

Empowerment of Indigenous Women in recovery of Post-  
Earthquake 2015 in Nepal: A feminist perspective

Miss Mintira Premruethairat



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in International Development Studies  
Common Course  
FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
Chulalongkorn University  
Academic Year 2019  
Copyright of Chulalongkorn University

การเสริมสร้างพลังอำนาจผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองในบริบทหลังการฟื้นฟูจากเหตุ  
แผ่นดินไหวในประเทศเนปาล ค.ศ. 2015 ผ่านมุมมองสตรีนิยม



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชาการพัฒนาระหว่างประเทศ ไม่สังกัดภาควิชา/เทียบเท่า

คณะรัฐศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ปีการศึกษา 2562

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Thesis Title                    Empowerment of Indigenous Women in  
recovery of Post-Earthquake 2015 in  
Nepal: A feminist perspective  
By                                    Miss Mintira Premruethairat  
Field of Study                    International Development Studies  
Thesis Advisor                    Assistant Professor Dr. KASIRA  
CHEEPPENSOOK

---

Accepted by the FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE,  
Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirement for the Master of Arts

..... Dean of the FACULTY  
OF POLITICAL  
SCIENCE  
(Associate Professor Dr. AKE  
TANGSUPVATTANA)

THESIS COMMITTEE

..... Chairman  
(Assistant Professor Dr. Carl Middleton)  
..... Thesis Advisor  
(Assistant Professor Dr. KASIRA  
CHEEPPENSOOK)

..... External Examiner  
(Bernadette Resurreccion, Ph.D.)

มินทริรา เปรมฤทัยรัตน์ :

การเสริมสร้างพลังอำนาจผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองในบริบทหลังการฟื้นฟูจากเหตุ  
แผ่นดินไหวในประเทศเนปาล ค.ศ. 2015 ผ่านมุมมองสตรีนิยม. (

**Empowerment of Indigenous Women in recovery of Post-  
Earthquake 2015 in Nepal: A feminist perspective)**

อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : ผศ. ดร.กษิร ชิพเป็นสุข

การเลือกปฏิบัติเนื่องด้วยเหตุผลเรื่องเพศและวรรณะเป็นปัญหาที่ส่งผลกระทบในทางลบกับบุคคลหรือกลุ่มในสังคมปัจจุบันเป็นอย่างมาก เช่นเดียวกัน ในประเทศเนปาล การเลือกปฏิบัติได้สร้างอุปสรรคและส่งผลกระทบต่อการดำเนินชีวิตผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองในประเทศซึ่งสาเหตุหลักเกิดจากปัจจัยความสัมพันธ์เชิงอำนาจทางเพศและอัตลักษณ์ที่ไม่เท่าเทียมในสังคม และ ปัจจัยผลกระทบของภัยพิบัติธรรมชาติ โดยวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้วิเคราะห์ผลการศึกษาโดยใช้กรอบแนวคิดนิเวศวิทยาการเมืองแนวสตรีนิยม (Feminist Political Ecology) ซึ่งมุ่งเน้นอธิบายวิถีชีวิตของผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองก่อนแผ่นดินไหว ผลกระทบจากความสัมพันธ์อำนาจในนิเวศวิทยาทางการเมืองที่ไม่เท่าเทียม และวิถีชีวิตผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองหลังเหตุการณ์แผ่นดินไหวในปี ค.ศ. 2015 ในบริบทประเทศเนปาล นอกจากนี้วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ยังทำการวิเคราะห์แนวความคิดการเสริมสร้างอำนาจของผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองในมิติการเมือง สังคม วัฒนธรรม เศรษฐกิจ และธรรมาภิบาลสิ่งแวดล้อม เนื่องจากมิติเหล่านี้ต่างมีความเชื่อมโยงและส่งผลกระทบต่อผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองในแง่ของความไม่สมดุลเชิงอำนาจในสังคม ความอ่อนไหวต่อภัยพิบัติ และการเสริมสร้างอำนาจในสังคม ซึ่ง การศึกษาวิจัยที่ส่งผลต่อการเลือกปฏิบัติและความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศในมิติต่าง ๆ เป็นสิ่งที่จำเป็นในการสร้างความตื่นรู้ให้กับกลุ่มผู้ที่มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียเพื่อชี้ให้เห็นถึงการเลือกปฏิบัติและความไม่เท่าเทียม และผลกระทบของเหตุแผ่นดินไหวต่อกลุ่มผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองบนพื้นฐานของความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศและวรรณะทางสังคม นอกจากนี้วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากการสนทนาแบบกลุ่ม ในพื้นที่เขต Sankhu/Shankarapur ในกรุงกาฐมาณฑุ ซึ่งเป็นพื้นที่ที่ประสบภัยพิบัติแผ่นดินไหวในปี ค.ศ. 2015 การสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึก และการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทุติยภูมิ โดยสรุปการศึกษาชิ้นนี้เน้นการศึกษาพลวัตของวิถีชีวิตของผู้หญิงพื้นเมืองช่วงก่อนเหตุภัยพิบัติแผ่นดินไหวและผลกระทบในช่วงเหตุแผ่นดินไหวปี ค.ศ. 2015 ในมิติของการส่งเสริมอำนาจผ่านกรอบแนวคิดนิเวศวิทยาการเมืองแนวสตรีนิยม

สาขาวิชา	การพัฒนาระหว่างประเทศ	ลายมือชื่อนิติ
๑	๕	.....
ปีการศึกษา	2562	ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก
๒๕๖๒		.....

# # 6181220824 : MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

KEYWORD Indigenous women, Earthquake 2015, Nepal, Women Empowerment  
D:

Mintira Premruethairat : Empowerment of Indigenous Women in recovery of Post-Earthquake 2015 in Nepal: A feminist perspective. Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. KASIRA CHEEPPENSOOK

Discrimination against gender and caste can be overwhelming issue to a person or a group who faces it. Similarly, indigenous women of Nepal have been facing impediments in regard to unequal power relations caused by gender, identity, as well as disaster. With the conceptualization of Feminist Political Ecology, this paper analyzes the subjectivities of a feminist perspective that highlights the lives of indigenous women pre-earthquake and their experiences on how they are affected by power relations in political ecology of Nepal. Along with the findings of the indigenous women's lives and their experiences amid the earthquake 2015 have also been analyzed with the notion of empowerment in Nepal. In addition, the analysis on the notion of empowerment is made on political, socio-cultural, environmental governance, and economical aspects, as these dimensions are interconnected and intertwined that have consequences on indigenous women in terms of power imbalance, disaster sensitivity, and their empowerment. So, this paper finds it important to explore on such subjectivities to enlighten the stakeholder on the differences that a woman based on gender and caste is facing different forms of impediments on their lives and experiences during a disaster. Likewise, the paper is based on qualitative research with the interview of a focus group on research site named Sankhu/Shankarapur in Kathmandu district (hard-hit area by earthquake 2015), and as well on one-on-one interview with key informants, along with secondary sources for analysis. Hence, this research has been an emphasis on the dynamics of indigenous women's lives pre-earthquake and their experiences during the earthquake 2015, with the notion of empowerment through the lens of Feminist Political Ecology.

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Field of Study:	International Development Studies	Student's Signature
Academic Year:	2019	Advisor's Signature
		.....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is an eye-opener and knowledge increment for me and hence, I would like to demonstrate my sincere gratefulness towards MAIDS program of Chulalongkorn University, and the scholarship provided through which I have been able to complete this thesis as a part of course completion.

Moreover, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my Thesis Advisor, Kasira Cheeppensok, who has given me the opportunity to do the research on “Empowerment of indigenous women in recovery of post-earthquake 2015 in Nepal: A feminist perspective”. Her persistence, enthusiasm, and continuous support throughout the adventure has helped me to successfully complete this thesis.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to committee members, Professor Carl Middleton, and Babette Ressurreccion who have demonstrated the concern for the indigenous women in Nepal and suggested me to do research on the topic through the lens of Feminist Political Ecology. I consider it my utmost opportunity and a great privilege to be able to complete thesis with the help and guidance of the committee members.

Similarly, I would as well like would like to thank my family, friends, and all those who have supported me in this academic journey of thesis completion. Without their support and motivation, I wouldn't have been able to complete the paper on time. Lastly, I am honored to be part of indigenous women community and be able to write this thesis. Hopefully, this thesis can bring a positive difference in the community. Hence, I would like to express gratitude towards all those who helped me to complete this paper. With this paper, I believe, will enlighten many stakeholders and encourage the new generation to fight for their rights so that we all could live in a world of equality.

Mintira Premruethairat

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
.....	iii
ABSTRACT (THAI) .....	iii
.....	iv
ABSTRACT (ENGLISH).....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
ABBREVIATIONS .....	i
CHAPTER I.....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	2
1.1. Introduction .....	2
1.1.1. The emergence of caste system in Nepal.....	4
1.1.2. Status of indigenous people.....	6
1.1.3. Women in Nepal.....	9
1.1.4. Status of laws and policies towards women.....	10
1.1.5. Brief implication of FPE.....	11
1.2. Research Questions .....	13
1.3. Objectives of Research .....	13
1.4. Research Methods .....	13
1.4.1. Primary Data.....	13
1.4.2. Secondary data.....	16
1.4.3. Ethical Issues .....	17
1.5. Research Site .....	17
1.6. Research Scope (Unit of Analysis).....	20

1.6.1.	Population and study group .....	20
1.6.2.	Area .....	20
1.6.3.	Time period.....	21
1.6.4.	Actors.....	21
1.7.	Limitations of the study .....	22
1.8.	Significance of Research .....	24
CHAPTER II.....		27
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....		27
2.1.	Feminist Political Ecology.....	27
2.2.	Contextualization of FPE to understand lives of indigenous women in Nepal	28
2.1.1.	Gender and indigenous identity construction in Nepal .....	29
2.1.2.	Impact of earthquake 2015 on women reflecting gender and disaster ....	32
2.3.	Contribution of Feminist Political Ecology framework .....	35
CHAPTER III .....		38
INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES PRE AND DURING EARTHQUAKE 2015.....		38
3.1.	Lives of indigenous women pre-earthquake 2015 in relation to power .....	40
3.1.1.	Patriarchy practices.....	40
3.1.2.	Socio-cultural practices in the society .....	44
3.1.3.	Indigenous women’s access to and control of natural resources..	46
3.1.4.	Education .....	49
3.1.5.	Language barriers .....	50
3.1.6.	Employment.....	52
3.2.	Experiences of Indigenous woman affected by earthquake 2015 .....	55
3.2.1.	Indigenous Women’s workload by the impact of earthquake 2015	55
3.2.2.	Health and safety issues.....	58
3.2.3.	Women’s vulnerability in access to and control over means of production.....	59
3.2.4.	Indigenous women’s participation in Decision Making.....	67



3.2.5.	Indigenous women’s voice and participation in Disaster Preparedness Programs.....	70
3.2.6.	Access to relief materials amid of earthquake 2015.....	74
CHAPTER IV .....		77
NOTION OF EMPOWERMENT OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN NEPALESE POLITICAL ECOLOGY .....		77
4.1.	Disaster recovery and resilience aftermath of earthquake 2015.....	77
4.2.	Empowerment towards indigenous women.....	80
4.2.1.	Political approaches to empowerment .....	81
4.2.2.	Social approaches to empowerment .....	84
4.2.3.	Environmental governance towards indigenous women .....	87
4.2.4.	Economic empowerment approaches .....	89
CHAPTER V .....		93
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....		93
5.1.	Summary.....	93
5.2.	Recommendation.....	102
REFERENCES .....		104
APPENDIX A.....		111
VITA.....		112

## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1: Indigenous women focus group.....	38
Table 2: Officers from different organizations .....	39



## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1: List of Indigenous people recognized by the GoN.....	7
Figure 2: Hierarchy of the caste system in Nepal.....	8
Figure 3: Nanmaiju Prajapati home in Sankhu.....	18
Figure 4: Sankhu, Nepal.....	19
Figure 5: Houses destroyed by the quakes in Sankhu.....	19
Figure 6: Shankharapur Indigenous women group interview.....	39



## ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community Based Organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CFUG	Community Forest User Groups
DoWC	Department of Women and Children
FPE	Feminist Political Ecology
ILO	International Labour Organization
INOLACC	Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Consultancy Centre
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIWF	National Indigenous Women's Federation
NWC	National Women Commission

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

Indigenous<sup>1</sup> women in Nepali culture are segregated by the caste system, are discouraged to be educated as men, obliged with the domestic and household roles, make them the subject to violence and discrimination, and discouraged to make any kinds of decisions at all the levels (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012). In addition, Lawoti (2005), writes that indigenous women face more of religious, linguistic and cultural discrimination, in compared to higher caste women. And hence, the purpose of this study is to recognize pre-disaster lives of indigenous women in relation to power and the impact of earthquake 2015 on indigenous women experiences with the notion of empowerment through the lens of Feminist Political Ecology (FPE).

Thus, this paper will be based under the framework of FPE, where Sundberg (2016) writes that "feminist political ecologists hold that gender – in relation to class, race, and other relevant axes of power – shapes access to and control over natural resources" which will take into consideration on the linkages and connections between gender, caste system, the power relation, and the disaster sensitivity of indigenous women in Nepal.

With that note, it is observed that women's discrimination comes in different forms and size, and indigenous women among other women in general are discriminated more in

---

<sup>1</sup> As per NEFIN, Indigenous Nationalities means a tribe or community who have their own mother language, traditional rites and customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure, and written or unwritten history, and there are 59 castes of Indigenous as per the Nepal Government.

the society (K. B. Bhattachan, 2003). The rights and access to politics are excluded for the indigenous nationalities (*adibasi janajati*) as the reservation of policies for Dalits, women, and indigenous nationalities were not provided (Lawoti, 2005).

In addition to issues of discrimination, when the disaster occurs, there are some group who are likely to be more vulnerable to the disaster sensitivity. As when the earthquake struck in Nepal in the year 2015, there were several casualties that included death and injury from the collapsed buildings and structures (A. B. Shrestha, Bajracharya, Kargel, & Khanal, 2016). Most of the victim were women as they were more vulnerable in compared to men due to various factors such as limited economic resources, lack of political voice/power, risk of sexual assault and exploitation, household labor responsibilities, and gender and age discrimination (Fothergill & Squier, 2018).

In regard to earthquake 2015, “26 percent of the damaged houses belonged to women-headed households, and 41 percent of it belonged to indigenous communities and Dalits, while poor women, and disadvantaged groups got affected more in terms of death, injury, displacement, person years of life lost, and impacts on other livelihood assets” (Molden, Sharma, & Acharya, 2016b). The vulnerable and marginalized groups that includes lower caste and indigenous communities, females, and senior citizens, were disregarded by the local governance structures and decision-making bodies, and as well by the earthquake international responders post disaster (Cook, Shrestha, & Htet, 2018). Moreover, Cook and others mentions that, there were reports circulating that there has been discrimination in the relief in terms of caste, gender, political favoritism, and patronage.

Now, this Chapter will discuss about the background on the emergence of caste system in Nepal, status of indigenous people, women in Nepal, status of policies and programs from the actors, and a brief implication of FPE.

### 1.1.1. The emergence of caste system in Nepal

In Nepal, to illustrate the indigenous women and the factors influencing them, understanding the evolution of caste system is significant. Traditionally, Nepali system of stratification has been emphasized on two kinds of populations, i.e. Tibeto-Burman<sup>2</sup> and Indo-Aryan (Brahmans, Khas, Rajputs) who are known as non-indigenous high caste group (Fisher, 2011). Fisher notes that Tibeto-Burman moved into the southern flanks of Himalayan chain from the west, which is the region border of Nepal and Tibet, and Brahmans and Rajputs entered Nepal from the plains of India, a more southerly direction. Fisher then states that these both kind of populations were intrusive.

Fisher further notes that, Tibeto-Burman speakers showed little Buddhist influence as they entered Nepal, prior to the seventh or eighth century. While on the other hand, Brahmans, Khas, and Rajputs appeared to be in larger number of populations during the twelfth century and later reinforced their living in the culture that became the revolution of Hinduism in Nepal. Subsequently, these people represented powerful kingdom or groups of chiefdoms, that was under its sway, if not represented by its local rule. As the number of immigrants from plains started to migrate to Nepal, the small chiefdoms fell under the sway of immigrants, and politically became powerful, ruled by elite, and the caste system started to evolve (Fisher, 2011, p. 118).

Consequently, during the Rana regime from 1846 to 1951, society was ordered by the orthodox Hindu notions, where national legal code of 1854, the Muluki Ain<sup>3</sup>, explicitly

---

<sup>2</sup> Tibeto-Burman are the population where majority of the castes (S. Gautam, Banskota, & Manchanda, 2011) belong to the indigenous categories (NIWF & UNDP, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Muluki Ain of 1854 was the country's code having 163 chapters, covered with about 1400 pages, that incorporated the rules, customs, laws, and royal proclamations, made the provisions of legal status of untouchability a punitive action, and legalized caste-based discrimination in Nepal that was based on Hindu jurisprudence in the framework of a national caste hierarchy (K. B. Thapa, 2010).

attempted to apply the ‘dharmastras’<sup>4</sup> to the civil and criminal law of the diverse kingdom to all groups called ‘Jat’(caste)<sup>5</sup> (Gellner, 2007). Gellner further states that, the main differences that supported by law and judiciary system were between the wearers of the sacred thread (Tagadhari), the elite group in the society (the high caste non-indigenous), and the rest who were also known as Matwali (alcohol-consuming classes). And, most of the alcohol-consuming classes falls under the indigenous caste.

Despite being outlawed by Rana regime in 1951, the culture of ruling by high-caste still remained, which was clearly to enhance their political and cultural unity within the framework that was established earlier that indeed reflected in policies, language, and religion (Dixit & Ramachandran, 2002). Dixit & Ramchandran, further notes that, it was only after the restoration of democracy in 1990, the ethnic, religious, linguistic communities including the low-caste groups were encouraged by the rights given by the Constitution to protect their cultures, languages, and religions. And, despite declaring Nepal to be a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual Hindu constitutional monarchial kingdom, the drafted Constitution of 1990 by the representatives of political parties gave Nepal a definition as Hindu Kingdom with Nepali language as the official language of the nation. This was the pressure mainly due to the Parbatiyas Hindus across the political spectrum from the ruling elites which in summary confined cultural pluralism. In nutshell, it showed that how the high castes non-indigenous people with power in relation could determine the rights and accumulated wealth to retain the power.

Hence, the above literatures show that the emergence of caste system is one of the reasons that depicts the indigenous caste fell behind in the in the society as the

---

<sup>4</sup> “Dharmastra literature represents a peculiarly Indian record of local social norms and traditional standards of behavior” (Olivelle, 2006, p. 172).

<sup>5</sup> The use of word ‘caste’ has been used to define the social organization that has been found in the traditional regional societies of India and among adjoining Hindu and associated populations in the lands of Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka (Subedi, 2010).



Hinduism from self-proclaimed high caste people revolved. These self-proclaimed high castes or the elites, who migrated from neighboring country made a strong representation in the kingdom, and initiated the caste system to suppress other castes, while taking advantage of the language, culture, religion.

### 1.1.2. Status of indigenous people

Nepalese population comprises of 125 caste/ethnic groups in which they are generally categorized into five groups known as Bahun/Chhetri, Janajati (indigenous), Terai Basi, Dalit, Muslim, and Janajati or the indigenous group, which leads the highest percentage of the population amounting to 36% of the total (Vallese, 2017).

In line to indigenous nationalities, indigenous people are identified by, 'Self-identification' as 'indigenous' (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012) which is taken as fundamental criteria. Similarly, the author also adds, beside from self-identification, majority of the indigenous peoples are considered indigenous by the following criterion:

- have strong links to their lands and territories;
- have distinct languages, knowledge systems and beliefs;
- form non-dominant sectors of society

In addition, as per NIWF and UNDP (2018) research, "Indigenous Nationalities" in context of Nepal means a tribe or community who have their own mother language, traditional rites and customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure, and written or unwritten history.

In the table 1, the lists of the 59 Indigenous Peoples formally recognized by the Nepal Government, and the categories<sup>6</sup> of Indigenous Peoples listed by Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) has been shown. NEFIN, is an umbrella organization

---

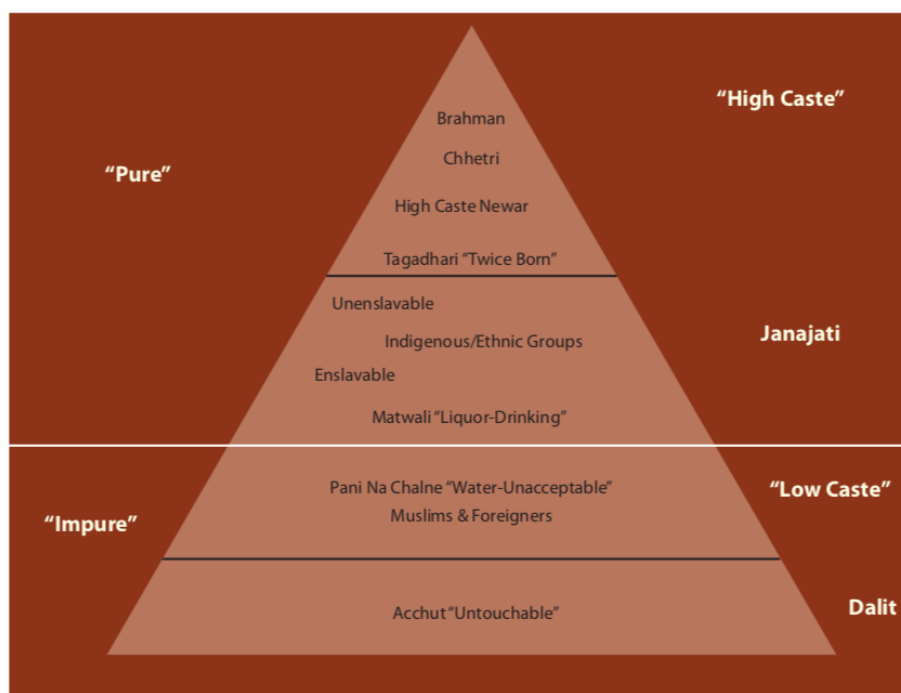
<sup>6</sup> NEFIN's five categories are based on developmental indicators, such as literacy, education, income, wealth, land holding and other assets. These are not based on indicators such as ownership and control over lands, territories, resources, autonomy, self-rule, customary laws, mother tongue, or indigenous knowledge.

of 59 Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal that was founded in 1990 (NIWF & UNDP, 2018).

