

STUDY ON GENERATING PROGRAM MODULES FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SUDURPASHCHIM PROVINCE, NEPAL



By Janaki Women Awareness Society (JWAS)
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Manda Kumari Karna
President, JWAS

The following terminologies will be referred as:

Municipality/palika:	local body in Nepal, often known as local government. There are 753 municipalities in Nepal including metropolitan cities, sub-metropolitan cities, municipalities and rural municipalities.
Ward:	ward is the smallest unit/s of local government (LG). Many wards comprise to form one local unit or local government.
Respondents:	all the people, who participated in this research
Key informant/s:	the interviewee/s
Mayor:	chief elected representative of municipality
Chairperson:	chief elected representative of rural municipality
Deputy mayor:	deputy mayor of municipality
Vice chairperson:	vice chairperson of rural municipality
Chief executive:	the mayor in municipality and chairperson in rural municipality
Deputy executive:	the deputy mayor in municipality and vice chairperson in rural municipality

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Situation of women and girls in Nepal	7
Role of NGOs in empowering marginalized people	8
Role of NGOs in the nation development.....	9
Research Statement.....	10
Brief introduction of Sudurpaschim province.....	10
Aims and objectives.....	11
Research Methodology	12
Profile of the respondents.....	15
Major findings.....	18
Discrimination against women and girls.....	18
Harmful social norms.....	19
Other prevailing issues.....	21
Low level of awareness and access to services.....	21
Available skills and need of capacity enhancement	23
NGOs in Sudurpaschim province	24
Conclusion	26
Recommendations.....	27
References.....	31

Introduction

Contribution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in empowering women and girls is highly acknowledged worldwide. In the context of Nepal, the government of Nepal (GoN) has recognized the contribution of NGOs in state building as well. Article 51- the policies of states, sub article J (14)- policies related to social justice and inclusion of the Constitution of Nepal (2015) has emphasized the inclusion of NGOs to meet the national needs and priorities (GoN, 2015). A study on civil society in federal Nepal mentions the roles of NGOs in-service delivery benefitting the isolated and excluded communities and individuals (Talcott et al., 2019). Hence, this study has been conducted by Janaki Women Awareness Society (JWAS), an NGO, to generate the program modules that can contribute to addressing the needs and priorities of women, girls and persons with disabilities (PwD) in Sudurpaschim province¹, Nepal.

JWAS, a women-led organization, has a successful three decades' track record in implementing women and girls' empowerment projects in the central and eastern Terai² of Nepal. JWAS has gained key insights on the needs which are not being met around the issues of women and girls, especially in the poor and marginalized communities in Koshi, Madhesh and Bagmati provinces. The study has explored the areas that can be useful in generating program modules for empowering women, girls and PwD.

The study first looks into the situation of women and girls in Nepal and the contribution(s) of NGOs in empowering women and girls as well as in the development of nation. Then it brings the deeper understanding on the needs of the community in Sudurpaschim province, especially women, girls and PwD. Finally, the study explores the program areas that can best

¹ The Constitution of Nepal (2015) has a provision for the three types of governments: One Central or federal government, 7 provincial governments, and 753 local governments. Sudurpaschim province- or - Far-Western province - is one among the seven provinces.

² Terai is a plain land in the southern side that has stretched from east to west in Nepal

solve the issues associated with women, girls and PwD in the most effective way.

Situation of women and girls in Nepal

Women and girls have less access (than men) to resources such as land, credit, agricultural products, education, and economic opportunities (Acharya, n.d.; Neupane, 2022; Bhattraï, 2017). They (women and girls) are far behind (than men) from exercising rights, participating in decision-making processes, contributing in leadership structures, and are forced to suffer socially, culturally, sexually, physically, mentally, politically and economically (Neupane, 2022). These aspects combined with the patriarchal mind-sets of people, a social practice of male supremacy in Nepal, which places male in a privileged position as the carrier of a family name, legacy, and heritage (Dahal et al., 2021; Dahal et al., 2022).

Women and girls are increasingly being understood to be more vulnerable (than men) to the impacts of social, cultural, developmental, and economical structures (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2016; Bhandari, 2021). Similarly, Acharya (n.d.) flagged out that the opportunities for Nepali women are very poor in accessing health, education, human rights and income generation opportunities. They have long experienced high levels of poverty, social exclusion, and marginalization because of their gender (ADB, 2016). They (women) lack self-confidence, have less access in decision-making as well as in policymaking (Acharya, n.d.); and their contribution and struggles in society, according to Dhungana (2014), were not well documented because men were the history writers. Bhattraï (2017) states, 'girls and young women face numerous challenges in their everyday life, ranging from the ill effects of early marriage to fewer opportunities in the workspace due to superstitions and societal traditions'. These evidences show that women and girls in Nepal are voiceless, have less access to rights and services, and are marginalized.

