the income of each period so as to note the financial performance of the irrigation institutions to conduct its operation and maintenance or not. In order to obtain higher income, irrigation institutions should try to do water fee collection activities that support the irrigation institutions' income rate. The financial sustainability consists of: revenue and expenses of the irrigation institutions. The financial sustainability is an irrigation

institutions' ability to compare all the income and expenditure costs. The financial sustainability is said well if its income is greater than the total costs. In the case of irrigation systems, besides financial viability, other benefits as employment generation, nutritional standards and market activities associated with forward and backward linkages are common.

4. Conclusion

The percent of financial self-sufficiency is higher in self-governed irrigation systems in comparison to jointly-governed irrigation systems. WUA was able to secure financial requirement to carry out all the operation in time using own resources in an economized way in self-governed irrigation systems,

but the collected fund was far below for operation in jointly-governed irrigation systems. Which confirmed that this can affect the sustainability of the systems in the long run and dependent over do. Lack of efficiency and effectiveness of the irrigation fee collection has been a key factor for low financial self-sufficiency in jointly-governed irrigation system.

'Bottom up' approach was adopted to foster the collective goals among the irrigators

in self-governed irrigation system, but 'top-down' approach in jointly-governed irrigation system, which was given little inspiration to farmers towards water delivery. The farmers felt a more sense of ownership over the system due to full-fledged authority in self-governed irrigation systems, whereas in jointly-governed irrigation system, Department of irrigation status quo was still prevailing which resulted increased inability of the farmers to benefit as much as they should.

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Project Monitoring and Evaluation Practices and Project Performance: The Mediating Role of Management Support

Late PRABIN RAJ GAUTAM, PhD Scholar

Abstract

This study examines the relationship among project monitoring and evaluation practice, management support, and project performance using survey data from 296 project leaders. To test the direct and indirect effects of project monitoring and evaluation practice on project performance, LISREL analysis was employed. The association between project monitoring and evaluation practices and project performance is explained using management support as a mediating variable. As a result, project monitoring and evaluation practice are positively related to project performance, with management support serving as a mediating variable.

Keywords: Monitoring and Evaluation, Performance, Management

1. Introduction

Project Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) is a project management tool, which acquires specific project aspects of resource utilization to inform management for course correction and planning (Ika, & Hodgson, 2014). Scholars have explained the relationship between PM&E and project performance in construction, environmental change, land management, and mariculture (Kisi, Agyekum, Baiden, Tannor, Asamoah, & Andam, 2019; Emmett & GMEP Team, 2013; Odhiambo, Wakibia, & Sakwa, 2020; Hauge, 2001). Leach (1999) found that PM&E activities enabled better performance of the project by informing management for course

correction and planning. However, the empirical research results might contradict each other. This raises whether PM&E is always an appropriate tool or whether its relationship with project performance is more complex. There could be different PM&E tools and different perspectives may view differently the appropriateness of PM&E as a project management tool.

The Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) views PM&E as a project management tool that should be judged on its usefulness to its intended users (Franke, Christie & Parna, 2002; Patton, 2003). The PM&E

practices require managerial support such as communication, managerial commitment, leadership role, and motivation (Lämsä & Savolainen, 2000; Belout & Gauvreau, 2004; Kumar, 2009; Kamau & Mohamed, 2015). From the UFE perspective, management support is an essential factor. However, resource constraints make it challenging. According to Ika Diallo and Thuillier (2010), management support becomes a strength of the PM&E team.

Using UFE theory, I develop and test hypotheses on such mediating effects using a sample of 296 entrepreneurship development project implementing organizations associated with the NGO Federation of Nepal. The primary objective of this study is to examine how PM&E practices affect project performance through management support. I focus on the importance of management support in the relationship between PM&E practices and project performance by examining the direct and indirect effects of monitoring and evaluating project performance through management support. The rest of the paper sets out the hypothesis of this study, followed by the methodology. Then, the study presents the results. Discussion and conclusions are presented in the last section.

2. Hypotheses Setting

2.1 PM&E and Project Performance

The importance of M&E to project performance has been acknowledged in the project management literature (Kimweli, 2013; Kithangacha, 2018; Dobi, 2012). I distinguished five dimensions of PM&E, including M&E Planning (MEP), Baseline Study (BS), M&E Budget (MEB), M&E Scheduling (MES), and Midterm and End term Evaluation (MEE) as suggested by Kisi, Agyeikum, Baldeh, Tannor, Asamoah and Andam (2019), and Crawford and Bryce (2003). All these dimensions lead to project

performance. Thus, PM&E practices may be a good predictor of project performance. These arguments lead to the following hypothesis given in the next section.

Hypothesis 1: PM&E practice will be positively related to Project performance.

2.2 PM&E Practice and Management Support

PM&E practices are critical for the project team to achieve the project's desired goals (Millstone, Van Zwanenberg & Marshall, 2010). Likewise, management support such as communication, managerial commitment, leadership role, and motivation plays a significant role in project success (Lämsä & Savolainen, 2000; Belout & Gauvreau, 2004; Kumar, 2009; Kamau & Mohamed, 2015). The management support allows the project team to deliver planned project outputs (Dvir, Raz & Shenhar, 2003). With PM&E, the project team can avoid failures and fulfill project promises. Management support is a mediating factor between the PM&E and project performance in this study. The mediating variable is an intervening variable that helps to see changes in the dependent variable (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West & Sheets, 2002). The mediating variable usually changes. I can reasonably expect a positive relationship between PM&E and management support. Hence, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: PM&E practice will be positively related to management support.

