

CHAPTER-ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

Nepal, a landlocked Himalayan Kingdom with a population of 28.4 million is considered one of the least developing countries in the world. It has been striving to accelerate the pace of its socio-economic development within the framework of a multiparty parliamentary system adopted since 1990s.

Nepal is the country of multi-culture and multi-ethnicity. The rural population of Nepal consists of several ethnic groups. They vary significantly in terms of socio-economic characteristics. It is reality that all ethnic groups are not attaining the same status of living. Some groups are far ahead socially, economically and politically than the other groups.

In general, country development means upliftment of people's social, economic and educational conditions. Among all, women development should be given due importance to uplift their socio-economic condition.

The total population of Nepal according to the Census 2011 is 26.5 million where male and female are 48.5 percent and 51.5 percent respectively. Nepalese women constitute slightly more than half percent of total population. Female literacy rate seems behind i.e. 57.4 percent with compared to men i.e. 75.01 percent and average 65.9 percent out of total population as estimated in the CBS 2011.

The life of women is always difficult in comparison to their male counterparts in Nepal. It is well known that the status of women is lower than that of the male. Women work more than men, sometimes more than twice, in all the age groups. Their work burden increases with age. Women in Nepal as elsewhere hold the triple work responsibility of reproduction, house holding and employment. Women make sustainable contribution to uphold Nepal's economy.

The position occupied by women in the social structures of her society that includes power, prestige, rights and duties is called women status (Acharya, 1979:2)

Nepalese women's socio-economic status is miserable. They were exploited in the society. From them men took full advantage and their own condition is at mercy of men. The status of rural women in Nepal is even worse than that of their male counterparts. Women who constitute more than half of country's population are always in low profile. They are almost neglected in any of the development activities. Women are leading more miserable lives particularly in rural areas. Most women in rural areas are living below the poverty line.

Women's equal participation in any development activities is not only desirable but essential as well to speed up the development process. In our country's context most of the women live in rural areas. They don't have any opportunity to improve themselves. They are made physically and mentally weak from society. Needless to say that no development plans and programmes can be successfully implemented unless male and female are eager to participate.

The speed of socio-economic development depends on the active participation of the women. In recent years there has been increasing concern about and interest in promoting greater participation of women in different sectors. Traditional, social norms and values of the society, poor condition of the family, patriarchal society etc. are some of the barriers to women to actively participate in development activities.

Various studies show the miserable condition of women in our country at very eve of twenty first century and situation is even worse. The women are providing a significant economic support in their household management involving in various income earning activities such as vegetable farming and selling, shopping, handicrafts, industrial sector etc. But few women get opportunity to be involved in the industrial sector, civil service and other organizations along with their household responsibilities. In our country Nepalese women have double-triple responsibilities. Child care, kitchen works,

managing fodder for livestock etc. are supposed to be their regular duties and an assistance to their family. They are also participating in various alternative income generating sources.

Generally the Nepalese women are involved in agriculture sector and only household sector. Various efforts have been made from government and NGOs to improve socio-economic status of women for a long time.

Decision making is a continuous ongoing process in solving problem of acquiring and using resources to achieve goals. In our society, the status of women is very low due to the lack of decision making power. Most of the Nepalese women do not have power of decision due to the culture and education.

The power of decision making is not found even among the educated women too. It is because of religious belief, traditional values, culture, male dominated society and unemployment. Similarly men dominate the decision making process, not only concerning outside the household decisions but also domestic decisions.

Nepal's five year development plans have always emphasized too need for special strategies to promote girls and women's education and several effective initiatives have been taken.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

More than half of Nepal's population comprises women. In spite of this dominant majority, the irony of fate lies here. The pathetic condition of women in society is itself an indicator of the low value set on women's lives and their suffering is very well in tune with the social system and life pattern. Women have various problems which are centuries old. They suffer much oppression all over the country. More in the rural areas than urban areas, they are the victims of the circumstances which have been created due to gender discrimination, which persists in Nepal from cradle to grave. Nepalese women have lower life expectancy than men. In some parts of the country the work

burden of girls is two three times that of boys and their school attendance is one-third. Girls usually receive less quality and less nutritional varieties of food than boys and are less likely to receive medical care. In many households, the girl child's workday begins before sunrise and ends long after dark. Growing up in a socio-cultural environment that is organized on the principles of patriarchy has several significant implications for the girl child in Nepal. Her status including her access to resources is inferior to her brother.

Despite their greater participation both in economic and social areas, they remain de-recognized and their labor considered as non economic activity. The life is becoming more complex and only men's income can not fulfill their all requirements. In this respect, women's participation in the economic activities has become inevitable. Sufficient efforts are not made to develop women's social prestige, self-confidence and feelings of equalities by educating them.

Women's involvement in politics is negligible because they always should keep themselves busy with household activities. Nepalese women are facing so many problems. Despite so many efforts directed towards their upliftment, women's status is still poor due to the existing laws.

Many researches have proved that women can work even better than men if they are provided opportunities. Women are as laborious and potential as their male counterparts but still they are confined to their traditional roles of mothers and housewives. Woman of today is not merely contented in her role of mother and dutiful housewife. She thrives for equal opportunities as men and wants to make a place for herself among the men and not below. She is powerful not weak, active not passive and capable of destroying and not easily destructible. No one can think about proper house and society. Without women the world remains incomplete and it is very hard to have peace, perseverance, love, justice etc. The mental and materialistic development of the country is possible with the equal share of women in every aspect of development.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that it will provide some useful information about women. In this study an attempt is made to analyze the problem of women and recommendations are given for the improvement of theoretical senses. Though there are many hue and cries about women development, the condition of women is very poor in reality. The study consists of explorations and inspections of women's socio-economic status, roles, activities and conditions. So, it will be useful for planners.

The study presents a vivid picture of Nepalese society. In this study main emphasis has been laid on the socio-economic status and decision making of women in Tirhut Rural Municipality Saptari District. So, it is also presumed that the study will reflect the overall women in Nepal.

1.4 Delimitation of the Study

This study has following important limitations which may restrict the findings to some extent.

This is micro level study. It may not be generalized in macro level. Because of limitation of time and budget this study has traced only household sector. the study area are only tirhut rural municipality in village diman ward No. 4. In this study are has only 180 householders were selected.

It is quite difficult to interview and fill in the questionnaire of male headed household as head of the house usually does the answering for this reason. The information collected in this regard is not enough as wanted. .

1.5 Objectives of the Study

To assess the socio-economic status of the women in the study area.

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. to study women's participation in community groups and income generating activities.
2. to study women's educational status and their involvement in decision direction making.

CHAPTER-II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies have been conducted on different issues related to socio-economic status of women and their involvement in decision making processes from different perspective. This includes brief review of existing literature on the status of women in Nepal. Many scholars have studied on women and their status, and have published numbers of books. so this chapter covers socio-economic status of women in general. Some of the selected studies have been reviewed and presented here.