Role of NGOs in empowering marginalized people

NGOs have been recognized as a means of connecting people, particularly those who are marginalized, voiceless and have less access to the resources and services to the development agendas and the policy makers. On the NGO day (February 27) in 2022, European Union's (EU) vice president commended the roles of NGOs in supporting and giving a voice to the most vulnerable as well as their essential contribution to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies (Borrel, 2022). Motivation and effective leadership help women in gaining confidence, and they aim to achieve their goals and that is the role of NGOs (Gupta, 2021).

Not only now, the role of NGOs in community development was highly recognized in the past as well. World Bank [WB] (1995) states on how NGOs, including community-based organizations (CBOs), engaged with the communities to transmit their needs and priorities into implementing a pilot project. It further states, NGOs provide information on local conditions, participate in environmental and social assessments, organize consultations with concerned parties, and act as a source, model or sponsor of project ideas (WB, 1995). NGOs can help in women empowerment with proper information about government policies, trainings and networking (Gupta, 2021). Bhandari (2021) has elaborated the examples of significant contribution made by NGOs in strengthening the access to security and justice to the poor and marginalized people after a decade long (1996-2006) people's movement in Nepal. Karki (2061 B.S.³) states that the operation of NGOs is based on the public interest for marginalized society and are always responsible towards people. Roles of NGOs are to organize, empower and advocate for obtaining the services

³ B.S. stands for Bikram Sambat, a Nepali calendar, which is 57 years ahead than Anno Domini (A.D.)

provided by the government and they can aware people about their rights (Dahal, 2061 B.S.).

Role of NGOs in the nation development

The roles and contributions of civil society organizations (CSOs⁴) in the development of a nation, including human rights protection, humanitarian support, and democracy promotion has been recognized worldwide (WB, 2007; Borrel, 2022; Dahal, 2061 B.S). NGOs are independent from government control, not seeking to challenge governments either as a political party or by a narrow focus on human rights, non-profit-making and non-criminal (Willetts, n.d).

Past evidences suggest that CSOs in different countries were engaged in delivering the public service to the large number of citizens. According to Pollard and Court (2005), in Srilanka, NGO called Sarvodaya would provide services to 7,000 villages. Referring Edwards (2004), Pollard and Court (2005) states that CSOs in Ghana, Zimbabwe and Kenya would provide 40% of all healthcare and education. Sholte (2002) mentioned, 'activities of CSOs do not quest for public office and monetary gain' (P. 283). 'In the 1990s, CSOs became a mantra- or- a formula- for the people, ranging from presidents to the political scientists, for social renewal' (Carothers & Barndt, 1999, p.19). Similarly public fatigue in the United States and Western Europe, according to Carothers & Barndt (1999), with the party system sparked the interest of people in CSOs.

World Bank (2007) stated about the important roles of CSOs in influencing policies and policy-makers at the global level. Carothers & Barndt (1999) state, NGO shape the country's policy by exerting pressure on governments and by furnishing technical expertise to policy makers and therefore play important and growing roles in developed and developing countries (P. 20). In the federal Nepal, CSOs provides technical skills and

⁴ This report uses CSOs and NGOs interchangeably.

expertise and have promoted a range of social accountability approaches (Talcott et al., 2019).

Research Statement

The information mentioned above are the indication that the position of women and girls in Nepal is highly impoverished, especially, in a unique region situated at the border of Nepal and India, commonly known as Terai. With the past learning of JWAS in the central and eastern southern part of Nepal, it has gained a knowledge that NGOs are crucial in empowering women, girls, PwD and other marginalized segments of society. JWAS now aims to generate the program areas that can contribute to the empowerment of women, girls and PwD in the Sudurpashchim province, western part of Nepal.

Brief introduction of Sudurpaschim province

Geographically, Sudurpaschim province is situated in the western part of Nepal. It has 88 local governments (LG) including 33 municipalities, 54 rural municipalities, and one sub-metropolitan city) in nine districts (Kailali, Doti, Achham, Bajura, Bajhang, Dardula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura and Kanchanpur). Sudurpashchim province is the home of 2711270 (9.29%) of the country's total population (29164578), including 1287997 (47.50%) male and 1423273 (52.50) female (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2021). With Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.4783, it is in the sixth position among the seven provinces in Nepal (Dhungel, 2011). The average female literacy rate is 24.44 lower than the male literacy rate, with males and females literacy is 76.37% and 51.93% respectively (CBS, 2021). The primary income source of households (83.14%) is agriculture (UN Nepal, 2020). There is a community impacted in a multi-dimensional capacity by harmful social norms, illiteracy, heightened gender-based discrimination, and severe poverty (Bhandari, 2019). These factors combine in Sudurpashchim province, Nepal, to result in a community where women and girls suffer inordinately in the face of development agendas. A research conducted by the Search for Common

Ground (2017) in Sudurpaschim province has stated that in Bajhang, Doti and Kailali districts, awareness on special provisions and rights of women and girls provided by national laws and international conventions was very low. Table 1 presents some data about the situation of women in Sudurpaschim province.

