

GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICS IN NEPAL

The Role of Demo Finland to Promote Gender Equality in Nepalese Politics

Jyoti Rai
Bachelor's Degree in Social
Services and Community De-
velopment Work
Diaconia University of Applied
Sciences
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ABSTRACT

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The research aims to focus on unequal gender power relation and women's role in decision-making process in the politics in Nepal. This study also evaluates the role of Demo Finland, a Non-Governmental Organization to politically empower women through its project called Mobilizing Youth for Gender Equality in Politics.

The study is based on the qualitative research method. A thematic data analysis is used to analyze the data collected from field. The unstructured interview was conducted with two political youth and student organization members to discuss the provision of 33 % women participation in Constituent Assembly ensures the ability to access the political power in all levels. The socio-cultural and economic status of women in grass-root level is studied to relate the factors that hinder women to voice their opinions, raise questions on their leadership skills, and how these women exemplify a majority of women in Nepal.

The research is not influenced by negative gender-based assumptions; the conclusion is made on the basis of collected data analyzing different relevant materials supporting the research topic. Importantly, women's participation in politics and legislative structures are emphasized more in the entire content as the statistical data studied shows their participation in decision-making level is relatively lower than men.

Keywords: Nepal, Gender Equality, Participation, Gender, Women, Decision-making, Politics, Empowerment, Discrimination, Education, Demo Finland, Socio-cultural, Religion and Economy.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in politics worldwide still remains relatively invisible in terms of decision-making bodies. Globally, only one in five members of a parliament is a woman, which women form less than 10 percent of the world leaders (Women's Political Participation 2011.)

Nepal is a multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural country with 92 spoken languages, and 101 caste and ethnic groups. The socio-cultural phenomenon such as gender, caste discrimination and religious beliefs has created various issues that violate fundamental human rights. The distinct role of men and women are based on social and economic background in the country has shaped a large gap between men and women's function (Nepal in Brief n.d.)

The different roles and opportunities open to women and men within family, community and a societal structure is deeply rooted in the traditional culture. In South Asian nations, social boundaries are the major issues influencing attitude of the entire societies or communities. The cultural restriction limits women to freely mobilize and express their opinions.

The World Bank report (2013) indicates that 51.6 per cent of total population in Nepal is female where the percentage of women politicians in parliament is 33 percent. For Nepalese political change, it is considered as a remarkable growth, from 6 per cent in 1990, and the percentage is highest amongst South Asians Association for Regional Cooperation nations (World Bank 2013.)

On the other hand, a majority of youth in Nepal is reluctant to actively participate in politics due to unstable political structure. According to Ministry of Youth and Sports (2014), the age group of 16-40 years is considered youth in Nepal, and 38.8 percent of total population is accounted youth group in Nepal. There have been relatively less opportunities for youth to engage in governance and participate in political and decision-making process (Ministry of Youth and Sports 2014.)

Back in the history of Nepal, youth and women had an immense contribution in the democratic revolutionary movements. The anti-Rana movements in 1947-1950, and the student movement in 1970s, are the historical examples of the groups' active participation in politics (Yami 2007.)

The first women's organization 'Women's Committee' was formed in Siraha district in 1917. The Women's Committee aimed of making people aware of political and social conditions. However, the organization could not function more than one and a half year because the Rana regime charged it with participating in undesirable activities (Malla 2011, 29.)

In 1990, women's participation in ending thirty years of autocratic monarchy 'Panchayat Era', to replace monarchical parliamentary system was a revolution to break the stigma of vulnerability. With women's political movement during Communist Party Nepal (CPN-Maoists) People's war (1996-2006) a massive transformation in the social structure of women was marked. A large number of women from rural areas were mobilized in People's war started by CPN. The women from grassroots level participated, as they were suppressed in many sectors as compared to women from urban areas (Yami 2007.)

The revolutionary choice during civil war provided women an alternative to the traditional harmful practices in the society. They became stronger to voice out for dignified life and opportunities to work side by side with men on equal terms. Currently, the CPN-Maoists have total seventy-six female participants in Constituent Assembly, which considered as the highest participation amongst all the political parties in Nepal (Yami 2007, 19.)

2 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

2.1 Constitutional Overview of Nepal

A Constituent Assembly (CA) is an assembly of representatives who are elected to debate and draft constitution for a newly created state or to radically alter an existing Constitution. Following a decade long civil war (1996-2006) the CA of Nepal was elected to write a new national constitution, which was dissolved in May 2008. One of the fundamental rights drafted in interim constitution is 'Rights of Women' where no one shall be discriminated in any form merely being a woman (Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007.)

In the provision of the Interim Constitution in Nepal, the CA members should comprise of 601 members. Under mixed electoral system, 240 CA members are to be elected using a First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system, and 335 through Proportional Representation (PR) System. For a total 575 elected members, out of which 195 seats are reserved for women, each political party has to ensure that 30% of women participation is through FPTP system. And, twenty-six members are nominated from the various walks of the society such as, influential and renowned professional. The quota system was introduced to increase women's presence in the CA and legislative structures (The Carter Centre 2008.)

In 2008, the data shows that women political representation was 32.8 percentages of the total 601 seats in CA. This remarkable political victory of women was under FPTP system, with 50 percentage of quota for women in the PR system. The significant level of women's participation in 2008 assembly was measured by winning thirty FPTP seats, 161 PR seats, and six cabinets appointed seats in total (The National Democratic Institute 2014.)

The first Constituent Assembly of Nepal formed in May 2008 was dissolved in May 2012 after all parties failed to agree on a new constitutional framework. A second Constituent Election was held in November 2013, the female political

representation in Interim Constitution decreased to 29.9 percent (Carter Center 2013; Women in National Parliament 2014.)

2.2 Status of Women in Nepali Society

Nepal is a secular nation where majority of population are Hindus and Buddhist while Christianity, Islam, Jain and other ethnic religions are minorities. The culture especially on the ritual ground plays, a predominant role in distinguishing the status of men and women in Nepali society. The feudal patriarchal system in Nepal treats men above women.

Some of the most common social issues in Nepal affecting women's existence are child marriage, social exploitation, domestic violence, lack of education, and cultural and ritual abuses. Among other religious practices, a Chaupadi Pratha (tradition), Kumari Pratha, Jhuma, Deuki Pratha, which violate child rights, are banned in Nepal's Children Act of 1992; however the imposed prohibition was challenged by the violation of cultural rights (Sarkar 2014).

According to Chaupadi partha practice women sleep in sheds or outbuilding during their menstruation period under dire condition. Likewise, in Kumari Pratha a young prepubescent is considered to be a reincarnation of the Hindu Goddess by devotees, and is worshiped until she reaches a puberty age. A Jhuma (Buddhism) or Deuki Pratha (Hinduism) practiced a young girl child is offered to deities as a sacrifice to fulfill their wishes for health recovery and bearing a son. In Nepal, the proportion of women involved independently in social and public activities are less than men. Socio-cultural, political, economic and educational factors have forced women to live suppress by not only men but also society itself (Sarkar 2014.)