2.1 Status of Women in Nepal

UNICEF (1987) has reported that most rural women work and live in difficult social and economical conditions. In the hills and mountains providing water, foods and work for their families often means walking long distance and working from dawn to dusk.

Most of the women in rural Nepal work and live in difficult social and economical situation. In general, women have less access to income, wealth, modern avenues of employment, education, health facilities than men, and have power, fewer legal rights than men, especially in property and family matters. In the hill communities women enjoy greater freedom in marriage and mobility and have greater decision making roles within the household but suffer from overwork and poorer physical and social infrastructures (UNICEF, 1992).

The socio-economic status of a family is determined by its income, education level and occupation of the members. Today Nepalese women are daughters, wives and mothers but are not recognized as individual with their own identities despite the fact that they are as human as men. Society has regarded women to the lowest rank and to a submissive role, confined to the home and farm and their responsibilities there due to their material function. They are discouraged and prevented to take part in public life (Subedi 1993).

Women socio-economic status even through raising is still low in Nepal. They still lack of adequate assess to employment, income, education, health care,

nutrition and constitutional provisions favoring their equal right to work employment and education (Acharya Bidhan 1994).

Despite their overwhelming contribution, Nepalese women have remained relatively disadvantaged gender in our society. In fact the participation of women in the development activities need not to be marginalized from the main stream of the development and indeed, more than half population can not be remained untouched to add up the bricks in this process. Our male dominated society is still hesitating to provide the equal right to women and it perhaps is also because of the male dominating conceptual ambiguities of our sociality where past or present, they are always remaining a subject of victim in our social line and there is every possibility for them to be tortured by their male partner even our a very small mistake while their men-fold feel free to do anything they like. Ironically Nepalese women have no security under the same law that every one else is enjoying now (Uprety 1998).

Women's status is measured using three indicators derived from a large sample of Nepalese women include education, employment status and intra-household decision making power. Education of women is an important status indicator. In general women with higher education tend to have a better position in society (WHO 1989). In some cases, however education alone may not be sufficient to increase women's empowerment. Women's employment is also considered an important factor in enhancing the status of women (Hogan and Others 1999). Thus we also include the employment status to measure women's status. In addition, women's involvement in intra-household decision making is used as another indicator of women's status. Their decision-making power is presumed to have greater autonomy and a high status in the household (Asia-Pacific Population Journal, March 2001).

Reference to policies and programmes for women and development began with the sixth plan. The sixth plan recognized the need for involving women in all the programmes and the projects in particular those related to provision of basic services in health and education. The plan emphasized to remove the legal

impediments to women's economic empowerment and initiated programmes to address them.

The objective of the Tenth Plan regarding women's participation is to achieve the overall target of sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation with a main objective of increasing women development indicators and women's rights by eliminating all forms of discrimination against women to create an equitable society.

The Tenth Plan makes comprehensive commitments for improving the status of women through various programmes like mainstreaming in the development activities and various empowerment programmes like social, economic, political and legal. The plan has stated that the resource allocation and the development activities will be based upon equity.

The local Self-Governance Act of 1999 has made provision for reservation of one seat for women in District Development Council and 20 percent representation of women in local bodies at the ward level. As a result some 40,000 women are now engaged in local governance. The first Amendment of Civil Service Act, 1998 was made to make special provision for women. Government has provided 33 percent quotas to the women to be appointed in Civil Services.

2.2 Women and Education

Education is the most important factor for development of human personality as well as of a nation. As women make half of country's population, education of women is very important and it should receive top priority in the context of development of modern Nepal.

UNICEF (1995) has pointed out that Nepal's formal education system suffers from a low enrollment of girls and high dropout and repetition rate for all. Net enrollment for girls is approximately 61% as opposed to 80% for boys.

The vast majority (80%) of Nepalese women have never been to school. One in nine has attended primary school, 6% have some secondary education and less

than 3% have passed their SEE. Four of five women are illiterate (Family Health Survey, 1996).

Education alters perception, attitude and behaviour of an individual. It helps be economically and socially productive members of the society. Therefore, women's participation in education has significant meaning for them personally and for the betterment of the society.

Despite Government's commitment at national and international level to uplift girls and women's level of education and, efforts of NGOs, INGOs, the civil societies, women's and girls participation in education is very low (Mira Mishra 1994).

A boy is to educate individual, but to educate a girl is to educate the whole family and society. Education is therefore essential for women and girls to become self dependent, more productive, skillful and creative and to recognize their right place in the society and to enter the mainstream of development of the nation. (Ghimire, 1997).

2.3 Women and Health

Nepalese women's health is in miserable condition in the sense that they are quite neglected from their very childhood stage. The cultural norms, economic conditions and professional attitude of parents towards the boys are in the center of the ill/poor health of women (Luitel S.1992).

The health condition of rural women is very pathetic as they have to get busy in agriculture, fetching firewood and drinking water. They are always overburdened with work. It is recommended medically that in last phase of pregnancy three months before delivery takes place, a woman should not be involved in physically strenuous work but in Nepal a pregnant woman keeps on working even up to the last day of delivery (Majpuria Indra 1996).

There is a wide spread lack of sufficient protein, vitamin A, iron and iodine in the diets of rural women. Micro level studies have shown that rural Nepali women work an average of 14 hours to 16 hours per day and there are

indications that women's workload remains relatively the same during pregnancy. (Acharya 1979)

UNICEF (1996) has noted that the proportion of females dying is higher than that of males in Nepal. Nepal has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

In Nepalese village, women and girl's illness were less recognized in relation to men and boy's illness. This leads to women and girls receiving less medical care than men and boys (Bhadra, 1997).

Marriage has an overwhelming importance in women's life. The event of marriage determines almost all her options and subsequent livelihood. Marriage heralds the exposure of women to pregnancy and child bearing. Child birth and lactation force women to withdraw from active economic work making them dependent on other member of society. Frequent pregnancies impinge on their health and sometimes even on their life (ADB 1999).

2.4 Women and Economy

Nepalese economy is predominantly agrarian. Throughout the country, the farm is the most significant source of subsistence and income. It produces almost 8 percent of average annual household income where men and women spend approximately 6 hours to 10 hours per day respectively. (Acharya and Bennett 1981).

Unless there is equal ownership of family property, the equal status of husband and wife in the family will not be possible. (Ghimire, 1995)

Women participation in the national economy varies among each caste and communities. The hills and mountain women are involved in outer economy more than those of Terai women. The 1981 population census reported that 46 percent women over the age of 10 were economically active while the corresponding figure for men was 54 percent. But in 1991 census, the percentage of economically active women declined to 40.38 percent and for

men is 59.62 percent. Yet only 48 percent of rural women as compared to 69.8% men were reported economically active. (2001 Census)

Traditionally women's responsibilities have been restricted to the homes, cooking, cleaning, child bearing and child rearing and looking after the home. Women are considered to be weak and dependent on men. (Gurung, 1999).