Table 1: Figure related to women in Sudurpaschim province.

Details of data	Figure in %
Women headed households	26
Women population with disabilities	2.7
<i>Total population with disabilities in Sudurpaschim province</i>	<i>2.60</i>
<i>Total population with disabilities in Nepal</i>	<i>2.25</i>
Women having bank account	33.7
Women aged 15- 49 have ever used internet	8.8
women aged 15-49 access no media in a week	50.6
Women aged 15-49 do not own any land	96.5
Married women (aged 15-49) experienced violence	
<i>Physical violence</i>	<i>18.9</i>
<i>Sexual violence</i>	<i>7.9</i>
<i>Emotional violence</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>All types of violence (physical, sexual, and emotional)</i>	<i>3.7</i>
<i>Consider wife beating justified</i>	<i>34.3</i>
Women employment	13.9
Women whose income use is decided by their husband	14.1

Source: *UN Nepal, 2021; National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal, 2023*

Aims and objectives

This study in Sudurpaschim province was conducted for generating the project areas for empowering women, girls and PwD that can contribute to solve the issues associated with these people in the most effective way possible. The specific objectives are:

- Improve the knowledge of governmental and non-governmental organizations on the needs of women, girls and PwD, particularly those in the selected areas
- Generate the program areas that can contribute to the development of best projects for empowering women, girls and PwD in Sudurpaschim province, Nepal.

Research Methodology

The study applied mixed-methods, QUAL-Quan model-based research design, giving more weight to the qualitative information. However, to strengthen the qualitative information with the understanding of demographic data of selected geographical locations, quantitative data was also collected. Qualitative information was collected through focus group discussion (FGD) and key informants' interview (KII), and quantitative data was collected through household (HH) survey. Both qualitative information and quantitative data of the project, hereafter, have been referred as 'data'.

Sampling and sample size

The research team consulted with some of the key population and institutions in Sudurpaschim province and selected Kailali and Kanchanpur district (will be referred as the 'study districts' hereafter) for the study. Bhimdutta municipality in Kanchanpur district and Kailari rural municipality in Kailali district were selected as a study location (Bhimdutta and Kailari will be referred as 'study palikas/municipalities' hereafter). In each municipality, one ward (ward number 6 and 2 in Bhimadutta and Kailari municipality respectively) was selected through stakeholders⁵ consultation and one marginalized and poor community was selected in each ward through cluster sampling for HH survey. In the selected

⁵ stakeholder in this research referred to the elected representatives of selected municipalities, NGOs, CBOs, journalists, government representaives, local leaders and activists

communities, the researchers randomly selected the house for HH survey. The first house was selected following the direction of a thrown pencil's point in one municipality and the first house of the community in the second municipality. Then each alternative house was surveyed till the number of houses reached 100. Thus, the demographic data was collected through 201 (100 and 101 HH in Kailari and Bhimdutta municipality respectively) HH survey.

Similarly, in each municipality, five FGDs (in total 10 FGDs with 82 participants in two municipalities) with grandmothers, mothers, recently married women, unmarried adolescent (referred as 'four generations of women' hereafter), and PwD were conducted (see table 2 for more). The research also interviewed with 41 key informants, who were from government, NGOs and other individual working in the selected municipalities and districts. Data was also collected through the interview and meetings with chief executives and deputy executives of municipalities, and ward president of selected wards. Brief discussion meeting was also conducted with the minister, ministry of social development, Sudurpaschim province, Nepal. Similarly, some district-based NGOs representatives were also interviewed.

Study tools

Two sets of questionnaires were developed for conducting HH survey, KII and FGD. An open-ended questionnaire was developed for KII and FGD, and semi structured questionnaire was developed for HH survey. Among three researchers, two were involved in developing the questionnaires. So one researcher and the two other field-based researchers/enumerators, who were recruited later for conducting HH survey, were provided online orientations. Questionnaires were finalized through pilot test with three informants and five HH out of the sampling.