Currently, the issue on 'the rights of citizenship through mother's name' has been raised in the new constitution of Nepal. The Citizenship Act (2006) and the Interim Constitution draft (2007) explicitly states that the children may obtain

citizenship in various ways including by birth, descent and neutralization. Contrary to it, the provision of citizenship to the children through mother's name has made legal only in special condition. The 'special condition' here states children born out of rape or accidental intercourse (Pant 2014.)

The interim constitution makes the provision discriminatory stating foreign and stateless women married to Nepali men are entitled to get the Nepali citizenship, and their children will be granted the citizenship. But, Nepali women married to foreigners, or single mothers do not have an option to obtain birthrights of being Nepali citizens to their children (Pant 2014.)

The laws and policies in Nepal to some extent are reflections of the values based on patriarchy. As the deadline to promulgate a new constitution of Nepal approaches, the issue makes an effective debate among decision makers, social activists and common citizens in Nepal. The citizenship through mother has raised questions such as nationalism, gender equality and human rights in Nepal. The issue on citizenship through mother is discussed precisely in the topic below.

2.3 Gender Equality in Nepal through Education

Empowering women and girls through quality education is an important step to promote gender equality. Education develops confidence and provides various opportunities to females as well as families across their generations.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) statistical data shows that youth (15-25 years) women literacy rate is 77.5 per cent whereas male is 89.2 per cent. Nepal has made significant progress to meet one of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 'Universalization of Primary Education' however, the drop out ratio on secondary level education, especially female, remains high. The UNESCO (2012) data shows that girls to boys' drop out ratio are 40.2 per cent being second country after Pakistan (41.1) in South Asia (UNICEF 2012.)

Lack of formal education is measured as one of the hindrances for women to effective participation in political and other development spheres. Female literacy rate in Nepal also differs according to the regional dimensions and urban/rural areas. The female population in rural areas is less educated than in urban areas due to lack of access to formal education, limited social mobility, and they are basically grounded in domestic spheres (Literacy and Education 2005.)

In addition, in some remote areas the girls and women enrolment in education program is also affected by a co-education system, early aged marriage, improper sanitation facility, daughters being second priority for getting education over sons. Because of lack of education it can be challenging to produce a competent female leader to the country, and a proficient citizen to be able to advocate for her own fundamental rights. The effective knowledge of politics and importance of civic society also encourage women to cast their vote in election.

The core concept of equality states equality between women and men refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys (UN Women Organization 2012).

Education plays an important role in redefining social norms towards gender equality. The girls education programs run by NGOs and INGOs in coordination with local organizations in rural areas will promote awareness among families to academically empower girls and women. An educated girl can be prepared as an empowered woman to combat against the women related issues in the communities. They can equally participate in decision-making process in household and political sectors. Also, women's analytical skills, awareness on national and global political scenarios and experiences should also be equally counted as other factors supporting education background.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The research aims to study the status of Nepalese women in political, social and economical spheres. This research is undertaken to study the key factors behind the hindrances to women's in meaningful political participation in Nepal.

The study also observes the role of NGO, Demo Finland, which facilitate women's political empowerment in coordination with its stakeholders. The results of the study based on collected data aims to present a brief knowledge about the socio-cultural practices in Nepal, which has created a large gap between men and women's roles in the society and policy making level in politics.

The objective of the study is to equate current situation of women from rural area to women in urban areas of Nepal. The findings on women's common issues across the nation describe how these issues affect the fundamental rights of women in every sector. The main objective of the research determines the role of Demo Finland to promote gender equity in politics through its project, Mobilizing Youth for Gender Equality in Politics project. A brief evaluation of the project in this research using SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis method shows the project's one-year effort, strategy planning, implementation of the action plans and the output.

The data collected conducting qualitative interviews, postcard reviews and researching on provided information is analyzed thematically to answer the following research questions:

- a) What are the hindrances to women's political participation in Nepal?
- b) What are the methods and activities of Demo Finland to ensure sustainability of gender equality in politics in Nepal?

4 BACKGROUND OF DEMO FINLAND

Demo Finland, a Finnish Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) works as a co-operative organization for Finnish parliamentary parties. All parliamentary parties are represented in the governing body of Demo Finland. The organization action plans are based on Finnish Government's Resolution (2004), that states the important factors for development, which are, respect for human rights, promotion of gender and social equality, good governance and sound economic management. (Demo Finland 2014.)

Demo Finland is run by the political parties for the parties taking major steps to enhance democracy by carrying out and facilitating projects between Finnish political parties and political movement in developing nations. The organization also provides platform to the various political parties representatives who share their expertise and challenges in regard to democracy. It values mutual understanding and cooperation between different political parties, and promotes constructive and inclusive political culture. Demo Finland is involved in different development projects in some of the developing nations such as, Nepal, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia, and in Finland itself. (Demo Finland 2014.)

In Nepal, Demo Finland was started in 2007. The organization works with Joint Youth and Student Platform (JYSP); JYSP is a platform for cooperation that brings together twenty major Nepalese political youth and student organization. The JYSP was established in 2007 with the support of Demo Finland, which has its role as a neutral and equal space for political cooperation and dialogue. It also coordinates training, seminar and awareness campaigns. (Demo Finland 2014.)

Mobilizing Youth for Gender Equality in Politics is one of the main projects of Demo Finland in Nepal started in March 2013. The program is funded by European Union and Demo Finland itself, and has its mandate until 2015. The activi-

ties are carried out in close cooperation with the Delegation of the EU in Nepal in order to ensure the visibility actions and EU funding. (Demo Finland, 2013.)

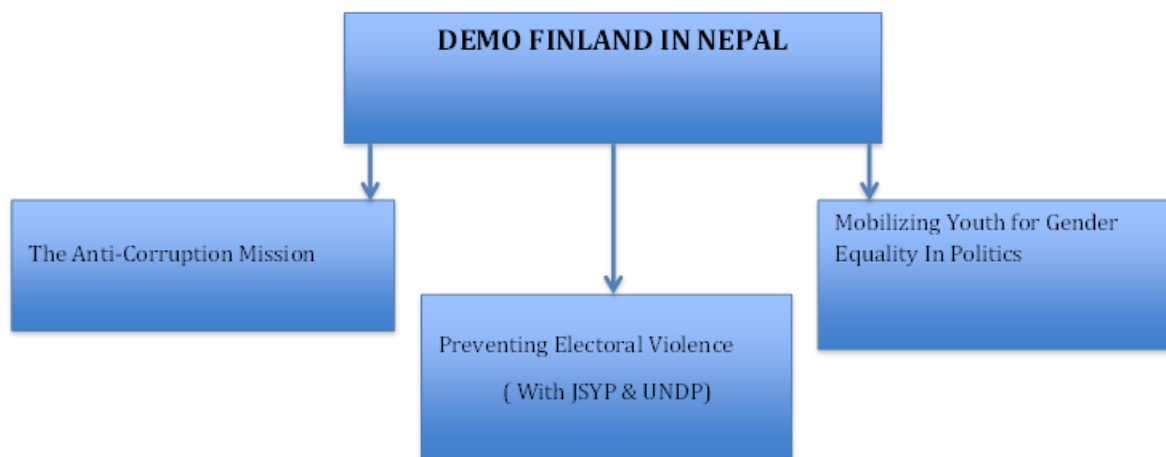


FIGURE 1: Activities of Demo Finland in Nepal

The above figure (Figure 1) depicts the activities carried out in facilitation with Demo Finland and implementing partners. The thematic focus areas have been observed in education, tourism and agriculture. The preventing electoral violence campaign was carried out by JYSP in cooperation with UNDP and Demo Finland, and in 2014 the focus area was anti-corruption. (Demo Finland, 2014.)

