

A Glance of Madhesh Women Empowerment, Parsa in Nepal



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Acknowledgment

This substantive product on Madhesh Women Empowerment is possible through the immense contribution of more than 100 people from different walks of the life in Parsa. It is possible due to extensive support provided by the SanoPaila, a NGO, led by a very committed young people. Thus, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to SanoPaila specially to Subir Ghos, Shailendra Tripathi and Kanchan Jha.

Similarly, I am so much thankful and express my gratitude to Dr. Rajababu Shrestha, SP, District Police office, Parsa for allowing me to join in various grand programs such as Public Hearing in Thori, UNDP's Gender Responsive Development workshop, Sister's for Sister program, Stop Urination at Street etc.

I also grateful with all respondents included former minister, commissioner, political leaders, journalist, social entrepreneurs, experts, civil servants, social worker, religious leaders, activists etc. for their time and honest sharing regarding the perception, and experience on various dimension of women empowerment and menstrual restrictions in Parsa district, Nepal.

September 2016

Radha Paudel

Kathmandu

Foreword from Researcher

Originally, I born in Chitwan lies Terai region of Nepal and spent about half of my life in many parts of Terai in various organizations at different capacity. I have travelled entire Terai from east to west from 2001 to 2009. Specially from 2005 to 2009, I went from village to village of districts of Terai districts such as Morang, Sunsari, Udayapur, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Parsa, Bara, Makwanpur, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Rupendehi, Banke, Bardiya, Dhangadi. I was wondering why the Terai is not moving since long whereas it has so many things as prescribed for development which are not have in hills and mountain.

The Madhesh Movement was evolved from People's Movement II, 2006/2007 then the issue of exclusion of Madhesh community is prominent in political and development discourse. In 2015, the Madhesh movement again raised up and continued for about seven months due to disappointed in constitution 2015. It was political issue so almost human right defenders and institutions were remained quite though there was huge violence of human rights from both sides; Madhesh movement and government.

On behalf of Radha Paudel Foundation (see in box), I went to various districts of Terai, hills and mountain for two months in order to sense the status of human right and peace building due to seven months prolonged blockade (I publish couple of articles and will publish in depth report later). I also initiated 'Peace Vigil' for meaningful dialogue started from Sarlahi and went up Siraha, Dhanusha, Parsa, Chitwan, Banke, Dhangadi and so on.

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Further, my thirst is increasing to know more about the Madhesh women's empowerment because most of the Madhesh leaders were claiming that there is exclusion, discrimination and so on but I hadn't get any specific answer when I was in Parsa again in April 2016 while Rinku Thakur broke the family and societal norm on child, early or forced marriage and Dowry. I also find hard time to get the literature on it. Thus, finally, I went to Parsa in order to unpack the understanding and perception on exclusion of women in Madhesh from the experience of Parsa.

Radha Paudel Foundation:

In order to build synergy among the single, simple and small efforts of all best wishers, friends, relatives and organizations who simply belief and follow the philosophy and mode of deliverables of Ms. Radha Paudel. It is yet to registered but has been started the activities already. The final and single motto is to *speak up* the issues which are unheard, extend *solidarity* who are excluded and build *synergy* for cause. In this connection, this study conducted for exploring the realities from a marginalized Madheshi community, expose it for changing mindset of stakeholders and urge to join the hands for overarching goal of sustained Peace and prosperity through peace, human right and empowerment.

It was conducted in very voluntary basis under the organization Radha Paudel Foundation (yet to formalize). I had dinner and slept with Swastika Giri, at Nagawa, Birgunj except a night at hotel but paid for two. Subir and myself took care of cost of transport and snacks whenever we together. Each evening, I was picked up and drop off by Dinesh, Umesh Chandra Giri who are *Miteri* (*Please refer to the book, Jumla, a nurses memoir*) nephews.

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Hope this report will be eye opening and reference for all individuals and institutions who are interested women empowerment in Nepal.

Should you have any queries, feel free to write me at rpaudel456@gmail.com.

Hope you would enjoy to read and I could make contribution for my Madhesh women and Nepal at large.

September 2016

Radha Paudel

Abbreviation

CDO	Chief District office
DDC	District Development Office
GBV	Gender Based Violence
SP	Superintendent of Police
VAW	Violence Against Women
VDC	Village Development Office
WCDO	Women and Child Development Office

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Executive Summary

This study entitled '***A Glance of Madhesh Women Empowerment, Parsa, Nepal***' was conducted for exploring the social, economic, political and menstrual practices among Madhesh women in order to assessing their empowerment. Social empowerment included clothing, festival, education, caste system, technology, mobility, health, disability, citizenship, marriage, dowry, Gender Based Violence (GBV), suicide, rape, alcoholism and substance use. Likewise, the political empowerment covered Madhesh movement, women's participation, inclusion, dalit rights, status of children and youths. Similarly, under the economic empowerment women's work load and economic opportunities discussed well. Menstrual restriction is also discussed as an important component of peace, human right and empowerment. Meanwhile the state and non- state stakeholders also participated in the data collections process. They were government authorities, NGOs, media, political leaders and Village Development Committee (VDC) secretaries. It was a week-long field work conducted in August 2016 where observation, in depth interview, group meetings were used to collect primary data and information with the people from various walks of life.

There are many reasons for being backward of Madhesh women; i) the poor mind set on women's right, ignorance on policies, dominant by traditional harmful practices, stigma and discrimination, ii) do not have power to make decisions even household chores, iii) women are so much economically dependent on their male members, subjected to various forms of violence within and outside of the family but considered stigma and matter of family prestige to report to police and any service providers, iv) the political parties are not taking accountability at local and national level, v) child marriage, dowry, substance use, menstrual taboos, sexual abuse and

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exploitation are rampant so youths are also struggling so much, vi) women are remained so silence though almost all women are suffering from various forms of violence at home from their nearer and dearer, vii) lack of willingness among NGOs, Government authorities, viii) women's participation still low priority, and ix) the VDC secretary are over burden, taking care of two villages by one and everything have to do by them due to pro longed absence of elected bodies.

In this vein, this study recommended the following activities for expedite the empowerment of women in Madhesh.

i) Issues based intervention; Child or Early or forced marriage and Dowry: These issues were addressed by policies since 1963 AD. Currently, many state and non-state actors are engaged to abolish it but they focus once the puberty start which is so wrong practice. A very critical engagement required since conception to abolish such social evils as mentioned below.