Information transcription and analysis

The collected qualitative information was transcribed in Nepali language at first hand as they were. Transcriptions were revisited and

removed all the identical information of respondents and processed through the thematic analysis procedures. This report presents the findings thematically. Quantitative data of the study was processed through Microsoft excel. The translated draft Nepali version of the report was shared with the respective municipalities and wards' representatives and officials. The views and feedbacks on the draft report were compiled and incorporated.

Ethical consideration

The researchers were very careful not to use biased and disrespectful language and words in the questionnaires and in all the study documents. The value of the research was laden to the respondents which means that the researchers did not place their interest. Every respondent was informed about the purpose, methods, as well as use of the outcome of the study in future. Brief information sheet, containing the information of the study, was prepared and explained to every respondent. The formal data collection was started only after getting the respondents' (oral) consent. The researchers also offered time to respondents to ask any questions if they had before starting the interview. In the data collection tools and information sheet, the researchers used respective language in regards to gender, culture, ethnicity, poverty and other intersectional issues.

The collected information was handled very carefully and confidentially. The institutions, cultures and religions of the study area have also been given higher respect. Before delving into the study, JWAS obtained an approval from the respective local governments. Every knowledge from the secondary sources or literatures, that have been used in the study, have been given a credit.

Research team

JWAS deployed a team of three researchers, including one principal researcher and two other researchers. A research expert/supervisor was recruited for a short period of time. Similarly, two

field-based research assistants/enumerators were also hired, oriented, and mobilized for the data collection work. The research was led by the principal researcher under the direct management supervision and monitoring of the executive director of the organization.

Limitation and delimitation

The research is limited in two districts (among nine) and two municipalities (among 88) in Sudurpaschim province. Similarly, it is based on the information provided by the limited number of HH, key informants and FGDs. The study only focuses on its objectives; so it does not cover the wider aspects associated with women, girls and PwD. The central focus of the study is limited to the needs of women, girls and PwD. The researchers delimited all the other areas, issues, people and communities, beyond the study focus, associated with women, girls and PwD. According to Simon (2011), the delimitations are those characteristics that limit the scope, define the boundaries of study, and are in the control of researcher.

Profile of the respondents

In this study, key person's identification and interview remained as a continued process throughout the study period. A list of the local institutions (government offices, schools, health posts, financial institutions, cooperatives and NGOs) in the selected palikas and districts were prepared, and at least one representative of the listed institutions was interviewed. The interview was also conducted with the ward level representatives, palika's chief executives and deputy chief executives, representatives of the district coordination committees (DCC), and representatives of the social development ministry of Sudurpaschim provincial government. Similarly, organizations based in the district and municipality which have been working on the issues of women and girls were also interviewed. In total, 41 people were interviewed, and 82 people participated in 10 FGDs in both districts. See the table 2 below.

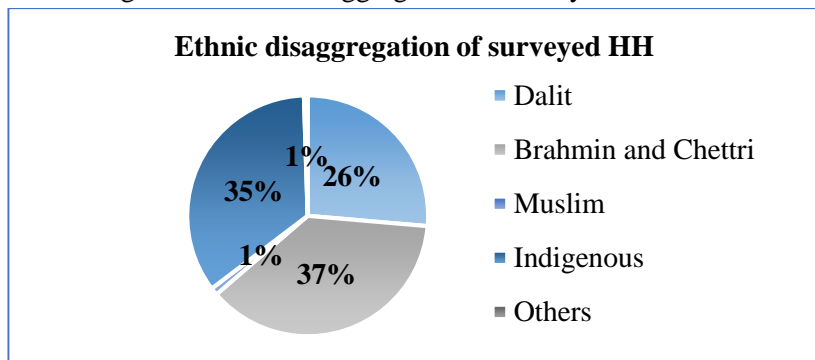
Table 2: Participation in FGD

Group information	Number of FGD	Participants
Grand mothers	2	17
Recently married women	2	14
Adolescent girls	2	18
Mother group	2	17
Persons with disabilities	2	18
Total	10	82

Source: *FGD*

Through the HH survey, researchers collected both quantitative and qualitative information. Quantitative information informed the demographic characteristics of the people. The researchers talked with the person who was available in the house at the time of survey visit. However, among the surveyed HH, 47 were male respondents and 154 were female. Similarly, 75 HH were Janajatis, 70 were Brahmins/Chhetris, 53 HH were Dalits, one Muslim, and two were other. See figure 1 for more information.

Figure 1: Ethnic disaggregation of surveyed HH.



Source: *HH survey*

Participation of people in the programs of NGOs

The majority of people have been found familiar with the work of NGOs. 62% of HH (n=124) responded that they have participated in cooperative related programs; 68 HH have participated in an agriculture related programs; 30 in health-related programs; and 28 HH have been engaged in education related programs implemented by NGOs. The research found a lower number of HH participating in rights based and other sectoral programs of NGOs. 35 households, however, stated that they have not participated in any program conducted by any organization.

