



BASELINE STUDY

UN WOMEN NEPAL COUNTRY OFFICE STRATEGIC NOTE (2023-2027)

SUMMARY REPORT

11 September 2024

Acknowledgement

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About UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FEDO	Feminist Dalit Organization
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GRB	Gender-responsive Budgeting
NAP WPS	National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
NDHS	National Demographic and Health Survey
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OCMC	One Stop Crisis Management System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals



Photo: UN Women/Suvi Helko

ABSTRACT



This document presents a summary of the findings obtained from the baseline study research undertaken as part of the implementation of the Strategic Note 2023-2027, a framework document that guides the work of the UN Women Country Office in Nepal. Organised in four outcomes, the summary highlights the following key findings and recommendations:

- Government policies and strategies (e.g., gender-responsive budgeting, National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security) are in place. However, implementation challenges especially in terms of capacities and move beyond tokenistic activities need to be addressed. Close monitoring toward meeting the goals associated with such policies and laws is required.
- Although there is an increase in women's property ownership, close to 80% of women, especially among ethnic minorities in Nepal do not have any property titles. Government policies such as tax waiver have made a difference in increasing joint ownership of property. Yet, caution should be exercised in assuming that these advantages are truly empowering women. Measures to increase women's access to property rights should be coupled with awareness campaigns on ownership rights and entitlements.
- Level of engagement of civil society organisations locally makes a difference in the implementation of initiatives related to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Where these are active, policies, strategies and action are more gender responsive.
- There is generally low to moderate agreement that stigma, discrimination, gender-based violence and harmful practices exist. There is interest in combating these as evidenced by the active engagement of participants.
- There is evidence that women have awareness of their rights and have succeeded in claiming these in such areas as health, social security and education. However, there is less awareness in areas such as legal equality and political participation. Awareness campaigns on women's rights and entitlements are needed. However, these need to be expanded toward supporting broader behavioural change.



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INTRODUCTION



Women and girls comprise over 50% of Nepal's total population.¹

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) guarantees equal rights to women, prohibits discrimination in the application of laws and underpins gender-responsive policies that advance the rights of women in all arenas.² The Gender Equality Policy endorsed by the Government of Nepal in 2021³ is aligned with the 2018 recommendations of the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), including in relation to law

reform, gender-based violence (GBV), harmful traditional practices, labour market segregation and electoral quotas. Yet, implementation gaps regarding laws and policies (involving both capacity deficits and lack of political will)⁴ pose serious barriers for women and girls to achieve meaningful participation and representation in political, social, economic, and educational realms. The 2024 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report placed Nepal 114 out of 146 countries, notably ranking lower in economic participation and opportunity and educational

1 National Population and Housing Census, 2021.

2 For an unofficial translation of the Constitution of Nepal and its position vis a vis gender equality, see <https://lpr.adb.org/sites/default/files/resource/629/nepal-constitution.pdf>

3 See National Gender Equality Policy 2021, <https://nwc.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Laingik-Samanata-Niti.pdf>

4 Study Report on Human Rights situation of sexual and gender minorities, NHRC Nepal 2020 available at www.nhrcnepal.org/nhrc_new/doc/newsletter/Inner_LGBTI_Report_NHRC_Asar_2077.pdf

attainment.⁵ Intersectional forms of inequality and discrimination compound the situation of minorities including those belonging to the Dalit, the Madhesi and the indigenous populations.

Working in Nepal since 2013 UN Women has contributed to narrowing such gender disparities and empowering women and girls. Its Strategic Note 2023-2027⁶ which is aligned to the planning and development frameworks of the country and the work of the United Nations through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027, foresees work in four outcome areas to address concerns reflected above. These are:

1. **Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Economic Transformation** focusing on inclusive, resilient, and sustainable socio-economic transformation at federal, provincial, and local levels. UN Women priorities include women's access to and control over productive resources, women's access to sustainable incomes and livelihoods and women's access to social safety nets.
2. **Inclusive and Transformative Human Development** focusing on improved equitable quality social services at federal, provincial, and local levels. UN Women will invest, *inter alia*, in research and evidence building including use of innovative approaches to contribute to shifting, tracking and measuring such shifts in

gender discriminatory social norms, and strengthening the capacities of women's and community-based organizations to support GBV prevention and response efforts.

3. **Environmental Sustainability, Climate and Disaster Resilience** focusing on gender-responsive climate change adaptation, disaster risk preparedness and mitigation, and effective response, recovery, and resilience. UN Women will contribute to enhancing capacities of relevant key stakeholders and ensuring that effective community-based mechanisms are in place to ensure the progression of gender-sensitive strategies for climate change adaptation, disaster risk readiness, mitigation, as well as efficient response, recovery, and resilience measures.
4. **Governance, Federalism, Participation and Inclusion** focusing on strengthening capacities and accountability at all levels of governance to formulate or reform gender responsive laws, policies and plans aligning with established international and national normative frameworks. In supporting this, UN Women will ensure the principle of leaving no one behind by facilitating meaningful engagement of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ persons, particularly those from marginalized groups, to influence governance processes.

To gauge progress in the implementation of the Strategic Note, a baseline study was commissioned in 2023 and completed in March 2024. This document summarizes some of the key findings.

5 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, 2024 accessible at https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2024.pdf.

6 For a summary, please see <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/nepal/about-un-women-nepal>



Photo: UN Women/Srijana Bhatta

METHODOLOGY



The objective of the Baseline Study was to generate baseline data for the results indicators contained in the UN Women’s Strategic Note 2023-2027, focusing primarily on impact and outcome level indicators. To do this, the study employed a concurrent nested mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews focusing on crucial gender dimensions including but not limited to violence prevalence, social norms, and decision-making. Data were collected in December 2023.

For the purposes of the quantitative survey, stratified random sampling was used to identify the 259 participants from areas where UN Women implements programming targeted by the current Strategic Note. Purposive sampling was used for the qualitative part of the study considering the selection of participants who possessed specific expertise relevant to the objectives of the baseline study to ensure representation from different stakeholders. Thus, 26 key informant interviews were carried out with representatives of local government, Civil Society Organisations (CSO), including

women CSOs and media. Eight focus group discussions were conducted with women's and men's groups, mixed gender groups and schools. One of the key limitations of the baseline is the oversampling of women participants. Despite efforts only 30 men participated in the quantitative survey accounting probably for a skewed representation of the findings in the baseline. Throughout the report, the term "participant" is used interchangeably with women unless otherwise indicated.

The study covered various districts, aligned to UN Women's outcome areas. Two local levels were selected randomly from each district, with one being urban and the other being rural. These included Kailai (Kailari Rural Municipality and Bhajani Municipality), Doti (Dipayal Silgadi municipality and Badi Kedar Rural Municipality), Surkhet (Bheriganga Municipality and Lekhbesi Rural Municipality), Kavrepalanchowk (Banepa Municipality and Mahabharat Rural Municipality), and Sarlahi (Malangwa Municipality, and Brahamapuri Rural Municipality).



Photo: UN Women//Uma Bista



Photo: UN Women/ Manjeeta Gurung

KEY FINDINGS



Organized by key outcomes of the Strategic Note, this section highlights baseline findings combining desk review and primary data collection. Annex 1 mirrors the findings to the relevant outcome and output indicators

1. Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Economic Transformation

By 2027, more people, especially women, youth, the most marginalized and poor, increasingly benefit from and contribute to inclusive, resilient, and sustainable socio-economic transformation at federal, provincial, and local levels.

Women's Access to and Control over Productive Resources

Where UN Women programming is concerned, a strong component of achieving this outcome is women's access to and control over productive resources.

► Finding 1.1

The Civil Code (2017) guarantees equal rights to women and men in owning property. Government initiatives have been introduced to foster gender-inclusive property rights. Yet, women encounter obstacles due to lack of awareness of their rights and entitlements.

The Civil Code (2017) guarantees equal rights to women and men in owning property. Governmental initiatives have played a crucial role in fostering gender-inclusive property rights. Reservation facilities, citizenship rights, job opportunities, and seats in decision-making committees are among the many measures taken by the government to address historical disparities in ownership. But implementation requires women to assert their rights. In the research, local government representatives stressed the importance of women advocating for their

rights to ensure effective implementation of laws and constitutional provisions. There is lack of awareness among women regarding documentation, resulting in property control often being retained by male household members. Despite the legal provisions, numerous women lack authority over the management of legal documents and asset utilization.