A. Intervention at the Family level

- recognize the households who have newly married couple and the young daughters or planned to have girl child
- engage with them, could form groups, hang with income generating activities
- impart the concepts such as factor of determination of sex, gender, role of parents for equal treatment for girls and boys at home, family and community more focused on social norms, values and emotions constitutional rights of girls, share the role model women etc.
- Use participatory tools where family members can understand the values of child not a boy or girl.

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- Identify the best household and awards them by providing economic opportunities where family can build confidence for economic independence.

B. Intervention at the school level

- By considering the second home and second layer of parents, school also concentrate on equality by maintaining language, institutional arrangement e.g. toilet.
- There should be abolish the discrimination between girls and boys and female teachers and male teachers.
- The notion of gender equality has to apply across all activities as a value of school
- The best or role models teacher and students should awarded

C. Intervention for stakeholders between family and schools

- For enhancing the negotiation or bargaining skills of parents, the economic opportunities should provide to group and individuals with conditions.
- Community should ensure a grant or fund to provide support on safety, education and job to those girls and parents who breakthrough the societal norms. For instance, Rinku Thakur left the home but there is no mechanism to celebrate her heroism, no mechanism for continue her education, her safety and security and job guarantee after graduation.
- The hero should use a resource person and their stories should make documentary, flash mobs etc.
- The political parties should stand strictly to educate, to abolish and to punish perpetrators.

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- The research, documentation and dissemination should continuously do as appropriate local

2. *Issues based specific intervention: Gender Based Violence included witchcraft, rape, physical assault, sexual abuse, harassment, exploitation etc.:* few activities are repeated here as mentioned in above.

A. *engagement of boys and men for accountability:* many NGOs and even WCDO is organizing activities only for girls and women e.g. *Sister's to Sister* program. The gender based violence are happening due to individual and relational attitudes, values and behaviours. Thus, to challenge own self and others or group, boys and men should engage for building individual and relational accountability where the community feel the equal behaviour between boys and girls, men and women and eliminate the various forms of GBVs.

B. Likewise, *engagement with faith healers as well as encourage to rewrite the religious book.* It could be difficult for district level of stakeholders though the discussion can be bring up for building critical mass in favour of this for future action.

3. *The enforcement of existing policies is very important.* As like police office (2015/2016) without listening any pressure and threat, the trend of GBV could be reduced.

4. The overall, *the interferential (hastachhepkari niti) should adopt* to take step ahead in social transformation by all stakeholder. This is the crucial time to respect the people's expectation and neutralize the frustration in order to contribute peace building process.

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This is also time to cross the comfort zones to take corrective actions around religion, culture and all as like SP, Dr. Rajababu Shrestha as role model in Parsa.

5. Critical engage should make with faith healers such as Maulana, Pandit in order to abolish the religious extremities for empowering girls and women.

6. The authorities includes ministers, political parties and local authorities should do periodic mentorship, follow up and practice of reward and punishment

7. The research, monitoring and documentation of the women empowerment activities constantly in order to do evidence based advocacy and result oriented project implementation.

8. The political parties need constant input on capacity building of them on contents of women empowerment, advocacy and monitoring.

9. The media also considered an important wing of women empowerment thus funding and capacity should be enhanced by stakeholders.

This report simply organized in four chapters; introduction, methodology, discussion and conclusion. It was conducted by Radha Paudel Foundation in facilitation of Sano Paila, Parsa.

Introduction:

Parsa district lies in Narayani zone, central development region, Federal number three and a district of Terai. Birgunj is the headquarter of it. It is surrounded by Bara, Chitwan, Makwanpur, India (state of Bihar) in east, west, north and south respectively.

It is called an industrial hub and have the busiest boarder for transportation to and from India. It has one Metro Municipality, a Municipality, 15 Ilakas, 5 electoral area (DDC's website, 2016). It is well connected with Kathmandu by east west high way and airport via Simara, Bara. According to the CBS (2011), it has 95,536 households, 601,



017 population where 288,659 are female and 312,358 are male. The adult literacy of Parsa is 69.7 % where 79.7% are male and 56.3% are female which is less than the national figure 84.7% /89.9% male and 80.2% female) and considered very weak (UNSECO, 2013). The mean year of school is 3.9 years. It has 83 % Hindu, 14% Muslim, 2% Buddhist and smaller share of other religion (DDC Parsa). According to the 2001 statistics, the 3% Chhetris, 7 % Brahmins, 16 % Janjati, Dalit 14 % and 41 % Madheshi other than Dalits. The 66 % households use firewood 16 % cow dung, 16 % cooking gas whereas 72 % households use electricity and 24% kerosene for lighting.

Statement of the Problem:

Nationally, Nepal has tremendous political changes. As a result, Nepal has female president, speaker and the constitution 2015 exclusively mentioned about the

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rights of the women and girls. But there are many gaps between fundamental and substantive rights. More importantly, more than 200 laws should amend in order to alignment with constitution 2015. Despite having progressive constitution in South Asia, the citizenship right is still discriminate between male and female.

In order to transfer the governmental plans and policies in to action as well as reaching out the most marginalized women, Parsa district development office (DDC) endorsed the gender audit in June 2016. As national level progress, Parsa also endorsed the plans and policies but yet to enforcement of the policies (Tiwari S. , 2013) also claimed that the women from Madhesh are marginalized and oppressed socially, politically and economically than other backgrounds due to poor access to education, health and employment and confined within traditional practices such as son preferences, dowry etc.

Often Parsa district is keep coming in to media due to various forms of Gender Based Violence. Though, the rape, witchcraft, dowry, murder, misuse of resources etc., Parsa is being progress on status of girls and women. In March 23, 2016, a 18 years girl, named Rinku Thakur, left the house by thrown away her all educational documents and citizenship and refused child and early marriage against the wish of her parents and neighbourhood. Likewise, many women from Parsa were holding ministers on behalf of their political parties. Nevertheless, there are many issues are underpinning which hindering to transform their perception, build agency and capabilities, use assets and raise their voices. This paper attempted to peeling up and let to know to all donors, policy makers and other stakeholders across levels and sectors where relevant.