Current occupation and education of people

The HH survey further informed that agriculture is a primary occupation for the majority of people (80% of HH). However, it doesn't mean that they have sufficient land as most of these people have found as agriculture related wage labourers. Similarly, 31 HH are wage labourers; 27 HH have their own small businesses, mostly grocery shops; and at least one person in 21 HH are either a job holder at a private company or a vehicle driver. Three percent of HH are also found in government services.

In the study palikas, school dropout rate, among the people between the age 10 to 29 years, was found highest. 155 people were dropped out from school before the completion of 12th grade; nine (9) people dropped out before the completion of primary education (5th grade); and 146 people dropped out while they were in the grades from 6th to 11th. People have different responses behind being dropped out. 36% (n=72) stated that they could not afford the school fees. This information shows that people are not aware about the government policy of free education. However, for regularly attending school, a child need more that tuition fees; such as cloths, snacks and stationaries, that a poor child could not afford. 34 girl children were forced to leave school as a result of their early marriage. The COVID-19 forced three (3) people to leave school, and 12 people left school for unknown reason. See table 3 for educational data of the study palikas.

Table 2: Education level of respondents

Education level	School attending students	Dropped out students
up to 5 th grades	150	9
6 th to 12 th grades	155	146
above 12 grades	61	0
total	366	155

Source: *HH Survey*

Major findings

In this chapter, qualitative information generated through HH surveys, KIIs and FGDs have been presented thematically. The study did not inform significant differences in the information received from Bhimdutta municipality and Kailari rural municipality. Therefore, themes have been generated after combining all the collected information and have been presented below.

Discrimination against women and girls

The study found that some parents are still discriminating between their sons and daughters. For example, daughters are attending government schools while boys have been admitted in private schools. General (mis) understanding among parents is that private schools are better than government schools. Private schools are expensive; however, parents see their social prestige in sending their sons to these schools. Girl respondents in the study did not accept these discriminatory attitudes of some parents. This type of discriminatory practice often prevents girls from obtaining quality education and demotivates them from achieving success. All the adolescent girls participating in the research echoed that,

'Young girls should be given equal educational opportunities as boys.'

All the FGD participants stated that they have experienced some kinds of discrimination in their lives. For example, child and forced marriage, physical violence (such as some husbands beat their wives), work-based discrimination (such as women are often regarded as homemakers), property-based violence (such as men are using women's income), unequal access to services and opportunities for different generations of men and women. Consumption of alcohol and drugs by men and boys in the family have made the lives of other family members, especially women and girls, difficult. In some communities, the traditional healing system and people's blind faith in them (persons involved in the traditional healing system) are also causing harmful effects in the lives of women and girls.

Harmful social norms

The research has flagged out some of the life threatening harmful norms prevailing in Sudurpaschim's societies. Child marriage⁶ (forced and self-initiated⁷) is one of the such norms prevailing in the communities. The people of Sudurpaschim province, as found by this research, are serious to end the practice of child marriage. One adolescent girl has the following opinion,

'I do not want to get marry in my early age as all the dreams and possibility of prosperous future will end with early age marriage.'

Child marriage makes the life difficult for girls. Child marriage drives to early child birth which leads the rest of her life as a caregiver of her children. The information indicates that cases of school dropout are also higher among the early married girls.

Similarly, the research also found the increasing trend of self-(initiated) marriage among early age young girls. Respondents have a view

⁶ This research uses 'child marriage' and 'early marriage' interchangeably

⁷ self-initiated marriage means boys and girls themselves decide to marry with each other without the consent of their parents or guardians.

that social media is very popular among all ages and groups of people, including young girls and boys. However, young people are not aware about using it correctly; and among other consequences, the trend of early age self-initiated marriage is increasing. However, the data shows that child marriage, either forced or self-initiated, hampers the wellbeing of girls and women.

Similarly, menstrual period-based discrimination (such as system of Chhaupadi) and caste-based discrimination (such as dalit and marginalized women and girls face more violence and discrimination) are also prevailing in the communities.

Some of these norms, according to the respondents, are the outcome of a patriarchal mind-set of the people. In a patriarchal society, decisions are supposed to be made by the men only which eventually curtails the opportunities, including the empowerment opportunities, of women. According to different generations of women participating in FGD, people are still holding an unnecessary feeling of patriarchy which is forcing women to follow some traditional beliefs. For example, people still believe that taking care of children is the job of women only.