Most women are still working in agriculture. Fewer women are employed in industry and service sector has been found to be expanding for women's economic participation. Women tend to be in clerical, sales and domestic services and men as production workers in manufacturing and transport. Within an occupational group, women are always in less prestigious job. Wage and salaried employment is more stable and secure than self employment but it is not always available to women. Even if they are fortunate enough to get salaried job, they are not that equally fortunate to involve in the white jobs. (Population census, 2001).

2.5 Women and Decision

Women are primary the actors of the domestic and subsistence sector. The whole process of decision making in the household is a complex one and it is difficult to pinpoint which of the member has made a particular decision. The relationship between the household members is so inter-linked that the influence of the members and the authority of the decision maker overlap. This element of influence plays a very significant role in the decision making process (Acharya and Bennett 1981)

The decision making power of women may increase when there is an equality of participation at all levels of planning and policy making. According to her, the women of Nepal are so dependent to men, if the male partners to give shelter to them; it is a question of basic survival. The system has made women so helpless and dependent that without men's they will not survive. So in this human system the rights of survival are laid on the heart of men. (Shanta Laxmi Shrestha, 1994)

Conventional social custom is one of the major reasons for obstacle women from participating fully in economic development which result low decision making power in the women's hand. Higher the participation of women for economic development, higher will the decision making power for women (Acharya, 1997).

Women have only access to resources but the actual control lies with men. Land for example is extremely controlled by men while women work on it. Similarly, health care accessible to all but men are the principal decision makers and determine and control any health care services required (Gurung, 1999).

Women in Nepal as else where hold the triple work responsibility of reproduction, house holding and employment. The existing socio-economic status of women, traditional bias, inadequate political commitment in some important constrains on increasing women's participation in power and decision making. Nepal is addressing the issue implementing various powers to women. No significant affirmative actions have so far been considered (2000, Dr. Baidy).

2.6 Women and Property Rights

Men are endowed with the right to property by virtue of the biological fact of birth. Women's right to property depends almost entirely upon the social fact of marriage (i.e. on their roles as a wife). Therefore women's economic scarcity is dependent on their adherence to strict social norms of proper marital behaviour. (Bennett 1980).

Women are deprived of all rights, socio-cultural, economic-legal and political . Economic discrimination against women is the root cause of all kinds of backwardness- socio-cultural, legal educational and political. The existing laws are gender-biased and silent about the women's property rights. (Thapaliya, 1996).

In respect of guaranteeing equal property rights to women, the existing laws are silent about modalities of giving rights. The Hindu law in respect of property rights is different from other laws and laws in the western countries. Flexible in nature, there are sufficient rooms in the Hindu laws for its amendments to address new social problems. In order to get rid of religious and cultural value which is basically characterized by negative values of social thinking, we have to look into things objectively and better analyze the issue in a legal perspective (Sangroula, 1996).

CHAPTER-THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the process applied for the present study. It describes research design, nature and sources of data, methods of data collection, method of data analysis and limitation of the study.

3.1 Study Area

Tirhut Municipality Saptari, District is a rural municipality oriented which is located in Sagarmatha zone, Eastern Development Region of Nepal. It is located in the eastern part of the district. Its headquarter is Rajbiraj.

Tirhut Rural Municipality lies in the eastern part of. Kanchanpur Rupanagar and Hanumannagar Kankilni Municipality and Agnisire Krishna Sabran Rural Municipality in the western Part and Aginisire Krishna Sawarn Rural Municipality in the northern part and Madhewa Rural Municipality in the southwest part of this rural municipality.

This Municipality comprises 5 wards. Four (4) are especially focused. Four ward is especially diman village. There are altogether 1 government secondary school. Besides these, there are three private schools in rural areas that consist of huge population. In this Rural Municipality the hulaki Rajmarg main highway, sub highway Hanumannagar & Mahuli Mahendra Rajmarg goes through this Rural Municipality. About 8 km. of this sub-highway lies in this Municipality. People get means of transportation easily in this road. Besides this, there are some other graveled roads where there is the facility of bus, tempu, auto riksha, and Majik, services. The facility of electricity is available in all wards and toles. District Development Committee has made a plan to provide the facility of electricity in all tolls of Tirhut Rural Municipality, Saptari District during this year.

The inhabitants of Municipality are constituted of different ethnic groups like Ahir/ yadav, Khang/ Khatebe, Dhanuk/Mandal Taili/sah, hagam/Thakur, sarmaha/ Suthihar, Malaha/Mukhiya, sada/ mushar, Kori / Mehta Kumhal, Dom, Barahi and Gupta/ sah etc. as well as many occupational groups. Most of the population depends on subsistence agriculture and other professions. There are many big farm lands. Most of the lands are cultivable but due to the lack of irrigation facility people are not growing various crops in large quantities. In winter season cultivation is not done in most of the land. They are compelled to depend on rain.

Naturally, it is extremely beautiful. Garden of Mango's rivers, streams and canals are the natural beauties of this Rural Municipality which attract and fascinate the people. Ram Temple which lies in this Rural Municipality is one of the famous places in Nepal. Chandra Nahar which lies in this Rural Municipality is one of the famous nahar in Nepal . this nahar is oldest nahar in Nepal.

According to Village Profile (2011) the total population of VDC Diman on Tihul Rural Municipality, ward no 4, is 6,665 including 3298 males and 3367 females. In accordance with the population census of Saptari district, published in collaboration with Village profile, 4510 people are economically active whereas 2155 people are economically inactive. Out of 4510 active people, males are 2250 and females are 2260. This indicates that most of the females of Tirhut Ward No 4, Rural Municipality are economically active.

3.2 Research Design

This study is based on both exploratory cum descriptive research design. It is exploratory because it is the first research about impacts of socio-economic status of the women on their decision making of the study area. This research has also attempted to explore the factors and realities. It is also descriptive in nature. It describes women's education, employment, income, position, participation, decisions etc. in this study area.

3.3 Nature and Sources of Data

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected from primary sources during the field survey with the scheduled questionnaire. This is the main component of the study and the secondary data have been derived from VDC profile, OBC profile, DDC profile, population census (2011), articles, books, journals, magazines and others.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

3.4.1 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The data are generated by using non-probability sampling technique. Out of the total households inTirhut, Saptari District only 180 households were selected purposively and randomly. This is the method which helps to minimize the cost and time of field work and also can ensure proper representation of a universe.

3.4.2 Primary Data Collection

Primary data were collected from the field survey for the purpose of receiving real information on women's participation in community groups and income generating activities, their educational status and their involvement in decision making. The following tools have been applied in this research.

