

**National Monitoring & Review of the  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS  
& DEVELOPMENT JUSTICE IN NEPAL 2021**



**Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal**

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Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal

## ABBREVIATIONS

BBC Nepal	Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical & Economic Cooperation
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDO	Chief District Officer
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against women
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
FGDs	Focused group discussions
FY	Fiscal Year
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GGG	Global Gender Gap
GII	Gender Inequality index
GNI	Gross National Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
IDI	In-depth interview
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MMC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MNCs	Multinational Companies
MoLESS	Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security
NDFN	National Disable Federation Nepal
NEC	National Economic Census
NFN	NGO Federation of Nepal
NLFS	Nepal Labor Force Survey Prime Minister Employment Program
NSDGF	Nepal SDGs Forum
NWC	National Women Commission
PMEP	Prime Minister Employment Program
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Agreement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
SNA	System of National Accounting
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WMG-SDN	Women Major Group for Sustainable Development in Nepal

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**Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal**  
August 2022

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nepal has been implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve decent lives for all and a healthy planet by 2030. Though Nepal has numerous progressive steps towards the SDGs agenda, the SDG 5.4: unpaid care work, has not been recognized as “work” in the national framework. Even in the labor force survey (NLFS, 2018), it has been categorized as “other forms of work”. The NLFS 2018/19 survey indicates that 65.7 percent of females were involved in unpaid care and domestic work compared to 51.4 percent of males. In informal employment, men’s participation is 81.1% while women’s is 90.5% whereas, in formal employment men is 18.9% while women is 9.5 percent only. In informal employment, 59.2 percent do not have paid annual leave and sick leave benefits and their employers do not contribute towards their social security. Globally, Nepal’s hourly mean gender pay gap is 28.9 percent while the median gender gap is 34.5 percent. Women’s contribution in unpaid domestic care work has been unrecognized at the current state by both government and society.

The objective of the study is to find the impact of unequal pay and unrecognized of unpaid care work on women working in informal sectors. In this research, we adapted two methods for the data collection. Primary data collection was done by conducting four focused group discussions (FGD) with women workers of a carpet factory in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, trade unions and local government representatives. Likewise for the primary data, we conducted in-depth interviews (IDI) with the key government’s representatives, CSOs and other stakeholders. We also conducted desk research for the secondary data collection. Additionally, informed consent was obtained with the targeted study population before collecting data.

The respondents in the carpet factory found not getting the minimum wage provisioned by the government. The respondents were found spending 10 to 12 hours in the factory on paid work whereas 5 to 6 hours they spent on unpaid care work. Most of their time is spent on work which lacks time for those women to learn skills and build capacity. Women’s involvement in the paid and unpaid work both for longer hours impacts their mental and physical health. Being in a poor and marginalized group, they are often abused and exploited in the workplace and are not included in social security programs provided by the government. The findings of this study suggested that the government should enact policies and programs to recognize, reduce and redistribute the unpaid care work and to promote shared responsibility among family members. Likewise, the statistics on informal women workers and awareness on social security should be promoted at all levels.

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# 1 NATIONAL CONTEXT & INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, independent, sovereign, federal democratic country. Its diverse topography includes the high snow-capped mountains (where mostly the Sherpas, Limbus, Bhotiyas of Tibetan origin live), the hills (where the Tamangs, Magars, Gurung, Sunuwar, Newar, Brahmin and Chhetries live, ) and the sub-tropical plains of the Tarai (where the Tharus, Danuwars, Chepangs and Mathalis live).

The spectrum of communities ranges from the very orthodox Hindu Indo Aryan groups to the relatively gender egalitarian Tibeto-Burmans. Hinduism constitutes a powerful ideological force in Nepal. The caste system also exerts a powerful influence on the social organization of life in Nepal.

Geographically, it is a landlocked country that lies between India and China. It is a mountainous country which has 147,181 sq. km of land rich in biodiversity and has a variation in climate and altitude and is home to approximately 30.5 million population. Women consist of 51.5% of the total population, men consist of 48.5% and the youth consist of 24% of the total population<sup>1</sup>. Nepal is a diverse country, consisting of 125 caste/ethnic groups with 123 languages spoken as mother tongue, Nepali language being the most commonly used with 44.6% of the total population. There are 10 types of religion in Nepal; Hinduism (81.3%), Buddhism (9.0%), Islam (4.4%), Kirat (3.1%), Christianity (1.4%) and other religions<sup>2</sup>. Overall literacy rate (for population aged 5 years and above) has increased from 54.1% in 2001 to 65.9% in 2011<sup>3</sup>. Male literacy rate is 75.1% compared to female (57.4%). Working age population (aged 15 to 59 years) has increased from 54% in 2001 to 57% in 2011<sup>4</sup>.

Nepal's Human Development Index (HDI) value is 0.602 according to the UDHR 2020 report. In 2019, Nepal ranked 142 out of 189 countries and territories and between 1990 and 2019, Nepal's HDI value increased from 0.387 to 0.602—an increase of 55.6 percent. The HDI is a summary measure assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The recent report of 2020 can be compared with the 2018 value of 0.579 indicating the rise in score by 1.4 percent. However, this progress is uneven with urban areas scoring (0.647) while in rural areas (0.561) with a large urban-rural gap. The HDI value also varies across provinces resulting in uneven development and progress.<sup>5</sup> While the Gender Development Index (GDI) value is 0.897, SIGI value is 36.2 % as per the data of 2019. The Gender Inequality Index

1 Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission Secretariat, Central Bureau of Statistics. 2012. National Population and Housing Census 2011 (National Report). National Planning Commission Secretariat, Central Bureau of Statistics. Kathmandu, Nepal.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 UNDP. (n.d.). Human Development Report 2020 The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report Nepal. Retrieved April 18, 2022, from <https://hdr.undp.org/>

(GII) (2016) value is 0.476, ranking 115th position which is poor among the 162 countries. Nepal's life expectancy at birth increased by 16.4 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.0 years and expected years of schooling increased by 5.2 years. Similarly, the Global Gender Gap (GGG) report 2020 shows that Nepal is in the 101st rank with the value of 0.680 value among 153 countries.<sup>6</sup> Nepal's GNI per capita increased by about 151.9 percent between 1990 and 2019. However, when the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.446, a loss of 25.9 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices.

Politically, Nepal transitioned into a Federal Democratic Republic after the promulgation of the 2015 constitution. It has been federated into seven provinces with three tiers of government system: federal, provincial and local. This is a response to the lack of capacity of the central government to deliver the type of inclusive social contract and progress that Nepal's citizens desire<sup>7</sup>. However, the roles and responsibilities of multiple entities at federal, provincial and local level government machinery remains unclear, posing risk to effective functioning of government.

Nepal being a member country of the United Nations (UN) has been implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve decent lives for all and a healthy planet by 2030. So far, Nepal has participated in Voluntary National Review (VNR) and reported in the High Level Political Forum in 2017 and 2020. The Agenda 2030 has been integrated into Nepal's national development frameworks. There are multiple initiatives from the government to incorporate the goals in development plans and programs such as in the SDGs roadmap 2016-2030; Needs Assessment, Costing and Financing Strategy; and SDGs Localization Guidelines for the baselines, targets and implementation and financing strategies for each SDG<sup>8</sup>. Nepal has also introduced gender, poverty and climate code in the national budget in the past since 2007/8, and has started to assign SDGs codes to all the national programs and projects and all line ministries<sup>9</sup>. Likewise, the 15th National Plan (FY 2018/2019- 23/24) has a dedicated GESI chapter in line with the SDGs. Despite all the efforts the SDG index dashboard shows that the overall score of Nepal is 65.5% and value is 96 out of 100 indicating that Nepal is lagging behind to achieve the SDG. The multidimensional poverty, structural challenges of the economy, difficult geophysical features and fragile environmental situation continue to pose serious challenges to the promotion of rapid, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development in Nepal.

In 2018, 28.6% of Nepal's population is multidimensionally poor.<sup>10</sup> The indicators that contribute most to multidimensional poverty in Nepal are undernutrition and households that lack any member who has completed five years of schooling. If aggregated by dimensions, the largest contribution is

6 Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal. (2020). Country Report Status of the Agenda and SDGs Implementation in Nepal. Beyond Beijing Committee - Nepal.

7 World Bank Group. 2018. Nepal Systematic Country Diagnostic: A New Approach to a Federal Nepal. World Bank, Washington, DC. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29421> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

8 Nepal Voluntary National Review, 2020 Main Message. (2020, July). Home | Sustainable Development. Retrieved April 19, 2021, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

9 National Planning Commission. (2020, June). National Review of Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sdgs.un.org/>. Retrieved April 12, 2021, from <https://sdgs.un.org/>

10 NATIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION. (2018). Multidimensional Poverty Index. <https://www.npc.gov.np/>. Retrieved March, 2021, from <https://www.npc.gov.np/>

due to living standards (44.4%). The health and education dimensions contribute 28.3% and 27.3%, respectively. In the 2020 NHDR report, the expected years of schooling for females is 12.7 and for male is 11.7 and the mean year of schooling for females is 3.6 while for male is 6.4. In regards to health, the life expectancy at birth for females is 71.9 and 69.0 for male. Health Financing in Nepal primarily relies on out-of-pocket payment with 60% (plus and minus) out of the total health expenditure, which has a huge impact on poor, marginalized and disabled women accessing health facilities<sup>11</sup>.

In regards to living standards, since the last few years, the economic growth of Nepal has been progressive around 7 percent. According to the labor force survey 2017/18, the male to female working-age population ratio is 100:125, the male to female employment ratio stands at 100:59. It unveils that the ratio of women working-age groups is higher than that of men in Nepal and while in employment the ratio of men is higher than women.

The Nepal Labor Force Survey states that out of the total labor force of 7.99 million and 11.4 percent are unemployed. Out of the total unemployed labor force, 56.3 percent are male, 43.7 percent are female. ILO estimates that in Nepal, approximately 5.7 million or 80.8 percent of workers have informal jobs. Agriculture is the biggest employing industry, one in every five is employed in this sector. Trade industry had the second largest share of employment (17.5 percent), followed by construction (13.8 percent). CBS presents, in its Labor Force Survey, the disparity between male and female workers in Nepal is wide. Data shows that there is 30% Gender Pay Gap in Nepal<sup>12</sup>. Some gender disparities were observed, where the share of those in informal employment was higher among females than among males (90.5 percent compared to 81.1 percent) – 9.4 percentage points difference.