► Finding 1.2

Notwithstanding an increase in women's property ownership, close to 80% of women, especially among ethnic minorities in Nepal do not have any property titles.

Ownership was defined in terms of participants possessing legal documentation of any property. On average, 20% of women participants in the study had ownership of any property. This finding aligns with national statistics from the 2021 census which indicated that approximately 2% of women nationwide owned houses exclusively, 10% owned land exclusively, and 12% owned both land and houses. Madhesi community had the highest proportion of women owning property (66%), followed by Muslim (33%), Dalit (17%), Brahmin/Chettri (15%), and Adibasi (10%). Most respondents

reporting property ownership were from Brahmapuri, which explains the higher number of Madhesi owning property in the sample.⁷ Surveyed women did not report facing challenges in accessing property rights. In addition, 24% reported receiving some form of government support related to women's property ownership. Few participants (about 4%) reported gender-specific obstacles in legal documentation process for property ownership.

► Finding 1.3

Although tax exemptions have made a positive change in increasing women's access to property ownership caution should be exercised in assuming that these advantages are truly empowering women.

Women now not only have the opportunity to acquire property through purchases but also have their names on the titles. Close to 90% of the participants had single ownership, with the rest reporting having joint ownership. The existence of 25% and 30% tax waiver to women compared to men in the purchase and sale of land in urban and rural areas since 2015 serves as a pivotal factor contributing to joint ownership. Close to 60% of the participants shared that they had acquired property through inheritance in cases when they were not married or stayed single, followed by 37% who reported obtaining the property

through purchase and another 3% through gifts and other means. This shift signifies a departure from the historical perception of property as exclusively belonging to husbands or passing down to male descendants. Although none of the female participants in focus group discussions reported cases where they had filed cases to claim inheritance from parental property after marriage, the fiscal advantage of 25% and 30% reinforces the argument that economic considerations, when aligned with supportive policies, can significantly impact societal norms and practices.

However, challenges remain. Despite legal provisions granting equal rights to sons and daughters over ancestral property, parental preference for sons inheriting more property remains common. This preference is rooted in the belief that daughters leave the household upon marriage while sons stay, perpetuating gender inequality in property inheritance. In addition, benefiting from fiscal advantages has raised concern on whether the women have been able to exercise the entitlements of ownership on their will. Male members may register land in women's names to benefit from tax exemptions accorded to females in land transactions, motivating their inclusion in property ownership. In fact, although the percentage of women owning land has risen, motivation for registration may be predominantly linked to tax waiver rather than empowering women to make decisions or exert control over property usage.⁸

⁷ In general, not so many Madhesi or Muslims own property. This finding needs to be interpreted cautiously given that the sample was not representative.

⁸ Further probing is needed in motivation for registration of ownership.

2. Inclusive and Transformative Human Development

By 2027, more people, especially women, youth, children, and the most marginalized and poor, increasingly participate in and benefit from equitably improved quality social services at federal, provincial, and local levels.

Policies and strategies associated with Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

► Finding 2.1

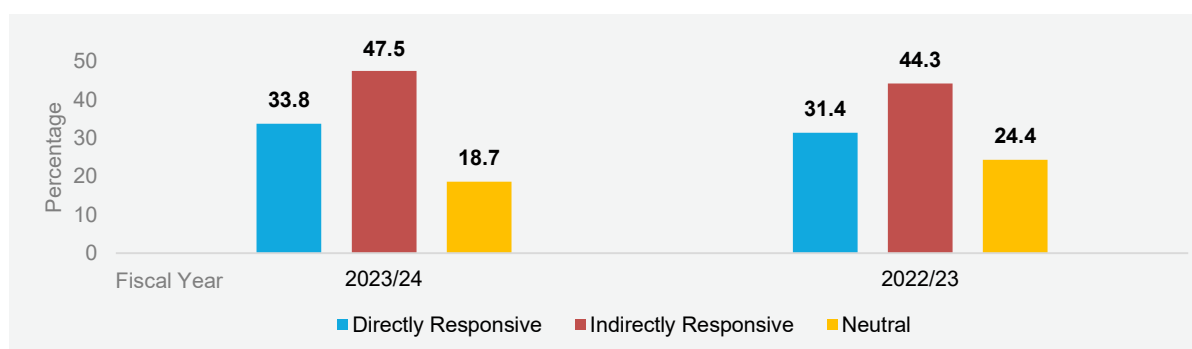
Nepal has a system in place to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment, both at the national and local level. However, its implementation is fraught with challenges related, inter alia, to capacity and resource allocation.

The fifteenth five-year plan (2019/20-2024/25) has taken a strategy to institutionalize the gender responsive budget dissemination process at all levels of government including federal, provincial and local level by 2025. The government had also declared a policy level intervention in budget speech

during fiscal year 2019/20 to incorporate Gender Responsive Budgeting System at provincial and local levels supervised through Gender Responsive Committee formed under Budget and Program Division of Ministry of Finance. Gender budgeting allows for a basis to analyse how committed or divergent are different tiers of government in their policy programs. It entails five different components including gender policy analysis, analysis of the budget based on its benefit to the women, gender impact analysis of expenditure, analysis related to necessity of gender issues in the budget, and analysis of gender sensitivity of the budget.

At the central level, the trend of gender responsive budgets started in the fiscal year 2007/08; the gender responsive proportion of budget has been constantly increasing over years with 11% during 2007/08 to a nearly constant proportion in the last few fiscal years.

Figure 1 Gender Responsive Budget at Federal Level



However, assessment of actual realization of the output as per the gendered division of budget is cumbersome. The respondents from central level key informant interviews expressed that, there should be clear principles of gender mentioned in budget calendar for different government entities. In addition to availability of data and capacity to produce data, resource crunch (both technical capacity and number of staffs) presents an impediment especially for local levels. The ten local governments across the five districts reported of less or no staffs who are fundamentally responsible for women division at the local level. The status of performing gender-based audit of the local level was directly related to the capacity of the local level together with availability and willingness of non-governmental entity working in the issues of women and marginalization within the local level.

Yet another challenge relates to the quality of GRB programming. Despite the emphasis on GRB, budget allocations have predominantly favoured physical infrastructure development over meeting the needs of marginalized populations, indicating a gap in addressing specific gender-related needs. Furthermore, while GRB has been a significant economic pillar at the local level, its implementation lacks effectiveness, with funds often diverted to workshops or related activities instead of genuine empowerment initiatives. This ineffective allocation of resources hampers the grassroots-level empowerment efforts, particularly for marginalized groups like gender minorities and Dalits, highlighting the

need for more targeted and impactful budget allocations aligned with gender equality and indicators of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

► Finding 2.2

Nepal launched the Second National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security in 2022. Opportunities and challenges need to be addressed for its effective implementation including monitoring to 2025.

The Second National Action Plan (NAP II) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2022-2025 builds upon the strategic areas of the First NAP; it rests on four pillars collectively aimed at promoting sustainable peace, gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls in Nepal. Under the **Participation pillar**, efforts are directed towards ensuring women's meaningful participation across various sectors, including government, security, and professional fields. The **Protection and Prevention** pillar focuses on implementing laws effectively to address sexual and gender-based violence, strengthening the transitional justice system, and adopting preventive measures to protect women at risk of violence. **Relief and Recovery** pillar prioritizes long-term rehabilitation and empowerment programs tailored to the specific needs of conflict-affected women, including livelihood support, skill training, and psychosocial counselling. **Capacity Development, Resource Management, and Monitoring and Evaluation** pillar emphasizes resource mobilization,

stakeholder participation, and results-oriented monitoring to ensure the successful implementation of the NAP. A monitoring framework for NAP II WPS was developed with support from UN Women; as of the summary, the document is being finalized.

The implementation of NAP II on WPS faces both significant challenges and opportunities across all levels of governance. At the forefront of challenges lies the need to address deeply ingrained societal norms and cultural barriers that perpetuate gender-based violence and hinder women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Despite legal provisions and policy frameworks, the gap between legislative mandates and practical enforcement remains a pressing concern, requiring concerted efforts to bridge through awareness-raising campaigns, capacity-building initiatives, and community engagement programs. As well, limited financial resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and institutional constraints may impede progress, highlighting the necessity for transparent budgeting mechanisms, stakeholder consultations, and strategic partnerships to optimize resource utilization and enhance accountability. However, the growing momentum for gender equality and women's empowerment at the global, regional, and national levels which Nepal needs to capitalize on alongside leveraging international support, sharing best practices, and fostering inclusive governance structures.