3.4.2.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire mentioned in the Appendix-I was set and then used to the respondents in order to obtain detailed information. The questionnaire was prepared in such a way that it provided both the quantitative and qualitative information. In fact, the questionnaire has helped to make the study more reliable, factual and impressive.

3.4.2.2 Interview

Interview is one of the widely used methods of obtaining information from the respondents. Interview was taken while questionnaires were being filled at

different places and in different situations in the study area. The interview covered the subject matters which were not covered by questionnaire.

3.4.2.3 Observation

Observation in the field can provide more information which is not actually obtained through the questionnaire and interview. Observation was done whether the respondents were really capable to perform different activities related to this study or not.

3.4.3 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data were collected from different sources of governmental and non governmental organizations Tirhut Rural Municipality Saptari District profile, Saptari DDC profile, OBC Profile, CBS 2001/2011 & 2017 Profile, Pragectishil Mahila Samuha, yuba women powerment samuha, yadav samuha, Women Saving and Credit Cooperative and Youth Club are the sources of secondary data.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

In this study the analysis of collected information, data is made from both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data have been presented in terms of percentage.

The quantitative data obtained from structured questionnaire are first processed through validations, editing and coding. Secondly processed data are presented in tables and in pie-chart terms of percentages. Finally, the data are interpreted with additional information. The qualitative data are received by observation and interview with respondents.

CHAPTER-FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Socio-Economic Status of Women

The socio-economic status of a household is determined by its income, education level and occupation of the members. Women's opportunities are limited by socio-economic factors even before they encounter any opposition in the political process. Women in Nepal particularly rural women benefit less from every resource from food to education. Women suffer relatively more severely from the consequences of poverty.

In this chapter, Impacts of socio-economic status of women on their decision making has been studied. It includes distribution of households by castes, religion, occupation and land ownership. Similarly, family structure, education, marital status, position, participation, employment and occupation of the women are also included and analyzed.

4.1.1 Caste

Nepal has multi-ethnic societies. The census of 2011 has listed 123 castes/ ethnic groups including unidentified groups (CBS, 2011). The caste/ ethnic composition of women in study area has a wide diversity. Caste plays an important role in the socio-economic status of women because the socio-economic activities are confined in accordance with their castes. Households of different castes are found in different numbers in the study area.

Table 1: Distribution of households by caste in the study area

S.N.	Caste	No. of Households	Percentage
1.	Yadav/Ahir	50	27.8
2.	Khatbe/ Khang	32	17.7
3.	Dhanuk/Mandal	14	7.7
4.	Gupta/ Heluwai	24	13.3
5.	Sah/ Teli	10	5.5
6.	Thakur/ Hagam	16	8.9
7.	Chamr/ Harijan	18	10.0
8.	Sutihar/ Sharma	16	8.9
	Total	180	100

Source: VDC profile/ field survey 2018.

The total sample households are 180 in this research. Yadav/Ahir families constitute more i.e. 27.8 percent households. Out of the total households 17.7 percent households are occupied by Khatbe/Khang, 7.7 percent households by Dhanuk/Mandal and 13.3 percent households by Gupta/Haluwai/Shah/Tali are found in 10 households which is only 5.5 percent. Similarly, 8.9 percent householder thakur,/Hagam,10 percent and 8.9 percent households are occupied by, Chamar/Hajam and Sutihar/sharma respectively. Both Chamar/Harjan and Khatbe/Khang are considered as the lower castes in Nepal. In this study area lower caste Chamar/harijan is still carrying their culture to play drums and trumps on the religious occupation.

4.1.2 Religion

According to interim constitution, Nepal is a multi-religious country with legal provisions of no discrimination against other religions. Though majority of the people in Nepal are Hindus, there is religious tolerance among various religious groups of Nepal. There are many people following various other religions except the Hindus in Nepal. The household religion by caste/ethnicity in the study area is presented in the following table.

Table 2: Distribution of household religion by caste /ethnicity

S.N.	Caste	Religion			Total
		Hindu	Buddhist	Christian	
1	Yadav/Ahir	50	-	-	50
2	Khatbe/Khang	32	-	-	32
3	Dhanuk/Mandal	14	-	-	14
4	Gupta/Haluwaie	24	-	-	24
5	Sah/Teli	10	-	-	10
6	Thakur/Hajam	16	-	-	16
7	Chamar/ Harijan	18	-	-	18
8	Sutihar/ sharma	16	-	-	16
Total		180	-	-	180
Percent			-	-	

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

In the study Hindu religion constitutes the dominant percentage i.e.100.0 percent households follow Buddha religion whereas only 0 percent households follow Christian religion. All households from Yadav/ Ahir to Sutihar/sharma follow Hindu religion. Hindu religion because of the large number of households of Hindus in the study area. All gods and goddesses have been worshipped and festivals are shared by Hindus and Buddhists. Both have mutual regards and respect for each other religions. Christians celebrate their festivals separately in this study area.

4.1.3 Major Occupation

The occupation of the family is also responsible for the development of the women's status. The occupation determines their economic status and their personalities. The occupation of the family is very important that assists the women for the overall development. The following table presents the major occupations of the sample households.

Table 3: Major occupations of sample households

S.N.	Occupation	No. of Households	Percent
1.	Agriculture	106	58.8
2.	Retail Shop	24	13.3
3.	Services	36	20.0
4.	Business	14	7.8
	Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

This study depicts that agriculture is the main occupation of the sample households. 58.8 percent households are found to be involved in agriculture. 13.3 percent households are involved in retail shops. It is a kind of part time business which is only opened when they are in leisure. Similarly, only 20 percent households are involved in governmental and non-governmental service sectors. Due to illiteracy and the lack of opportunities, more households are deprived of working in such service sectors. Only 7.8 percent households are engaged in business sectors. Mostly Gupta are involved in business.

4.1.4 Land ownership

The pattern of landholding in this VDC Diman, ward No. 4, Siraha District is similar to the landholding system of other villages of Nepal. Landownership is more often associated with socio-economic status and has a linkage with the availability of food for the farmers.

Table 4: Pattern of landownership in sample households by caste

S.N.	Caste	Landownership in Bigha				Total
		Up to 1	Up to 2	Above 2	Not at all	
1	Yadav/ Ahir	42	8	-	-	50
2	Khagbe/Khang	32	-	-	-	32
3	Dhanuk/ Mandal	-	10	4	-	14
4	Gupta/ Haluwai	8	10	6	-	24
5	Sah/ Taili	6	-	-	4	10
6	Thakur/ Hajam	6	-	-	10	16
7	Chama/ Harjan	16	2	-	-	18
8	Sutihar/ Sharma	10	-	-	6	16
	Total	120	30	10	20	180
	Percent	66.7	16.7	5.6	11	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

The above table indicates that out of the total sample households 66.7 percent have land upto 1 Bigha, 16.7 percent have land upto 2Bigha and 5.6 percent have more than 2 Bigha. But 11 percent sample households do not have land at all.

Some households have more land and some have no any land. They use to cultivate in other' farm in 'Adhinya' and 'Trikhanni'. Productive land gets Adhinya whereas low productive land gets Tirkhanni. Mostly, Khatbe/khang and lower castes like Khatbe/khang and Chamar/Harijan have owned very small size of land and some families don't have land at all. However, Dhanuk/mandal and Gupta / haluwai have owned more land and Chamar/Harijan Khatbe/khang and Sutihar/sharma have medium size of land.

4.1.5 Respondents classified according to Family Structure

Almost in all parts of Nepal nuclear, joint and extended types of families are found to be in existence. The family structure also affects impacts of socio-economic status of women on their decision making. The respondents of the study area are classified according to the family structure.

Table 5 I: Respondents classified according to family structure

Family Structure	No. of Respondents	Percent
Nuclear	130	72.2
Joint	50	27.8
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 5 II: Respondents' family structure by caste

S.N.	Caste	Family structure				Total
		Nuclear		Joint		
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
1	Yadav/Aihar	24	48	26	52	50
2	Khatbe/Khang	18	56.25	14	43.75	32
3	Dhanuk/Mandal	14	100		-	14
4	Gupta/Haluwaie	22	91.7	2	8.3	24
5	Sah/Teli	6	60	4	40	10
6	Thakur/Hajam	16	100		-	16
7	Chamar/Harjan	16	88.9	2	11.1	18
8	Sutihar/sharma	14	87.5	2	12.5	16
Total		130		50		180

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

It is observed that most women of this village prefer nuclear type of family rather than joint family. The above table indicates that 72.2 percent respondents' families are found nuclear in structure. They believe that due to smaller family size, economic condition can be strengthened somewhat easily in nuclear family. Because of foreign employment of their husbands they get nuclear family. They also believe that work load of women is higher in nuclear family than in joint family. This table also shows that only 27.8 percent respondents' families are found joint in structure. In the sample households, extended family structure is not found but it may be rarely found in some families in the study area.

Table 5 II indicates that 52 percent of the total 26 Yadav/Ahir respondents are found to be living in joint family. Though they are working separately in different places far from houses, there is not the tradition of separation. 48 percent Yadav /Ahir respondents are also found in nuclear family. In Khatbe/Khang 56.25 and 43.75 of the total Khatbe/khang respondents are found to be living in nuclear and joint families respectively. But in other castes, most of the

respondents are found in nuclear family rather than joint family. In these castes, there is separation after marriage from the family as soon as possible.

4.1.6 Women's position in family

Women's position in the family is somewhat the identity of the women in the society. In the joint family the same woman's position may vary. Women's position also plays a vital role in order to make decision and manage household activities.

Table 6: Women's position in family

S.N.	Position	No. of Respondent	Percent
1.	Mother	104	57.8
2.	Mother-in-law	10	5.5
3.	Daughter	26	14.4
4.	Daughter-in-law	40	22.2
	Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Most of the respondents are mothers in the study area. It is also clearly seen that in 104 households the position of the respondents is mother. Mother certainly plays a vital role in the house management. There are 10 households which have women in the position of mother-in-law. They have good social and economic status as they get good respect in the family and they do not have much problem. Their husbands and sons support them. There are also 40 daughters-in-law and 26 daughters. Marital status makes the difference in women's status. It is through the marriage that women change their status of daughter to daughter in law. Most daughters and daughters-in-law are found to be educated. Some of the them are getting higher education.

4.1.7 Educational status of women

Education is the basic and valuable foundation of social and national development. It is an important part of our life which helps to develop personality of all individuals. It is one of the important elements to maintain quality of life. An individual can upgrade the living standard by involving in quick and easy income generating activities. It also helps to establish mutual

understanding of co-operation, co-ordination, good faith, peace and reconciliation in a family and society. Without education nobody can achieve success. Human life passes in dark in the lack of education, as a result the social and national development process can't go ahead. So, it has vital role for the personal as well as national development. Due to the poor educational status of our country, most of the people are deprived of education particularly the women. Still most people have misconceptions regarding the women education.

Education is also the fundamental right of every citizen which is essential for public awareness, changes and overall development. Female education has also brought a lot of changes in several areas. The following table presents the educational status of women in the study area.

Table 7: Educational status of women

S.N.	Education	No. of Respondents	Percent
1.	Can't read and write	56	31.1
2.	Primary level	74	41.1
3.	Secondary level	16	20.0
4.	Higher secondary level	10	5.6
5.	Above bachelor	4	2.2
	Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

In this study, literacy rate of women seems to be higher than illiteracy rate. Most of the women (41.1%) have studied only up to primary level and 20 percent have studied up to secondary level. But they have only been housewives. Similarly 5.6 percent women have studied upto higher secondary level and 2.2 percent women have passed Bachelor level. They are also engaged in government services.

4.1.8 Marital status of respondents by caste

Most of the respondents are married in the study area. Early marriage has been one of the important characteristics of the Nepalese women. Marital status

changes the women's status. It also changes the women's role and increases the duties and work load of the women. It is through the marriage that women change their status of daughter to daughter-in-law.

Table 8: Marital status of respondents by caste

S.N	Caste	Marital Status of Respondents				Total
		Married	Unmarried	Widow	Divorced	
1	Yadav/ Ahir	34	12	2	2	50
2	Khagwa/ Khang	26	4	-	2	32
3	Dhanuk/Mandal	08	2	4	-	14
4	Gupta/Haluwaie	16	6	2	-	1224
5	Sah/Teli	10	-	-	-	10
6	Thakur/Hajam	14	-	12	-	16
7	Chamar/Harijan	16	2	-	-	18
8	Sutihar/Sharma	16	-	-	-	16
Total		140	26	10	4	180
Percent		77.8	14.8	5.5	2.2	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

In this study most of the women are found married that is 77.8 percent. Unmarried, widow and divorced women have also been included. In this study out of the total respondents 14.8 percent women are unmarried, 5.5 percent women are widows and the rest 2.2 percent are divorced women. Because of husband's reason 2.2 percent women have got divorced in this study area. Now they are passing their single life happily. Out of 4 divorced women, one is from yadav Ahir and the other is from Khatbe/ Khang. Divorce can be done easily in Khatbe/ khang families. Education has made yadav/ahir women think of freedom of their life. They don't want to endure any type of bad activities of their husbands. But in other castes the case of divorce is not found. All the married women do not have their self decision in all the works. They have to depend on their husbands. Even widows depend on their fathers-in-law to

manage their house. Some widows are also found to be involved in the management of their houses.

4.1.9 Women's participation in the community

The government is committed to equal and meaningful participation of women in development process. It promotes women as equal participants and beneficiaries of sustainable governance and human rights. Women's participation in socio-cultural and political activities depend upon the attitudes of their husbands, fathers, parents and male relatives. Women's participation in different groups is mentioned in the following table.

Table 9: Women's participation in the community

Membership in	No. of Respondents	Percent
Membership in saving and credit groups	70	38.9
User's groups (water and forest)	60	33.3
Mother's groups	50	27.7
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 9 shows that out of the total respondents 38.9 percent have participated in saving and credit groups. 33.3 percent women have participated in users' groups like forest and water users' groups. The rest 27.7 percent women are found to be involved in mothers' groups. According to this, it is obvious that the percentage of women is greater in economic area rather than in social area. Still more women are not involved in mothers' groups. They involve in mothers' groups temporarily. They leave the groups because of different attitudes among the family members, misconnects about the groups and the work load at home. Some women do not participate in such groups due to their ignorance and family pressure

4.1.10 Women's access to economic resources

In Nepal women's personal property means the dowry they get during their marriage from maternal home. In this village also the women have personal property in the form of 'Daijo' and 'Pewa' and they can use it themselves.

Table 10: Women's access to economic resources

S.N.	Access	No. of Households		Total
		Yes	No	
1.	Landownership	30	150	180
2.	Freedom in selling	4	176	180
3.	House ownership	10	170	180
4.	Livestock ownership	80	100	180
5.	Sales of household product	100	80	180

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

The above table shows that out of 180 respondents only 30 women who have the heads of home have their landownership. But 150 women do not have landownership. Only two women can freely sell it. Similarly 10 women have house ownership whereas 170 women do not have house ownership. 80 Women have livestock ownership. 100 women can sell the household products without any argument and permission with their husbands and family members.

Above table shows that besides sales of household products, most women do not have access to other economic resources in this study area.

4.1.11 Women's employment

Employment status refers to status of an individual with respect to his/ her category of employment. Employment helps women be capable in decision making. It helps to develop their economic condition.

Table 11: Women's employment

S.N.	Type of employment	No. of Respondents	Percent
1.	Permanent	4	2.2
2.	Temporary	16	8.9
3.	Daily wage	30	16.6
4.	No job	130	72.2
	Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

In this study area most of the women have to perform various types of household works. Only 2.2 percent women have lower level permanent jobs and 8.9 percent women have temporary private jobs. 16.6 percent lower castes and landless women use to work in daily work basis. 72.2 percent women have no jobs. They have to perform all domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning house and utensils, fetching water, bringing firewood, grinding and processing the cereals, food preservation, looking after children etc. Besides all these domestic works, they also work in the firms. Although most women are quite busy in several works, they are not found to be engaged in economic works.

4.1.12 Occupation of women

Occupation of an individual refers to the kind of work done during a selected reference time period. The occupation determines the economic status, personality and career of the individuals.

In rural Nepalese society the main occupation of women is household activities. They also perform agricultural works almost equal to their male counterparts. They are compelled to work from the early morning till night.

In this village women are hard-working. Besides household works, they are involved in agriculture, retail shop, service, tea shops, cosmetic shops, handicraft shop, tailoring and medical service.

Table 12: Occupation of women

S.N.	Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percent
1.	Retail shop	20	11.1
2.	Agriculture	120	66.6
3.	Service	4	2.2
4.	Tea shop	8	4.4
5.	Cosmetic shop	6	3.3
6.	Handicraft shop	16	8.7
7.	Tailoring	4	2.2
8.	Medical	2	1.1
	Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

In this study, more than 6 percent respondents are involved both in household and agriculture. Only 1.1 percent respondent is engaged in medical service. And 2.2 percent, 8.7 percent, 3.3. Percent,4.4. Percent, 2.2 percent and 11.1 percent women are involved in tailoring, handicraft, cosmetic, tea shop, services and retail shops respectively.

4.2 Women in Decision Making

Decision making power of Nepalese women is very low. Because most women being illiterate, their male counterparts do not believe in their capacity of decision making and hence women's participation in decision making remains low. The role of women in household decision making and the allocation of household resources depend upon a number of factors. In Nepalese society men have a dominant role and women have to support their male counterparts. In this chapter efforts have been made to analyze women's decisions on household activities, children's education, household management, loan and saving and family planning.

4.2.1 Women's decision on household activities

Involvement in family decision making process indicates one's higher or equal status in the family. Status of women is also religiously higher in Nepal, especially in higher caste Hindu families.

The role of women in household decision making and the allocation of household resources depend upon a number of factors. These factors include type and composition of the household, age and life stage of the women and the number of household males absent from the village. In the family, most of the daughters and daughters-in-law are not accepted as decision makers. The women's decision on household activities is presented in the following table.

Table 13: Women's decision on household activities

Decision	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	140	77.8
No	40	22.2
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

This table obviously shows that 77.8 percent women can decide on their income, expenditure and other household activities but 22.2 percent respondents are not found to be involved in decision making on the important issues of the family. Most of them do not know about farming land and even the earning of the husband.

4.2.2 Women's decision on children's education

We know that women are responsible about the children's education and their care in our male dominated society. Some of the females are deprived of different opportunities. All women are not capable to decide about their children's education and their future career.

Table 14: Women's decision on children's education

Decision	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	130	72.2
No	50	27.8
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

In this study, out of the total respondents, 72.2 percent women can decide about their children's education but 27.8 percent women can't decide about it. They can decide only with the help of their husbands and other family members. This result depicts that in this modern age women have no equal status as men.

4.2.3 Women's decision on household management

Women's role is important in household management in the context of Nepal. Almost in all castes, women are the household heads who are responsible for the household management. In order to run the house, they have to decide about several things. Women's decision on household management is presented in the following table:

Table 15: Women's decision on household management

Decision	Male	Female	Both
Buying personal use good	10	160	10
Buying daily use good	20	130	30
Home management	40	80	60
Marriage ceremony	20	10	150

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Decision about buying personal goods is done mostly by women. Similarly, decisions about daily use goods are mostly done by women. Only few women need support of their husbands and other family members. To decide about important ceremony and function both men and women need argument. About home management females can decide themselves. The research gives this conclusion that joint decision of both men and women is essential in important ceremonies as well as household management.

4.2.4 Women's decision on loan and saving

Saving is an effort to build the quality of life of an individual and a family. It is the outcome of the regular act of economy. It helps a family to earn more money by investing in other economic activities. Loan is sometimes taken for solving the problems and also for investing in various income generating activities.

Most women of this area are actively involved in saving and credit groups. They decide themselves to withdraw small scale loan and deposit little amount of money.

Table 16: Women's decision on loan and saving

Loan and Saving	No of Respondents			
	Yes	Percent	No	Percent
Small scale loan	170	94.4	10	5.6
Large scale loan	130	72.2	50	27.8
Saving	140	77.8	40	22.2

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

The above table shows that out of the total respondents 94.4 percent women are capable to make decisions in small scale loan and 5.6 percent women are unable to make decisions themselves. Regarding large scale loan, 72.2 percent women can decide themselves, whereas 27.8 percent get support from their family heads. 77.8 percent women are able to save money in banks and saving and credit groups as their capacity. Some women also invest in different areas for interest. But 22.2 percent women can not make decisions on saving. It is because some women can not save at all, some do not have rights to decide and some expect their husbands to make decisions on saving. Both men and women make decisions on large scale loan and saving. They also decide to save for their future plans.

This study shows that most women are also participating in some financial activities in this modern age. It also indicates that today's women's status is gradually improving.

4.2.5 Women's decision on family planning method

For the socio-economic development of the family, family planning has crucial roles. In this study area, many governmental and non-governmental organizations have been encouraging married people to make decisions on family planning. FPAN provides its services in family planning. It is providing knowledge to people about maternal and child health through different means of communication. The following table presents the women's decision on family planning.

Table 17: Women's decision on family planning method

Decision	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	144	80
No	36	20
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

The above table shows that most women are able to decide themselves on family planning. 80 percent women are capable in making decisions whereas 20 percent women can not make decisions on family planning.

Most women have been involved in various programmes and seminars about family planning conducted by different organizations like Family Planning Association, health posts and others in different times. Also people having knowledge about family planning encourage others to make decisions on this matter. Caste/ethnicity affects the decision making of family planning. Yadav, Dhanuk, Gupta, Shah and Thakur, women are more capable to make decisions on family planning rather than Chamar, Dhanuk and Gupta women. It is because yadav, Shah and Gupta women give more emphasis of present than future. Similarly most of the women who have received formal or informal education are found to be able in decision making on family planning. Altogether 20 percent women do not decide on family planning because of ignorance, carelessness, shyness and religious belief. Superstition is also one of the main factors which discourages the women and their husbands to be involved in different programmes and decide about the family planning.

4.3 Influential Factors on Decision Making

In rural areas of Nepal women are dominated by men. They are compelled to work hard and endure pain, discrimination and injustice upon them. Not only their works are regarded as unproductive but also their decision making power is considered unimportant. The existing socio-economic status of women, traditional bias, and inadequate political commitment are some constraints on increasing women's participation in decision making level. Hence, several efforts are necessary to be made to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

In the study area it is found that women are also involved in decision-making. They make decisions on children's education, household management, loan and saving, family planning and household activities. Income/ employment, education, age, family structure and martial status are the influential factors on women's decision making which are analyzed in this chapter.

4.3.1 Income or Employment

Income or employment influences the women to make decisions. They can be independent and economically active if they have employments. They have regular income from their employments which can be invested for fulfilling the necessities of the family and their own. Income of the women encourages them to make decisions. Those who have permanent jobs can decide more than the women who are engaged in temporary jobs and other works on daily wages. Jobless women are not able to make decisions as other job holder women. Employment creates energy to make decisions.

4.3.2 Education

The level of education plays an important role in the involvement of women in decision making process. The involvement of educated women is higher than that of uneducated women. Table 7 vividly presents that 31.1 percent respondents are illiterate who are not capable in making decisions themselves. They want to get co-operation from their husbands or family members to

decide. 41.1 percent women who have got primary level education also depend on their husbands or family members. But the rest 27.8 percent women make decisions themselves on several matters. Mostly they make right and quick decisions. They have obtained knowledge, power, experience about decision making through education. Education certainly enables them on decision making. These days some women are found to be working in policy making levels due to education.

4.3.3 Age

Age is also the major influential factor of decision making process. In fact, age brings a lot of changes in each and every human being's life. The women can not decide properly and quickly unless they are healthy physically as well as mentally. In fact, one should be matured enough to make right decisions. Altogether 180 women from 15 to 55 years of age are included in this study. Mostly women from 15 to 29 years of age are rarely involved in decision making process because their parents, husbands and family members make decisions on various matters.

The women from the age group 30-45 years are actively involved in decision making process. Most women of this age group make decisions themselves but some women decide with the help of their husbands and family members. They should perform several works during this period because of which they should make decisions.

The women above 45 years of age are also involved in decision making process but not as the women from 30 to 45 years of age. They may be weak both physically and mentally. Old age also affects the capacity of the individuals.

4.3.4 Family Structure

Family structure is another important influential factor of decision making process. Decisions are made mostly by women in nuclear family but in joint family most decisions are made by both men and women. Women are far ahead in decision making process in nuclear family than in joint family. The

respondents are not found from the extended families. Table 5 clearly indicates that 72.2 percent women are from the nuclear families who are found actively involved in decision making process. Their role in the household management and decision making is greater than the women's from joint families. Most of the Yadav and Gupta women are capable to make decisions. Their decision making power is greater than that of Khatbe, Chamar, Sutihar/sharma and Thakur women. Similarly, the lower caste women do not have more power of decision making because of their ignorance, culture and belief.

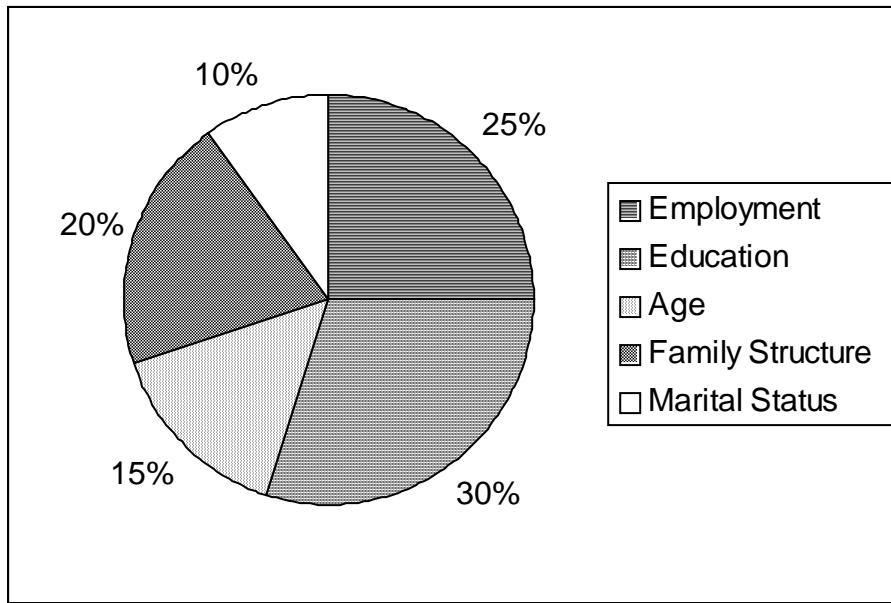
In fact family structure has a great influence on decision making processes.

4.3.5 Marital Status

Marital status has also a great influence on decision making process. Due to marriage, women migrate to the husband's home place. Through marriage women's status of daughters change into daughters-in-law. Married, widowed and divorced women have to make more decisions than unmarried women, because of more responsibilities and duties in the family. Table 8 also shows that most of the respondents in this study are married, widowed and divorced. Their marital status has influenced them to make more decisions themselves.

Thus, employment, education, age, family structure and marital status have influenced the women to make decisions in this study area. The influences on women to make decision are presented in following pie-chart.

Influence on Decision Making



The above pie-chart obviously indicates the influence done by the influential factors on women to make decisions. It shows that women are influenced on decision making 25 percent by employment and 30 percent by education. Similarly, women are influenced on decision making 15 percent by age, 20 percent by family structure and 10 percent by marital status.

CHAPTER-FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Tirhut Rural Municipality, Saptari district of oriented Rural Municipality which lies in Sagarmath Zone. It is a village with multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural people. To study the women's socio-economic status and their roles in decision making processes in this study area. 180 women were selected. Of the total selected women 140 were married, 26 unmarried, 10 widows and 4 divorced. 50 from yadav/Aihar, 32 from Khatbe/Khang, 14 from Dhanuk/Mandal, 24 from Gupta/Haluwai, 10 from Sah/Teli, 16 from Thakur/Hajam, 18 from Chamar/Harijan, and 16 from Sutihar/Sharma were selected respectively. The women from 15-55 years of age group were interviewed for the study.

The dominant religion in this study area is Hindu. 100 percent households are Hindus whereas 0 percent are Buddhists and the rest 0 percent are Christians. Although the households are found in different religious groups, they follow each other's religious activities like Dashain, Lhosar etc. that have created and developed co-operation and co-ordination among the households.

72.2 percent households are nuclear in structure and 27.8 percent are joint. Out of the total respondents 31.1 percent are illiterate, 41.1 percent women have completed primary level, 20 percent have completed secondary level. Similarly 5.6 percent women have completed higher secondary level and only 2.2 percent have completed bachelor level.

It is found that the major occupation of the sample households in this study area is agriculture. Most households have sufficient land, some have a lot of land and some are landless too. Registration practice of land in the name of women is increasing but they are not able to sell. Besides agriculture women are also found to be involved in various occupations like retail shop, tailoring, services and business. They are able to earn for the family. Their occupations have also helped them to make decisions.

Majority of respondents (72.2%) are jobless. 2.2 percent women are found to be in permanent jobs, 8.9 percent in temporary jobs and 16.6 percent women in daily wages.

Of the total respondent women, 77.8 percent are found to be involved in household decision making process. Their direct or indirect roles in household decision making are very crucial. But 22.2 percent women are not involved in this process. Most daughters and daughters-in-law are not involved in decision making due to less responsibility and social context.

72.2 percent women can decide on their children's education whereas only 27.8 percent males can decide on this matter in the study area. Women's active participation on children's education up to secondary level is greater than men's due to their literacy and their stay in the nuclear family. It is also because of their husband's employment in foreign countries and the low cost for education. But mostly men decide on their children's higher education in the country and outside the country.

Expect marriage ceremony, for buying personal goods, daily used goods and home management, women are far ahead on decision making. Most women can decide themselves.

Regarding the loan and saving in the study area, most women can make decisions themselves. Joint decision is also made for this purpose.

Concerning the family planning, most women (80%) are found to gain knowledge. Women who have got formal or informal education are capable to make decisions on the family planning. Their husband's roles, other organizations' roles and awareness programmes have made them capable to make decisions on family planning.

Income, education, age, family structure and marital status influence the women of any caste/ethnicity to make decisions about socio-economic activities.

5.2 Conclusion

The socio-economic condition of the women is not poor in the study area. Religious faith among the religions is found in the society. They have mutual understanding and relationships with each other.

Most women and households are involved in agriculture. In spite of their involvement in agriculture, women so far have had very little opportunities for agricultural training and extension services. Though there is fertile land, the households have been facing irrigation problem. So they are not able to produce crops in large quantity.

Only few women have land ownership in small size and house ownership. And most women have livestock as their own property. But only very few women have property rights.

Most women are unemployed. In spite of their unemployment, they are quite busy in their household activities and agriculture.

Women's participation is satisfactory only in user's groups like forest user's groups, water users' groups and women's groups. There is also women's participation in development committees especially in women's quotas but they are not provided important roles to work for the society.

The role of women in decision making is highly remarkable. Despite their active role and involvement in decision making, they can not decide themselves on marriage ceremony and selling and purchasing land and house.

In fact, Income, employment, education, age, family structure and marital status are the influential factors of decision making.

5.3 Recommendations

This study concludes that the socio-economic status of Tirhut Rural Municipality, Saptari District is not poor. Their socio-economic status is gradually improving. Women's involvement in decision making is very important in each and every sector but at present women participation is far behind in Nepal, as they are not given equal opportunities as men. However, in

the study area most women's involvement in decision making on some certain household activities is remarkable. But still some issues related to women are more serious. Such issues need to be solved. Thus, some recommendations are listed below for taking steps towards raising the socio-economic status and the household decision making power of women which will also assist policy makers and local development practitioners to design appropriate and effective policies and programmes in this regard.

Illiteracy is a major factor that affects women's socio-economic status and decision making power of women. Informal education classes should be extended for the illiterate women with some incentives and scholarship of any kind. Opportunities should be provided to the women for higher education. Government, NGOs and INGOs should encourage the women for higher education. Efforts are necessary to be made to develop women's social prestige, self-confidence and feeling of equalities by educating them.

The widespread poverty is the most threatening constraint on the improvement of women's socio-economic status. Various programmes to minimize the existing level of poverty should be more effectively conducted. Training for income generation need to be conducted in several areas.

Employment is another major factor which assists to empower women in decision making and socio-economic condition. Opportunities for employment in different sectors should be given to women as equally as men. The government has to create employments in the study area in order to develop the country. Employment quotas for educated women should be reserved.

Agriculture is the main occupation in the study area. However, the system of agriculture is old. Agricultural trainings should be launched for the improvement of agricultural system. Modern techniques should be implemented. Besides these, farmers should be encouraged to produce cash crops. Irrigation facility should be provided so that people can produce various crops in winter season too.

Most women are deprived of their property rights. The government has to mention about the property rights of women in the constitution and make necessary laws to implement effectively.

It is necessary to increase the role of women in different sectors. Reforms should be made regarding the various women related government policies and programmes.

It is also essential to empower the women who are not capable and involved in decision making, providing them employment, encouragement and education.