

**ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
(NGOs) IN EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN
POKHARA VALLEY**

A Research Proposal Submitted to:

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Chapter – One

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nepal is an agriculture-based country with 81 per cent of its total population depending upon agriculture. As per the 2001 census, Nepal has the total population of 2,31,51,423, out of which total number of female population is 1,15,87,502 (CBS, 2003). On an average Nepalese women works 16-20 hours a day in activities like husking and grinding food grains, fetching water, collecting firewood, crop farm operation, raising livestock and taking care of children and family, 4-6 hours are spent on household activities (Adhikari 1999). They contribute more than half of the labor forces but still they are suffering from various problems like illiteracy, poverty, exploitation, domestic violence, unemployment etc. They are still considered to be the second sex of the nation having very little or negligible role in decision making in public and private sector.

Empowerment is an effective approach to uplift the condition of women in Nepal, hence the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are focusing on programmes which helps women in empowerment. Women's empowerment, as defined by a group of women activists in South Asia, means, "a process wherein the powerless and dis-empowered gain a greater share of control over resources and decision making". Even more specifically, it is "the process by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources, and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and gender-based discrimination against women in all institutions and structures of society" (Shrestha and Hachhethu 2002). Dr. Meena Acharya (1997) defines "Empowerment is a process, which enables women to meet both their practical as well as strategic needs. Practical needs relate to immediate problems such as poverty, water, health etc. These needs may be meeting to a certain extent within the existing social structures without challenging the ingrained power relationships. Meeting strategic needs, like access to property and wealth, changing the division of labor and the system of unequal wages, and gaining control over their own bodies, on the other hand, is challenging the existing structures of oppression."

Women empowerment has now been a worldwide phenomenon. Various programmes and conferences are being held to meet the demand of the women especially in the developing countries. The fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing (4-15 September 1995) stated “The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvements of women’s social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.” (Beijing, 1995)

The women liberalization movement held in 1960’s at the western world too has played an important role in influencing Nepalese women, making them aware of their rights and equality. Improvement in the education sector of Nepal has brought changes in the social strata of women exploring the spaces outside their household by focusing on their career development and becoming financial independent. Public mobility gained through exposure to a modern life too has had direct and strong correlations with women’s opportunity for career development.

This initiation of women has been supported by the governmental organizations (GOs) and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and further has helped in strengthening the capacity building and awareness-raising of women by intervention in education, skill training, income-generating activities, sensitization activities and creating the opportunities for employment. However, there is a distinct gap between the state’s proclaimed goal of ‘gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment’, and its policy and programs that are overburdened by WID principles and the welfare approach. (Shrestha and Hachhethu 2002). The status of women in Nepal has not distinctively changed even after the efforts from public and private sectors, hence the researcher will concentrate on the study of the role and contribution of NGOs in empowerment of women in Pokhara, which will be helpful to confer the developments taking place in the life of women in Pokhara.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Nepal is one of the under developed countries in the world, with major proportion of people whose income is less than US\$ 1 per day (Human Development Report 2004). Among 22.7 million people of the country 85.80 percent of people live in the rural areas. Estimated per capita GDP for the year 2002/03 is US\$ 237. The growth rate of population is 2.25 percent per annum, percent of unemployed population is 5.1, literacy rate for the year 2001 is 53.7 percent, which is however increasing but still much lower to upgrade the pace of development by making optimum use of human resource. (CBS, 2003). Nepal's social indicators remain well below the average for South Asian Region. Human development index (HDI) remains 0.471; Human empowerment index (HEI) remains 0.463 (social empowerment-0.46, economic empowerment; -0.337, political empowerment -0.646) (Human Development Report 2004).

Nepal has signed as one of the member participant countries in the 12 points issues of women to be addressed by the government declared in Beijing conference. And this initiative of government in empowerment is effective only when women can be made aware of their capacity and find women involvement in the decision/policy making. However, only a small percentage of women mostly the urban are able to take advantage of these opportunities in the cities and towns mostly at the lower echelons (e.g. clerks, secretaries receptionist etc) of the bureaucratic/administrative structure, and do not reflect their role and voice in the decision/policy making. The rural women are still deprived of these opportunities.