List of 59 Indigenous Peoples formally recognized by the Nepal Government	
Ecological Regions	Indigenous Peoples
(I) Mountain	(1) Bara Gaunle, (2) Bhutia, (3) Byansi, (4) Chhairotan, (5) Dolpo, (6) Larke, (7) Lhomi (Shingsawa), (8) Lhopa, (9) Marphali Thakali, (10) Mugali, (11) Siyar, (12) Tangbe, (13) Thakali, (14) Thudam, (15) Tingaunle Thakali, (16) Topkegola, (17) Sherpa, and (18) Wallung.
(II) The Hill	(1) Bankaria, (2) Baramo, (3) Bhujel/Gharti, (4) Chepang, (5) Chhantyal, (6) Dura, (7) Fri, (8) Gurung, (9) Hayu, (10) Hyolmo, (11) Jirel, (12) Kushbadia, (13) Kusunda, (14) Lepcha, (15) Limbu, (16) Magar, (17) Newar, (18) Parí, (19) Rai, (20) Sunuwar, (21) Surel, (22) Tamang, (23) Thami, and (24)Yakkha.
(III) Inner Terai	(1) Bote, (2) Danuwar, (3) Darai, (4) Kumal, (5) Majhi, (6) Raji, and (7) Raute.
(IV) Terai	(1) Dhanuk (Rajbanshi), (2) Dhimal, (3) Gangai, (4) Jhangad, (5) Kisan, (6) Meche, (7) Rajbanshi (Koch), (8) Satar/Santhal, (9) Tajpuria, and (10) Tharu.
NEFIN's five developmental categories of Indigenous Peoples	
Developmental Categories	Indigenous Peoples
(I) Endangered Indigenous Peoples	(1) Bankariya, (2) Hayu, (3) Kisan, (4) Kusunda, (5) Kusbadiya, (6) Lepcha, (7) Meche, (8) Raji, (9) Raute, and (10) Surel.
(II) Highly Marginalized Indigenous Peoples	(1) Baramu, (2) Bote, (3) Chepang, (3) Danuwar, (4) Dhanuk, (5) Jhagad, (6) Lohmi, (8) Majhi, (9) Satar (Santhal), (10) Siyar, (11) Thami, and (12) Thudam.
(III) Marginalized Indigenous Peoples	(1) Bhote, (2) Bhujel, (3) Darai, (4) Dhimal, (5) Dolpo, (6) Dura, (7) Free, (8) Gangai, (9) Kumal, (10) Larke, (11) Lohpa, (12) Mugal, (13) Pahari, (14) Rajbansi, (15) Sunuwar, (16) Tajpuriya, (17) Tamang, (18) Tharu, (19) Topkegola, and (20) Walung.
(IV) Disadvantaged Indigenous Peoples	(1) Bargaule, (2) Byansi, (3) Chhairotan, (4) Chhantyal, (5) Gurung, (6) Jirel, (7) Limbu, (8) Magar, (9) Marphali Thakali, (10) Rai, (11) Sherpa, (12) Tangbe, (14) Tinganule Thakali, (15) Yakkha, and (16) Yolmo.
(V) Advanced Indigenous Peoples	(1) Newar, and (2) Thakali.

**Figure 1: List of Indigenous people recognized by the GoN**  
Source (NIWF & UNDP, 2018)

Following the description of indigenous people, as a part of social stratification, the figure 1 below shows the hierarchy of the caste system in Nepal (Asian Development Bank, 2010).



**Figure 2: Hierarchy of the caste system in Nepal**  
**Source: (Asian Development Bank, 2010)**

The hierarchy of the caste as shown in the figure above denotes top to bottom social stratification pyramid where the upper castes people enjoy the privileges of high caste in compared of lower. The establishment of these privileges can explored by going back to eighteenth century, when the kingdom of Nepal was unified under a dynasty of peoples who migrated from India centuries earlier (Robins, 2012). Robins also shows that, the migrated people established themselves as the privileged group in the society and stayed ahead in every dimension such as politics, social, culture, and economics. In addition, author notes that the ‘Brahmin’, and ‘Chhetri’ who also migrated inbound placed themselves above all indigenous ethnicities and other lower caste groups of Hindus “through a rigid system of social stratification”. Furthermore, author notes that many lower castes people were even deprived of citizenship which was their basic rights to be recognized as Nepali, ignored by the social services which were already scarce during the time, and their life expectancy, literacy rates, and the social economic status were even far-off lower in compared to nation’s average.

Subsequently, during the time of Maoist insurgency, an armed conflict in Nepal that exploited social disparities to benefit marginalized groups attracted a huge quantity of women and Janajatis (indigenous) people, despite the leaders belonged from the elite groups (Asian Development Bank, 2010). The report of ADB notes that the Government of Nepal (GoN) aftermath of this conflict amended several discriminatory laws and provisions by signing in the numerous international conventions that made commitment to gender equality and social inclusion. The same report of ADB shows that, GoN realized the barriers to inclusion was not only because of gender, caste, and ethnicity but as well due to language, religion, disability, geography, and regional identity.

### **1.1.3. Women in Nepal**

As the barriers of inclusion includes gender and others, this section will be about introduction on status of women in Nepal. Women in this context are biologically constructed as female, and socially constructed as woman, is a source of creation of life but are treated as second class citizen, inferior to men (Gadtaulaa & Chung, 2016). Gadtaulaa also mentions that, women in Nepal are treated as secondary citizens, who are believed as ‘born to serve man’.

Women in Nepal, despite being numbered to almost equal to men, are still suppressed at homes, bounded by the household chores, and isolated from various rights and empowerment (G. Dahal, Hossain, & A. Z. Nowak, 2016). The authors mention that women are dependent on men (father, brother, husband) for education, marriage, employment, and other which leads them to suffer from social, cultural, economic, and political biases in the traditional male dominated society. G. Dahal et al. (2016) further suggests that tradition and culture discourage women to be the decision maker and have less authority to do anything independently as they have to depend economically on males and further stresses that the voices of women are unheard, abused, and were even forced to give up their life in the pyre of their dead husband which existed before 1920.

Likewise, report by (Vinding & Kampbel) states that, the indigenous women, on the other hand, have lesser power relation in compared to the higher caste women in the community in all the dimensions. Moreover, there are sub-castes within the indigenous people, and the indigenous people exceptionally the women who are at the lower level are farther vulnerable and has limit in access to nation's services and as well lacks the knowledge of empowerment (NIWF & UNDP, 2018).

Moreover, approximately 88.87 percent of the population follow Hindu religion (D. R. Dahal, 2003), and this tradition is a major setback for women. Nevertheless, NIWF and UNDP (2018) urges that despite having disadvantages, indigenous women do have greater freedom in terms of movement, participation in cultural festivals, possessions, and choosing a life partner. However, NIWF also notes that these freedoms are not substantial, as the indigenous women are deprived from education, access to land ownership and employment due to the language and knowledge in compared to both non-indigenous women and indigenous men.

And, be it in the capital city or outside of the capital, it can be seen that indigenous women among the women in general are suppressed, faces multiple discrimination, and vulnerable to the recovery and are less likely to be empowered within the gender of women (NIWF & UNDP, 2018). Further Nepal (2017) states that indigenous people have been historically, and continue to be the subject of the marginalization in the field of social and politics which has weakened the success of development.

#### **1.1.4. Status of laws and policies towards women**

Since Nepal is a socially stratified country, it is recorded that there are 96 discriminatory provisions and 92 schedules in various acts and provisions, including the Constitution, that discriminate provisions, and rights and responsibilities towards women (Nanda, Gautam, Verma, & ICRW, 2012). These discriminatory laws and policies subtly encourage preferences for a son over daughter, notes Nanda and others.

Likewise, there are discriminatory laws and policies towards the indigenous women that is ensured by UNDRIP, ILO Convention No. 169, CEDAW and CERD general recommendation No. 25 ((LAHURNIP) et al., 2018). Further report by (LAHURNIP) et al. (2018) shows that there is evidence that non-recognition of indigenous women, diversity among women in existing laws, plans and policies of the State, and also by the “mainstream” women’s movement” is seen lacking as per the report. Also Ghale (2008) notes that, despite being a signatory of ILO 169 in the obligation to respect the rights of indigenous people over natural resources, the implementation part is yet to be realized.

#### **1.1.5. Brief implication of FPE**

After the short description on the sections above, the study of indigenous women through FPE is thus deemed important. Since there has been evidences from the literatures above in regard to the indigenous women having to experience different forms of discrimination in its social structure, power relations, and other aspects. This section briefly describes the implication of Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) on finding indigenous women’s lives pre earthquake in relation to power and their experiences during the earthquake 2015 with notion of empowerment can be illustrated.

As the paper is set to be framed through the lens of feminist perspective, the overall concept of empowerment of women or “pro-girl” rhetoric which got popular in the discourse during 1990s as women began discussing the shift in the feminist consciousness (Riordan, 2001). However, feminist political ecology can be seen in light since 1890s, when Kenyan women’s knowledge on environment was silenced and resisted the impact of economic independence and colonial conservation (Watts, 2000). Gender in terms of power relation, class, race, and other relevant axes (Sundberg, 2016), thus makes a gateway for feminist political ecology to be considering many subjectivities such as “the issues of politics of environmental degradation and conservation, the neoliberalisation of nature and ongoing rounds of accumulation, environmental struggles around knowledge and power, justice and governance, and

enclosure and dispossession, focusing on access and control of resources that consider gender dimensions of such issues” Elmhirst (2011).

Likewise, Nepal embedded with social stratification, caste hierarchy, and gender power imbalances has led to the pathway of division among people in terms of class and status (Robins, 2012). Class and caste are often intersected in Nepal, where the class structure of the economy are connected with the caste system of the people which are often cited as the same to demonstrate the social differences (Nightingale, 2011).

Looking in early period of 1990s, the movement of insurgency or Maoist insurrection came from the class based oppression and consciousness of gender (Leve, 2007), that drew large number of attention from women and Janajati (indigenous) people (Asian Development Bank, 2010). Similarly, as we take Nepal’s women into consideration, though women have been politicized by raising their consciousness of gender and class-based oppression to empower, the morally grounded ideas about social personhood is a difficult journey for one’s autonomy and agency (Leve, 2007).

Besides, with the literatures and background of emergence of caste system in Nepal, status of indigenous people, description of women in Nepal, the impact of earthquake 2015 on women, and the situation of policies and programs from different actors gives this paper insights on why the study of indigenous women lives and their experiences during the earthquake 2015 is important. Hence, in order to acknowledge indigenous women’s lives, their experiences during the disaster, and the notion of empowerment in Nepalese political ecology leads the paper to implicate through the lens of FPE.

## 1.2. Research Questions

- How indigenous women's experiences were affected by the earthquake 2015 along with the notion of empowerment through the lens of feminist political ecology?

## 1.3. Objectives of Research

- To find out the lives of indigenous women pre-disaster in relation to power, and the impact of earthquake 2015 on indigenous women's experiences.
- To analyze the notion of empowerment in regard to indigenous women in Nepalese political ecology.

## 1.4. Research Methods

The research method on this thesis has been based mainly on the qualitative method. While the collection of the data includes both the primary and secondary source. The primary data are from the interviews with the group of indigenous women and the officers from various organizations. On the other hand, secondary data has been based on articles, reports, websites, and so on. The details of primary and secondary data collection have been mentioned below.

### 1.4.1. Primary Data

As a part of primary data, two kinds of interviews were taken. One interview was with the group of indigenous women and the other interview was with the officers (one at a time) of different organizations. Below is the further explanation on the process.

#### *1.4.1.1. Focus group interview of Indigenous Women*

As a part of focus group interview with Indigenous women, the area called Sankhu was chosen. Sankhu (Shankharapur) is the name of the locality under the Sankhu Municipality where the indigenous people having the caste 'newar' resides in majority.



However, the details of this site have been written below in the research site description. This place was chosen for the interview so that the indigenous women can share comfortably on their own place.

Before gathering the women in a group who belonged to the indigenous caste, one of the community-based organization (CBO) that runs programs of empowerment through their personal funding, was referred in the process of contact. This CBO has been in operation for 5 years mainly by a male founder who belongs to indigenous caste. This CBO run programs in regard to economic and livelihood empowerment for the people in the same locality, especially for the women. Often times the programs are operated in partnership with the local municipality in Sankhu.

Upon the request of the founder of a CBO, a group of indigenous women agreed for the interview. Then the total number of six indigenous women agreed to be interviewed. The interviewee's background in regard to occupation were different from one another. The two respondents were shop owners, two were teachers, one was housewife, and one was social worker.

The structure of the interview was basically focus group with semi-structure interview questions. Nevertheless, in this focus group interview, there was the risk of having possibility that respondents may not express their opinions or perspective honestly about the topic as they may be influenced by other's personal opinions. But this method was used for the interview because when they are in group with different background and experiences, this would make them share their perspectives openly and get broader and variant range of information from different people at once.

The interview questions used for this interview has been attached in the **APPENDIX A**. The purpose of this focus group interview was thus, to get responses on factors influencing them, their access to and control of resources, the understanding of empowerment, and experiences on the earthquake 2015.

#### ***1.4.1.2. One on One Interview with institutional/organizational officer***

On the part of the individual interview with the officer, five number of respondents were interviewed. Four of the respondents were female and one was male. These interviewees were the key informant for the data, information and statistics of this thesis. The interviews were conducted at various organization based in Kathmandu valley.

The five interviewees were from Department of Women and Children (1 respondent), National Women Commission (1 respondent – Male), National Indigenous Women’s Federation (2 respondents), and Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Group (1 respondent). These interviewees were people working with the organization from NGOs, semi-government, and government organization. All the interviewees were female while only one was male.

The reason for choosing one on one interview with the officer of the organization is because additional questions from the semi-structure interview questions could be asked to get more detailed responses.

The purpose of this method was to get additional insights and perspective in terms of laws and policies on indigenous women empowerment and factors that influence the indigenous women’s experiences during earthquake 2015. In addition, to achieve additional information and data on the programs, inclusivity, laws and policies, and disaster recovery measurement towards indigenous women in regard to their empowerment have been the objectives of this interview.

And since these interviewees are part of the process in the development, and sustainability that curbs the laws and policies which would influence the indigenous women in the political ecology, this interview method from the respondents deemed important.

After the interviews were taken, some documents were collected from the Department of Women and Children, National Women Commission, and National Indigenous Women's Federation. The documents are listed below:

- Sambodhan - Integrated Platform for Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response Project progress report by **National Women Commission**
- 2018/2019 early report complaints filed under **National Women Commission Offices**
- Statement of the violence against women under **National Women Commission Offices**
- Guidance – Women's Development in Emergency Protection Services of groups under the program for operation by **Department of Women and Children, under Ministry of Women's and Children**
- A book titled "Economic empowerment of Indigenous Women in Nepal" by **National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Nepal**

Hence, these were the documents collected from the various organization as the interviews were taken and have been used as a part of analysis in the upcoming chapters.

#### **1.4.2. Secondary data**

Secondary data has been one of the sources of data collection. Mostly, journal articles, books, theses, and internet articles has been used and thus the paper is based on qualitative research. The reports, data, and statistics from Government websites, INGOs, NGOs, and other organization has been used as well. The geography of the contents has been particularly about Nepal, Shankharapur (the research site), and as well other areas where it was necessary.

The major articles, reports and documents from different organizational sites was accessed to gain information on:

- 1) the feminist political ecology concept and its contextualization,
- 2) the factors that has been influencing indigenous women lives
- 3) the impact of earthquake 2015 on indigenous women and others
- 4) the discourse of empowerment on indigenous women in the political ecology of Nepal

The relevant documents for the topics mentioned above was accessed and reviewed from local level to national level organizations, and as well the international reports and data have been used.

#### **1.4.3. Ethical Issues**

The ethical issue of this research would be taking the consent of every interviewee and respect the interviewee's anonymity. The focus group indigenous women were approached through proper channel which is through the references of founder of the CBO mentioned in the primary data section. The interviewees were all above 18, and a proper consent was taken in regard to the information to be utilized on this thesis research. The officers from various organization also filled the consent form and were all well-informed on the usage of information and data.

#### **1.5. Research Site**

In regard to earthquake 2015, in Kathmandu city, not all the areas were affected equally. There have been some areas which had greater impact from the earthquake in terms of number of deaths, injuries, and destruction of the possessions and houses. Though most affected regions were outside the Kathmandu Valley region, Kathmandu region also witnessed 1700 casualties, 13,000 injuries, and 724,000 collapsed houses (S. Shrestha, Bajracharya, Bajracharya, Shrestha, & Maharjan, 2016).

Likewise, Shrestha and others mention that, Sankhu, a town in Kathmandu Valley witnessed 90% of the housing damage, which is one of the oldest settlements, situated about 20 km northeast of Kathmandu city. As per (Hub–Nepal, 2015), Sankhu also known as Shankharapur is one of the area which had huge casualties among other areas which could witness the flattened of indigenous Newari culture traditional buildings and monument to the grounds. In the same case study, it is written that, Sankhu is an old town where Newars, one of the indigenous communities, along with some other indigenous castes people are inhabited. However as per the availability, indigenous women belonging to the newar castes from various background living in Sankhu were selected as potential interviewees for this research.

In the article by (Lohani, Araki, Hokugo, & Kaneko, 2017), it is noted that, 90% of the Sankhu building were damaged and the streets were full of debris. With 90% of the damages caused by the earthquake 2015, the economics of the town was in struggle, and its reconstruction and recovery from the economic loss has been important to bring back the prosperity of trade and tourism for the livelihood of the indigenous people in the town (S. Shrestha et al., 2016).



*Figure 3: Nanmajju Prajapati home in Sankhu*  
Source: (S. C. Lama, 2019)



**Figure 4: Sankhu, Nepal**  
Source: (China Daily, 2015)



**Figure 5: Houses destroyed by the quakes in Sankhu**  
Source: (Una, 2015)

As seen in the figures 4,5, and 6, the damages were severe in this area, hence, the indigenous women in the Shankharapur area has been in consideration as the research site in this paper.

## **1.6. Research Scope (Unit of Analysis)**

The research scope in this paper has been sub-categorized into population and study group, area, time period, and the actors involved during the research that has been based on both primary and secondary data. The unit of analysis has thus been discussed in detail as follows:

### **1.6.1. Population and study group**

The population of indigenous people accounts to more than 36% of the total population (Vallese, 2017), and the indigenous women population amounts to more than 18% of the population in Nepal (NIWF & UNDP, 2018). Primary research based on the indigenous women total population is beyond the scope of this research due to time limitation, geography, limited literatures, and others. Hence, an indigenous woman experiences in the urban setting of Sankhu area has been the unit of analysis.

While the study group of this research has been based on the focus group interview with 6 respondents from Sankhu, and one-on-one interview with five officers of different organizations ranging from Community Based Organization to National level institute in Nepal.

### **1.6.2. Area**

The area of focus has been indigenous women residing in the Kathmandu Valley for the interviewees. However, to be precise on the thesis, Sankhu, a badly affected area by the earthquake 2015 has been selected as the research site. This town is populated with indigenous nationalities and so therefore serve as a suitable area for the research.

Similarly, organizations that were in Kathmandu Valley where the relevant information could be accessed in regard to indigenous women, and their empowerment in the political ecology, have been chosen for the area of interview of officers.

Hence, the focus area of this paper are the indigenous women in Sankhu are and the officers to find out the experiences of indigenous women during the earthquake 2015 and the notion of empowerment in Nepalese political ecology.

### **1.6.3. Time period**

The focus of this research has been based on earthquake 2015 in Nepal. However, to analyze the lives of indigenous women and experiences during the disaster, the study of secondary data has been from the different literatures that is dated from various timeline. Also, the history on formation of hierarchy of caste system has been touched upon, in line with extraction about social stratification, and so on. The literature reviews to further understand the influencing factors that would have shaped the lives of indigenous women in the social structure has further been researched. In addition, literatures and interviews on how the earthquake 2015 had impact the indigenous women has been the emphasis as well.

Moreover, the empowerment of the indigenous women in the political ecology has also been based on various literatures. The literatures have relied on the laws, policies, provision, of Nepal which is formed by the many factors that in includes social stratification, social-cultural practices, political revolution based on Hinduism, and so on that has been further discussed in Chapter 2.

Therefore, the time period of this qualitative research has been based on various events and timeline to find out and analyze on lives of indigenous women and how earthquake has made an impact on indigenous women's experiences have been elaborated along with the notion of empowerment through the conceptual framework withstanding the availability and necessity of the literatures.

### **1.6.4. Actors**

The actors involved in the process of the interview are varied. The actors have been chosen based on where potential data and information can be extracted in relation to



indigenous women lives in various timeline, and empowerment programs. There are many organizations that are involved, from the community-based organizations to policy making body. However, specific organizations such as Department of Women and Children (DoWC), National Women Commission (NWC), and National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF) have been chosen as they directly deal with women and the latter one directly deals with the indigenous women and their issues. In summary, these actors have been chosen to study and research about the intended purpose. This paper has involved officers from different organizations to get a broader perspective, data, information and statistics in order to understand the notion of empowerment towards indigenous women.

Lastly, points described above in this research scope had been limited to time, space, and scope. Thus, variables that is beyond the time limitation, area (geography), space, and scope have not been regarded. However, in the future if there will be interest from the actors or stakeholders, the study can be conducted in greater and in-depth volume to analyze the situation of indigenous women in details.

### **1.7.Limitations of the study**

This thesis emphasizes on the indigenous women's lives pre-disaster and their experiences during the earthquake as mentioned above, however, the generalization of the indigenous women has been made except for some part where it was deemed significant due to the time, and space limit.

Moreover, all the indigenous are not the same in regard to caste, background, socio-economic status, and other aspects. So, the primary source of data involves a group of indigenous which belongs to only few castes of indigenous people among all the castes (there are 59 castes of indigenous people as per GoN). Further, the diversity of the indigenous women in different parts of Nepal where access, transportation, and communication are difficult to reach have faced different kinds of discrimination and marginalization, which this thesis could not cover all and has been narrowed to specific area of Sankhu (research site) only.

On the other hand, during the field work, the inclinations of the officers of some organizations made interview appointment to be time consuming as they had to be contacted several times. And the location of the group interview of the indigenous women was difficult to reach due to road construction and less availability of the public transportation. Additionally, long festival holidays in Nepal made it more difficult to get appointment with the group of indigenous women and the officers as well.

