

**RIGHTS, SHARES AND CLAIMS :
REALISING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN SOUTH ASIA**

**WORKING PAPER: RESOURCE MAPPING FOR
WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS WORK IN NEPAL**

2011-2012

SOUTH ASIA
WOMEN'S FUND

SAWF

About South Asia Women's Fund (SAWF):

SAWF is a regional women's Fund, committed to supporting women-led interventions to enhance and strengthen access to women's human rights and countering violations thereof. It has worked closely with partners to support human rights in the context of conflict, identity, socio-economic deprivations and in relation to violence against women. In its present phase, it is committed to supporting the emergence of a regional human rights movement, which would address national and regional concerns. Its work is focused on developing a regional mandate that is informed by national realities, and is responsive to the rights and needs of the individual woman. The organisation, currently works in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

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The present publication **“RIGHTS, SHARES, AND CLAIMS: REALISING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN SOUTH ASIA; *Working Paper: Resource Mapping for women's human rights work in Nepal*”** is an edited version of the research conducted by Paro Chaujar. For the detailed version, please contact SAWF.

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WOMEN'S FUND



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WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN SOUTH ASIA;**
*Working Paper: Resource Mapping for
women's human rights work in Nepal*

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	:	Community-Based Organisation
DFID	:	Department for International Development
ESP (DFID)	:	Enabling State Programme:
GBV	:	Gender-Based Violence
GESI	:	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy
LGBT	:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
NORAD	:	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
RBA	:	Rights-Based Approach
SDC	:	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SWC	:	Social Welfare Council
VAW	:	Violence Against Women



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1. OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

South Asia and India in particular, has witnessed serious cut backs in funding for promotion of Women's Rights. However, there are few studies which have tracked trends and developments in the arena of women's rights, in South Asia. This prompted the South Asia Women's Fund (SAWF) to conduct a resource mapping study in 2011, to map funding trends and developments, especially in the arena of women's rights. This report presents findings from the study conducted in Nepal.

Methodology

The mapping exercise was conducted in two phases:

Phase I: Survey of select organisations working on women's issues/ women's organisations in Nepal. The primary tool for conducting the survey was a questionnaire, that was sent out to participating organisations via e-mail. The questionnaire covered the following domains: (i) organisational objective and purpose; (ii) Strategies being used by them to achieve these objectives; (iii) Activities and programmes aimed at women; (iv) the resources they are spending on activities targeting women; (v) Significant changes brought about by the organisation; (vi) Issues on which securing funding is difficult; (vi) Reasons for the difficulties faced.

Participating organisations were identified through Key Informants. The main criterion for selecting these organisations was, that they should be working to promote women's human rights (even if they were not explicitly 'women's organisation'). Even though large majority of NGOs in Nepal are based in Kathmandu, several grassroots organisations based in the districts, were specifically searched for and approached. Survey forms were sent out in August-September, 2011 and all responses were received by end of December 2011. A total of 42 organisations responded to the survey questionnaires.

Phase II: In-depth interviews with selected surveyed organisations, select women's rights activists and donors were conducted, after all questionnaires from surveyed organisations were received. Most in-depth interviews with surveyed organisations were conducted over phone and e-mails, while majority interviews with donors and activists were conducted face to face (See annexure). Interviews with activists followed the broad interview guide, developed centrally for the study and interviews with donors followed a semi-structured questionnaire. In-depth interviews with surveyed organisations included a set of three questions. All interviews were conducted between January and March 2011.

Preliminary findings of the study were shared at a conference organised by the South Asia Women's Fund in end of March 2011.

Limitations and constraints

One main constraint in this exercise is related to the methodology adopted for the study for Phase I, i.e., long-distance survey via e-mails. It emerged that organisations would have been more forthcoming, if the survey was conducted in person. While majority of the organisations approached for the survey did respond to it, albeit over a long period of time and after repeated reminders, a significant numbers of organisations based outside of the valley, did not respond. In the end, 42 organisations in Nepal participated in the survey, as against the original target of 100.

A related constraint is that several organisations that are based out of Kathmandu and that were specifically sought out because they are far off centre and are working directly with marginalised communities, did not participate in the survey. One reason being their relative unfamiliarity and discomfort in dealing with such impersonalised long-distance surveys conducted via e-mails. Also, the fact that many of these organisations did not know about SAWF and had had no previous contact with SAWF, may have been a factor in their lack of interest in following up.

Similar challenges were faced while contacting organisations for appointments for follow-up questions (in-depth interviews), most of which were finally conducted over the phone/e-mail.

2. INTRODUCTION

Women in Nepal

Diverse ecological zones and multi-ethnic population¹ characterises the landlocked country of Nepal. There are at least 100 different caste and ethnic groups, who speak at least 92 different languages.² According to the latest Census of Nepal (2011), 83 per cent of the population lives in rural areas and more than half the population of the country lives in the *Terai* belt (plains), followed by the hills (43 per cent) and mountains (7 per cent). Development indicators for the country indicate wide disparities on the basis of caste, ethnicity and gender and multiple exclusions based on combination of caste, ethnicity and gender. For instance, *Terai* belt has the lowest literacy rate at 17 per cent, compared to the national female average of 55 per cent and male average of 81 per cent.³

Although the difference in capabilities between women and men (as measured by Gender-related Development Index-GDI) is low for the entire country, the level of human development for women living in the Mountains and the Mid-Western Development Region, is low in Nepal.⁴ Nepali women's share of earned income is about one-third of that of men, while their participation in political processes is only a fifth of the male rate.⁵ Affirmative action, however, has led to increased representation of women in governance, with one-third of the total seats of the new Constituent Assembly (2008) being held by women.⁶

While overall poverty rate has declined to 31 per cent in 2004⁷, poverty in the country is concentrated in the rural areas (35 per cent) and among marginalised communities viz. Dalits (46 per cent), Muslims (41 per cent), *Hill Janajati*/Indigenous nationalities (44 per cent) and *Terai Janajati*/Indigenous nationalities (35 per cent).⁸ According to the Social Exclusion Index developed by the Government of Nepal, the most excluded caste and ethnic groups have higher gender differentials, with the highest gender differentials among the Dalits, followed by Muslims and *Terai Janajatis*.⁹

¹ The Government of Nepal has identified 59 Janajatis or indigenous nationalities, who fall outside of the traditional Hindu caste system and have been historically excluded in the development and political processes of the country.

² USAID, 2007

³ ADB, 2010

⁴ UNDP, 2009

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Poverty figures have since declined further.

⁸ ADB, 2010

⁹ ADB, 2010

There is a high prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in Nepal. A study carried out in two districts of the country revealed that 81 per cent women face domestic violence frequently.¹⁰ Forced and early marriages are common, despite the legal age for marriage being 18. Violence against women includes all forms of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse at home and in the workplace, trafficking of women and girls, and harmful traditional practices, such as dowry, *Deuki* (offering girls to God and not allowing them to marry), *Chhaupadi* (isolating menstruating women/girls) and accusations of witchcraft.¹¹ According to the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2006, 23% women and 20% men in Nepal believe that gender-based violence is acceptable.

Women in Nepal live under a highly patriarchal society, with various rungs of hierarchies imposed by historical marginalisation of various caste groups and ethnicities. Gender inequalities along with caste, class and ethnic disparities have been identified as root causes of the decade-long conflict in the country, which has promoted both, the government as well as donors, to acknowledge the various disparities and historical exclusion and take steps to address them. In the current period in Nepal, the Government has adopted a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion strategy and several donors have developed strategies and policies for correcting the historical injustices. These initiatives, such as the Gender Equality Act (2006), Domestic Violence Act (2009), Action Plan Against GBV (2010), Gender Responsive Budgeting (since 2007/2008), and several initiatives of various donors, are relatively new in the country. The resources available for promoting women's human rights in Nepal need to be understood within the context of historical marginalisations and exclusions in the country and the recent acknowledgment and initiatives that are trying to respond to these.

Brief overview of women's movement in Nepal

It is generally agreed that NGOs, including women's organisations, have become important development and political players in Nepal, after the restoration of multi-party democracy in the country, following the people's movement in 1990 (*Jan Andolan I*).¹² Transition to democracy was accompanied with the channeling of foreign aid to civil society in the country. Foreign aid has been a significant contributor to the burgeoning NGO sector in Nepal, including financing of women's organisations and networks.¹³

The history of women's movement, in fact social movements in general, in Nepal, have been

¹⁰ Asia Foundation, 2010

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² NORAD 2007, Tamang, Seira, 2009 and Acharya, Meena 2010

¹³ Tamang, Seira, 2009 and Acharya, Meena 2010,

traced along the political trajectory of the country over the past six decades – from the rule of the Kings, the interrupted experiences of democracy, the decade long armed conflict, ending with a People's Movement, that overthrew Monarchy and the post-2006 period of 'nation building' (see Table 1 for brief overview). In particular, the political movements during the 1990s have been credited for broad-basing social movements in the country, 'involving masses, including women on a much broader scale than earlier and gaining depth in terms of its agenda for change.'¹⁴ NGOs, INGOs and donors (funding for non-state actors) have surfaced mostly post 1990s and several women's organisations surveyed, as part of this study are fairly young, established in early 2000s. According to some activists interviewed as part of this study, most women's organisations emerged as part of the strategy to expand constituencies of political parties and women's autonomous organising has been limited.

Various scholars have observed that an important characteristic of the women's movement in Nepal is that it is fragmented along various affiliations and identities: political (party), caste, class and ethnicity. However, several activists and organisations find women from dominant social strata as not having sufficiently understood or advanced the cause of removing specific barriers they face on account of their marginalised ethnicity. This bias of women's organisations and indeed, all forms of NGOs in Nepal continue to date, even as strong voices have emerged from women, organising themselves into NGOs, networks and federations along caste/ethnic lines. Identity politics is central to the dynamics of multi-stranded women's movement in Nepal. (see Tamang, 2009 and Acharya 2010 for more).

The surveys and interviews conducted with NGOs, donors and activists, as part of this study have resonated with these findings and provide further nuances on the role of aid architecture in these dynamics. Understanding resource availability for promoting women's human rights in Nepal need to be situated in the overall context of financing for development and human rights work in Nepal. While the Government of Nepal is the largest financer for development per se, development and human rights work implemented by non-government organisations are largely financed by international donors, including bilateral and multilateral agencies and INGOs. Although, technically not 'donors', INGOs serve as intermediaries, routing funding from donors to implementing organisations.