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Purpose of the Study:

The main purpose of the study is to uncover the realities of marginalization and exclusion of Madhesh women through the analysis of Parsa district for their empowerment. The specific purposes are;

1. To assess the socio-cultural context around women
2. To examine the political situation of women
3. To explore the economic situation regards to women
4. To assess the menstrual restriction in Madheshi community

Research Question:

1. What is socio-cultural context women have at Parsa?
2. Why do they are following such social cultural practices?
3. What is status of political participation of women?
4. Why do they have such participation?
5. What is the economic condition of women?
6. Why they do have such condition?
7. What sorts of menstrual restriction follow by women at Parsa?
8. Why do they follow such practices?

Rationale:

The empowerment of women is key core concern in international human right discourse. There are many declaration and covenants such as Universal Declaration of Human Right 1948, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Convention the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Convention on the Rights of Child, discussed the social, cultural, economic, political rights in a way

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and the other around. As a signatory country, Nepal obligate to incorporate in to its policies and actions. In this same vein, Nepal government has promulgated pro-gender constitution 2015. It says; protection from any forms of gender based violence, safe motherhood and reproductive health, right to participation in all sectors and levels on the basis of proportional inclusion, affirmative action at education, health, employment, social security, equality in property rights. However, there is discrimination in equal citizenship right as well as inconsistency between fundamental rights and other subsequent rights.

As alignment of constitution, there are many acts, rules and guidelines which created enabling environment for empowering women in all sectors and levels with special focus for poor, marginalized and excluded women.

However, the status of Madhesh women is not much priority for research/studies yet except few students of Masters and PhD. In media, informal discussion, NGO's world, people are saying that Madhesh women are in exclusion but no one has answer of what, how, how and the ways to overcome it. This researcher was so confused not having proper evidences for advocating on it. Thus, for filling the gap of Madhesh women empowerment, this study is very crucial and important.

Methodology:

Research Design: This study is designed as qualitative research based on interpretative world view.

Research Sample: The participants identified and interviewed on the basis of purposive.

Research Data: Both Primary and secondary data collected and reviewed during the data collection process. The primary data included the group meetings, observation, in depth interview whereas secondary data included review of journals, articles, reports published by state and non-state actors.

Research Participants: Primarily, women were the key participants of the research though there were many key informants were included from various walks of the life including youths, business people, scholars, politicians, government authorities etc.

Research Tools: The three types of tools used during the course of data collection that helped to triangulate the data and information. They were;

In depth interview: In order to explore the status of women empowerment in Parsa, researcher took in depth interview with various walks of life in Parsa. They were government employee, CSO representatives, activists, private sectors etc.

Group meetings: The total four group meetings conducted by researcher; youth volunteers, women entrepreneurs, women leaders and nurses.

Observation: During the course of data collection, researcher observed few activities and institutions such as Muslim orphan home (etimkhana Mothersa), rehabilitation centre, sub regional hospital, stakeholder's consultation for gender

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responsiveness, sister's to sister program (girl's congress), stop urinate on street, public hearing, rally, cleansing campaign, candle light ceremony etc.

The verbal consent was taken before administration of research tools. The data collection had done in 11-18 August, 2016.

Date	Activities
August 11, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departure from Kathmandu to Birgunj by bus and to SanoPaila by Riksha • Had meeting with team of SanoPaila
August 12, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had Rally on international Youth day • Address the corner assembly • Joined Cleansing campaign • Spoke over Thahakhabar radio • Observed of Ektim Khana Mothersa • Addressed at meeting of STOP urinate at street • Meeting at Court regarding justice for children • Meetings with SP • Meeting with Social /Political Activist • Meeting with youth activist • Joined at Candle light ceremoney
August 13, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview at Terai Radio • Meeting with Executive Chair of Terai Radio • Joined the team of public hearing atThori along with Asst. CDO

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August 14, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Journalist, Chandra Kishor Jha • Meeting with Dr Susma Tiwari • Meeting with Women Development Office
August 15, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with women political leaders, minister, commissioner • Meeting with DEO • Meeting with Social Entrepreneur, Shayma Badan
August 16, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and child service Center, Police office, Parsa • Joined the consultation meeting of UNDP with VDC secretaries • Meeting with Ganesh Lath, Business and social worker
August 17, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed Sister's to sister program

Limitation of the Study: This study is limited in only Parsa district due to constraints in resources.

Discussions and Findings:

Socio-Cultural Empowerment:

Society and culture are the key important institutions for constructing gender, masculinity and patriarchy. As a result, the status of women is defined in all societies. Despite having the good infrastructure such as transport, media, road, health, education etc. in Parsa, women far behind due to socio-cultural practices. For instance, the Human Development Index (2014) showed that the Humla and Rautahat) neighbouring district of Parsa have similar form in education of a component of human development. Here, the society is holding all forms of harmful

or irrational traditional practices as a symbol of pride and culture.

For Instance, when

Rinku Thankur

refused the early and forced marriage, even

the intellectuals,

journalist said the

Parsa has different

context (Paudel R.,

2016). However,

there are few

practices changed

already as follows;

The quality of education is depressing in compare to 15-20 years back. Women from the west and southern part are more backwards in many ways. Parents discontinue their girl's education once they graduated 8-10 grades due to prestige, fear of love marriage. However, the number of girls are high than boys in public school due to sending boys to private schools. There are many reasons behind the poor quality education in very complex manner. Even the teacher has not had passion as earlier days. They work as like political leaders and always like to stay in headquarter by showing many irrational reasons. Even the female teachers learned same behaviours and do not like to stay in village. There is no influence of gender focal person (N-54) and female teachers in quality education, many girls are leaving school. Currently a NGO supplies sanitary pad at school but it is not used due to culture of stigma. The 75 % schools don't use the toilet due to not having water supply. Additionally, no one ready to clean their toilets. In such programs, NGOs also exclude boys so the stigma from boys and ignorance among boys still same. In many schools, the teachers for lower class are teaching for higher classes and they are using traditional methods even after series of teacher's trainings on methodology. There are cases reported of rape and other forms of abuse by teacher. Likewise, the school management committee is not working as their intended role but do as political parties e.g. bribing in election. Parents also responsible for such condition but they yet to realize it. They do not like to learn from media but follow the rumours and creating conflict at home and school. Here, the parents forced to make fake documents by adding years e.g. making passport, citizenship for aboard migration, early marriage. Once girls have citizenship and they get marriage with Indians and easy to start business. As a chief, I am trying to make happen but experiencing so much threats from political parties, teachers and so on.