In addition, getting appointment with one of the respondents of the NIWF took almost three weeks in the process as they had some kind of negative inclinations. To take the interview of NIWF officers were the most difficult as they were avoiding being taken interview. When they (NIWF office) were contacted through the landline number, the call receiver told they don't have time for interview, and again when contacted repeated times, the call receiver says, "only chairperson can give the interview and the chairperson has gone out of valley for 20 days". When asked again after 20 days, the person in contact told, there is hardly any time for them to give any kind of interview. However, at the end of the three weeks, one person referred through personal contact who happened to be an acquaintance with the program coordinator on the same organization (NIWF) agreed on the interview and told she can give very limited time for the interview. To reach the officers for interview was a hassle and time consuming as they didn't want to give appointment over the telephone and had to visit the office three times for an interview.

And, the secondary source literatures are mostly limited to women in general. The data and statistics segregation based on caste, ethnicity, and gender were lacking. The information regarding the affected indigenous women by the earthquake 2015 were also inadequate and limited on the literatures as the discussion are seen mostly of the women in general rather than the specific caste of women that was affected. This could be because of the geography, topography, vulnerability of the location that indigenous people reside. Further, disaster preparedness and recovery framework catering to indigenous women in the policy level are very rare to be found.

Nevertheless, despite the long list of limitation, the research of this paper has been completed while broadening my knowledge and exposure on lives of the indigenous women, their experiences during the earthquake 2015, and empowerment notion in the political ecology of Nepal.

### **1.8. Significance of Research**

The purpose of this research is to find out about the lives of indigenous women pre-disaster in relation to power, and their experiences during the earthquake 2015, and the empowerment notion that shapes them in the Nepalese political ecology through the lens of FPE. This research is an illustration to shed light on how indigenous women in Nepal been treated or observed in compared to higher caste or non-indigenous women. Now, as the purpose has been discussed, the significance of the research will briefly highlight the gap in the literatures that is present in doctrine, and discourse in regard to indigenous women.

In regard to significance of the research, S. Acharya, Jere, and Robinson-Pant (2019), shows that indigenous people lack the political representation, opportunity to education, accessibility in proper health care, and many more. Moreover, S. Acharya and others states that, Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment of Nepal mentions that Nepalese indigenous women's knowledge, capacity, and skills face an impediment of climate change, and natural resource management which is due to lack of access to political power and as well as access to resources.

Likewise, study by (Sujakhu et al., 2019) identifies female-headed families who belongs to disadvantaged social groups that includes indigenous women are more vulnerable to those higher caste women as these disadvantaged groups contacts to extreme climate and its related hazards, insufficient financial assets, limited social network, and too much dependent on natural resources.

Besides, Nepal has been an earthquake prone area with seismically active territory that is located in the central most segment of the Himalayan seismic belt with a prolonged

history of occurrence of damaging earthquake that dates six large destructive earthquakes in 1255, 1408, 1505, 1833, 1934, and 2015 A.D. (D. Thapa, Tao, Wang, & Fan, 2017). Furthermore, the damaged houses of 41% belonged to the Dalits and indigenous women communities, making them face more hardships as they try to cope with the post-earthquake 2015 (Shakya, 2016).

In addition, despite having a significant number of indigenous women in Nepal, they appear to be vulnerable to disaster recovery, climate change, social stratification, livelihoods, that is socially produced in the social isolation, financial authority, and knowledge based supremacy exercise by the communities elites and public official (P. Sapkota, Keenan, Paschen, & Ojha, 2016). Subsequently, leading to absence in access to equity rights and exclusion in the policy paper directly, and immense discrimination in the social, political, and economical environment (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012).

Further, research by Y. K. Bhattachan (2005), identifies that National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) has rehabilitate indigenous women and children displaced by conflict programs where activities such as skill development training and micro credit without any security bond or interest are in the objectives but stresses that, programs as such lacks adequate budget, and priority. Additionally, the author states that sex disaggregated data gives a picture of the general women which does not account data on indigenous women as there is no separate data provision in relation to issues of indigenous women. Also, when the author raised the concerns over the indigenous women, it is shown that the spiritual leaders became furious over raising issues, as they believe indigenous women has no right to put forward such views that fails to respect the traditional hierarchy of men over women in the traditional culture of Mayan.

The paper by (Lam & Kuipers, 2019) strongly states that the Nepalese Government (GoN) published detailed recovery plans which was largely based on Sendai Framework for DRR, but even after three years of earthquake 2015, Nepal is at the struggling phase to realize the reconstruction vision and attain resilience, that has reflected in the policies and mentions no ground level details has been examined on resilience implementation.

Hence, the points mentioned above implies that the indigenous women have been facing different standard of actions, that has been influencing them and their actions even during the disaster like earthquake of 2015 in Nepal. So, with the literatures that shows signs of different treatment, the significance of research on indigenous women, whose position have been constantly ignored deems important. Additionally, inconsideration of indigenous women in the disaster preparedness and recovery along with political ecology has also played a major role in initiating interest on analysis of course of their empowerment.

The emphasis of this research will thus rely on FPE to shed the light and provide insights on the lives of indigenous women in relation to power, and their experiences during the earthquake 2015 that is interlinked towards the course of empowerment in various aspects. Hence, the significance of this findings will demonstrate the differences or inequality that an indigenous woman faces or the subjectivities of struggle in regard to power relation that still exists, along with dynamics of experiences of indigenous women during earthquake and the empowerment notion in political ecology of Nepal through the conceptual framework of feminist political ecology in upcoming chapters.

## CHAPTER II

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the conceptual framework is to help in illustration of the purposed objectives regarding lives of indigenous women pre-disaster in relation to power, and their experiences during the earthquake 2015, along with notion of empowerment in Nepalese political ecology through the lens of Feminist Political Ecology (FPE).

Feminist Political Ecology theory argues that, “hold that gender – in relation to class, race, and other relevant factors of power – shapes access to and control over natural resources” (Sundberg, 2016). Now, as this paper intend to study about the indigenous women’s lives in relation to power, and their experiences during the earthquake 2015, FPE will illustrates the power axes in terms of gender and disaster to acknowledge the issues of indigenous women pre-earthquake and during the earthquake. Furthermore, understandings the notion of empowerment in the Nepalese political ecology will as well be analyzed through this framework. Hence, FPE is an essential framework to shed the light on the objectives of the paper.

#### **2.1. Feminist Political Ecology**

As we move forward with conceptual framework, a short description on the FPE will be discussed to understand FPE for the context of this paper. As stated by (Elmhirst, 2011), Feminist Political Ecology illustrates “the power of feminist conceptualization of scale, which not only highlight less visible scales but as well stresses on their interconnection, conceptualizations of embodiment in its material and emotional dimensions, and conceptualizations of politics and subject formation in political ecology to see gender as a constitutive force at all scales of analysis”.

Further, Thomas-Slayter and Wangari (1996) cited in (Sundberg, 2016), suggest that “gender norms result from social interpretation of biology and socially constructed gender roles”. In addition to this, (Resurrección & Nguyen, 2017) discusses that FPE “emerged out of a concern for social equity and social justice issues in environmental change, offering a multi-scale analysis of gendered rights and responsibilities, knowledge production, and workings of power and politics in the use, access and distribution of resources”.

Whilst FPE constitutes conceptualization of different scale of analysis in relation to castes, class, power relation, social equity, justice, and others, the indigenous women were hard hit by the earthquake 2015, and thus this framework will illustrate the ways on how indigenous women can be vulnerable and have different experience in compared to streamline women by disaster such as earthquake in relation to power in coming chapters.

As we defined FPE, the contextualization of FPE in regard to brief understanding on lives of indigenous women, challenges of contextualizing FPE, and contribution of the framework into this paper will be elaborated below.

## **2.2. Contextualization of FPE to understand lives of indigenous women in Nepal**

In the context of power play in politics, ecology, and social structure, there are differences in the society in relation to gender, caste, class, and so on. Hence, with FPE, this section will explore the literatures that has made an impact on indigenous women lives and their experiences during the earthquake 2015 in regard to caste identity, disaster, and power relations. So, utilizing FPE approach the topics below are described to understand the construction of gender and indigenous identities, and the impact of earthquake on women in Nepal reflecting gender and disaster.

### **2.1.1. Gender and indigenous identity construction in Nepal**

Now, moving on to understand women as a gender and how their caste identity was constructed in the social structure, understanding the social and political structure is important. Patriarchy system a major drawback for women in Nepal can be defined as struggle between women and men to control women's labor power, writes Boris and Bardaglio, 1983 in (Tamang, 2000). In this context "gender refers to the socially constructed and historically variable relationships, cultural meanings, and identities through which biological sex differences become socially significant" (Laslett & Brenner, 1989). However, more than the individual characteristics, Laslett & Brenner writes that "gender refers to the social relationships between women and men that shape personal identity, and is institutionalized in families, schools, politics, culture and ideology, the labor market and as well the workplace". Hence, women as gender can thus be defined by the socially constructed variable that has been established in various institution.

Now, in the case of women and caste identity construction in Nepal, the connection can be linked to the literature from history that has led to illustration on three unifications, termed as "Rastriya Itihas" – National History (Des Chene, 1996). Des Chene notes that Nepal has had three unifications (ekikarans), - first is the territorial unifications through Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1768 by conquering petty territories, second is the Bhanu Bhakta Acharya unity through emotional unification in early 20<sup>th</sup> century by translating Valmiki's Ramayana into simple Nepali language that made the people feel of being united by single language and culture, and the last but not the least, is the unification in late 20<sup>th</sup> century, by unifying with the rest of the world through advent of modernity which is counted as the tale of progress that required parliamentary structure, civil service bureaucracy, UN membership and so on. Farther, the author summarizes that, in either way, the control and manager of the relations of the country remained



consonant with the past rulers, while unification showed the sign of decline in autonomy of Panchayati systems<sup>7</sup>.

Following the brief history on the unification in the form of nation building, it is noted that, from the era of Panchayat the adoption of orthodox concepts and the initiation of reformative policy that was prolonged by the mid age literate aristocrats who appears to be accountable for the weakening status of women (M. Acharya, 1999). This is because author state that, family laws in the early period had governed property rights, inheritance, marriage, divorce, that reinforced the patriarchy system which placed severe boundaries on women's control over economic resources. For instance, the paper by Acharya discusses that, the National Code of Nepal (Muluki Ain) of 1963 codification of the inheritance structure derived from the beliefs of Hindu religion emphasized on patrilineal decent and a patrifocal residence structure.

Subsequent to strong beliefs in Hindu religion since the past, women have been denied basic human rights through the culture of imposing restrictions or economically designed exploitation and manipulation of the position in family and in society (Dhungana, 2014). Author also notes that, Hinduism is not a religion but is a way of life along with religion, rituals, and practices that are commonly intertwined through which the certain set of rituals are further decoded in the form of language, idioms, myths, metaphors by the priest or pundits. And the scripts such as Manusmriti (the codes of Hindu); Swasthani (story of Lord Shiva and a part of Skandapurana), Chanakya Niti (Code of rulers), Sanskrit epics the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata is then acquired by man in the society, consequently shaping the concept and position of women's in Hindu society.

Consequently, the declined status of women is believed to be because of old beliefs and superstitions which were never completely explored in Nepal, and it explained to be the impact of Muslim rule in India that was adopted in Nepal along with prohibitions and

---

<sup>7</sup> Panchayat System is a monolithic one-party authoritarian system of government called party-less system that was introduced by King Mahendra in 1962 (N. Khadka, 1993).

limitations placed by Rana rulers to women that they are bounded by the roles of housewives (Tamang, 2000). The discrimination by the social identities, social norms and culture have been common in Nepal since the early eighteenth century (Robins, 2012). The author further transcribes that, the norms of men being the decision maker and the leader where women have to depend on male figure has proven lesser role of women in the power to access and control of resources.

So, inequality in terms of gender in the social organization thus can be debated by “the concept of social reproduction, where the feminist refers the social reproduction to the activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, responsibilities and relationships that is directly involved with the maintenance of daily life basis and intergenerationally” (Laslett & Brenner, 1989).

Furthermore, the literature shows that the entire civil code was divided and ranked by the caste hierarchy, the state officials legislated local behavior in regulation of caste boundaries and behavior with laws and punishments for crimes varied as per caste and sex (Tamang, 2000). Additionally, Manchanda (2004) states that, the social structure then soon segregated the caste of superior and inferior including pure and impure where indigenous people, women, and Dalits were deprived of social, cultural, economic and political life.

Also, in regard to discrimination, the patriarchy system of Nepal has further marginalized indigenous or lower caste women (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012). In the analysis by Acharya (1999) women from Terai communities, mid and far western development regions in general are socially discriminated. Further, wealth was primarily measured by the land owned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Nepal, and the groups who could not afford much land were Dalits, while those tend to lose land or did not have enough for the survival were ‘Janajatis’ (indigenous people) (Gellner, 2007).

As the marginalization of the indigenous people started from the cultural discrimination, political oppression, economic exploitation, and social exclusion, Nepal witnessed a radical change during the Maoist insurgency also called as Peoples War (K.

B. Bhattachan, 2003). The ‘People’s War was first officially declared in February 1996 by Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN – M) with a 40-point list of demands to the Nepali government to mainstream parties (Shneiderman & Pettigrew, 2004). The ideology of the Maoist movement was oriented towards expansion of the rights of poor and marginalized that included women (S. Gautam et al., 2011).

Gautam and others, further notes that, this movement spread from 45 districts in 1996 while poor country-dweller and the women from oppressed nationalities had been the most active to join the Peoples War. It was nearly 70 percent of women belonging to Tibeto-Burman communities (such as Magars, Tamangs, Kamis and Gurungs), mostly the indigenous castes joined in the Peoples War as they were dominated and discriminated from social, linguistic, cultural, economic, and political aspects by upper-caste Brahmin/Chettri (non-indigenous) elites (S. Gautam et al., 2011). Despite all the movements and fights, the phrases above shows that marginalization of indigenous women still exists which has also been recognized by the international policy but is yet to bring change in notion of empowerment (S. Acharya et al., 2019).

### **2.1.2. Impact of earthquake 2015 on women reflecting gender and disaster**

While the process of inclusion and empowerment were gradually growing, Nepal was induced by the 2015 Gorkha earthquake with massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake on 25 April 2015, and was followed by countless aftershocks (Molden et al., 2016b). The same report shows that, more than 8 million people affected, as there were casualties reported of more than 8,800 deaths (4,843 females), 22,304 people injured, and 2.8 million people got displaced, while pushing 700,000 additional people to be below poverty line. The “vulnerability of the population in general has been expressed in time and space in conjunction with a hazard” (Wisner, Blaike, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2004, p. 53). These authors also express that the mitigation of these damages could have been done, if there were disaster resilient buildings, and proper policies and practices on disaster risk management.

Similarly, gender sensitivity in post-disaster recovery is unaware, which makes women vulnerable. The lack of knowledge, awareness and exposure, unfavorable political situation, policy implementation, limited capacity, and traditional patriarchal culture have been the barrier for the post-disaster recovery (V. Thapa & Pathranarakul, 2019). In regard to women's impact by such disaster, it is evident from the research by V. Thapa and Pathranarakul (2019) that, there have been missing adequate consideration towards women in the process of design and planning of the disaster response and recovery.

Subsequently, when the disaster like earthquake occurs, it is noted that women and women-headed households not only die more than men, but as well do have limited access to formal relief and recovery mechanisms after disasters, and thus, have been vulnerable to recovery (Ganapati, 2012). Further Fothergill and Squier (2018) states, women are the exploited and discriminated gender in the context of Nepal in regard to disaster occurrence as they have limited access to political control/power/voice, knowledge resources, social norms, and others.

Women in general were affected more because they had to shift in the temporary camps or shelters that was far from their homes, and lives of women in these temporary shelters were threatening as they had to face sexual violence, trafficking, child marriage, exploitation, and abuse (Molden, Sharma, & Acharya, 2016a). Besides, women be it from high caste or indigenous groups or the Dalits (V. Thapa & Pathranarakul, 2019) experienced more psychological distress and mental health problems like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and as well depression, in contrast to men.

Moreover, the road and transportation infrastructure development in Nepal is at the very basic stage that make the life of people living in the villages particularly on the hills and mountains regions difficult and not easily accessible by outsiders writes (Shively & Thapa, 2017). This situation is creation from undermined political instability, weak economic performance, and a prolonged civil war, which however got a bit of highlight after the earthquake of 2015 shares Shively and Thapa.

Here, the impact of earthquake on women can be seen larger in compared to men. Furthermore, in the process of inclusion, indigenous women are neglected which makes them disadvantaged and marginalized that ultimately leads them to limited access to politics, economics, and social dimensions in compared to the women of the higher caste (non-indigenous) (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012). Hence, the overall recovery work in Nepal still remain conceptual and descriptive in goals as the major components in the good governance is missing in the process of implementation (Lam & Kuipers, 2019) which is the consequences of differences in gender, identity and the power relations in Nepal.

## **2.2. Challenges of contextualizing FPE**

Like two sides of the coin, as the contextualization of the FPE on the indigenous women has been described, there are as well challenges in the process of contextualizing the approach into the research. Precisely, in the context of Nepal, Nightingale (2011) states how feminist theory can be challenging when there is shift in the body of spatial practices. The author has given an example on how the imaginative caste system and gender issues are acted out in the era of post conflict. For instance, the observation of woman as a gender in most of the Hindu community were and still are in some area spatially segregated during the menstruation as it is believed that their body is polluting the environment, while on the other hand, the post conflict shifted the caste-based discrimination practices by allowing different caste people to sit and eat together in caste and as well in gender groups. This shows how the shifting in embodied spatial practices can create complexity for the approach of feminist theory.

Another example by (Kimura & Katano, 2014), notes that the presentation of the gender as a main variable during the time of crisis or disaster like Japan's Fukushima nuclear reactor accident, highlight the vulnerability of the gender norms and perceptions. This example in relation to Nepal as well justifies the issue about the gender equality normative while dealing with people in recovery and resilience since feminization during the disaster like earthquake are at times neglected (K. K. Shrestha, Bhattarai,

Ojha, & Bajracharya, 2019) and so creates disaggregated data and information or insufficiency of such.

On the other hand, incorporation of indigenous knowledge in access to natural resources such as participatory approach in forest management appears to be complex than they seem in regard to women (Boutkhil, 2006). The author elaborates by stating that time and effort of the women while engaging in their everyday routine such as cooking, gathering wood, fetching water, caring for the family, shepherding, and so on (a defined gender roles and responsibility in Nepal) could limit in access to legitimized knowledge production to understand the value of forest regeneration and forest engineers.

While the challenges of contextualization may be produced while featuring FPE due to broad and complex framework, this concept on the other hand has shed light for many scholars and researchers that will as well be used to incorporate the significance of this research as described in the section below.

### **2.3. Contribution of Feminist Political Ecology framework**

Despite the challenges of FPE persists for the application due to its nature of being intertwined, and multidimensional, the contribution of FPE in conjunction with disaster like earthquake 2015 in Nepal in terms of indigenous women experiences, and notion of empowerment have been elaborated in this section.

Sundberg (2016) states that, FPE scholars “account women as actors that can bring a shift in epistemology in the social sphere while addressing the particularities in regard to their knowledges and practices”. FPE thus intrinsically link to domination of women and nature in the process of production and reproduction where domestic female service is made invisible as it is connected to nature in the patriarchal capitalism, that intersects between race, class, gender, and power relation that is seen embedded in a certain culture and worldwide view leading to extended poverty and neglected group in the process of development (Mayberry, Subramaniam, & Weasel, 2001). In this regard, the study by (El Seira & Kurniati, 2020), notes that “most men disagree and object in the

idea of women being given a role in disaster situations, along with belief in religion discourse that limit the role of women in social structures, household burdens, education, interests, policies and legislations, organizational culture, political environment, and household income”.

As stated by Cupples, 2007 in (Horton, 2015), “gender risk analysis tends to operate via homogenization and reduction of women, ‘marking sexual difference on their bodies and connecting their needs to reproduction as the initial efforts to bring highlight gender lens in terms of disaster is often focused on biologically linked vulnerabilities and mothering roles, that frequently reproduces disempowerment which streamlines women representation as the submissive victims of natural disasters”. So, Cupples (2007) highlights that feminist lens can be used to focus on women’s involvement in the disaster process that can have impact on subjectivities which could lead to destabilize or reproduce certain gender identities. Further, the institutional view on women as dependent and weak gender do separate or marginalize women in planning and decision-making process writes UNISDR, 2009 in (Horton, 2015).

Likewise, (Resurrección & Nguyen, 2017) notes that FPE attempt to highlight on “how gender intersects with other axes of power such as ethnicity and class which accounts dynamics of outcomes underlining the need for subtle differences responses to disadvantaged large scale investments, climate change and disasters”. Moreover, the authors states that there is a need to recognize the lives of women’s earlier to a disaster based on historical contexts that could justify the different positions of vulnerability of women that criticizes one-size-fits-all solutions which can be complex and intertwined in regard to people and their changing lives.

Similarly, Hyndman (2008) contends by saying that “gender is not only shaped by disaster such as tsunami in Sri Lanka but also produced by the intersection of social, economic, and political relation and other ongoing conflicts within the country”. And Mohanty (2003) quotes that, woman is “intrinsically unstable which means woman are different throughout ethno-national identity and geographic location”. In addition to this Cupples (2007) notes that feminist perspective not only recognizes the “pre-disaster

vulnerabilities and forms of vulnerabilities but also by discursive positioning facilitated by the disaster itself”.

Likewise, the research by (V. Thapa, 2018) highlights that through the gender lens, it assess “women’s role in the household, the community, and other arenas in the context of post-disaster recovery concludes that disaster effects can be of two types visible and invisible, where invisible part is difficult for the Nepalese community to understand and imply due to lack of awareness, knowledge, exposure, unstable political situation, limited capacity and resources, and policy implementation gaps thus leading to challenges and impediment in terms of gender sensitivity and inclusiveness in the post-disaster recovery during earthquake 2015”.

Hence, with the help of FPE, this paper will shed light on the two objectives. First is to find out about the lives of indigenous women pre-earthquake in relation to power, and the indigenous women’s experiences by the impact of earthquake 2015, and lastly to analyze the notion of empowerment in Nepalese political ecology. Through which the struggle of indigenous women during the disaster and as well on their everyday lives from small household micropolitics to national or global economy can be linked with the inclusivity in the disaster preparedness or recovery, knowledge production, power relation, and social differences that exist in Nepalese socio-political sphere of Nepal.

Therefore, the paper divides findings and analysis part into two chapters i.e. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 under the lens of FPE as shedding light on findings about the lives of indigenous women in relation to power, and their experiences during earthquake 2015 in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 being an analysis on notion of empowerment in Nepalese political ecology.



## CHAPTER III

### INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES PRE AND DURING EARTHQUAKE 2015

This chapter purposes to find out lives of indigenous women pre-earthquake and as well their experiences during the earthquake 2015 in relation to power from the field work analysis based upon feminist political ecology framework in this chapter.