The constitution of Nepal has ensured equal rights to all citizens. The article 18 talks about *No discrimination shall be made in the application of general laws on grounds of origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, physical condition, condition of health, marital status, pregnancy, economic condition, language or region, ideology or on similar other grounds*. Similarly, the article (33) has ensured that everyone shall have the right to employment and right to choose employment. Under the constitutional provision, the government brought National Employment Policy -2071. Under the Labor Act 2017, the Prime Minister Employment Program (PMEP) is in implementation from February 2019. It is the scheme for generating 100 thousand employments to the unemployed citizen<sup>13</sup>. The recent national 15th Plan is also aligned with the constitution and it has been materialized by the national law and policies. The government aims for a productive society that provides employment to its citizens in accordance with the targets of SDG 8 or decent work. The work has to be decent for all and everyone has the right to employment. However, the Migration Report 2020 says that even with the government's SDG

11 Adhikari, S. R., & Tribhuvan University. (2013, July 5). An Evaluation of Nepal's Free Health Care Schemes: Evidence from a Quasi-Experimental Design. 18. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2289344](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2289344)

12 Dhungana, S. (2019, June 20). CBS report brings to fore huge gender pay gap. *The Himalayan Times*. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/central-bureau-of-statistics-report-brings-to-fore-huge-gender-pay-gap>

13 Interview with Dr. Ram Kumar Phuyal, Former Member, National Planning Commission on 15th May 2021

roadmap 2016-2030, the labor and migration issues have not received much priority and subsequent periodic plans and annual budgets.<sup>14</sup>

The SDG 5.4 is about unpaid care work, which has not been recognized as work in the national framework. Even in the labor force survey, it has been categorized as “other forms of work”. This is yet to be updated by data as the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) is yet to collect the data on SDGs implementation and on target 5.4 on unpaid domestic and care work in the upcoming national census 2020-2021<sup>15</sup>. The other forms of work include: subsistence food production, manufacturing of household goods, fetching of water, collection of firewood and construction of major repairs to own dwelling. Females were more likely to get involved in these activities (65.7 percent of females were involved compared to 51.4 percent of males) (NLFS 2017/18).

## Situation under COVID-19

In Nepal, COVID-19 has negatively impacted the national economy plunging by -2.9 percent—the first time in last two decades, which is comparable to the impact of the Mega Earthquake Disaster in 2015<sup>16</sup>. As of 21st May 2021, total infected cases are about 48,0418 whereas the total number of deaths is 5,657. The case fatality rate in the second wave is 1.29 percent while on the first wave, it was 1.09 percent only. The pandemic has also disrupted approximately 1.4 million home-based workers in Nepal<sup>17</sup>. As per the forecast of the World Bank, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, Nepal's real GDP of Fiscal 2020 is -5.1 to -3.6 per cent which was estimated -4.9 to -3.6 per cent.

### A. Systemic Barriers

#### 1. Unjust Trade and Investment Agreement

Nepal has adopted an open policy for trade and investment since 2004 after being a member of the World Trade Organization. Nepal is also a member of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) under the umbrella of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) which is in the implementation phase. Despite these agreements, South Asia shared only an average of 3.3 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP) as of 2017. There are also barriers among South Asian States in tariff or non-tariff, which have shifted from product-based to negative lists and other procedures such as rules of origin; the outcome, however, was not parallel to what was expected (Don McLain Gill, 2020). As of 2016, South

14 Nepal Migration Report 2020. (2020). Government of Nepal - Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security. <https://moless.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Migration-Report-2020-English>

15 Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal. (2020). Country Report Status of the Agenda and SDGs Implementation in Nepal. Beyond Beijing Committee - Nepal.

16 Ministry Of Finance. (2021, November 24). Ministry Of Finance. Retrieved May 5, 2021, from <https://mof.gov.np/site/publication-detail/3105>

17 ILO. (n.d.). COVID-19 labour market impact in Nepal [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-kathmandu/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_745439.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-kathmandu/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745439.pdf)

Asia's average tariffs were at 13.6 per cent, which are significantly higher than the world average (6.3 per cent) (Don McLain Gill, 2020). Despite having all the above trade agreements, people living in this region still remain poor and largely unemployed. This also demonstrates how the countries in the region are being disadvantaged from the economic opportunities. This illustrates that the people living in this region remain poor, having low employment opportunities.

### Foreign Direct Investments

The role of the private sector has been promoted and encouraged as an inherent feature for foreign capital and technological investment. Several policies and laws have been developed to protect rights of the investors, including through the Intellectual Property Policy 2017, Foreign Investment Policy 2015, and Industrial Enterprises Act 2016, among others. Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act (FITTA) 1992 governs FDI. Under this law, the foreign investors are allowed to invest up to 100% in almost all industries, except for a few on the negative list<sup>18</sup>. Nepal has also signed Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA) with six countries and Double Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with ten countries (The Nepal Policy Review, 2018). Such policies at national level have paved the way for international trading for import and export of goods and services. These policies also shrunk the production of local goods and services by limiting the export ratio. Also under these policies, local handmade carpets and woolen clothes have not gained the international market but have allowed import of food beverages and clothing in the Nepali market instead.

The trade deficit of Nepal has been increasing and reached 52.4% of GDP in 2019, jumping up from 28.3% in 2010. This was mainly due to the expansion of the import of goods and services, which increased from 40.1% of GDP in 2010 to 63.8% in 2019.<sup>19</sup> The study on the impact of trade deficit in the economy in 2021 has mentioned that FDI destroys local jobs, decreasing salary and wages and hurting competitiveness.

In developing countries like Nepal, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is widely accepted because it is promoted to have positive impacts such as its contribution to GDP, technology innovation, competitive practice, and knowledge and skills in the recipient economy of the country. However, FDIs can push the import rate if the financial transaction is incredibly intensive and autonomous and also because revaluation of currency leads to trade deficit.<sup>20</sup>

According to the Industrial Statistics 2019/2020, there are 5,052 foreign investment projects with proposed foreign capital of NRs. 333.05 billion (USD 2.84 Billion)<sup>21</sup> with 2,69,394 new employment

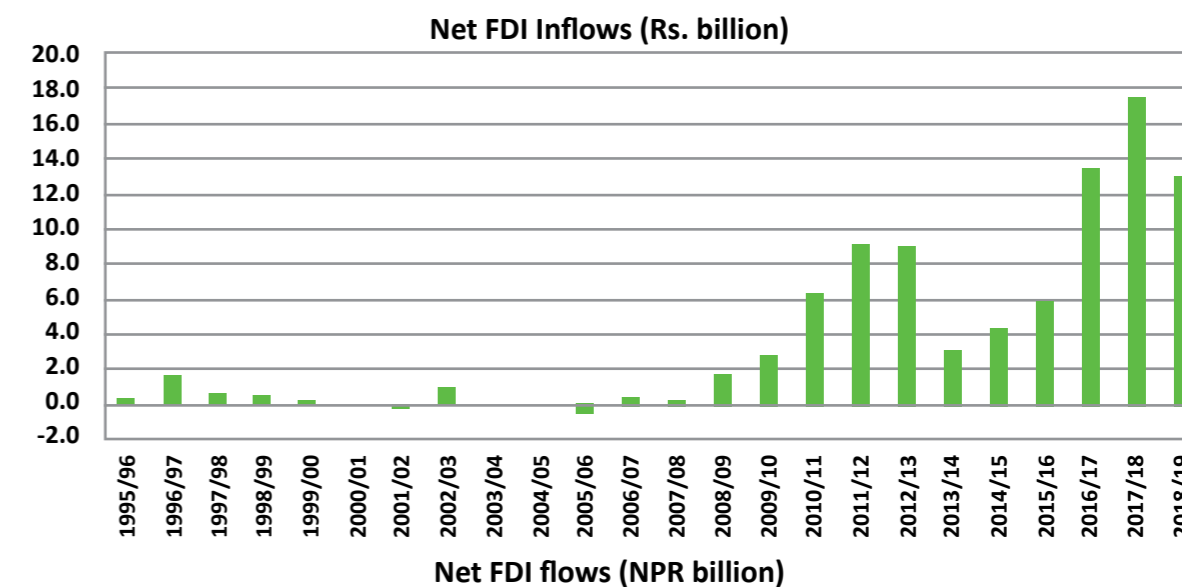
18 Schedule (Relating to sub-section (2) of Section 3) Industries or Businesses Restricted for Foreign Investment, The Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act 2019 -9 categories are listed in the negative list such as Cottage and small industries, weapons industries, Real estate etc. The Impact of Trade Deficit in Nepalese Economy, JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT (2021), VOL. 4(1), 65-80

19 National Planning Commission, Central Bureau of Statistics, & Government of Nepal. (March 2021). National Economic Census 2018 Analytical Report Manufacturing Industry. National Planning Commission Central Bureau of Statistics. <https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/14/bAnalytical-Report-Manufacturing-Industry.pdf>

20 <https://www.mof.gov.np/EconomicSurvey2019>

21 NRB exchange forex rate 05 June 2021 <https://www.nrb.org.np/forex/>

Table Number 1: FDI inflows (Rs. Billion) in Nepal



licensed from DOI accounting the first day of registration to the end of Fiscal Year 2076/77. The report states that there are more than 90 different countries that have commitments for FDIs in Nepal.

### Labor and Employment

According to the Nepal Labor Force Survey, 2018, there are about 900,000 who are unemployed and are looking for jobs. The pandemic has also resulted in 830,000 people who lost their jobs, a total of 22 lakh population. The global crisis has also impacted overseas workers as approximately 80,000 returned back to Nepal during the pandemic. This has put pressure on the domestic labor market. To manage unemployment, the government through the different ministries have projected to source employment opportunities for the next year. The government has also studied the gaps and is planning to match the gaps by creating 5 lakh employment opportunities every year. For that, the government is planning to create skills-based training.<sup>22</sup> To create new employment opportunities, the Nepal government has brought initiatives such as: poverty alleviation program 1.5 lakh, youth-self-employment program 10-12 Lakh, small farmers program 50 thousand, Prime Minister Employment Program (PMEP) 2 Lakh, Industry and Commerce 1.5 lakh, and agriculture with 3.5 lakh. To sum up, the government has created (approx.) 10 lakhs new employment opportunities. Despite these initiatives, there is still a big gap to fill as the crisis continues to impact the economy.

### 2. Corporate Capture

According to the National Economic Census (NEC) 2017/18 (CBS 2019), there are 104,058 manufacturing establishments comprising 11.3% of all industries in Nepal.<sup>23</sup> The small enterprises cover 97.73%, while

22 Interview with Hon. Dr. Ram K. Phuyal, Member, National Planning Commission on 15th May 2021

23 <https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/14/bAnalytical-Report-Manufacturing-Industry.pdf>

medium is 1.57% and large is 0.70%. The manufacturing industry in Nepal has been gradually expanding. The value added to the manufacturing industry increased from Rs. 45,059 million in 2012-13 (at 2001 price) to Rs. 56,018 million in 2018-19. The average growth rate of the manufacturing industry was 3.1%, but this was lower than the GDP growth rate (5.1%). The industrial sectors contribute 13.3% in the national GDP and agriculture contributes 24.26% and the service sector contributes 50.61.<sup>24</sup>

The government of Nepal has developed policies with the provision (2016/2017) of establishing a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund by allocating at least 1 percent of net profit for CSR activities. Despite progressive policies, the CSR is still at an early stage, lacking uniform standards and framework for reporting, monitoring mechanisms and aggregated data on CSR activities and amount. Among different sectors, only banking sectors are relatively taking some initiatives of CSR activities.<sup>25</sup> One of the major issues is the noncompliance in tax payments by big corporations. As of January, 2022, more than 900 firms are under investigation for purchasing fake VAT bills and evading tax (Kathmandu Post, 2022).<sup>26</sup> A study conducted by KC Jit (2018), indicated that the influence of tax evasion on the total tax revenue showed that an increase in tax evasion by 1 unit led to a decrease in value of tax revenue by 34.037. In the same way, study of the influence of tax evasion on economic growth (at current price) showed that an increase in tax evasion by 1 unit led to a decrease in the economic growth by the value of 147.440. Thus, tax evasion has an inverse relationship with economic growth, and tax revenue.<sup>27</sup>

This clearly shows how cooperates are not being monitored, held accountable in regards to their social responsibilities, hindering the overall progress and development in Nepal.

