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Role of NGOs for Women Empowerment in Nepal

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of non-government organization in upgrading the socio-economic status of Nepalese women with special reference to Melamchi Municipality-1, Majhuwa, Sindhupalchowk. NGOs in Nepal play a crucial role in the empowerment of women by providing education, economic resources, legal support, and healthcare services. They also advocate for policy reforms and cultural change, addressing the many barriers that women face. While challenges remain, the ongoing efforts of these organizations are laying the groundwork for a more equitable society where women can fully realize their potential. As UN (1995), the women empowerment is the systematic process to make women aware of gender based acquire a greater voice, unequal power relationships in which to speak out against the inequality found in workplace, home and communities. Thus, women could involves taking control over their lives, gaining skills, setting their own agendas, solving their problems and developing their self-reliance etc. This article will be useful to researcher, teachers, students and other concerning individuals and agencies. However, quantitative research methods, descriptive and analytical research designed, deductive approach is applied.

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Keywords: Role, NGOs, Women, Empowerment, Income

INTRODUCTION

Nepal, a country with a diverse cultural and social landscape, has faced challenges in achieving gender equality and empowering women. Despite various strides in development, women in Nepal still face barriers in education, employment, health, and access to justice

After 2046 BS people movement, NGOs are massively registered in the Social Welfare Council, Lainchour. Presently more than 52 thousand NGOs and around 700 INGOs are registered in Social Welfare Council (SWC). Among of them, around 10 percent NGOs are working as their objectives and rest of them are passive form. Out of 10 percent NGOs, fifty percent are working for women and development sectors to enhance the women livelihood, secure of women rights based on equality, equity and justice as norms of international declaration of gender and development. NGOs are playing vital role for women empowerment and development. WOREC, CSW, ABC Nepal, Maiti Nepal, BASE Nepal and many more NOGs are directly working for women empowerment and development.

The ability of women to control their daily life in the social, political, and economic spheres is the essence of the term "women's empowerment." They are able to travel from the perimeter to the center thanks to the phrases' strength. Women may realize their identity and power in all facets of life via the dynamic and multifaceted process of empowerment. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have shifted the conventional focus of women's health and education since the late 1980s and early 1990s. They do this by promoting economic and social empowerment, which addresses the root causes of deprivation (Narayan, 2002; Sadik, 1988).

As, Nepal census (2021). 31.5 percent women have head of household and 23.4 percent women are the land owner. NGOs that focus on human rights protection, awareness-building, and advocating for political, economic, social, and cultural rights have done just as well. Generally speaking, the NGO movement has assisted the underprivileged and impoverished in starting self-help organizations, feeling empowered over time, and achieving some degree of long-term improvements in their standard of living. This has

given them the chance to mainstream their goals and use their organization to express their voices and choices.

The socio-economic aspect of a society is a subject to change for which there are various factors responsible, like culture, technology, population, environment etc. In addition, modernization, industrialization, urbanization and various development activities are also supportive to the socio-economic change of the society. Likewise, the non- government organizations play an important role in changing the socio-economic aspect of society.

The position and role of NGOs in Nepal have been ambiguous in recent years. The history of NGOs in Nepal is quite brief. Through NGOs and CBOs, the authoritarian government tightly regulated social services throughout the Panchayat era. Only a small number of people were able to start NGOs in Nepal because of the extreme restrictions. There were just 10 NGOs in Nepal prior to the start of the Panchayat system in 1960. Between 1960 and 1977, the number rose to thirty-seven. Most of those were modeled after Kathmandu.

NGOs proliferated throughout the nation following the establishment of democracy. In Eastern Nepal, there weren't many NGOs until 1985. Nepal has seen a dramatic rise in the number of NGOs and Civil Societies (CBOs) and their operations since 1990. NGOs differ from one another in terms of organizational capabilities, point of reference, size, and scope. In this case, Nepali NGOs are beneficial to the nation's democratization, training, and human empowerment. The environment, forestry, wildlife, and national development (poverty, human rights, HIV/AIDS, health, etc.) sectors are served by nearly 35,000 registered NGOs and several unregistered NGOs (Medani, 2014).

NGOs may support community-based businesses and give the relevant governments and international organizations the technical and moral support they need. NGOs are frequently able to resolve local issues more quickly than the official bureaucracy. NGOs are quick and effective in communicating. With the help of locals, they translate people's concerns and offer services to the communities. They encourage community involvement in project activities, act as a financial intermediary, counsel local communities on how to utilize project-financed goods and services, provide technical knowledge to beneficiaries, implement complementary activities, and support and benefit from an NGO funding mechanism established by the project.