4.1 Evolution and Concept of the project

Demo Finland started its work in Nepal in 2007 with its three different projects. Mobilizing Youth for Gender Equality in Politics was started on 8th March 2013 to ensure young women's meaningful political participation. The different locations of the action were covered in Kathmandu of central region and a few selected areas in the districts of Sunsari, Panthar, Solukhumbu, Nuwakot, Dhanusha, Rautahat, Mustang, Baglung, Rupendehi, Mugu, Dolpa, Rolpa, Banke, Bajhura and Dadeldhura.

The concept of the project was evolved after the organization, together with JYSP observed women participation considerably less than men in the project activities. Noticeably, the active and meaningful participation of women was unremarkable. This encouraged the organization and JYSP to establish a platform that gives women from various districts of Nepal skills to gain required knowledge in leadership and politics. It also aimed to enhance their abilities to raise their voice in women issues with proper knowledge of their political parties' constitution and States policies (Sarika Jaiswal, personal communication 30.10.14.)

As mentioned above, JYSP is a joint platform of twenty major Nepali political youth and student organizations, which works to increase the opportunities for youth in political participation, and promote a constructive dialogue between them. JYSP plays a vital role in helping research team to find female youth leaders who were involved in politics, and also motivate their members to participate the study activity program. From the initial phase, the organization emphasized the work based on empowerment and meaningful participation of women, youth and marginalized group, transparency in political system and encouragement to develop regional and local activities (Demo Finland 2014.)

The organization has three-year funding (2013-2015) with EU. The Mobilizing Youth for Gender Equality in Politics project is 80% funded by European Union while rest 20% is covered by organization itself. The organization is situated in Lalitpur, sub-metropolitan city of Nepal, and currently there are seven employees (Nepalese) working in the organization (Demo Finland 2014.)

4.2 Objectives of Demo project in Nepal

Demo Finland works in coordination with JYSP to increase youth political participation through different political empowerment activities. The organization extends its support to women from rural districts of Nepal and also marginalized

groups providing a proper channel and tools to participate effectively in political organizations.

As in the political history of Nepal, political participation of a person in local to state level starts from their active involvement in student political union. Across the world, the youth and student unions comprised with a dynamic source of new ideas for inclusiveness in politics. The group can work strategically on bringing positive changes in political systems. The JYSP and Demo Finland together promote participation of youth and women in democratic decision-making. In addition, more young women from rural areas are encouraged to participate in the politics. The expected result of the organization is to train a total number of 418 female politicians across the country on democracy and leadership skills. The trainees are 400 in the districts and 18 on the central levels (Demo Finland 2012; 2014.)

The main objectives of the Demo Finland is to see the overall increase in number and competencies of young women engaging in political party organizations as well as women entering leadership position. The organization's data till date shows that four participants (male and female) have been elected in the CA, which measures the effective work carried out by the organization in political gender inclusiveness. The project is based on participatory approach, which provides a platform for dialogue across parties to encourage their constructive engagement and establishment of communication channels for democratic transition in the country for long run (Demo Finland 2012.)

4.3 Development Activities of Demo Finland

Demo Finland activities in Nepal are based on the fundamental importance of democracy for development and gender equity specifically in political sector. The developmental activities of the organization are based on participatory method. The strategy and planning are designed within organizational meeting, involving Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is a cross-party leader-

ship group of women politicians who work together above parties' differences as a direct channel of influence to the platform (Demo Finland 2012.)

The alternatives and contingency plans are prepared to reduce the internal and external threats or risk, which will be discussed below. There are three major activities to promote gender equality in Politics in coordination with the JYSP. (Sarika Jaiswal, personal communication 30.10.14)

- a) District level trainings: 32 district-level trainings in two set are organized to strengthen the capacities and political competencies of Nepali women across the nation. The training participants are active young members of twenty political youth and student organizations at local level in sixteen selected districts. The training also aims to empower young women to work together with other political members, develop their leadership skills, enhance their political abilities and expand their network for political socialization. The toolkits produced is distributed and further explained in the training session.
- b) Toolkits: To support the other activities and strengthen the process towards gender equality in youth and student organizations a set of three toolkit on how to increase gender parity in organization is distributed. A tool kit is a book in Nepali language designed to explain the political and leadership structures using visuals, figures, case studies and examples. The toolkit also provides motivation and guidance on implementation and support on technical means.
- c) Study: Young women political participants who lack proper political knowledge are supported with study knowledge by providing accurate and reliable data. The main purpose of study is also to aware political participants with their parities constitutions. The organization's research team ASMITA carries out the research. ASMITA is a local partner of the organization that provides expertise for the study, trainings and tool kits of the action plans.

5 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND CHALLENGES

The online data published by Social Welfare Council Nepal approximately 370 NGOs and eight INGOs affiliated to SWC working for Women development and services. INGOs/NGOs and local level organization introduced a various programs in Nepal to foster the development of women in the society as well as to promote gender equality (Social Welfare Council Nepal 2010; 2013.)

5.1 DidiBahini

Among the various NGOs working in similar field, DidiBahini is a non-profit non-governmental organization working in Nepal since 1992 towards gender equality and social justice. Through its participatory learning method the organization works with men and women both to achieve a positive change in behavior and attitude. In addition, it also practices a process-oriented approach to gender education (DidiBahini n.d.)

Women Forums, Youth Forums and Gender in Politics are some of the activities the organization carries out. From the activities mentioned the organization aims to develop leadership skills among women at grassroots level, provide a platform to young adults to access their rights to information. The organization has set up collaboration with UN Women in 2011 through The Mainstreaming Gender in Institution Practice of Political Parties program to achieve gender equality in politics as an effective participation (DidiBahini n.d.)

However, the constant change in political and economic situation in Nepal and limited funding bring challenges to the NGOs and INGOs. The political instability is one of the major challenges to the organizations' smooth operation of planned activities.

5.1 Cultural Challenges and Risks

The NGOs are independent and neutral from the government control, not seeking to challenge either a political party or governments. However, working in developing nations with different stakeholders and target groups could be challenging in terms of implementing action plans.

Nepal is a multi-linguistic nation with diverse cultures and societal norms. The members of each cultural group shares different values and experiences. The INGOs and NGOs working to tackle these underlying socio-economic and cultural barriers are a huge challenge itself. The social change is a long-term approach that needs strategic planning for required sustainable goal. Demo Finland has crucial challenges to reach out to the communities with traditional values on social structures.

Demo Finland has played a key role to reflect the underlying issue of women leadership in politics and legislative sectors. The organization closely works with the political youth and student groups, which is considered as risk due to unstable political situation in Nepal. The changes in political structure to position generate chaos within stakeholders and target groups (Sarika Jaiswal, personal communication 17.11.14.)