2.3 Management Support and Project Performance

It is important to note that management support is a critical factor in achieving project success. The UFE theory recognizes management support as a strategic resource of project management (Patton, 2003). Previous studies have uncovered the critical role of management support in PM&E practice (Kamau & Mohamed, 2015). Furthermore, a project team that receives

management support can deliver project promises in new and distinctive ways. From the UFE perspective, management support is essential for cost control methodologies (Patton, 2003). Therefore, when PM&E practice receives management support, the project team is more inclined to achieve cost, schedule, and quality performances. It is believed that management support is critical because of its positive relationship with project performance. Thus, I propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Management support will be positively related to project performance.

2.4 The Mediating Effect of Management Support

Micah & Luketero (2017) have suggested that the relationship between project PM&E practices and project performance may be more complex than a simple main effect. As noted previously, hypothesis 2 states that PM&E practices will be positively related to the project performance and hypothesis 3 states that management support will be positively related to project performance. These two-hypothesis link PM&E with project performance and management support with project performance. This means that the relationship between PM&E practice and project performance is hypothesized to be indirect. Therefore, management support plays an intermediate role between project performance and independent variables of PM&E practice. Hence, the following hypothesis is developed.

Hypothesis 4: Management support will mediate the relationship between PM&E and project performance.

3. Research Methods

I employed a questionnaire survey approach to collect data, and all items required seven-point Likert-scale responses ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" through 4= "neither Agree nor disagree," to 7= "strongly agree." The population in the study was

the Kathmandu-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) listed in the NGO Federation of Nepal. Of 330 questionnaires emailed, 301 responses were received, and five of them were incomplete. The remaining 296 valid and complete questionnaires were used for the quantitative analysis. The four dimensions of management support were Communication I, Managerial Commitment (MC), Leadership Role (LR), and Motivation (M) (Lämsä & Savolainen, 2000; Kumar, 2009; Kamau & Mohamed, 2015; Belout & Gauvreau, 2004). Project performance dimension was measured with three dimensions: Cost Performance (CP), Project Schedule Performance (PSR), and Project Quality Performance (QPP) (Kissi, Agyekum, Baiden, Tannor, Asamoah, & Andam, 2019). The study employed Cronbach alphas and composite reliabilities to measure the reliability of the multi-item scale for each dimension, and reliability measures were above the recommended minimum standard of 0.60 as advised by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). In this study, both measures of reliability are above 0.70.

This study used LISEREL analysis to test the direct and indirect effect of project PM&E practices on project performance. This analysis provides a chi-square value and five indices to confirm the path models. The indices are the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index (AGFI), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Residual (RMSR). The result of this analysis satisfied the fit indexes of confirmatory factor analysis ranged from adequate to excellent for project PM&E practices: GFI=0.98, AGFI=0.95, NFI=0.94, CFI=0.98, RMSR=0.02, management support=0.97, AGFI=0.94, NFI=0.95, CFI=0.97, RMSR=0.01, and project performance: GFI=0.94, AGFI=0.89, NFI=0.92, CFI=0.98, RMSR=0.03. Additionally, the three models of project PM&E practices, management support, and project performance had

chi-squares less than three times their degrees of freedom, $137.52/59=2.34$, $212.58/98=2.16$, and $65.29/25=2.61$, respectively. The confirmatory factor analysis results suggested that the models of project PM&E, management support, and project performance provided a good fit for the data (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Furthermore, convergent validity was measured using the t-statistics for analyzing path coefficients from the latent variables to the related items. This study found statistically significant with the highest t-value for the items measuring project PM&E practices 9.41 and the lowest t-value for the items measuring project performance 2.05. These values exceed the standard requirement of t-value 2 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). It confirms the satisfactory convergent validity for all dimensions. This study employed the confidence interval for each pairwise correlation estimate (i.e., \pm two standard errors) should not include 1, the percentage of variance extracted, and measure the correlation between each pair of constructs, one at a time equal to 1 to satisfy the discriminant validity requirements (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hoyle, 2000). All these conditions

satisfied all pairwise correlations in three measurement models, the percentage of variance extracted exceeded the construct's shared variance with every other construct, and the correlation between each pair of constructs, one at a time, is equal to 1. The chi-square difference in all cases was significant at $p<0.001$ level of significance. So, each measurement model satisfies discriminant validity between all pairs of constructs. This study has some limitations. Because of the cross-sectional nature of the survey, I am unable to investigate causal associations between my variables.

4. Analysis and Results

LISREL 8.52 was used to analyze the hypothesized relationship. Each path between constructs was evaluated for statistical significance of the path coefficient. The hypothesized relationship was tested with a complete model, and the result of LISREL analysis suggested that the model is a perfect fit with GFI=0.943, AGFI=0.878, NFI=0.986, CFI=0.99, RMSEA=0.0135, the chi-square 73.06 (df=40). The results were presented in the table 1 below, and the figure 1 showed the path coefficients, t-value, and constructed relationship.

Table 1

Standardized path estimates				
Hypothesized relationship				
Hypothesis	Variables	Path Coefficient	t-value	Result
H1	Project PM&E will be positively related to Project performance.	0.48	7.42	Supported
H2	Project PM&E will be positively related to Management Support.	1.2	11.9	Supported
H3	Management support will be positively related to project performance.	0.52	8.37	Supported

$p<0.05$, $p<0.01$. $n=296$ (two-tailed test).

As hypothesized, all three hypotheses of H1, H2, and H3 are supported. It means, there is a positive relationship between project PM&E and project performance ($\beta_{11} = 0.48$, $t = 7.43$), a positive relationship between project PM&E practices and management support ($\beta_{21} = 1.20$, $t = 11.81$), and a positive relationship between management support and project performance ($\beta_{12} = 0.55$, $t = 8.37$).