¹⁴ Acharya, Meena 2010, "Diversity and Unity in Women's Movement in Nepal, paper presented to the IAFFE Annual meeting 2010, July 22-24, Buenos Aires. <http://editorialexpress.com/conference/IAFFE2010/program/IAFFE2010.html>

Table 1: Brief overview of the history of women's movement in Nepal

Period	Political scenario	Type of women's organisations	Focus	Key Achievements
Before 1990				
1940s	Political movement for democracy gains strength	Off shoots of political parties	Mobilise women, overthrow Rana regime, education for girls, prohibition of polygamy, widow remarriage, preventing child marriage	Voting rights for women. Schools for girls were opened in Kathmandu.
1950s	Political movement split into several strands	Women's movement split into various organisations	Rights to be included in political decision-making	4 of 113 members of King appointed Advisory Assembly were women
1960-1989	Dissolution of elected Parliament Political parties banned Women's organisations went underground (1980s) CBOs were promoted under govt led, donor-funded micro credit programmes	3 parallel strands i) Women's organisations part of State established All Nepal Women's Organisation ii) Second strand led by professionals inside and outside govt. iii) Third strand led by underground political movement	i) Elite led ii) Research, advocacy, WID iii) Restoring democracy	i) One seat for women in Village Panchayat Executive ii) First report on Status of Women in Nepal Women participated in 1990 mass movement that overthrew monarchy
Post 1990				
1990-1996	Jan Andolan I (People's Revolution I) Nepal becomes Constitutional Monarchy with multiparty government. Foreign aid assistance channeled to 'civil society'	i) Multiplication of political parties led to multiplication of sister women's organisations. ii) Non-govt. women's organisations, researchers, activists organised into NGOs partnered with UN, INGOs and donors	i) demands for structural changes ii) work at grassroots, formation of CBOs, social mobilisation of women. Focus gender equality and empowerment	Inheritance rights for girls More than 200,000 CBOs, their federations and NGOs in the country in 2005

	Gender mainstreaming financed by donors adopted by govt. CEDAW signed	Organisation and networking among women's organisations is along class/caste lines. Kathmandu bias First Dalit women's organisation estd (1994)		
1996-2006	Decade long civil war (1996-2006) King seizes power (2002) 20% reservation for women in elected bodies Donor attention moves to <i>Janjati</i> , Dalit and women as caste, ethnicity, class, and gender identified as causes of conflict.	Political parties' women wings continue Women as combatants touted as gender equality by Maoists NGO women's organisations multiply, identity and non-identity based women's NGOs Nepal Indigenous Women's Federation estd (2001)	Specific charter of demands by Dalit women's organisations, indigenous women's organisations <i>Madhesi</i> women's organisations and <i>Muslim</i> women's organisations	
2006-present	Jan Andolan II (People's movement II) overthrows monarchy Nepal declared secular republic Constituent Assembly elections held Conflict transformation and peace building, nation building overshadow women's issues	Political parties' women wings continue, but come together for the people's revolution (Inter Party Women's Alliance) Women's organisations from excluded communities gain voice, express dissent First attempts at networking across caste/ethnicity	Peace building in communities Women's representation in political parties, parliament, constitution writing	33% reservation for women in all state bodies Equal citizenship rights for mothers and fathers Changes in several unequal laws Domestic Violence Act 2010 declared by govt as the year to combat GBV.

Sources: Developed from Acharya, Meena 2010, Tamang, Seira, 2009, Asia Foundation 2010

The players involved in women's human rights work in Nepal

This section will focus on three key players involved in promoting women's human rights related work in Nepal – NGOs, INGOs and donors. The role played by women's organisations, that are wings of political parties is excluded from this analysis.

NGOs

As described in the previous section, NGOs in Nepal have primarily developed in the post-1990s era. The government policies after 1990, supported the growth of civil society in general, by providing a legislative framework and defined roles in development work. In particular, the Social Welfare Act 1992 (SWA), the Ninth Plan document 1997–2002 and the Local Self Governance Act 1998, promoted the growth of civil society in Nepal.¹⁵ The former, in fact, changed the role of donors and INGOs, prohibiting them from direct implementation of programmes and required them to partner with local social organisations for implementing projects in the country. This marked the beginning of partnerships between NGOs and INGOs in the country.

Growth of NGOs in Nepal has been phenomenal over the last 2 decades, from 247¹⁶ registered with the Social Welfare Council¹⁷ in 1990 to 30,284 NGOs registered as of latest figures. Currently, NGOs registered under the SWC are classified under one of the ten sectors (such as community and rural development, health development, education development, etc.).¹⁸ Less than 10 per cent of the registered NGOs (2,305) are classified under 'women services'. Although, this categorisation may not be accurate in reflecting the actual number of organisations working on women's issues in Nepal, it does indicate that the proportion of NGOs dedicated to working for women in Nepal is low. Majority of the NGOs are based in Kathmandu, although, they may have presence in various districts in the country.

Table 2: Number of NGOs, INGOs and donors in Nepal

<i>Number of NGOs registered with SWC</i>	<i>30,284</i>
<i>NGOs working on 'women's services'</i>	<i>2,305</i>
<i>Number of INGOs regd with SWC (total amount current year)</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>INGOs working on women's issues (specifically)</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>INGO working on women's issue, amount for current year (USD)</i>	<i>4,854,242</i>
<i>Number of donors providing technical assistance in Nepal (multilateral/bilateral/foundations)</i>	<i>20</i>

Source: Social Welfare Council, Government of Nepal and Ministry of Finance

¹⁵ Norad, 2007

¹⁶ Norad 2007

¹⁷ Social Welfare Council, Government of Nepal, is mandated with the registration and control of social organisations working in Nepal.

¹⁸ NGOs affiliated with Social Welfare Council

While there is little available literature classifying women's organisations on the basis of the type of work they do, Asia Foundation has conducted a mapping of organisations working specifically on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nepal.¹⁹ This exercise identified 32 NGOs for whom GBV was one of the focus areas (half of these organisations were covered in this study as well). Majority of the organisations identified as working on GBV, are based in Kathmandu. The mapping exercise found that NGOs working on GBV seem to concentrate their services in the Kathmandu valley itself, or in the other big cities of the country. Districts such as Rolpa, had no services available in the area of GBV, while some other districts had 6-7 NGOs providing services for GBV.

Donors and INGOs

Foreign aid was first introduced in Nepal in 1951, when the country opened itself to the world. The first among the foreign donors was the United States. Although in the initial years, foreign aid was mostly in the form of grants, in the 70s and 80s the proportion of loans became higher than grants. However, since the mid-90s, with the shift of bilateral aid towards INGOs and NGOs, the proportion of grants has increased.²⁰

Just as social movements and NGOs have been affected by political developments in the country, donor priorities have shifted with shifting political landscape. While government policies opened the doors for donors to finance civil society, political developments determined their thematic priorities. For instance, after the signing of the peace agreement, donors shifted their agendas from coping with the conflict to the social inclusion agenda and the process of reconstruction, reconciliation and peace building.²¹

Also, the mushrooming of several NGOs during 1990s phase of experiment with democracy, has been seen by many as a way by which political parties expanded their constituencies. NGOs, activists and donor representatives openly shared how aid agencies were infiltrated by those aligned with specific political parties and formation of NGOs to syphon off resources was an open practice. Share of autonomous women's organisation in the resources available from donors has therefore, been limited.

Recipient NGOs in Nepal use the term donors and INGOs interchangeably, since often, they are indeed, financed by INGOs, who in turn are financed by 'donors'. In fact, the annual statement of Technical And Other Assistance, Ministry of Finance, Government of Nepal, lists assistance from "Bilateral and Multilateral Sources, *Including INGOs*".

¹⁹ Asia Foundation, 2010

²⁰ NORAD, 2007

²¹ NORAD, 2007.

INGOs

According to the latest records available with the Social Welfare Council, Government of Nepal, there are 123 INGOs operating in Nepal.²² Until 1992, when the Social Welfare Act, 1992 was instituted, INGOs were directly implementing programmes in communities in Nepal. The Act brought about changes, whereby international organisations could no longer implement projects, and were required to partner with a local organisation ('social organisation'), registered with the SWC to conduct their work in the country. For the current fiscal year (2011-2012), 123 INGOs have committed NR 3,576,247 (US\$ 44.4 million).²³

Donors

There are several bilateral donors in Nepal: Canadian International Development Agency, Embassy of Denmark, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Germany, GIZ, Embassy of Norway, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Embassy of Switzerland, U.K. Department for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development. In addition, there are a few multilateral donors and grant mechanisms operating in Nepal: Asian Development Bank, World Bank, European Union and the various UN agencies.²⁴ Private foundations financing development work in Nepal are almost always foreign. For fiscal year 2011-2012, total bilateral aid to the Government of Nepal was to the tune of US\$ 45 billion.²⁵ Figures for funding from bilateral donors to NGOs in Nepal were not available.

Partnership arrangements between donors and recipient organisations vary. Some donors directly partner with NGOs, while others partner with INGOs; who are expected to, in turn partner with NGOs and CBOs in implementing projects (see figure on next page).