DEO, Parsa

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Clothing: the ghumto pratha (covering the forehead) is decreasing and women started to face with their male members at home and community. It is also an outcome of abroad migration of their husbands or male members. The market also changed, hanging many modern attire compare to 15 years back. However, even educated and working women covered their head by sarees and shawl while working at home. They are not allowing to wear the dress what they can use at public life.

Festivals: this community has been celebrating many fest and festivals which helps to create community harmony, unity and solidarity for cause. But during the most of activities, they keep center to their children and husband (wish for healthy and long life) and suffer by themselves so much. And women are sole responsible to manage all forms of festivals.

Education: The number of girls in school is significantly high than boys due to sending boys to private schools. But the number of girls is gradually decreasing when they reached grade 9,10 due to fear among parents of dowry, poverty, losing prestige, poor menstrual hygiene and management in school and largely ignorance among parents. Though the promotional activities are operated by government, there is no significant result indeed. It could be lack of specific parental guidance or counselling or incentives to encourage parents to continue the school to their girls. More importantly, the role of school management committee (SMC) is not productive as intended by the government of Nepal. Many candidates of SMC contested by paying ransom (a form of corruption), which is very odd by many ways. As a result, they focused on development activities where they can play or misuse of funds rather doing the jobs as they supposed to do. The school is not connected with society, also fail to articulate the concerns of life and society. The language is also

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key barrier for access to quality education. A curriculum in local language was developed seven years back but not utilized. It was considered burden by teachers, parents and students. Indeed, having the competency in more language is an asset for future. Thus, hill origin girls more educated and empowered than Madhesh origin.

Caste discrimination: Though the caste system abolished in 1963, the discrimination on the basis of caste system is still practicing in Parsa. Researcher observed while conducting data and information in field. However, in public places specially in cities, no one dare to ask the caste.

Technology: The use of mobile, television is seen everywhere by girls and women. The DDC Parsa claimed that 60 % population are using mobiles and more than 39 % population enjoying with televisions. But, parents, school teachers and others believed that the adolescents are not using it for constructive purposes. In observation, girls and women, boys and men were watching funny, Hindi movies on mobile, television. Even the school children aware about all programs and news update from neighbouring country not of Nepal due to easy access with multi channels without payment whereas Nepali national channel has to pay for access with.

Mobility: women's mobility is increasing in two ways; i) the male members are in abroad migration so women are out of house for family activities including banking, communication etc., ii) few families migrated to city due to having money from remittance for their children's education and health. In many cases, women enhanced their negotiation and collaboration skills even solving the family demands and issues. Respondents also shared what they heard on misuse of remittance money and cheated their partners (husband or wives).

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Health: Despite having access to transport, easy access with border and all, the health service is very poor in Parsa where women are heavily affected. The government's hospital, Narayani Sub regional hospital is dirty, contaminated, mass of visitors here and there. Staff including doctors, nurses, administrative and others frustrated so much and feeling of anarchical everywhere. Many respondents do not have faith on hospital and going private hospital which is in queue in both sides of the hospital. Even the quality of private hospitals is below the average level so many of them often go to Kathmandu or India. During the field trip, the laboratory was under investigation by local authority.

In the villages, there were many cases of maternal death due to prolonged or obstructed labour, snake bites, elephant attack etc. The rural villages are not connected with city; muddy road and many rivers without bridges so the death is not controlled yet. In Thori, a mother dead just last month due to not operating the birthing centre for 24 hours as government mandate.

Disability: The people with disability are not able to get identity cards and social securities due to not accessible with service providers. The process is very lengthy and expensive as well. The respondents of public hearing were sharing hardship for making as well as not mainstream as they deserved. And there is no disable friendly structures wherever went for data collection.

Citizenship: Respondents of group meeting and in depth interview shared that the authorities often doubt on their identity and asked for many unnecessary documents. There are many inter country marriages since history. Respondents from Thori said that the authorities simply assumed them that they are Indian but indeed they were migrated from eastern hills during King Mahendra's regime in order to protect the boarder in 2011 B.S. In addition, the CDO (Chief District office) is far, 2-6 hours in

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public bus which is not regular. In order to save time, they simply hook up with brokers and many of them had involved bribing too.

Marriage: The child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage comes under this title. Due to massive advocacy on child and early marriage, the respondents aware on it though have observed tough to implement for their daughters and sisters. They have fear of elope or love marriage (voluntary) and demanding of ransom as Dowry. The nine girls reported as child or early and forced marriage in 2015. The majority of community sacred from community or neighbourhood to send schools to their girls and sister due to fear of society too. They could not reject the value of their community. By and large, they considered the daughter or sisters as burden of the family for their education, dowry and others since they recognize the sex of child during birth. It is associated with their religion and decision of priest (Maulana for Muslim and Pandit for Hindu). In many cases, the marriage happens without seeing each other and not consulting with girls. In Muslim, it sounds bit liberal, at least parents ask to girl whether she is fine or not. Girl should reply yes for three times to agree to marry with this boy. Thus, boy pay ransom to girl's parents (bride price). Muslim also allow to marry within blood or family relation which is not allow by science.

Gahuna: it is also a form of child marriage prominent in Terai. Usually, it happens in quite young ages. Girls returned to their husband's house after about 2-3 years of Gahuna. Respondents witnessed that such Gahuna practices not effective for both girl and boy due to change in the thought process on marriage, choice of partner and other skills so the conflict begins at home in many senses. As a result, girls encountered with various forms of violence including killing, suicide, divorce, polygamy and so on.

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In Parsa, many parents made the fake birth certificate and passport by adding few years on their children for marriage and abroad migration. Boys added that their sisters got marriage when they were like 17-20 years who had degree of 7 class to bachelor degree. In many cases, high schools are far from home so parents afraid to send them there due to feeling of unsafe and insecurity. Once the girls have citizenship, it is easy to get marriage with Indians because they get the opportunity for starting Business in Nepal.

Dowry: The child or early marriage or level of education of girls/boys is associated with dowry in Parsa. Few respondents are working as social and political activist. Their daughter and girls have Master's degree even though they are giving dowry. It reflects the gap between negotiation skills and life as well as how much dowry practice embedded in the community as a prestige. Thus, abolishing dowry practice is not easy due to not available girls or parents as role models like Rinku Thakur for early and forced child marriage. Nowadays, the dowry also changes its shape. Respondents experienced that the ransom for dowry is directly deposited to the bank or purchased the materials before the exact date of marriage. Here, the level of confidence is loosed by both girl's parent and girl. It is happening due to the intervention on anti-dowry, child marriage up to the parents or family level in order to make equality at family since birth.