Figure 1. The results of this study

The three conditions must propose in an empirical study with the mediator (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

1. the independent variable has a significant impact on the mediating variable,
2. the independent variable has a significant impact on the dependent variable without a mediating variable, and
3. the use of a mediator decreases the relationship between the independent and dependent variables while presenting a significant relationship between the mediating and dependent variables.

In this study, the independent variable was the project PM&E practices, the mediating variable was management support, and the dependent variable was project performance. I tested three conditions by employing LISREL analysis. Results show that the project PM&E practices significantly positively affect management support ($\gamma_{21} = 1.09$, $t = 13.14$). The first condition is met.

The result also shows that the project PM&E practices significantly positively affect project performance ($\gamma_{11} = 1.33$, $t = 11.20$). It satisfies the second condition. In the third condition, the PM&E practice significantly positively affects firm performance ($\gamma_{11} = 0.68$, $t = 9.24$), and management support has a significantly positive relationship with project performance ($\beta_{12} = 0.65$, $t = 9.78$).

For the test of the third condition, I examined the change in chi-square value for the PM&E practices variables between before and after entering the management support variable. Results show that chi-square value had substantial change after entering management support variable ($\Delta\chi^2 = 44.66$, $\Delta df = 1$, $pb < 0.001$). The significance of the direct effect of project PM&E practices is reduced when the indirect effect of project PM&E through management support is included in a total effect model. These results show the mediating effect of management support. Therefore, H4 is supported. Based on H4, this model demonstrates that management support mediates the relationship between project PM&E practices and project performance (total effect = 1.09, indirect effect = 0.62, $p < 0.001$, direct effect = 0.48, $p < 0.05$). Here, the indirect effect is significant, and the direct path remains significant (although reduced) in the presence of management support. The direct effect also remains significant. However, it contains only 43.17% of the total effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, with the remaining 56.83 % following through the mediating variable of management support. All these support hypotheses 4.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study provides a conceptual model to examine the mediating role of management support in the relationship between PM&E and project performance. The result shows that PM&E practices can positively contribute to project performance. However,

if management support is added as a mediator, the direct positive relationship between PM&E and project performance will reduce. It is proved that PM&E practices influence project performance indirectly by influencing management support. Therefore, management support plays a mediating role.

A longitudinal investigation will shed more light on the management support. Further researchers may use a longitudinal design to investigate my model's causal inference. This study needs to go further in examining a potential medication in the relationship between PM&E and project performance. However, I do not consider the other factors such as culture. In addition, it is likely that if leadership changed or changes, the PM&E practices and project performance might be influenced. Since the analysis is focused on

self-report results, there is a risk of common method bias. However, in this analysis, the test of common method biased reveals that it is not a significant issue. Multiple measures, such as Cronbach alphas, composite reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity were used to support the consistency of the data and the outcome.

In conclusion, PM&E practices are crucial to project success. When exploring the relationship between PM&E activities and project performance, my research emphasizes the critical importance of the mediating role of management support. In today's complex climate, the perspectives proposed in this study have significant implications for project implementation organizations.

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Examining Participation in Climate Change from the Perspectives of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

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Synopsis

This policy brief draws from the authors' extensive experience in the field of GESI and climate change, as well as several assessments and researches undertaken in Nepal by them and others. It provides an overview of emerging participation challenges in the context of GESI and climate change and makes recommendations for overcoming these barriers to participate equally and equitably in climate change-related programmes.

Participation in the context of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) means changing the unequal power relations between women and men and between different social groups¹. The gender, political affiliation and power structures, geographic location, caste, ethnicity, age, economic status, literacy levels, disability status, and sexual orientation and gender identities

of local individuals play a major role on: i) who participates (or does not participate); ii) where and how they participate; and iii) who creates the spaces to participate and who redefines participation or has the authority to do so. The narrow definition and understanding of GESI framework have trivialized the complex GESI issues. It has not been able to effectively define and address the emerging and overlapping GESI issues. Poor women and marginalized groups are still heavily involved in labor-intensive, low-value climate-resilient-related activities, but are underrepresented or excluded in supposedly prestigious, visible and better paid activities. Stereotypical narratives about women and marginalized groups² limits their meaningful participation. The existence of powerful and exclusive leadership mechanisms and influences are a bottleneck (gatekeepers) for effective participation.

1. MoPH, GoN. GESI Strategy of the Health Sector 2018. Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal, 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal.

2. Marginalized group – refers to women and men from historically discriminated (caste/ethnicity, sexual orientation/identity, language) + situationally vulnerable groups (poor, persons with disabilities, illiterate, from geographically remote areas.)

Leadership in the context of GESI can mean the effective participation of women and excluded social groups in the prevalent or mainstream power relations to bring about social equity. There is a need to understand how leadership is conceptualized and practiced in society at large. The structures and platforms for participation are defined, created and held by powerful individuals and institutions, and these structures are inherently unequal. The power and politics shape the policies and programs¹⁴. The powerholders give spaces for participation through a lens of *generosity*¹⁵. The powerholders act from position of power, privilege and based on expectations of how the powerless are “supposed” to behave.

Deeper examination, understanding, and action is required to call into question the concept of “effective participation” of women and marginalized groups. The existing GESI framework must be revisited to address the emerging and complex GESI issues. Adequate technical and financial investments must be made to understand, develop and strengthen GESI related knowledge, skills, methods and programmes.

