

**Review
of
A Year of Experience of Women in Politics
at Local Government:
The Case of Hetauda, Makwanpur, Nepal**



Women Leaders from various walks of Life at DDC, Hetauda, July 22, 2018

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July 2018

Acknowledgements

Though this is the sole effort of mine from design, collection and analysis on a voluntary basis for the Radha Paudel Foundation, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to Ms. Parbati Rana, Deputy Chair of Bhimpheedi, Rural Municipality, Makwanpur for coordinating all meetings without a single delay.

My thanks go to all participants who represent government, NGOs, cooperatives, networks, parties, deputy mayor and media and openly shared their hands-on experience concerning women, peace and security, especially women's participation in politics.

I am also grateful to Asmita Pokhrel, Intern, Radha Paudel Foundation for her company and the Baniya family at SanoPokhara who served food and accommodation during my stay in Hetauda.

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Background

The participation of women in politics and the peace building process is not a new agenda in Nepal as well as globally. Particularly, after CEDAW 1979 and UNSCR 1325 focused so much on women's participation issues.

Despite being a signatory country, Nepal has been struggling to deliver on its commitment to women's participation in politics. However, the election of the Constitutional Assembly (2008) was a huge *reap* of women's participation in politics in Nepalese discourse though it was debatable and had experienced many loopholes.

In order to implement the Constitution of Nepal (2015), about two decades later, Nepal conducted an election for local government in June 2017 (Election Commission, 2017). As a signatory country for CEDAW and Constitution of Nepal, 2015 (which required a 40 % representation of women by gender quota), women won 40 % seats in local government.

The local government completed a year of its formulation and there are diverse news and reports popping up, specially targeted to women's political participation. Due to gender, stereotyped and patriarchal mindset and culture, women leaders are suffering various types of discrimination, violence and exclusion in personal and public life.

By considering the women's status in Nepal, Researcher Radha Paudel and Director Radha Paudel Foundation reviewed the status of women who are working as women politicians as well as women leaders at various walks of life in Hetauda, Makwanpur as a case study.

This study organized and discussed issues based on objectives. It is limited to the women leaders, politicians, activists who are working around Hetauda at Sub-Municipality, District Coordination Committee, NGOs, Cooperatives, politics etc.

Objective

The key objective is to unveil the status of women who are exercising their political positions since 2017's election at their respective workplace. The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the changes of women's life followed by local government
2. To explore the status of women politicians
3. To explore the challenges for women politicians at their work



Ms. Juneli Shrestha, Parliamentarian delivered speech

Methodology

It is qualitative based study and collected primary data from the three interactive meetings in July 22 and 23 at District Coordination Office, Rural Women Service Center (RWSC) and Sub- Municipality at Hetauda, Makwanpur. Altogether, the fifty women participated in an interaction meeting. They represented a municipality, a rural village municipality, a district coordination office, NGOs, provincial parliament, media, government, and others. Before the commencement of interaction, a facilitator obtained verbal consent with the information documented by note keeping, photo and video recording.

Findings and Discussions

The findings and discussion carried out according to the objectives of the study as follows.

Assess the changes of women's status after having local government

Despite having a gender responsive constitution and increasing representation of women in politics, women's status is merely not changing in terms of safety and voice in the family and community. The boys or men or women who possess power at home imposed so many restrictions in mobility due to menfolk feeling threatened from women's empowerment and trying to control women's ideas, thoughts and body. Some of this is due to misinterpretation by the media that focuses on women's misuse of money and Facebook by girls and women whose family members are working abroad.

The gender-based violence (GBV) is occurring constantly. Because of dismantling of the women's development office, the issues related with women's right are disorganized and women are confused as to where to go and what to do. They could not share the case in front of the political leaders or at rural municipality members in person but feel more comfortable to share over the phone. They are feeling more insecure because almost all ward chair are men who neither have the knowledge nor skills to listen and address the GBV cases. Women usually face delays in processing and justice is either ignored or delayed.

Additionally, women are more frustrated because the existing policies are merely absence of implementation. For instance, girl doesn't get citizenship on her mother's name.

In order to be financially secure, women involved in ten saving and credit groups puts additional layer of conflict within women and family to overcome poverty. Likewise, many are involved and would like to be involved in cooperatives but are not allowed to establish new cooperatives. There is no plan for cooperatives where large numbers of women are working.



Ms. Parabati Rana, Deputy Chair delivered speech

Among women, the status of dalit (formerly “untouchable” women) are facing manifolds of problems including untouchability – a violation of constitutional right (article 24) and punishable as serious social crime (Government, 2015).

The nature of violence between girls and women is different because child marriage, forced marriage and voluntary child marriage is still rampant. Additionally, girls and women are deprived from information and services including radio. Recently, more than 95% women identified the health problem with their uterus.

Many girls and women subject to GBV due to economically dependent with men that is fuelled by not accounting of women's work in the informal sector.