Gender Based Violence (GBV): The joint family still dominant in Parsa where the in-laws are key power holders at family and community activities. Many female respondents experienced that the in-laws often misuse the power once the husband

The Violence related with Gender Based Violence reported at Police Office in 10 months											
Time	Ra pe	Attemp ted Rape	Human Trafficking	Polyga my	Child Marriage	Illegal Abortion	Murder	Aa Ha	Witch craft	VAW	Rescue
2072/73	17	7	6	3	0	0	9	30	2	860	121
2071/72	11	10	2	8	1	1	12	66	1	950	99
2070/71	17	4	8	4	-	-	5	35	3	380	103
<p>Note: The reporting pattern is affected by about 7 months' strike by Madhesh Movement. Minimum 150 cases per month is reported. The verbal report is not counted under this data collection. The VAW (Violence Against Women) included verbal abuse, physical assault, deprivation from food and health care, extra marital relationship, polygamy, divorce. Now, people encourage to report the cases directly due to the program organized by police office called Police my friend. Usually women came to report once they have so much suffering otherwise they tried to reconcile at home and community. In many cases Police office also try to mediate usually for VAW. In many cases, the VAW repeat after 3-4 months once they mediate at police office. The male violence not reported yet but misuse of money was reported when male was aboard.</p> <p><i>Raj Kumari Thapa, Women and children Service Center, Police Office, Parsa</i></p>											

is not at home. In case of uncooperative husband, the GBV is every day as like meal no matter whether their husbands at home or not. He mobilized the mother, sisters or friends/relatives and started to give torture. UNDP found that Parsa is one of the most GBV prevalent district in Terai. There are many reasons behind having GBV in Parsa. During field work, it is concluded that many stakeholders possess high positions, advance educational degrees and have high economic status but not understand the gender and gender based violence. Many girls and women do not have self-confidence to bring the issue forward due to economically dependent, insecure and societal value. Girls and women are facing sets of violence at everyday life but no way to speak. They just keep secrete till the severe state like matter of life and death, said by respondents of public hearing. The inferiority complex, humiliation, losing self-confidence since childhood when they realize that the parents and neighbourhood pay more privileges to the boy.

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Suicide: According to the SP, the 40 girls committed suicide during 10 months' tenure in 2016. It showed a severe form of depression might existence due to imposing various forms of stereotyped gender roles by family and community including deprivation from basic human needs.

Rape: The reporting of rape cases also increasing. Due to not having as well as using practice of toilet, many girls and women subjected to rape while having toilet in farm or land or big canal or bush etc. The criminals are disappearing to India due to open boarder so difficult to minimize as well.

Alcoholism: Often GBV associated with alcoholism within family and outside. During field trip, observed many alcoholic men and dispute and fight at village.

Substance Use: Researcher had faced with the gang of substance users, coming either very rich or poor family background due to having access with money and materials as member of supply chain. More importantly, the open boarder is also accelerating the issue of substance use. The girls are also there with same background.

Political Empowerment:

Madhesh Movement at Parsa: Researcher has already documented entire perception of the Madhesh movement 2015/2016. Thus, this report will not discuss in details. Parsa was always in center while the Madhesh movement was running due to the border with India called Miteri Pul (Miteri Bridge). The agitators who were there also interviewed for this research as well. Many supporters had not understood the essence of the Madhesh movement. They simply demanded few agenda as observed in media by key Madhesh leaders. However, almost all respondents were joined movement with spontaneously, enthusiasm, hope and commitment. Specially women realized their rights and spaces at all levels and sectors. The respondents were joined the protest while their three friends; Pannalal Yadav, Upendra Yadav, Munsu Patel, got seriously injured. Respondents also ventilated their frustration towards their leaders while Munsu Patel lost his mother and he was in hospital due to spinal cord injury. They added, many agitators had still bullets on their forehead but leaders do not do anything for their treatment. Many respondents still disappointed and depressed due to disturbed so much such as deprivation of basic needs, violation of human rights, compromised of daily life, scrutinized their employment, income etc. Few women also committed suicide followed by prolonged boarder blockade. Despite all ups and downs, women aware their equal participation in politics and rights.

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Women's participation: Due to sequential of Madhesh movement, women concerned to participate at local level political discourse. Principally, the political parties and men political leaders are more attentive for increasing the women's participation during various course of Madhesh movement. However, the movement 2015 did not speak about the women's right at all. More importantly, they are far behind to have meaningful participation as they and political manifesto intended due to economically dependent or poor, incompetent or command in education and analysis, use of technologies, language, stereotyped gender roles etc. The respondents shared and agreed that they just used for men leaders always. Few respondents of interview shared in a way that they are doing the politics for the sake for their personal benefit from the party and so pessimistic and visionless as a political leader. Many respondents claimed that women do not participate in local political process due to gender roles as well as stereotyped values. Both, women and men thought that women supposed not to stand in front of any men specially their husbands, in laws, leaders etc. In many cases at local level political discussion, there is someone from family or relatives. In some places and events, women also participated forcefully or without knowledge and skills as well as passion whom are mostly the wives, sisters or relatives of political leaders or employees. In other hand, women's participation is being seen as stigma associated with bad character due to divorced, had second marriage, separated women are in politics now. Even the educated women do not like to come in politics due to so much blame, insecurity and safety. They believed that the Kathmandu or the government is so biased towards Madhesh women, talked only about witchcraft, childcare but not advocating what Madhesh women have and what they need.

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Inclusion: Chamar, Dushad (Pasban), Tatwa (das) are started to participate in political process at local level due to strict provision of inclusion in constitution and other laws/by laws. In public events, there is no discrimination in the basis of caste.

Dalit Rights: In dalit community, both men and women, are making decisions in collective manner. They eat together, work together, drink together and quarrel together as well. Elites Tharu community is not much liberal as Bramin. Once the country owned the secularism, the Muslim community is getting strict for their identity even the school girls started to use burka which was not practice before. The inclusion is not implemented as demanded by constitution 2015. The Mind set of political leaders is seen a key barrier for that, they added.

Children in general: At local Mothersha, the poor, partial orphan children are living as like orphan but it seems Muslim promotion centre. The shelter is below the standard as government prescribed such as no psychosocial counselling, no medical check-up, all children looked like depressed, under nourished. They also not able to follow the Math, Science, English as their age. There is enough land and fund but no any strategic plan including sustainability.