Finding 2.3

More than half of women aged 15-49 years make their own informed decisions regarding their sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care.

Women are considered to make their own informed decisions on sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health if (1) they can say no to their husband if they do not want to have sexual intercourse; (2) they make decisions on whether or not they should use contraception; and (3) they make decisions themselves about their own health care. Nationally, close to 63% of presently married women are regarded as making informed choices concerning their sexual and reproductive health including the ability to refuse sexual intercourse, making decisions about family planning usage alone or with their spouse, and deciding about their healthcare independently or with their spouse's involvement. Close to 77% of currently married women decide jointly with their husband/partner, while 14% make their own decision, and 9% report their husband/partner mainly decides. Among those making joint decisions, 58% consider both their and their partner's opinions equally significant. Overall, 91% of women participate in decision-making regarding family planning, whether individually or jointly.⁹

9 National Demographic and Health Survey 2022.

Violence against women

► Finding 2.4

Prevalence of violence against women has remained steady (close to 23% over the decade). Yet, the rise, albeit small, in intimate partner violence is a concern requiring immediate attention.

Violence against women remains an issue of concern in Nepal. National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) (2022) indicates that the prevalence of physical violence experienced by women since age 15 years has remained relatively stable at 22% – 23% over the past decade. However, there has been a slight increase over time in the percentage of women encountering physical violence within the last 12 months, rising from 9% in both 2011 and 2016 to 11% in 2022. Among all women, 16% have faced solely physical violence, 1% have undergone only sexual violence, and 6% have endured both physical and sexual violence. Overall, 24% of women have ever experienced physical or sexual violence. This percentage notably increases with age, from 13% among those aged 15–19 years to 30% among those aged 40–49 years. About 23% of women who have ever been married or had an intimate partner reported experiencing physical violence from their current or most recent partner, including 11% who experienced physical violence in the last 12 months. Additionally, 7% reported sexual violence, with 4% experiencing it within the last 12 months, and 13% reported emotional violence, including 10% who experienced such

violence in the last 12 months. Overall, 27% of women have experienced one or more forms of physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their current or most recent partner. The percentage of women facing spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence decreased from 32% in 2011 to 26% in 2016 before slightly increasing to 27% in 2022. The percentage of ever-married women experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional intimate partner violence by a spouse or partner in the last 12 months rose from 14% in 2016 to 17.2% in 2022.¹⁰

► Finding 2.5

There is a decline in the proportion of both women and men justifying wife beating over time from 29% in 2016 to 19% in 2022. However, rates of acceptance of violence in relationships are higher among youth than adults.

Over time, there has been a decrease in the proportion of both women and men aged 15-49 years who justify wife beating. Among women, this proportion decreased from 29% in 2016 to 19% in 2022, while among men, it declined from 23% in 2016 to 17% in 2022 (NDHS 2022).¹¹ This development is a positive indication of societal progress towards gender equality and the rejection of violence within relationships. However, rates of acceptance of violence are higher among

¹⁰ Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2022, Ministry of Health and Population.

¹¹ National Demographic and Health Survey 2022 accessible at <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR379/FR379.pdf>

youth likely revealing a gap in awareness and acceptance of the importance of mutual respect, dignity, and non-violence in interpersonal dynamics. Among youth, aged 15–19 years old, 21% female and 24% male agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one specified reason. In contrast, those aged 45–49 years old have lower rates of agreement, with 16% of women and 14% of men in this age bracket expressing similar sentiments.

► Finding 2.6

Although more than 70% participants believe that GBV should not be tolerated, the phenomenon is far from being repudiated by all. There is caste variation in toleration of GBV. However, many are involved in proactively addressing GBV, including on supporting survivors.

Primary data collected in target areas indicated that 12% of participants believed that GBV was very high in their communities followed by 11% that believed it to be high and 35% believing it to be moderate. Depending on the level of information surveyed participants had, 37% believed GBV to be low and 5% to be very low. There was generally a belief that GBV should not be tolerated with 34% very strongly believing this and 39% strongly believing this. However, it is concerning that there were participants that moderately believed it should not be tolerated (15%), slightly believed it should be tolerated (7%) and strongly believed (6%) that it should be tolerated.

There was some variation where caste/ethnicity is concerned. Well over 70% of participants in all caste/ethnicity except for Muslims (67%) either very strongly or strongly believed that GBV should not be tolerated. Participants that very strongly believed that GBV should not be tolerated included Dalit (41%) and Adibasi/Janajati (46%) compared to Brahmin/Chhetri and Muslim (33% each) and Madhesi (23%). Over 35% reported active involvement in efforts to reduce and challenge gender-based violence. Among those actively engaged, the majority focused on supporting GBV survivors (88%). Community awareness campaigns (71%), advocacy for policy changes and legal reforms (62%), and education/training efforts (53%) were also prominent areas of engagement.

Stigma and discrimination

Community members participate in awareness programs and rallies addressing social norms and harmful practices. This engagement was largely influenced by the efforts of CSOs and CBOs in promoting gender equality. More women were moderately involved compared to men who had low to moderate levels of participation. However, while attendance in programs and rallies was high, the challenge lied in translating this engagement into behavioural changes, particularly in challenging harmful norms at the household and community levels. Field reports indicated instances where women participated in awareness rallies for equality and decision-making rights but faced restrictions in

financial decision-making when they returned home. There was uniformity in behaviour across all caste and ethnic groups.

► Finding 2.7

Overall, there was a positive attitude to combating stigma associated with caste-based discrimination, sexual minorities and persons with disabilities. On average 30% of participants actively engaged to address these.

Caste-based discrimination: There was a moderate to low perception of the current level of caste-based discrimination. Overall, 36% believed that there was a moderate level of caste-based discrimination followed by others reporting a low level (32%) or very low level (11%) of prevalence compared to those who believed there was a high (8%) or a very high level (14%) of prevalence. Overall, there was aversion to caste-based discrimination. Participants strongly believed (51%) or believed (28%) that individuals should be treated with equal respect and dignity. This was highest among Adibasi Janajati (74%), followed by Dalit (61%), and Brahmin/Chettri (52%). Equally encouraging, respondents had actively engaged (31%) or somewhat engaged (52%) in activities to reduce stigma among social groups.

LGBTIQ+ people: There was a perception that discriminations against LGBTIQ+ people were very high (15%) or high (9%) followed by 36% who believed that there was a moderate level and those that

believe there was low (29%) or very low (11%) discrimination. While the majority (78%) believed that LGBTIQ+ people should be treated equally, 18% remained neutral, with a very few participants expressing contrary views. Nearly 79% of the people reported active (26%) or moderate (53%) engagement in some form to combat discrimination. While they expressed that their efforts were directed towards addressing stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people, it was evident that they were actively fighting against discrimination in any form.

Persons with disabilities: The view that persons with disabilities should not be stereotyped and should be treated equally prevailed. However, when asked, 33% of the participants reported that there was low level of stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities contrasted to 15% who noted that the discrimination was very high. Close to 30% of the participants reported actively engaged in efforts to reduce and challenge the stigma associated with persons with disabilities compared to about 53% being somewhat engaged and 17% not being engaged at all.

In addition to actively or moderately participating in addressing stigma and discrimination, ***improved access to resources for marginalized groups was a mechanism to combat stigma and discrimination.*** Participants either strongly believed (43%) or believed (34%) that this should be the case with 18% remaining neutral.

Harmful practices: Dowry, Son preference, and Chhaupadi

► Finding 2.8

Although there was recognition that dowry, son preference and Chhaupadi were a concern, and between 40%-60% actively engaged to addressing these, there was sufficient following to adhering to these practices that makes continuous programming necessary.