This paper is based on a comprehensive capitalization of the extensive knowledge of the authors’ works on GESI mainstreaming in Nepal and review of other national and international literature on GESI.

1. GESI policies and problems

After a decade of Maoist insurgency of which, amongst others, one of the

key political aspiration was inclusive development in Nepal, after 2006, GESI became an integral element of governance, policy making and development in Nepal. Since then, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has taken several measures to mainstream GESI by formulating policies¹⁶ and undertaking structural reforms at the national and local levels. As a result, extensive research and studies indicate participation of women and socially marginalized groups in development and climate change related sectors such as forestry, agriculture, water, energy, health and so on has increased in numbers.

However, despite the relative increase of women’s and marginalized groups’ participation in climate change-related sectors, evidence and experiences suggest that their quality of participation is often superficial, ineffective and questionable, and that they have not been able to fully engage, lead community initiatives and decisions and access resources and opportunities. Understanding and addressing the issue of their ineffective participation is critical in the context of climate change, given that climate change affects men and women differently, and those with minimal assets are disproportionately affected. People who have historically been confronted by asymmetries based on gender, caste, ethnicity etc. and those who are situationally vulnerable (age, poverty, disability status, sexual orientation, region, etc.) in Nepal have lesser assets and capacities to cope with and adapt to the impacts of climate change, and thus cannot effectively access

14. Andree J. Nightingale, 2017.

15. Generosity here implies - the space provided for participation by the powerholders are not spaces that the powerless can claim, but rather spaces that they are granted and expected to behave in accordance with the powerholders’ expectations.

16. For example, Nepal’s contribution (2015), SDG road map (2020), Community Forestry Development Guidelines (2014), Nepal Climate Change Policy (2019), Forest Sector Strategy (2016-2025); Agriculture Development Strategy (2015-2025) National REDD+ strategy (2018), Draft GESI Strategy and Action Plan of Forest and Environment sector (2020-2030) etc.

and participate in, and benefit from climate change related resources and programmes.

2. Current Situation in GESI¹⁷

i) Who can/ are participating (or not participating)?

Narrow understanding and use of Gender equality and social inclusion framework

After 2006, Nepal experienced the implementation of a number of progressive policies, strategies and methods to address GESI-related challenges, notably in the sectors affected by climate change. However, due to the oversimplification of the GESI policies and frameworks, limited and simplistic understanding of complex GESI issues and concepts, limited social skills of the users, an instrumental approach to their use during design and planning cycles, and minimal investments, the GESI issues are often trivialized and the intended results have not been fully achieved. Further, new groups of situationally vulnerable people have emerged due to sudden changes in their situation, such as climate change, disaster, COVID affected people and so on. For reasons mentioned above, current GESI framework and approaches are unable to define and address these overlapping and emerging GESI-related issues.

ii) Where and how are the women and excluded social groups participating?

Poor women and marginalized groups are still heavily involved in labour-intensive, low-value climate-resilient related activities, but are underrepresented in supposedly prestigious, visible and better paid activities. The trend of women and marginalized groups within the natural resource management groups/ committees

are shifting towards performing more meaningful technical and decision-making roles, particularly within the Community Forestry User Group. But their engagements are still centered on rolling out decisions (usually labour-intensive menial works) made by the privileged male committee leaders/members, or engaged in traditional roles performed by women. Various studies reveal that poor women and the marginalized groups are highly engaged in less valued, unpaid and labour-intensive activities, such as clearing the forest under-growths, fencing, plantations, as well as leading campaigns and resolving social conflicts such as gender-based violence campaigns, banning alcohols, child marriages etc. and playing little or no role in visible and prestigious roles such as discussing and managing major technical and infrastructure related conservation activities and committee's decision-making processes etc. This division of labour automatically puts women and marginalized groups in subordinate positions and makes it difficult for them to influence climate-related decisions that can directly benefit them.

Stereotypical narratives about women and marginalized groups limits their meaningful participation.

There seem to be incremental shifts in stereotypical narratives about women and marginalized groups as being vulnerable victims, toward capable and mobile members and leaders of user groups and committees. However, stereotypes about them, such as their time poverty and inability to leave their caring roles and obtain family permission to participate in committee meetings

17. Overview of current situation is with reference to the quality of participation of women and marginalized groups based on the field studies undertaken by the authors for different organizations between 2011 and 2020 in the Terai Arc Landscape, Koshi basin and other hills and mountain areas of Nepal (Gurung D, Bhatt, S. 2014, PCRF/ WB 2015, UNCR, Nepal 2020, FAO 2019, ICIMOD/UNEP, UN-Women 2021).

and forums, or their inability to manage technical tasks, continue to dominate the discussions and decisions about how and where to engage or not to engage them. This perspective has a role in limiting the meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups in technical and more visible, powerful roles, as well as reinforces their engagement in more gendered and traditional caring roles.

Existence of powerful and exclusive influencing agents¹⁸ a bottleneck(gatekeepers) for effective participation. The government and non-governmental agencies in Nepal have created, and strengthened several mechanisms at the local levels to execute development activities which has created centers of powerful individuals and institutions with new skills, knowledge, political and non-political networks, and financial resources (NPC, Nepal 2012). They function as main drivers and gatekeepers of development in the districts and communities with direct

links with and control over the central-level institutions, and over the communities. To a large extent, control the way development resources are channeled to communities (Dahal et al 2008). These mechanisms and power structures (politically affiliated groups, organizations, or federations, committees, cooperatives, user groups) play crucial roles in determining who can engage, access resources, who are/can be considered a specialists/ experts, who can be the voice of the local community and participate in decision-making in development interventions, including climate-change related programmes. These different layers of intersecting power structures are not well understood and analyzed, and no steps are taken to ensure that these mechanisms do not create bottlenecks for reaching out to the poor women and marginalized groups. A study (FCPF/WB 2017) reveals that there are four types of influencing agents or power centers prevailing in the districts, with specific characteristics as summarized below.