### 3. Land and Resource Grabbing

In Nepal, the Lands Act 1964 has been amended eight times. Data suggests that overall, 26.1% of agricultural households in Nepal do not have their own land to till and if they have lands, only 19.71% of women have ownership of land. Landlessness among Dalits is very high. It is at 36.7% among the hill population, 41.4% among Madhesi Dalit and some have very small landholdings. In Nepal, only 5% of the population controls 37% of arable land. According to the report Land for Landless Peasants 2019, indigenous peoples have been deprived of their ancestral lands, territories and resources due to development projects carried out by the State without seeking their free, prior and informed consent and without assessing the potential impact on them and the environment.<sup>28</sup>

In June 2020, two houses were burned down and eight others were destroyed in Chitwan National Park using hordes of elephants to evict *Chepang* indigenous families.<sup>29</sup> Various indigenous communities'

24 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/425750/nepal-gdp-distribution-across-economic-sectors/>

25 Nepal Rastra Bank Economic Research Department. (August, 2021). CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN NEPALESE BANKING INDUSTRY. Homepage - नेपाल राष्ट्र बैंक. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://www.nrb.org.np/>

26 <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/11/16/revenue-investigation-department-files-cases-on-multi-billion-rupee-tax-evasion-scam>

27 K.C., J. B. (2018). Tax evasion in Nepal: An Inquiry. *Pravaha*, 24(1), 83–95. <https://doi.org/10.3126/pravaha.v24i1.20228>

28 JuRI-Nepal, A.I., (2019). Nepal: Land for landless peasants. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ASA3112212019ENGLISH.pdf>

29 Kumar, D. (2020, August 4). Violence against *Chepang* Peoples in Nepal Sparks Outrage at National Park Authorities and Conservation Movement. *Cultural Survival*. <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/violence-against-chepong-peoples-nepal-sparks-outrage-national-park-authorities-and>

**Table 2: Source of Funding on Climate change program, Government of Nepal**

**Source of Funding: Climate Change Programs 2007/08 to 2011/12 (NRs 000)**

Source	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
GoN	5,244,529	9,285,375	8,423,717	11,399,498	12,118,491
Grant	2,003,571	4,384,416	7,237,013	10,643,427	11,148,778
Loan	2,436,460	1,485,699	2,903,305	3,588,988	4,291,579
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,684,560</b>	<b>15,155,490</b>	<b>18,564,035</b>	<b>25,631,913</b>	<b>27,628,848</b>

**Source of Funding: Climate Change Programs 2007/08 to 2011/12 (%)**

Source	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
GoN	54%	61.3%	45.4%	44.5%	44.1%
Grant	20.7%	28.9%	39.0%	41.5%	40.4%
Loan	25.2%	9.8%	15.6%	14.0%	15.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

leaders and activists demand safety, security and dignity of the indigenous livelihood, culture and way of living. However, international conventions such as UNDRIP and ILO 169 are not able to protect these especially when actual displacements are happening. This is clear evidence of rights violations.

Similarly, the conflict of *Newar* of Khokhana against the government is also related to land and resource grabbing. The government wants to build a 76-km road, which will be the shortest linking Kathmandu and the *Nijgadh- Tarai*, and is estimated to take four years to complete at the cost of Rs 110 billion. Whereas, the locals *Newar* are against the expansion saying it will destroy the rich *Newari* heritage and culture.<sup>30</sup> Governments are leading such development projects from top to down approach which lacks the prior consultation and has mostly failed to address the demands of the community peoples.

### 4. Climate Change

Globally, Nepal ranks 4th on the vulnerability index on climate change.<sup>31</sup> Also, in terms of global risk for earthquake occurrence and impact, it is 11th in the world, and of all the multi-hazard countries it falls in the top 20. And also, it has been identified that more than 80% of the population is exposed to the risk of natural hazards.<sup>32</sup> A climate analysis report states that the risk of climate change has increased the vulnerability of Nepal's grassroots communities, particularly those living in remote areas, and dependent on subsistence agriculture.<sup>33</sup> In 2020, more than 400 people were killed due to monsoon-induced

30 Bhattaraj, K. D. (2020, July 11). Khokana epitomizes how Nepal gets its development wrong. *Annapurna Express*. <https://theannapurnaexpress.com/news/khokana-epitomizes-how-nepal-gets-its-development-wrong-2636>

31 *In depth*. (n.d.). UNDP in Nepal. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://www.np.undp.org/content/nepal/en/home/energy-environment-climate-and-disaster-risk-management/in-depth.html>

32 UNDRR (2019). *Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal: Status Report 2019*. Bangkok, Thailand, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

33 *Climate Risk Country Profile: Nepal (2021): The World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank*



disasters and over 1,000 people were affected.<sup>34</sup> According to the dashboard of SDG Index, on Climate Action SDG 13, the country is on track towards SDGs. Nepal's budget for climate action also increased by almost 6.5 fold since FY 2017/18, while the spending on relevant activities has increased from 15 to 20 per cent.<sup>35</sup> But despite budget allocations, the vulnerability of the country due to climate change has not reduced. It also lacks gender-responsive framework and resources to actualise plans.

The review on Nepal climate Public and Expenditure illustrates that government funding on Climate Change programs has been decreasing by years whereas the grants and loans are increasing yearly.<sup>36</sup>

### 5. Patriarchy and Fundamentalism

In Nepal, there is still a culture of preference for men. From the very beginning, the seed of machismo, preservation of *kul* (patrilineal name, breadwinner, guardian, superior, strong, brave etc.) are in the mindset of men, further resulting to violence against girls and women.<sup>37</sup> Nepal became a secular country, the influence of Hinduism is still dominant. Hinduism is mostly a patriarchal system where men are the superior being than women.

In February 2021, a legislation proposal was endorsed by the government that requires women under age 40 to have consent from a guardian and local government for women when traveling to the Gulf or Africa.<sup>38</sup> The government had to clarify that the action is to reduce the possible trafficking of women and girls in the gulf countries. Legislation does not necessarily protect women and girls, but in many cases also legitimizes violence. The cases of rape and violence against women and girls also increased during the pandemic especially with extended lockdowns and quarantine. According to police reports in 2021, there are 1,021 rape cases registered during the lockdown period. The INSEC report also shows that this year only, there are 140+ cases of rape.<sup>39</sup> These are just conservative numbers since most victims don't really come out due to stigma and fear of their perpetrators. Even with some legislation on these issues, there are still a lot of cases being recorded. The feudal culture is embedded in the government itself including the politicians, this is coupled with weak implementation of laws and policies and delays in the justice system, which also further encourage this patriarchal culture.

### 6. Militarism and Conflict

Political instability and political conflict in the country have impacted its socio-economic sectors. Nepal had gone through a 10-year Maoist insurgency/ armed conflict from 1996 to 2006. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the Maoist and the then government in November 2006. Some

34 Rastriya Samachar Samiti. (2021, June 17). Monsoon Preparedness Response Plan endorsed. *The Himalayan Times*. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/monsoon-preparedness-response-plan-endorsed>

35 Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal. (2020). *Country Report Status of the Agenda and SDGs Implementation in Nepal. Beyond Beijing Committee - Nepal*.pg. 62

36 Government of Nepal, UNDP, UNEP. (2011). *Nepal Climate Public Expenditure & Institutional Review*. National Planning Commission. Retrieved March 6, 2021, from [https://www.npc.gov.np/images/category/climate\\_public\\_expenditure.pdf](https://www.npc.gov.np/images/category/climate_public_expenditure.pdf)

37 Shrestha.S.L (1954).*Gender Sensitive Planning What, Why and How in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Women Awareness Center Nepal

38 Khadka, U. (2021, February 11). History of female (im)mobility in Nepal. *Nepali Times*. <https://www.nepalitimes.com/here-now/history-of-female-immobility-in-nepal/>

39 Gorakhapatra Online. (2077 B.S, Chaitra 25). महिला हिंसा बढ्दै, औसत दैनिक सात महिला बलात्कृत. *Gorakhapatra*. <https://beta.gorakhapatraonline.com/mustread/2021-04-07-35098>

fractions of them are yet to come to peace. To settle the issues of disappearance and conflict, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons were established. Both commissions have yet to fulfill the tasks to fully bring peace and justice.

Nepal's government and another communist rebel group formally signed a peace agreement on March 5, 2021 in a hope that it would end violent attacks, extortion and bombings by the rebel.<sup>40</sup> The Madhesi movement, *Tharu* Movement, and indigenous movements continue to demand amendments of the constitution to guarantee their inclusive and equal participation in the peace process. Sporadic conflicts and unrest in the bordering areas are also common. Nepal is bordered with India in the East, West and South of Nepal.

According to the UPR factsheet 2020, Nepal has an established system and mechanism to deal with justice concerns, however due to the lack of impartial function and decision making, the promulgated laws are less effectively functioning. There is also strong influence of politicians in the different sectors of the government and is more obvious in their appointment of favored commissioners in the Transitional Justice Commission.

Also, even with the legislation Enforced Disappearance Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Act-2014 is enforced to end discrimination and impunity, the initiatives and actions at the ground level are limited. The government is weak in implementation as well as in enforcing constitutional mandate for making sectoral commissions such as filling up positions in the National Women Commission.

### 7. Patriarchal Authoritarian Governance

In 2008, the newly elected Constituent Assembly declared Nepal a Federal Democratic Republic, abolishing the 240 year-old monarchy. Despite being a Federal Democratic Republic country; Nepal is exhibiting to some extent authoritarian tendencies by adopting laws and policies that restrict and violate human rights. The government uses the Electronic Transactions Act 2006 to arbitrarily detain individuals, including journalists; particularly targeted those critical of the government and of the leaders of the ruling party<sup>41</sup>. Additionally, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology drafted social media guidelines which gives authority to the government to regulate social media content and criminalize users' activities. The right to Freedom of Expression and privacy is of a huge concern as several bills limit freedom of expression, especially in media freedom<sup>42</sup>.

The government continue to perpetuates discriminatory laws and policies that continue to violate women's human rights. The government did not reform constitutional provisions which denied women equal citizenship rights. This has excluded many people from the right to a nationality and pushed them

40 Government, rebels formally sign peace agreement in Nepal. (2021, March 5). *Times of India*. [https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/government-rebels-formally-sign-peace-agreement-in-nepal/articleshow/81350127.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/government-rebels-formally-sign-peace-agreement-in-nepal/articleshow/81350127.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

41 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/nepal/report-nepal/>

42 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/nepal/report-nepal/>

to become stateless, violating basic human rights such as access to education, employment, freedom of movement and healthcare. Likewise, the Department of Immigration proposed an introductory policy requiring women below the age of 40 to obtain permission from their families and a recommendation from the local government before traveling internationally. Due to huge backlash from the public, the policy has not come into force.