Dowry was a significant concern for many participants including those that strongly agreed (22%) and agreed (32%). Only 14% remained neutral on the issue. However, it is concerning that 15% strongly disagreed and 17% disagreed that dowry was a concern. In fact, about 36% believed that if a family did not give dowry, the chances of violence against their daughter increased. 47% strongly opposed the practice but it is of concern that 21% had reservations but accepted it as a practice, indicating

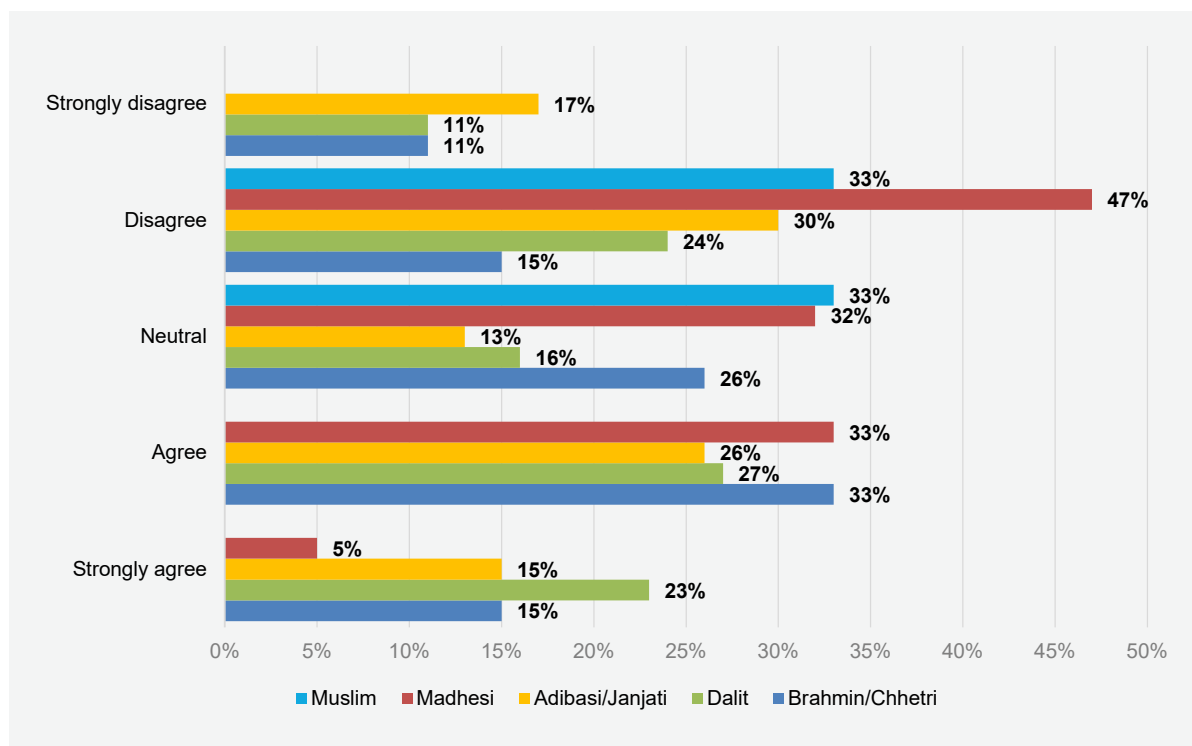
the practice remains still firmly rooted in the surveyed areas. Close to 20% of the participants were in the spectrum from considering it completely acceptable, to acceptable under certain circumstances with 15% calling it an outdated tradition. There was sufficient variation on level of acceptance by caste/ethnicity to consider targeted programming on addressing this harmful practice as Table 1 shows. Participants reported being actively engaged (59%) or somewhat engaged (39%) in discouraging dowry.

Son preference over daughters was high (29%) or significantly high (11%) with 27% remaining neutral and others showing low (26%) or extremely low (8%) preference. Overall, more participants strongly agreed (47%) or agreed (33%) that both sons and daughters should be equally valued in the community. 12% remained neutral with fewer disagreeing (6%) or strongly disagreeing (3%) on the contrary. Many participants agreed or strongly agreed that both sons and daughters should be equally valued. However, there were 15% of Brahmin/Chhetri and 16% of Madhesi participants who maintained a neutral

Table 1 Feeling about dowry by caste/ethnicity

What do you feel about dowry?	Brahmin/Chhetri	Dalit	Adibasi/Janajati	Madhesi	Muslim
Strongly acceptable	7%	3%	7%	5%	0%
Acceptable in certain circumstances	4%	11%	13%	5%	0%
Harmful and outdated tradition	19%	10%	9%	37%	67%
Reservations but understand its cultural significance	22%	23%	26%	0%	0%
Strongly oppose dowry practices	48%	53%	44%	53%	33%

Figure 2 Rate of agreement on acceptance of Chaupadi by caste/ethnic origin



stance on this issue. Although in the minority, sentiments that daughters and sons should not be equally valued among the Brahmin/Chhetri and the Adibasi/Janajati at 4% each is concerning. It is encouraging however, that 60% asserted their active involvement and 30% were somewhat involved in advocacy campaigns aimed at discouraging son preference.

Chhaupadi,¹² is still regarded as a cultural practice with its own following per Figure 2. Thus, 17% strongly agreed and 23% agreed to this as an accepted practice. Another 19% were neutral. Approximately 40% strongly disagreed or disagreed that the practice is a way to maintain purity in worshipping the deities. The Dalit, the Brahmin/Chhetri and Adibasi/

Janajati strongly agreed with the practice. However, there was a level of engagement in discouraging Chhaupadi. Approximately 39% of respondents reported being actively involved and 44% somewhat involved in discouraging the practice.

Raising awareness and challenging the practice of dowry, son preference, chhaupadi in the community came in different forms. The two types of activities conducted by many were organisation of community workshops and dialogues (60%) and distributing informational pamphlets or posters to educate the community (58%). This was followed by engaging with local leaders, influencers and faith-based leaders to advocate (53%) and supporting families who had chosen not to practice harmful practices (39%). Fewer worked as a role model (25%).

12 An ancient tradition practised in some rural parts of Nepal which involves banishing people, often young girls, to mud huts or sheds for the duration of their menstruation period, or even longer.

3. Environmental Sustainability, Climate and Disaster Resilience

By 2027, more people, especially women, youth, children, and the most marginalised and poor, increasingly benefit from and contribute to building an inclusive, sustainable, climate-resilient and green society and reduced impacts of disasters at federal, provincial, and local levels.

► Finding 3.1

Higher level of engagement of civil society organisations locally made possible the implementation of initiatives related to GEWE.

The presence of civil society organizations (CSOs) working on GEWE was important in influencing key normative, policy and peace processes led by government mechanisms and institutions. Contrasting differences in gender-budgeting and policy making were observed in local contexts where CSOs engaged compared to those with very limited presence of CSOs, even within same district. For instance, in Badeikedar rural municipality of Doti reportedly there was very limited intervention of CSOs in issues related to women, with some intervention of FEDO and no other organization. The rural municipality also had neither passed GESI policy nor had internalized policies related to Chhaupadi in the local policies. In contrast, Dipayal Silgadi municipality that had interventions of several organizations including FEDO, not only had these policies but had performed gender auditing with aid from the CSOs (see Annex 2 for examples).

One of the stark observations during the baseline study was the absence of

men in the baseline study and previous programme interventions. A host of reasons may account for this absence, including disinterest, and time restrictions. However, the engagement of men and boys is key to the success of GEWE programming as shown elsewhere. It is important that upcoming programme interventions engage men to positively influence key normative, policy and peace processes.

► Finding 3.2

While electricity access has reached near-universal access, renewable energy is limited in its contribution. Gender data especially at the household level, i.e., female and male headed households are sorely needed.

The Energy Synopsis Report 2023¹³ which analyses Nepal's energy usage does not provide gender data at the level of sex of head of household. Therefore, it is impossible to reach any gender related conclusions on this indicator. Traditional sources still dominate, constituting about 66% of the total mix, with fuelwood

13 Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, the Government of Nepal; <http://weecs.gov.np/source/Energy%20Synopsis%20Report%2C%202023.pdf>

being the primary source at 60% of fuel consumption. Similarly, commercial fuel usage is 27%, while electricity consumption as source of cooking fuel has reached only to 4%. Despite these shifts, renewable energy accounts for only 2% of total energy consumption. The report further interprets that Nepal has made significant progress in expanding electricity access, with 94% of the population now connected, notably achieving near-universal access in the Madhesh region at about 100%. Additionally, 92% of households utilize electricity as their primary lighting source. Hence, the dominance of traditional energy sources in Nepal's energy usage highlights the ongoing challenges in transitioning to more sustainable alternatives. While there is progress in expanding electricity access, the limited contribution of renewable energy highlights the need for further investment and policy support to achieve a more diversified and environmentally friendly energy landscape.