No specific justice mechanism for children: though the structure is in place, the guidelines also provided by government with some resources, it is not in place where already two children committed crimes.

Status of youths: Though youths are educated, went to expensive educational institutions, they deprived from quality education and do not get proper guidance on career counselling. As a result, they are living with unemployment, frustration, forced to aboard migration, encountered with substance use and other socially unexpected behaviours. Youth's participation special female is severely low. Very few male participated in various activities during field visit.

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Economic Empowerment:

Women over burden: During the data collection, even educated women joined the discussion after completion of family or agriculture or formal job at their home and office. Due to having enough fertile land, women's contribution is significantly high because they engage in planting, harvesting, horticulture, etc. Respondents were disappointed with men who worked in farm at Panjab not here in Parsa.

Economic opportunities: In Birgunj and its surrounding, many respondents have already started business at in order to continue the activism with economically independent. But these businesses are still not enough due to not following the post training support including follow up. Though, there is no intensive researches in the field of economic opportunities and challenges for women in Parsa, women are moving towards formal work very slowly. The history tells that women in Madhesh very creative, constructive and content. They also preserve many indigenous knowledge and skills such as music, painting, knitting, cooking etc. However, almost all women are working at informal sectors and the opportunities also squeeze since the introduction of open market. For empowering women economically, few state and non/state organizations initiated the economic activities which are too short and stereotyped. For instance, snacks making, embroidery, knitting etc. which are unable to compete with market in many ways, they responded. In the beginning, it sounds good and interesting but don't get long term market and enthusiasm. In many cases, the connectivity with highway yet to reach to encourage women for entrepreneurship as well as promotion of market. The headquarter of Parsa district is in south and one sided which is so far and inaccessible for the people who are living in west side of district. In order to fulfil the family needs, the men members and youth are leaving not only Parsa, but also country. As a result, the pattern of labour

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also changed dramatically among women. Women started to work in field and are working which is being done by men in previous years. However, women have not had the property on their name. Due to substitute in tax, the number of women is slowly increasing though it is still not effective because mostly women have property for using the lesser tax and not for their choice. NGOs have done campaign on joint land certification and announced for award where only three couple were awarded.

In addition, they do not have decision making power over the economic activities. They have to wait for decision from their husbands from abroad even for going to local market or maternal house. Nevertheless, however, few women take lead role and manage their family business once their husband stepped back. Respondents often struggled with disadvantages of open border with India. There are many pressing issues includes disappearances of criminals, black market, disputes in boarder, overflow of beggars etc. Further, the youths are not like to work as their parents had done due to open boarder and market. At least Nrs 500-Nrs 2000/day can earn from the black market generally.

Menstrual Restriction:

The menstrual literature from Nepal, do not speak about the menstrual restriction is exist in Terai. Almost all are talking Chhaupadi and practicing in western (far west and Midwest) Nepal where as Uprety A. (2014) claimed that it is practicing in 21 districts but not in Parsa. Researcher herself worked in few districts of the Terai since 2005 where adolescent girls identified as a key barrier for empowering them (CEDPA Nepal, 2005). Further, Sharma N., (2010) also claimed that all Nepali communities are following sets of menstrual restriction across globe. Respondents

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were given the role of poor menstrual hygiene associated with menstrual restriction and said 60% women have problem with uterus.

During interview and discussion, many respondents proudly said that they do not practicing menstrual restriction. But there are range of restriction while probing e.g. where do you sleep during menstruation? who would cook during menstruation? etc. In community, leaking menstrual blood either in school or anywhere it is big stigma. School is providing sanitary pads in support with funding agencies but not used by the girls. The summary of restriction is mentioned in below table.

Table No: Menstrual Restriction among Madhesh and Hill origin men and women

Respondents and General remarks	Restrictions			
	Eating	Touching	Mobility, entering	Use of materials
Hill origin boys, men: Rigid among Bramin/chhetri, not allow to do anything for three days	Not allow to eat meat, milk, foods and fruits offering to god	Not allow to touch materials for worship, trees of vegetables/fruits	Not allow to sleep or enter in regular bed/room, not allow to enter in Kitchen	sanitary pads but expensive for all
Hill origin girls/women: Very strict, like to follow,	same as above	Same as above	Same as above	Clothes and sometimes sanitary pads

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consider a part of culture and religion				
Terai Origin boy/men: remain inside, considered the menstrual blood as contaminated, polluted, feeling shy to buy pads or buying with hiding, no toilets so need to go night, whole day	Not allow to eat regular or nutritious food.	Pickle, trees of fruits and vegetables, teachers, books, religious books,	not allow to enter to kitchen, temple, not to join the cultural and religious activities in the community	Many women and girls do not use pantie's so discomfort to manage period.
Terai origin girl/women	same as above	same as above	not allow to enter kitchen and workshop room but allow to sleeping same room with husbands in some families where as others are not following same.	use old clothes,

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State and Non-State's Accountability:

Women and Child Development Office: Parsa is well accessible district compare to other neighbouring districts though the Women and Child Development office do not make follow and monitoring in its working areas and others. During public hearing and other respondents disappointed by seeing passive role of it. They said, 'we do not know whether Parsa has women and child development office'. The social mobilizer (n-9) from the same level of perception towards their leadership and activities. They said that women and child development office has very limited budget for more responsibilities. The incentive which is provided for the field visit (Nrs 450/day) not enough for field visit. Additionally, these staff are responsible to take care of their children and household chores so they usually attempted to escape the field visits.

VDC Secretary: The VDC Secretaries usually not staying at the village. Even for the birth certification, people has to come headquarter once telephonic conversation with VDC secretary. Thus, the poor, non- Nepali speakers and low educated people do not have direct access with them. As a result, the brokers would get opportunity to play and cheap the people. Respondents who are NGO workers, politicians and social activist blamed that the VDC secretaries are not gender responsive in daily communication as well as distribution of VDC grant. Further, they emphasised that the VDC secretaries had coalition with political parties or leaders and channelize the women's fund to development fund. For instance, 'let's make a road where women also enjoy while working'. The prolonged absence of elected bodies at local level, the institutional development is missing, Sadly, the social and development resource misuse in consensus of local political bodies. In many cases, the language also become barrier to access to CDO, DSP etc.

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NGOs: the NGOs are increasing, but the results are not seen in field. Many respondents believed that the many NGOs have fund but not use properly due to having limited knowledge and skills. The most of the activities are done for the sake of tick. Further, the implementation of project is getting hard due to the prolonged absence of elected bodies at local level. As like government services, the NGO's work also influenced by politics and brokers, they added.