The constitution has ensured 33% women's participation in all spheres. However, in reality, the government has only fulfilled this where the constitution has made it mandatory such as in the parliament with 32.72 percent and federal government at the provincial level at 34.36 percent.<sup>43</sup> Even in the Council of Ministers, there are only five women ministers out of 25 ministries.<sup>44</sup> The 15th plan has set a target to achieve 40% by 2080/81 B.S. (2023/24 A.D). Likewise, the national data on women's representation in public service is only 24.7 percent which is targeted to reach 34 percent by 2023/24 A.D. In the administrative posts, there is low representation from Dalit, Muslim, Madhesi and indigenous communities. Due to more men's representation in all sectors, the 50:50 inclusivity across the country is a challenge to achieve by 2030.<sup>45</sup> The Government has not fulfilled its obligation of non-discrimination as per the CEDAW though it has ratified even the optional protocol.

In mid 2022, the government is going ahead with the election. CSOs and women's human rights organizations are advocating for equal space and participation for women and men in the election including from marginalized communities such as disadvantaged indigenous peoples, Dalits, Madhesi, LGBTIQ and many more. However, the government remains silent in practice with the people's rights of participation and democracy.

## B. Priority Issues : Unpaid Care work

In Nepal, women carry out 85 percent of daily unpaid care work, spending a total of 29 million hours a day (cumulatively) compared to 5 million hours spent by men. Gender norms result in women spending disproportionately more time than men in these activities.<sup>46</sup> According to the UN Women, a woman works in unpaid care work for an average of 10 years whereas men work only 4 years in their lifetime. The pandemic has resulted in more involvement of women and girls into the unpaid care work while the school shifted to virtual and the health system is overstretched. The root system is the rigid patriarchal norms and values which perpetuates that women are the home makers and men are the breadwinners.<sup>47</sup> The count of time spent on unpaid care work by women has not been incorporated in the System of National Accounting (SNA). The government of Nepal is using a SNA 2008 version which is the international framework to calculate and include the work. The system of national accounting

43 Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission. (2020, March). *The Fifteenth Plan. National Planning Commission*. Retrieved May 13, 2021, from [https://npc.gov.np/images/category/15th\\_plan\\_English\\_Version.pdf](https://npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_plan_English_Version.pdf)

44 <https://www.opmcm.gov.np/cabinet/> accessed on 10th June 2021

45 Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal. (2020). *Country Report Status of the Agenda and SDGs Implementation in Nepal. Beyond Beijing Committee - Nepal*. Pg No. 37

46 <https://lostata.ilo.org/millions-of-hours-spent-daily-on-unpaid-work-evidence-from-asia-and-the-pacific/> accessed on 10th June 2021

47 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/nepal> accessed on June 2021

has addressed the extended work<sup>48</sup> but not the unpaid care work. Therefore, due to the reasons such as unavailability of the data in the national account and to address the unpaid care work with the workers women it is crucial to study on this matter.

### Unemployment rate

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, economic activities have slowed and are expected to contract by 3.0 percent in 2020 as projected by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).<sup>49</sup> According to the Labor Force Survey, the ratio of Employment to population is 34.3 percent in which female is 22.9 percent and male is 38.3 percent. The data shows a total of 908,000 are unemployed among that 397,000 are female and 511,000 are male population. The under-utilization rate of labor is 39.2 percent. The female ratio underutilized in labor is 48.7 percent and 31.8 percent in male. It shows that there is still a huge number of populations of working age who are under employed and under-utilized in the labor force. The economic survey also has included the population, those who are engaged in the production of goods and service for benefit or salary one hour a week are defined as the employed.

### Informal employment

Nepal Labor Force Survey 2018/19 states that the informal sectors hold 62.2 percent while the formal sector covers 37.8 percent only. In the informal employment<sup>50</sup> women's participation is higher than that of men by 9.4 percent. In informal employment, men's participation is 81.1 percent whereas in formal employment it is 18.9 percent. While women's participation in informal employment is 90.5 percent and in formal it is 9.5 percent only. Those who are employed in informal employment out of total 59.2 percent do not have paid annual leave and sick leave benefits and their employers do not contribute towards their social security. Globally Nepal's hourly mean gender pay gap is 28.9 percent while the median gender gap is 34.5 percent.<sup>51</sup> Nepal's average monthly income is 15,000 to 25,000 Nepali rupees which is USD 128.1 to 213.5<sup>52</sup> with 41.3 percent of the employed earning the amount. Whereas, there is the data of the population who earn less than Nrs. 6,500 per month and the ratio of women is higher (58 percent) than men (42 percent).

The data above shows that women are largely involved in informal employment which has less income and uncertainty of social security. While in the carpet factories numbers of the women workers are not accounted for in the national system. So, their status and situation is unrecorded and undemented.

48 The work done by women is like making firewood, collecting water, making pickles, gunkruk and so on. Interview with Sharu Joshi Shrestha on 26th May 2021

49 Economic Survey 2019/2020, Government of Nepal - Ministry of Finance [https://www.mof.gov.np/uploads/document/file/Economic%20Survey%202019\\_20201125024153.pdf](https://www.mof.gov.np/uploads/document/file/Economic%20Survey%202019_20201125024153.pdf)

50 In terms of current economic status, those currently active have been classified into one of three codes - "agriculture", "informal non-agriculture" and "non-agriculture other sectors". For an operational purpose, a person whose main job is not in agriculture has been counted as working in the informal sector, ILO report, 2004

51 Office, I. L. (2018). *Global Wage Report 2018/19: What Lies Behind Gender Pay Gaps*. International Labour Organization. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_650553.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_650553.pdf)

52 Exchange Rate for June 10, 2021, <https://www.nrb.org.np/forex/>

## 2 ASSESSMENT ON SDGs COMMITMENTS AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

In Nepal, the National Planning Commission (NPC) is the main government authority to plan, implement and review the SDGs implementation processes. Nepal participates and presents a Voluntary National Review in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2017 and 2020 respectively. Recently, the National Planning Commission has launched a resource book for the localization of SDGs. The NPC has been assessing its commitments by reviewing the SDGs progress every year and also it has published a 4-year SDGs Progress Assessment Report 2016-2019. Apart from the Government, CSOs are also actively engaged in the SDGs implementation and review processes. Every year, CSO-led reviews on the status of the SDGs are conducted across Nepal by various CSOs and networks where a CSO-led report is produced and also becomes reference for CSO engagements in other spaces.

### C. Architecture of SDGs Monitoring in the Country

The Government of Nepal created a steering committee for SDG implementation and monitoring under the chairmanship of Hon. Prime Minister. The National Planning Commission is the apex body of the government for the implementation, review and monitoring of the SDGs/Agenda 2030 at national level. The National Planning Commission's vice chair is also the head of the SDG implementation and monitoring committee. In the committee, there are thematic and line ministries SDG focal persons. Under committee, there are 7 thematic committees among which is the Governance and Gender Empowerment Committee.<sup>53</sup> So far, Nepal has participated in the VNR twice. The review led by NPC in VNR 2020 was inclusive and CSOs perspective was given space more compared to the process in 2017. The NPC held a series of consultations during the VNR 2020 and developed a report with inputs from CSOs like BBC Nepal and many others. For example: BBC Nepal's inputs on Goal 5 was incorporated in the government's VNR Report 2020. However, the government still needs to recognize women-led CSO representations in the HLPF country presentations as well.

The CSOs spotlight report of SDGs 2020<sup>54</sup> highlights that it is hard to achieve all the goals of the SDGs by 2030 as Goal 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 have been highly affected by the COVID 19 crisis. Also the implementation and achievement of all the goals are difficult in reality because geo-politics and the domestic political environment determine the entire development process.

<sup>53</sup> Government of Nepal National Planning Commission. (2020). *National Review of Sustainable Development Goals. National Planning Commission. & SDG Progress Assessment Report, 2016-2019*

<sup>54</sup> SDGs National Network Nepal. (2020, July). *Voluntary Peoples Review of SDGs in Nepal Amplifying Voices of the People: Closing the Gaps of SDGs*. Retrieved September, 2021, from [https://nacasud.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2Nepal-Civil-Society-Spotlight-Report-of-SDGs-2020\\_Final.pdf](https://nacasud.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2Nepal-Civil-Society-Spotlight-Report-of-SDGs-2020_Final.pdf)

### D. Roles of CSOs in the SDGs Processes

In Nepal, the Nepal SDG Forum is a civil society platform for engaging CSOs collectively in the SDGs implementation and links the CSOs to the government. There are 17 goal convenors and 16 thematic convenors in the platform. The secretariat of this platform is the NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN). This forum is a loose network consisting of various CSOs for the SDGs implementation and its status review at national level. The forum has national level organizations as its convener and members. Mostly, it conducts national and federal consultations among the members and partners. Thus, it limits the grassroots voices because it itself can't reach to the ground level. However, CSOs like Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal bring the voices of the grassroots level to the provincial and national level and to the forum like this. BBC Nepal is one of the founders of Nepal SDG Forum (NSDGF) and the convener of its Women and Girls' constituency and Gender Justice theme while also leading the Women Major Group for Sustainable Development in Nepal (WMG-SDN). Also, it has been engaging in activities of the SDGs Forum and has submitted the report from women's CSOs perspectives on behalf of the Women Major Group for Sustainable Development Goals in Nepal (WMG-SDN) in both VNRs in 2017 and 2020.<sup>55</sup>

### E. Financing and Resource Mobilization

The National Planning Commission has published a report on tracking the financial requirements to implement and achieve the SDGs goals and its targets. In February 2021, NPC also published a need identification, fund projection and financial strategy report. In the report, it has been projected that each year total NPR 2025 billion (USD 17.293 Billion) financing which is 48% of the GDP in average to achieve the targets of SDGs by 2030. In which every year there will be a lack of NPR 585 billion (USD 4.996 Billion). The government is planning to achieve 27% tax collection by 2030 in total GDP.

<sup>55</sup> Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal. (2020). *Country Report Status of the Agenda and SDGs Implementation in Nepal. Beyond Beijing Committee - Nepal, Pg No: 3-4*

# 3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS – WOMEN’S PRIORITIES

## A. Research Findings on the specific goals, targets and indicators

The women workers working in the different factories of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur were found poor (low income) and migrated from the different parts of Nepal. Most of them were the indigenous Tamang community from belonging to different districts and migrating to the valley seeking work. Majority of the women were found married but illiterate and living with their family. Few women were also found living alone after the death of the husband or living separately from the husband due to the second marriage. Most of the women workers found living in the room provided by the carpet factory but few of them found working in the factory but staying outside on their own. According to Nepal Carpet Manufacturer and Exporter Association, there are approximately 300 carpet factories across Nepal and there are 25,000 to 30,000 carpet workers as per the ratio of the carpet production in Nepal. While out of the total workers women’s ratio is higher than that of men. The representatives of Carpet Manufacturer and Exporter Association and Trade Unions both claimed that the official data on the workers in the carpet industry are not available so far.<sup>56</sup>

This section will discuss the findings of the study based on the SDGs target 5.4 and 8.5. The impact on the health of women, impact of COVID-19 and social security are also discussed here. The gathered findings of the study are presented below:

### 1. Lack of Implementation of Laws and Policies in Carpet Industry / Informal work: [Target 8.5.1]

It was highlighted that the carpet factory women workers are not getting the minimum wages as per the standard set by the government of Nepal. It was found that both women and men are paid equally for equal work in the carpet factory. It was highlighted that there is no difference in the payment for men and women for weaving the carpet. The mode of payment is based on the piece rate or per square meter of the carpet weaved rather than monthly remuneration or daily wages. The women workers make earnings on the basis of the piece of carpet they complete. Moreover, it was found that per month a worker’s normal basic earning is NRS. 5,000 to 8,000 (USD 42.3 to 67.6). However, the normal basic income was not enough to meet their daily family needs of food, health security etc.