As stated, in chapter 1 on research method part, field work was conducted with the interview of group of indigenous women (focus group) and the officers of various organizations (one-on-one key informant). So, a short background on focus group indigenous women (name changed) and officers (name changed) have been stated in the tables below. The background details consist of name, age, education background, occupation, and income level of indigenous women group that has been mentioned in Table 1. While details such as name, organizations they belong to, and their position or title in the organization has been mentioned in the Table 2.

**Table 1: Indigenous women focus group**

S. No.	Name	Age	Educational Background	Occupation	Income Level
1.	Lila Shahi	34	Class 5	Agriculture and Shop	1000/day
2.	Sarita Joshi	41	SLC	Shop Owner	500/day
3.	Ayesha Shrestha	37	MBS	Teacher	20,000/month
4.	Ambika Napit	39	SLC	Housewife	-

5.	Kumari Shrestha	50	SLC	Social worker	3000/month
6.	Reeta Karanjit	51	SLC	Teacher	28,000/month
7.	Deepak Shrestha (male)	50	-	Founder of CBO “Shankarapur Sarokar Samaj”	-



*Figure 6: Shankharapur Indigenous women group interview*

*Table 2: Officers from different organizations*

S. No.	Name	Organization	Position
1.	Anisha Adhikari	Department of Women, Children and Senior Citizens	Director
2.	Reeta Magar	Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Consultancy Centre	Advocate and Member

3.	Durga Chettri	National Women Commission	Information Officer
4.	Cizana Majhi	National Indigenous Women Federation	Chairperson
5.	Kangana Thapa	National Indigenous Women Federation	Program Coordinator

Now, as per the field work analysis, this Chapter is thus divided into two parts: lives of indigenous women pre-earthquake in relation to power of gender and caste identity, and the experiences of indigenous women during the earthquake 2015 as per the semi-structural questionnaire attached as **Appendix A** at the end of this paper.

### **3.1. Lives of indigenous women pre-earthquake 2015 in relation to power**

The argument made by FPE illustrates that gender and disaster can be intertwined and complex subjectivities where gender vulnerabilities can be recognized from the historical contexts of women (and men's) lives prior to disaster that could explain the dynamics vulnerabilities at the time of disaster (Resurrección & Nguyen, 2017). Hence, the following topics from patriarchy practices, socio-cultural practices in the society, indigenous women access to and control of natural resources, education, language barriers, and employment is elaboration on lives prior to disaster in terms of power relation on gender, and caste identity as per FPE.

#### **3.1.1. Patriarchy practices**

In regard to patriarchy practices, Sandra Harding (1986), Donna Haraway (1991), and others cited in (Sundberg, 2016) under the subdiscipline of feminist critiques of development states that “patriarchal gender norms inform basic conceptions of who counts as knowledge producer, what counts as knowledge, how the knowledge is produced”.

In which similar to the statement, key respondent, INOLACC shares that, patriarchy system is there since the mother bear a child in her womb in Nepal. She gives an example saying when there is weaning ceremony, the boy is handed with option of gun toys and the girl with a doll. Also, the girls are taught from the small age to sit back and wash dishes after the meal, while the male child or the boy can go out and play football or outdoor sports without bothering for the dishes which comes from the gender roles where a man as gender is socially preferred.

In response on socially preferred gender, research by Leone, Matthews, and Zuanna (2003) notes that early stages of fertility is declined in Nepal as generally there is behavior of having son as the preference which is socially determined and culturally accepted as male gender is associated with status and economic potential.

Moreover, taking an example of indigenous villages area, respondent, INOLACC shares that female work is defined by the roles and responsibility to do agricultural work, farming and delivery of the crops or vegetables in the shop while the male counterpart is responsible to collect the money from those shops and manage the finances of the household upon the labor of the female shares a respondent. And when the money falls on the hand of the male, the female will have less power in the decision making and authority of the house or other household matters, while she had contributed to that income generation.

The report by (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012) notes “that women’s rate of economic participation is usually underestimated for one reason that is women often do not make any distinction between work, help and unremunerated work even though these activities differ from the domestic responsibilities and often times generate income”.

On the other hand, key informant, DoWC says that, there are cases where the housewives started a small-scale business and earned some amount for the household, then after proving that women can create income generation, the male counterpart starts to help with the business and make it more like a family

business by supporting the wife. However, these businesses are mostly a small to medium scale businesses such as restaurants/cafe, tea shops, retail shop, clothing stores, and so on.

Key respondent, DoWC further adds that, women are appreciated when they bring income at home as they contribute to the finances and lessen the burden on the male counterpart. When the profit or the income is shared among the family members, she is then supported to do small scale-business, and this somehow proves to be a path towards empowerment for women in a small extent.

The phrase above can be supported by the research of D. R. Acharya, Bell, Simkhada, Van Teijlingen, and Regmi (2010) that shows the relationship of decision making of women working for cash are likely to have more participation in the decision-making process in compared to those who do no work for cash.

However as stated earlier by NIWF respondent, these kinds of support are not substantial as majority of the indigenous women are deprived of education, land ownership, employment due to the barriers in the language and knowledge in comparison to the non-indigenous women and indigenous men.

Indeed, this has caused indigenous women to face double discrimination. Double discrimination because of gender (woman), and ethnicity (indigenous caste) in the case of Nepal (Roy, 2004).

The patriarchy practices or the patriarchy system when it comes to Nepal, it is obvious that everywhere male has been in the dominant position says key respondent, DoWC. For instance, at one level we as women seems to be upgraded in the sense that we can have professional career, however often times professional career even though in an executive level doesn't mean we are free from the household activities that is embedded as gender role in our Nepalese society. So, when we go back home after work, we still have to

conduct our gender roles and responsibilities as a mother, wife, daughter, or daughter in law. The household chores still remain our duty no matter what your position or status is in your career. She further states that the concept of generalizing roles and responsibility of a woman is embedded in such a way that changing that norm will be very difficult.

Likewise, the book by (Nanda et al., 2012) demonstrates that there is a favor for a conservative gender roles for women in Nepal, as nearly half of the men agreed that woman's role is to take care of her home and cook for her family, and produce a son for her husband's family.

Furthermore, key respondent, DoWC describes that household chores is overlooked by men thinking it's the women's work. Men do not see it as a work at all or think it's not their duty to get involved or help with the household chores. This is because of the grassroots level thinking and teachings that our society has been planting in a child from their birth based on gender. She even contests it saying, however in the foreign land or the workplace in Nepal, the profession such as cook, chef, laundry, janitor, and the work that is similar to household chores are usually conducted by the men as they earn from that job. Yet again, when it comes to household level, their mind-set follows the societal system of believing that the household chores at home is to be conducted by a woman or a girl. The majority men are believed to be superior and do not support of what women does outside the household work, says the respondent.

Upon sharing, the respondent shares another case that she came across. In a training facility given by an organization regarding empowerment and awareness, a woman is involved actively meaning she had to come for training quiet often. And one day the woman's husband goes to the training center and beat his wife just because she was actively involved in the activities outside the house rather than the household chores.

In this support, the research by (R. Adhikari & Tamang, 2010), shows that about three in five women in Nepal experience sexual coercion by their husbands, which is caused by literacy status of women, decision making power regarding their own health care, husband-wife age differences, alcohol consumption by the husband, and male patriarchal control in household level.

The cases show that woman have very little autonomy to live their life independently, and even though the woman may know about her rights, she is not encouraged to have her own autonomy and act as her own agency for decision making. This phrase can be validated by the findings of Nanda et al. (2012), that demonstrate that 44 percent of men in his research agree that a women deserve to be beaten to show the norms around masculinity of being tough. Likewise, (R. Adhikari & Tamang, 2010) also suggests that there should be programs focused on education, campaigns against alcohol abuse, awareness programs targeting husbands, and women's empowerment programs to reduce sexual coercion and protect women's health and rights. Nevertheless, this remains a question to the concerned stakeholders on how empowerment from different levels can address such issues.

### **3.1.2. Socio-cultural practices in the society**

Despite the abolishment of caste and ethnicity based on social exclusion which was legally implemented, discrimination based on caste is still obvious, and evidences can be seen as the rural women of ethnicity or the indigenous women are still poor and generally unemployed, with unwell representation in socio-economic and political ground (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012).

Key informant, NWC, told that there are cases in the district called Humla, where there is Sherpa (indigenous caste) people residing in majority. He said that, in this district there is a cultural practice of polyandry. Here for one woman to marry all the brothers of the same house is a common practice as she cannot

deny the culture. In the case that she denies this practice, she will be ousted from the village.

And this statement shared by Y. Gautam and Andersen (2016) as well suggests that, in the rural area called Humla, there are groups of caste that includes high caste – ‘Chhetri and Thakuri’, ‘Dalits as the weakest’, and ‘Lama’ and other indigenous caste who practices fraternal polyandry (two or more brothers sharing wife).

However, when I asked the officer regarding the law that does not allow an individual to marry two persons at the same time, and what actions can be taken if that woman makes a complaint with NWC or police.

Key respondent, NWC then replies, “I think the woman will be more than happy and no such complaint has been reported till date as she can enjoy the property of all the brothers, and they blame their own ‘Karma’ for these things to happen”. However, the officer further says, this kind of practice is in decreasing trend. Generalizing the woman’s silence for agreement of such crime is a part of the cultural practice and social thought in this patriarchal society and thus, it really seems to be rooted in such a way that women in many parts of Nepal still can’t stand up for their own rights and nor the authority has obstructed such practices.

In addition, while over 14 million female children worldwide are married before the age of 18, nearly half of the number are from South Asia (Pandey, 2017). Pandey moreover notes that in the case of Nepal, one-third of the women were married before they reach the age of 16, and 78 percent before they reach the age of 20, and the odds are that Madhesi, and Low Caste Hindu women compared to the High Caste Hindu women are significantly higher in that ratio and percentile.

Similarly, in the case of inter-caste marriage, within indigenous community, it is seen that one caste who is considered to be higher does not agree or respect the other indigenous caste who is lower. While on the other hand, in the case of



non-indigenous community, the inter-caste marriage among non-indigenous is not a very much of a problematic if the bride or the groom are educated and are socio-economically stable to support themselves says key informant, INOLACC. This kind of thinking and culture is also making the indigenous people fall behind as the priority is given to the caste rather than the progressive status of the person shares another key informant, DoWC.

Key informant, DoWC, as well think the protection cluster is important in the case for the advocacy which they are running at the moment as the disaster taught them some lesson as well. However, this advocacy and awareness programs that they have do not specify for the indigenous or non-indigenous as they are focused for women in general.

The cultural mindset that women should not go out and stay at home, which is often the roles depicted by society and community makes women bounded by the household chores of kitchen mostly and household territory shares the respondent. This is also one of the reasons that made women to fall under casualty as the earthquake victim in Nepal. This is because they could not run out of the house structures and think promptly on how to react in the disaster shares the respondent. And though Nepal have been under the active seismic platform, government nor the concerned authority had been spreading awareness on measures to be taken during this kind of disaster.

### **3.1.3. Indigenous women's access to and control of natural resources**

Stopler (2003) states that though many countries practice the equality between the sexes which is as well incorporated both in the international and national laws, concurrently, there is evidence that certain groups have the right to keep religious and cultural norms that discriminate against women. Likewise, as stated by (Elmhirst, 2011), FPE “treats gender as critical variable in shaping access to and control of resources in relation to class, caste, race, culture, and ethnicity that outlines the process of ecological change, the struggle of men and women to sustain ecologically viable livelihoods, and the prospects of any community for sustainable development”.

Similarly, Nepal is inhabited by multiethnic community and endowed with rich indigenous knowledge<sup>8</sup> of agriculture practices where agriculture practices ranges from seed selection to knowing different crop varieties, cultivation practices, terracing, and land preparation on the most difficult landscapes (Joshy, 1997). Indigenous knowledge of farmers has been one of the main factor in the contribution of conservation of agrobiodiversity which is the foundation of several years of experience and observation on species, and interaction with the ecosystems (Upreti & Upreti, 2002).

Also in Nepal, agricultural diversity has been based on diverse farming systems built upon indigenous knowledge, and their experiences, ecological, biological and cultural diversity (Campbell, 2000). While Upreti mentions, local initiatives and indigenous conservation of agro-biodiversity is the strength of Nepal's agriculture to maintain crop and species diversity, the self-evolving agro-biodiversity has been destroying because of weak conservation policies, and rapidly changing indigenous knowledge-based integrated subsistence agriculture to specialized monocultural practices.

The key respondent, NIWF says that are many cases where the indigenous knowledge goes unrecognized and ignored by the government. For example, taking the case of community forest management in Nepal, now the community forest is not approachable for the women to make a living out of it as the elites have captured the forest, natural resources in around the area, and the indigenous have limited control over the management of it. Moreover, the community forest is not completely community-based forest anymore as the government or the military has been interfering in the access and control of the resources of the forest. And for their advantages, they do not want to recognize the indigenous knowledge or value it. Hence the laws can be called discriminatory towards the indigenous.

---

<sup>8</sup> Indigenous knowledge means the detailed local or traditional knowledge of the species identity, characteristics and their specific uses of it (Joshi, Joshi, & Joshi, 2011).

Similar to the case of Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), 'Tinchuley Milkey Jaljarey' is also in the plan of government to conserve it while key respondent, NIWF, believes that it is not necessary to conserve it rather they could give proper knowledge and trainings to the indigenous around the area so that they can manage the forest on their own and make effective and efficient use of the resources from the knowledge. From the systematized and proper management skills the indigenous people especially women in that area could make a better living. She further states that under the perspective of climate change, it is sustainable to utilize the indigenous knowledge and so the government should respect the knowledge and give input rather than reaping the benefits out of it. Moreover, the government has signed for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with UN and plans to meet the agenda by 2030 A.D. But what concerns the respondent is that the 17 goals of SDGs if were to be met by the government without aligning the indigenous people and its knowledge in the agenda, how will that agenda be met or achieved.

Moreover, in the literatures stated by (M. Khadka, Karki, Karky, Kotru, & Darjee, 2014), it is reported that community forestry in Nepal tend to have gender inequality and exclusion in the process. In addition, author notes that, "the rural population of Nepal which incorporate women, indigenous peoples, and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, depends on forest ecosystems as part of their subsistence needs and are vulnerable to changes in forest access, use rights, and rules". Additionally, cultural norms, social hierarchy and practices based on gender, caste, ethnicity, wealth, and location creates various institutional challenges in regard to empowerment of the women, poor, and socially excluded groups in Nepal states Khadka, Karki and others.

Furthermore, in the paper by Khadka, Karki and others, it is noted that the Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) belongs to three groups such as Dalits, Janajatis (ethnic groups, alternatively indigenous people), and advantaged castes (Brahmin, and Chhetri), and women in these CFUGs comprises of 50 percent, nevertheless, the involvement of women and disadvantaged castes and ethnicities tends to be little when it comes to decision making processes of CFUGs.

Adhikari (2001) mentions that, women in the hills have developed indigenous knowledge, skills and technology in regard to conservation, protection, use and management of natural resources while interacting with it. Moreover, women in mountain areas play a fundamental role in use of resources such as agriculture, forestry, livestock, and household works (S. M. Gurung & Banskota, 1990). The study by Grantham (1996) shows that rural women often perform a larger range of tasks in compared to men and holds different domains of knowledge about fodder tree use, cultivation, and management.

However, when analyzing through the gender perspective, the involvement and participation of women in planning and decisions-making programs seems to be minimal so, J. R. Adhikari (2001) suggests that gender issues should be mainstreamed in the overall planning process of community forestry programs.

#### **3.1.4. Education**

The research by Atteraya, Gnawali, and Palley (2016) notes that in Nepal, 37 percent of women were poor, around 38 percent of women absolutely had no education, while 18 percent of men had no education at all. Moreover, (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012) notes that, the indigenous women scored very low in literacy rate that was far under the national average in compared to literacy rate of women in general. This has been the reason for the household roles and responsibilities which they take from the early age if compared to boys of the same age.

Likewise, key respondent, INOLACC, shares that inequality still exists for the indigenous women because still a smaller number of indigenous women have access to education. And in order to make the impact in the society, she stresses that the majority should have the access to education. Further stating that we should encourage the younger generation girls and empower them to take a step forward and make them aware of rights, laws, and policies.

Furthermore, respondent says that reservation seat of 33 percent of political representation reserved for women is segregated in all the government structure to promote women's participation, and representation (Ghale, 2008). However, the seats in this 33 percent are mostly taken by the non-indigenous women shares Ghale. Hence, one of the demands of the indigenous women represented by NIWF and the concerned organization have been based on the political representation that indigenous women should have access and reserved quota, says key respondent. For reason for this privilege is required is because if we look back, it's not very long ago that indigenous women have started to gain access to education, and so the confidence level, knowledge, outspoken skills, and others still lacks and so their empowerment is necessity in this regard.

On the other hand, Kumari Shrestha, the focus group respondent (name changed), believes that gender roles should change, and it is slowly changing as well. The respondents say that, "the new generation especially our children's generation wants that equality and the education also helps a lot in this matter. One woman says that, "when compared to previous days, male of the household did not use to cook or wash clothes, but now as the girls have started to have careers, the boys have no choice but to help in household chores, and this change can be seen slowly changing the norms of the society as more girls are getting education."

### **3.1.5. Language barriers**

The research by (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012) shows that language is one of major barrier in empowerment and development of indigenous women.

It's because it is far likely for the indigenous women to speak national language on their everyday activities if compared with the men or high-caste non-indigenous women shares key respondent, INOLACC. And, when there is problem in the language, it eventually leads indigenous women to drop out from

the school that hampers their further education overall. Consequently, the access to education due to the language barrier is thus creating the disadvantage in the workplace and other aspects for the indigenous women to have better socio-economic status in the society.

Similarly, key informant, NIWF shares an example. When they had gone for an awareness program in one Magar (indigenous caste) village, the women there did not understand Nepali language as they spoke only Magar language. So, during that time they requested one Magar female to translate the speech so that those women could understand about the program and communicate. However, she mentions, through the translation process, sometimes the effective of the program may not be as much as it would have been from the first language understandings. And since, they are used to in speaking their ethnic language in the villages or rural areas, speaking of the national Nepali language seems to be a problem shares respondent. Moreover, indigenous women face difficulty in communicating in the local governments' offices, low entrance levels exams.

So, completing schooling is the problem due to lack of mastery in official language, Khas Nepali, also known as Nepali language when their own ethnic languages were banned in the government offices and even in the judicial proceedings ((NIWF), (LAHURNIP), & (FPP), 2011). Hence, problem of language seems to be one of the major barriers for the indigenous women in accessing and control of resources such as access to education, various programs from government, NGOs, and other organization as Nepali is the official language used (Regmi, 2003).

Further, another respondent, NIWF says, the reason behind they are facing problem with using Nepali language as the official language for indigenous women because of factors; such as access to education, socio-economic status, the availability of the awareness programs from various stakeholder to empower them in using the language, the culture, norms, practices and the social structure

towards construction of indigenous identity, and wide domination of non-indigenous people toward indigenous people on language expertise.

Perhaps in the case of indigenous women, Rao and Robinson-Pant (2006) also states that, there is huge battle for recognizing the indigenous language and culture, claiming indigenous identity, and the control and access over resources in the process of gender differences are not prioritized. So, when the entire community is marginalized from the mainstream, the recognition is at stake rather than the access and rights of the different groups in the consideration.

The report by GoN as well states that language is one of the barriers towards inclusion that is faced by indigenous caste. Moreover, Nepali language now a national language was a pressure from Hindu Monarch that was drafted during 90s mainly by the elites confined cultural pluralism (Dixit & Ramachandran, 2002). Hence, with the advantage in language, culture, religion, education and other aspects led them to be in higher political spectrum and other engagements of social, economic, and cultural environment.

### **3.1.6. Employment**

Employment has been one of the factors to determine the socio-economic status of people that ultimately shapes the access to and control of resources in the social stratification of patriarchy system in Nepal. Since, indigenous people have been generalized based on caste, their opportunity and access to various resources have been limited shares a respondent. Webb and Dhakal (2011) states that, the prevailing Hindu caste-base hierarchy is categorized as, Brahmin and Chhetri (high castes) known as ‘wearers of the sacred threads, whereas the caste Kami (blacksmiths), Damai (tailor), and Sarki (cobblers) are known as Dalits (occupational castes, also known as water-unacceptable and untouchable), a low caste, and the indigenous (janajati) castes are generally known as ‘Matwali’, alcohol drinkers, low to middle castes, who are often marginalized and ignored.

In line with caste system, Vinding and Kampbel (2012) notes that, despite the re-examination of the list of indigenous peoples, only 59 indigenous identities have recognized officially up to date, while other indigenous identities are still excluded from the list. The author further states that 59 indigenous people who made it in the list are based in four different geographical zones: mountainous Himalayan belt, the hill region (including Kathmandu valley), inner Terai, and the plain region that is along the border to India, in the South, which is also known as Terai. As they come from diverse geographical zones, the socio-economic development and occupations of the indigenous people vary. Vinding and Kampbel writes that their occupations includes “hunter-gatherers, nomadic herders and shifting cultivators, agriculture, production of handicrafts, wage laborers, urban dwellers, and so on.

In regard to this, key informant, INOLACC also explains that, the indigenous people are generally stereotyped by the caste, such as ‘Sherpa’, indicating a porter for trekkers just by the caste. While there are many Sherpas who have reached in high level position in occupational hierarchy, yet they are still stereotyped or generalized based on the caste as porter, a low-level job and so on for other indigenous caste as well. Moreover, she further shares that the indigenous people are even stereotyped in the occupation they can choose. This is built by the social structure where people generalize the indigenous people by occupation such as military, entertainment sector (musician, dancers in restaurants/bars), laborious work, and mostly blue-collar jobs share respondent. Hence, when indigenous are socially stratified even in their occupation, looked down upon and the behavior towards the indigenous people is not pleasing in the society and community.

In addition, key informant, NIWF suggests that, indigenous women have been losing the access to land, forest, raw materials, and natural resources, leading to discontinuation of traditional occupations such as production of handicrafts, hunting, fishing, boating, collection of herbs, wild fruits and green vegetables has greatly affected their socio-economic status both in rural and urban areas.



Due to which, the indigenous women have been engaged in low paid manual work, unskilled labor, work without contracts and social protection, wage earner, domestic helper, self-employed (small businesses like restaurants, retail shops, beauty parlors) and many migrated outbound which makes indigenous women more vulnerable than indigenous men because of the limited decision making power within their communities (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012). Moreover, the modern development as described by Vinding and Kampbel also suggest that the mass factory produced products slowly replaced the village handicrafts that used to be made by Janajati or Indigenous women.