Political Leaders: Almost all respondents claimed that the power is so much centralized thus the implementation of constitution 2015 is very urgent and challenging as well. They further added, the political leaders are not honest no matter whether new or old. Madhesh leaders were used the Terai people for 7 months but no one speak up while the flood affected to Terai as well as other GBV cases. The SP also said that he often gets the threat, pressure, phone calls once he arrested or keep criminals in custody. The political parties are not demonstrating the value of ethics, integrity, honesty. Due to prolonged absence of election at local level, anyone can claim as leaders who have loud voice, big muscle and money, many respondents said. Thus, the new and charming leadership demanded by Parsa and country that could do by youth leaders, respondents expressed. They recommended that the political transformation could be sustain if it flows along with social transformation otherwise it creates conflict. They added, bringing the people like Phattasing Tharu, Surendra Chuadhary are not example of mainstream and inclusion. Thus, the threshold is very important but who endorsed. Having 32 political parties in coalition of government showed clearly that it is state of political instability. They presented example of Prime Minister Puspa Kamal Dahal, Prachanda also failed to correct his son.

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Media in Parsa:

The most of the media at local and national is so biased that couldn't represent the voice of voiceless. They are accountable towards sponsors. Those media who try to the media for people, that is matter of worrisome of political parties and government. The team members of Terai radio were considered anti-government during the Madhesh movement. It faced the threat once radio attempted to bring the issue out e.g. Mahesh movement. The both parties considered spy to few journalist, FM stations and had big tussle with administration as well as press council. Local administration asked to submit the matter which was shared to Kathmandu and aired in Parsa.

Overall Challenges in women empowerment in Parsa

1. The poor mind set on women's right, ignorance on polices, dominant by traditional harmful practices, stigma and discrimination towards women's progress are key issues of bringing back to women in Madhesh.
2. Within the modern practice and family, the women's status below the second citizen. They do not have power to make decisions even household chores. Even the husbands are working in aboard and ordering as like do this and do not this via phone.
3. Women are so much dependent on their male members of the family so they subjected to various forms of violence within and outside of the family but considered stigma and matter of family prestige to report to police and any service providers.

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4. The political parties are not taking accountability at local and national level as result of it women do not have voice at family, school and everywhere. Even highly educated and working women are not empowered at family.
5. Child marriage, dowry, substance use, menstrual taboos, sexual abuse and exploitation are rampant so youths are also struggling so much.
6. Women are remained so silence though almost all women are suffering from various forms of violence at home from their nearer and dearer. The activities for women empowerment also not able to reach up to the needy women due to limited resources and lack of willingness among NGOs, Government authorities.
7. Women's participation still low priority. They do not like to come generally. Mostly women who are participated in programs, they are wife, daughter or relative of powerful political leader. The elites captured almost all resources which is allocated for poor, marginalized and excluded women due to political pressure.
8. The VDC secretary are over burden, taking care of two villages by one and everything have to do by them due to pro longed absence of elected bodies. In addition, they also get immense pressure from various political parties to make happen as their wish instead of rational and consultative decisions.

Conclusion

Parsa is representing entire Madhesh somehow. The issues and concerns mentioned above are not only the issues of Madhesh. These are applied across the Nepal for women empowerment. Primarily, there are two major obstacles seen at the micro level;

1. Patriarchal, feudal, masculine, gender stereotyped mindset, practices and structures among the policy makers, government authorities and political leaders as like in national level
2. The customary laws, ignorance, negligence, poverty is also equally fuelling for draw back women in Parsa.

At micro level, neither the intervention reach door to door to break the barriers that imposed and followed from top and ancestors nor champions or hero or role models in village to village. Thus, there is huge gap between Parsa and Kathmandu (national level) discourse and action in women empowerment.

Further, the huge gap in understanding, willingness and commitment among local level stakeholders.

Recommendation:

Here, the recommendations are attempted to provide in very action form so any one can pick up the issues and could make difference in the life of women and children in Parsa and Madhesh at large.

1. Issues based intervention; Child or Early or forced marriage and Dowry:

These issues were addressed by policies since 1963 AD. Currently, many state and non-state actors are engaged to abolish it but they focus once the puberty

start which is so wrong practice. A very critical engagement required since conception to abolish such social evils as mentioned below.

A. Intervention at the Family level

- recognize the households who have newly married couple and the young daughters or planned to have girl child
- engage with them, could form groups, hang with income generating activities
- impart the concepts such as factor of determination of sex, gender, role of parents for equal treatment for girls and boys at home, family and community more focused on social norms, values and emotions constitutional rights of girls, share the role model women etc.
- Use participatory tools where family members can understand the values of child not a boy or girl.
- Identify the best household and awards them by providing economic opportunities where family can build confidence for economic independence.

B. Intervention at the school level

- By considering the second home and second layer of parents, school also concentrate on equality by maintaining language, institutional arrangement e.g. toilet.
- There should be abolish the discrimination between girls and boys and female teachers and male teachers.
- The notion of gender equality has to apply across all activities as a value of school
- The best or role models teacher and students should awarded

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C .Intervention for stakeholders between family and schools

- For enhancing the negotiation or bargaining skills of parents, the economic opportunities should provide to group and individuals with conditions.
- Community should ensure a grant or fund to provide support on safety, education and job to those girls and parents who breakthrough the societal norms. For instance, Rinku Thakur left the home but there is no mechanism to celebrate her heroism, no mechanism for continue her education, her safety and security and job guarantee after graduation.
- The hero should use a resource person and their stories should make documentary, flash mobs etc.
- The political parties should stand strictly to educate, to abolish and to punish perpetrators.
- The research, documentation and dissemination should continuously do as appropriate local

2. *Issues based specific intervention: Gender Based Violence included witchcraft, rape, physical assault, sexual abuse, harassment, exploitation etc.:* few activities are repeated here as mentioned in above.

A. engagement of boys and men for accountability: many NGOs and even WCDO is organizing activities only for girls and women e.g. *Sister's to Sister* program. The gender based violence are happening due to individual and relational attitudes, values and behaviours. Thus, to challenge own self and others or group, boys and men should engage for building individual and

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relational accountability where the community feel the equal behaviour between boys and girls, men and women and eliminate the various forms of GBVs.