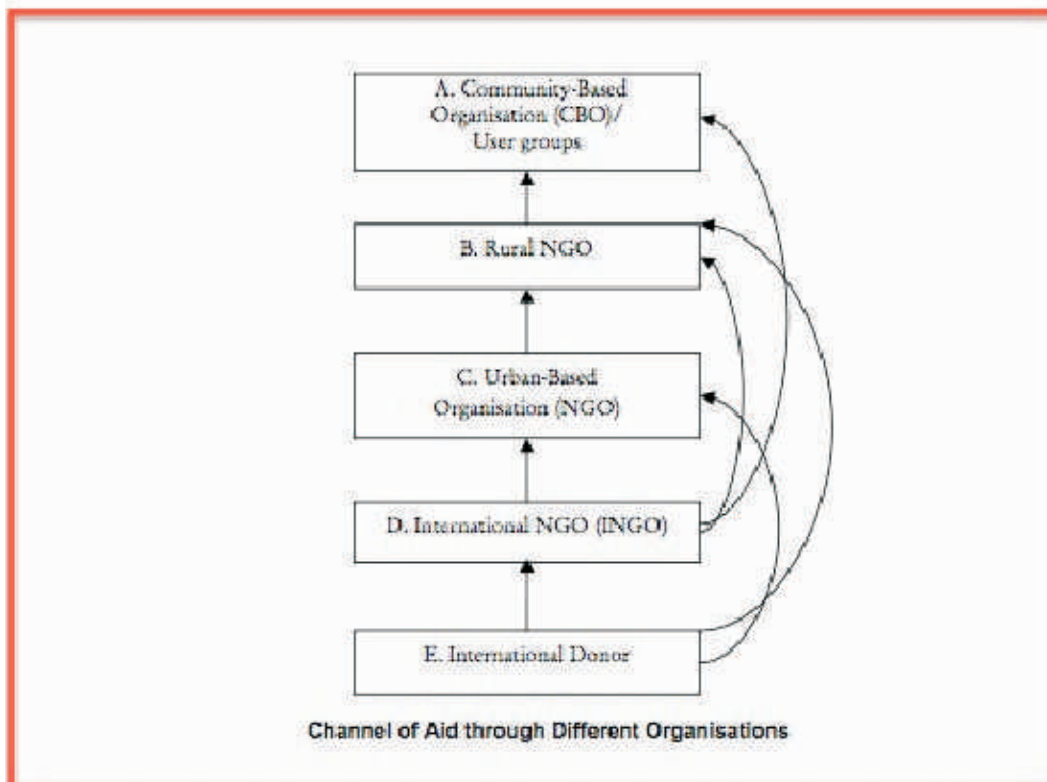
A study on donor best practices towards NGOs in Nepal, identified several barriers to accessing donors - the first among them being language. Donor requirement for communicating ideas and proposals in English and in sophisticated formats including the Log Framework, exclude large number of organisations, with only center-based large NGOs having

List of INGOs Working with Social Welfare Council. <http://www.swc.org.np/> Accessed March 9, 2012.

Government of Nepal, Ministry of Finance 2011. Statement of Technical And Other Assistance FY 2011/12. (From Bilateral and Multilateral Sources Including INGOs).

Although the UN is not and does not classify itself as a donor, its partnership with the civil society organisations includes financing specific activities and projects. To that extent the UN is considered by recipient/ partnering civil society organisations, as a donor.

Government of Nepal, Ministry of Finance 2011. Statement of Technical And Other Assistance? FY 2011/12. (From Bilateral and Multilateral Sources Including INGOs).



Source: NORAD 2007: *A Discussion Paper on Donor Best Practices Towards NGOs in Nepal*

the necessary language skills and capacities. A second barrier was the donor practice of developing relationships based on personal connections.²⁶ Perspectives of NGOs, activists and donors interviewed for this study also identified similar barriers (see Findings)

The access to valuable information, resources and power is shared and exchanged among a very close network of city-based privileged elites with the political and personal savvy to establish relationships with donor representatives, both expatriates and Nepali. In such cases, it is felt that donors do not sufficiently recognise the real conflict of interest, when it comes to their own practices.

(Source: NORAD 2007)

The geographical profile of Nepal and associated geopolitics, makes it even harder for grassroots based organisations (NGOs and CBOs) to access donor funding. While donors are aware of these barriers, only a few of them have made arrangements to improve accessibility by establishing field offices and/or simplifying their application and grant management procedures.²⁷

²⁶ NORAD, 2007

²⁷ NORAD, 2007

3. FINDINGS FROM THE SAWF STUDY

As described earlier, the SAWF study in Nepal includes surveys and interviews, among selected organisations working on women's issues; interviews with activists and donors. This section presents findings from primary data collected as part of the study.

About organisations working on women's issues in Nepal

42 organisations/groups/networks working on women's issues/ gender issues in Nepal were surveyed as part of this mapping exercise. These include one organisation focusing on rights of LGBT, one formed by sex workers, one run by women survivors of trafficking and one formed and run by disabled women.

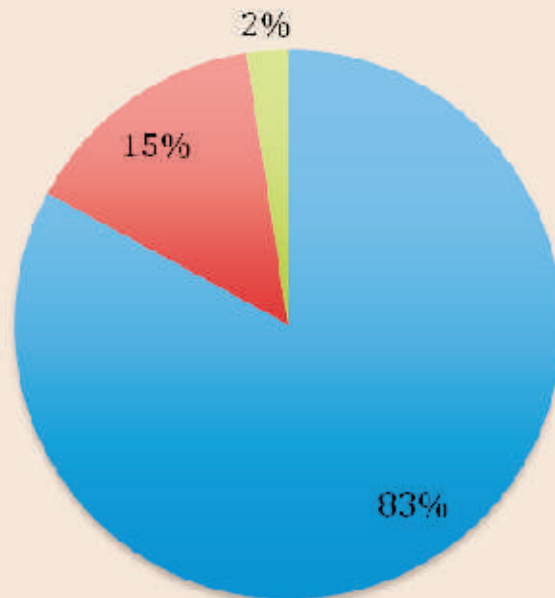
Location of organisations

Majority of the surveyed organisations (76 percent) were based in Kathmandu, the capital city. This is reflective of the general trend in Nepal, where larger majority of NGOs are based in the capital. Of the five development regions in this country, surveyed organisations cover only 3 development regions and among the three, because the Kathmandu bias primarily, the central region is over represented in the sample. One of the organisations surveyed, was from one of the most inaccessible areas of the country (district Accham).²⁸ Even as the survey could not find participants from the other 2 development regions, it did manage to capture organisations based in other regions, but working with disadvantaged communities (Tharu, Muslim, Madhesi) in the other regions.

²⁸ The regions from where there is no representative sample in the survey, are the Mid Western Region and the Eastern Region. The Mid Western Region has some of the most economically depressed districts and is home to two major ethnic and religious minorities, Tharu and Muslim, as well as some endangered groups. The Eastern Region has the most mixed population, comprising major castes and ethnic groups - Brahman, Chhetri, Rai, Limbu, Tharu, different Madhesi groups and Dalit castes.

Chart 1: Base location of surveyed organisations

■ Central ■ Western ■ Far-Western



Operational area

Majority of the surveyed organisations were operating at the level of district/s (60%); about 45 percent described themselves as working at the national level and a smaller percentage described their operational area of work as 'regional'.²⁹ Often, organisations working at the level of districts also mentioned that they work at the national level as well and /or were operating in more than one district, while those working at the 'regional level' were working specifically in districts from that specific region. (This also explains why the total percentage exceeds 100). Also, organisations that said they work at the national level, often have field offices or networks at district levels.

Primary target/focus group

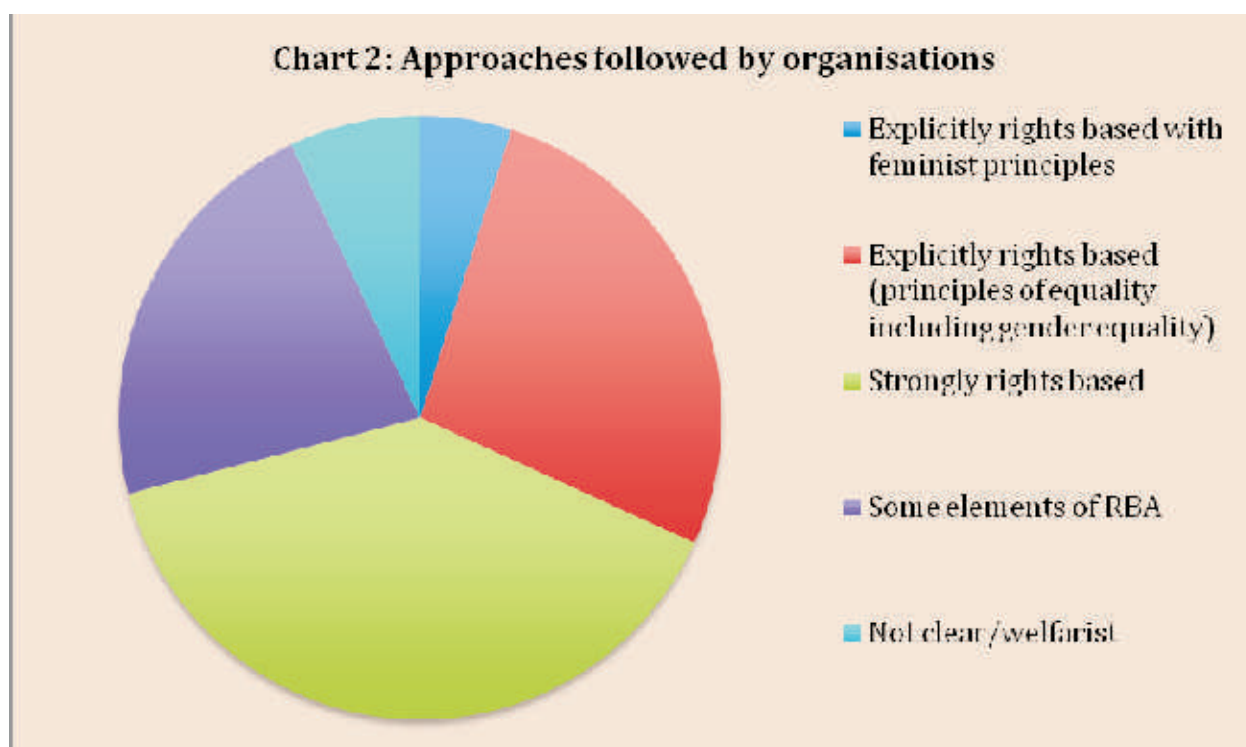
Almost 70 percent of the surveyed organisations, focused exclusively on women, while the remaining include women as one of their beneficiary/target groups. Half of all activities (50.9

²⁹ Nepal is administratively divided into 5 development regions, 14 administrative zones and 75 districts (corresponding to states in India, provinces in Pakistan). Districts are administratively further divided into municipalities and Village Development Committees.

per cent) undertaken by the surveyed organisations had women as direct beneficiaries and 14 per cent of the activities had women as indirect beneficiaries. The wider communities were the second most listed under both categories- direct beneficiaries (10 per cent) and (38 per cent). Also, about 40 per cent of the surveyed organisations had specific target groups among women, such as trafficking survivors, Dalits, indigenous communities, Muslims, etc.