5.2 Network and Coordination

A substantial networking and support is essential for NGOs and local level organizations working in development sectors to provide better services to the communities they are working in. Demo Finland in Nepal closely works in coordination with JYSP. A local level NGO ASMITA, while European Union provides the required fund to execute the organization's activities. ASMITA supports the organization grouping process and the capacity building network Sarika Jaiswal, personal communication 17.11.14.)

The Women Steering Committee is a cross party leadership group for women, adopted as a permanent structure of the JYSP, a direct channel to influence within the platform. All the activities are monitored by the committee, which acts as a link between the organizations and the platform (Demo Finland 2012.)

The pertinent and variety of information are required to support the programs of NGOs; the coordination partner also facilitates to link the organizations with government agencies. Through the networking with stakeholders and JYSP the organization has developed an effective programs and projects to address the needs of communities.

The organization in coordination with JYSP invites media representatives to their training programs and other events at central level. The media and journalists are involved for the widespread of the program for public awareness and to improve the visibility of program among large number of audiences for their effective participation. In total six national media journalists are sponsored to take part in district level activities (Demo Finland 2012.)

On the other hand the implementation of wide range of activities in different districts required an adequate fund. Demo Finland covers participants' transportation cost to encourage and support to involve them in training programs in the district. Considerably, lack of adequate budget has also been challenging to organize training programs in a frequent manner (Sarika Jaiswal, personal communication 30.10.14.)

6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The research work on Gender Equality in Politics in Nepal is referred reviewing available reports and data published by INGOs and Local Level Organization. The literature reviewed here helped acquire understanding on the previous findings on the related topic. The previous result will also provide the researching topic a guideline on the use of methods and key issues.

The literature review serves to enhance and consolidate your knowledge base in your subject area and helps you to examine your findings in the context of existing body of knowledge (Kumar 2014, 45).

It was challenging to categorize previous work written specifically on gender equality in political participation in Nepal. A number of reports, articles and books were studied to understand the concepts and results on gender equality study in Nepal. A literature written by Nadita Pradhan Bhatt (2013) on Women's Political Participation in Nepal was reviewed to summarize the theory on the respective issue. In addition, the books interrelated to the issues in other nations and theories related to women issues were reviewed to interpretive the data. The data extracted from organizations' report was reviewed as a summary of the literature to understand different findings (Bhatt 2013.)

The conclusion of Bhatt's (2013) literature was based on the conversation with four women activists in politics and development sector. The participants expressed their solidarity on the importance of women's involvement in leadership and decision-making process in politics, as a meaningful participation by the participants as well as the writer herself. Also, women excluded from political sphere mean their contribution to country's development agenda settings and decision-making is less.

The inclusiveness of the group in civil services and high-level position will also be highly affected. Nevertheless, in addition to the leadership skills, women should acquire conceptual clarity and understanding on the principle of equality.

In addition, the literature emphasized the environment such as, character assassination, women's role as a homemaker, low level education, cultural restriction, affecting women's political participation, decision-making rights or in any fields. The environment here explained the attitude of male-counterparts. The recommendations made to address such issues were awareness programs to build their confidence, capacity building and political knowledge. However, the author here failed to include male activists or participants' views on how they identify the gender discrimination issue. A brief finding on the role of male counterparts to make feasible environment for women to express their opinions within their political organization was also overlooked (Bhatt 2013.)

Considerably, a number of organizations working on women issues have strategic plans for capacity building and awareness trainings. The voices of female activists and political members are involved to perceive the situation like in Bhatt's article, but equal participation should be counted as an equal exchange of ideas from male counterparts as well to find the solution.

In the following chapters the key concepts such as Gender, Equality, Politics and Socio-culture, in relation to research are described which will guide further readings:

6.1 Gender

According to UN Food and Agriculture Organization (1997) the term Gender was defined as, the relations between men and women, both perpetual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. The meaning of gender here do not cover only the issues focus on women, but the social relationship between men and women, their roles, opportunities, division of labor as well as their together contribution to reproduction, consumption and distribution (FAO 1997.)

The term gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed meanings and roles assigned to persons of different biological sexes: males and females. The concept also includes expectation held about the characteristics, aptitudes of both women and men (UNESCO, 2009.)

Gender itself constructs a high expectation as an identity in social norms, power relationship that shapes the role of men and women, and available opportunities for women. Durkheim (n.d) cited in Holmes (2007), as society became more complex, more distinct differences in body and mind emerged between women and men; the specialized in their roles and this made division of labor more efficient and communities stronger (cited in Holmes 2007).

In context of Nepal, a non-discrimination ground defines gender as men and women. Also in 2007, the Supreme Court of Nepal ordered government to issue citizenship ID to third Gender, being part of CA and member of fundamental rights of committee (New Gender in the Constitution n.d.)

However, the Nepalese communities have created a distinctive role of men and women where men are kept in the higher level, for example, daughters are fed after sons, wives are look after husbands, elderly women are look after their sons. As mentioned by Holmes (2007), the social construction makes women as a gender more vulnerable than men, it is not the physical differences themselves, but the social significance attached to them that determines what women and men do (Holmes 2007).

6.2 Gender Equality

Equality basically is emphasized on equal access of opportunities, services, contributions, and use of rights and power regardless of age, gender, caste, race and beliefs. The term equality should not be accentuated as only women's rights and feminism, but male and female both being equal citizens of the nation should be treated on the same scale according to the needs.

As UN Women Organization referred equality as rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys. The equality does not depend upon whether they are born as a male and female, but should be assessed in terms of their capabilities, opportunities and empowerment. A large number of organizations across the world are examined to ensure that they accord an equality of opportunity to women in relation to men (UN Women Organization n.d; Malla 2011.)

Although equality for men and women are legally provided for both, women in Nepal are socially accorded a lower status. They have to be relied on reservation system for the opportunities in public, private and other sectors like, government level, politics and employment. The unequal distribution of wages, disproportional data in political participation and low-level position in public and private institutions are the main examples of gender disparity in Nepal.

The concept of political equality viewed according to Beitz, in identifying political equality with the institutional requirement or equal power; the simple view treats political equality as concerned exclusively with the distribution of single unambiguous values. In some cases the discussion on gender equality is equated to women only. The first step of equality requires to be addressed from household level, which is, not giving special attention either to a girl or boy child, but treating them equally (Beitz 1989).

6.3 Politics

The politics of Nepal function within the framework of a republic with a multi-party system. A large section of the population in Nepal cannot access political participation and representation to public affairs due to economic and social conditions, social stigma and lack of access to proper information. In the research the concept of politics is emphasized on Parliament and Party Politics to study the women's position in Nepalese politics.

The instability in current political situation of Nepal has created dissolution of the CA without drafting the Constitution. Among the largest political parties in Nepal, Nepali Congress (NC), United Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-UML), Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and Madheshi Janadhikar Forum were the responsible political parties to draft the new Constitution of Nepal. Some of the major political party's manifesto related to gender equality and women's political participation is presented below (Malla 2011.)

- a) NC declared its manifesto for the 1991, 1994 and 1999 respectively to minimize the existing economic, social and political inequalities between men and women. Increase certain quota for women in government services. Promote female literacy and respectful social position of female.
- b) CPN-UML, establish daughter's equal right to inheritance on par with rights of the son. Guarantee equal rights eliminating all political, economic and social inequalities. Eliminate all social discriminations against women.
- c) RPP, launch programs on women's development and promotion of employment to enhance the status of women. Increase women's participation in politics. Adopt concrete measures to empower women in every sector.