B. Likewise, *engagement with faith healers as well as encourage to rewrite the religious book*. It could be difficult for district level of stakeholders though the discussion can be bring up for building critical mass in favour of this for future action.

3. The *enforcement of existing policies is very important*. As like police office (2015/2016) without listening any pressure and threat, the trend of GBV could be reduced.

4. The overall, *the interferential (hastachhepkari niti) should adopt* to take step ahead in social transformation by all stakeholder. This is the crucial time to respect the people's expectation and neutralize the frustration in order to contribute peace building process.

This is also time to cross the comfort zones to take corrective actions around religion, culture and all as like SP, Dr. Rajababu Shrestha as role model in Parsa.

5. Critical engage should make with faith healers such as Maulana, Pandit in order to abolish the religious extremities for empowering girls and women.

6. The authorities includes ministers, political parties and local authorities should do periodic mentorship, follow up and practice of reward and punishment

7. The research, monitoring and documentation of the women empowerment activities constantly in order to do evidence based advocacy and result oriented project implementation.

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8. The political parties need constant input on capacity building of them on contents of women empowerment, advocacy and monitoring.
9. The media also considered an important wing of women empowerment thus funding and capacity should be enhanced by stakeholders.

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Annex

List of Participants who were consulted for this research

S.N.	Name	Organization	Designation	
1.	Arbinda Singh		Political Activist UML/Teacher	Male
2.	Ahamadtabrej	Activist		Male
3.	Prof Bhagya Gupta	Independent	Retired Reader	Male
4.	OmPrakash Sarraf	Sadbhabana	District Chiar	Male
5.	Prakash Tharu	Madhesh Victim relief fund	President	Male
6.	Man Bdr Shrestha	CPN Maoist, Thori unit		Male
7.	Lal Bhadur Shrestha	VDC office, Thori	Ex. President	Male
8.	Uddab Sapkota	VDc office, Thori	Ex. President	Male
9.	Jarithing Tamag	VDC Office, Subarnapur	Ex. President	Male
10	Bhairab Bhadur Basent	Thori, participant of public hearing		Male
11	Prakash Khanal	Thori, participant of public hearing		Male
12	Geeta Bista	Thori, participant of public hearing		Female
13	Hari Bhadur Sunar	Dalit Federation, Parsa		Male
14	Shanti Thapa Magar	Thori, participant of public hearing	Farmer	Female
15	Aash Bhadur Gurung	Thori, participant of public hearing		Male
16	Chandra maya Pathak cheetri	Thori, participant of public hearing		Female
17	Pulmaya Khatri	Thori, participant of public hearing		Female

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18	Niru Sinjali Magar	Coordinator, Nagarik Sachetana Kendra		Female
19	Ram Prakash Kuwar	Maoist		Male
20	Thakur Neupane			Male
21	Dr Sumtra Tiwari	Sano Paila		Female
22	Manni Singh			Female
23	Rajendra Ruit	Terai FM	Station Manager	Male
24	Ajay Yadav	Terai FM	President	Male
25	Debendra Yadav	Sano Paila	Volunteer	Male
26	Krishna Kumar Karna	Sano Paila	Volunteer	Male
27	Bishal Shah	Sano Paila	Volunteer	Male
28	Prajwal Pokhrel	Sano Paila	Volunteer	Male
29	Raj Kumar Shah	Sano Paila	Volunteer	Male
30	Sabitri Bhandari	Child Protection Office	Child Protection Officer	Male
31	Saiendra Tripathi	Sano Paila	Campaigner	Male
32	Ajit Gurung	Rehab Center/Sano Paila	Rehab Chief	Male
33	Subir Ghosh	Sano Paila	Media Chief	Male
34	Chief Justice	District Court		Male
35	Layers	District Court		Male
36	Chanchala Das			Female
37	Mamata Rajkarnikar			Female
38	Kirtika Das			Female
39	Niharika Das			Female

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40	Renu Singh			
41	Mithila Singh	Sanghiya Samajbadi Parti		
42	Karima Begam	Former Minister		
43	Sekh Chad Tara	Former Chair of National Women Commission		
44	Raj Kumari Thapa	District Police Office		Female
45	Indira Ale	UNDP, Regional Office		
46	Basanta Neupane	LDO, Sarlahi		
47		LDO, Bara		
48	Kiran Manadhar	Interparty Alliance, Parsa		
49	Renuka Das	VDC, Secreatry		
50Chapagain	VDC Secretary		
51	Lal Bdr Karna	VDC Secretary		
52	...Yogi	VDC Secretary		
53	Devi Chandra			
54	Narayan			
55	Deepak			
56	Basant			
57		Women Network, Parsa		
58		Mahila Kalyan Sangh		
59		Interparty Alliance		
60	Ganesh Lath			
61				

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Guide for In Depth Interview

1. Key work of women at home, community
2. Role in decision making at home
3. Role in social activities
4. The source of income of women, their education
5. Status of child marriage, dowry, gender based violence
6. The practice in menstruation
7. Role of stakeholders VDC secretary, government authorities, media, political parties
8. What is status of political participation of women?
9. Why do they have such participation?

Photos



A Girl Playing along with her goats on the way



Meeting with VDC secretary



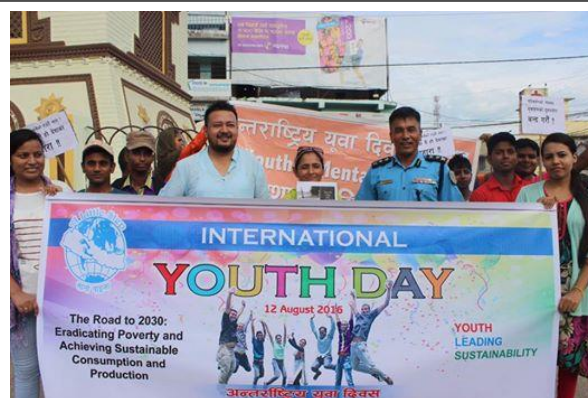
Police My Friend Program



Public Hearing at Thori



Meeting with Social Activist



International Youth Day 2016

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Stop Urinate at Street



Meeting with Women Leaders



Women Leaders



Children at Ektimkhana Mothersha



Immediate Chair of Women Commission at Parsa



Former Reader of Tribhuvan University

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Meeting with Nursing Chief



Substance Rehab Center



Business, Social Worker and Author



Sister's Sister program



Men are at Labour Work



Staff of Women and Child Development Office

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