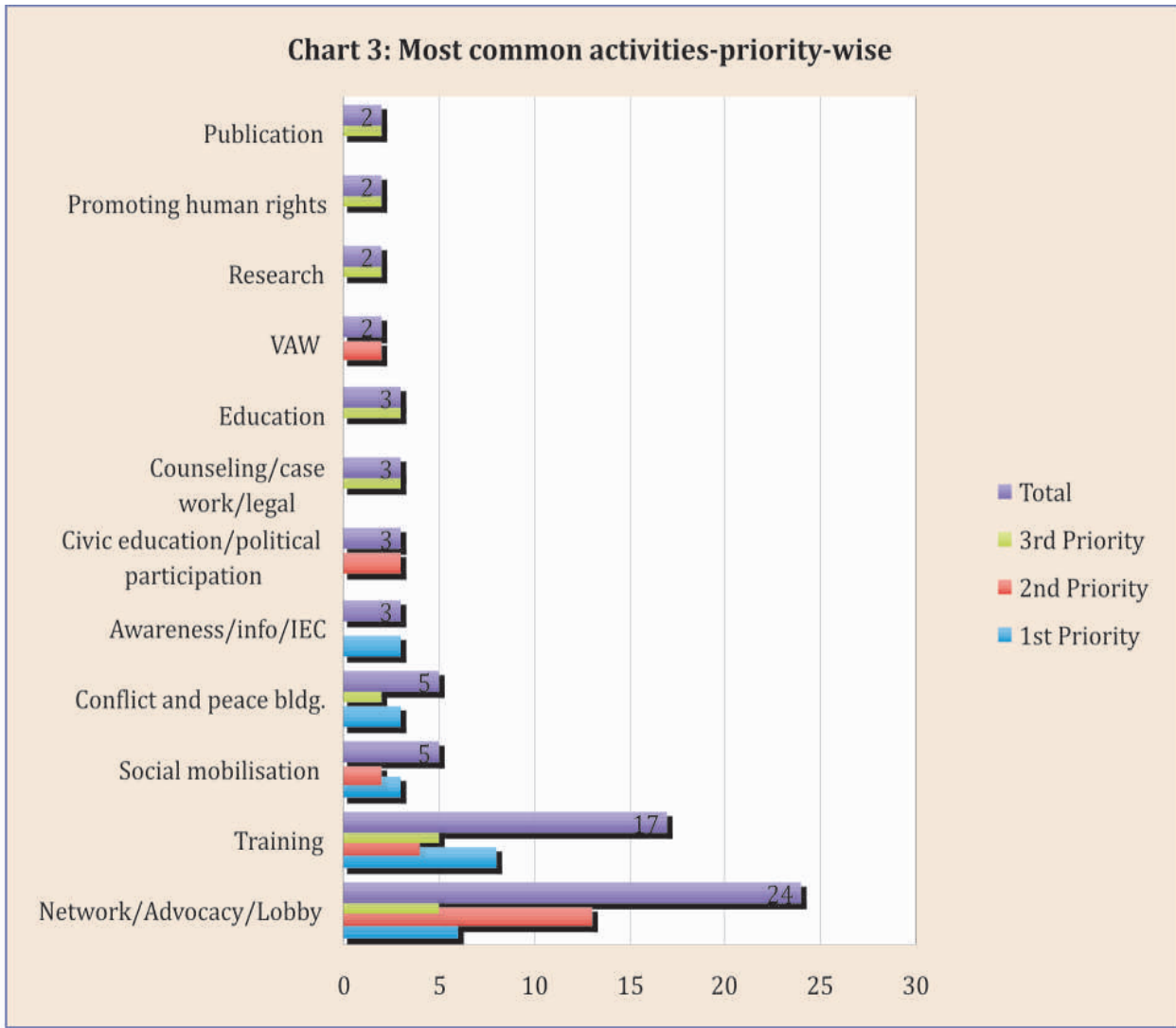
Rights based framework

Larger proportion of the surveyed organisations work within the rights based framework: Almost 40 per cent were strongly rights based; 26 per cent were explicitly rights based and less than 5 per cent were explicitly rights based with feminist principles.



Priority activities

Surveyed organisations were asked to list their activities in order of priority; and among the top five priority activities the most common (in order of priority) are: training (score 24), networking/advocacy/lobbying (score 17), awareness raising and information dissemination (score 5); social mobilisation (score 5); conflict transformation and peace building (score 3); civic education and political participation (score 3); Violence Against Women (score 3); Counseling/case work/legal support (score 3). Education/literacy; research; promoting human rights; and publication score 2 each.



The least common activities with women as direct beneficiaries include: youth development, good governance, housing, migration, disaster/climate change, grant making.

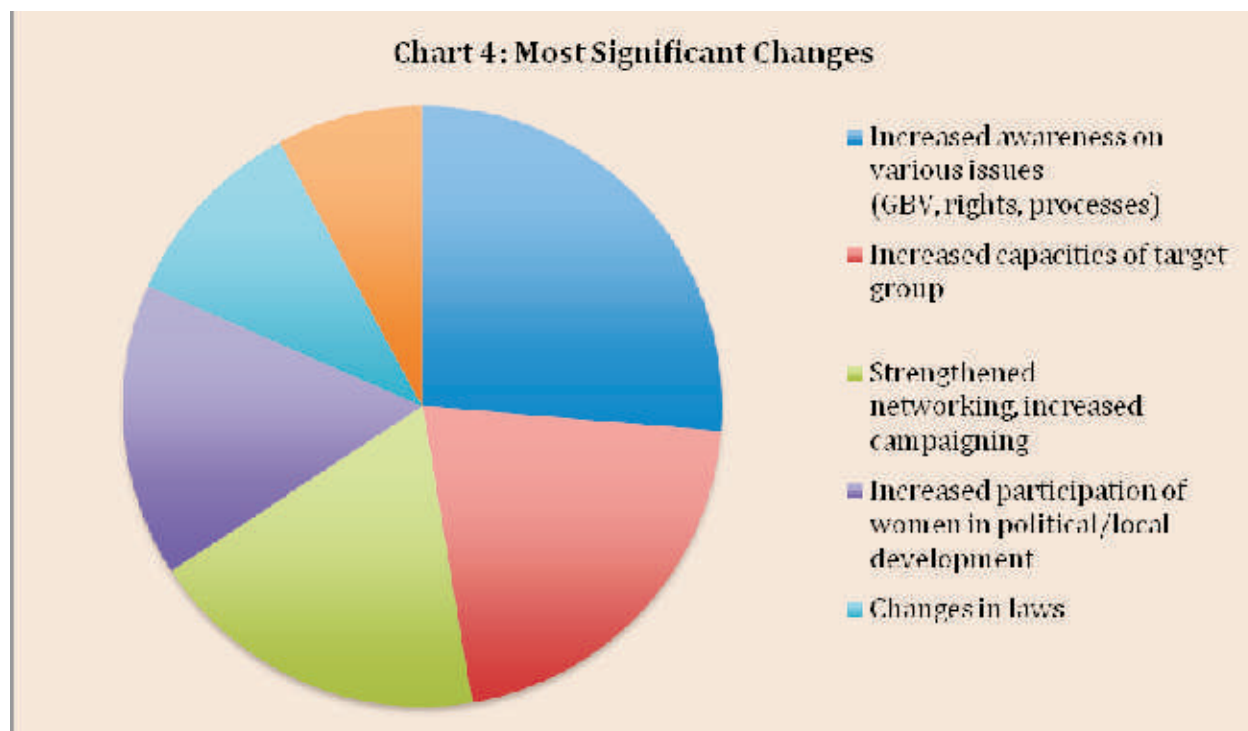
A word of caution is in place here. Organisations have listed thematic areas (such as VAW) and also specific 'activity' (such as training) under this category. They have not always provided both together. It is possible that training could be in the area of VAW or the work on VAW is primarily research. It is possible, therefore, that higher number of organisations could indeed be working on VAW, even though they have listed only training/ research, without specifying VAW under this question. Also, even though, organisations were specifically asked to list their activities in order of priority, it is possible that many have simply listed all their activities, without ordering them by priority.

Nonetheless, the above charts do resonate with in-depth interviews conducted with surveyed

organisations, activists and donors, where for instance, it was repeatedly stressed that there is far more funding available for advocacy related work than for actual provision of services (counseling/legal support) and for conscientisation/ social mobilisation work with women in communities. Following sections will further elaborate on how activities and funding interact.

Most significant changes made by in the lives of women beneficiaries

Among most significant changes that organisations have made, surveyed organisations listed the following in order of frequency (most common to least common):



The list of significant changes made by organisations in the lives of women, matches with the organisations priority activities (see section above). Given that most activities of women's organisations revolve around building networks and policy advocacy, it is no surprise to see that most changes described, were in the areas of strengthened networking. It is important to note that in Nepal, there are several networks and when organisations speak of increased networking, they mostly refer to networks initiative by them, among their target groups, with their partner organisations (CBOs). Only few organisations referred to increased networking among different networks as a significant change.

Capacity building of specific target groups in the area of claiming their rights, voicing their concerns, participating in political (CA) and local development processes is the second largest reported area of significant change brought about by surveyed organisations.

Budget allocation for women

The average annual budget of surveyed organisations is about Nepali Rupees 16,043,730 (or little less than US \$ 200,000). The range is, however, quite steep from NR 100,000 to NR 69,000,000 (or roughly US\$ 1200 to US\$ 850,000³⁰). Both extremes are from two women-led organisations based in Kathmandu. Some of the indigenous and Dalit women's organisations did not share their budgets, but from those that shared it, does appear that organisations away from the centre, do tend to have smaller budgets.

Majority (64 per cent) of the surveyed organisations, allocated more than half their budget towards women beneficiaries. This also matches with the question of activities, where women are direct beneficiaries, where half of all beneficiaries comprise women. 10 organisations (22 per cent of the sample) did not provide details of either budget or budget allocation to women, and have been recorded as '0' in the table below. All but two of these organisations focus exclusively on women, so it is safe to assume that majority proportion of their budget is allocated for women. The total allocation for women could therefore, be well above what has been reported.

