The Role of Gender in Post-Disaster Recovery and Disaster Risk Governance in Nepal: Examining Links Between Women, Institutions and Capacity-Building

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

Although it is widely acknowledged within disaster scholarship that women are more vulnerable to disasters than men, there is a dearth of literature explicitly discussing the ways in which governmental and non-governmental institutions have supported, strengthened and built the capabilities of Nepali women since the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. Thus, the objective of this study was to undertake an institutional analysis of the role of gender in post-disaster recovery in Nepal. This overarching goal has been divided into two key research aims:

1. To examine how institutions have built the capabilities of Nepali women in a post-disaster context and whether this is sustainable.
2. To acknowledge and understand the power structures that govern Nepali women's lives and how these affect their ability to participate in disaster risk management.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 53 participants from four categories: Nepali women and men who reside within Bhaktapur municipality; employees of non-governmental institutions who run community programmes aimed at increasing community capacity following disasters; and municipal and federal employees who work in the area of disaster risk reduction. Document analysis of Government policies and frameworks was also undertaken. My research suggests that although governmental and non-governmental institutions have taken initial steps towards enhancing the capacities of women post-disaster, there are still many opportunities available for these institutions to translate policy into practice, address the specific needs of disaster-affected women, provide targeted training to enhance their disaster preparedness, and positively transform their role in modern Nepali society. In particular, I demonstrate that key opportunities to enhance social inclusion and redress pre-existing gender inequalities have been missed by both the Government and I/NGOs who work in the field of disaster risk reduction; highlighting a policy-implementation gap created by slippages between policy and practice. Furthermore, my research underscores the gendered barriers that serve to constrain Nepali women and impede their ability to build disaster resilience, thus further entrenching their vulnerability. On this basis, I provide recommendations on how the policy-implementation gap can be addressed through ensuring policies are coherent and contain clear guidelines and standards, fostering gender mainstreaming and undertaking gender audits, and encouraging widespread coordination between governmental and non-governmental organisations. Finally, I demonstrate that although Nepali women living in Bhaktapur municipality have encountered new forms of insecurity as a direct result of the earthquake, post-recovery conditions have fostered some long-term positive social and economic

changes for women. These changes include the diversification of women's employment and women undertaking traditional 'men's work', in addition to experiencing heightened confidence and respect as a result of their contributions in the aftermath of the earthquake.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GoN	Government of Nepal
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
HDI	Human Development Index
IFRCRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
NEOC	National Emergency Operation Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission
NRA	National Reconstruction Authority
NRRC	National Risk Reduction Consortium
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
PDRF	Post-Disaster Recovery Framework
SGBV	Sex and Gender-Based Violence
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction
VDCs	Village Development Committees

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis undertakes an institutional analysis of the role of gender in Nepal, specifically examining interrelations between women, the Government, and non-governmental organisations in a post-disaster setting. This is pertinent given that research suggests women are more vulnerable than men in times of disaster, yet less likely to be involved in disaster planning (Neumayer and Plumper 2007). Furthermore, the Government of Nepal (2015: 61) found that women constituted the single largest disadvantaged group to be adversely affected across a range of key sectors, including housing, health, and agriculture, suffering from the greatest amount of damage and loss. My research investigated whether the current policies and frameworks in Nepal relating to women and disaster are effective and what mechanisms might be needed to further support women's participation in disaster management.

This overarching goal has been divided into two key research aims:

1. To examine how government and non-government organisations have built the capabilities of Nepali women in a post-disaster context; and
2. To analyse the power structures that govern Nepali women's lives and how these affect women's ability to participate in disaster risk management.

The research answers the following four questions which guided this project:

1. How have institutions supported, strengthened and built women's capabilities in the aftermath of disaster?
2. How do gender, ethnicity and caste prevent Nepali women from engaging in disaster risk governance?
3. How can this knowledge be applied in practice to better support equitable participation and involvement of women in disaster risk governance?
4. Have women's roles changed post-disaster? Are they better positioned in the aftermath, or are they encountering new forms of economic insecurity?

In order to achieve the aims of this project, a case study approach was undertaken. Fieldwork was conducted across the Kathmandu region of Nepal over an eight-month period in 2019. I/NGOs from across Kathmandu Valley were included within the study and Bhaktapur, an urban region with a large Newari population, was identified as a site to research community insights. This research utilised a mixed method approach whereby participant observation, interviews, focus groups and document analysis were the primary methods of data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with

53 participants from four categories: Nepali women and men who reside within Bhaktapur municipality; I/NGO facilitators who run community programmes aimed at increasing community capacity following disasters; and municipal and federal employees who work in the area of disaster risk reduction. Data was then analysed, drawing upon gender and development and capabilities theories.