<sup>56</sup> FGD with the Trade unions representatives and IDI with the representatives of Carpet Manufacturer and exporter association

**One of the participants revealed her story of earning as a worker in a carpet factory.**

*“Normally, it takes one to one and a half months to complete a carpet. After finishing that we can make up for NRs. sixteen thousand (USD 135.3). By dividing that amount per month the monthly is like eight thousand. If we have a small child, we cannot work at normal time so it can take two to three months’ time to complete one carpet. (Participant, FGD, Bhaktapur)*

Likewise, another participant stated:

*“In our factory, we get per meter NRS. 5500 and for complex design it is paid six to seven thousand. But in most of the factories, the owners/ employers pay us the same rate for both designs. In some factories for the simple designed carpet, we have heard they get six thousand per meter.” (Participant, FGD, Kathmandu)*

It was found that the price of carpet is calculated per meter. A simple designed per meter carpet is normally five thousand and five hundred only. When the carpet design is complex the rate per meter is seven to eight thousand. Generally, the price is the same in all factories but the price of the carpet and payment may vary from factory to factory.

There is a lack of management mechanism within the carpet industry to check and balance the exploitation of labor. Participants shared that they sometimes could not even earn NRS. 5,000 too if a mistake occurs in working. A participant shared her experience of completing a carpet however not able to get paid due to a mistake:

*“Once, I made 10 pieces of carpet. Unknowingly, by mistake I used different colors in the design. After the completion of the carpet, the employer scolded me and cut my payment. From all that work of 10 pieces, I had to receive 5000/- but I could not get the payment as it was unapproved by the employer.... Like I did it for free.” (Participant)*

Likewise, another participant asserted that to complete weaving a carpet it takes two months to three months. *“For weaving a simple design carpet, it takes one and half months to two Months. Whereas for the complex designed carpet it can take 2- 3 months to complete one.” (Participant)*

The representatives of trade unions also agreed that the minimum wage has not been implemented in the carpet Industries. Although there are many interventions from the trade union on implementing the minimum wage for the workers in the carpet industry it is yet to be implemented. Likewise, it was found that the minimum wages are increased by the government every 2 years by 2 percent, on the tri-mutual agreement of the government, trade unions and employers. If in case the government doesn’t increase the wage the trade union and the business houses increase the wages as per the guidelines of labor act.

“In the informal sector the minimum wage is not working. If the employers want, they can provide the minimum wages but they are not willing to do so. Trade union is advocating to provide the current minimum wage NRs. 13450/- per month to the workers. But it has been applied in limited factories but not in all.” (Trade Union representative)

Another representative of the trade union shared that the workers are not getting the quality facility and wages. Trade unions claimed to advocate for the implementation of labor acts and minimum wages in the Carpet Industry.

*“The carpet is exported in the international market however with agony I have to say that we the workers are not getting paid off with the facilities and earning as we deserve. There is no difference in payment for men workers to women. But there are varieties of workers, some work on price rate and some work on salary basis.” (Trade Union Representative)*

In 2019, the government of Nepal set the minimum wage for the workers as Nrs.13,450/- per month. It came into effect in January 2019 which is still ongoing.<sup>57</sup> Recently the government has announced that the minimum wage for the workers will be Nrs.15,000/- in USD 127.42/- which will be effective from the mid July 2021. According to this, a worker will earn NRS. 577/- per day.<sup>58</sup> The amount is going to increase by 11 percent than the previous wage ratio. In addition to the prescribed wages, the industries or organizations will have to provide additional facilities, including provident fund and allowances as per the Labor Act. However, the implementation of the policy is yet to come into practice. The recent raise in minimum wage is not sufficient for the workers to sustain their family and fulfill the requirements such as food, shelter and health expenses. In case of the carpet factory women workers, they are provided with the minimum salary and the shelter for a family to stay.

The issue on the wage was also raised. In which the participants also raised that while setting the wages for workers there should be consideration of the high market prices to meet a family’s daily needs. Which is often lacking in government budget announcements. On this a participant mentioned;

*“Today the cost of education is high, groceries are high too. So, it is difficult to raise a family from the earnings of only one person. All family members need to work and earn for their livelihood. So ironically when the government makes laws and policies to increase the salary for workers, they also need to lay down the rights and boundaries for the workers. (participant)*

Gender Expert Ms. Sharu Joshi claims that “.... the topic of unequal payment among men and women is the global issue which is also realized by the governments. While we talk about the payment the qualification comes ahead. When there is unequal qualification, there is unequal payment. The unequal

<sup>57</sup> <https://wageindicator.org/salary/minimum-wage/nepal>

<sup>58</sup> <https://thehimalayantimes.com/business/minimum-monthly-wage-of-workers-raised-11-per-cent-to-rs-15000>

*payment has created the uncountable gaps, imbalance between men and women. There is political unaccountability towards women workers.”*

Though the government has set the minimum wage standard, due to lack of regular monitoring of the formal and informal sectors, there is lack of consistency on the implementation of minimum wages. It was found that most of the employers in informal sectors are not following the government rules and guidelines. The trade unions and government both should do the strict monitoring at all levels to ensure the workers are getting the minimum wages and their rights as provision in the constitution.

### 1.2 Lack of implementation of complaint mechanism at the workplace

It was highlighted by the participants that they have experienced verbal abuse from their employers. The cases of verbal abuse were found among the women workers in the carpet factory. Participants also revealed that most of the employers of carpet factories often use slang and abusive words against the women workers. Despite the provision on national laws and policies of workplace violence elimination, the violence related case management mechanism was not seen in the carpet industry. If the violence takes place in the factory, participants bear the incident to keep on the job. Whereas the employer and trade union play a mediator role to take such cases to the police station.

One of the participant shared her story of facing verbal violence; She shared:

*..... “When we ask the owner for payment and in an emergency, we get scolded with abusive slang words by the Employer. We are often verbally abused by different slang words. I don’t think it is appropriate. We are workers but not the slave. We work so that he is also able to eat. We are here to work to earn some money because we are poor. We are not here because our parents told us to go and work here. So I don’t like when the boss uses slang words against my parents. None should use such words against workers. We work here like an ox day and night. But we don’t get paid on time and are respected. We work hard but when it’s time for payment, it is delayed. The near and close ones (workers) get paid on time. We don’t have unity among workers either.” (Participants)*

Other participants also added that such violent employers are in most of the factories, only few lucky workers get good employers by chance.

According to another participant, such cases of violence are common in the places where illiterate and poor women work. She affirmed “In informal sectors, I have seen some cases even which give goosebumps. It happens with the people who are poor, unaware, unorganized and could not speak against such cases.” She added, there is a need for awareness and education among the workers and the government is responsible to make a policy and launch a program regarding violence to control it.

A former carpet worker and current trade union’s representative, who has been working in factories for decades, argued that women workers in the carpet sector face difficulties. She asserted “working in the

*carpet factory is difficult. Because the women came from different backgrounds, some are single women, some women's husbands are abroad. Those women must work to pay the room rent, educate children despite the abusive employer. There are many women who have faced such violence but dare not talk about this. There are many such owner who look down upon women as sexual being. And if they (women workers) don't do as required, they are fired from the job."*

Likewise, another representative of the trade union admitted that the workers are not aware about their rights nor they would be able to raise their voice against the exploitation due to lack of education and awareness. He further added

*.... "In the carpet factory, the use of children and women from the poor background and mostly from the indigenous community are seen mostly. Around 85% of people are children from the Tamang community who are brought here for labor exploitation. In the surroundings of Kathmandu valley, the children from Tamang community from Makwanpur are brought for exploitation and those children won't have any educational, political, and social consciousness due to which the environment of exploitation has been created."*

Some participants also put their views optimistically stating that in the past there used to be more violence in the carpet sector which has been reduced by 80% at the present. Before 2044 B.S. (1987 AD) there used to be many cases of violence against the workers. When women workers used to speak a word, they used to get beaten and physically abused. Also there used to be sexual violence. But after the establishment of democracy in 2046 BS (1989 AD) the rights of the workers were established and improved too. From looking at the then and now, the rights of workers are many and also the violence has been reduced. Hence, it needs to be taken as an achievement for workers.

However, the fact was contradicted by a key person, from the Carpet Manufacturer and Exporter Association, He asserted that it's a common problem in every society and country. He argued by saying "It's all about human nature. Not all are the same but it can happen at your home, in your society and everywhere. It's not only in this industry. In total I would say, from a management level, such examples of violence cases are rare. There can be one or two among twenty thousand workers. But it is seen and heard less. However, there are cases of elopement of men and women workers."

The government of Nepal has the Sexual harassment at workplace prevention Act -2071(2015) which was enacted addressing the sexual harassment at workplace to protect the rights of every individual to work in safe environment. The act has provisioned two mechanisms: internal and external complaint mechanisms. Under the internal complaint handling mechanism, the manager or the head of the department have the authority to decide on administrative matters. The head of office has power to take departmental action against the perpetrator pursuant to the internal employee service rules. While under the external complaint handling mechanism, the Chief District Officer ("CDO") of the concerned district is the initial complaint handling authority. Also, there is a provision of punishment for the culprit. Section 12 of the Act provides that any person who has committed sexual harassment

under the Act may be punished with imprisonment of up to 6 months, and / or fine of up to Nrs. 50,000. The section also provides that any employer failing to comply with the duties and responsibilities imposed by the Act, may be punished with a fine of up to Nrs. 25,000. However, from the study, it was found that such an act has not been implemented properly in the carpet industry.

In the carpet industry women workers are from poor backgrounds and illiterate. The awareness level is lacking among the women workers. The workers are not well aware of the kinds of violence, complaint mechanisms and information on seeking justice. The statement also shows women workers are suffering those violence and hardships just to remain employed and to look after the family.

## 2. Impact on unequal responsibility/ unpaid care work: (Target 5.4)

It was found that women workers in carpet factories are over burdened with the household chores unpaid care work. Also, they lack the time for their skills and career development due to sole responsibility of household chores. It was also found that women workers were also quite unaware of the equal sharing of the household chores. The patriarchal social gender norms are pervasive in the women workers. At first, the women workers also acknowledged the roles of women in the kitchen no matter how and where they work. Likewise, the men's roles are as breadwinners. The mindset has segregated the women and men's role in the household, as a result women are seen largely in the unpaid care work when men's presence is very less. After an awareness session on the importance of sharing the household chores, they realized that it's not a gender role rather a work that can be done by anyone. The women were able to understand the unpaid care work as work, needed to be valued and shared among the family members and society. They have shared their experiences below.

### 2.1 Care work

It was highlighted that women are bound to do the household chores, feed the child and handle all the work due to patriarchal social norms and gender values. The women lack the appreciation of their family members and sharing the chores responsibility. The burden of household work has occupied women's time and they miss many opportunities such as education, employment while engaging in care work.

Majority of the participants shared that the average time of working in unpaid work is 5 to 7 hours while the time they spent working in a factory is 10 to 12 hours. One of the participants shared that we work on average two to three hours in the morning and two to three hours at household chores such as cooking, cleaning, looking after children and elderly people. Few of the participants shared their husband and children support in the household chores for cooking and cleaning and washing dishes. However, most of the participants asserted that their husbands do not help in the chores. Even if they request it, they don't help or sometimes even get angry. The participants revealed that most of the women worker's husbands work as labor and they rest after coming back to home but do not support the household chores.