► Finding 3.3

While at the national level, statistics show more females than males lose their life due to disasters, gender data are missing at the local level.

At the national level, the annual loss of human life (death and missing) for 2023 reported due to disaster was 2.05 per 100,000 persons in 2023, with more females losing life.¹⁴ At the local level however, sex disaggregated data are missing. Bhajani municipality reported

the human loss of 1.87 per 100,000 populations due to the incidents such as risk from flood, thunderbolt, snake bites. The number of populations affected directly and indirectly by these risks are 40,412 per 100,000. The number of populations affected was significantly high mainly because Bhajani area is prone to flood. With the same regard, Kailari municipality reports the human loss of 8.01 and the number of populations affected directly and indirectly by these risks tolls up to 1,871. Likewise, in Dipayal Silgadi, the human loss reported due to landslides, fire, animal incident, forest fire, earthquake and thunderbolt counts to 11.77 per 100,000 population whereas the number of populations affected directly and indirectly with these disasters are 447 per 100,000. Also, in Badikedar, the human loss reported is 6.71 and the number of populations affected counts to 349 per 100,000. Similarly, in Bheriganga the human loss reported due to fire, windstorm, heavy rainfall, thunderbolt is 6.22 whereas the populations affected is 124 per 100,000. In the same line, Lekhbesi reports 3.15 human loss and 136 per 100,000 populations being affected directly and indirectly. While Banepa and Mahabharat reports the human loss of 5.91 and 6.22 per 100,000 population respectively, the number of populations affected in these municipality counts to 814 and 373 respectively. Similarly, in Malangwa and Brahmapuri the human loss reported counts to 3.66 and 6.374 and the affected populations is reported to 649 and 344 per 100,000 population respectively. Provided, the need to capacitate the community in mitigating small-scale natural disasters as such is imperative with focus to continued collaboration between the concerned stakeholders in local and national framework.

¹⁴ DRR portal (<http://drrportal.gov.np/>) reported 563 (298 female; 259 male and 4 unknown) deaths and 35 missing in 2023.

4. Governance, Federalism, Participation and Inclusion

By 2027, more people, especially women, youth, and the most marginalized and poor increasingly participate in and benefit from coordinated, inclusive, accessible, participatory, transparent, and gender-responsive governance, access to justice and human rights at federal, provincial, and local levels.

Gender-responsive governance, access to justice and human rights

► Finding 4.1

Although there is progress in the legal framework of gender equality and empowerment of women, gender minorities remain discriminated against.

Several constitutional provisions ensure gender equality and empowerment of women and girls including gender minorities (see Annex 3). However, the dissolution of government bodies such as the Women's Development Office (WDO) and Women's Coordination Office (WCO) as part of federalism process, has had significant implications for the implementation of legal and policy frameworks related to GEWE. Legal recognition and implementation remain elusive, highlighting the ongoing challenges faced by marginalized communities in Nepal.

Gender minorities including Dalits:

The constitution of Nepal promises legal assurance to its citizens; namely, Article 12 outlines the process for

obtaining citizenship and gender identity recognition, but challenges persist, mostly for marginalized groups like Dalits within the LGBTIQ+ community. The Supreme Court has issued mandates to address the rights of gender minorities including mandating the government to grant citizenship to *Tesro Lingi* 'non-binary' according to their identity on December 21, 2007. Yet, certification and approval from a doctor that non-binary people have undergone a gender affirming surgery is required for gender minorities to access citizenship rights.

Another challenge concerns representation of Dalit within gender minorities. Although Article 18 and 40 of the Constitution, guarantee the right to equality, as well as rights and representation for Dalits, implementation often falls short, with inadequate distribution of resources. Limited representation of Dalits in decision-making bodies at the national government bodies is also reflected within the 39 organizations working with diverse sexual and gender communities where up to five individuals of this community are encountered.

Same sex marriage: On June 27, 2023, the Supreme Court ordered the performance

of temporary same-sex marriages. However, challenges remain, including the definition of same-sex marriage as a “temporary” union that does not grant equal rights. The partners within the marital system are unable to claim property, acquire citizenship (in the name of partner) or other benefits, thus requiring the need for comprehensive legal reforms. In February 2017, a policy draft was initiated to ensure marriage rights for sexual minorities, including provisions for artificial pregnancy and adoption. However, this policy has not been passed, hindering equal rights in marriage.

► Finding 4.2

While Nepal complies with the constitutional provision of 33% women representation at different levels of government, efforts to promote and support women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes at all levels of government are needed.

Constitutional provisions 84 and 176 require that a quota of 33% of the representation at different levels of government is women. At present 37% of seats in the National Assembly and 33% in the House of Representatives are held by women. Similarly, at the provincial level, women constitute 34% of representatives, while at the local level, their representation stands at 41%. Inclusive measures, such as mandatory Dalit participation at the ward level and reserved positions for women in every

party, signify a conscious effort to ensure increased representation of women.

As an example, Dalit ward members Kavre and Mahabharat credited the opportunities created by government quotas, enabling them to become people's representatives. Over time, these women developed the skills and confidence needed for effective leadership. Their success stories highlight a transformative journey from initial learning phases to actively contributing to developmental initiatives. The acceptance and recognition from their communities reinforce the positive impact of policies aimed at increasing representation. Similarly, women's groups in Banakhu emphasized the importance of the 33% seat allocation in local governments. Resolving conflicts within committees and evaluating performance based on capacity showcases the evolving role of women in leadership positions.

Notwithstanding mere compliance with the law, there remains a notable disparity between male and female representation across all levels of governance. For example, as of December 2023, Cabinet of ministers (federal level) consisted only four females out of 22 ministers (18%).¹⁵ At present, there are 11% of women judges (44 women out of 402 judges) in all three layers of the court system. Specifically, there are three judges in the Supreme Court, 23 in High Court and 18 judges in District Court.¹⁶

¹⁵ <https://www.opmcm.gov.np/en/cabinet/>

¹⁶ Source: <https://www.norway.no/en/nepal/norway-nepal2/news/access-to-justice-womens-rep/#:~:text=At%20present%2C%20approximately%20there%20are,18%20judges%20in%20District%20Court.>

At the local level, challenges also remain. For example, in Brahmapuri, despite having representation, the participation of women was significantly low. A Dalit ward member emphasized that while there were mandates ensuring the representation of Dalit women at the ward level, frequently she was neither invited to meetings nor her voice was considered in the decision-making process. The intersectionality of caste compounded the issue, aggravating the deeply ingrained discrimination faced by women, highlighting the need for addressing both gender and caste dynamics to promote inclusive decision-making.

► Finding 4.3

More than 70% believe that women should be involved in leadership and decision-making roles. However, there is variation in terms of level of decision-making, the higher the level, the more limited the participation of women.

That women and marginalized groups should be involved in leadership and decision-making was a belief strongly held (40%) or held (36%) by study participants. Only 20% were neutral with a small minority that believed the contrary. Fewer Madhesi (21%) and Muslim (33%) believed this compared to other ethnic groups with many taking a neutral stance on the matter (about 68% and 67% respectively). Community members engaged in promoting involvement of women and marginalized groups in leadership positions either actively (37%) or

somewhat actively (50%). Among the ones who reported to be actively engaged, 93% were actively involved in volunteering for awareness programmes, followed by 75% engaged in advocacy efforts for improved service access, 48% supporting economic empowerment and 34% in advocating for diversity and inclusion.

The current landscape of women's involvement in decision-making processes reflects a nuanced picture across different regions. There was a perceptible shift in awareness and mobility for women. While women remained primarily within the household sphere, their active participation in meetings and involvement in women's groups indicated a growing presence at decision-making levels. However, there was a gap in women's participation at political and higher-profile decision-making levels. For example, in Sarlahi, the opportunities for women in decision-making appeared limited, primarily confined to a few NGOs. In Kailali, while women were present, their access to decision-making was restricted. The dominance of males in decision-making spaces was identified as a significant barrier.

Unequal division of labour and gendered roles may be a barrier to women's leadership and decision-making experiences. Close to 36% strongly believed and 38% believed that the gender-based roles and division of labour should be more equitable, with 21% remaining neutral. These views were the basis for more than 27% of participants being actively engaged in supporting and promoting equitable division of work.