6.4 Socio-cultural

The Socio-culture is viewed as how the individual thoughts are processed according to his or her culture, institution and historical context. Vygotsky (n.d) has defined Socio-cultural theory of human learning describe as a social process and the organization of human intelligence in society and culture.

Culturally, Nepal is divided into various ethnic groups, castes and languages, which to highly influence the socialization process of the people. A socio-cultural pattern in society also develops political beliefs or attitude towards

women's rights to access political power. In the rural areas of Nepal, the society has constructed role of women below men. Due to the lack of awareness on fundamental rights the cases such as domestic violence are frequently emerged, and women endure rapes and assaults. Family and society often overlook such cases because of social structure that prevail with the firm assumption of male superiority and female inferiority syndrome (Malla 2011, 111).

A very common example of social and cultural issues surrounding women is a strong tradition of educating children, a priority given to son over daughter. The traditional concept in Nepalese family is girls are responsible for household chores such as cooking washing and cleaning while boys are breadwinner (Timsina 2011, 22.)

In 1992, Nepal Government reformed the basic education policy and declared free education up to grade 10 in government schools regardless of gender. However, the free education policy did not address needs of basic materials and sanitation facility in school. Despite free education the sanitation and co-education system made a major hurdles to keep young girls out from school, especially economically underprivileged children and young girls from marginalized group (Child Research Net 2014).

6.5 Discrimination

The concept of discrimination is very wide in social context. It could be related to social, caste, disability, race and gender, which has been a global issue. UN General Assembly as an international bill of rights adopted the Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and a commitment for national action to end such discrimination (UN Women 2009.)

In Nepal, a majority of women faces discrimination based on caste and gender in social, economic and political grounds. Due to existing patriarchal mindset of

society, girls experience discrimination from their families, when they are given second priority for education and trainings over boys.

The underlying causes of any kind of violence against women are also gender discrimination. The disapproval of women's equality is quite visible in political sector in Nepal resulting in the political representation of women relatively less than men. Women experiencing gender discrimination in local politics and governance has been very common.

According to Shrestha and Hachhethu (2002), many female politicians regardless their party affiliation, viewed that their inclusion in the party committee or the elected bodies was merely symbolic. Their male counterparts do not acknowledge their participation in debates and discussions on general subjects. Despite women occupying 33 % of seats in CA their influence in decision-making level and constitution-building process has been seen limited.

7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology defined by Kumar (2014) as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. Research methodology has many dimensions and research methods do constitute a part of research methodology.

7.1 Research Method

Based on the aim of the study, the research is based on qualitative research method. Qualitative research method in this study allowed to include perspectives of participants connected with political sector, which also offered principle of openness in data collection related to everyday events and experiences in the field.

As the basic theoretical assumption of qualitative research, the social identity of women in Nepal as the actors explained, a second-class citizen was studied in the data collection process.

Qualitative research has a strong orientation to everyday events and/or the everyday knowledge of those under investigation. Action process-for instances, the development of advisory conversation are situated in their everyday concept (Flick et al. 2004, 8.)

The study analyzes the experiences of interviewees and participants of Demo Finland on gender equity approach. The perspectives of participants taken are based on their involvement in the political organizations, and experience in general sphere. The collected information supported to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to research process, meaningful patterns and structured results (Flick, Kardoff & Steinke 2004, 3.)

To assess the organization work till date, the online statistical data and information received from the organization was analyzed to measure the implications of actions undertaken by the organization to address the issue of gender

equality in political sector and its implications. The qualitative data in the research was collected through unstructured interviews. The interview data were used to construct effective meanings in terms of specific purpose of the study.

7.2 Qualitative Interview Method

A qualitative interviewing was used as it provides both an academic and a practical tool. It allows us to share the world of others to find out what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their worlds (Rubin & Rubin 1995, 5.)

For data collection, an unstructured interview was conducted with two different political youth and student organization members (male and female), a coordinator of Demo Finland and a student (female) of Development Studies. The interviewees were chosen through the networking contact and considering their experience and active involvement in the activities assisting on women's development issues and their inclusiveness in the country. The two interviewees here have minimum five years experience in the political sector.

As one of the challenges of unstructured interview mentioned by Zhang and Wildemuth (n.d), the method requires significant amount of time to gain trust and develop rapport, the networking was an advantage to the unstructured interview method to minimize the time limit (Zhand & Wildemuth n.d).

The interview was conducted individually providing a set of questions to all. The additional questions concerning the organization's background were added for the Demo Finland project information.

A qualitative research interview seeks to cover both a factual and meaningful level, although it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level. It is necessary to listen to the explicit description and to the meaning expressed, as well as what is said between the lines (Brinkmann & Kvale 2009.)

The languages used in the interviews were English and Nepali at participants' convenience. All the interviews were voice and video recorded while field notes were maintained when required. As Silverman (2011) has stated, even if some people are able to remember conversation better than others, we are unlikely to be able to recall such potentially crucial details as pauses and overlaps (Silverman 2011, 279).

7.3 Postcards Collection Review

A set of handwritten postcards by males and females participants from six different districts of Nepal was reviewed to support the study. The activity was a part of district level training in Saptari, Mahottari, Rauhahat, Bhajang, Siraha, Baglung, Bajura, Rolpa and Rupendehi districts of Nepal. Approximately 300 postcards were collected from the activity. The students from development studies faculty in Kathmandu valley also expressed their ideas of economic, social and political development in the process. This participatory approach was designed to incorporate general population demand to CA members. The contents mentioned below were mentioned repeatedly in the postcard addressed to CA members:

THEMES				DISTRICTS/REGION (NEPAL)
Gender Equality	Education/Economical Development	Political Empowerment	Social Barriers	Bajhang
CITATIONS				Baglung
				Rolpa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare programs focussing the women and families of remote regions. • Promote awareness programs related to gender discrimination and women security. • Compulsive and free education system for girls to increase girls' literacy rate. • Capacity building and political knowledge to women from district level. • Effective and stringent laws against all sorts of discriminations. • Proper use of natural resources and infrastructures development. 				Rupendehi
				Rautahat
				Mahottari
				Kathmandu

FIGURE 2: Postcards Data Analysis

Through the written content participants expressed their demands, questions and wishes to the national level legislators. The concept of message collection through postcards was to bring people's voice in written form stating a various problems related to women at grassroots level and rural areas in the country.

The participants inscribed about the difficulties that they face in everyday life due States' power structures and authorities. Women who were illiterate also expressed their demands in the cards with the help of other participants. Out of 300 postcards, one hundred cards were reviewed for the study. Each post card contained maximum five demands. Every data in the postcards were equally important however, the data that were arranged together to analyze where based on research topic as mentioned on the above diagram. The data collected through postcard review provided different themes in this research. The other citations contained in the postcards are presented in the topic, Findings of Research.