Types of influencing agents ¹⁹	Characteristics
1. Educated men from socially, politically, and economically advantaged and privileged groups. Mostly high caste men.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most powerful with strong political and non-political networks; usually heads/ members of executive bodies of key organizations, federations, and user groups. Key players, informants, focal points in forest and other sectoral programmes. • Key contact points, usually first interface for major and large organizations for advice or spokespersons (man), guidance, and implementation of programs. Occupy almost all key leadership positions; main influencers/ decision-makers for most of the development, climate change programmes; also capture resources.

18. Examples of influencing agents: Ward chairperson, Community Forestry Chairperson, politically connected men and women, high caste wealthy and educated persons etc.

19. Influencing agent: Positional leaders/ or a person who influences decisions from behind the scenes.

<p>2. Educated men from socially marginalized but politically advantaged groups (advantaged Adhivasi Janajati, Dalit).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerful within their communities, but do not have strong political and non-political networks, hence tend to be excluded from key decision-making processes and benefits. But in comparison to women leaders, these men leaders from socially excluded groups tend to have more access to information and resources. They mostly participate in spaces given by the group 1 type of leaders.
<p>3. Literate women from socially, economically, and politically advantaged groups. Usually women from advantaged caste groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a handful of women are repeatedly called upon as women's representatives for most of the development interventions; these are usually women members of federations, committees, groups, etc. (the same women are members of at least 5 to 6 executive committees, so participate in most trainings, exposure visits, etc.). • They could be considered most responsible for advancing gender equality but they are usually practicing male-like leadership styles, and excluding and resisting the empowerment of other women. They are still excluded by men from major decision-making processes and opportunities, even when such opportunities are meant for them; not trusted and respected for their capacities; mostly participate in spaces given by the group 1, 2 types of leaders; can voice their concerns but have little influence on decisions and lesser access to resources.
<p>4. Literate women from socially marginalized and politically affiliated groups. Mostly poor Dalit/ highly marginalized Adhivasi-Janajati women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few marginalized women are recipients of development aid, are members in executive committees or are women representatives in development interventions. • They have limited networks, and are usually patronized by advantaged women and men. Participate in spaces given by the group 1, 2 and 3 type of leaders. Their voices are not recognized. Passive participation (tokenism/rubber stamps), very little access and influence over the community decision-making processes.

Source: PCPI/WB 2017. Gender Integration in REDD+ and ERP in Nepal. An assessment report.

iii) Who creates and grants the spaces and platforms to participate?

As described above the structures and platforms for participation are defined,

created and held by powerful individuals and institutions, and these structures are inherently unequal. The powerholders grant space for participation through a lens

of generosity: The powerholders act from position of power, privilege and based on expectations on how the powerless are supposed to behave. Standing examples include the consultations meetings and workshops organized to develop or strengthen key policy documents and programmes.

3. Recommendations

- A deeper examination, understanding, and action is required to call into question the concept of "effective participation." Crucial to understand who creates, defines, and grants spaces in which to participate, and how the marginalized might claim such space. The uncomfortable truth of who reframes participation, or who has the authority to do so, must be questioned and revisited. The concept of participation (effective) is a contested concept and must be acknowledged and addressed.
- In the changing context of Nepal, the present gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) framework must be revisited. The framework should not be applied in a linear or isolated manner. The disadvantaged intersections of diverse groups of individuals should be carefully analyzed to understand overlapping marginalization in order to reach out to the most vulnerable groups and therefore ensure "no one is left behind." GESI framework should take into account the various disadvantaged intersections of people holistically, such as historically discriminated (gender, caste, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity) + situationally vulnerable (economically poor, region, disability status, age, education/position, etc.) + climate vulnerable = most vulnerable.
- Existing social knowledge and skills on participatory methods and approaches for addressing complex GESI concerns in the climate-change sectors are oversimplified, trivializing the gravity of the social challenges. Besides allocating adequate investments resources (gender responsive budget) to address these pressing issues, a critical review of "participation" is needed.
- To achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of "leaving no one behind," effective implementation of laws and by-laws at the grassroots level is required, in addition to investments in programmes and capacity building of both government and non-governmental organizations and the community. Not only the new laws required to be enacted, but also legal procedures and guidelines must be in place to successfully implement these laws and related policies and programmes.

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Policy Review on Food and Nutrition Security to Eradicate Hunger in Nepal

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1. Background

Food scarcity is a severe problem in Nepal. Around 6.5 million people (around 22%) are considered food insecure. Among the children below 5 years, 36.5% are stunted and 9.6% are wasted (low weight-for-height), as caused by chronic malnutrition (WFP, 2021). Similarly, about 56% of all women in the country face food insecurity.

Nepal needs to produce sufficient food for its population as well as high-value products for export to reduce its trade deficit, for which it needs to redouble its efforts. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) has provisioned right to food and food sovereignty as a fundamental human right. The promulgation of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act, 2018 is a crucial move towards translating the constitutional provision into reality.