Table 3: percentage budget allocation to women beneficiaries

No. of samples falling in the ranges	>0 <=10	>10 <=25	>25 <=50	>50 <=75	>75 <=99	=100	out of total	Overall % of Allocation for Women
% of Financial allocation in budget for women as direct beneficiaries	9	0	1	5	14	5	42	44.91
	21%	0%	2%	12%	36%	12%	100%	

The wide range of annual budgets of organisations is symptomatic of unequal access to resources and a source of deep discord between women's organisations. In depth interviews with surveyed organisations and activists reveal that some organisations that have 'good connections' with donors, on account of their language abilities (proposal and report writing), social networking and socio-cultural backgrounds similar to staff of donor organisations, have greater access to information about grants, and are more successful in raising funds.

³⁰ For the purposes of this report US\$ 1 = NR 80

Large women's organisations based in Kathmandu and receiving larger shares of funding also echo this sentiment, saying that they are aware that smaller NGOs and CBOs, who are their partners, are unable to raise funds due to these barriers.

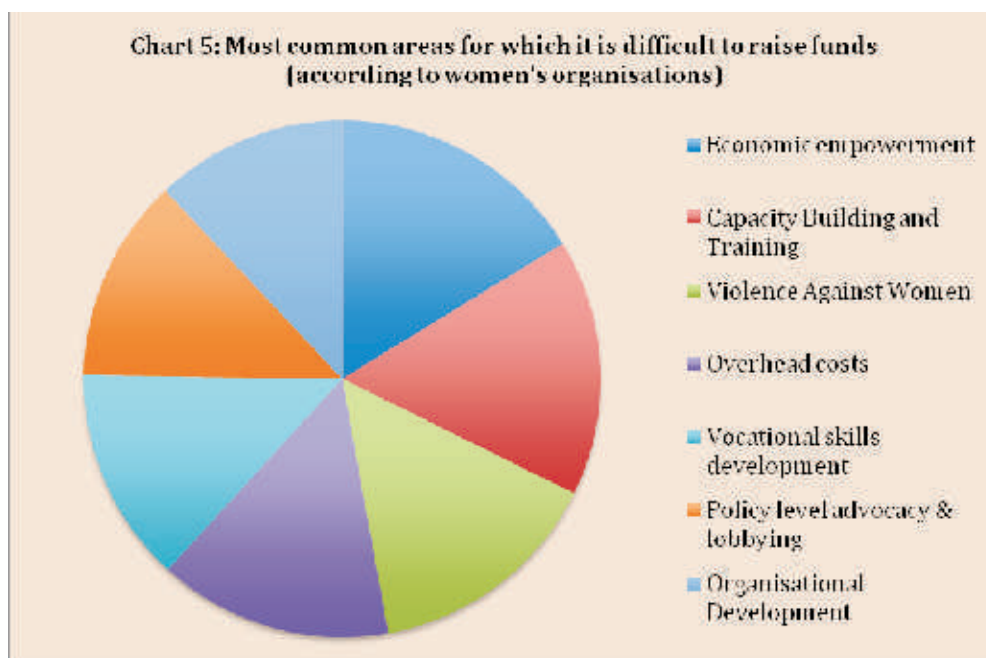
Donors would, rather work with large organisations, with capacities to absorb bigger funds, capacities to write good proposals and ability to demonstrate outcomes in their reporting, than smaller organisations, that need smaller funds and would likely struggle to write good reports in English.

Donors interviewed as part of the survey, do not contest these complaints and in fact, say they recognise the limitations imposed by their administrative requirements (language, finance management, organisational resilience). INGOs, because of their placement as intermediaries between donors and NGOs, take on the administrative and proposal writing/ reporting roles, monitoring roles, lighten the burden of NGOs in these areas and hence, are able to partner with smaller organisations based in the field. For donors, who are not routing funds through INGOs, large NGOs with established financial and management capacities are the safest bet. INGOs, though serving an important function for donors and NGOs alike, are seen as competing, and successfully so, with NGOs for the same resources.

Most difficult issues to raise funds for

Surveyed organisations listed activities/areas, that they found most difficult to raise funds for and provided reasons why it was difficult.

The activities/ areas that they found most difficult to get funding for, include economic empowerment; capacity building (of service providers/women's groups/NGOs/CBOs); Violence Against Women; overhead costs; vocational skills development; policy level advocacy and lobbying; and organisational development. Organisational development, together with overhead costs, which are basically costs for running and sustaining an organisation, together emerge as the single most difficult item to raise funds for.



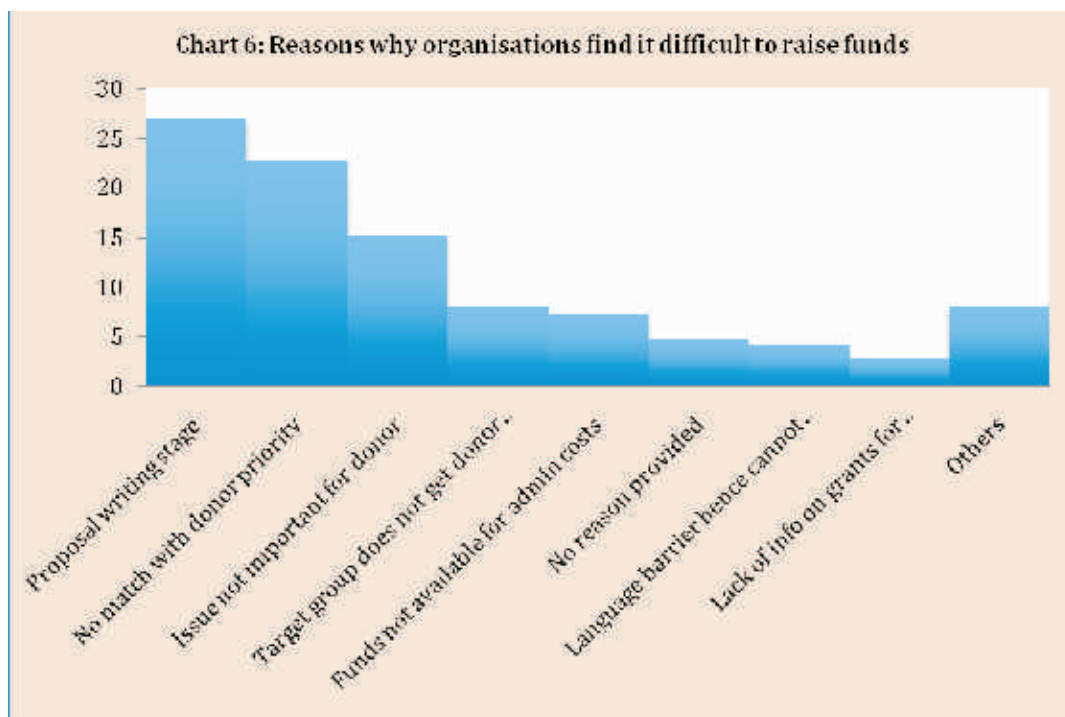
Among thematic issues, the most common areas that organisation find difficult to get funding for, include economic empowerment, skills development and violence against women. Among activities, capacity building and training for existing service providers, women's groups/collectives and NGOs/CBOs and policy level advocacy were most common activities that are difficult to raise funds for. Almost half of all organisations surveyed, reported that overhead costs (equipment, rent, infrastructure, administrative costs, salaries, honorariums and communication costs) were difficult to raise funds for.

On violence against women, in-depth interviews revealed that while there is a lot more money available for policy advocacy and awareness generation on violence against women, resources for providing services to women survivors of violence are limited. Almost all organisations that provide shelter/counseling facilities to women survivors report that project based and short duration grants, severely affect their ability to continue providing shelter and support services to women survivors of violence. Some donors on the other hand contend that they are wary of organisations running shelters, since they find women survivors staying for longer than 'acceptable' periods in shelter homes. Donors seem to suggest that NGOs do little to reintegrate women from shelter homes into their families and communities. However, it is not that shelter homes do not get funded, the challenge for NGOs is that shelters are an ongoing requirement, until violence against women is completely eliminated. Grants for shelter homes need to be available on a continuing basis, but donors only commit to grants for limited period and rarely continue to provide long-term support. In one case, a donor refused to finance food and accommodation costs for survivors in a shelter, since there would be no output to show against these expenses.

On economic empowerment and skills development, during in-depth interviews, organisations shared their frustration, when faced with questions from communities. They are aware that crores (millions) are being spent by large organisations, but there are no results to be seen, in terms of real changes in women's lives. There is hardly any funding available for promoting livelihoods. For landless women, this problem is most acute.

Why raising funds is difficult?

Organisations also listed reasons, why it was difficult to raise funds for specific areas. Single largest barrier to organisations ability to raise funds were related to donor requirements (proposal writing requirements) and priorities. These findings resonate with existing scholarly writing on the role donors and funding play in women's movement in Nepal, as well as the findings on donor practices, where language and personal networking were listed as barriers to accessing funds. See analysis section for more on funding dynamics.



During in-depth interviews organisations, shared that a large part of the reason why they find it difficult to raise resources is that fund raising is highly competitive and only well-written proposals get funded. Women's organisations are advised by INGOs and donors, to hire the services of consultant to be able to write 'good' proposals.

Organisations typically apply to several donors under various calls that are advertised to maximise their chances of getting any funds. When they are not successful in raising funds for specific activities, they tend to divert their overhead costs to finance those activities. For

example, one network that looks at right to livelihood and economic empowerment as an important strategy for peace building among youth, re-routed its overhead costs for financing skills-based training, when the donor only agreed to finance awareness building work and not skills training.

Interviews with organisations of women from marginalised communities, reveal that they are the worst off among women's organisations. Organisations working on disability, share that often donors would not finance them for areas such as sexuality, simply because in their mind disabled women are not 'sexual' beings.

What do organisations do, when they do not receive funds?

Depending on the strength of the organisation and personal resources available with founders and staff of the organisations, organisations cope differently. 10 percent of the interviewed organisations said that they had to stop their interventions and in fact, have faced with closing down of their office in the face of fund crisis. Personnel that had been trained on the job for years, had to be let go and went scrambling for jobs. Inability to even pay the core staff, led to gaps in contacts with the communities. Most organisations, including networks, say that they regularly dip into the overheads to finance programmes, that do not get financed. Donors require NGOs to keep overheads low and even this low overhead is diverted to fund programmes.