7.4 Data Analysis

According to Matthews and Ross (2010), data analysis as the collection of methods that are applied to the data we have gathered in order to present a description, interpretation, explanation, evaluation and analysis which can be understood more clearly. A group discussion, interviews, conversation, meeting and individual stories can have a powerful message behind them, which could help recognize individual identities, group belong and collective action (Riessman 2008).

The interviews were voice-recorded. The recorded data was listened and transcribe thoroughly. Transcripts were translated from Nepali to English language. A total number of fifteen pages of translated interviews were organized into a

coherent structure filtering relevant materials based on the themes in relation to the research questions, which produced reliable evidences.

While transforming the findings into required outcome, the research questions were overviewed as an analytic process. The unstructured interview provided interviewees freedom to express their thoughts and experiences. The interviewees also presented real life examples in connection to the topic to support the facts that they presented during interviews.

The finding of the research is based on the data collected through interviews and postcards reviews on the respective topic. The data analysis description for the research has been depicted in the table below;

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION	SOURCE OF DATA	METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS
Unstructured Interview	No. of pages transcribed & translated: 15 Individual Interview: 4 interviewees	Qualitative Analysis
Postcards Review	Postcards collected from 16 districts of Nepal No. of postcards reviewed:100	Thematic Analysis
Data from Demo Finland	Articles, information and previous evaluation	SWOT Analysis

FIGURE 4: Data Analysis Description

Figure 4 above illustrates the data collected in this study was processed and analyzed using three methods separately. The information gathered was useful to gain thorough knowledge of gender disparity phenomenon in political sphere, which was highly influenced by culture and social aspects. For example, the respondents frequently mentioned the patriarchal mindset of people and government policy in Nepal has affected equality in every sector.

A set of data collected consists of methods within the research topic such as interviews, postcards and data from the organization. This research is analyzed using thematic data analysis. As Braun and Clarke (2006) defined the thematic analysis method offers a way of identifying and providing a rich, detailed analy-

sis of patterns across a data set. The primary source of analysis was postcards written by the women participants from the districts. A thematic analysis is used to review the content in the postcards (Braun & Clarke 2006,3).

The postcards contained the obstacles Nepalese women face and recognize in their everyday life such as difficulties to access to education, economic development, identity and status in their own community. These factors have crippled their fundamental rights, political participation and well-being. In addition, during identification of themes the contents mentioned such as infrastructure, power outage problems, and high/elite class were considered relatively less relevant to the topic were separated from the final list. The data placed in an order listing the demands according to the districts and themes made it convenient to study.

The themes that emerged which were closely related to interviewees' description on the gender disparity issues were structured for answer to research questions. For instance, the high demand of free education to women and equal participation in politics reflected women's voice to equality. However, the less discussed ideas on compulsory education and meaningful participation in the context were marked to refer as recommendation and needs of training programs required to the participants.

Besides, the project work evaluation using SWOT analysis provided a review of organization's role in promoting gender parity in politics. The data to evaluate organization activities were based on Demo Finland reports and information gathered from staff members through interview and email correspondence. The implication of the activities was also assessed on the basis of participants' development in the political and leadership level. The number of 390 women who were trained through this program and example of four participants of Demo Finland are also presented in this research.

8 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

8.1 Participants' Demand to the Policy Makers

As mentioned above, a postcard to CA members was a collective demand of Demo participants to policy makers to be drafted in new constitution. The female participants took the opportunity to write down their common issues overlooked by policy makers. The following points are mentioned by a majority of participants considered as the voices of women in the districts:

- a) Free education, capacity building and leadership training for women.
- b) Vocational trainings and employment opportunities to Women and Youth.
- c) Stringent laws to end any type of violence against women.
- d) Citizenship rights for children on mother's name.
- e) 33% women representation in parliament implementation.
- f) Enable women as equal and fair participants and decision makers at the local level.
- g) Women political empowerment.
- h) Administrative, legislative and judicial measures to guarantee empowerment in law.
- i) Promote the awareness programs related to gender discrimination on local and national levels.
- j) Awareness program and trainings for males among high caste.

k) Recognize women's household work, care work in policies

Some of the participants condemned the quota system for women. According to them the policy gives an impression of ineffective approach to equality. Instead, the capacity building programs should be introduced for women in rural areas to make them capable to compete even without positive discrimination plan.

The demands of participants from urban areas (Kathmandu) and rural districts were comparatively less distinctive. The common agendas of women across the nation were their identity as a lawful citizen of a country holding equal rights in social, economic and political spheres as men.

8.2 Political Parties' Effort to Promote Gender Equality

Interim Constitution of Nepal adopted women's representation in the legislative parliament at 33%. According to the guidelines of Electoral commission, each political party has to ensure that 30% of female political members contend for FPTP election.

The active political members of Nepal Student' Union (NSU) and All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU) believe that their parties have a positive views on the women representation quota. The allocation shared equal opinions and task to design development programs for both women and men. However, the fact was not denied that it still lacks proper implementation of rules due to different mindset of the people within their parties.

In addition, the female interviewees recommended proper political knowledge to be provided to women interested in politics, which helps them to understand the party constitution and debate accordingly. The effective intervention from government level involving capacity building of women is important to resolve this problem. The male counterpart should take female participant as an equal contributor to the party's agendas and value their opinions. Male interviewee proposed for awareness training programs to be designed for male political mem-

bers to understand equal rights within their own political organization first, which means equal rights to opinions and decision-making.

The interviewees agreed on females' active involvement in politics creates a platform to put women related issues on the front; moreover women legislators acting on the behalf of women, or representing women's voices, forms an important part in favor of equal participation of men and women political bodies. (Interviewee A & Interviewee B & Interview C, personal communication 10.14.)

The patriarchy notion cannot be changed overnight. To break the notion awareness campaigns, leadership skills, and capacity building for women from grassroots level is required. But importantly, equal contribution of men and women is important to bring positive change.

8.3 Key Factors to Promote Gender Equality in Politics

The term gender equality is largely emphasized on women's role in social, economical and political sectors, however there are very less discussion held on men's responsibility to achieve gender equality. The issue of gender equality do not justify giving more power to women in every field, but underlines on equal distribution of power and rights to all levels of decision-making.

The literature of Bhatt (2013) reviewed in this research has provided a few credible factors affecting women's growth in developmental and political level. It has also presented a certain facts about women's status in the society due to traditional boundaries, and the role of women in policy level due to the limitations set by stereotype. In addition to the researched factors in the literature, the effort to reconsider men's significant involvement to gender equity is important. The challenges women politicians face in political organizations can be addressed developing implementable strategies within political framework. For example; training and awareness programmes, implementation of policies designed to promote equality and evaluation of the progress.

The societal pressure on man from the early age to be 'tough', and considered a 'breadwinner' designates a sense of more importance, physically and mentally in men than women. On the other hand, the same society teaches women to respect men as they provide protection, food and recognition to them. Societal pressure to uphold stereotyped notions of masculinity means men most often suppress this aspect of their human persona. Moving forward towards gender equality does not mean loss of masculinity. It explains that men as a group will be able to share and be part of a broader, healthier, safer, and richer cultural experience (UNESCO 2009.)