Dialogue on Dignified Menstruation

Explore the status of women politicians

As the Constitution guaranteed women's participation in local government, the 40% of woman occupied seats are exercising their roles and responsibilities. Almost all participants came from social/NGO and Cooperatives background. In general, they received space after a long contribution in society and got respect from the public as well as their respective political party. They also get salary and other privileges that helped them to move independently even at personal or family level. Earlier, they had to depend on their husbands.

I entered in to the officer by recalling her roles and responsibilities instead of a women or mother or wife or women member of my party.

The deputy mayor of Hetauda Sub-Municipality

At the federal level, in Hetauda, all women politicians won as deputy positions, defined as a judiciary role in the 2015 Constitution. *They significantly engaged in mediating or improving access to justice.* They reported various types of issues, violence and crimes between husbands and wives, within family members, and within neighbours and others. Not many had sound knowledge and practice of laws nor people who knew about legal mechanism, having clear laws and guidelines for all issues.

Participants recalled the cases of dalit representative from Kalikot¹ and deputy mayor from Godavari Municipality² and said that they also constantly experience threats and torture verbally, emotionally and socially.

Explore the challenges for women politicians

There are a variety of challenges experienced by women politicians while working. Here, this report tries to explain categorically for clarity.

- **State restructure related challenges**

- ✓ the women's issue is particularly omitted. There is a provision of coordinator for agriculture, health and education but not for women and children programs. The former staff who are working under ministry of women and children have to work as secretary of rural and municipality. There is no one to raise the specific issues, budget for women, children, people with disability and other marginalized groups.
- ✓ Usually, in a way and the other around, the chair or mayor or myself controls most of the power so women politicians' voices are not heard first. If heard, there is no minuting or they are manipulated in minuting and implementation. As a group, all menfolk put women politicians down and exclude them.
- ✓ Due to the electoral process, women faced many challenges due to not having any experience for last 20 years. The situation might not like this if the election would take place from parliamentary, provincial and local level accordingly.

- **related with political parties**

- ✓ leadership should assign capable women leaders for proportionate positions instead of direct electoral process that demoralized many women in politics.
- ✓ got unnecessary influence and pressure to mediate the GBV cases and crimes. For instance, the ward (the lowest or smallest unit of government) provide proof as victim for wife and few days later for the husband. The political institutions itself created unnecessary tensions and disputes.
- ✓ due to a lack of women's participation and lack of like- minded women leaders within the party, women who are determined to speak up within party find it difficult to raise or lobby within own political party too. Thus, women are not liberated and democracy has yet to come for women.
- ✓ A corrupted culture has halted women's voice. The decisions keep changing due to influence from politics and money and from men folks wanting to earn money as well. In next election, men may go for proportionate quota for saving money and securing positions. They are scared and learned from last election.



Meetings with RWSC team

¹ Physically and emotionally tortured and killed her by community

² Physically and emotionally tortured by her husband and finally file the case against her husband

- **others:**

- ✓ women experience layers of discriminations from menfolk with such comments as “You have already state president, speaker ...what more do you need?” or “You are not supported by your women folks, why do you blame us” In many cases, women leaders are blamed for bad character or accused of divide and rule.
- many women leaders are not ready or not changed by themselves, though they are leaders in public life. They did sex selective abortions, give dowry, spent so much money for partying (e. g. the World Cup over and Gold Cup start for staring for women's decoration for Teej).
- The quota or affirmative actions misused by elite castes or elite women leaders.
- Rape survivors do not have any safe space including shelters or any options for livelihoods. They are working and taking care of children born from rape by themselves from street. They keep encountered with same sorts of violence again and again.
- Among women who are working in politics, they are not unified for raising issue. Even for the issues related with human rights, GBV, women leader divided. Thus, women leaders are still get less respect or attention in practice within party and beyond.
- Resisting at home or with family and at work all the time is very difficult. Many deputy women leaders are frustrated, depressed and want to resign.
- Bureaucracy halted the progress as political leaders wanted to move on.
- Women or women groups pulled back from supporting women leaders.
- No real movement for women, always fight for men thought it was national agenda like class struggle.
- Were threatened if any women leader spoke for survivors

Recommendation:

The women's participation in politics, guarantee of safety and security, freedom and dignity are constitutional rights (Government, 2015) particularly article 38 (women's right), article 42 (right to social justice). However, the women's right is becoming agenda before, during and after the civil war in Nepal (Gita Shrestha, 2017).

- All stakeholders who are working for women in politics, need to work in way that many women would secure the primary position for decision making in upcoming political process.
- The access to justice mechanism should be fast, accessible and gender responsive that is the responsibility of local government. Thus, the process of formulating such guidelines, awareness has to be expedited.