Governance

Majority of the surveyed organisations had more female members in their governing board than male members. 43 per cent of organisations had only women in their governing bodies, while 26 per cent had between 50 and 99 per cent representation of women in their governing bodies. Only a small proportion of 4 organisations did not have any women in their governing bodies and these are all the NGOs that are not exclusively focussed on women, but women are one of their beneficiary groups.

Similar figures emerge for the executive bodies, with slightly higher percentage of organisations reporting an all-female executive (48 per cent), followed by 33 percent reporting between 50 to 99 per cent women representation in their executive bodies.

Overall, among surveyed organisations, executive bodies are almost 70 per cent comprised by women and governing bodies are 80 per cent comprised of women. Almost one-third surveyed organisations, have no overlap between members of executive and governing bodies, but a majority of organisations do have overlap between member of the board and executive. Overall, for all 42 organisations surveyed, 22 per cent members of the governing bodies are members of the executive. This overlap between governing and executive bodies,

has been an issue that has been debated and discussed in the development circles in Nepal. It is common practice for founders of organisations to be chief executives, as well as on the board and management roles among board members are common. Various NGOs have defended this in light of scarce trained human resources in the country for managing projects.³¹

About donors financing women's rights work in Nepal

As part of this mapping exercise, 6 agencies (donors and INGOs) that are funding organisations/ groups working on women's issues were interviewed. The proportion of their grants towards women's rights ranged between 18 to 100 per cent of their budget. All donors expressed that gender was a specific focus area for them and SDC, ESP (DFID) and CARE International monitor their programmes, to assess fund flow to women/ gender issues, as well as to assess what percentage of their beneficiaries are females (women and girls). All donors except Asia Foundation, said that their allocation to gender was increasing consistently.

The table below depicts the size of donor portfolio in Nepal, which ranges from US\$ 1.8 to 11 million. The average grant size is between US\$ 5000 to 500,000. Most donors provide short-term grants, 8 months to 3 years and although project periods may be longer, commitments are made on annual basis and subject to performance. INGO donors, who in turn receive grants from bilateral/multilateral/ private donors, report that they too, receive grants for shorter periods.

Table 4: Overview of grant profile of select donors/INGOs

	ESP (DFID)	SDC	CARE Intl	Asia Foundation	UN Women	Dan ChurchAid
<i>Size of portfolio (million USD, for latest 2011/2012)</i>	1.8 ¹	26 ²	11	5.2	2.5	5.2 ³
<i>% to women/ gender</i>	30	50 (increasing trend)	60 (increasing trend)	18	100	20
<i>Average grant size (USD)</i>	25,000-50,000	No response	100,000-500,000	25,000-50,000	15,000-50,000	5,000-15,000
<i>Average grant period</i>	8-18 months	4-5 years	1-3 years	1-5 years	Activity based (days, weeks, months)	5 - 10 years

Source: Interviews with donors/INGOs

³¹ See NORAD, 2007

Notwithstanding the trend for shorter grant periods, INGOs tend to form long-term associations with their partner NGOs, whereby several short-term projects have run into partnerships of 10 years or more (Asia Foundation, CARE International, Dan ChurchAid). Each short-term grant is preceded with extensive efforts and time spent on developing proposals, often on an annual basis. With newer partners and in current times however, both donors/INGOs and NGOs are pessimistic about such long-term partnerships continuing.

Thematic focus of donors and approach to promoting women's human rights

Interviews with select donors indicate that all donors promote women's rights under various thematic areas– political empowerment, governance, livelihoods and economic empowerment, natural resource management, women's empowerment, equity and justice, gender-based violence, legal/procedural awareness, building local institutions and social mobilisation.

Women are a core impact group or core target group for all but one donor (for whom women are specific target group, under specific gender projects, such as trafficking). Women are a specific target group by themselves (UN Women, CARE Nepal) or as part of focus on excluded/most discriminated groups (Dan ChurchAid, SDC, DFID). Donors appear to be focusing specifically on poor and excluded women.

Various strategic programme documents of the surveyed donors show a shift towards focusing on women from poor and excluded backgrounds, as opposed to their earlier focus on women in general or poor women. Caste and ethnicity based exclusion have become central to targeting among donors. Various donors followed a specific focus on gender and social inclusion and lobbied with the government for national strategy for the same, which resulted in the country adopting a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy (2010). Some donors have since, further elaborated their own GESI strategies.

³²(GBP 1.2 Million for 2 years)

³³(Swiss francs 24 million)

³⁴(4 million euro)

Table 5: Thematic focus of donors and approach to promoting women’s human rights

	<i>Thematic focus (related to women’s rights)</i>	Approach to women’s human rights
ESP (DFID)	Political empowerment Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All programme focus on excluded groups and women as one category of excluded - Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Social Inclusion is core of the programmes - Focus on political, social and cultural rights and access to resources
SDC	Livelihoods Economic empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women’s rights integrated throughout the programme - All targets, workforce diversity, resource allocation to represent proportion of women in Nepal (51%) - Monitoring of fund flow and impact is disaggregated by gender
CARE Intl	Natural Resource Management, Women’s Empowerment Equity and Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All three programme areas, have focus on poor women as core impact group - Special strategy for working with men and boys - Aligning gender within Organisation Development strategy of self and partners - Capacity building, awareness generation and income generation
Asia Foundation	GBV (including trafficking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working directly with government at the policy level , as well as strengthening provision of services - Grants to local organisations on environment and gender issues
UN Women	Legal/procedural awareness Strengthening community- based institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity enhancement of govt. - Capacity building of NGOs - Policy formulation - Structural support to govt.
Dan ChurchAid	Livelihoods Legal education Governance Social mobilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on discriminated groups, women considered most discriminated - Access to social and economic justice through policy and field level interventions

Who are donors funding?

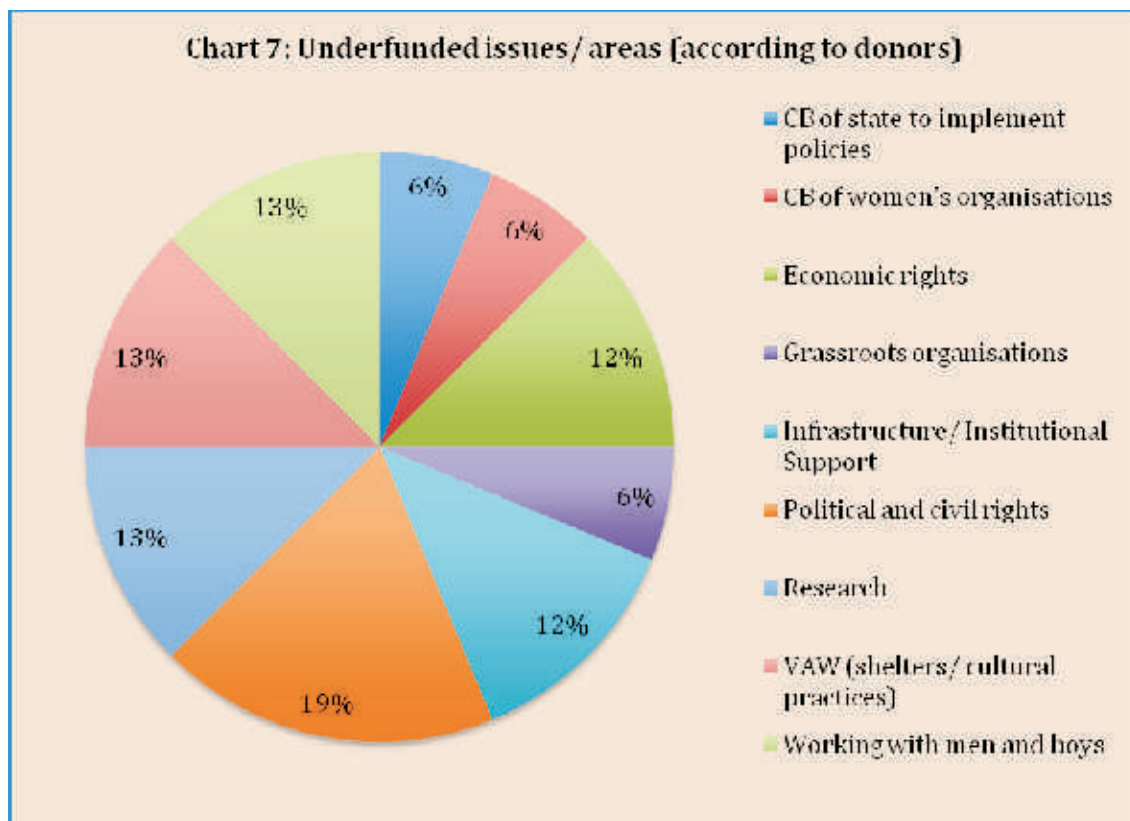
Donors report open and transparent processes for selection of grant recipients and all have set guidelines for selecting recipients. Most advertise calls for proposals and a smaller minority proactively looks for appropriate organisations.

On grants for projects specifically targeting women, there is an increasing tendency to select women's organisations/ groups and women-led organisations. Where donors do not necessarily and exclusively partner with women led organisations, one criteria for selection of partners is workforce diversity of partners (SDC).

For almost all donors, NGOs form a significant proportion of their grant recipients. CBOs are also listed as recipients of grants, except for UN Women. While CBOs are direct recipients in some cases, in others, grants to them are routed through NGOs. Most donors require recipients to be registered, but a minority is financing un-registered groups and organisations, through an umbrella network or another registered partner organisation.

Issues not getting adequate donor attention

According to interviewed donors, political and civil rights of women, economic rights, and violence against women (support for shelters and for cultural practices), are the most under funded areas- receiving least donor attention. In terms of activities that are not sufficiently allocated for by donors, capacity building (of NGOs and state) and research were listed. If one looks back at the chart listing areas that are most difficult to raise funds for, women's organisations also listed economic empowerment/skills development and violence against women. In these two areas, there is an agreement between donors and organisations alike. However, donors do list political and civil rights as the biggest under-funded area, while women's organisations did not mention this. One donor in particular, shared that donors are hesitant to get involved in the 'political sphere', since there is a risk of being perceived as interfering in internal matters, yet there is a need to support women political leaders.



One donor shared that in Nepal, basic issues i.e. education, health and drinking water are not being addressed adequately. Also that needs and priorities of conflict-affected women, are not getting adequately addressed. There is no gender responsive procedure in conflict interventions, more men than women affected by conflict are benefiting from interventions. The procedures for women to access relief and recovery packages are too complicated.