According to the respondents, people should work together with stakeholders and governments to end child marriage. Similarly, joint efforts are also needed for fighting against all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, stopping drug addiction, and creating awareness on gender-based discrimination. Parents have to be sensitized against the forced child marriage as well.

Education on the right use of social media among youth can be effective for preventing early age self-initiated marriage of girls. However, the researcher did not find any previous study that shows the relation of social media and self-initiated marriage of girls. Along with the need for research around the early age self-initiated marriage of girls, NGO leaders also identified the need for rigorous in-depth research that can provide

policy recommendations to different levels of governments on the right use of social media.

Other prevailing issues

The study found some serious cases of violence, including crime related violence, are increasing in the communities. One very serious crime related violence spreading in the community, according to the KII respondents, is the child sexual abuse. As the news on rape and murder against girls are coming frequently in the media, and such abuses are happening in the nearby communities, girls in the study districts expressed their feeling of insecurity.

Prevalence of HIV is a major concern of Sudurpaschim's people. Many young people (men) of the province are in the foreign employment. HH survey data reveals that 96 people from 34% (n=70) of surveyed HH are in the foreign employment. Respondents have seen a connection between foreign employment and HIV, and it is likely that it will increase in the future. Though some awareness and prevention programs are ongoing, they are not sufficient. Along with this, respondents also pointed out the need for a sexual and reproductive health awareness program for young girls.

Young boys are becoming the victim of drug addiction. The different generations of women participating in this study showed their serious concern about it as men and young boys in drug addiction have been mis-behaving with their wives, mothers and women in the communities. Use of alcohol among youth has fuelled such negative behaviour of boys and men against women and girls.

Low level of awareness and access to services

Access to education, according to the PwD, is lower among them. The HH data shows that 24 people in 12% (n= 23) of surveyed HH, have some kind of disabilities. The number indicates a higher prevalence of PwD in Sudurpaschim province. They have a view that governments are

not serious in improving the access to education for the PwD. Many children with disabilities drop out soon because of not having a special school dedicated to them. Children having mental illness are almost prevented from the opportunities of education, skill enhancement, and income generation. With all this information, the respondents also suggested for a research for identifying the need and specific programs that can provide the areas of income generation opportunities to all types of PwD. However, the higher number of PwD in the province demand for the focused interventions from the governmental and non – governmental level.

The research informed that women, girls and PwD in Sudurpaschim province are not much aware about the rights and services provided by the government, and the process and procedures for obtaining these services, though they believe that people must know it. As a result, PwD respondents stated they are only receiving welfare based short term support. The budgets of the municipalities are not sub-categorized or sub-headed, which resulted in a lack of specific targeted programs for PwD, women and girls. However, they demanded for the rights based sustainable programs, and special attention from all levels of governmental and non-governmental entities. Respondents further stated that PwD, being in the category of GA (C grade) and GHA (D grade)⁸, need more support from the government and NGOs.

Young unmarried girls have a thought that the quality of government schools should be enhanced. If government schools provide same level of education as private schools, parents do not discriminate against daughters by sending only sons to private schools. Similarly, sensitization to parents who are strongly holding patriarchal feelings is also identified as a major area for improving the unequal opportunities of boys and girls in education. Similarly, regular community based awareness programs against alcohol and drug addiction can also be helpful.

⁸ Government has categorized the PwD people based on their disability status.

The research also informed that young girls should be given equal opportunities as boys. The leadership quality of girls should be strengthened so that they can speak publicly and lead the social campaigns against gender-based discrimination. If girls are empowered and given a space to speak about their concerns to the policy makers, they themselves can demand and advocate for their needs and rights. Opportunities for the girls to put their opinion in front of policy makers should be provided. Mothers and married women emphasized the need of engaging young girls in the rights-based programs.

Available skills and need of capacity enhancement

The HH survey informed that at least one person in every two households has some kinds of skill that can be used to improve his or her life. Some of the available skills in the communities as revealed by this study are: stitching (tailoring), bamboo products making (especially in a Tharu community), driving (such as tractors, jeep, bus and truck), house wiring, plumbing and carpentry. Approximately 80% of the HH and other respondents mentioned that they are good in agriculture, mainly in the traditional agriculture system. Similarly, the information also demonstrates that many HHs also have the skills of goat, pig, and other livestock farming.

The research identified income generation opportunities as a major need for economic empowerment of women. Agriculture related skills-based trainings, vocational trainings, stitching (tailoring) trainings, and other skills-based trainings and activities that can increase the income of women were identified as major sources for economic empowerment. Women of different generations have a view that they do not have the economic rights and also lack the sources of income generation. Sometimes, women receive short term training but that does not give effective return. The people of study location have also lacked the knowledge of market management and are not able to sell the skills they have. The educated young girls, who can read and write well, demanded for the entrepreneurship related as well as skills-based training.