- The structure at local government need to reconsider to address the GBV as well as assure the access to justice for girls and women
- The massive campaign on dignified menstruation for preventing the reproductive and urinary tract infections as well as empower girls and women needs to come from the agency level. For that, the activities should go as holistic approach and be initiated by local government



Dialogue on Dignified Menstruation with deputy mayor

because menstruation restrictions is a key hindering factor for peace, violation of human right, empowerment and pre-condition for achieving SDGs (Paudel, 2018).

- For building confidence and assurance among survivors of GBV, the shelter is crucial and important that should a priority of the local government.
- Engage boys and men in all activities of women empowerment has to be encouraged for preventing GBV and create enabling environment for girls and women.
- Building capacity of women politicians and potential politicians is urgent, especially on technology, law, leadership and crisis management
- The women politicians should speak and stand to implement all activities as expected by the Constitution including implementation of affirmative actions for dalits and other marginalized groups.
- The dialogue on roles and responsibilities of women politicians should disseminate in order to avoid misunderstanding, disputes at family and public level through engaging media as well as interactions or any other creative activities.
- The lobby and advocacy should start to mention clearly about the provision of minster for women.
- The role of NGOs also need to review according the need and demands of state restructure. Likewise, cooperatives also the sector which shouldn't ignore. The ways should explore from the past experience and present scenario.
- This report is a case from limited participants thus need to do in depth analysis for further details.

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List of Participants, meeting at DDC

આવનિતિ ૨૦૭૫/૦૪/૦૬ ૦૭:૦૦ વેલોડાના
ગારીબો સનૌપોષણરેલ, ધાર્યુક્રમમાં
ભિંમનાલિંકરેલ ઉપાલેધાતે રહ્યો ।

ક્ર.સં	નામ, ધાર	સંપર્કનં.	વેદા/અવધા
૧	મુલેલ સેલ	૯૮૫૦૨૯૧૭૫	૩.૬૨ પ્રવા
૨	મુલુ પિરેલ	૯૮૫૦૬૨૫૦૮	"
૩	લક્ષ્મી મોકાન	૯૮૫૦૯૫૨૨૬	RWSC
૪	લક્ષ્મી વાલુ, ધિર	૯૮૫૧૦૭૨૮૬	
૫	અમીલા કાર્ક (પ્રા.સં.)	૯૮૫૧૨૨૨૫૫	૨.૧૦.૨.૮
૬	સુભાષિતા સુયાસતા	૯૮૫૨૦૬૬૧૬૬	RWSC
૭	અંબલા મોર્મી	૯૮૫૨૦૨૨૨૮૨	RWSC
૮	મિના ચૌરેલ	૯૮૫૨૬૧૯૯૮૫	RWSC
૯	પિના ઘલાનુ	૯૮૫૫૬૩૮૦૩૩	RWSC
૧૦	સલિજા પ્રાસની	૯૮૫૫૧૦૩૬૧૧	"
૧૧	શાર્દિલા સેલ	૯૮૫૫૦૬૧૧૭૨	
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૧૩	અમીલા પીરેલ	૯૮૫૫૦૩૧૫૫૫	મુલનાતેલો
૧૪	સુમિત્રા કાપલ	૯૮૫૫૦૭૦૫૫૫	સલિવન
૧૫	હરિ દુપાડા	૯૮૫૫૦૬૬૧૭૧	પતકાર
૧૬	અમર વિપલો	૯૮૫૫૬૧૫૩૫૫	પતકાર
૧૭	લક્ષ્મી ચિપ્પેલ	૯૮૫૫૫૧૬૫૮	
૧૮	રૂપામલા કુર્મી	૯૮૫૫૫૧૬૫૮	સિલ
૧૯		૯૮૫૫૦૪૮૦૫૦	

क्रमांक	नाम	संयोजक	संयोजक
२०.	विमला देवी	७८५०७१०८२	अनंदाश्रम
२१	जुला दाहाल	९८४२९०३६९३	११ ११ ११
२२.	सुमित्रा पांडे	९८४५९०९८९०	ट.जी. वडा
२३	विमला बि. व.	९८४५९०९८९०	मि. ग. प. ५९९
२४.	मनका देवी शर्मा	९८४५९०९८९०	मनका
२५	दुर्गा चिमिरे	९८४५९०९८९०	मनका
२६	कुमारी काँडा	९८४५९०९८९०	हिमराइत
२७	गुरु लामा	९८४५९०९८९०	गुरु
२८)	शिवरा तामा	९८४५९०९८९०	शिवरा
२९	शिवरा तामा	९८४५९०९८९०	शिवरा
३०	राधा रिता	९८४५९०९८९०	राधा
३१	माधवी पंडा	९८४५९०९८९०	माधवी
३२.	Radha Pandel	९८४५९०९८९०	R
३३	Prakash Khatri	९८४५९०९८९०	Prakash
३४.	Armita Pokhrel	९८४५९०९८९०	Armita.