Mobility restriction: 41% of participants strongly affirmed the presence of mobility restrictions for women and girls compared to the 36% participants asserting that there were no discernible mobility constraints for women and girls. 23% of participants remained neutral. Many participants strongly agreed (41%) or agreed (33%) that there should be no mobility restrictions, with 12% remaining neutral and 14% disagreeing. Disaggregation by caste revealed that many participants opposed or were neutral to the idea that there should not be any mobility restrictions for women and girls. However, 30% of Adibasi/Janajatis disagreed with the notion of unrestricted mobility, compared to 13% of Brahmin/Chettri and Dalit participants, respectively. Participants shared that they actively engaged (37%) or somewhat engaged (51%) in actions promoting freedom of movement and mobility.

► Finding 4.4

Policies and laws with a focus on gender equality have been enacted. However, their implementation requires close monitoring toward meeting the aim associated with such policies and laws.

Adoption of national and/or local (multi) sectoral strategies, policies, and/or action plans with a focus on gender equality is crucial for advancing women's empowerment and addressing systemic inequalities. However, it was remarked that the government must not only monitor the leadership of women but also provide them with capacity-building

opportunities, such as leadership training and knowledge sharing on political obligations, to ensure their effective participation in decision-making processes. Moreover, these strategies should be guided by feminist principles, emphasizing the prioritization of gender equality across all sectors. While there has been progress in increasing the representation of women in political positions, efforts should continue to ensure full representation, with a particular focus on achieving one-third representation of women in political power. Additionally, national strategies must acknowledge and address structural violence as a significant issue affecting women, prioritizing interventions to combat it effectively. Furthermore, the integration of dismantled women's divisions under social divisions is essential to promote strategic policy implementation, moving away from mere small activities towards substantive gender-responsive strategies.

Although laws addressing issues such as acid attack (Criminal Code, 2074 section 193), Chhaupadi (Criminal Code 2074 section 168) and Witchcraft Allegation (Offence and Punishment Act, 2072) have been introduced, their effective implementation remains challenging, even with the existence of institutional mechanisms. Persistent discrimination against gay Dalits and non-Dalits emphasizes deeper social biases and structural inequalities that must be addressed. Redirecting cultural spending priorities towards genuine empowerment initiatives for marginalized groups like Dalits is imperative to achieve inclusive and sustainable gender equality.

► Finding 4.5

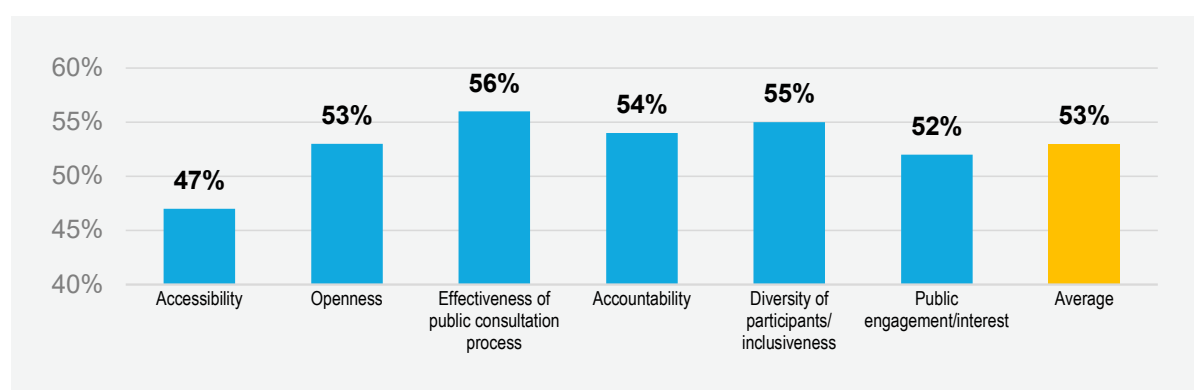
More than half of women participants believed that there were sufficient opportunities for women to engage in decision-making processes. However, programming needs to pay attention to varied perceptions especially as these relate to ethnicities and municipalities.

Recent policies have focused more on social security, with funds provided to older people, widows, and others. Key informant interviews indicated that although necessary, these initiatives should be conducted through local bodies, with macro-level institutions focusing on policy implementation. Similarly, the institutional mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure clarity of responsibilities and effective coordination among bodies such as the One-stop Crisis Management Center, public attorneys, and women's divisions. It is imperative that these bodies operate within their designated boundaries

and priorities, focusing on collaboration rather than blame-shifting. The need of regular reviews and training programs were highlighted to enhance the understanding of respective duties and promote accountability.

Women's opportunities to engage in decision-making processes was examined through six criteria: accessibility, openness, effectiveness of public consultation, accountability, diversity, and public engagement using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, 1 meaning no opportunities to 5 meaning sufficient opportunities. On average, the scores for each criterion ranged from 3.49 to 3.61, suggesting a somewhat neutral stance towards a slightly positive attitude. Overall, close to or more than half of women believed that there are sufficient opportunities for women to engage in decision-making as Figure 3 shows. Overall, there was no significant difference among the different ethnic groups but for Muslims who scored lower on all criteria, indicating they perceived fewer opportunities for participation. As well, participants from Malangwa Municipality and Kailari RM perceived fewer such opportunities.

Figure 3 Agreement on sufficient opportunities for women to engage in decision-making processes



Focus group discussions reported varied success in engagement. For example, women mentioned awareness of leadership opportunities at the ward levels as elected representatives. Many were also the members in local committees like forest user groups, and drinking water committees. The effectiveness of these local committees in terms of women involvement in decision making process however varied from place to place. For instance, in Bhajani, the community women reported that they had formed the forest user committee of all women after the male members were frequently reported of getting involved in bribery. Overall, the awareness of women on participating opportunities in decision making processes had improved but needed a sustained intervention and support in capacity building for more impact.

Capacity to engage and influence governance processes

Women, girls and LGBTIQ+ persons, especially from excluded groups, have adequate capacities to meaningfully engage and influence governance processes at all levels.

► Finding 4.6

More than 30% of participants were well informed on various areas of rights with variability along caste and municipality. Certain areas of rights and entitlements such as health are known more than others such as legal equality.

Ability of women to claiming their rights and entitlements is connected to awareness of these. However, only 10% of participants reported they were extremely well informed followed by 22% who were well informed. Others claimed to be either moderately informed (20%) or somewhat informed (37%). On the other end, 11% were not informed at all. Participants from Bhajani Municipality (61%) reported being extremely well-informed about their rights and entitlements, followed by those of Lekhbesi Municipality (35%). Dalits (18%) and Adhibasis (17%) were the most informed, while 33% of Muslims, 32% of Madhesis, and 11% Dalits were completely uninformed. It is assumed that the reason that Dalits are more informed is because Dalits were prioritized due to the systemic marginalization they have endured. Consequently, numerous programs and orientations were deliberately directed towards them to ensure equal footing.

Awareness on specific rights and entitlements varied probably as a function of the activities associated with the specific areas. Thus, there was more awareness on the right to health (89%), right to work (81%), right to property (78%) and right to education (78%). There was less awareness on the right to social security (58%), legal equality (45%) and political participation (45%). Among municipalities, the highest level of awareness was reported in Lekhbesi Municipality (97%), while the lowest was in Malangwa Municipality (25%). Close to 47% of the participants reported receiving information and awareness regarding rights and entitlements from local organizations or government agencies.

► Finding 4.7

Accessing rights and entitlements was challenging for about 30% of participants depending on caste, with more Brahmin/Chhetri reporting this. Overall economic constraints remain the most cited hurdle (about 85% of the participants).

Close to 31% reported facing some level of difficulty in accessing rights and entitlements. A higher proportion of respondents from Brahmin/Chhetri backgrounds (51%) reported facing challenges compared to Muslims (33%), Adibasi/Janajati (30%) Dalit (29%) and Madhesi (26%). During the discussions with the community groups, participants reported that the primary challenge concerned lack of awareness regarding their rights and entitlements, as well as uncertainty about how to access and

assert them (57%). As well, participants reported facing common barriers in claiming their rights and entitlements. These included:

- (a) economic constraints (85%) related to the inability to pay for documentation or paperwork (60%), followed by limited access to financial resources (47%), and lack of funds to pay for fees or bribes (31%);
- (b) societal norms (69%);
- (c) legal barriers (33%), more specifically, lack of legal documentation (approximately 68%), discriminatory laws (66%), limited access to legal aid (23%) and complex legal procedures (21%);
- (d) bureaucratic hurdles (33%),
- (e) overcoming discrimination based on gender on sexual orientation (30%);
- (f) navigating legal complexities (21%).