2. Current Situation

In Global Hunger Index (2021), Nepal ranks 76th out of a total of 116 countries. With a score of 19.1. Although the country has a moderate level of hunger, food and nutrition insecurity is still a cause for concern (Welthungerhilfe and Concern worldwide,

2021). There are seasonal and regional variation in food security in Nepal. Seasonal poverty and food insecurity is the highest between May and August — just before the annual harvest, and the lowest between October and January — immediately after the annual harvest. The cereal deficit is the highest in the Mountain and Hill regions, whereas the Terai region generates a cereal surplus. This indicates that food deficit in the Mountain region is often caused by difficulties in food transportation and distribution (WFP, 2019, p. 17). Nepal's overall grain production is enough for the country but the distribution problem exists among the ecological belts, ethnicities classes and age groups, and between men and women.

It has been reported that province wise Karnali Province (Province 6) and region wise Mountain Region have the highest rate of child stunting, whereas the highest rate of child wasting prevails in Madhesh Province (Province 2). About 56% of all women and 76% of Dalit women experience food insecurity. Dalit women are most likely to be food insecure, even after accounting for factors such as education and wealth.

They are 82, 85, 89 and 92% more vulnerable to food insecurity than Muslim, Brahmin/Chhetri, Terai Indigenous and Hill Indigenous populations, respectively (Pandey and Fusaro, 2020).

Around the one-third of the arable land in Nepal has remained due to the out migration of the youth, especially men posing a serious threat to food and nutrition security.

Migration of the youth has led to the feminization of agriculture, making rural women increasingly responsible for farming. KC (2020) has pointed out that the impacts of the feminization process on women largely depend on their caste/ethnicity, gender, class and economic condition. Male out-migration has also brought huge changes in rural households, with women increasingly getting involved in decision-making. While new roles in farming have emerged for women, the traditional gender norms still constrain how they practice farming, which has undergone noticeable changes. Whereas less emphasis has been given to maximizing crop production and raising livestock and management of farmland closer to settlements, less intensive farming practice have received a special attention (KC, 2020). In addition, there is climate change occurring at an unprecedented level, which has not only affected production and availability of food but also has created negative impacts on access to food by poor and marginalized people, severely reducing their purchasing power, and hence pushing them further into food insecurity and undernutrition.

Major causes of food and nutrition insecurity in Nepal include: poverty, less employment opportunities, conversion of agricultural land for development purposes, low agricultural mechanization, and poor access to market and less attention to women-friendly agricultural technology generation. Besides, there are also other factors at

play such as import-oriented government policies, weak implementation of policies and programmes, poor coordination among local, provincial and federal governments and non-participatory top-down approach.

Proper coordination among the three tiers of the government under the new federal system is envisaged to streamline the resources and increase food production to achieve food and nutrition security for every citizen.

3. Problem Statement

Food and nutrition security is a fundamental human right. Quality food is the sole source of nutrient and energy for people. Meaningful participation of farmers in production planning, growing crops, fruit and vegetables and raising livestock, and their consumption and distribution is crucial to sustaining our lives and those of our future generations. However, the irony is that it is the traders who fix the price of agricultural produce rather than the farmers themselves during the value chain processes. Farming is regarded as a low-profile profession in the society, despite farmers being the producers, managers, leaders and care takers of the Mother Nature. Why are not they respected in the society? How are farmers surviving and maintaining their families? What is the dignity and position of farmers in the society? Answers to these questions have not been satisfactory so far. We need our own food bowl in our hands in order to live dignified lives ourselves and sustaining our future generations. Now, we are losing our food bowl. We are becoming dependent on others. Nepal has become a sole food importer from being a food exporter until the end of the 1960s. Hence, food scarcity has been a major problem in Nepal.

There is huge gap between 'achar' and 'bichar' among the ruling/political elites. What they say they do not do whereas

what they do they do not say, which has been creating illusion in the society since long. There is a need of demystifying this illusion created by these so-called intellectuals and bureaucrats in telling the truth to the 'Hudakharne Manchhe'. It needs critical consciousness to break the 'culture of silence' among the large majority of the people and to make a significant difference in the lives and livelihoods of these 'Bhumi Manchhe'. How long do Nepali people have to live in the grim poverty and suffering? They are begging with their golden bowl despite living in the heaven. Many youths are out migrated from Nepal to overseas countries to fulfill their basic needs like food, clothes and shelter. This is an irony of contemporary Nepal. Nepal has previously had 'Dani Sanskar' previously as opposed to 'Magante Sanskriti' at present. The social values, ethics and self-esteem have been eroded due to the current dependency policies, practices, ideas and beliefs instead of self-sustaining export-oriented long-term socio-economic programming. We are easily forgetting the 'golden age' of Mahakalin governance. Why are we not learning from the past? How does this country have to sustain remittance and until when? Is this the permanent solution for the sustainable development of the country? Every conscious citizen knocking the door of the Singh darbar to seek the answer to this "Yaksha Prashna".

4. Methodology and Definitions

A political economy approach has been adopted to analyze the issues surrounding food and nutrition security. Food has become a political issue. It affects lives as well as livelihoods, with almost every aspect of its production and consumption stimulating attention from interest groups and the public at large. Food issues inevitably involve struggles over the way the government balances corporate against public interests. Methods used for collecting

information for this paper include literature review and observation and literature review.

The World Food Summit (2009) has defined food security as "a situation in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (WFS, 2009). Forum for Food Sovereignty (2002) defines "food sovereignty is the right of individuals, communities, peoples and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies, which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies" (Thapa, 2014, p. 13, cited by Thapa, 2020, p. 113).