*“My husband does not even wash his own clothes, not even his underwear. In his free time also, he does not help me in the kitchen and household chores....They say the husband is above us, maybe that’s why...?!” (Participant)*

Similar thoughts were shared during FGD in Kathmandu that most of the participants accepted that the husbands do not help in the kitchen chores.

*“He gets angry if I ask him to help me in cooking. If I am cooking, I ask him to help to cut/prepare vegetables or I ask him to wash the dishes. but he gets angry. He gets angry if he has to cook the food. So, I feel bad and I don’t ask him to cook or help. Instead, I cook myself even though I am tired.” (Participant)*

It was found that women with small children face more challenges to work in factories and the responsibility of unpaid care and domestic work is even harder. A participant shared that having a small child is harder and it takes a long time to do it all by yourself.

Women are considered as the main person for the responsibility of cooking, cleaning and washing, taking care of children and elderly and sick persons. In the study, the women were found having a patriarchal mindset of considering unpaid care work under the women’s roles. Even most of the participants shared that these works are women’s work so that as a wife and mother women should do it. If women don’t do it then who else does, they thought. They mentioned that they cannot think of other options for the household chores than themselves.

*“If not us (women), who will do it? It’s been habitual for us to work at home doing all the household chores. So, we don’t feel like it’s work. No one else does it beside ourselves. Who else can we think of?” (Participant)*

Regarding the time spent in the unpaid care and paid work by women, it was found that the women work normally 16 hours a day. Most of the time is spent in the factory (paid work) for 10 to 12 hours in the factory whereas they work 4 to 6 hours on average in unpaid care work. Depending on the size of the family the hour of working in unpaid care work increases. The table below shows the average working hours of women in unpaid care work and paid work in the factory.

The table above shows that women are engaged in the household chores for more than 6 hours a day and in the factory they are engaged for more than 10 hours on an average. It is evident that women workers work the whole day like a machine without any other support or rest. The above statements shared by the workers are showing that women are doing the household chores mostly. The household responsibility is just considered a women’s chores rather than work. There is a need for focus in the policies and planning that unpaid care work should be recognized as a work rather than just women’s work or role. The awareness on the recognition, redistribution and reducing the women’s unpaid time needs to be done at community level as well as in the policy making levels.

The government of Nepal has targeted to reduce the time spent in unpaid care work by 6 hours by 2030.<sup>59</sup> As per the data of 2019, the time spent by women in unpaid care work is 11.87% whereas for 2022 the target is to reduce the time by 10.27 hours.<sup>60</sup> There is a lack of mechanism or framework to recognize and reduce the time of women spent in unpaid care work. Especially working in both paid and unpaid work, women workers face the most difficulties and inequality. The impacts of unequal unpaid care work have created problems such as overburdened care work responsibility among women. This has impacted on women’s health, career, education and so on.

## 2.2. Impacts on the opportunity for personal skill development

The study found the internal migration among the carpet factory workers. It was found that the majority of the women workers migrated from the adjoining districts of Kathmandu, Bagmati Province 3 and other districts. Their migrant status and having less information also enable them to be deprived of the skill-oriented training.

Women workers were found working from morning to night in both paid and unpaid care work. Their time in unpaid care work is unshared and taken care by the women only. Which has an indirect impact on women’s education, skills development and career. Many women workers admitted they felt guilty for not being able to teach their children and provide them enough care and time.

According to Bimala Wagle, Women Development Officer, Women and Children Department of Tokha Municipality, she stated “.... women are engaged in household work from early in the morning including opening the main gate in the morning and closing it at night. The household work is even not valued instead women are overburdened with it. When we called them to participate in training, they told us they woke up earlier than the usual time in the morning so that they could attend the training. If the household chores are undone the family members won’t be happy about it. Hence, they wake up early to get all the work at home and then only they come to attend such training. This is the scenario of women workers.”

The federal government and local governments have schemes for many businesses and employment-oriented skills and training targeting women, poor and marginalized communities. The schemes include training such as skill development training at ward level, women entrepreneurship training, training on pickle industry, spice industry and hand-made bags, beads and so on. The government also provides Montessori training to women. whereas for male the electrical and plumber training is provided.

When the government organizes trainings targeting women, there occurs a few challenges: such as in most of the trainings there is same women’s double representation in the trainings. While the women come to participate in the training. There are women’s different stories of working double hours at home and outside.

<sup>59</sup> <http://sdg.npc.gov.np/resource/2659/>

<sup>60</sup> <http://sdg.npc.gov.np/data/>

The above stories show that women are overburdened with the household chores responsibility. It has impacted on them with the load of work alone to handle. It hinders them from meaningfully participating in obtaining different skills and training for their career and future income related works. The load of household work results in women's decreased time for their career upliftment. They are pushed back to attend the personal development programs which ultimately hinders their economic and social status.

### 3. Facilities to the workers in factory and knowledge on the Social Security Act 2018

#### 3.1 Lack of Knowledge on the government's Social Security Act 2018

Women workers were found less aware of the social security provided by the government to single women, persons with disability, elderly women etc. The women workers shared that they are not aware much of the provisions of social security. Since most of them were illiterate and lack access to information, they don't know about the facility, process and allowance provided by the government.

Participants from FGD stated that they have heard about the Social Security provided to the single women allowance, Elderly people's allowance and allowance given to the person with disability but not on the contribution based social security scheme. The participants also mentioned that they don't know about the individual Pan number and tax deduction from the salary.

Gender Expert Sharu Joshi Shrestha asserts the contribution based Social Security is open to everyone including migrant workers returnees, domestic workers, home-based working women or home makers. The policy of depositing the 35% from the earnings in social security is not applicable to all. She mentioned *"I am capable and I can deposit 35% but not all women can due to the low level of income."* She claims that if social security is not ensured for all women, it affects their health, economic empowerment and voice.

In Nepal, the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, is the main government authority to regulate social security. There is a lack of awareness on the contribution based social security fund. There is also a challenge to include all informal workers, self-employers and domestic unpaid workers in the scheme. Social security has been established as the constitutional rights of a citizen. The article 43 has provisioned the rights of contribution based social security to the workers.

The Government of Nepal launched its contribution-based Social Security scheme under the Social Security Act- 2076 (2017). The contribution-based social security act (2017) is funded through the contributions made by the workers and the employers. This is considered as a milestone towards achieving decent work for all.<sup>61</sup> Since 1034 AD, Nepal has been expanding 13% of the national budget

61 Nepal launches a contribution-based Social Security Scheme. (2018, November 27). ILO. Retrieved June 21, 2021, from [https://www.ilo.org/kathmandu/info/public/pr/WCMS\\_651182/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/kathmandu/info/public/pr/WCMS_651182/lang-en/index.htm)

in Social Security. There are almost 90 schemes where the budget is allocated on the heading of Social Security. The government has established an entity called National Integrated Social Protection Mechanism to monitor and stop the duplication of security programs and to enhance its effectiveness. Which has been passed by the commission and is in the stage of finalization from the ministry of council. After the approval and implementation of the mechanism, it will create a national data system, which will network all the ministries and cover all the data in the system for monitoring and regulating the data on social security.

The Nepal Labor Force Survey 2017/18 reveals that out of the country's total population 7.1 million are employed. More than 62 percent are employed in the informal sector shows that the informal sector has the biggest share to create jobs in the labor market. Trade union leaders have claimed that only around 7 percent of the workers in the country are organized in trade unions. Unfortunately, the workers engaged in the informal sector are largely excluded from national and international labor related instruments as well as the economic system.<sup>62</sup>

ILO states that social protection for the workers in the informal economy is still an emerging issue in Nepal.<sup>63</sup> The formal sectors are already registered in the Social Security as per the policy. From the published tables of the National Economic Census (NEC) 2017/18 (CBS 2019), both registered and unregistered establishments are 104,058 manufacturing establishments.<sup>64</sup> As stated in the first 1st strategic plan of the Social Security fund, of the total 70 lakh 86 thousand workers in Nepal only 16,8216 workers from the formal sectors are registered. The data shows that there is still a long way to go to engage all the workers in the list. As per the 15th National Plan, only 17 percent citizens are engaged in the basic Social Security as in FY 2075/76 and the government has projected to engage 60 percent by FY 2080/81 (2023/24). There is still a lack of awareness and information among the workers and employers regarding the social security provision and some employers are ignoring the issue though they know it already. Since the carpet factory in the informal sector is small in size, scattered, underground and unregulated in nature, it is a challenge to register the employers in the list.<sup>65</sup>

As the government's social security scheme is a milestone to secure the workers' rights during and after their retirement from work. But in practice there is still a gap in the implementation of the laws and policies and aligning it with labor rights. Also, there needs to be encouraging statements and mechanisms of the government to lure the employers and workers of all sectors to get registered in the social security fund. Awareness is required among the community people focusing on women workers of informal sectors at all levels. Likewise, government's special programs need to be implemented to engage the informal sectors too, which are seasonal and temporary in nature. Then after the Social Security will ensure all workers and employers rights for all.

62 Workers of all hues need to unite. (2019, November 1). The Kathmandu Post. Retrieved June 22, 2021, from <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2019/11/01/workers-of-all-hues-need-to-unite>

63 <https://www.ilo.org/kathmandu/areasofwork/informal-economy/lang-en/index.htm>

64 <https://www.adb.org> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/623281/adb-wp1166.p>

65 Workers of all hues need to unite. (2019, November 1). The Kathmandu Post. <https://kathmandupost.com/16/2019/11/01/workers-of-all-hues-need-to-unite>



### 3.2 Facilities to the women workers provided by the carpet factory

The women workers shared that they are provided with some facilities by the factory. From the workers of a factory, it was shared that there is provision of providing Dashain Bonus to the workers and children's education. Whereas in other factories, the workers stated that they don't receive Dashain or any festival's bonus.

*"Our employers provide us facilities like room, monthly ration of food packages such as 1 sack of rice, Lentils, salt, oil etc. Also, we get Dashain bonus NPR. 5000/- and for children's education NPR.5000/-. While in other factories the workers shared, they didn't receive Dashain or any festival's bonus". (Participants)*

The above-mentioned facilities of room and food are provided by the employers in almost all carpet factories. The participants revealed that the facility of ration and room is applicable to those families from which 2 persons are working in the factory. If one person alone from a family works in the factory, the facilities are also cut off. In this regard the participants shared as follows:

Regarding the facilities provided by the factory, one of the participants revealed:

*"When we both husband-and-wife used to work in the factory. We used to get per month one gas and 1 sack of rice, room (But we used to pay NPR.3,000/- and water was not provided). It was provided by the employer/owner. After that my husband started to work outside of the factory as a laborer. Then after the employer cut off the provided facility of rice and gas because my husband left the job in the factory. Now, I still work there, but he said I will not be getting my portion of the facility. That makes me worry about our future. If the lockdown keeps extending my husband will not be able to earn money. Also, the boss will not be providing the past facilities that we used to get before. So I fear we will face problems when joining our hands to mouth. (Participant)*

It shows that the problems faced by the workers are cut off from the facilities like room, food and others. Due to the weak monitoring system, it is not applied at all factories. Other participants argued that normally workers don't receive such education and Dashain bonus in other many factories. Also, though the room is provided for them, there is not provided safe drinking water.