Table 2 Main barriers faced by different ethnicities

Main barriers faced by ethnicity	Brahmin/Chhetri	Dalit	Adibasi/Janajati	Madhesi	Muslim
Legal barriers	29%	29%	19%	20%	0%
Societal norms	79%	73%	50%	80%	0%
Economic constraints	71%	87%	100%	80%	100%
Bureaucratic hurdles	43%	31%	38%	60%	0%
Lack of awareness about rights	64%	53%	63%	40%	0%
Discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation	50%	33%	13%	0%	0%

▶ Finding 4.8

Overall, participants felt confident in demanding their rights and entitlements. However, success rate varied based on the area of the right and entitlement, claiming social security benefits being the most successful area. Awareness campaigns, economic empowerment, greater representation and policy reforms are ways to help build confidence.

Over 40% of the participants felt empowered to demand their rights followed by 25% who felt somewhat empowered, and 20% who felt moderately empowered. A negligible proportion reported feeling not empowered at all. In situations where women successfully demanded and accessed their rights and entitlements, a substantial number reported achievements especially in claiming social security benefits as Figure 4 shows. In line with finding 1.1, this finding indicates that more work is needed to empower women to claim their property ownership.

On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was “not confident” and 5 was “very confident” women overall felt more confident in demanding or accessing the right to healthcare services (average 3.57) and to live free from discrimination and violence (average 3.57) compared to demanding or accessing social security entitlements/allowances (3.23) and to participate in decision-making processes in my community (3.06). No significant difference was observed based on caste/ethnicity. Overall, women felt extremely confident (12%) or confident (25%) in seeking information or assistance related to rights and entitlements compared to 27% who were moderately confident (mostly Muslim) and 30% that were somewhat confident. (mostly Madhesi). Only 6% (belonging to Dalit) and Adibasi/Janajati) were not confident at all. 90% of individual agree that there is a need to reduce discrimination and forwarded certain other ways to increase confidence among women/girls/LGBTIQ indicating the broader societal changes needed to empower women. These are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 4 Success rate in claiming rights and entitlements in different areas

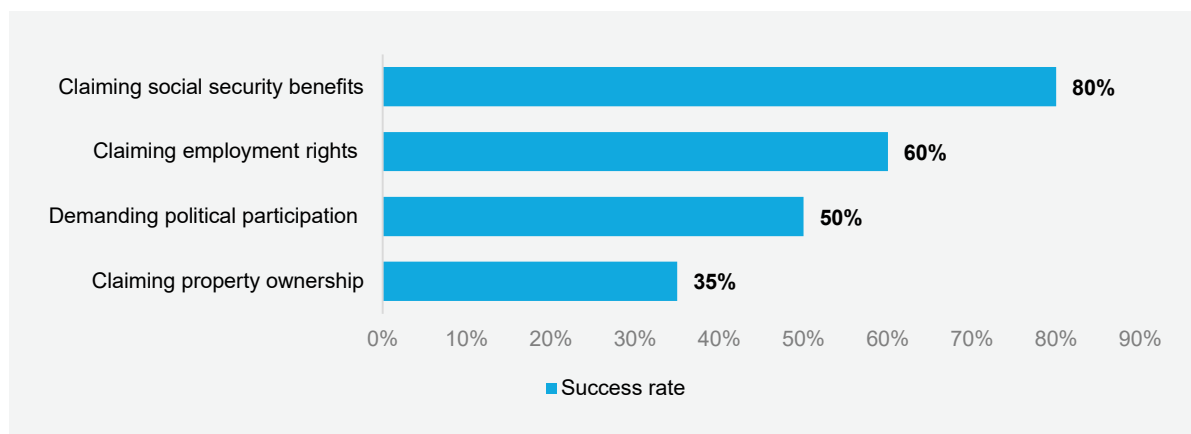
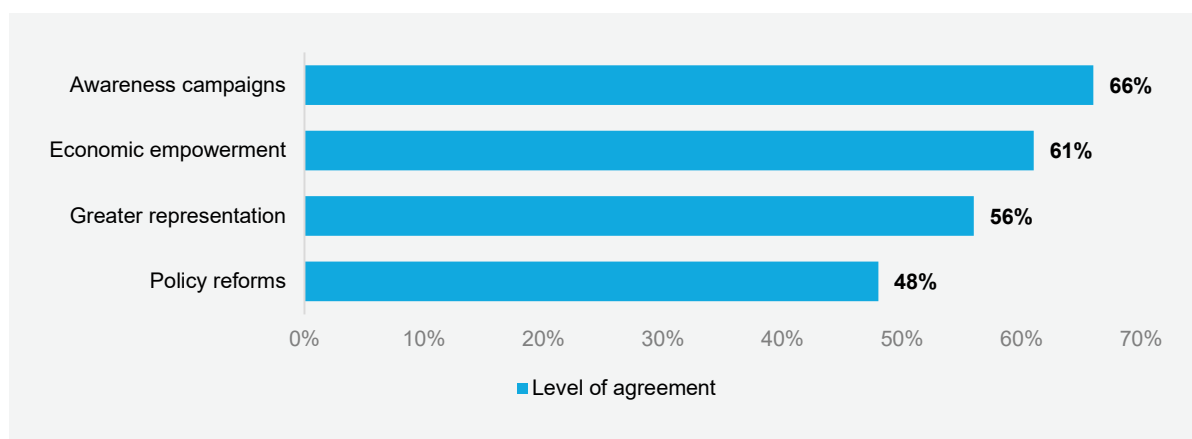


Figure 5 Ways to reduce discrimination

While there were programs related to educating vulnerable and marginalized women on their rights and entitlements, the instances of application of this knowledge into action including claiming such rights and entitlements in concerned offices is not very significant especially where legal equality and political participation was concerned. This implies the need of concerted efforts

that not only build awareness, but also address significant barriers, including economic constraints and entrenched social norms favouring patriarchy. Adopting an intersectional approach that acknowledges and addresses the unique challenges faced by diverse groups of women is crucial for devising effective interventions that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.



Photo: UN Women/Sangharsha Panta

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✔ Establish robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of gender equality laws and policies at national and local levels. This includes monitoring women's leadership, providing capacity-building opportunities, and ensuring inclusive governance processes.
- ✔ Improve gender-responsive budgeting, specifically at the local level by aligning allocations with gender equality objectives and addressing the needs of marginalized populations.
- ✔ Implement community-based initiatives to challenge harmful social norms and practices. Develop awareness campaigns, workshops, and family-based interventions that actively involve communities in addressing economic constraints and cultural barriers.

Annex 1:

Mapping of Findings to Relevant Outcome and Output Indicators

Table 3 Summary of findings by indicators¹⁷

Indicator	Finding
Outcome Area 1: Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Economic Transformation	
NPL_D_1.1B: Women's ownership of property—land and house (SDG indicator 5.a.2)	<p>Finding 1.1: The Civil Code (2017) guarantees equal rights to women and men in owning property. Government initiatives have been introduced to foster gender-inclusive property rights. Yet, women encounter obstacles due to lack of awareness of their rights and entitlements.</p> <p>Finding 1.2: Notwithstanding an increase in women's property ownership, close to 80% of women, especially among ethnic minorities in Nepal do not have any property titles.</p> <p>Finding 1.3: Although tax exemptions have made a positive change in increasing women's access to property ownership caution should be exercised in assuming that these advantages are truly empowering women.</p>
Outcome Area 2: Inclusive and Transformative Human Development	
SP_D_0.2.3: Primary government expenditures (federal and provincial) as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector or by budget codes including GRB or similar aligned with SDG Indicator 5.c.1 and SDG 16.6.1 (UNSDCF FA 4.1) (UN Women Global SP 0.2.1, 0.2.3)	Finding 2.1: Nepal has a system in place to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment, both at the national and local level. However, its implementation is fraught with challenges related, inter alia, to capacity and resource allocation.
SP_D_0.1.7: Number of adopted National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security with monitoring indicators.	Finding 2.2: Nepal launched the Second National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security in 2022. Opportunities and challenges need to be addressed for its effective implementation including monitoring to 2025.

¹⁷ Indicator numbers are reflected according to UN Women Strategic Note 2023-2027 Results Framework.