5. Current Food Security Policies

Nepal has formulated various acts, policies, strategies, and regulations related to agriculture, food and nutritional security. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) has provisioned about food in its Article 36 as: (1) *Every citizen shall have the right relating to food;* (2) *Every citizen shall have the right to be safe from the state of being in danger of life from the scarcity of food;* and (3) *Every citizen shall have the right to food sovereignty in accordance with law* (NLC, 2015; p. 17). In order to materialize this constitutional provision, the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act, 2018 is has been promulgated. The Act in its Article 2.e has defined food sovereignty as: (i) farmer's participation in food related policy making process; (ii) choice to adopt profession in food production and or distribution system; (iii) choice of agricultural land, labor,

seeds, technology and farm machinery; and (iv) protect from negative impacts of globalized agricultural trade (NLC, 2018; p. 2). Furthermore, the Act in its Article 5 has elaborated for the identification of target households who are suffering from poverty, geographical remoteness and any other factors, and in its Article 6 has defined provision for food support identity cards (ID) with specific focus on women-headed households to secure food for these vulnerable groups (NLC, 2018, Pp 5-6). All these are good legal documents. However, their implementation aspect in terms of relevant laws, policy, strategies, plans and programmes seem to be weak. There is a lack of separate food and nutrition security policy in Nepal.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-2 (2015-2030) is to "End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture". It has set five targets. The first is to end hunger and ensure food access for all, especially the most vulnerable people. The second is to end undernutrition, including stunting and wasting in children under five as well as provide sufficient nutrition to adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and senior citizens. The third is to double agriculture productivity and incomes for smallholders, particularly indigenous people and women. It should be achieved by increasing access to land and other natural resources as well as to technological advancement and inputs, capital, and markets. The fourth is for the food system to be sustainable and resilient to climate change and weather-related disasters. The fifth is to maintain genetic diversity in agricultural farms and wild plants and animals. It also envisages that food should be equitably distributed. It is quite a challenge to achieve these targets in the context of Nepal.

6. Policy and Practice Recommendations

The following policy and practice recommendations have been put forward:

- Bottom-up approaches and methods should be followed by policy-makers and decision-takers during policy-making and amendment processes.
- Existing good acts, policies and programmes should strictly be implemented to increase production and productivity per unit area. In this regard, civil society organizations can play a role of watchdog.
- There is need for strong coordination among local, provincial and federal governments to produce better results.
- Climate adaptation programmes should be implemented at municipal, provincial and federal levels to address negative impacts of climate change on food security.
- There is need for reorientation among people to change their food habits towards using local grains, vegetables, fruit, livestock products as opposed to imported products such as long-grain rice and junk foods.
- Separate food and nutrition security policy needs to be formulated in order to promote systematic investment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Food security zone should be declared to ensure food and nutrition at community level.
- Equitable food distribution system should be in place, taking into account region (the Mountains, the Hill and the Terai), gender, ethnicity, class, age group, etc.

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Reframing the Concept of Participation in Collaborative Forestry in Nepal

BHOLA BHATTARAI

Synopsis

Over the decades, despite several policies and programmes put in place and enacted to ensure the participation of citizens in forest management and benefit sharing, and environmental protection, the access, control and sharing of benefits in favor of women, economically marginalized people and socially excluded people, whose livelihood mostly depends on natural resources, still falls short of what was expected. To draw lessons and develop practical approaches for participation from the experiences generated from the collaborative forest management (CFM) of Nepal. This policy brief is prepared based on the discussion with users/CFM representatives from the Tarai of Nepal. It suggests that the existing policies, for enhancing and increasing the participation of women, economically marginalized, socially excluded, traditional and distant users in CFM, do not explicitly stress participation in practice. The policies and laws are not implemented effectively resulting poor understanding on full and effective among CFM stakeholders. The unclear roles

and responsibilities among the partners including CFM group, local government and DFO are creating confusion. The poor and marginalised people appear to be purely symbolic participation who often do not know about their roles and responsibilities. Similarly, there is unfair distribution of benefits since it is distributed in favor of higher-class people who can invest big amounts of money compared to economically marginalized and socially excluded people. The policy brief concludes that the amendment of CFM structure, use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in participation, and better enforcement of CFM laws will allow the marginalized people to have full and effective participation in decision making platform. These policy changes can improve their livelihood through CFM.

1. Introduction

Collaborative Forest Management (CFM), implemented in Tarai, is a participatory approach of forest management. The Forest Act (1993, second amendment in 2016), under which CFM in Tarai is

implemented, is designed to collaborate with three main partners citizens, local government and DFO. This collaboration is expected to protect, conserve, manage and ensure the benefits to community. Similarly, the CFM guideline (2011) provides right to local community who can form CFM group among the forest users, including traditional and distant users, living in the south region in the context of Tarai. Following the guideline, at present, there are 31 formally registered CFM groups in Tarai which comprises of 0.6 million households, managing 73,364 hectares of forest area (DoF, 2018). A total of 4 million residents in Tarai are getting benefits from CFM (DoF, 2018).

2. Problem Statement

The forestry sector in Nepal is guided by several national policies, strategies and guidelines which adopt participatory approach. Different layers of institutional mechanism are created to address exclusion and inequity. The Forest Sector Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy, 2007 has emphasized the implementation of co-management of forest, including the distant users and people living in southern part of Tarai. Similarly, CFM which has been implemented as one of the common systems for forest management is considered as a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach itself. Furthermore, CFM has a strong element of incorporating distant users as active stakeholders and beneficiaries in the management and sharing of benefits from the forest. It is designed with in-built institutional arrangements and processes that support active and scientific forest management.