In the recent times there has been certain changes in the status of Nepalese women, even though the number of female officials is quite negligible in comparison to men but women now are found employed as clerks, secretaries, receptionist, school teachers, nurses, doctors, administrator, researcher, scientist, pilot, etc. which is the good indicator for their career development and becoming independent. It is important to reinforce the self-confidence, self-worth and capability of women as effective participants in decision-making structures and processes. Women's physical presence at all levels of decision-making processes should be supported by their effective participation

Many efforts have been initiated nationally and internationally to uplift the situation of women. But even with all these efforts there have been very minimum efforts owing to violence and conflicts of different types. Gender based division of labor also hinders women from being involved in productive works. His majesty government of Nepal has introduced 5% reservation in the parliament (Constitution 2047) and 20% reservation on ward level (Decentralization Act 2055); this kind of action by the government will ensure women participation in the decision/policy making, but involvement of females at political level is also negligible. There is a vast deprivation for women in the opportunities to represent and access public positions and to be in the power structure.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the proposed research is to trace the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in empowering women in different sectors. The specific objective of the research is as follows:

- i. To trace the status/position of female in their respective organizations;
- ii. To explore in which level females have been benefited from different programs/ activities introduced by the organizations;
- iii. To explore the role of NGOs in capacity building of female employees;
- iv. Finding out the effective involvement of women in all public spheres as well their participation in all levels of decision/policy making process.

1.4 Research Questions/Problems

The proposed research will mainly be focused on to explore out the “empowerment” of the women working in the non-governmental organizations. The researcher will try to meet the above-mentioned objective by scrutinizing following research questions;

- i. What is the organizational structure of NGO?
- ii. What is the hierarchal status of the employees especially females?
- iii. What are the organizational policies for gender balance?

- iv. What is the education level of female employees in the organization?
- v. What are the special benefits offered by the NGOs to encourage and uplift the condition of the women within the organization?
- vi. What is the income level of the male/female working in the NGOs?
- vii. Who has the control over the income of working women (i.e. parents, husband, in-laws or self) and what is their economic contribution in household operation?
- viii. What are the measures developed and implemented by the organization in capacity building and empowering the women of different positions within the organization?
- ix. What are the major constraints that hinder women from being professionally developed/ skilled (education level, socio-economic condition, family condition or the organizational culture itself)?

1.5 Rationale of the Study

Nepal is a multi- lingual, multi- ethnic country with diverse cultural heritage. Women have always played a major role in conserving these cultural heritages, which has given a distinct recognition in the world. They contribute more than half of the population of the country therefore educational upliftment and empowerment of women is pre-requisite for mainstreaming gender balance in the development. Hence, this study will help in exploring the recent status of women in Pokhara valley by analyzing the role of NGOs in their empowerment, which will give a broad base to know the contribution of the women in Nepalese economy. It will also help to give an idea about the male female ratio in constructive development of the country. It will also explore the cultural understanding in the empowerment of the women in every household.

This study will create awareness in generating mass of educated women within the different organizations or institutions for creating opportunities for their career development ensuring sufficient women's representation and participation in institutional structures and processes. Further it will also help the policy makers and the researchers for future reference. Besides its practical utility, the study is also expected to have

academic importance and will be helpful in some way for further anthropological studies on this subject.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

As an academic, the study had been undertaken limiting itself within the walls of budgetary, temporal and spatial boundaries. The study will be focused only in Pokhara, sub metropolitan city and the conclusion that comes from the study cannot be taken as the total data of the country and cannot be generalized. Only the females working in NGOs will be studied and household females will not be selected as respondent. The cultural aspect of empowerment of women study in this region may vary with different regions and cultural diversity found in Nepal and hence the study cannot be taken as the complete record of women empowerment in Nepal.

Chapter - Two

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

For any kind of research study, a detail perusal of literature and secondary sources is the first pre-requisite. Following the same tradition, pertinent literature has been thoroughly reviewed which has been presented as follows:

a) The Concept of Gender

According to the dictionary of Anthropology – Gender has been used to refer to the social, cultural and psychological patterning of differences between male and female which is a cultural classification allows for the separation the biological and cultural aspects of differences between males and females.

Kamala Bhasin, in her book “Understanding of Gender” stated that, gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of men and women, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles.

Gender is not synonymous with women, nor is it a zero-sum game implying loss for men; rather it refers to both women and men, and to their status, relative to each other. Gender equality refers to that stage of human social development at which “the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not be determined by the fact of being born male or female”, in other words, a stage when both men and women realize their full potential (cited from Women’s Empowerment – Measuring the Global Gender Gap by World Economic Forum 2005)

b) Women Empowerment

The past three decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic

health and education. Along with awareness of the subordinate status of women has come the concept of gender as an overarching socio-cultural variable, seen in relation to other factors, such as race, class, age and ethnicity. To establish equitable access to resources and opportunities for both men and women, it is necessary to empower women.

The prominent concern related with women's issues especially with gender and gender-based studies has been traced from various literatures. Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (1997) by Dr. Meena Acharya has been referred which highlights the status of women in Nepal in respective fields like household works, education, political participation, fertility rate, life expectancy and mortality too has been focused and situation analysis has been presented. She has recommended the process of empowerment in following dimension in the context of Nepal.