It is interesting to note that even as donors themselves impose limitations to organisational/operational costs in the grants they make, and even as donor grant mechanisms exclude smaller/grassroot organisations, they recognise that these receive less donor attention.

Representatives of donors, who were interviewed acknowledge that grant mechanisms (their own and other donors as well) can exclude smaller organisations and some shared the ways in which they try to include smaller organisations (opening field offices away from centre, selecting organisations based in target area only, etc). However, by and large, the donor community agrees that grass-root organisations receive less attention from donors. They understand that grass-root organisations are under resourced, because of their distance to donors, language barriers and low capacity to absorb (larger) funds.

In terms of institutional support, in particular, INGOs shared that they found it extremely difficult to convince their donor to provide for institutional costs – such as capacity building of organisations or costs for infrastructural support – for partner NGOs. INGOs typically build in capacity building of partner NGOs in areas related to project (GBV, monitoring/accounting formats, for example). Beyond this, they are not able to raise funds from their own donors for institutional capacity building of organisations they partner with. One INGO shared that they failed to convince their donor to provide support for motorcycles for community workers of a partner NGO in a very difficult hilly terrain, where there is no public transportation.

What are the capacity building needs of women's organisations?

Most donors only identified capacity gaps among women's organisations in the area of management and fund raising. Major areas identified for strengthening capacities of women's organisations, especially smaller and grass-root organisations, are management (programme, financial, personnel) and writing proposals and reports. In addition, some donors listed that women's organisations need to learn to better network with donors, have more information on grants, be updated with development jargon, and learn to use new technologies.

In terms of issue focussed capacity gaps, one donor suggested that women's organisations need to strengthen their understanding on gender issues (and not 'women's issues') and another donor said that women's organisations need to engage with, interpret and intervene in the challenges posed by globalisation.

It is interesting that when asked to list capacity needs of women's organisations, almost all donors, while listing areas of low capacity among women's organisations, also shared how donor mechanisms need to change, to be more accessible to grass-root women's organisations:

Understanding the dynamics of promoting women's rights in Nepal

In order to understand the dynamics of the work around promoting women's rights in Nepal, select surveyed organisations and renowned activists were interviewed. Some of the areas of agreement across organisations and activists were:

Addressing gender inequality at the grassroots is a priority area for women's rights related work in Nepal

There is widespread agreement that resources for women's rights related work, need to move from center-based large NGOs working on policy level, to smaller NGOs and CBOs, that are working directly with women in communities. Smaller organisations and those based in rural areas, formed by women from marginalised communities, rarely get financed for basic training and social mobilisation around gender inequality. As a result, some activists find that all discourse on gender is highly intellectualised and limited among a small elite circle, that speaks the 'language'.

It's a vicious cycle: there is no investment in building capacities of these organisations, and donors lament there aren't capable organisations at the grassroots and end up financing larger, already established organisations, even if they do not have direct field presence.

Funding for women's rights related work is not declining as such, but the funding priorities, patterns and mechanisms are skewed

Funding for women's issues has increased over time and this is evident from the proliferation of NGOs in Kathmandu, as well as, in rural areas. The problem is not with lack of investment in women's issues, but where exactly the funds are being channeled. Previously there were a lot of resources for gender training and gender mainstreaming, but now funding is restricted to certain thematic areas: reproductive health, HIV, GBV. There is little funding for core women's issues, i.e., gender inequality. These days there is a lot of funding for the 3 Ps of gender based violence (protection, punishment, prevention). In the recent years 'women and conflict' has also received specific funding in Nepal. Also, 'outcomes' and 'results' focus have led to quantitative focus of interventions, rather than qualitative: for instance, the focus is on number of girls enrolled in schools and not on how school education is changing gender norms and attitudes. Center-based women's organisations share that its not just the organisations based in rural areas that have little access, within organisations based in Kathmandu, funding comes easier to male-led organisations, than female led organisations.

Grants for women's rights work are now highly fragmented into thematic areas, reflecting priorities set by donors (including their commitments to their own governments and other donors). Thematic areas most popularly funded in Nepal are Violence Against Women and Women and Conflict/Peace Building. Within these thematic areas, funding is more concentrated in the area of policy advocacy, rather than providing direct benefits to target women.

Under the theme Violence Against Women, there are far greater resources available for policy advocacy and campaigning work than for provision of socio-legal services for women survivors. Activists and organisations find it ironical that while resources have been spent on making women (and communities) aware of the rights of women, there is little investment in providing actual support to women, when they need it most. Almost all surveyed/interviewed organisations providing psycho-social and legal services to victims of violence, lamented the lack of funding for their shelter homes, which are also the centre of their socio-legal services. Donors on the other hand claim, that many organisations are simply running shelter homes as a pivot to raise funding, even as many women survivors continue to languish in these shelters, without any plans for their reintegration or rehabilitation into communities. Notwithstanding the disagreements on the way shelter homes are seen by organisations and donors, there is a general agreement among organisations and activists that there is need for service provision and this need remains under funded.

Yet another feature of current funding pattern is that it is characterised by 'in-the-box' solutions for pre-set thematic areas. Innovative and new ways of engaging with women are ignored in favour of 'approved' strategies. A woman-led organisation that has undertaken path-breaking work in promoting women's employment in the tourism industry, in the roles of guides and porters, a traditional male-led sector, has been refused funding by various donors for years. It manages by diverting its own income from expeditions into training women for these jobs. The potential for expanding this initiative throughout Nepal and in fact, also sharing this as a progressive model for local development in similar terrains, is greatly hindered by the lack of donor interest. Only recently has this organisation found a donor.

According to some activists, there is little funding available to bring about structural changes, for instance, in the area of land rights or housing rights of women. There is little funding available for working directly with women: social mobilisation and service provision. In Nepal, a country struggling to establish basic governance mechanisms, the donor focus on government as the sole service provider and hence hesitation for funding NGOs to provide services (socio-legal, for example) is not helpful.

Women's movement in Nepal is highly fragmented along socio-cultural lines, as well as, along political affiliations

Women's rights activists from marginalised communities, as well as, organisations of women from marginalised communities, including disabled women, share that the women's movement is fragmented and deeply divided. Upper caste women-led women's organisations, networks and donors exclude women (activists and organisations) from marginalised communities and do not give importance to structural issues that need to be addressed for equality. Large 'mainstream' women's organisations receive the lion's share of funding, due to their personal connections with donors (attributed to their upper caste, English speaking privileges) and their greater accessibility to donors.

Organisations based outside of the Kathmandu Valley find themselves excluded by the networks and advocacy initiatives led by Kathmandu-based women's organisations.

Feminist scholarly writing in the country have also elaborated on the fragmented nature of women's movement in Nepal and provide similar reasons for the same.³⁵

Janajati (indigenous) and *Dalit* scholars and advocates have criticised the women's movement for ignoring the diversity of Nepalese women.³⁶ According to one scholar/activist, women's movement in Nepal is fragmented along party politics, personalised, hierarchical and without a centralised structure to represent a united front. She also criticises development programmes and donor approaches for considering women of Nepal as a homogenous group, saying "there is no such category as 'Nepali Women'".³⁷ Yet another scholar contends that representation of 'the Nepali Woman' as a single over-arching category is a contemporary construction, which has been achieved at the expense of consistently effacing the historically prior multiple and contested ethnic/caste identities thrust upon women in what is now the new Nepal.³⁸ Further, the scholar notes, 'the Nepali women's movement has been and continues to be dominated and led by high-caste Hindu women and some Newar women, and this fact has only recently been acknowledged.³⁹ Leadership positions in NGOs are dominated by Bahun, Chettri and to some extent Newar women. By virtue of their high caste advantages, they also happen to be among the most educated and versed in English, which in turn, significantly increases their access to donors.

New attention (from donors) to marginalised communities has emerged from the discourse on conflict, where it was placed within the context of poverty, caste, ethnicity, class and gender.⁴⁰

³⁵ See Acharya, Meena 2010, for more

³⁶ See Tamang, Seira, 2009, and Acharya, Meena 2010 for more

³⁷ Acharya, Meena 2010

³⁸ Tamang, Seira, 2009

³⁹ Tamang, Seira, 2009

⁴⁰ Tamang, Seira, 2009

Social exclusion of different groups based on geography, religion (caste), ethnicity, class or gender were recognised as root causes of conflict.⁴¹ Subsequently, women from some of these communities have been able to express their identities as not just women, but as Janajati or Dalit women. Nepal Indigenous Women's Federation was formed only in 2001, for the first time in the history of social movements in Nepal, indigenous women established themselves as an identity and lobby. However, women's rights activists from among Dalits and Janajatis lament that it's a struggle for them to get mainstream women's organisations and networks to become inclusive. Even less successful in pushing their agendas, are the Madhesi women.⁴²

Political alignments are yet another factor, dividing women's organisations in Nepal. Most of the NGOs, including women's NGOs, are informally aligned to political parties.⁴³ Political sympathies or more pointedly, the politicisation of NGOs, is one reason for the lack of unity and the multiplication of projects and endeavours.

Yet another factor fostering divisions and lack of collective advocacy among women's organisations is the fact that they are competing for scarce resources. Priorities of women's organisations (and NGOs in general) are seen to be dictated by donor priorities than real needs.⁴⁴

Most funding is for short periods, project-based and with extensive and sophisticated proposal and reporting requirements

Most interviewed organisations report that the funding trend has moved from long-term partnerships with donors (10 years), where programmes were designed bottom-upwards (from needs assessment at grassroots to developing ideas for intervention) to short-term projects (few months to 3 years), where programmes are developed to fit into pre-designed formats, goals and outcomes. Organisations spend six months to a year, working on concept notes and proposals, only to be rejected or to receive funding several months after they have started interventions. Latter is particularly true for 'continuation' projects, where applications need to be written for each committed year. Although project time frames are rarely extendable, disbursements are often late.

Funding mechanisms exclude smaller organisations, since the funding environment is made extremely competitive through the bidding process. The English language requirements and the sophisticated formats for applications and reporting for outcomes, by design, excludes many organisations, even if they are actually working directly with the target communities.