Therefore, the gender equality as a whole cannot be achieved without engaging men and boys. The pre-conceived notion of women's strengths and abilities can be break down by proper awareness training to men, and building capacity and leadership skills for women. The provision made of 33% women's participation in CA and 50% in each political organization needs to be reformed specifying women's effective role in every decision making level. The policy should not be limit up to women's quantity in government level, but the quality of their participation should be focused.

9 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES

This work has been a great experience for me in terms of studying the social issues in Nepal through different resources and theories applied. The topic allowed me to pursue my interest and learn about women in politics in a wider perspective.

In the context of Nepali society I had a radical view on the socio-cultural environment of the country, the research process has provided a guideline to analyze the scenario and be able to present the findings to professional social sector audiences. As a community development worker it is very important to understand a real life practice in the field in a holistic approach and its functions according to the needs of the community.

The networking skill is very essential in the social field as it creates a platform for social sector workers to connect with each other to exchange their ideas. The opportunity I got from DIAK to voluntarily participate in the Demo Finland workshop as a language translator/interpreter for Nepali youth political member participants. The experience motivated me to study precisely about the women's role in decision-making level in politics in Nepal. I transformed my networking into the resources that were added in this study. The interpersonal and listening skills have been the greatest strength to the study.

9.1 Ethical Consideration

The key actors in this work were the active political youth members of the two largest political parties in Nepal. Also, a project coordinator of Demo Finland in Nepal was interviewed for the organizational data. The social code of ethics was maintained throughout the entire process to ensure participants were not affected by the provided information or data.

Prior to conducting interview with the organization member, an administrative procedure was completed with Demo Head Office in Finland, and also a set of questionnaire was sent to the interviewee via email. The interviewees were chosen entirely on voluntarily basis. There was no monetary compensation included through the entire interview. The information provided by the participants associated with different political parties was filtered on the ground of accuracy and additional information supporting it.

As mentioned by Kvale and Brinkman (2009), the confidentiality of interviewees is required to be protected while transcribing the data whether a transcribed text justifies to the interviewees' verbal statement. Likewise, while analyzing the data the interpretation of the statements create ethical issues; such ethical issues were taken under consideration when preparing an ethical protocol for an interview study.

In addition, the statements provided by the interviewees on the basis of their political organizations' philosophy or manifesto required to be categorized according to the needs of the research. The individual interview was conducted to avoid disagreement and respect interviewees' different opinions on the same issue. The names of interviewees involved in political student and youth organization are kept undisclosed on ethical ground.

9.2 Learning Experiences

There were a handful of learning experiences gained during this research. A problem solving skill and to challenge myself to complete my work in specific time frame were the productive achievements. Working individually required a great amount of commitment. A data collection, meeting schedules and verifying information were continuous process while working alone. Nevertheless, it provided an ample opportunity to be more responsible and sensible.

The transcription and data translation was a tedious process. The translation of fifteen pages data from native language to English became resourceful due to my internship experience in the Qutomo Project of Vantaa Nicehearts ry in May 2013 as a Research Intern. I was able to develop academic approaches to the findings and recommend new ideas to the readers.

In 2013, during my three months practical internship in Swaziland I observed the phenomenon of social change through communities' support. I learned that such participatory method could be an effective example tool to incorporate to raise women from social boundaries.

Exploring various news articles and information related to my research topic provided essential context needed to understand the women's role in political, social and economical sectors in Nepal. The research discipline has shown a significant impact on my performance as a social work student that the systematic involvement leads to knowledge and understanding on the required field.

The overall procedure of writing research was a remarkable learning experience. The presented work is the reflection of tremendous effort put on from brainstorming on thesis ideas, interview method and exploring information in consultation with actors experienced in the field of the respective study including the supervisors.

10 DISCUSSION

A debate on women's role in economic, socio-cultural and political sector is drawing a fair amount of attention worldwide. The effort of organization on local and international levels to empower women access their rights have been so far effective in Nepal. In order to increase the number of women in politics and government structures, Nepal Government implemented laws of reservation quotas. However, there is still a huge amount of work to be done to increase women's leadership skill and meaningful political participation.

The research data underlined the importance of women's active political participation, which will provide them a wide platform to raise women related issues in policy level such as, violence, poverty, and lack of access to quality education. The participants in this research reciprocally agreed that the political participation of women is essential; however patriarchal system and socio-cultural boundaries are the root causes that hinder women to work or compete with men.

In contrast, the political organizations in Nepal considerably have minimum effort to promote equality within their political organizations. The discrimination while designating higher post has often been a big question in the party. The aptitude of female colleagues has often been overlooked due to prejudice on women's capabilities. The female candidacy for election has also been a challenge in political organization because women are perceived as a weak link for a large number of public votes.

The above statements can be justified with an example; along with men more than hundreds of women participated and sacrificed their lives during ten years armed conflict in Nepal (1996-2006). After the ceasefire and peace accord in 2006 the women's participation in the formal peace negotiation led by Government and mediated by United Nations (UN) was completed overlooked.

Also, a majority of female participants deliberately hesitate to compete with men due to traditional upbringing, lack of political knowledge and negative approach of their male counterparts. While women in politics have a tremendous pressure to prioritize their political party's identities rather than gender issues, for which they feel marginalized within the party structures.

10.1 SWOT Analysis Evaluation of Demo Project

There are relatively less awareness program on government level to promote equitable participation of women in politics and inclusion in decision-making levels. Various local and international level organizations in Nepal are playing a key role to carry out a wide range of programs designing a feasible environment for women to participate. However, the growth of NGOs and INGOs working in women's issues in the country proves that there need a lot of work to be done to address their issues.

Demo Finland is the first and by far only NGO in Nepal working in coordination with twenty major political youth and student organizations. It has a major contribution to develop leadership skills in women from district level and advocate for their fundamental rights inside the political frame in Nepal.

The work accomplished by Mobilizing Youth for Gender Equality in Politics project till date is assessed here through project structure study and implications on its target group. A one-year period is relatively insufficient time to measure the organization's impact in the development field; nonetheless a SWOT analysis method is used to combine the study of the strength, weakness, opportunities and threat of the organization. The table presented below overviews above-mentioned tools:

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Cooperation with the largest youth and political parties in Nepal. b) Steering Committee members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A new organization. b) Under industrialization process. c) Limited number of Staffs. d) Funding in proportion to request of stakeholders and target groups.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Uniqueness in being co-operative organization of all political parties in the Finnish Parliament. b) Provides scopes to work beyond limited groups and actors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Unstable political situation in Nepal b) Changes in position/stands of stakeholders/target groups. c) Conflict in terms of relationship management d) Natural Calamities

FIGURE 3: SWOT Analysis on Demo's Project

The Figure 3 above describes the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat of Demo Finland from strategy planning to the implementation of action planned. The organization works in coordination with a large political parties' alliance JYSP, which has been the organization's biggest strength to facilitate equality in politics. The co-operative relationship with the stakeholders and coordination from the Steering Committee members to work together aside party

differences has been a key factor to carry out the activities in different districts. The participation of female participants as committee members has offered women to play a significant role between political organizations and Demo to create effective network to ensure gender parity.

On the other hand, the organization is relatively new to strategize plans into action, integrate fundamental values into organizational structure. There is inadequate number of human resources as being in the initial phase of action plan. The organization itself being a cooperative body of all political parties in Finnish Parliament has given an identity of uniqueness considered as an opportunity to broaden its mandate.