Likewise, in the process of poverty's reduction, it is important for the women to have stable socio-economic status and so the government, INGOs, NGOs have made some effort to reduce the poverty level in Nepal (Atteraya et al., 2016). Authors further states that there are different types of inequality emerging from caste/ethnic discrimination, gender-based exclusion, and geographic disparities and thus found out that poverty reduction can be affiliated with the employment opportunities like women's engaged in micro-credit organizations, women's ownership in productive resources such as land and/or housing, educational opportunities, and women's participation in decision making in the family. This is because, women manage land, but do not have the holdings of the land in their name as men control the land and other assets in their name in the patriarchal society of Nepal (O. Gurung, 2009).

Further, the income pattern of the indigenous people is lower than non-indigenous people but higher than Dalits caste, but some indigenous groups such as Limbus, Magars and the Kumal, Sunuwar, Majhi, and Chepang fall in very low capita income in compared to other ethnic groups and castes (Subba et al., 2014).

On the other hands, in regard to security sector employment, the challenges of the gendered restructuring have been deeply rooted in the patriarchy practices that is long-held understanding in the security sector where people recognize that physical strengths as the key factor in favoring men over women in the recruitment (M. Khadka & Sunam, 2018). As women are perceived to be physically weak gender, gender sensitive physical

infrastructures are still to be established for better gender-inclusive environment that includes indigenous women shares Khadka and Sunam.

Nevertheless, study of sector-wise sex disaggregated information about employment and discrimination was almost non-existent says key respondent, NIWF.

It is believed with small-to-medium scale businesses indigenous women's socio-economic status is higher than high caste non-indigenous women, but over the time it has overturned because of the benefits that non-indigenous high caste women have been benefitting from the modern development and the advantage in regard to the language (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012). Thus, the factors that have influenced the indigenous women in access and control of resources include unequal opportunities of employment, socio-economic status by the social stratification, decision-making power relations within and outside the household and so on, that has ultimately marginalized them.

### **3.2. Experiences of Indigenous woman affected by earthquake 2015**

This is second part of this chapter, where the experiences of the indigenous women that was affected by earthquake 2015 will be elaborated along with description by the focus group and key informants as per relevance. Thus, the experiences that indigenous women encountered have been categorized into; indigenous women's workload under the impact of earthquake 2015, health and safety issues, indigenous women's vulnerability in access to means of production for livelihood, and women's participation in decision making.

#### **3.2.1. Indigenous Women's workload by the impact of earthquake 2015**

Women's burden and workload in Nepal was not less which got more complicated during the earthquake 2015. As stated by (Lam & Kuipers, 2019), resilient remains a conceptual and descriptive goal as the keys to good governance are absent because the whole Nepal reconstruction process has been neglecting community participation, and

vulnerable groups that includes indigenous women. Due to which the burden and workload on all sides as the study by (Shakya, 2016) shows that Dalits and indigenous women have been the ones vulnerable and more affected by the earthquake 2015.

As noted by (Jaggar, 1983), he raises a question, “If all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves?”, where he refers to the subject of “inconstant, uncertain, unknown arbitrary will of Men, be the perfect Condition of slavery?”. Taking an example, the marriage women aged 15 to 24 years in Nepal are reported to have sexual violence with marriage revealing complex and complicated factors such as gender norms, economic dependence of women, poverty, alcohol consumption of husband, lack of knowledge, social stigma, and lack of supportive familial and social environment (Puri, Shah, & Tamang, 2010).

The conceptualization of gender have been shifting for many years from biologically determined nature to socially produced gender nature (Nightingale, 2011). And the socio-nature of woman has been (re)produced in everyday activities including forest harvesting, agricultural work, food preparation, and consumption that is creating consequences for ecological process and social inequalities which as well intersect with ethnicity/caste, class, and race in Nepalese social sphere, notes Nightingale.

In this regard, Deepak Shrestha, focus group male respondent (name changed) says that, in comparison to male and female victim, when it comes to life and physical damages, the number of females may have been affected more but this has led to less effect in the household operation in terms of socio-economic status of an individual household. If it was higher number of male deaths, as a matter of fact, it is a male dominated society, the family member would have to struggle more in terms of socio-economic status and others, shares the respondent. He further supports his point saying this is what women has also been saying as they believe the situation would have gotten worse if the main head (male figure) of the household would have lost their lives more than women.

Similarly, Ayesha Shrestha, focus group respondent, shares a story about her experience during the earthquake in this regard. While she was giving breast feeding to her 15 months old son, the earthquake occurred, and at that time her mother-in-law was in other room. She tried to move from bed but couldn't, as there was the closet near her, which was shaking so bad and, she was scared that it would fall on her child. It was a kind of shock to her, she didn't even know how to protect herself and her son from the earthquake inside the house, then she thought of staying under the door frame as she had heard about it somewhere that it would be safe under the door frame. Then her mother-in-law came and then they all went out quickly. She further shares that her older son was in other house, and then she thought he must have died under the debris of the house as it must have been damaged. She then ran and went quickly to that place without thinking anything else in mind. And does not even know how she reached that place while the aftershocks were still shaking the ground.

The story above was an example of how the nature of the motherhood, who cared for her children without the concern of her safety first. While the husband is out for work, she was responsible to make sure that everyone was safe without thinking about her own safety and care for her mother in law as well. The nature of the womanhood which makes them sensitive to the people around them is such a quality that is possess from within that they resist the subordination, willing to labor for household chores including taking care of family members without cost which has been embedded as social norms of gender roles in the patriarchy society leading to influencing factor for women having lower socio-economic status in the society.

Hence, the perceived responsibility of women in the social sphere in compared to men are more connected to their family, and the surrounding around them that has been causing suppression of their autonomy. And this nature of gender roles that is perceived by the social norms has led to become accepted norms and cultures of gender roles since the early centuries which is intense more in indigenous women as their spatial practices in rural areas are different as awareness is still lacking and not reached (Nightingale, 2011).

Most of the respondents was overall saying that their lives were affected in some ways as nearly no houses in the area was left except for few from the earthquake 2015. And one of the respondents says that even though the houses were not destroyed, living in the house during the aftershocks was not possible as it was shaking so bad for months. Everyone was surviving from the food that they could gain access to in the neighborhood or from their own gardens or farms.

The focus group respondents moreover shared that they had the roles and responsibility to take care of the children and the elderly people in the family including their husband.

However, did not share that what roles and responsibility the husband had when they were working for the family. They were the ones cooking and taking care of the children. The children were also suffering from disease during the period of aftershocks of months and thus they had been stressed throughout the time. And when finally, the aftershocks slowed down, many of them realized that it was best if they help others in need too. Moreover, the caste did not matter and there were people from neighborhood be it from low or high status, were living on the same ground for certain period of time.

### **3.2.2. Health and safety issues**

Even in the regard of health services, indigenous women are less likely to receive antenatal care as they are more likely to deliver at home in compared to non-indigenous women (Pandey, Lama, & Lee, 2012). Additionally, in regard to health status, it's the high caste women including newar (the high caste among indigenous castes) get the essential antenatal services in contrast to Dalits or Janajatis (indigenous) women (Subedi, 2010). Proving that the access to proper health care by the indigenous women are limited.

In an illustration of temporary shelters, key informant, NIWF, says that there were cases of sexual harassment, trafficking, health and hygiene, and sanitation

problem which caused challenging situation for the girls or women. In addition, respondent from INOLACC even conducted awareness problem in a school for the female children where these children often times do not even know when they have been exploited in time of disaster recovery.

Further, the key respondent shares that people discriminate the people based on caste in rural areas by giving an example during earthquake. During that time, Dalit who are believed to be untouchable castes were not allowed to receive the materials with others due to their untouchable caste. Some of them were even beaten and threaten when they stood in line for the receiving it.

In addition, key respondent, DoWC states that during the earthquake 2015, trainings and awareness programs were conducted on sexual harassment and as well social counselling by respondent herself as the District Chief officer (DCO) based in Sankhu, Banbhanjhyang, Kathmandu. She explains that, the need of social counselling was very much needed even after earthquake occurrence for a long time because those who had lost their family member were stressed out, depressed for a long period. Especially the pregnant women, were also in need of the dignity kit and counselling, as they were emotionally and physically distressed. Adding information onto the place, Sankhu, is as well the research site for this paper, it shows that indigenous women have been among the distressed and socially vulnerable groups that the respondent mentioned.

Hence, with earthquake 2015, many people had to be displaced, among the displaced, indigenous women were in majority who faced sexual violence, and other problems more due to their socio-economic status in the society (V. Thapa & Pathranarakul, 2019).

### **3.2.3. Women's vulnerability in access to and control over means of production**

Atteraya et al. (2016) states that 25 percent of people in Nepal live in absolute poverty which is earning less than 1.25 USD<sup>9</sup> a day. The study also shows the level of education of women is less than men that have been leading to lower employment opportunities and low economic status. In line with indigenous women, it is evident that indigenous women have low economic status and are poorer than the high caste non-indigenous women. However, there are different types of inequality emerging from caste/ethnic discrimination, gender-based exclusion, and geographic disparities and thus poverty reduction can be affiliated with the lack of opportunities like women's engagement in micro-credit organizations, ownership in productive resources (land and/or housing, educational opportunities), and participation in decision making in the family (Atteraya et al., 2016). Hence, this section will be divided into four points of; access to capital/economics, access to credit, access to information, and access to skills/trainings.

### ***3.2.3.1 Access to capital/economics/credit***

The income pattern of the indigenous people is lower than of non-indigenous (higher-caste) but is higher than Dalits and Terai caste (untouchable caste), but some indigenous groups such as Limbus, Magars and the Kumal, Sunuwar, Majhi, and Chepang fall in very low capita income in compared to other ethnic groups and castes (Subba et al., 2014).

During the earthquake, key respondent, DoWC explains that information dissemination was given regarding awareness program along with the CBO (community-based organizations) like the cooperatives were operated for the awareness training programs, and economic empowerment training programs as well. Likewise, 7500 grants were distributed among the victims so that they can start something on their own with the grant. And, under the protection fund, DoWC distributed relief materials to those children who lost their parents as

---

<sup>9</sup> The World Bank's International Poverty line of \$1.90/day at 2011 purchasing power parity is based on a collection of national poverty lines, which were originally used to set the international poverty line of \$1.25/day at 2005 purchasing power parity (Jolliffe & Prydz, 2016).

some did not have clothes, foods, school bags, stationery items, and treated the wounded victim from earthquake, as the funds were mobilized promptly and accordingly. There were many women and children who got relief from this protection fund, and DoWC were praised with positive feedback for this scheme as a part of prompt action in economic empowerment during disaster.

This is how the women in general got access to capital from the programs of DoWC, but the question remains on how about the indigenous people who are not aware of the information of the grant or any kind of such programs due to the locations they reside, they ended up with no access to any kind of grant or capital during the disaster. When these marginalized group of indigenous women fall out of the process of such programs, the access and control of resources is then lacking, and their vulnerability is then increased with disaster such as earthquake.

Deepak Shrestha, a focus group respondent, also shares that, during the earthquake relief materials were distributed more from the personal level, NGOs, personal contacts, and very limited from the government. Even today, the funds have not been implicated by the government for needy victims. In addition, he says, experience in earthquake was very bad as there were almost none of the house that was livable as destruction was massive, in Shankharapur, Kathmandu. Throughout the time, they were helping each other rather than waited for government's aid. The relief for basic needs came from family and friends living abroad for them but the poor who were also victims could not recover, yet many of them are in the phase of recovery from the damages.

During that situation, he further explains that economically it was very difficult for everyone, as most of the houses in the Sankhu area got destroyed including his own home. The local government body such as the metropolitan of Shankharapur had some kind of relief aid after the earthquake but it was limited. There were many volunteers from NGOs, INGOs, and others that came for survey, and even helped them with relief materials however, the financial



burden to rebuild the houses was intense and distressing. While the government had offered to grant 50,000 NPR (Nepalese Rupees) to maximum of 1 million NPR (Nepalese Rupees) to victims whose houses were destroyed, according to the category of destruction, this grant was also then limited to countable number of people.

And since, Shankarapur is a place to be considered in the world heritage site, the renovation or reconstruction cost will cost more than 4-5 million Nepalese Rupees for 1-2 floors house to meet standard of the world heritage site. This implies that the government grant was barely enough to rebuild the damaged houses and hence, till date, many can be seen living in the temporary shelter.

When the male focus group respondent replied to some of the answers, it was visible that the indigenous women did not know much about the governments aid, or any kind of grants that they could have accessed to. This shows how the accessibility of capital/credit/relief fund of such kind can create inequality in the power relation of a gender even in the case of disaster sensitivity.

### **3.2.3.2 Access to information/social networks**

Earthquake 2015 that occurred in Nepal was disastrous with casualties including deaths, injuries, damages to infrastructure, and many more in the country. Upon saying this, there have been evidence that not everyone was affected equally as the vulnerability of the disaster was disbalanced in the power relation of the gender and other factors that created it including access to information.

In this regard, key respondent, INOLACC, shares that during the earthquake, she assumes every individual was a victim as it affected every individual some way or the other, however, “vulnerability of the earthquake was not the same for everyone”. She along with other member of NIWF, went to the Magar (indigenous caste) villages and distributed some relief materials as they got

funds from TEWA and UNICEF. While they went for the relief material distribution, she shares that in the areas such as Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Sankhu, Rasuwa, Dhading, and Sindhupalchowk, which are not far from the capital city, the victims, did not know how to use the undergarments, and as well the hand sanitizer. In addition, she told that a Magar (indigenous caste) old lady told her that she had never worn an undergarment in her life. And with the case of hand sanitizer, the issue was gaining attention from various places as relief materials distributors posted or shared their experiences saying people did not know the direction on how to use it as they were either consuming it or using it as body lotion.

And while many people were focused more on the relief material distribution during the earthquake, awareness programs on various aspects were missing towards the vulnerable groups which worsen their situation shares other key respondent, NIWF. She shares, in a household where both the husband and wife who were earthquake victim had got the victim card, and since husband is usually the one responsible for bringing the relief materials from the upfront distributors into the home, women on the other hand are more likely to be engaged within the household activities. However, in this case the husband took the relief materials from both of victim card and never took the relief materials into the house.

With this example, she tries to demonstrate the embodiment of inability of women to fight back against the domination or oppression of husband's self-centered behavior using his autonomy could dictate the livelihood for a woman's life which could have been avoided if access to information of where the relief materials are being distributed and information on other awareness programs could have upbringing the indigenous women in their daily lives and lives during disaster.

Similarly, Chini Maya of NIWF explains that they had distributed some relief materials during the earthquake in Majhi (indigenous) community, and it was mostly elderly people who came forward to receive the materials. She stresses

that youth were shy in nature to get the reliefs materials, and the elderly women thought the pack of sanitary pads was snacks as they came forward to receive it. During this period running campaign for awareness, and empowerment could not be the issue on priority as people needed the essential goods, relief materials and other kinds of kits in emergency rather than awareness because gathering relief materials and going for distribution was already a hassle task during the aftershocks and so we did not focus on empowerment and awareness issues shares respondent. This was the impediment of the FPE that was mentioned in Chapter 2 as well.

On the other hand, the respondent says that in the case of male or the boys, they were active in gathering together for receiving the relief materials since they had their networks and are physically stronger as well. They did not even bother where and what the materials would be received as whenever they hear there are relief materials distributed, they just go and get it. And the information as such also flows more to them as they are frequently in touch with each other in compared to women in the community who are mostly engaged within household. Moreover, the accessibility and the autonomy for girls/women in the village areas to go out for collection was not very convenient.

Similarly, during the earthquake, the focus was heavily on relief materials and its distribution by various individuals or organization because the target was then heading towards the upcoming election. So, some of the individuals were functioning for relief material distribution to convince people to vote them shares the respondent. Hence, distribution was done in such a way that they would benefit politically during the election. Additionally, those people residing in Kathmandu valley who are economically well off also went to get the relief materials despite the damages were not much on their side. The faster information accessibility was basically the reason for those residing in Kathmandu valley to gain relief materials easily. While in contrast the marginalized indigenous or the lower caste people in the villages or rural areas

fell behind from getting relief materials due to inability to access or have the information on such programs of distribution.

### 3.2.3.3 Access to skills/trainings

For focus group respondents, skills and/or training was the first thing that came to their mind (indigenous women group) when discussed about empowerment and post-earthquake recovery 2015. When asked about empowerment, the group did not understand the picture or how to start briefing on the empowerment issues and hence, one of them started with skills/trainings discussion during or post-earthquake 2015.

In regard to skills, key respondent, DoWC was explaining about how the indigenous women could earn from the small-scale business such as restaurants, retail shop, skilled and unskilled labor, and so on. She further states that however, man suppresses woman despite generating income because men's mind is embedded by the gender roles in patriarchal society that women are to be bounded by mandatory household chores. This is one of the reasons that shows how women have economically lower status than the male counterpart as their time have to be balanced for both work inside the house (without pay) and as well as outside the house (with pay).

On other hand, focus group respondent, Lila Shahi says she could not participate in the skills training that was provided by the local government but participate in one of the awareness programs on how to be safe on earthquake. She explains that it was only after 2 years of earthquake 2015, awareness program was initiated in her locality. She says, *“the time before earthquake I didn't have shops, I used to do only agriculture from home, and now I have been looking after the retail shop for about 3 years now. The earthquake really affected my life from income generation and other aspects as well. My agricultural occupation had to be stopped and there was nothing I could do”*.

Other focus group respondent, Sarita Joshi replies that there were few programs based on skills training such as pickle making, tailoring, agricultural training, and disaster preparedness training. Again, Lila Shahi shares that because of the shop that she was to look after, she could not attend the training.

Likewise, the focus group respondent explains that government did initiated some kinds of programs such as tailoring, beauty parlor skills, foreign employment quota from the government, and various kinds of skills training.

Yet, a respondent believes that in order for the women to sustain in the long run, the program should not be limited to skills training, while the government should have approaches that will empower and make them sustain in the long run which could be from different dynamics.

Furthermore, during the earthquake, main focus remains on livelihood training through D.O.W.C, says the key respondent. She explains that, short-term training was given in large volume as most people lost their livelihood. However, the trainings were limited to goat rearing, vegetables farming, etc. From these skills-trainings, the victims could generate income that was provided after the earthquake 2015 shares respondent.

Similarly, after the earthquake, the government's structure changed to a Federal Democratic Republic country says key respondent, DoWC. After this change, all the district offices got collapsed, and it turned into rural and urban municipalities. Then the leading role in the disaster got jeopardized as it was not clear on who will lead in which field and conduct what kind of programs. These issues are yet being discussed at present. But one agenda was clear, that is, every provincial level office will lead the program in collaboration with the DoWC.

However, the programs catering to indigenous women is not specified or incorporated in any of the programs or trainings which could upbring or promote indigenous knowledge and skills which were as well hampered due the earthquake 2015.

#### **3.2.4. Indigenous women's participation in Decision Making**

Similarly, on exploration of indigenous knowledge, a research by Maskey, Gebremedhin, and Dalton (2006) finds that advantage is obtained by high socio-economic profile of an individual, and the participation level in the community forest management thus excludes the disadvantaged groups such as indigenous women.

Likewise, DoWC key respondent explains that they delegate the local government to conduct the programs to be implemented on the field as a bottom-up approach. These programs are mostly based on income generation and livelihood programs.

As the key respondent shared about how the programs are being implemented or initiated, there were no trace on if the marginalized groups such as women from various castes or social background, different geography where reaching is difficult, are involved in the part of the process.

Similarly, Deepak Shrestha, a focus group respondent, shares his thoughts on how socio-cultural change is important. He describes that at present women are coming out for their rights, from the local to national level. The policy on the national level toward women empowerment got introduced late but have been in the process of incorporation. Some of the policies have been implemented through the government offices.

Amita Napit, focus group respondent, on the other hand, says that, the socio-economic status and the caste hierarchy has changed during the earthquake as in the temporary shelter, no matter what caste or socio-economic people belonged to, they had to stay in the same place along with everyone. During that time, the culture of untouchables did not exist since people of higher caste had no choice but to stay together with everyone in the shelter. Moreover, in the temporary shelter she stayed had a group of women cooking for everyone, and all the castes from high to low were involved so the higher caste could not choose but have the food cooked by the low caste people. That time was the time when all caste was considered as united. In this regard, Kamala Shrestha, other focused group respondent as well share the experience that discriminated treatment to the caste-based identity was hardly witnessed as people feared for their lives more than the culture or norms that had set them apart in the socio-hierarchy.

With the notion of socio-cultural norm of caste based discrimination that got halted during the disaster, why is it people needed this kind of disaster to realize that traditional cultural norms that had been established by people for higher privilege centuries ago do not carry significance if people are willing to accept the change for the betterment.

Also, a focus group respondent talks about the support from the husband or male counterpart is also necessary when it involves activities other than household chores. Support from family of male figure such as husband, father, brothers is important element to make us take initial step towards autonomy of our lives in the patriarchal society says respondent.

However, when women become active with the political activities it is not easy for them to take part and act on their own agency due to large existence of narrow social norms in gender roles and responsibilities. For instance, it becomes necessary for female to take permission from the male counterpart when she needs to go outside or do something outside the household while the male does not do the same. Hence, women

being dependent on men still make women indecisive if the male counterpart is not supportive.

Due to which, the respondent responded that, Nepal is a male dominant country, women acting as their own agency for the autonomy of their lives is difficult to find in the socio-culture of Nepalese society especially in the case of indigenous women. Because their socio-economic status is also one of the factors that influences to have the limited autonomy of their own. Even in the programs of empowerment that many government agents, or NGOs implement in the villages area, it is not proven to be efficient as the women are treated as dummy where their participation is listed but the efficiency of the programs is yet ambiguous. Moreover, when women participants in the programs do not agree with the male counterpart, it becomes difficult for them to continuously raise their voice as it ultimately goes unheard in meeting or in the process of implementation of such.

On the other hand, one of the focus group respondent shares that for women to be politically active and give time like how men do is difficult as by the time they finish the household chores, it is likely that sometimes it become challenging for them to keep up with the men on the same level. The focus group respondent explains that from dawn, they have regular routine of cooking, take care and send children to school, look after the elderly people in the house, and other household chores, which creates inconvenience for them to make time for meetings that are usually schedule in the early hours, and often times it becomes impossible for them to attend activities that is beyond the domesticity.