⁴¹NORAD, 2007

⁴²TamangSeira, 2009

⁴³TamangSeira, 2009

⁴⁴TamangSeira, 2009

Activists and organisations feel that funding comes easy to organisations, that can write good proposals and can demonstrate outcomes on paper - an ability, they feel they are lacking in.

Short-term grants and long periods and effort invested in writing applications means organisations end up spending a large amount of time and efforts in mobilising resources. For smaller organisations, that do not have dedicated staff for fund raising, the investments and risks are even higher.

As INGOs, as much as, NGOs are direct recipients of grants from international bilateral, multilateral and private donors; many organisations and activists feel that INGOs have various other sources for raising funds from donor countries and should not be allowed to apply for grants in-country. The NGO community in Nepal, has been critical of INGOs competing with NGOs for finances made available by international donors or work in Nepal. NGO Federation of Nepal has made appeals to the Government of Nepal to prohibit INGOs from “raising funds from donor agencies '*earmarked money* allocated for Nepal”. They have petitioned that INGOs should be prohibited from accessing grants for which Nepali NGOs and/or government are eligible to apply.⁴⁵ There are also allegations that international organisations are “converting their identities as local organisations”, in order to be able to directly implement programmes, without having to partner with Nepali NGOs. These trends are seen to be opportunistic and undermining of local organisations. Also, organisations feel that in sub-contracting procedures or where INGOs route funds to NGOs, the NGO/CBO recipients are rarely informed of the total grant amount and the share of the INGOs. In such arrangements, there are rarely provisions for institutional strengthening of NGOs/CBOs.

Irony of sustainability requirement of donors

Donors expect NGOs to demonstrate 'sustainability' of the project inputs. This sustainability is expected out of a project that is to be completed in 9 months or 3 years. The work related to challenging norms and practices and supporting women, claim that their rights cannot be accomplished within short periods. NGOs are expected to 'find' other sources of funding. A lot of time and effort and specialised skills are required for mobilising resources, which is again a challenge for smaller organisations. Hence, what happens is that larger Kathmandu-based NGOs get large amounts of funds, which they disburse to smaller organisations. The programme development cycle is not necessarily bottom-upwards.

⁴⁵ NFN calls upon the government of Nepal to bring Social Development Act into immediate effect in order to regulate NGOs. http://www.ngofederation.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13. Accessed March 9, 2012

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study set out with three broad questions that needed to be answered:

1. What are the available resources for women's rights work and for women's groups and organisations?
2. What are the obstacles and challenges faced by women's groups and organisations in accessing resources for undertaking their activism and work to ensure human rights of women?
3. What are the areas for capacity building and support, required by women's groups to enhance and strengthen their outreach and access to required resources?

Resources available for women's rights work in Nepal and obstacle to accessing them

From literature review, surveys and interviews with organisations, activists and donors, it seems that resources available for women's rights work in Nepal, have an upward trend, as also demonstrated by the increase in number of organisations working on women's issues and women's organisations in the country. It is also clear that just as others NGOs in the country, women's organisations are largely financed by foreign aid agencies (donors and INGOs), whether directly or via government programmes. Specific focus on women and their organisations, especially recent focus on organisations of ethnic-identity based women's organisations, has been attributed to increased understanding of the role of gender inequality (and inequalities based on class/caste/ethnicity) in the decade long armed conflict in the country.

Having said that, large amounts of funding available for promoting women's human rights work in the country, has been skewed in terms of its share among different types of women's organisations. First of all, the hierarchy established by fund flow to organisations based in rural areas, puts CBOs at the bottom of the rung. Negotiation powers of those at the bottom of the rung, are seen as limited and transparency of donors/intermediary organisations (larger NGOs/ INGOs) towards the CBOs, is described as absent.

Secondly, centre based, English speaking and high caste/class-led women's organisations are seen as having the lion's share of funding, while smaller organisations based in the field and led by women from target communities or marginalised communities, receive little funding. Social affiliation-based networking is seen as an enabling factor. Caste-based parochialism is described as rampant in the selection of recipients.

It is also clear that the political trajectory of the country (conflict then and transformation now), has influenced the themes that have got funded, as well as, internationally set priorities

(such as the 3 Ps of Violence Against Women). There is far more funding available for policy advocacy and networking related work, than for all other activities. Even among the top 5 most common activities, advocacy and networking far outnumber other activities. Even as policy advocacy emerges as the single most common activity that women's organisations are engaged in, activists reveal that structural issues are not being taken up.

Organisations find it most difficult to fund their operation/ institutional costs, since donors are not willing to invest in this. Donors themselves recognise that inadequate attention is paid to these areas and that undermines organisations' (especially smaller organisations') ability to sustain themselves and represent their issues.

Areas for capacity building/ support required for accessing resources

This emerged as the most ironical question in the course of this study. It is a fact that all surveyed organisations report difficulties in accessing resources to varying degrees, depending of course, on their rate of success or failure with obtaining grants. It is also a fact that a major reason why they fail to mobilise resources, is to do with their inability to write a successful project proposal. However, in light of the fact that funding environment is extremely competitive and that some organisations have an (unfair) edge over others in their ability to meet donor requirements, can we really identify 'writing better proposals' as an area of improvement for women's organisations or indeed all NGOs in Nepal? Should we be better preparing women's organisations to play in the uneven and unequal funding grounds? Or does the funding environment need to become more responsive to the reality of being a women's organisation in rural Nepal or being an ethnic women's organisation in an inaccessible terrain in the country?

What have we learnt about the dynamics of women's rights-related work in Nepal?

In conclusion, this study has found that the web of work related to women's rights movement in Nepal is characterised by fragmented women's organisations and skewed distribution of available resources from foreign agencies. Although organisations report significant changes in the area of increased awareness, voice, networking and capacities for representation among target groups and changes in laws, they also report that very little is being invested in mobilising women at the grassroots and providing them with support services necessary for them to be able to claim their rights. An encouraging phenomenon is the growing space created and claimed by newly formed organisations of women from marginalised communities. One only hopes that in the pursuit of inclusion and equity, the government, donors and women's movement will make excluded groups partners and not simply recipients, at the end of the aid hierarchy.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information shared by various organisations, activists and donors, the following recommendations emerge for improving access to resources for women's organisations:

1. Fund allocation for promoting women's human rights-related work needs to be reviewed in light of the diversity and different experiences of gender inequality, based on caste, class and ethnic affiliations of women.
2. Organisations of women from marginalised communities need to be supported, to strengthen their institutional and representational capacities. Grants for target beneficiaries need to be made to organisations of target beneficiaries.
3. Donors need to be more transparent in their fund allocation and recipient selection procedures, measuring outcomes and impacts and fund flows to women beneficiaries, as well as, reviewing and correcting any unfair biases towards established, large, centre-based and or elite/male-led organisations or INGOs. Fund allocations also need to be measured in terms of direct benefits to target groups.
4. Grant mechanisms need to be more responsive to the reality of women's organisations in Nepal– their capacities be better understood in the context of historical marginalisation and investments need to be made accordingly. Current system of competitive bidding needs to be reviewed in light of unequal capacities to meet current set of donor requirements.
5. As much as policy advocacy is required, investment is critical for provision of services and empowerment of the common woman at the grassroots.
6. Where provision of services (for instance, via para-legal committees) is being financed, implementation of principles of gender justice needs to be ensured.
7. Current practice of top-bottom programming, where donors define programmes and strategies, needs to be reviewed and replaced with a more consultative and bottom-up approach for assessing needs, priorities and designing programmes.
8. Promoting women's human rights at the grassroots requires sustained interventions at the community level. Donors need to review their grant design and period to ensure that sufficient time and resources are allocated for effecting changes in norms, practices and behaviours.

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ANNEXURE 1: LIST OF DONORS INTERVIEWED

1. CARE Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal
2. Dan Church Aid, South Asia Office, New Delhi, India
3. Enabling State Programme (of the DFID), Kathmandu, Nepal
4. Swiss Development Cooperation, Kathmandu, Nepal
5. The Asia Foundation, Kathmandu, Nepal
6. UN Women, Kathmandu, Nepal

ANNEXURE 2: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

Activist	Affiliations
Dr. Renu Rajbhandari	Women's Rehabilitation Centre (Chairperson) Also, National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders.
Sharmila Karki	Jaagran (President, Chief Executive)
Shanta Laxmi Shrestha	World Education (Associate Country Director)
Sheikh Chand Tara	National Women's Commission (Chairperson. Also, activist for rights of Muslim and Madhesi women)
Bimala Ghimire	MahilaAdhikarManch (National Women's Rights Forum). Also chairperson Prerana

ANNEXURE 3: ANALYSIS OF APPROACHES EXPLAINED

In order to ensure parity and consistency in analysis of qualitative data, common definitions and sets of parameters were developed – for instance while analysing the approaches being undertaken by the groups, the following definitions were referred to by all the researchers:

Category 1: *Explicitly rights based (with principles of equality including gender equality):* it brings together gender, participation, and empowerment into a coherent framework which is rooted in the norms and principles of international human rights standards and values. Focuses on, (i) Participation – inclusive, people-centred; (ii) Empowerment – leading to social transformation, for the marginalised and oppressed communities; (iii) Accountability:

Identification of claim-holders and corresponding duty-holders (state and non-state); (iv) Equality and Non-discrimination- as defined by international human rights law; and (v) Justice - based on universal standards and norms; just distribution of resources and power; ensuring claims of violations.

Category 2: *Explicitly rights based (with feminist principles):* Along with elements of category 1, clear articulation of feminist principles – critiquing unequal power relations, analysing gender inequality and protecting and promoting women's rights and issues

Category 3: *Strongly rights based:* Groups that reflect a rights based approach in their praxis- which means their activities, demonstrate adoption of a rights based approach even while the articulation may be missing (responses on objectives, strategies, activities and changes in women lives include elements of RBA – participation, empowerment etc. but not seen within the framework on equality and non-discrimination. No direct reference to human rights standards, inclusion or social transformation)

Category 4: *Some elements of rights based:* Groups that refer to rights based approach, and there is some level of understanding within the organisations, however, the activities or strategies do not reflect the same.

Category 5: *RBA not clearly articulated/welfarist:* Focusing on the needs and not on rights of the communities; addressing immediate causes of problems. Programmes are entirely around the needs of the community, and there is little or no linkage between one programme line and another, as no attempt has been made to synchronise programme plan or strategic understanding. No reference to elements of RBA.

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