According to the MFSC (2011) some of the major gaps for good governance

in participatory sustainable forest management are: exclusion of poor and marginalized in power and position, policy collision, underestimation of community capacities, people's priority on infrastructure development, and insufficient knowledge. Although some scholars like Rai, Dhakal, Khadayat, and Ranabhat (2017) believe that distant users living far from the forest are benefiting from the CFM in Tarai, many other such as Satyal (2006) and Luintel, Scheller, Bluffstone, and Adhikari (2017) disagree the opportunity created by existing forest management system and argue that common Nepali citizens do not get fair share of the benefits from Tarai forests lacking dedicated institutions, rules and practices.

3. Participation in Forest Management

There is the provision of inclusion of women and disadvantaged groups in the CFM. The hamlet and ward level participation is secured in the user groups. The examples of women, Dalits and IPs participation is ensured in sub-committees, EC and IU of CFM. CFM has provision of inclusion of geographically heterogeneous communities, women, Dalit and IPs. The representation of a female in executive committee is mandatory but there is practical difficulty in inclusion or in participation of women of Tarai origin due to socio-cultural practices of role of women outside home in the societies. Along with beginning of participatory development approach in 1970s, people's participation became mandatory in the local development, especially in the developing countries. The government and NGOs are making number of policies and programs to involve people in development process.

Table 1: Participation in Nepal's CBFM discourse periodically

Period	Government	Major equity concerns/ issues
1960-19970s	Powerful Monarchy	a) Introduced Panchayat forest for local control over forest resources.
1978-1990s	Powerful Monarchy	a) Introduction of community forestry through Panchayat political leaders b) Master plan for the forestry sector has emphasized for the wider participation of people in national forest.
1990-2000s	Democratic government with constitutional monarchy	a) New forest act is enacted and emphasized the community-based forestry to strengthen inclusive and democratic governance in community level. b) The new forest policy 2000 is enforced for Tarai forest. The CFM is introduced to address the issues of exclusion and access of traditional users in Tarai.
2000-2017	Democratic and republic state	a) Participation is important agenda in forestry discourse. b) Forest policy, strategy, and laws are revised and formulated to address issues of exclusion and inequity in forestry.
2022	Federal system with newly elected government	a) Policies and laws ensured participation. b) The participation of marginalized and excluded communities are still inadequate.

(Source: Hobley, 1998; Brit, 2002; Bhatta, Karna, and Paudel, 2010;; Care Nepal, 2012; MoFSC, 2018; Nepal Law Commission, 2015; NARS, 2018.)

4. Policy Discussion

The study found that poor community people are excluded in the forest management as well as in benefit sharing. As a result, community people, especially those who were traditional forest users, are compelled to transform their livelihood strategies. Participation in decision-making process is important since it determines the effectiveness of CFM. The evidence shows that the participation of marginalized

communities in CFM is nominal. Upriety et. al (2012) state that there is high chance of elite capture if the participation is weak in forest management activities. This study is also found that despite policy provisions exists, the nexus, power relations and vested interests barred marginalized group to reap adequate benefits simply because of their lack of participation or passive participation

4.1 Space and opportunities for participation

Participation of all stakeholders and beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of regulations are crucial for equity and good governance in CFM. The participation of women, Dalits and indigenous peoples (IPs) in forest management activities empowers communities and also makes them accountable. This study found that there is decreasing trend of participation and access of women, Dalits, and IPs in different resources/opportunities.

Good participation of both male and female in different activities such as preparation and implementation of management plan is prevalent in CFM. The participation of women, Dalits and IPs in CFM in decision-making, implementation and benefit sharing is more of 'presence' of users rather than 'participation'. Since the users' group is not an autonomous body and people lack awareness and are unwilling to actively participate. The dominance of elites can be addressed through the participatory dialogue and reflection.

The active and effective participation can address imbalances and disparities among people caused by class, caste, ethnicity, gender, age and geographical remoteness. In CBFM practices, the challenge of contributing to the social equity and justice from forestry sector has been given priority. Different agencies have been working in the forestry sector and they have started to respond to these concerns through their own policy and programs. The regular meeting, effective monitoring and evaluation, capacity building and civic engagement, and responsible governance systems supports to ensure full and effective participation in CFM. At this juncture, (MFSC is implementing various programs for sustainable conservation and management of natural resource

focusing the gender, equity and inclusion issues.

Furthermore, the CFM seeks to develop specific form and appropriate mechanism for sharing rights, responsibilities, and benefits with 'consideration of social, gender, and ethnic equity (Dhungana et al., 2017). Especially, the benefit sharing of distant users can be addressed through open, transparent and accessible distribution of timber, non-timber and other services. But the study demonstrates that in the absence of effective mechanism, benefit is not shared equitably to distant users, poor and marginalized members of CFM irrespective of their geographic locations. The major problem in CFM benefit sharing is that the forest administration and EC have not been proactive in fostering dialogue between rightsholders and stakeholders in resolving this problem. The present benefit sharing practice is not clear on how the benefit should be distributed. The CFMG should receive a fair share or percentage based on their investment and contribution from CF management. The current policy mentions that 50% of forest products go to community, 40% to federal government, and 10% to local government. The use of ICT is inadequate in CFM. The Use of ICT increases the participation of different stakeholders' effective way.

The issue of participation is addressed by exercising autonomy by the CFM Executive Committee (EC). In case of CFM groups EC plays the cosmetic role. The participation and representation of EC does not last long so that they are not accountable. The other partners like DFO and local government have more power so there is unequal partnership among three partners. As a result, they have different priority and do not consider participation, inclusion and equity as serious issues in CFM. To address this, the role of actors must be reviewed and changed the policy provisions accordingly.

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