In the process of interview focus group respondent, Ambika Napit shares that gender roles should change, and it is slowly changing in the younger generation. She shares that the new generation like for instance our children's generation wants equal rights and equality in treatment, and education has helped a lot in this matter. *“When compared to previous days, the male or boys did not use to cook or wash clothes but now we see when the girls or woman are also busy*



*with their work or job, they have to do it and this change can be seen and is slowly changing in the society”, shares the respondent.*

On the other hand, Reeta Thapa, key respondent shares that no matter how much the women are likely to move forward or be empowered, it does not seem possible without the support of the family members. And many times, women are hesitant if the family support is not there for her and she resist change in the societal structure in the patriarchy system. This is because there are stories or evidences from the villages area where girls who move against the family is often ousted from the family or village and are removed from the inheritance, and other support. So, many of them become reluctant and follow the culture and live the life as defined by the social stratification rather than rights, equality, or any kind of change.

As the respondent responses are analyzed and written down, it creates a question about why the social structure define the roles and responsibilities of women to be bonded by the household chores which do not carry much significance if proper management of the household chores is given to third person or managed by both the gender in the house rather than throwing one gender for all the responsibilities that bear no income and this time value of money is overlooked by the women as well. The concept of woman to be the mother of the house without having time to be bread earners may be the concept that has been embedded for a long time that men do not want to change as it keeps their routine outside the house to be less time occupying and saves their money.

### **3.2.5. Indigenous women’s voice and participation in Disaster Preparedness**

#### **Programs**

In references with Persons with Disabilities (PWD), the CBS data shows that PWD population is 1.94 percent in Nepal, but there is no gender, caste ethnicity disaggregated data in the documents. Hence, it shows that the most vulnerable group in public and private sphere are the Indigenous Persons with Disabilities as well. And as per the CBS, the government has no particular plans and programs that can/would address the

problems faced by this group. Moreover, there is non-recognition of indigenous Persons with Disabilities as distinct entity in the laws and policies, and indigenous women plays no part and are lacking quotas, special provisions, equal rights, and access to resources ((LAHURNIP) et al., 2018).

Likewise, Kumari Shrestha, a focus group respondent shares that during the earthquake the military volunteers came to help the victims by taking out their things from the debris. And, after few days the local office had been searching for volunteers who are capable to help those in need in that area. The volunteers during that time asked if there are poor and those in hunger, but she contrast in her mind as she thought everyone is a victim and have similar situation, be it the rich or poor, even she is left with no food and money as everything was destroyed with the house. Yet she thought she is in a better position to help others. She then furiously asked the volunteer to help her as well as she also lost everything as everyone in the village was affected some way or the other. Then the volunteers gave her medicines for common cold and fever, diarrhea, along with umbrella, torch, a bag, tea, cloth, mask, and a pair of gloves.

On the other hand, since Nepal is an earthquake prone area, the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) is very important framework to be implemented as there have been evidences that in the disaster like earthquake, it is women, children, elderly people and marginalized groups are most vulnerable. However, its utilization from the government could be seen in lacking from many standpoints. The implementation of DRM from the organizations in specific to indigenous women were lacking.

In this regard, the Director of Department of Women and Children (DoWC) explains that they do not work like the local authority office which directly deals with the victim as their responsibility concerned with policy making, program initiation and implementation. She further states that there is an Act 2074, that is related to disaster and NDRF 2075, which works as guidelines for the Department of Women, Children and Senior Citizens in regard to disaster management.

In regard to political representation, one of the focused group respondent shares that, women were hardly seen in the participation of any kind of social work or political activities prior to earthquake 2015, but the situation changed after and now more women can be seen to be involved in community service or social work apart from their household chores. And in the case of political representation, after government made it compulsory to have women participation, men started reaching out to women for the programs as well. However, participation of women is not much efficient as they are mostly compelled to register their name while not including them in the process of decision making.

One of the respondents, says she does not agree on this humanity showed as said by other respondents. She shares, *“I was pregnant, and I was searching for the shelter around the area of Sankhu as I had teaching job in the area. One person, whom I asked help for even said what if our things get lost if you sleep on the veranda as we don’t know you. I felt so bad as during the time of this kind of disaster also, they didn’t even think of helping me as I was pregnant, and delivery was very soon dated. I was so hurt as we are a family of 8 members, I dint know where to go and was helpless and finally found a tent near the church which gave us the shelter to stay. There was no good place for me to rest, as inside the tent, I used to feel the heat and couldn’t stay there, moreover with my pregnancy I couldn’t find proper food to eat, there was no help from any kind of government or others as I was new to the place and didn’t know where to go. I had a son of 8 months as well. Later I soon found a room, and everyone arguing that it was a difficult time as most of the people went out to stay, and it was difficult to give rooms to someone unknown”*.

In addition, key respondent, NIWF explains that in 4 districts such as Kavre, Ramechhap, Sindhupalchowk, and Dhading that they went to distribute the relief materials there was construction for temporary shelter going on in one place through the help of Marwadi Community and volunteered engineering

students. And since in that area, most of the indigenous people resides, it could be seen that the indigenous men were not bothered at all to help in the construction or volunteer in that process. They rather drink alcohol and watch the construction going on. She explains that both indigenous men and women have the strange habit of being laid back. This may also be the reason for them to be called 'Matwali Jat' meaning alcohol-consuming caste.

Moreover, in the Prime Minister's account there was deposits from all around the world and within the nation as well but none of it has been utilized nor distributed. There was a scheme where the victim was supposed to receive 3 lakhs rupees each (300,000 thousand rupees = approx. \$2,600 USD), but they never got that money and afterward the laws got strict as NGOs or other organizations could not make monetary contribution, shares key informant, NIWF.

Furthermore, key informant, NIWF, explains that this is because the government wanted the money to be in their accounts by making the strict one way rule and laws where the local NGOs had to go through a long procedure to distribute relief to the needy and this was because more and more people started to send money to the NGOs directly rather than going through the prime minister's account. As the corruption heightened the rule got strict and imposed was laid. Likewise, in later days, one door system was implemented where everything from relief materials to grants have to pass or be authorized through the government. For every relief material per time, they had to take government's permission, make a letter and go through all the hassle which got intricated as there was scam cases in the earthquake grants. And even more, the relief materials distribution had to be shown as the political party's contribution which were more of politically driven. Every aid and help in the later stage of earthquake occurrence was more of targeting political gain or benefits for individual's publicity or the party's image.

Hence the disaster preparedness programs which were already lacking was then further politicized and the indigenous women who had been marginalized faced more suppression from the instable government, improper management of the funds and budget, which could be accounting for increasing poverty in Nepal after the earthquake 2015.

### **3.2.6. Access to relief materials amid of earthquake 2015**

With the literatures above, it is evident that indigenous women have been facing discrimination in their daily lives, and which even got reflected in the time of disaster. The disaster inclusivity was mere to be found on discourse as well on the practice. Having said this, the access to relief materials were no different for the indigenous women in access to it during the earthquake 2015.

In line with the access to relief materials, a key respondent, INOLACC shares that indigenous women faced double discrimination for being a woman and as well indigenous. Their ethnicity or caste system made the access to the resources for relief limited. While men had the advantage on firsthand relief materials, the indigenous women were bound to think about the role and responsibilities at home, which relates to care and responsibility rather control over resources.

Moreover, during the relief material distribution it can be seen that the victims those who had access to roads or those whose lived within the area of road accessibility got more relief materials than those who did not have the access to roads or transportation, shares Ambika, a focus group respondent.

And the sad fact about indigenous women is that many of the indigenous people live in the area where easy access to roads is not possible as there are still many villages where the roads have not reached and walking to that village by the volunteers or relief distributors was not very convenient during the aftershocks or the major post-earthquake in 2015. Hence, indigenous women in majority lacked the access to many facilities, and access to relief materials which indeed deteriorated their overall status.

In the case of earthquake 2015, key respondent, DoWC explains that there was a case where indigenous women did not show interest in receiving the relief materials when the distribution of relief materials were given. And she explains that indigenous women seem to be more of a passive in nature in compared to other caste. Even in the case of relief materials distribution, whoever was clever did get more relief materials and got access to other facilities as well, but those who was not quick or proactive was left behind. Moreover, the access to information about the relief materials also played a vital role in receiving it.

As of this statement, the question is provoked on why the indigenous women would be disinterest in receiving the relief materials as they were the victims to the earthquake as well and were in majority if looking at statistics. And when the information of relief material was disseminated, why is it that the non-indigenous would have the access to it earlier than indigenous people?

### **Conclusion**

Indigenous women's experiences pre and during disaster like earthquake 2015 has thus been highlighted through feminist lens. So, with help of FPE, it emphasizes on the embodiments that is connected on the multiple scale and relations be it household, nation, or global, the pathway of the indigenous women lives are paved by the dynamics of gender intersections with class, caste, power, social standing and other axes.

From the field work findings, it is then illustrated that patriarchy system, socio-cultural practices in the social sphere, indigenous women's access to and control over natural resources, education, language barriers, and employment in relation to power can thus shaping indigenous women's experiences pre-earthquake which in regard reflects the notion of gender and disaster is interlinked where the gender sensitivity and the inclusivity is important assessment in the political sphere.

Likewise, the preconceived notion on gender responsibilities, improper management on health and safety issues, limited access to means of production, indigenous women's in the process and as well as decision making, disaster preparedness and recovery, and information asymmetry, plays important role in regard to different dynamics of experiences of indigenous women during the earthquake 2015 if compared to mainstream women or men.

Hence, from the field work findings it is illustrates the certainty that the lives of indigenous women's pre-disaster and during disaster like earthquake 2015 can shape their experiences that is based on unequal power distribution in the social, political, economics, and ecological spectrum as we explore through the lens of FPE. Therefore, next chapter is going to be about the notion of empowerment of indigenous women in Nepalese political ecology.

## CHAPTER IV

### NOTION OF EMPOWERMENT OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN NEPALESE POLITICAL ECOLOGY

As the paper findings were concluded with the different dynamics of indigenous women's experiences on pre earthquake and during earthquake 2015 in relation to power, this chapter will be an analysis on notion of empowerment of indigenous women in Nepalese political ecology. Henceforth this chapter will be an analysis within socio-political ecology sphere of Nepal as per the framework of feminist political ecology, outlining two sections; the disaster recovery and resilience aftermath of earthquake 2015, and illustrate the empowerment of indigenous women pre and post-earthquake 2015 in relation to unbalanced power distribution.

#### 4.1. Disaster recovery and resilience aftermath of earthquake 2015

Nepal is one of the most disaster prone country among top 20 in the world, where more people are likely to be killed by the disasters such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, fire, drought and others than any other country in South Asia (Shakya, 2016). Upon stating this, there is a finding that illustrates resilient to be largely conceptual and descriptive where the good governance are absent post-earthquake 2015 (Lam & Kuipers, 2019). Moreover, Lam and Kuipers, also notes that, Nepal Government (GoN) had publishes a detailed recovery plan aiming to create “well-planned, resilient resettlement and a prosperous society and build back better under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction”, but this vision on reconstruction still remain to struggle on the implementation part.



On the other hand, National Indigenous Women Federation (NIWF) plays a significant role in the empowerment of indigenous women as the umbrella organization for the indigenous women in Nepal that incorporates 49 castes out of 59 castes of indigenous groups under their programs of empowerment. As the government body have not given any space for the indigenous women to grow or participate in decision-making level, NIWF has been playing the role for indigenous women to have their stand in the politics and have been lobbying for the same.

As per the key respondent, NIWF, even when an indigenous woman is well educated, have the capability and capacity, there is hardly any space for her to enter as almost all the decision-making posts are selected by the political party which is controlled by the non-indigenous people on the top level. Though there are few cases where indigenous women are posted in the decision-making level, they do not know how to protect the rights of other indigenous women and many times they do not even understand on why, how, and what kind of empowerment and rights they should secure. Those in the politics usually have to follow the paths and directions of political party that limits them in having to be part of decision making.

Similarly, findings by (Kotani & Honda, 2019) states information based on scientific, technical, and financial aid with respect to reconstruction of houses in rural area communities post-earthquake 2015, were inefficient and access to appropriate institutions were linked mostly through networks. And the study by (V. Thapa & Pathranarakul, 2019) states that damages and losses incurred to women and marginalized groups are very high, and in addition, the housing quality of marginalized groups are often considered poor. Furthermore, Thapa and Pathranarakul stated in the studies that, gender sensitivity analysis results that women in patriarchal societies are often the ones who are socially, economically, and politically at disadvantaged, and this especially applies to lower social classes.

Moreover as stated by Shakya (2016) studies, 41 percent of damaged houses belonged to indigenous communities, Dalits, and 23 percent to senior citizens, also within that 41

percentile, the 26 percent of the damaged houses belonged to female members. Further the author explains women, PWD, and people with lower economic status had difficult time to cope with after math of earthquake which even resulted to child labor, human trafficking, violence, abuse, exploitation, and early marriage to meet ends meet that are caused by disruptions in policing, justice system and loss of family protection.

With the establishment of National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) on 25 December 2015 to oversee the earthquake recovery and reconstruction in Nepal, while the authority's vision and goal started to fail with barely 5 percent of the destroyed houses had been rebuilt leaving 800,000 families under makeshift shelters, even after two years of occurrence of earthquake due to poor coordination between government and donors, lack of understanding in local authority, and lack of transparency and awareness to the general public in regard to funds collected amounting to \$4.1 billion (N. Adhikari, 2017).

However, on the positive note, the humanitarian emergency response were deemed successful by government and beneficiaries with Search and Research that included women in the training from the civilian government, military, media, and society both in urban and rural settings (Cook, Shrestha, & Htet, 2016). But this research as well does not mention if the women of vulnerable groups or from the indigenous background were included for the trainings. So on the part of inclusive disaster risk management framework, (V. Thapa & Pathranarakul, 2019) recommends that government should reflect on participative decision making, tailored approaches, recognition of diversity, and removal of barriers.

The disaster recovery and resilience program in Nepal thus, firstly do not have segregated data that caters to indigenous women, and secondly the data and information in regard to impact of earthquake 2015 with inclusivity, recognition, tailored, and participative framework can rarely be found in regard to indigenous women. But with the literatures mentioned above, a picture can be painted as deficiency, ineffective, and lack of programs, and policies from stakeholders in regard to reconstruction and recovery from earthquake 2015 catering specifically to marginalized group of

indigenous women in Nepal. Hence, the empowerment programs are further discussed and analyzed in the section below.

#### **4.2. Empowerment towards indigenous women**

Understanding the term empowerment for this research means “theory, research, and intervention that link individual well-being with the larger social and political environment”, as defined in Perkins and Zimmerman (1995). The empowerment concept relates to two inter-related dimensions as per Kapitsa (2008), i.e. resources and agency, where resources cover both tangible (material and financial assets) and intangible assets (skills, knowledge, expertise, membership and participation in organized social and/or political networks also known as social capital), and, agency is the ability of the people to define their goals and objectives by implying actions to challenge the power relations of legitimate inequalities and institutional biases. In addition, “women empowerment is explained as increment of the visibility and participation of poor women, enable them to bargain for resources, and change state policy, while implicate change of power relations for women’s autonomy in regard to men and other social groups” (Purushothaman, 1998).

Combining both the definition of empowerment and women empowerment into the empowerment notion in the context indigenous women of this research, the analysis will be the research while having to seek into the issues of visibility and participation of these indigenous women in bargaining for resources, provisions in state policy, and the autonomy in the unequal state of power distribution. Since, there are evidences that the indigenous women have faced several discriminations, suppression, and marginalization.

Further, under the lens of FPE, this chapter will as well analyze indigenous women’s visibility, participation, autonomy, and agent pre-earthquake and post-earthquake 2015, based on linkages of indigenous women’s relation with power on different aspects in Nepalese socio-political ecology.

#### 4.2.1. Political approaches to empowerment

The political empowerment in regard to indigenous women and the approaches by different actors on the basis of autonomy and agents in politics and its accessibility is questioned when it comes to political approaches to empowerment. Hence, the various approaches taken by the actors are discussed further.

**The Government of Nepal (GoN)**, had started to address the grounds for the disadvantaged groups such as the indigenous and Dalits by ratifying the ‘United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention) in 2007’ (Asian Development Bank, 2010). And stands Nepal stands as signatory to major international human rights and Indigenous rights treaties but for two centuries, indigenous people have been politically, socially, and economically been marginalized and discriminated by the dominant ethnic elite (Stevens, 2010). Moreover, Stevens also notes that the lack of implementation still exists on the part of ILO 169 caused by failure of many jurisdictions of national law, policy, and practices to uphold the provisions that reflects the continuous domination of indigenous people by high castes non-indigenous ethnic elites in social and political aspects.

**Department of women and children** is wing of Ministry of Women and Children and Senior Citizen. Government of Nepal (GoN) that has given the task to Department of Women and Children specially to empower women with low socio-economic status, mainstreaming gender concerns, women and child rights advancement, implement, assist, monitor, and carry out the functions for women’s development programs. The policies and empowerment approaches of Department of Women and Children in Kathmandu are mostly in regard to women in general. And there are no specific approaches in their policy that caters to Natural Disaster Response Framework – (NDRF) and empowerment programs catering to marginalized or disadvantaged groups such as indigenous women in their component of designs and plans (Department of Women and Children). The research by (B. Shrestha & Pathranarakul, 2018) also finds

gap with Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare, and other ministries in response to cluster coordination.

In support to bureaucratic process, Director of DoWC, respondent (non-indigenous woman) explains that, in regard to the programs and its approaches, they are mostly bottom-up approach, where the needs assessments are made from the local level or district level and assessed by the Department. Then the Department presents the programs to the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, and then it goes to the Ministry of Finance, and to the National Planning Commission, and after the approval is done from the National Planning Commission, the programs are then implemented and operated by the Department with coordination of the local bodies. This whole process seems to be so much of long bureaucratic process that having one program to be approved will thus take long time and this may be the reason why the indigenous women's empowerment programs are still lacking in terms of empowerment as firstly no one is there to represent their needs in this hierarchical structure of the government and even though they are presented, it takes way too long to be approved and actually be implemented if not lost on the way up shares key respondent, DoWC.

**National Women Commission (NWC)** is a constitutional body with the provision of new constitution of Nepal, 2015, which is part of 27 other than Commission, and Article 252 – 254 (National Women Commission, 2019). This body has been established on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2002, and is governed by Rastriya Mahila Aayog Ain, 2074 (National Women Commission, 2019). As per their website, NWC has the responsibility for Gender equality, and women empowerment with the review of this government body after ten years from the commencement date of the constitution. This organization or body states about women empowerment and equity in general, and their programs are focused based on equal access to legal and political framework, eradicate gender-based violence, well-being of women, effective inclusion of women in the mainstream of development, gender justice, and monitoring the implementation of national and

international treaties in relate to gender justice in their programs. However, the disaster response, recovery, and preparedness from the disaster is undermined and there are not specific approaches towards indigenous women to be found.

**National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF)** is an umbrella organization of Indigenous Nationalities having specific purpose for indigenous women. The establishment of NIWF in 1999 has been serving with the goal of ensuring indigenous women's equitable rights in social, cultural, legal, economics, and political dimensions (National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF)). Their approaches of empowerment have been based on equity and rights of indigenous in all the aspects for marginalized women in the society, while details and process of the approaches/programs are still lacking with no measures mentioned in regard to disaster preparedness and recovery.

In politics, the indigenous women are discriminated as they lack the access in first-hand information, and rights. When the access to politics is not there, the effectiveness and efficiency of mobilization of indigenous women is limited in the political field for the reason that they are women and belongs to indigenous caste. For instance, in the local election, indigenous women were hardly to be found, while on the other hand, the non-indigenous women were more likely to be seen, as they got better access to the political representation shares the respondent and the study by (O. Gurung, 2009). Ultimately, the non-indigenous women got more probability to be on the leadership role, says the respondent, NIWF.

However, when there has been an effort from NIWF to try and lobby the policies and laws in favor of indigenous women, the reply that they get from the government is that there have not been clear guidelines from CEDAW which we follow so how can we make such laws and policies that is not there on the international level, shares key respondent, NIWF. So, the gap and discrimination can be seen in every level in regard to indigenous women and

this is how the discrimination is (re)produced. So, the empowerment of women has been a difficult issue in the case of indigenous women.

Further, in comparison of indigenous and non-indigenous women, the non-indigenous is heard saying that indigenous women have greater freedom in terms of decision making at the household level shares key respondent, INOLACC. But the respondent contests the statement she heard by saying that, if the indigenous women enjoy greater freedom in that regard, why is it not reflected on the national level decision making? Because the decision making in the household level is not very subsistence and it does not empower the women in the higher level. Hence, she states that social structure and education of the indigenous women is the biggest barrier to move forward and get into the politics of national level as indigenous women are less likely to be literate and lack political participation which research by Vinding and Kampbel (2012) also supports the same.

Hence, from the analysis above, it is clearly demonstrated that the decision-making role or political roles for the indigenous women is still lacking and ignored.

#### **4.2.2. Social approaches to empowerment**

As per the field work from National Women Commission (NWC), in Nepal there are no specific approaches by the National Women Commission towards the indigenous women.

However, key respondent, NWC shares that, they have been rolling out the legal support, shelter support, and other support for the women in general. NWC has been majorly taking cases of gender-based violence by filing the report directly with the victim. There are four organizations that takes the complains. NWC have only the records of those cases that are reported directly with the Department while other cases reported with other organizations are informed to NWC as well. The four organizations are National Women Commission

Department, Police Station, Court, and the local body/municipality. Most of the cases that NWC records are the domestic violence and violence against women. The foreclosure issues, criminal prosecution issues, and governmental issues are mostly directly reported to the police.

Findings in the earlier chapter shows that indigenous women have been facing many socio-cultural challenges leading them to be disadvantaged and marginalized group in the society, while aftermath of People's Movement conflicts by Maoist People's Liberation Army, women of disadvantaged groups started to take roles that was traditionally played by men and forbidden by Hindu beliefs (Aguirre & Pietropaoli, 2008). The roles such as plough fields to earn a livelihood, conduct farm activities and trade, provoke the security forces by negotiation with police and the Maoist, and as well challenge the authorities and the court system. Furthermore, the socio-cultural empowerment came from the emergence of specialist community radio stations, while in present day, the Interim Constitution 2007 disregarded the culture of different indigenous identity and led with idea of monolithic entity as one language, one religion, one identity and one culture (S. Dahal & Aram, 2013).

However, the substantiality of the efforts or initiations are not enough to empower the indigenous women in the all aspect to bring equality of gender and remove caste hierarchy in the Nepalese society.

In this regard, key respondent, NIWF, shares that empowerment program should be different depending on the topography or region that it is going to be implemented. As Nepal is a country with diverse topography and ethnicity/s of people, she states that within the indigenous caste some people in marginalized group are highly educated and some are not informed or aware about the current situation outside their place or region due to the limited access to resources. They are as well not aware of socio-cultural practices in the urban areas and are



defined by the traditional norms and culture which sometimes do more harm than good to their socio-economic status and autonomy.