People have seen the nearby local government as a major resource for the development of their community. They have a view that if the municipality wants, other resources and available skills can be utilized to improve the lives of women, girls and PwD in the region. Majority of the people in the study palikas are educated. Land, forests and rivers are available nearby, so people can be trained in income generation activities using these resources as well.

This study has also flagged out some of the areas for enhancing the capacity of women and girls. Respondents gave higher importance to the advocacy dialogues and interactions between different generations of women, policy makers and civil societies. These interventions can be effective for ending the ingrained harmful practices in the communities against women and girls. Similarly, education, awareness and training have also been noted as an effective medium for increasing the confidence of women and girls. For example, training on self-defence can boost the confidence of girls against sexual abuse. The capacity of child clubs and youth clubs should be strengthened on the basis of institutional development so that they will be able to lead community-based campaigns against prevailing harmful norms.

NGOs in Sudurpaschim province

Many NGOs have been implementing different short and long-term projects for enhancing the life of women, girls and PwD. Through these projects, many women and girls have already been engaged in the child clubs, youth clubs, CBOs like mothers' groups, and cooperatives. FGD participants, especially young girls, were found interested in capacity building activities. They are also interested in leading some community level campaigns against harmful social norms.

Many NGOs have been found actively working in the communities. As stated by Carothers & Barndt (1999), NGO foster citizen participation and civic education and also provide leadership training for young

people who want to engage in civic life (P. 20), respondents of this study appreciated the contribution of NGOs. The research team met some leaders and officials of NGOs.

However, interestingly, the HH survey informed that 17% of the HH (n=35) had not participated in any of the programs conducted by NGOs. People have experienced some changes in their lives, especially in the lives of women and girls, through the programs of NGOs. The information and support provided by the NGOs to women, single women, and PwD have helped them in their daily lives. Program on women empowerment has helped women to improve their leadership role, increase their participation in the development work, and their participation in politics has also been increased.

Contribution of NGOs has been appreciated by the people of Kailali, for connecting them to the cooperatives. The common response of the respondents in Kailari rural municipality was:

'Cooperative provides mortgage free loan facility at a low interest rate which has helped the daily lives of people.'

According to the respondents, cooperative has made the day to day lives of people easier which has enabled people to invest in education and health of children. Cooperative has also promoted the habit of daily saving among the poor and marginalized community.

Mother groups and cooperative members also emphasized the roles of NGOs in helping them organize and function as a group. Affiliation in a group has helped them to enhance their individual skills on non-seasonal vegetables and its marketing. The production of certain vegetables has also been increased, for example farming of mushrooms. Participation in a program implemented by NGOs has also increased the level of self-confidence at an individual and group level. In many aspects, women have become sensitized that they need to know more about their rights. The speaking habit among women and girls has increased for demanding their

rights. Now, women and girls can speak up and introduce themselves confidently.

Conclusion

The above findings led the researchers to conclude that people in Sudurpaschim province need livelihood related projects that can offer people a long-term engagement, capacity enhancement opportunity, diverse types of income generating opportunities based on the available resources, skills, and local context. By improving existing skills and businesses, in addition to introducing innovative ways of using local resources, promoting entrepreneurship, and collaborating with local business enterprises and cooperatives, the women, girls and PwD can be empowered.

Formal and informal education, both in and outside of the classroom, to the poor and marginalized girl children and PwD need to be strengthened. For the out of school adolescent girls and married women, the education on behaviour change and life skills (topics include general day to day health and hygiene behaviour, drug addiction, women violence including alcoholism, awareness on HIV, and other diseases including sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, and harmful social norms) would be helpful. For the school going young girls, the behaviour change education can be provided through organizing community listener groups, through distributing handbooks and pre-recorded materials such as radio serial dramas (RSD).

Similarly, an interactive dialogue between targeted people of this study and policy makers helps policy makers to know the actual needs of the people. Targeted people on the other hand will get the opportunity to express their concerns, needs, and their expectations with the policy makers. After the interaction, the targeted people, especially young girls,

can advocate for translating the commitment, made by the policy makers in the interaction program, into action.

People have seen LG as a major resource and are appreciating the contribution of NGOs as well. So it is highly important that these two institutions collaborate for the efficient implementation of any projects/programs for generating impactful result, and for the long-term sustainability of the projects.