More than half of population are of female in Nepal. Among of them 69.4 percent are literate. Thus, illiterate female is not able to involve in the job besides the household work and agricultural production. The gender biasness is still we can see in the rural area because prefers the son to send school and made expenses in education to them. And opportunities of job are also to the male. But, NGOs are providing the Vocational and livelihood training to the women and NOGs are also enhancing the women empowerment through different types of initiatives. But, large number of rural women are still back from those types of opportunities. The present paper analyzes the role of non-government organization in upgrading the socio-economic status of Nepalese women with special reference to Melamchi Municipality-1, Majhuwa, Sindhupalchowk.

Research Gap

There are still have many areas to research besides the role of NOGs in women empowerment such as, role of NGOs to enhance the social and economic status in rural settings of Nepal, role of NGOs to enhance the voice of voiceless people of rural setting of Nepal, role of NGOs to improve the community forest, role of NGOs in Educational sectors of Nepal, role of NGOs to promoting the market of rural production in Nepal so on.

METHODS

This paper used the quantitative research methods and applied the descriptive and analytical research design and deductive approach. The required material is used both primary and secondary information. An information is carefully analyzed and describe to make it meaningful so readers can easily understand the situation of an events.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age group	N	%
25-34	17	40.4
35-54	18	42.9
45-54	7	16.7
Total	42	100

While analyzed the age of respondents, highest percent (42.9%) are aged 35-54 years aged group, second highest (40.4%) are aged 25-34 years aged group (table 1)

Table 2: Family Types of Respondents

Types of family	N	%
Nuclear	17	40.5
Joint	25	59.5
Total	42	100,0

Source: Survey report 2024

As table 2, largest percent (59.5%) respondents are living with joint family and only 40.5 percent are living in nuclear family.

Table 3: Religion Status of respondents

Religion	N	%
Hindu	38	90.5
Buddhist	4	9.5
Total	42	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

Highest percent (90.5%) respondents are belongs the Hindu religions and rest of them are Buddhist religion but other religions are not resident in that study area (table 3)

Table 4: Educational Status of Respondents

Education Status	N	%
Literate	40	95.24
Illiterate	2	4.76
Total	42	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

As table 4, highest percent (95.24%) of respondent are literate and 4.76 percent are illiterate.

Table 5: Educational Level of Respondents

Educational Level	N	%
Some primary level	9	22.5
Lower Secondary	3	7.5
Secondary	15	37.5
High School	10	25.0
Graduated	3	7.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: Field Study 2024

Among the literate respondents, highest percent (37.5%) respondents have secondary level education, second highest percent (25%) have high school education, 3rd highest (22.5%) have primary level education and lower secondary and graduated respondents have 7.5 percent each respectively (table 5).

Table 6: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	N	%
Unmarried	3	7.1
Married	38	90.5
Widow	1	2.4
Total	42	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

Among the respondents, 90.5 percent are married, 7.1 percent unmarried and 2.4 percent are widow. However, highest percent are married (table 6)

Table 7: Monthly Income of Respondents

Monthly Income	N	%
Below Rs.10000 in a month	29	69.0
Rs.10000 – 15000	7	16.7
Rs.16000-20000	6	14.3
Total	42	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

While analyzed of the monthly income of respondents, highest percent (69%) have their monthly income is below Rs.10,000, second highest (16.7 %) have Rs.10000-15000 and 14.3 percent have Rs.16000 to 20000 (table 7).

Table 8: Husband's Occupational Status of Respondents Women

Husband's Occupation	**N**	**%**
Service	26	61.9
Business	6	14.3
Driving	6	14.3
Technician	3	7.14
Unemployment	1	2.38
Total	42	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2024

Out of 42 respondents, highest percent (61.9%) of their husband's occupation is services, 14.3 percent's husband's occupation is business, another 14 percent's husband have driving, 3 percent's have technician and 2.38 percent's husband are unemployment (table 8).

Table 9: Role of Women in Household Decision Making

Role in Decision Making	**N**	**%**
Household decision as a household head	12	28.40
Income expenditure	18	42.70
Freely outgoing	5	11.90
Purchase of household amenities	8	17.0
Total	42	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2024

As table 9, highest percent (42.70%) women have decision role in income expenditure, 28.40 percent have role of household head, 17 percent have role of decision for purchasing of household amenities and 11.9 percent women can decide to go home as her wishes. However, among the respondents, almost all women have their decision rights.

Table 10: Role of NGO's to Women Empowerment (multiple responses)

Role of NOGs	N	%
Provided knowledge and education through non-formal education	37	88.0
Provided vocational Training	42	100.0
Provided chance to participation in talked program	42	100.0
Provided Skills training	41	97.6
Provided self-income generating training	42	100.0
Provided Self decision-making training	42	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2024

While analyzed the role of NGOs to empower of women, 88 percent women said the NGOs have enhanced the knowledge providing education through non-formal education, same way cent percent women sad NOGs have provided vocational training, provided of chance to participation in talked program activities, self-income generating training, self-decision-making training and 97.6 percent women said the NGOs have provided the skills training to empower of women (table 10). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have played a pivotal role in addressing these issues, contributing to the empowerment of women through various initiatives, advocacy, and grassroots movements.