Additionally, the respondent states that, it's quite difficult to gather people for the awareness programs and empower them in context of Nepal as there are many NGOs/INGOs who give them monetary value worth 200-300 Nepalese rupees just to participate. And this leads to disinterest in the content of the programs/knowledge/awareness given to the women because their interest is now emerged out of monetary gain than the information given. This is how the awareness programs from organization like ours is not very effective as they expect the monetary value rather than knowledge and hence convincing them for change is a big difficulty/barrier in the first phase.

Besides, in the respondent's opinion, it's not possible to change the mindset of the elderly people but can empower them so that they make the younger generation aware of the rights and accessibility to the information and other social issues. In her view, education is the main factor where young generation can be encouraged and empowered through which they can expand their opportunities of employment, and even obtain innovation in agriculture and farming which has been one of the main income generators for their sustainable livelihood.

Likewise, in connection to earthquake 2015, DoWC, key respondent states that, , women, children, and senior citizens have been the most affected victims as they are weak, and voices are unheard. These neglected group are protected by the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens along with the Department of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen under the 'Protection cluster'. However, there is no specification or guidelines that caters to the indigenous women as it is an overall program catering to women in general, children and the senior citizens.

As the respondent explains that there is no specific programs or guidelines to guide the marginalized indigenous women of the nation, it shows that the voices of the indigenous has been ignored by the government and the reproduction of domination is obvious in the bureaucratic structure.

Furthermore, key respondent, DoWC explains that, “recovery process of the disaster falls under the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. The policy making, program implementation is different on the level government operation as there is hierarchy on the government level. For instance, from the Prime Minister Office to the Council, and the Home Ministry. And under the home ministry, committee is formed, and the disaster and its recovery policy formulation come under the home ministry, where different ministries are formed, and the protection cluster is then established by our ministry through which the Department of Women and Children is responsible for the implementation. However, the data on the recovery is then with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. Hence, it seems like, in the long and lengthy process of bureaucratic government structure where the non-indigenous have been taking benefits in production of domination of marginalized of indigenous women, the empowerment programs in specific to indigenous women still seems to be unattainable policy.

#### **4.2.3. Environmental governance towards indigenous women**

Like how the indigenous identity is discriminated in Nepal, their knowledge is also neglected (Fortier, 1993). Moreover, the indigenous ethnic communities such as Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Thakali, Sherpa, Tharu, Dhimal, and so on are increasingly identifying themselves as cultural groups rather than political, they realize that if they do not encourage their own ethnical ground then their ethnicity will banish by the multiparty system of the government (Regmi, 2003).

Similarly, key respondent, NIWF says, there are many cases where the indigenous knowledge goes unrecognized and ignored by the government. While this statement can also be supported by the article of (O. Gurung, 2009), as the author states that successful model of community-based development programs in Nepal is deprived of indigenous people's customary rights of forest resources that additionally affect their ethnic identity.

The respondent furthermore believes that from the systematized and proper management skills, the indigenous people especially women in that area could make a better living in the case they receive proper knowledge and trainings. When they are trained and have proper knowledge, they can manage the forest on their own and make effective and efficient use of the resources from the indigenous knowledge. As supported by ((LAHURNIP) et al., 2018), the report claims that with the disarranged indigenous knowledge, indigenous women are losing their mean of livelihood and food security that is caused by the lack of access, control and use of lands, territories and resources. In addition, the study by (I. P. Sapkota & Odén, 2008) shows that, the cross-sectional analysis and socio-economic inequalities within the group are inexorably associated with the household's ability to use resources in regard to fuel-wood collection from the forestry.

As we discuss about the unrecognized knowledge, the perspective of climate change is also important in recent years which somehow associate with the indigenous knowledge shares key respondent, NIWF. Further explaining, climate change is a very trending issue everywhere and the impact from it can also be seen everywhere. While under the perspective of climate change, it is sustainable to utilize the indigenous knowledge and so the government should respect the knowledge and give input rather than reaping the benefits for elites out of it.

Key respondent further shares, on the other hand, the impact of climate change is not the same for every nation, or everyone in a nation as well. Nepal do not even have proper approaches to fight the climate change. For instance, when the earthquake 2015 hit in Nepal, the vulnerability was not the same for everyone within Nepal. As we can see that the indigenous people have been living in the vulnerable places such as near the river, on the edges or the corner of the forest, by the mountains, and so on. These vulnerable areas are difficult to reach. And when the disaster like earthquake occurred, the indigenous people, especially women among the indigenous people are mostly affected in higher volume. Hence, the government should analyze on who are likely to be more affected when the disaster occurs, and the segregation and categorization of the group based on the impact should be in consideration so that the approaches made by the government can solve the issues focusing on the group differently on a tailored basis.

Therefore, on the part of environmental governance towards indigenous women it is now likely evident that indigenous knowledge has been disappearing with the disregarded laws and policies towards their knowledge production, due to which the impact can be seen as well in the occurrence of disaster like earthquake 2015.

#### **4.2.4. Economic empowerment approaches**

Till date, the laws and policies towards the empowerment of indigenous women are lacking from the national level itself. In regard to this statement, the studies by (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012) shows that there are international provisions such as ILO Convention No. 111 that reflects the Nepal's National Labour Policy for economic and social empowerment concerning the excluded women, but these provisions haven't been enforced down the timeline, and hence, the indigenous activists are extensively lobbying for the provisions to be translated into specific policies.

Subsequently, in context by M. Khadka and Sunam (2018), it is stated that in Asia, poverty, gender inequality, and social exclusion are deeply rooted in the social institutions, structures that leads to barriers for women's political and economic

empowerment. And the author suggests that the efficient ways for economic growth should be enhancing gender equality and effective use of their talents, knowledge, and skills.

Likewise, key respondent, DoWC shares that they have started with the training and awareness creation, economic empowerment, and social counselling programs because while addressing the issue of poverty reduction, it is crucial for the women to have steady socio-economic status, so the government, and NGOs have been slowly making an effort to decline poverty level in Nepal.

On the other hand, Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) has created a microcredit finance where the members of the CFUGs that includes women, low-caste individuals such as indigenous and Dalits, can deposit some amount of money from their income and as well borrow small amount from the common fund for the purpose of income generation with nominal interest rate that is usually lower than the commercial banking rate and is fixed by CFUGs (Bijaya et al., 2016).

Similarly, key respondent, DoWC explains that the recovery of disaster is a small component that DoWC focus on as the main components have been economic empowerment and social empowerment as part of post-recovery of earthquake 2015. The processes on how they empower women in the economic and social aspects are as following steps:

- Go to a village
- Make a group that has been connected with local community
- In a group, 4-7 members are then formed
- 6 groups are formed in each ward
- From the ward level, the committee is formed
- 30 members are then formed in the committee
- And gradually they become the members of the financial cooperatives of their committee
- This process is then followed in all 77 districts of Nepal

Till the time women become the member of financial cooperative, they are trained with:

- Capacity building
- Decision and development training
- Income generation program

Consequently, all these trainings that were provided have been empowering women in such a way that these women have been able to mobilize the capital starting 50 lakhs (5 million Nepalese Rupees) to 3 crores (30 million Nepalese Rupees) from each financial cooperative. And all the 77 districts operate this program in the regular basis. Moreover, after the earthquake 2015, the skill development trainings were done in massive level especially for the women. But following the restructuring in the local governance in Nepal, the office got dissolved and the members who were involved with the programs are still working from the provincial level or the local level.

As the key respondent from DoWC mentions the process and involvement of the women in the process of cooperative operation and management, it was not clear in regard to the indigenous women involvement in such programs and they did not have data or separate data that would identify women of various group.

Hence, G. Lama, Ozawa, and Lama (2010) proposes that the present institutional design has been a barrier in the economic welfare of the indigenous people and suggests that the risk of poverty of indigenous people is likely to change in the social policies if education system improves. In addition, authors note that, their participation would likely bridge the gap existing between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Moreover, the findings by Lama and Lama indicate that the disparity in the ethnicities of individual is not caused by random chances but deliberate institutional design that

isolates indigenous territories from development and thus advises that equal treatment of all peoples in the government or non-government institutions is essential to bridge the existing gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter on notion of empowerment of indigenous women in Nepalese political ecology thus concludes with the disaster recovery and resilience aftermath of earthquake 2015, and empowerment approaches of different aspects that demonstrate unequal power relation in terms of gender, caste identity and as well as disaster.

There have been many clear evidences in the literatures in regard to indigenous women struggle over access to resources even in the time of occurrence of earthquake 2015 that even leded them into greater poverty. However, it shows that the efforts from various stakeholder were still lagging and lacking when it comes to indigenous women upliftment. The vulnerability of indigenous women to disaster is seen greater in compared to mainstream women but the laws and policies catering to them are rare to be found even on the national level.

On the second part of empowerment towards indigenous women, the situation of laws and policies supporting indigenous women are as well very limited and basic. With the less visibility and participation of their presence in the society, politics, environmental governance, leading low economic status, the approaches to their empowerment were essential to be highlighted. However, when the research got completed, the picture of marginalized indigenous women was drawn with backward in access to the same facilities, and empowerment by the various stakeholder.

Hence, the resilience, recovery, and empowerment of indigenous women still is lacking behind which needs an intervention from all the stakeholders to uplift their status as equal to other women in general.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1. Summary

Indigenous women in Nepal faces discrimination in the form of caste-based identity and gender discrimination as they come from low to middle caste of hierarchy. With the categorization of caste hierarchy, indigenous women face many forms of discriminations from religious, linguistic, cultural, and others. Hence, this research has the purposes to find indigenous women lives pre-earthquake and their experiences during earthquake 2015 along with notion of empowerment through the lens of feminist political ecology.

In first chapter, the paper discusses about the background on the emergence of caste system in Nepal, status of indigenous women, women in Nepal, status of laws and policies towards women, and brief implication of FPE.

The background analysis as mentioned above gave the lead to how the caste system and its hierarchy emerged in the socio-political sphere. And to for better understanding of the background on indigenous women, the exploration on the status of indigenous people were explored to illustrate the suppression and discrimination of indigenous women in Nepal. And since Nepal is a patriarchy led society, women are discouraged to be literate, and within the gender of women, indigenous women are discouraged beyond due to geographical disparities or most residing in rural areas. In these rural areas, access to good quality education is lacking and moreover they are subject to household chores and farming/agriculture. These indigenous women in addition are often subject to violence and marginalization.



On the other hand, socio-economic status of indigenous women is low in compared to non-indigenous women, as they have lost ancestral lands, got restricted from the forests and natural resources which was their major source of livelihood, and lacks the participation in the decision-making process.

While the lack of participation of the indigenous women in the decision-making level is built up from the ancient time where Hindu religion followers suppressed the gender of woman to be confined by household works, and/or inferior to man. Subsequently the base of religion became the pillar for the National code that depicted the political status of the ruler who had migrated from the South of Nepal to be higher than other people in the country by social stratification. This is how the indigenous women started to become marginalized in the social system of patriarchy and social stratification of caste.

Similarly, there was a major event, earthquake 2015 with epicenter at Gorkha district that affected large number of indigenous women leading to increase in poverty level and decline in social-economic status of the already vulnerable group.

So, for the further research, qualitative research method along with interviews were conducted to find out the objectives of this research. And as due to limitation of the time frame, a specific area called Sankhu / Shankharapur was chosen for the field analysis on this research.

Consequently, to frame this research in the conceptual framework, Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) theory was chosen to highlight the purpose of the paper. FPE was chosen as the conceptual framework because this feminist lens aids the paper to highlight the lives of indigenous women and their experiences during earthquake as FPE illustrates that gender is produced through various connections between social context, disaster, and other axes while enquiring the role.

In particular, the concept of FPE enquire about the gender dimension on various issues that includes gender norms which result from social interpretation of biology and

socially constructed gender roles. Also, FPE concept help to indicate the paper to enquire and highlight the subjectivities of indigenous women in the Nepalese socio-political environment where the linkages of gender and power relation shapes the experiences and lives of indigenous women even with disaster in Nepalese political ecology. While other feminist theories do not theorize the gender dimension intrinsically with race, class, nature, disaster, power relation, knowledge production, and (re)production of domination and suppression. Thus, FPE has been a significant conceptual framework for this research.

As FPE is defined on the second chapter with illustrations that will help in highlighting the purpose of the paper, this chapter is then contributed by three sections: contextualization of FPE to briefly understand the lives of indigenous women in Nepal, challenges of contextualizing FPE, and contribution of FPE in this research.

In the contextualization of FPE, two topics, gender and indigenous identity construction in Nepal, and impact of earthquake 2015 on women were elaborated.

Under the topic gender and indigenous caste identity construction, the elaboration states that construction of these are socially produced that existed through religion, history of hierarchy concept, culture, and so on. Gender here referred to socially constructed woman whose identity is shaped by family, schools, politics, culture, and ideology, and as well as the workplace. Moreover, the laws that governs the National code also discriminates woman in terms of property rights, inheritance, marriage, and places other several boundaries that marginalized them in gender power relation. The restrictions imposed on woman impedes their autonomy and are often exploited and manipulated at home and at workplace. Equally, the caste identity of the indigenous woman further marginalized them with limited accessibility imposed on politics, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects.

While on the other hand, impact of earthquake 2015 on women was huge, as the 7.8 magnitude struck destroying houses and causing casualties of deaths, injuries, and displacement, majority of the casualties were borne by women. The vulnerability

position during the disaster has been showing that women, children and senior citizen to be the majority when it occurs due to lack of knowledge, awareness, exposure, unfavorable political situation and policy implementation, limited capacity building, and traditional patriarchy culture. As a result, post-disaster recovery is also affected by these reasons and yet, literatures demonstrate that there have been missing adequate consideration towards women, especially marginalized group of women, in the process of design of disaster response and recovery.

Moving on to field work analysis, this chapter divides into two parts of findings where the first part explains on lives of indigenous women pre-earthquake in relation to power of gender, and caste identity. And with the help of FPE, the topics identified were patriarchy practices, socio-cultural practices in the society, indigenous women's access to and control of natural resources, education, language barriers, and employment.

Since the unification of the chiefdoms in Nepal, Hindu religion has been the base for its Constitution and National code of conduct, the norms and practices in the society have been given priority to the male as the gender and have been considering them superior. While woman on the other hand are believed to be born to serve man. This patriarchy system practice is embedded in such a way that till date the mindset of people still follows this gender norms, and roles. Additionally, socio-culture still prefer son over daughter as they are believed to carry on the parents/ancestral lineage and when a parent has a son, they are associated with the status and economic potential as well.

The discrimination of these kind can be found since the birth, as girls are given options of dolls, and the boys are given option of guns, sports equipment etc. From the education, to roles and responsibilities, the society have different standards for male and female. At the household level, girls are expected to wash dishes after every meal, while sons are allowed to go and play football or any kind of sports since their childhood. The situation gets worse in terms of indigenous women/girls as they lack proper and good education since many dwells in rural areas and have difficulty to reach by road/transportation. Moreover, the social stratification of caste hierarchy is greater subject of marginalization for indigenous women in Nepal.

Further, the norms and culture of the society in which indigenous women lives are embedded in such a way that contesting these cultures are hard to be found. This can be linked with education, as the literacy rate of indigenous women is very low which is far from national average even if compared to women in general. The inequality of the access to education has thus made an impact in the society where the factors of influential becomes variant and complex from the root.

And, ss matter of indigenous women's access to and control of resources, the indigenous knowledge similarly unrecognized by the high-end society or the laws itself. This is because the power and authority of the elites and the government in the access to and control of forest, natural resources by densely indigenous resident are disregarded and ignored. Many indigenous women use the resources in their daily activities and as well generate income for their livelihood from the community forest, but their accessibility and ownership depend on the elites or the higher caste ranking governance. The repeated ignorance, and negligence from the actors have led to struggles of sustainable livelihood, domination in knowledge production, suppression in bearers of indigenous knowledge and leading to reproduction of marginalization in society for indigenous women.

On the other hand, there are many examples where indigenous women run small-to medium scale business and generate income for household. As the male counterpart starts approving of the income coming from the business, they support the wife and run it like a family business. The businesses are mostly restaurants/café, tea shops, retail shop, clothing stores, and so on. With the income, comes a power in the decision making of the household level, and this somehow proves to be part of empowerment to them though to a small extent. But while this seems to be upgrade status for indigenous women, yet they are bounded by household chores no matter how much they contribute to the earnings, or work in high position or have executive level of professional career due to societal gender roles and responsibilities. It is very rare to see men and women share equal roles and responsibilities in the household level, as it is mostly women doing the non-monetary labor work. To be specific about indigenous women, they are

more likely to be backward in this agenda as they dwell in rural areas where education, awareness, and broad societal norms are yet to reach.

Similarly, the language barriers for indigenous people especially women who are bounded by the household chores cannot communicate in the National language called ‘Nepali’ as they are used to speaking their individual’s indigenous language. This is other factor that creates marginalization in the employment, access to information, and others as declaring Nepali language as the only official language has created a big impediment on the indigenous people, especially women.

In addition, it is by nurture that women’s rate in economic participation are underestimated for a reason, that is women often do not make distinction between work, help, and unremunerated work even though the activities differ from the domestic responsibilities and often times generate income. The activities such as agricultural work, delivery of crops or vegetables in the shop, farming, managing the shops, etc. When their labor is not acknowledged in monetary value then their labor work is sidelined leading to low-economic status. Further, the impediments faced by indigenous women is employment where access to it is very limited and stereotyped by the society. They are expected to have occupation of handicrafts production, fishing, boating, collection of herbs, wild fruits, and green vegetables which is less substantial for the economy.

On the other part of findings chapter, the experiences of indigenous amid earthquake 2015 is featured with topics of indigenous women’s workload by the impact of earthquake 2015, health and safety issues, women’s vulnerability in access to and control over means of production, indigenous women’s participation in decision making, indigenous women’s voice and participation in Disaster Preparedness Program, and access to relief materials amid earthquake 2015.

In terms of women’s workload amid earthquake 2015, it increased with the disaster as their livelihood, houses, got destroyed, and the good governance from the governments, and hence they have been in greater vulnerability with the gender and caste identity as

well. While the vulnerability does not end with gender and caste inequality, indigenous women and women overall with the impact of earthquake 2015 have created health hazards, compromised safety as there were reports of sexual harassment, trafficking, violence, and also emotional and physical distress with the casualties incurred on them.

On the part of indigenous women's vulnerability in access to and control over means of production is elaborated with access to capital/credit, access to information/social networks, and access to skills/trainings. The access to capital or credit states that there were very limited capital or credit from the government to support the victims or those affected from the actors or stakeholders. And the other impediments which was majorly missing in the recovery of indigenous women was the access to information or the social networks due to the unequal power relation in the politics and social spectrum. However, the skills or training programs was implied on a small-scale basis for the victims to have regain livelihood which was also seen to be politicized as of earthquake 2015.

Furthermore, in the overall process of the design, and planning be it pre or post-earthquake, the inclusivity was still seemed to be conceptual as the indigenous women are rarely found to be part of the decision-making process. And with the discrimination on the decision-making side, the vulnerable groups such as Person with Disabilities (PWD), indigenous women, children, other marginalized group seems to be lacking behind in the Disaster Preparedness Programs and as well on the access to the relief materials of earthquake 2015.

Above all, the marginalization of indigenous women wouldn't have been lacking and if the government's laws and policies had implemented supportive policies in regard to empower indigenous women or the marginalized group to reduce discrimination and marginalization.

So, on the part of analysis on notion of empowerment chapter, two parts have been segregated to rationalize indigenous women in Nepalese political ecology with disaster recovery and resilience aftermath of earthquake 2015, and empowerment towards

indigenous women in terms of political, social, environment governance, and economic approaches.

It is stated that Nepal is among 20 top countries in the world that is prone to disaster like earthquake, floods, landslides, fire, drought, and others. However, the framework towards disaster preparedness, risk reduction, recovery, and resilience seem to be conceptual and descriptive with struggle for implementation, and especially it's hard to find one that caters to indigenous women. The reason being lack in transparency and awareness of information and fund collected to the public, lack of understanding in local authority, and poor coordination between government and donors.

Moreover, the second half of the analysis part, describes on the empowerment of indigenous women with approaches by concerned actors, to elaborate on visibility of indigenous women in all aspects. Nevertheless, the laws and policies have also been discriminatory when it comes to women and indigenous women as well. The research shows that there have been 96 discriminatory provisions, and 92 acts and provisions that Constitution discriminate against women. While not only the laws and provision are discriminatory, it is still evident in the good governance of the nation, indigenous women are disregarded and ignored. In political approaches, there are hardly any actors that has defined policy in terms of indigenous women empowerment. While the only organization that deals with empowering indigenous women, National Indigenous Women Federation (NIWF), also lacks power and authority to bring a bigger change in the lives of indigenous women.

Although small progress is being witnessed with the socio-cultural environment with change in time and space of the situation. However, impediments are still there as the social culture of patriarchy and caste hierarchy has been deeply rooted in such a way that change is yet to come. Inequality in the society and cultural practices still exists in the mindset of the people that is difficult to change promptly. Moreover, in the event of earthquake 2015, the access to relief materials also were discriminated in society where people depicted on who should be getting the relief materials first. The reason being that indigenous people mostly dwell on the mountainous regions where the

transportation is difficult to reach, and they lack awareness, education, and others influencing factors which leads them to being vulnerable group of women if compared to other women in general. The efforts from the government or concerned authority in terms of monetary contribution and so on was non-existence.

In regard to environmental governance, the indigenous knowledge possessed by indigenous women though have been proven to be sustainable for environment in many of the research papers, yet, have been disregarded to be a substantial part of the productivity or environmental governance by the concerned actors/stakeholders. Often times, the indigenous knowledge or the resources that the indigenous have in the area where they reside are also misused by the elites, and others though the production of the products from the indigenous knowledge claims to be sustainable to the climate change. The rights of indigenous people especially the indigenous women are very limited in the community forest, as there are non-existence of well-defined rights, roles, responsibilities, and resources of different stakeholders. This has led them to low education and low economic status with continuous replacement of indigenous knowledge to modern technologies. The change in technology has been difficult for the indigenous women to keep up with changing technology pace. And the indigenous knowledge is thus depleting yearly with trend in outbound migration, foreign land employment, deforestation, disregard by actors/stakeholder to hold on the knowledge, and so on. These issues have been difficult for the indigenous women to pass on from one generation to another.

Lastly, in regard to economic empowerment, the data has shown that 25% of people in Nepal live in absolute poverty which is earning less than 1.25\$ a day. And there have been studies that shows the level of education of women are lower than men, that links to lower employment opportunities as well as lower economic status. In addition, most of the indigenous women falls under the poor economic status as their engagements in the economic productive is limited to small-scale businesses, skilled and unskilled labor. Moreover, the laws and policy's discrimination towards indigenous women makes them more vulnerable to the economic status. Similarly, during the earthquake



2015, indigenous women were seen to be mostly affected from the casualties and there was rare governmental support to those affected and empower them for better livelihood.

Therefore, this paper concludes with the highlighted subjects that have been shaping the lives of indigenous women pre-earthquake, and as well their experiences during earthquake 2015 along with the notion of empowerment in the Nepalese political ecology based on the conceptual framework of Feminist Political Ecology.

## **5.2. Recommendation**

With the brief introductory on indigenous women, caste system, gender and disaster and their power relation that plays the role of indigenous women have been elaborated in the field work analysis, and empowerment analysis. And, conclusion of the paper sheds some points where recommendation to all the stakeholders is found to be important. As mentioned in the chapters above, the differences in the caste or caste-based hierarchy was established by some group of people for their own benefits that was imbedded in such a way that the following generations followed the culture, and discriminated people based on their bias judgement and benefits to be taken by some group. Hence, people living in the same society in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and the world of globalization should be more aware on rights and be open minded to accept change that is better for the greater good.

Eradication of the poverty could be uplifted if the indigenous women were given equal access to and control of all kinds of resources, especially on the indigenous knowledge, as they possess expertise which as well helps in climate change. Moreover, in the case of disaster like earthquake 2015, it has been a lesson for the actors, and despite knowing the fact that Nepal is prone to major disasters, the actors are still lacking behind in the part of implementation on laws and policies that could help to mitigate the risk and hazards, casualties and all kinds of damages from the disaster.

And since indigenous women are significant in numbers, it is demonstrated that they have been constantly ignored and disregarded in the policies. Hence, the barricades that impedes indigenous women should be removed so that the country's development does include the significant number of populations which could likely contribute to greater good and change scenario of social cultural norms of gender and caste identity. The social inclusion will not only lead to decrease in discrimination but as well bring equality in the power relation of gender and as well as disaster in case of occurrence.

So, they should be empowered and made aware of their worth of their body and as well as labor towards self-autonomy. With the self-autonomy, and empowerment of the concerned authority could bring greater prosperity in the country if the mind-sets are changed for betterment rather than oppression and suppression of one gender, marginalized group or others. Likewise, understanding of empowerment in women is lacking and self-understanding of worth of their labor and body is seen less due to the cultural norms and its embodiment. The awareness of culture to accept everyone as humankind is necessary to bring down the untouchability, gender and caste-based discrimination.

Like elsewhere Nepal's affirmative action policy is not free from criticism. The critics have been giving suggestions on the reservation policy for women that favors women from the privileged castes and ethnic backgrounds, which leads to exclusion of indigenous women, women from rural areas, or under privileged caste/ ethnics groups. The policy hence should be more inclusive with multi-layer of analysis from the experts, scholars, high level authority, and so on. Nepotism in the political representations is high for men and women of higher caste, elites, privileged people and this should be stopped for the country to have good governance.

Nevertheless, in-depth study is still required to shed more light in the theory of Nepalese political ecology where explorations on various areas from mountain region to terai region is required in particular to densely populated indigenous community with diverse culture and geography to get better analysis on the lives of indigenous women, and the notion of empowerment for equal power relation in terms of gender, caste, and disaster.

## REFERENCES

- (LAHURNIP), L. A. f. H. R. o. N. I. P., (NEFIN), N. F. o. I. N., (NIWF), N. I. W. s. F., (YFIN), Y. F. o. I. N., (NIDA), N. I. D. A., (NCARD), N. C. A. R. D., & (INWOLAG), I. W. s. L. A. G. (2018). *Alternative Report of the Indigenous Peoples of Nepal*. Retrieved from Kathmandu, Nepal: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/NPL/INT\\_CERD\\_NGO\\_NPL\\_30811\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/NPL/INT_CERD_NGO_NPL_30811_E.pdf)
- (NIWF), N. I. W. s. F., (LAHURNIP), L. A. f. H. R. o. N. I. P., & (FPP), F. P. P. (2011). *The Rights of Indigenous Women in Nepal*. Retrieved from [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/NPL/INT\\_CEDAW\\_NGO\\_NPL\\_49\\_9805\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/NPL/INT_CEDAW_NGO_NPL_49_9805_E.pdf)
- Acharya, D. R., Bell, J. S., Simkhada, P., Van Teijlingen, E. R., & Regmi, P. R. (2010). Women's autonomy in household decision-making: a demographic study in Nepal. *Reproductive health*, 7(1), 15.
- Acharya, M. (1999). *Women in Nepal*: Asian Development Bank, Programs Department West and Office of Environment ....
- Acharya, S., Jere, C. M., & Robinson-Pant, A. (2019). Indigenous adult women, learning and social justice: Challenging deficit discourses in the current policy environment. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 1-22.
- Adhikari, J. R. (2001). Community based natural resource management in Nepal with reference to community forestry: A gender perspective.
- Adhikari, N. (2017). Nepal's earthquake disaster: two years and \$4· 1bn later. Retrieved from Aljazeera
- Adhikari, R., & Tamang, J. (2010). Sexual coercion of married women in Nepal. *BMC women's health*, 10(1), 31.
- Aguirre, D., & Pietropaoli, I. (2008). Gender equality, development and transitional justice: The case of Nepal. *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 2(3), 356-377.
- Asian Development Bank. (2010). *Overview of gender equality and social inclusion in Nepal*: Asian Development Bank.
- Atteraya, M. S., Gnawali, S., & Palley, E. (2016). Women's participation in self-help groups as a pathway to women's empowerment: A case of Nepal. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 25(4), 321-330.
- Bhattachan, K. B. (2003). Expected model and process of inclusive democracy in Nepal. *Transformation Agenda: Inclusion in Nepali Democracy, Kathmandu, Nepal*.
- Bhattachan, Y. K. (2005). Consultation and Participation of Indigenous Peoples in Decision-making in Nepal. *Webster and Gurung: Introduction*, 78.
- Bijaya, G. D., Cheng, S., Xu, Z., Bhandari, J., Wang, L., & Liu, X. (2016). Community forestry and livelihood in Nepal: A review. *The Journal of Animal & Plant Sciences*, 26(1), 1-12.
- Boutkhil, S. (2006). " Very poor people have little choice but to live with disaster." Mike Davis Planet of the Slums 2006. 122.
- Campbell, B. (2000). Managing Agrobiodiversity: Farmers' Changing Perspectives and Institutional Responses in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region. *Mountain Research and Development*, 20(4), 380-381.

- China Daily. (2015). Devasted Nepal hit by another quake Retrieved from [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-05/13/content\\_20700379\\_12.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-05/13/content_20700379_12.htm)
- Cook, A. D., Shrestha, M., & Htet, Z. B. (2016). The 2015 Nepal Earthquake: Implications for future international relief efforts.
- Cook, A. D., Shrestha, M., & Htet, Z. B. (2018). An assessment of international emergency disaster response to the 2015 Nepal earthquakes. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 31, 535-547.
- Cupples, J. (2007). Gender and Hurricane Mitch: Reconstructing subjectivities after disaster. *Disasters*, 31(2), 155-175.
- Dahal, D. R. (2003). Social composition of the population: caste/ethnicity and religion in Nepal. *Population monograph of Nepal*, 1, 87-135.
- Dahal, G., Hossain, I., & A. Z. Nowak, H. (2016). *Women Education and Empowerment: Its Impacts on Socioeconomic Development in Bangladesh and Nepal* (Vol. 9).
- Dahal, S., & Aram, I. A. (2013). Empowering Indigenous Community through Community Radio: A Case Study from Nepal. *Qualitative Report*, 18(41).
- Department of Women and Children. Retrieved from <http://dwd.gov.np/en/index>
- Des Chene, M. (1996). IN THE NAME OF BIK AS. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 1(2), 259-270.
- Dhungana, R. (2014). Nepali Hindu women's thorny path to liberation. *Journal of Education and Research*, 4(1), 39-57.
- Dixit, K. M., & Ramachandran, S. (2002). *State of Nepal*: Himal Books Kathmandu.
- El Seira, R. M., & Kurniati, E. (2020). *Gender in Disaster Mitigation*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Early Childhood Education and Parenting 2009 (ECEP 2019).
- Elmhirst, R. (2011). Introducing new feminist political ecologies. *Geoforum*, 42(2), 129-132.
- Fisher, J. F. (2011). *Himalayan Anthropology: The Indo-Tibetan Interface*: Walter de Gruyter.
- Fortier, J. (1993). Nepalese indigenous labour relations. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 20(1), 105-118.
- Fothergill, A., & Squier, E. (2018). Women and children in the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. In *Living Under the Threat of Earthquakes* (pp. 253-271): Springer.
- Gadtaulaa, S., & Chung, Y. K. (2016). Socio-cultural position of women in Nepal and Korea: A comparative approach. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 15(2).
- Ganapati, N. E. (2012). In Good Company: Why Social Capital Matters for Women during Disaster Recovery. 72(3), 419-427. doi:doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02526.x
- Gautam, S., Banskota, A., & Manchanda, R. (2011). Where there are no men: Women in the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. *K. Visweswaran, Perspectives on Modern South Asia: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation.. Oxford: Blackwell Blackwell*, 340-348.
- Gautam, Y., & Andersen, P. (2016). Rural livelihood diversification and household well-being: Insights from Humla, Nepal. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 44, 239-249.
- Gellner, D. N. (2007). Caste, ethnicity and inequality in Nepal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1823-1828.

- Ghale, Y. (2008). Scoping study on women's leadership in the agriculture sector in Nepal. *A report submitted to Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and NRM (WOCAN), Kathmandu, Nepal.*
- Grantham, K. (1996). Gender and indigenous knowledge: the role of Nepalese women in agricultural research and development. *School of Agriculture and Forest Sciences, Bangor, UK.*
- Gurung, O. (2009). Social inclusion: Policies and practices in Nepal. *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology, 11*, 1-15.
- Gurung, S. M., & Banskota, M. (1990). Women in Mountain Resource Management in Nepal. *Women and the Management of Energy, Forest, and Other Resources. Mountain Population and Employment Series(3).*
- Horton, L. (2015). 10 Disaster through a gender lens. *Disaster Research: Multidisciplinary and International Perspectives*, 140.
- Hub-Nepal, S. A. U. K. (2015). Earthquake Damage Assessment in the Traditional Town of Sankhu.
- Hyndman, J. (2008). Feminism, conflict and disasters in post-tsunami Sri Lanka. *Gender, Technology and Development, 12(1)*, 101-121.
- Jaggar, A. M. (1983). *Feminist politics and human nature*: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jolliffe, D., & Prydz, E. B. (2016). *Estimating international poverty lines from comparable national thresholds*: The World Bank.
- Joshi, K., Joshi, R., & Joshi, A. (2011). Indigenous knowledge and uses of medicinal plants in Macchegaun, Nepal.
- Joshy, D. (1997). Indigenous technical knowledge in Nepal. *Issues on sustainable land management(3)*, 45-61.
- Kapitsa, L. M. (2008). Women's economic empowerment. *Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations.*
- Khadka, M., Karki, S., Karki, B. S., Kotru, R., & Darjee, K. B. (2014). Gender Equality Challenges to the REDD Initiative in Nepal. *Mountain Research and Development, 34(3)*, 197-208.
- Khadka, M., & Sunam, R. (2018). *Workforce diversity and reservation policy in Nepal: A strategic approach to strengthening women's voice and visibility in formal employment sector*. Paper presented at the Women and the Future of Work in the Asia-Pacific.
- Khadka, N. (1993). Democracy and development in Nepal: Prospects and challenges. *Pacific Affairs, 44-71.*
- Kimura, A. H., & Katano, Y. (2014). Farming after the Fukushima accident: A feminist political ecology analysis of organic agriculture. *Journal of Rural Studies, 34*, 108-116.
- Kotani, H., & Honda, R. (2019). Effective combinations of information content and channels for the post-disaster reconstruction of rural housing: A case study of the 2015 Gorkha Nepal Earthquake. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 39*, 101118.
- Lam, L. M., & Kuipers, R. (2019). Resilience and disaster governance: Some insights from the 2015 Nepal earthquake. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 33*, 321-331. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2018.10.017>
- Lama, G., Ozawa, M. N., & Lama, P. (2010). Geographic isolation and poverty among Indigenous peoples in Nepal.

- Lama, S. C. (2019). 4 years after quake, Sankhu rises from the dust. *Nepali Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nepalitimes.com/here-now/4-years-after-quake-sankhu-rises-from-the-dust/>
- Laslett, B., & Brenner, J. (1989). Gender and social reproduction: Historical perspectives. *Annual review of sociology*, 15(1), 381-404.
- Lawoti, M. (2005). *Towards a democratic Nepal: Inclusive political institutions for a multicultural society*: SAGE Publications India.
- Leone, T., Matthews, Z., & Zuanna, G. D. (2003). Impact and determinants of sex preference in Nepal. *International family planning perspectives*, 69-75.
- Leve, L. (2007). "Failed development" and rural revolution in Nepal: Rethinking subaltern consciousness and women's empowerment. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 127-172.
- Lohani, T. N., Araki, Y., Hokugo, A., & Kaneko, Y. (2017). Challenges after earthquakes: Lessons learnt from the 2015 Nepal earthquake. *Report of Research Center for Urban Safety and Security*.
- Manchanda, R. (2004). Maoist insurgency in Nepal: Radicalizing gendered narratives. *Cultural Dynamics*, 16(2-3), 237-258.
- Maskey, V., Gebremedhin, T. G., & Dalton, T. J. (2006). Social and cultural determinants of collective management of community forest in Nepal. *Journal of forest economics*, 11(4), 261-274.
- Mayberry, M., Subramaniam, B., & Weasel, L. H. (2001). *Feminist science studies: A new generation*: Psychology Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). "Under western eyes" revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist struggles. *Signs: Journal of Women in culture and Society*, 28(2), 499-535.
- Molden, D., Sharma, E., & Acharya, G. (2016a). LESSONS FROM NEPAL'S GORKHA EARTHQUAKE 2015. In (pp. 1-14).
- Molden, D., Sharma, E., & Acharya, G. (2016b). Lessons from Nepal's Gorkha earthquake 2015. *Lessons from Nepal's earthquake for the Indian Himalayas and the Gangetic plains*, 1-14.
- Nanda, P., Gautam, A., Verma, R., & ICRW. (2012). *Study on gender, masculinity and son preference in Nepal and Vietnam*: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).
- National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF). Retrieved from <http://www.niwf.org.np/>
- National Women Commission. (2019). About Us. Retrieved from <http://nwc.gov.np/en/home-page/>
- Nepal, U. (2017). Population Situation Analysis of Nepal (With Respect to Sustainable Development). In.
- Nightingale, A. J. (2011). Bounding difference: Intersectionality and the material production of gender, caste, class and environment in Nepal. *Geoforum*, 42(2), 153-162.
- NIWF, & UNDP. (2018). Introduction. In *Economic Empowerment of Indigenous Women in Nepal*. Kathmandu: National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Olivelle, P. (2006). Explorations in the Early History of the Dharmasastra. *Between the Empires: Society in India*, 300, 169-190.

- Pandey, S. (2017). Persistent nature of child marriage among women even when it is illegal: The case of Nepal. *Children and youth services review*, 73, 242-247.
- Pandey, S., Lama, G., & Lee, H. (2012). Effect of women's empowerment on their utilization of health services: A case of Nepal. *International social work*, 55(4), 554-573.
- Perkins, D. D., & Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Empowerment theory, research, and application. *American journal of community psychology*, 23(5), 569-579.
- Puri, M., Shah, I., & Tamang, J. (2010). Exploring the nature and reasons for sexual violence within marriage among young women in Nepal. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 25(10), 1873-1892.
- Purushothaman, S. (1998). Empowerment of Women in India-Grassroots Women's Networks and the State. In: Sage Publications Sage India: New Delhi, India.
- Rao, N., & Robinson-Pant, A. (2006). Adult education and indigenous people: Addressing gender in policy and practice. *International journal of educational development*, 26(2), 209-223.
- Regmi, R. (2003). Ethnicity and identity. *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology*, 8, 1-11.
- Resurrección, B. P., & Nguyen, H. (2017). A feminist political ecology prism on development and change in Southeast Asia. In *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Development* (pp. 261-270): Routledge.
- Riordan, E. (2001). Commodified agents and empowered girls: Consuming and producing feminism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 25(3), 279-297.
- Robins, S. (2012). TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AS AN ELITE DISCOURSE. *Critical Asian Studies*, 44(1), 3-30. doi:10.1080/14672715.2012.644885
- Roy, C. K. (2004). Indigenous women: a gender perspective.
- Sapkota, I. P., & Odén, P. C. (2008). Household characteristics and dependency on community forests in Terai of Nepal. *International journal of social forestry*, 1(2), 123-144.
- Sapkota, P., Keenan, R. J., Paschen, J.-A., & Ojha, H. R. (2016). Social production of vulnerability to climate change in the rural middle hills of Nepal. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 48, 53-64.
- Shakya, K. J. L. T. I. (2016). Earthquake: Impact on Nepalese economy and women. 18(2), 75-82.
- Shively, G., & Thapa, G. (2017). Markets, transportation infrastructure, and food prices in Nepal. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 99(3), 660-682.
- Shneiderman, S., & Pettigrew, J. (2004). Women and the Maoist: Ideology and Agency in Nepal's Maoist Movement. *Himal Southasian*, 17(1), 19-29.
- Shrestha, A. B., Bajracharya, S. R., Kargel, J. S., & Khanal, N. R. (2016). *The Impact of Nepal's 2015 Gorkha Earthquake-Induced Geohazards*. Retrieved from Kathmandu:
- Shrestha, B., & Pathranarakul, P. (2018). Nepal Government's Emergency Response to the 2015 Earthquake: A Case Study. *Social Sciences*, 7(8), 127.
- Shrestha, K. K., Bhattarai, B., Ojha, H. R., & Bajracharya, A. (2019). Disaster justice in Nepal's earthquake recovery. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 33, 207-216.

- Shrestha, S., Bajracharya, A. R., Bajracharya, L., Shrestha, N., & Maharjan, M. (2016). Earthquake Damage Assessment in the Traditional Town of Sankhu, Kathmandu. *Journal of the Institute of Engineering*, 12(1), 27-38.
- Stevens, S. (2010). Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and international human rights law through the recognition of ICCAs. *Policy Matters*, 17, 181-194.
- Stopler, G. (2003). Countenancing the oppression of women: How liberals tolerate religious and cultural practices that discriminate against women. *Colum. J. Gender & L.*, 12, 154.
- Subba, C., Pyakuryal, B., Bastola, T., Subba, M., Raut, N., & Karki, B. (2014). A Study on the Socio-Economic Status of Indigenous Peoples in Nepal. *Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP), Ghattekulo-Anamnagar, Kathmandu*.
- Subedi, M. (2010). Caste system: Theories and practices in Nepal. *Himalayan Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 4, 134-159.
- Sujakhu, N. M., Ranjitkar, S., He, J., Schmidt-Vogt, D., Su, Y., & Xu, J. (2019). Assessing the livelihood vulnerability of rural indigenous households to climate changes in central Nepal, Himalaya. *Sustainability*, 11(10), 2977.
- Sundberg, J. (2016). Feminist political ecology. *International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology*, 1-12.
- Tamang, S. (2000). Legalizing state patriarchy in Nepal. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 5(1), 127-156.
- Thapa, D., Tao, X., Wang, G., & Fan, F. (2017). *Deterministic seismic hazard assessment for Nepal*. Paper presented at the 16th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering (16WCEE-2017, Paper No. 730), Santiago, Chile.
- Thapa, K. B. (2010). Religion and law in Nepal. *BYU L. Rev.*, 921.
- Thapa, V. (2018). Women's roles in post-disaster recovery: the case of the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, Nepal.
- Thapa, V., & Pathranarakul, P. (2019). Gender inclusiveness in disaster risk governance for sustainable recovery of 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, Nepal. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 34, 209-219.
- Una, G. (2015). LETTERS: Helping Hand. *The Himalayan Times*. Retrieved from <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/letters-helping-hand/>
- Upreti, B. R., & Upreti, Y. G. (2002). Factors leading to agro-biodiversity loss in developing countries: the case of Nepal. *Biodiversity & Conservation*, 11(9), 1607-1621.
- Vallese, G. (2017). *Population Situation Analysis of Nepal (With Respect to Sustainable Development)*. Retrieved from
- Vinding, D., & Kampbel, E.-R. (2012). *Indigenous women workers: With case studies from Bangladesh, Nepal and the Americas*: ILO Geneva.
- Watts, M. (2000). Political ecology. *A companion to economic geography*, 257, 274.
- Webb, E. L., & Dhakal, A. (2011). Patterns and drivers of fuelwood collection and tree planting in a Middle Hill watershed of Nepal. *biomass and bioenergy*, 35(1), 121-132.
- Wisner, B., Blaike, P. M., Blaikie, P., Cannon, T., & Davis, I. (2004). At risk: natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters.





จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
**CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY**

# APPENDIX A

## Interview Form

Name:

Age:

Educational Background:

Occupation:

Income level:

Source of income:

### Questions:

- Do you think that women are treated unequal to men, and if so, how do you feel deprived by the fact you are a woman?
- As an indigenous woman, what are your views on the caste system of Nepal?
- Do you think there are barriers for you as the indigenous women?
- What are your views on the policy for the empowerment of the indigenous woman?
- Do you think that there has been discrimination in the recovery process in compared to other caste in the society of Nepal?

### Sub-Questions:

- What do you know or think about the term empowerment?
- Has there been any empowerment program that you are involved in that has been organized by NGO/INGO/Government?
- If yes, what have been the impact of that program/initiative for you, society and the whole VDC or Municipality?
- If No, why is it that, you as an earthquake victim not involved in the empowerment and recovery program?
- How was your experience in the earthquake 2015?
- How did it affect your life as an indigenous woman?
- What are the relief materials you received or access you got during the time of earthquake 2015?

## VITA

**NAME** Mintira Preruethairat

**DATE OF BIRTH** 24 June 1988

**PLACE OF BIRTH** Udon Thani

**INSTITUTIONS  
ATTENDED** Kings College, Affiliated to International  
American University

**HOME ADDRESS** 10 Suksan Alley, Nai Mueang Sub-district,  
Mueang Nakhorn, Ratchasima District,  
Nakhorn Ratchasima Province, Thailand

**PUBLICATION** THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT  
(ICIRD) 2019