The uncertain change in the structure of stakeholders due to political instability creates potential risk and threat to organization's planned actions. The involvement of different youth political group organizations with different ideologies could invite conflict in strategy plan, which could be risk to the organization operation (Rakesh Karna, personal communication 17.11.14.)

Also, the external factors such as political instability, natural disaster and delayed in election can possibly obstruct the action plan operation. The organization has developed its contingency plans to operate its activities effectively without affecting from those social, cultural, political and environmental circumstances. In the case of political fluctuation and natural disasters or calamities the organization has planned to narrow down its geographical coverage of the action or relocate the activities to safer areas. To minimize the impacts of threats the organization has designed contingency measures such as considerable amount of flexibility on time and action format (Demo Finland 2013.)

11 CONCLUSION

In the context of Nepal, social exclusion was seen in political representation, before democracy. The disproportional representation in governance structures based on caste system existed until the decade long civil war. The CPN/Maoists ideology of gender and class equality within their People's Liberation Army (PLA) was appreciated by hundreds of Nepalese.

However, the lack of basic education, less support from families, lack of political knowledge, economic insecurity and patriarchal prejudices are seen as the major obstacles for women's active participation in political sphere. These social impediments can be changed slowly through awareness raising, training programs, capacity building, community mobilization and educational programs facilitated by NGOs and INGOs. This study has also presented some examples on traditional and ritual practices violating rights of women and girls.

The local NGOs and INGOs in Nepal have a significant effort in social and development sectors. However, a long-term sustainability due to organizational mandate and funding has been a huge challenge. A holistic approach to ensure greater participation of women in politics needs to be introduced. The organizations should emphasize that a quota system entails a certain percentage of female candidates' participation, but such policy does not guarantee their effective involvement in decision-making levels.

Some programs interlinked with other programs, such as gender equality program linked with Early Childhood Education Development and Care, girls education in rural areas and micro finance schemes training programs will provide a comprehensive ideas of sustainability, and keep close partnership with the stakeholders for common goal. The local communities can be involved in the areas where the communities have taken initiative to social change.

Demo Finland effort to participatory approach on providing young women platform to raise their voices through the activity programs is commendable. The common issues of women highly affecting the everyday life in rural areas should be included in the new constitution of Nepal while drafting women's development policy. For the effective impact of the activity a follow up on the demands submitted to CA is highly recommended to the organization.

In addition, the role of Demo Finland should also maintain an equal contribution male and female's participation in its activity programs. Considering the organization's main strength as working jointly with twenty major political Youth and Student wings, a continuous group discussion for distribution of equal opportunities should be encouraged. The needs assessment should be included as a part of Demo's program as well as encourage assessing the weakness and strengths within parties.

Similarly, within the platform also the organization should strongly lobby for women's equal participation for exchange training program visits, which will give equal opportunity to the exposure. The role of Finnish Embassy in Nepal was not visible throughout the research process. As mentioned the organization itself being a cooperative organization of all political parties in Finland, it could be considered as an opportunity to the Demo to expand its work plan.

Women need proper qualification and political knowledge to ensure their participation. To educate women to be able to debate meaningfully it requires a quality education and leadership training programs. Gender equality cannot be achieved without the involvement of men and communities. Therefore, raising awareness programs among men and the communities will help minimize negative stereotypes and build equal relationship between both the genders.

Likewise, different political parties promoting the gender equality in the country should adopt effective policies within their own organizations first. The national policies affect both male and female, hence every political organization should

acknowledge that there should be equal participation of both genders in the formulation of policies.

To see the significance of sustainable programs women should be educated and trained in their interested fields. They should not be judged on the basis of their gender, but their abilities to learn and contribute to the nation should be highly emphasized. Women empowerment should involve the rights to meaningful participation in all levels of society, access to available resources and recognition in decision-making process. The skills they have should be enhanced to make them able to utilize their capacity fully.

Gender equality through meaningful participation of women in political construction is vital step to achieve democratic system in Nepal. The system will provide inclusiveness and legal provisions that protects fundamental rights of women. The commitment from men to fight against gender discriminatory practices is very important because the gender inclusiveness policy is not accomplished without the participation of both, male and female.

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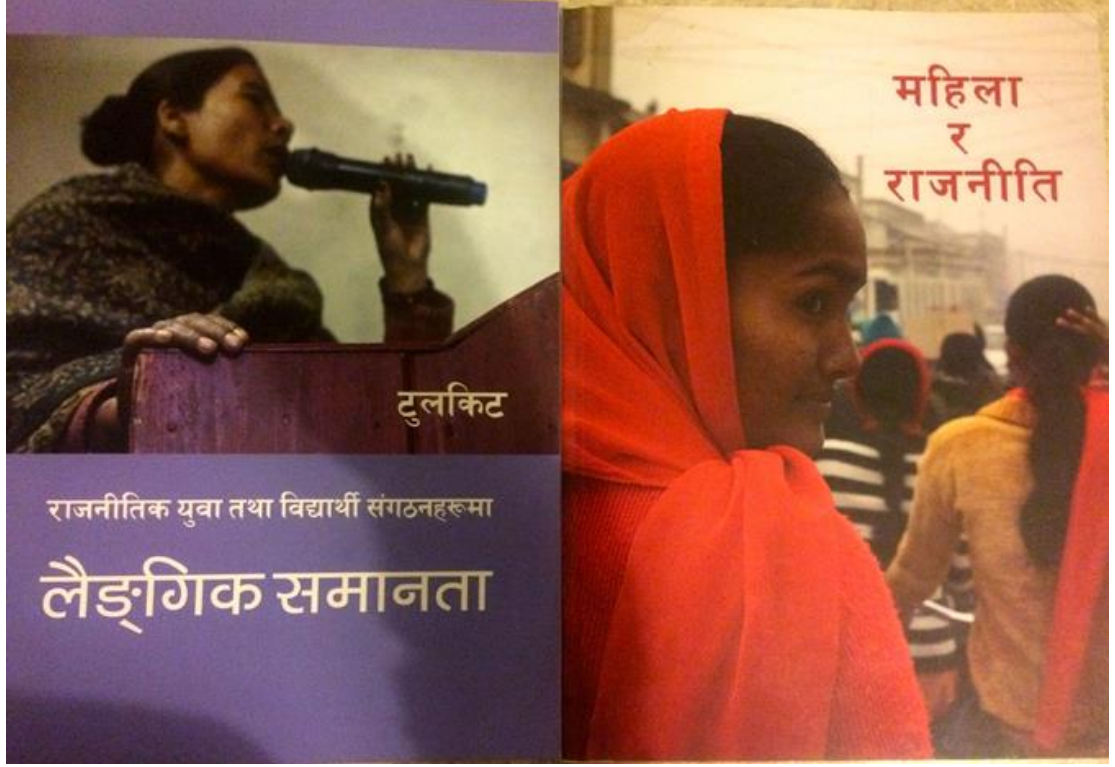
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APPENDIX-1: DEMO FINLAND ACTIVITIES TOOL KITS



APPENDIX-2: POSTCARDS TO CA MEMBERS