1. **Awareness and Education**

NGOs have been instrumental in increasing awareness about women's rights and issues. They focus on educating women, especially in rural and marginalized communities, about their legal rights, health, and social responsibilities. Through training programs, workshops, and information dissemination, they work towards changing traditional mindsets and improving the literacy rates among women.

One of the key areas of focus is literacy programs aimed at adult women. Many NGOs in Nepal, such as the Women's Foundation Nepal (WFN) and Nepal Women's Community, provide educational opportunities that help women gain skills that are essential for their economic and social participation. This education enables women to take on leadership roles, participate in decision-making processes, and create awareness in their communities.

2**. Economic Empowerment**

Economic independence is crucial for the empowerment of women. Many NGOs in Nepal work on skill development and capacity-building programs that focus on women's economic independence. They offer vocational training in areas such as tailoring, handicrafts, farming, and small-scale businesses. NGOs like SAATHI and Clean Energy Nepal have provided women with the necessary tools and resources to establish and grow micro-enterprises, contributing to their financial stability.

Additionally, NGOs facilitate access to credit and financial services. Women's groups formed by NGOs are often linked with microfinance programs, enabling women to start businesses, manage their finances, and improve their livelihoods. This access to economic resources is key in breaking the cycle of poverty, allowing women to become financially independent and take control over their futures (Kumar, &Yadav, 2024).

3. **Legal and Social Advocacy**

NGOs in Nepal advocate for the implementation of laws and policies that protect women from violence, discrimination, and exploitation. Through campaigns and lobbying, organizations like Forum for Women, Law, and Development (FWLD) and Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) work to ensure that women have access to legal rights and protections.

These NGOs help women understand and navigate legal systems, offering legal counseling and representation for survivors of domestic violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence. They also work to raise public awareness about the importance of gender equality and legal protection for women, promoting reforms in national legislation.

4. **Health and Well-being**

Health is another critical area where NGOs have significantly contributed. In a country where many women still lack access to proper healthcare services, NGOs offer maternal and reproductive health services, family planning, and counseling. Through mobile health clinics, workshops, and community health programs, organizations such as Nepal Family Development Foundation (NFDF) and Mother's Alliance Nepal have reached remote villages to provide women with essential health services.

NGOs also work on issues like menstrual health, sexual and reproductive rights, and combating early child marriages—key areas where women face significant challenges.

These health programs are designed to improve women's overall well-being and contribute to the reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity rates (Kumar, 2024).

5. **Political Participation**

NGOs play a vital role in promoting women's participation in political life. Through leadership training programs and awareness campaigns, NGOs encourage women to become actively involved in local, regional, and national politics. Organizations like The National Women's Commission and Women's Peace Network Nepal work to empower women politically, ensuring they are represented in decision-making processes at all levels of government.

Furthermore, NGOs help women form networks and support groups that foster leadership qualities and political awareness. These initiatives have helped create a growing number of women who are now elected representatives in local governance and decision-making bodies, contributing to more inclusive and gender-sensitive policies.

6. **Ending Violence Against Women**

One of the most significant contributions of NGOs in Nepal is their work in eradicating violence against women (VAW). Domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking, and early marriage remain major issues. NGOs have been on the frontlines, providing shelters, hotlines, legal aid, and psychological support to survivors of VAW.

Organizations like Maiti Nepal and The Shakti Samuha work tirelessly to combat trafficking and support survivors with rehabilitation programs. Through advocacy and awareness campaigns, NGOs are challenging societal norms that perpetuate violence and advocating for stronger laws and enforcement mechanisms.

7. **Cultural and Social Change**

In Nepal, traditional patriarchal structures often limit women's opportunities. NGOs have been working not only on legal and policy reforms but also on changing cultural norms that restrict women's roles in society. They promote gender-sensitive education, highlight the importance of women's roles in the family and community, and challenge gender stereotypes.

Through media campaigns, community dialogues, and awareness programs, NGOs help shift the mindset of both men and women regarding gender equality. These efforts are vital

in promoting a broader societal change that values women as equal participants in all aspects of life.

8. **Challenges and Way Forward**

While NGOs have made significant contributions to women's empowerment in Nepal, challenges remain. Issues such as funding limitations, geographical barriers, conservative mindsets, and insufficient legal implementation often hinder their work. However, with continued support from both national and international organizations, there is hope for sustained progress.

Moving forward, there is a need for increased collaboration between NGOs, the government, and international bodies to create a more inclusive and gender-responsive environment. Strengthening the capacity of women's organizations, improving access to services, and ensuring that women's voices are heard in policymaking are essential steps toward achieving lasting empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Basically, in rural area, the NGOs are playing vital role to enhance and empowering women through different initiatives i.e. non-formal educational program, skill development training, vocational training, income generation training, group discussion participation program etc. However, the women are able to decision making of household activities even they are able to be household head now.

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