However, few trade union representatives agreed that the progress made in the carpet factory is positive from past to present. At present there is labor law and act, workers' rights, trade unions for workers' rights. Trade unions representatives affirmed that the workers who work under them or associated with them provide NRS.10,000 for the pregnant women and paid leave for 2 months. The trade unions representatives claimed that there are still many workers who are associated with the trade unions.

### 4. Impact on health

The health issue was also found among the women workers. It was highlighted that women workers face various kinds of health problems due to the longer hours in both unpaid and paid work. The long hours work ultimately impacts on their health negatively. By working in the factory every day the use of wool and dust deteriorates their health. It was found they get health related problems like eye problems and respiratory problems and back pain etc. Likewise, the unshared responsibility of the household chores and care work also impacts on their mental and physical health. Since a woman alone has to take care of all the house work and care work such as cooking food, serving the family, looking after children, caring of elderly and sick members, washing and cleaning etc. After spending an average of 16 hours a day in both paid and unpaid work, women tend to have an impact on their health.

It was found that they get various health-related problems by working in the carpet factory. Few of the common problems found are workers having back pain, eyes problem, problem with respiratory system etc. Majority of the women admitted that they get back pain and eye problems by sitting for longer hours and working continuously in the same position.

*"We get back pain problems by working in one position for longer hours. The work also impacts our eye's health. We have to continue looking at the paper design and hand knotting accordingly which ultimately caused the eye problem." (Participant)*

Moreover, it was found that there was no health insurance for the workers in the carpet factory. In case of a health emergency, the workers take credit from the employer to get treatment from the hospital. The workers' shared income is just enough for looking after the basic needs like food and children's education. In the case of a health emergency, most loans are taken from employers or others.

*"When a health related emergency occurs, there is no provision or facility provided to us in the factory. However, during an emergency we ask for a loan which we use for the hospital expenses. The provided loan is paid off through our earrings on next month's work. (Participant)*

The health issues of the informal workers are often neglected by the big industries and corporate houses. In the carpet factory also the health-related facilities are being ignored by the employers. The government mechanisms are also lacking to monitor on a regular basis. The rights of workers to have decent work are yet to be ensured by the government.

### 5. Impact of COVID-19 on the carpet factory women workers

The Covid-19 has severely impacted the women workers of the carpet factories as well. The women workers working in the carpet factory faced different problems from managing food for the family and daily expenses during the first wave of COVID-19. Most of the participants shared that they did not

get support from the local government in the first lockdown since according to the local government, they are migrant workers.

It was found that the workers were deprived of the relief packages in the first wave and lockdown period. While the local government provided relief packages, they could not get it.

*“When we go to the Ward office (Local government) for the relief package in the first phase of lockdown, they ask us to bring the number of the employer or recommendation letter. They asked for citizenship and we were deprived because we belong to the other district and here, we are migrant workers. They told us that the employer is responsible to provide relief for us but not them.” (Participant)*

Some workers were able to find support from the social organizations and some workers were provided ration support from the factory owner. However, most of the workers had to ask for credits from the employer to meet the daily food expenses. The participants were fearful and said, if the lockdown wave 2 keeps extending for months like the previous year, they will face problems coping up. They said that they will have difficulties to join hand to mouth.

We asked participants about how the employer supported you during the first lockdown period. Most of the participants also shared that the ration and the facility provided by the employer is also inadequate to fulfill their family needs. Participants of FGD shared that if the 2 people from a family work in the factory they are provided all the facilities of ration and room. If not they also lose their share of facilities provided by the employer.

*“When both husband-and-wife used to work, 1 gas and 1 sack of rice, room rent (3,000 that we have to pay and water is not provided) per month we used to get. It was provided by the boss. But when my husband works outside of the factory, the boss said the provided facilities of rice and gas will be cut off. I still work there, but my portion of the facility I will be not getting from now on. That makes me worry about our future. If the lockdown keeps extending my husband will not be able to earn money. And the boss will also not be providing the past facilities. So I fear we will face problems joining our hands to mouth.” (Participant)*

Another participant shared that her employer is kind to them even in the lockdown period. She mentioned:

*“Last year due to covid 19, our owner intended to not provide us regular support for children’s education. We fight with the owner by saying that our children are taking class online so we need it. Later, we asked support from the trade union’s representatives to lobby the issue with the employer/ factory owner. At last, we were able to get the payment that we have been getting from years.”- (Participant)*

Women workers were found worried about the second wave and lockdown. They stated *“If the lockdown like the first wave goes longer, it will be hard for us to cope up. We will have difficulties with our hand to mouth.”*

Another Participant also revealed that there is no suitable condition to work and maintain social distance. They shared that in case anyone gets infected by covid, there is no insurance and management for them.

One participant mentioned *“We have to bear the expenses of the treatment, food and stay by ourselves. We are not economically stable so we want help from others. Right now, there is no safe quarantine for covid 19 patients in our area. In most of the places, there is no quarantine facility for workers.”*

The women workers are not able to implement the safety measures rules and purchase two masks every day. Due to the closure of international flights employers and owners are also not getting the required raw materials like in previous years. So, all the workers are affected badly. There are many women workers, who stay outside of the factory but work in the factory. They faced problems like paying room rent, managing food for the family etc. Therefore, the relief packages programs need to consider the women workers working in the factory. Trade unions should be involved in the relief distribution programs.

There are almost 300 carpet factories and twenty-five to thirty thousand carpet workers across Nepal. But there is no official government data yet regarding the carpet workers. The carpet manufacturer and exporter association is planning to conduct a study on the workers. According to him, the COVID has impacted on the carpet business and earnings of the workers. It was found that the associations on carpet manufacture and exporter are doing initiatives to provide essentials to the factory workers and make quarantine centers for 300 people in Kathmandu. However, there is a need for more migrant women workers focused covid relief packages and quarantine spaces.

## B. Analysis based on the findings

The study revealed that there is no wage gap between men and women in the informal sector; however, the payment method impacts the earnings of women as their time needs to be allocated for unpaid care work. The payment is made on the basis of the completion of a carpet. On average, depending on the size and design of the carpet, it takes 1 month to 1.5 months to complete the carpet. However, for women as their time is allocated for unpaid care work, the completion time takes from 2 months to 3 months impacting their overall earnings. The women workers also mentioned that if there are to focus on child and senior citizen care, more time is contributed to unpaid care work.

Based on the information gathered during the study on the SDG targets 5.4 ; Unpaid Care Work and target 8.5 ; achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all. Here are the key findings of the study as analyzed below.

### Findings and Analysis on Unpaid care and Domestic Work:

It was found that every day the women workers spent an average 16 hours working. In average 10 hours they spent in the factory in paid work whereas in average 4 to 6 hours they work in unpaid care work. Though there is no wage difference between men and women but due to unequal distribution of household chores were women mostly spend their time, they earn less than men provided they take longer to complete the carpet than men.

The women took sole responsibility for the household chores and care work for children and senior citizens. Many women and communities did not see unpaid work as work more as a responsibility, duty and a role of women while men as breadwinners. Due to this gender role, women were overburdened and working long hours. When women sought assistance or help for house chores, many husbands were not supportive, they believed it was their duty to fulfill and their responsibilities. Taking on the responsibilities of house chores with miniscule or no support and working to minimize the financial burden, many women felt underpressure and stressed. Their life and time is solely focused on unpaid work and contributing financially to their family, this raises a concern for their quality of life. The perception of women as a homemaker and men as a bread winner continues to persist but with ongoing cultural evolution, financial demands and inflation, these gender roles have significantly disadvantaged women, putting them more pressure and burden to fill with their roles and responsibilities as homemaker while sharing financial burden to sustain their families.

If we are to address the issue of unpaid work, we need to have a deeper understanding of the situation. The patriarchy and social norms contribute and perpetuate the ongoing gender roles but this also needs to be viewed through an intersectionality approach. Education can play a major role in how we address the issue of unpaid work and challenge the ongoing harmful perception of unpaid work but education that goes beyond the existing system and deliveries needs to adopt new nuances such as gender transformative and intersectionality approach that highlights and challenges the existing gender roles and gender equality disparity.

### Findings and Analysis on Equal pay for Equal work and Decent Work for All :

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as “productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity”<sup>66</sup>. Taking this definition into account, the government of Nepal has developed various laws and policies to ensure decent work at the workplace; nevertheless, extending these laws and policies to informal work is a challenge. The government has set minimum wage but not effectively implemented and monitored, this is of a challenge, as the findings from the study also indicates that workers earn less than the standard set by the government. Women also mentioned that the situation regarding work harassment and violence has improved comparatively over the years but it was noted that women still faced verbal abuse at

<sup>66</sup> EGD I WIDER Discussion Paper 2005 004. (2005, January). UNU-WIDER. Retrieved June 21, 2021, from <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/dp2005-04.pdf>

work. Despite laws and policies in place regarding work harassment and violence, it still lacks effective implementation, women addressed the lack of complaint mechanisms to address harassment and violence, the government needs to make more effort to eliminate any forms of work harassment and violence. The findings also indicate that informal workers were not in any social security scheme such as health care, this creates many challenges especially during the time of COVID 19. The findings also indicate that many workers seek loans to make payments for any medical bills, exacerbating their situation and making them more vulnerable and pushing them further into a vicious circle of poverty. The government needs to ensure that while addressing decent work, holistic and an intersectionality approach is applied. Many women who worked in the informal sector belong to disadvantaged ethnic groups with limited to no education. This continues to put women from marginalized communities in more vulnerable positions. With lack of minimum wage, violence, lack of social security; women are pushed further into poverty.

### C. Women's initiatives & actions

According to the 2011 Census, women constitute more than 51% of the total population in Nepal. While they are greater in number, their representation in decision making level and access to resources are less than that of men. Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal has been advocating continuously for women's human rights in all spheres. Lately various CSOs are working and advocating on economic rights and justice which includes the recognition, redistribution and reduction of the unpaid care work and decent work for all. To achieve the 2030 Agenda, women-led CSOs including BBC Nepal are advocating for gender mainstreaming in all SDGs. On behalf of the Women Major Group for Sustainable Development in Nepal (WMG-SDN) BBC is leading the yearly review of Voluntary National Review (VNR) from local to national level. Besides, it has been raising grassroots women's voices in the national and international forums on SDGs such as HLPF, CSW, UPR, CEDAW and so on.

Likewise, BBC Nepal has conducted capacity building sessions for the women from informal sectors regarding equal pay for equal jobs and recognition of unpaid care work. It has been advocating for the equal space of those women workers in the CSOs-led Nepal SDGs Forum and national forums convened by the government. It is linking the informal sector's voice at the national level among the ministries and government heads.

## 4 COMMON GROUND ANALYSIS FOR THE THEME OF HLPF 2021

The SDGs have been well-integrated into Nepal's national development frameworks. Nepal has developed the SDGs Status and Roadmap 2016-2030, SDGs Needs Assessment, Costing and Financing Strategy, SDGs Localization Guidelines and SDG progress review report 2016-2019. Necessary institutional set-ups are also in place for effective implementation.<sup>67</sup> The 15th National Plan (2019/20-2023/24) has incorporated almost all the indicators in the SDGs. Likewise, in 2020 the national planning commission has also published the SDG localization handbook in Nepali. The government has forged partnerships with non-state actors on SDGs implementation. Private sectors and civil societies being the key players in achieving SDGs, the government has been working closely with the apex organizations for proper coordination and implementation. However, even the local and provincial level government has not endorsed the plan properly. Meanwhile, the government's financial analysis illustrates that without the added efforts SDGs are impossible to achieve by 2030. The financing estimation reports of NPC shows that the financing gap will be NRS. 585 billion per year from the period 2016-2030.<sup>68</sup> The report shows that the financial gaps are increasing over the years. Overall, the annual average financing gap stands at 12.8% of GDP throughout the SDG period. The government has entered into Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for the resource generation and mobilization at local and national levels.

To make the SDGs implementation effective and achievable national planning is revisiting the indicators and possibly the indicators will be reduced.

In the case of Nepal, both the government and CSOs of the country have been engaging actively in SDGs localization process since its commencement. They participated in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2017 and 2020 respectively. In the last two VNRs the government has incorporated the CSOs perspectives in the VNR reports and presented them in the HLPF as well. In the HLPF 2021, the Nepal government put forward the impacts of COVID-19 and availability of people's vaccines, prioritizing the health of people.<sup>69</sup> The process of National VNR led by the government is limited to the CSOs and networks at national level. Though there are three tiers of governments, only the federal level government is active in the VNR process, especially the National Planning Commission. Therefore, the local voices of the grassroots community are still not directly incorporated in the government's VNR. However, there are a few numbers of CSOs leading and including the local grassroots organizations in the process of SDGs review, which has ensured the least numbers of grassroots voices in the VNR review led by CSOs.

<sup>67</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/nepal>

<sup>68</sup> [https://www.npc.gov.np/images/category/SDGs\\_Costing\\_Final\\_Version.pdf](https://www.npc.gov.np/images/category/SDGs_Costing_Final_Version.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Min Bahadur. Shahi, Former Member, National Planning Commission, 2nd June 2021

## 5 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The women workers in the carpet factory found not able to get the minimum wage provisioned by the government were also not in practice. The women workers spent 10 to 12 hours in the factory on paid work whereas 5 to 6 hours they spent on unpaid care work. Most of their time is spent on work which lacks time for those women to learn skills and build capacity. Women's involvement in the paid and unpaid work both for longer hours impacts on their mental and physical health. Being under the poor, uneducated, marginalized group they are found often abused and exploited in the workplace. When the women workers rights are not secured and they are excluded from social security programs. It is out of question to achieve the SDGs goal, its targets including decent work and gender equality. As many women were in the carpet factory were from marginalized groups belonging to indigenous and ethnic groups such as: Tamang, Sherpa, Rai, Gurung community who internally migrated for work to the outskirts of Kathmandu for work. They attained only primary education or no education so their roles and responsibilities from a young age was focused on household chores and had limited access to laws, policies and ongoing government programs. The intersectional perspectives should be linked to analyze the impact on gender equality and decent work and understand their status and challenges faced and develop programs to address their needs.

The study revealed that women workers in the informal sector are still not able to get minimum wages set by the government. They face insufficiency in fulfilling the daily family needs including food, shelter and even children's fee for school. Their monthly income does not support the emergency health expenses. Moreover, women workers of informal sectors are not able to get the living wages from what they do though the government has ensured social security rights in the constitution.

Hence, the government should create a specific policy and programs to engage informal sector workers in social security. It should regularly monitor the informal sectors and keep up the database with the full disaggregated information. Likewise, the government should conduct a regular sensitization program among the violence and reporting mechanisms in the informal sectors.

The government should also enact policies and programs to recognize, reduce and redistribute the unpaid care work and promote shared responsibility. Also, the specific programs and campaigns that promote men engagement in the household chores should be promoted at all levels.

Moreover, the local and provincial governments should be held responsible to maintain the database of the informal sector's workers status in their respective areas. Only, that helps to contribute to the national data system which will ultimately contribute to the SDGs.

## Recommendations

After the various discussions conducted with women workers, experts, academicians and CSOs leaders in both virtual and non-virtual platforms, the study has gathered key recommendations from the stakeholders which are listed as below. The recommendations are targeted to the national and local governments followed by key demands from feminist lens for the feminist development justice.

### Our Recommendations to the National Government

The implementation of the minimum wage and living wage for the women workers should be ensured.

Women workers should be engaged in the social security fund and social security scheme. National and local discourse on engaging women workers needs to be prioritized.

The national statistics should focus on the status and engagement of the informal women workers.

Discourse on the overall women's time spent on unpaid care work should be technically from the National Accounting System (NAS) in the international framework has not been discussed yet. Such issues need to be raised nationally and globally.

The local and federal governments should be held accountable for the data on informal sectors.

There should be specific national policies and programs to recognize, redistribute and reduce the unpaid care work of women.

The government should provide subsidies on the materials and equipment that reduce the unpaid care work.

The media should create and disseminate contents, art and literature on men's engagement in the household chores and change the patriarchal gender norms.

There should be further study on informal women workers and the impact on unpaid care work.

### Our Recommendations to the Local Governments

Awareness should be created among workers and employers on laws and policies related to labor rights and social security schemes.

There should be the establishment of an effective grievance mechanism focusing on women workers of informal sectors and its implementation at all levels.

Government should conduct regular monitoring to ensure the women workers safety and security.

Awareness on workplace violence and complaint registration or Helpline numbers should be provided to the workers' women.

### Our Key Demands

We demand to enhance the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) of women and girls, Major groups and stakeholders on the gender responsive implementation of the SDGs.

We demand systems and mechanisms in place to ensure gender equality and public expenditure in all the government bodies.

We demand to allocate funds for gender responsive programs and the implementation should be mandatory at all spheres of the government.

We demand to ensure 50% women participation from diverse marginalized backgrounds in the decision-making level so that the voices of women are incorporated at all the three tiers of government.

We demand equality and end all kinds of discrimination and violence based on gender.

We demand to establish an equal pay system as per workload rather than based on gender.

# 6 ANNEXES

## Annex I List of Interviewees of In Depth Interviews and FGDs Participants

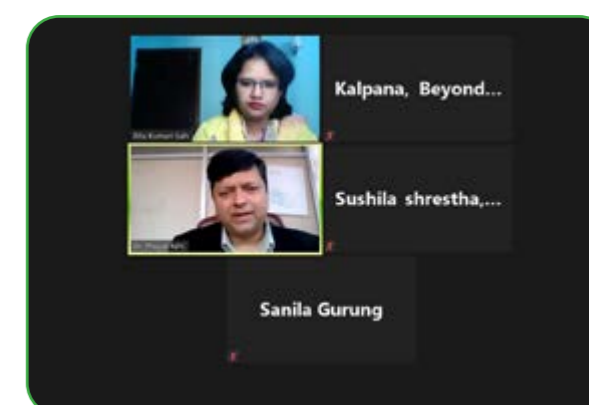
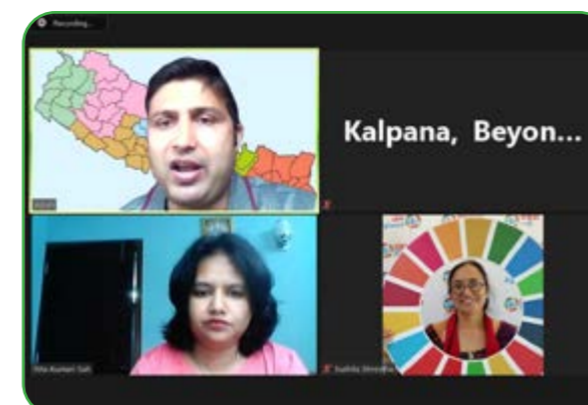
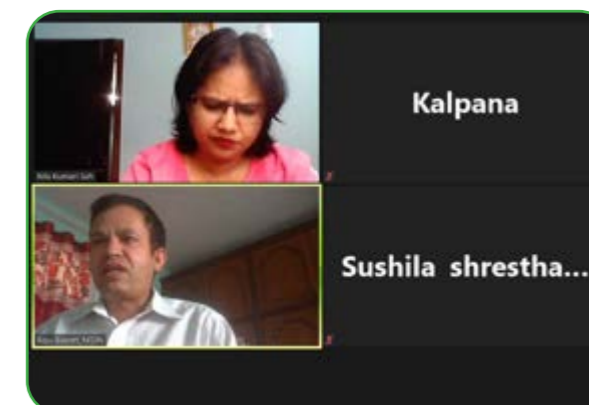
Table 1: List of FGD participants

S.N	FGD Groups	Date & Time	No. of participants
1	Trade union's Representatives	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2021/2:00-3:00 PM	7
2	Local Government's representatives (Ward and Municipality Reps)	11 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 / 2:00 -3:00 PM	6
3	Carpet Factory women workers Kathmandu	6 <sup>th</sup> May 2021/11:00-12:00 PM	17
4	Carpet Factory women workers Bhaktapur	6 <sup>th</sup> May 2021/ 8:30-9:45 AM	20
<b>Total</b>			<b>50</b>

Table 2: List of In- Depth- Interviews (IDI)

S. N.	Name	Date and Time	Organization
1	Dr. Ram Kumar Phuyal	15 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 (7:45 – 9:55)	Former Member, National Planning Commission
2	Ms Meera Sherchan,	16 <sup>th</sup> May (11:00 AM- 12:00)	Under Secretary, National Women Commission
3	Mr. Purushottam Adhikari	21 <sup>st</sup> May (2:00- 3:00 PM)	Under Secretary, Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS)
4	Ms. Sharu Joshi Shrestha	26 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 (2:30 -3:30 PM)	Gender Expert
5	Mr. Arjun Bhattarai	20 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 (1:00- 2:00 PM)	General Secretary, NGOs Federation Nepal/ Nepal SDG Forum
6	Mr. Bala Ram Gurung	20 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 (2:00-3:00 PM)	Secretary, Galaicha Byabasayi sangh/ Carpet Export Business Association
7	Mr. Raju Basnet	19 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 (11:00-12:00 PM)	Goal-8 Convener/ General Secretary of NDFN

## Annex II Photos of Consultations



Glimpses of Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with the women working in informal sectors in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with the representatives from CSOs, National governments and stakeholders.



Glimpse of FDG with women workers in Kathmandu



Glimpse of FDG with women workers in Bhaktapur



National level interaction with stakeholders on the women's human rights and SDGs





**Glimpses of district wise FDJ research's Key findings sharing and consultation with local and national level governments stakeholders conducted Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kathmandu**

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## Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal

Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal (BBC) is a national human rights feminist Network organization. It has been advocating and working continuously on the Beijing Platform for Action aftermath of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing since 1995. BBC aims to work towards the civil, political, economic and social empowerment of women and girls to achieve substantive gender equality, women's human rights and sustainable development in Nepal. BBC has been actively engaging in CEDAW monitoring, ICPD Monitoring, UPR reporting, and MDGs' implementation and currently the agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). BBC is a founder of Nepal SDGs Forum (CSOs Forum) and the Convener of Women and Girls' constituency and gender justice theme. It also functions as the secretariat of the Women Major Group for Sustainable Development in Nepal founded (WMG-SDN) in 2017. BBC Nepal is a commitment maker of Generation equality action coalition: Economic Justice and Rights, Bodily Autonomy and Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights and Feminist Movement and Leadership.

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