Indicator	Finding
<p>SP_D_0.5.3: Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care. (UNSDCF FA 2.4)</p>	<p>Finding 2.3: More than half of women aged 15-49 years make their own informed decisions regarding their sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care.</p>
<p>SP_D_3.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual, or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.</p>	<p>Finding 2.4: While prevalence of violence against women has remained steady over the decade (close to 23% over the decade), the rise, albeit small, in intimate partner violence is a concern requiring immediate attention.</p>
<p>NPL_D_1.2B: Percentage of women and men aged 15-49 who agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one specified reason.</p>	<p>Finding 2.5: There is a decline in the proportion of both women and men justifying wife beating over time from 29% in 2016 to 19% in 2022. However, rates of acceptance of violence in relationships are higher among youth than adults.</p> <p>Finding 2.6: Although more than 70% participants believe that GBV should not be tolerated, the phenomenon is far from being repudiated by all. There is caste variation in toleration of GBV. However, many are involved in proactively addressing GBV, including on supporting survivors.</p>
<p>NPL_D_1.2A: Percentage of people (women/girls, men/boys and LGBTIQ+ people) who demonstrate attitudes and engage in behaviors that challenge social norms and harmful practices.</p>	<p>Finding 2.7: Overall, there is a positive attitude to combating stigma associated with caste-based discrimination, sexual minorities and persons with disabilities. On average 30% of participants actively engaged to address these.</p> <p>Finding 2.8: Although there is recognition that dowry, son preference and Chhaupadi are a concern, and between 40%-60% actively engaged to addressing these, there is sufficient following to adhering to these practices that make continuous programming necessary.</p>

Indicator	Finding
Outcome Area 3: Environmental Sustainability, Climate and Disaster Resilience	
<p>SP_D_0.5.4: Level of influence of civil society organizations working on gender equality and women's empowerment, including women's organizations, in key normative, policy and peace processes.</p>	<p>Finding 3.1: Higher level of engagement of civil society organisations locally made possible the implementation of initiatives related to GEWE.</p>
<p>NPL_D_1.3A: Ratio of renewable energy in total energy consumption (%).</p>	<p>Finding 3.2: While electricity access has reached near-universal access, renewable energy is limited in its contribution. Gender data especially at the household level, i.e., male, and female headed households is sorely needed.</p>
<p>NPL_D_1.3B: Reduction in annual loss of human life (deaths and missing persons) and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100, 000 populations</p>	<p>Finding 3.3: While at the national level, statistics show more females than males lose their life due to disasters, gender data are missing at the local level.</p>
Outcome Area 4: Governance, Federalism, Participation and Inclusion	
<p>SP_D_0.1.4: Number of laws that were adopted, revised or replaced to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.</p>	<p>Finding 4.1: Although there is progress in the legal framework of gender equality and empowerment of women, gender minorities remain discriminated against.</p> <p>Finding 4.2: While Nepal complies with the constitutional provision of 33% women representation at different levels of government, efforts to promote and support women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes at all levels of government are needed.</p> <p>Finding 4.3: More than 70% believe that women should be involved in leadership and decision-making roles. However, there is variation in terms of level of decision-making, the higher the level, the more limited the participation of women.</p>
<p>SP_D_0.1.5: Number of national and/or local (multi) sectoral strategies, policies and/or action plans adopted with a focus on gender equality.</p>	<p>Finding 4.4: Policies and laws with a focus on gender equality have been enacted; however their implementation requires close monitoring toward meeting the aim associated with such policies and laws.</p>

Indicator	Finding
<p>NPL_D_1.4B: Proportion of population who believe there are sufficient opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes of public institutions (SDG 16.7.2) (UNSDCF FA 4.2)</p>	<p>Finding 4.5: More than half of women participants believed that there were sufficient opportunities for women to engage in decision-making processes. However, programming needs to pay attention to varied perceptions especially as these relate to ethnicities and municipalities.</p> <hr/> <p>Finding 4.6: More than 30% of participants were well informed on various areas of rights with variability along caste and municipality. Certain areas of rights and entitlements such as health are known more than others such as legal equality.</p> <hr/> <p>Finding 4.7: Accessing rights and entitlements was challenging for about 30% of participants depending on caste, with more Brahmin/Chettri reporting this. Overall economic constraints remain the most cited hurdle (about 85% of the participants).</p> <hr/> <p>Finding 4.8: Overall, participants felt confident in demanding their rights and entitlements. However, success rate varied based on the area of the right and entitlement, claiming social security benefits being the most successful area. Awareness campaigns, economic empowerment, greater representation and policy reforms are ways to help build confidence.</p>

Annex 2: Examples of Effective Engagement of CSOs

- In Surkhet, NGOs like Awaj Nepal, Navjyoti Kendra, and FEDO collaborated on eliminating child marriage and providing support and the local levels have also integrated these programs in their budgets while also working together with CSOs in organizing awareness events like 16 days of activism.
- In Kailali, especially in Kailari rural municipality, the local government itself has taken innovative initiations like formation of municipal level group of women entrepreneurs who organize meetings every month in the municipality itself and have also operated some business in groups like Duna-Tapari factory, slippers factory etc. The local level connects these groups with CSOs who have similar interventions.
- The CSOs are also working closely not only with local levels but also with district level mechanisms like women cell, OCMC, Dalit Cell etc. where these CSOs are invited as a member to support in the consultation activities of this government mechanism, while also providing relief and rehabilitation related support to these mechanisms when required. This involvement has not only aided the CSOs to network with government mechanisms but also have provided them with opportunities to influence the policy and peace processes. For instance, the key person of FEDO in Doti was also a member of Dalit Cell of Nepal Police-Doti and was regularly invited for suggestion and rehabilitation related support (if possible) when cases related to Dalit was registered in the district police mechanism.
- Financial independence marks a key indicator for women empowerment as stated by majority of the participants in FGD. The participants expressed more desire for interventions that has the component of livelihood, and sustainable income generation as compared to advocacy related interventions. Other than the advocacy efforts, the CSOs are also engaged in livelihood-based support and income generating activities in some of these local levels. The “Baal Maitri Sthaniya Sashan Samiti Purnagathan Abhinyatrikaran” conducted periodic training sessions, including pickle-making and skill-oriented education, aiming to enable women to engage in income-generating activities. The interventions of CSOs therefore also should incorporate these elements, which in long run make women independent economically and shall produce a transcending impact in normative processes.

Annex 3:

Constitutional Provisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Girls

Table 4 Constitutional provisions on gender equality and empowerment of women

Article	Title	Major Provisions	Category
12	Citizenship	Citizenship with identity of descent and gender	Fundamental Rights
18	Right to Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non discriminatory • Equal right to the ancestral property • Opens rooms for making special provisions for socially backward women; gender and sexual minorities and others 	Fundamental Rights
38	Right to Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal right without gender-based discrimination • Right to safe motherhood and reproductive health • Right to obtain compensation in case of suffering from violence • Right to participation in principle of proportional inclusion • Right to positive discrimination • Equal right to property and family affairs 	Fundamental Rights
42	Right to Social Justice	Right to participate in the State bodies on the basis of inclusive principle (includes gender and sexual minorities as well)	Fundamental Rights
43	Right to Social Security	Social Security Right to those who cannot take care of themselves (including helpless single women)	Fundamental Rights

Article	Title	Major Provisions	Category
50	Directive principles	Gender Equality included in the Directive Principle	Directive Principle
50	Policies of the State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies related to social justice and inclusion • Priority in employment • Making vulnerable women and girls self-dependent • Rehabilitation, protection and making self-reliant to violence victim women and girls • Measure and value the unpaid household and care work 	Directive Principles, Policies and Obligations of the State
84	Composition of Parliament	At least one third of members of federal parliament should be women	Representation
176	Composition of State Assembly	At least one third of members of the State Assembly should be women	Representation
252	National Women's Commission	A constitutional body that works for establishing rights and interests of women. It monitors the implementation of laws and international treaties related to empowerment of girls and women	Constitutional Body

Table 5 Major legal instruments to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

The Legal Aid Act, 1997
Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act, 2007
Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2009
Caste Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011
Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention) Act, 2015
Witchcraft Related Accusation (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2015
National Civil Code, 2017
National Penal Code, 2017
National Women’s Commission Act, 2017
The Labor Act, 2017
Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act, 2018
Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2018
Crime Victim Protection Act, 2018

Source: Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens