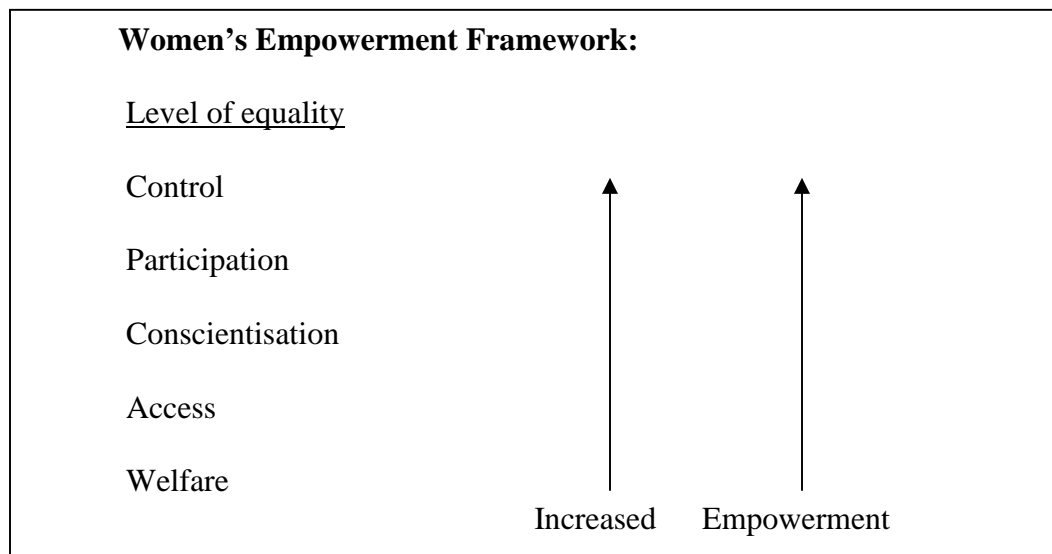
- i. Increasing women's access to economic opportunities and resources – such as employment, credit and wealth including land and technology, and apparently non-economic resources such as education, knowledge, and health, which are primary to human development.
- ii. Increasing women's political power through women's organizations, solidarity, and collective action. Both qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to evaluate this process. Political will and ability to bring about changes in women's legal status, to direct resources to women, and to give them access to positions of power, are of crucial importance.
- iii. Raising women's consciousness about the symptoms and causes of prevalent oppressiveness, religious, economic, cultural, familial, and legal practices.
- iv. Strengthening women's self-confidence. An indicator for this is the rise in women's self-esteem and increased capacity to interact with world beyond the domestic circle.

It has been found that the term gender refers to the rules, norms, customs and practices by which biological differences between males and females are translated into *socially* constructed differences between men and women, boys and girls. This results in the two

genders being valued differently and in their having unequal opportunities and life chances. (Cited from Gender, Poverty and National Policies by Naila Kabeer). The gender inequality is also due to social, cultural and religious beliefs. A gender perspective means recognizing that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and care of human beings, and therefore between economic growth and human development. They are workers in both spheres – those most responsible and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer most when the two spheres meet at cross-purposes, and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two (cited from Gender, Poverty and National Policies by Naila Kabeer). Various researches based on social and cultural factors has been done which focuses on gender based perspective and issues of discriminations, but no literature has been found on comparative study in organizational level hence this research will focus on cross cultural studies of women working in various organizations.

Equality between women and men is intrinsic to the definition of women’s development; this brings with it the necessary corollary of women’s empowerment as the means to overcome the obstacles to women’s equality. Sara Longwe (1991) has developed the Women’s Empowerment Framework to fully incorporate the idea that gender awareness is essential in the development of gender-sensitive programs.

The women’s empowerment framework consists of five-level scale of increasing equality and empowerment.



Welfare addresses only basic need.

Welfare refers to basic needs

Access refers to involvement of equality in access to resources and benefits;

Conscientisation refers to recognition that problems stem from structural and institutional discrimination;

Participation refers to women taking decisions alongside men.

Control refers to ultimate level of equality and empowerment.

Shanta Laxmi Shrestha, opines that the empowerment plays a major role in the development of the country. Empowerment is needed to the vulnerable and the socially exploited group, which has so far been kept away from the mainstream. This exploited group has to be made aware of their rights, their potential and supporting them to increase their self-confidence. External support is a vital to achieve empowerment by providing them with equal opportunities, access and control over resources.

Gender inequality has been a subject of much concern in recent decades. Since 1975, UN Conference on Women (Mexico), the world community has acquired a great deal of knowledge about the situation of women worldwide, and gained valuable insights into the process of development from a gender perspective. Women are becoming conscious of their own situation and are active in bringing about gender perspective changes in the existing discriminatory social, economic and political structures. The demand for gender equality has pervaded all spheres of life, including the design and content of development strategies, policies and programs. (Acharya, 1997)

Gender inequality can be controlled only if the women are provided with education and other income generating trainings and skills to earn their livelihood. Engendering Development suggests some positive actions that a state can take to reduce the gender discrimination that causes harm to society as a whole. It can “tax” and subsidies, pursue and regulate, prohibit and punish or provide services. It can directly prohibit prejudicial behavior- such as when it requires enterprises to hire workers on the basis of skills rather than on the basis of sex and sanctions or fines violations. (Cited from Gender, Poverty and National Policies by Naila Kabeer).

From the perusal of the above-mentioned views on bridging the gender gap and empowerment, it is clear that the issues closely related to economic, political,

consciousness, self-confidence are the prime one, but here the issue related to empowerment of women working in organizations has been given very little attention. Thus, this study will look at those aspects, which remained very little explored viz. Women empowerment at organizational level.

Chapter – Three

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

Pokhara is a sub-metropolitan city with the population of 156312 with 79563 males and 76749 females (CBS 2001) where multiethnic groups have migrated from the nearby villages and other places in sustaining their livelihoods, higher education and better opportunities. Pokhara is located in Kaski district, the geographic location of Kaski district Nepal is $83^{\circ} 40'$ - $84^{\circ} 12'$ longitudinally and $28^{\circ} 6'$ - $28^{\circ} 36'$ latitudinal. It is 450 – 7961 m above the sea level. Total area is 2017 sq km with tropical and sub-tropical temperature.

Pokhara is one the developed city in Nepal where many men and women are actively engaged in different kind of activities in public spheres. According to the District NGO Profile prepared by NGO Federation, Kaski (Mangsir 2062) the total number of **NGOs working in Kaski district is 110 nos.** in various sectors; out of which 29 NGOs are working for women. Hence, the study will basically be focused on female employees working in different NGOs within the Pokhara valley.

Pokhara is surrounded with the people of different socio-economic status and multiple ethnic identities, which will contribute in understanding of the cross-cultural phenomena. Besides, the city is facilitated with transportation and communication facilities, which are the important factors for research.

The present study area has been found to be more relevant and accessible for the researcher in order to meet the research objectives. The main criteria to select Pokhara as study area is due to the fact that the researcher can address the organizations in Pokhara, as it being the home town of the researcher. There has not been any literature found about the study of women empowerment done in NGOs based in Pokhara. And the political situation is also comparatively secured and conducive for the research.

3.2 Research Design

The study will mainly concentrate on to explore the empowerment approaches practiced by the different NGOs. Hence, the research design will be the combination of both an exploratory and descriptive designs. The exploratory research design will be useful to explore the different aspects of the problem under study and the descriptive design will be employed, as the study to encompass the description of empowerment scenario of the study area. Education level, position/status acquired in the organization, caste/ethnic group, income level, control over resource, participation in decision making level etc. will be studied as different variables. However, no specific hypothesis will be formulated.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

The research will mainly be based on primary data. The data will be collected using different methods/techniques of primary data collection tools i.e. interview schedule, observation, institutional analysis, key informant interview, focus group discussion etc. Two sets of interview schedule (one each for NGO management and female employees) will be designed for the containing both open and closed ended questions. Besides primary data, secondary data will be collected through NGO Federation Kaski, District Development Committee, Kaski, (DDC) and through library sources etc.

3.4 Sampling Method

There are altogether **110 NGOs** actively working in Kaski district, out of which 76 NGOs are working within Pokhara. However, the study will be focused on female employees working in different NGOs within the Pokhara valley due to the limitation of time and resources of the researcher.

The different organizations will be taken as a sample unit depending on their nature of work using stratified random sampling method. The organization with male and female employees and with minimum of 4 nos. of salaried staff will be included in sample size to

meet the research objectives. Thus, universe of the proposed study will be the total of **26 NGOs of Pokhara valley** (list attached). Most of the female employees of the selected organizations will be the respondents of the study.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data will be edited, coded, enter and processed in computerized system using statistical software SPSS 10.0 (Statistical Package for Social Science). The data will be analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative statistical methods. For qualitative data, it will be managed manually and descriptively analyzed. For quantitative data simple statistical tools like frequency, mean etc. will be used. An attempt will be made to interpret the qualitative data and the sincere effort will be made to maintain the objectivity and avoid data error by comparing them with other data collected from different sources. Based on the outcome of the study the thesis will be prepared and submitted to the Department.

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