Recommendations

This is the most important section of this research which has presented the program areas that need for the empowerment of women, girls and PwD in Sudurpaschim province. The suggested program areas by the respondents have been presented under the five different categories. Respondents suggested different types of programs that are needed for empowering girls, women and PwD in the communities:

Formal and civic education

- Distribution of educational materials to the poor and marginalized communities.
- Awareness creation in the communities on the free education and scholarship provisions of government for the targeted people.
- Continuous and sustainable implementation of following campaigns in the communities:
 - school admission campaign for girls' enrolment,
 - campaigns against all form of violence against women,
 - campaigns against child marriage,
 - campaigns for leadership opportunities for girls and women,
 - campaigns for vital registration,
 - campaigns against traditional harmful practices and so on.

- Trainings and sensitization program to the guardians of PwD on the care of PwD children.
- Regular household visits for the awareness and orientation to the parents as well as mobilization of local women leaders for helping children to continue their education and ending child marriage.
- Bicycle and learning materials distribution in schools.

Health awareness

- Household level awareness program against HIV targeting to the young people in the foreign employment. Similarly, other people who are at risk of HIV and their parents should also be educated.
- Reproductive health awareness program for recently married women and adolescent girls. Free distribution of materials (sanitary pads and contraceptives) to the girls and early married women.
- Provision of free ambulance service for pregnant women.
- Training on psycho-social counselling to young women.

Capacity strengthening

- Engage and facilitate women, girls and PwD to lead the advocacy campaign against violence, discrimination and violations of rights.
- Conduct programs that can ensure joint engagement of young girls and senior stakeholders in policy related rights-based matters.
- Put in place child clubs and young girls strengthening programs such as learning exchange, training on public speaking, training on self-defence, and enabling them to advocate for their rights.
- Put in place self-defence training to the girl children and comprehensive education on safety and security against child sexual abuse and rape.
- Establish Joint Trust Fund by NGOs and government organizations for supporting violence affected women. NGOs can provide technical operation support for that fund. The fund can be used, for example, to establish safe shelter houses where violence affected women and girls can stay for a short duration of time.

Provisions of psychosocial counsellors in the safe house should also be managed.

- Offer programs that can sensitize policy makers and implementers on the multiple issues of girls, women, and PwD.
- Further research, advocacy and campaigns are needed at multiple stages ranging from households to the communities to the district and provincial level for ending child marriage, discrimination based on menstruation, and other social norms.
- Some focused programs including orientations to the religious leaders, parents, community based key persons and youth against child marriage and other social norms should be offered.
- Encourage PwD and young children to sports. Distribution of sports and learning materials to school children.

Economic empowerment

- Facilitate communities in preparing an individual household level long term livelihood improvement plan. Provide training to enable families to execute the plans and establishing a system of periodic review of those plans.
- Offer skill based training for operating a certain marketable business (such as boutique, stitching, beauty parlour, house wiring and so on) to the people identified through a comprehensive need identification assessment.
- Provision of learning exchange programs between the members of cooperative and other groups such as mother groups, child clubs and youth clubs, and between cooperatives and small farmers.
- The provision and practice of income generating activities such as saving and credit mobilization, agriculture related trainings would be very helpful for the small farmers.
- Seed distribution for enhancing the agriculture products, identification of markets, and helping small farmers to sell the unused products in the market.

- Promote employment opportunity through entrepreneurship development based on the qualities and abilities of girls, early married women and PwD.
- Promoting Kailari rural municipality as a Tharu Cultural Tourism Centre/Village. This may also promote the concept of social entrepreneurship for the sustainable income in the communities.
- Promoting the marketing of Tharu cultural products in the national and international markets that can lead to the promotion of social entrepreneurship.

Other programs

- Municipality should allocate targeted group specific plans and programs such as a separate program for persons with physical disabilities and mental disabilities; dalit women and uneducated women; young girls and early married women and so on.
- Continuous distribution of support-materials for the PwD.
- Local disaster preparedness plans including disaster preparedness trainings to the community youth are to be put in place, followed by community shelter house including management of food, and support of other disaster related materials
- Support the efforts of police and municipalities in organizing programs against drug addiction, women violence and punishing the victims of harmful norms.
- Research and studies are to be carried out to provide policy feedback to the governments and on the right use of social media.

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About Janaki Women Awareness Society (JWAS)



Janaki Women Awareness Society (JWAS) is a non-governmental and not-for-profit civil society organisation that was established in 1993 A.D. (2050 B.S.) in Dhanusha district of Nepal JWAS was founded and is operated by a group of women social workers in order to enhance empowerment of marginalised people, women, Dalits, youth, janjatis, people with disabilities, and those affected by disasters and conflict in Nepal, eventually improve their quality of lives. The vision of JWAS is to create a prosperous society where women can live a dignified life. Its goal is to improve and promote the economic, social, political, health and environmental status of women, girls and marginalised people. For more information about JWAS, visit: <https://jwas.org.np/>.

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