It is widely acknowledged that disasters do not affect individuals and communities equally. Rather, there are factors which put some groups of people, such as women or those belonging to lower-castes or particular ethnic groups, at increased risk of vulnerability prior to, during, and in the aftermath of a disaster (McDermott *et al.* 2010; Mendez, Flores-Haro and Zucker 2020; Meyer 2017; Peek and Stough 2010; Teo *et al.* 2018). This 'disaster vulnerability' should be understood as the combined characteristics (such as race, gender, access to resources and education level) and efforts of individuals, communities and governments, along with the social, economic and political factors that impact whether they have a quick response and sustained recovery (Galea et al. 2007; Kilmer and Gil-Rivas 2010; Norris et al. 2002; Norris and Elrod 2006; Weisner et al. 2004).

In Nepal, as is the case elsewhere, some groups of women are more vulnerable than others (Aryal 2016; Fothergill and Squier 2018). This includes those belonging to particular castes or ethnic groups (such as *Sudra*, the lowest of the traditional *varnas*), female-headed households, and women with disabilities, among others. These women experience heightened vulnerability as a result of their diminished social status, which is determined by social norms and expectations. Vulnerability in Nepal is further compounded by a number of root causes of gendered vulnerability that make women more susceptible in instances of natural hazard. This vulnerability is associated with numerous underlying factors, the overarching being a lack of resources, including economic, education, health, and social networks, which are critical for allowing people to cope with hazardous events and build resilience. Furthermore, gendered power imbalances such as lack of political voice, gender and age discrimination, risk of sexual assault, and household labour responsibilities are only compounded by natural hazard (Fothergill and Squier 2018: 253; Phillips et al. 2010; Thomas et al. 2013). Although the experiences of all vulnerable groups are deserving of attention and research, these trends underscore the need to bring gendered experiences to the fore of disaster risk reduction in Nepal.

The prevalence of natural hazards is particularly high in Nepal, which is considered to be one of the 20 most disaster-prone countries in the world (World Bank 2018) and have the second-highest incidence in terms of annual frequency of large-scale disasters among least developed countries since 1985 (DFID 2006). Nepal's status as a disaster-prone country received worldwide attention on the 25th April 2015, when it was struck by the world's fifth worst earthquake, the Gorkha earthquake. The 7.6

magnitude earthquake took place at 11:56am local time, striking the Barpak district of 'Gorkha', located approximately 76km from Kathmandu (GoN NPC 2015), and killing nearly 9,000 people (Aryal 2014: 165). According to Rajbhandari (2016), more than half of the casualties were women and children.

Despite the acknowledgement in the literature that women are more vulnerable to disasters than their male counterparts, there is a dearth of literature explicitly discussing the ways in which governmental and non-governmental institutions have supported, strengthened and built the capabilities of Nepali women since the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. Furthermore, although there is a breadth of literature discussing disaster risk reduction within the Nepali context, there has been scant consideration of the ways in which power dynamics may impact both the effectiveness of disaster risk reduction initiatives run by governmental and non-governmental institutions, and thus impact women's participation in disaster risk management. This research fills an important gap in the literature through analysing both the steps taken by institutions to simultaneously promote women's inclusion in disaster management and build the capabilities of these women to respond to catastrophic events, while also investigating the gendered barriers that continue to constrain women and limit their involvement. I also explore how the earthquake has impacted the role of women in Nepali society – namely, whether women are better positioned in the aftermath, or encountering new forms of economic insecurity. Here, I focus attention on Newari women who reside in Bhaktapur municipality and experienced the 2015 Gorkha earthquake.

My results suggest that women's inclusion in disaster planning exists more on paper than in practice, thus, women's participation in disaster risk governance is hindered by this gap between policy and implementation. Newari women who live in Bhaktapur municipality also expressed the belief that women's participation in disaster risk reduction programmes is constrained by traditional patriarchal culture. I provide recommendations as to how governmental and non-governmental institutions can better support equitable participation and involvement of women in disaster risk governance, such as addressing barriers to policy implementation and integrating a gender perspective into policy and practice as a strategy to reduce gender inequalities.

I argue that the role of women *has* changed post-disaster, albeit in small but positive ways - particularly in the realms of economic and social empowerment, with women's employment becoming increasingly diversified, women undertaking traditional 'men's work' as a direct result of the earthquake, and women gaining more confidence and respect in the aftermath of disaster by exercising their capabilities to assist the community. These shifts are gradual and still challenged by patriarchal norms; nevertheless, they demonstrate that the earthquake has provided opportunities for women to assert more control over their lives. My thesis builds on and contributes to the global literature around disaster and gender

(Bradshaw 2001, 2013; Horton 2012; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Fothergill 1998) through exploring how disaster can provide opportunities to redress social inequalities, transform gender roles, and contribute to women's empowerment. It also provides insights into the complexities of interactions between disasters and women's empowerment, particularly within the context of a particular political environment and historically patriarchal relations.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. This introductory chapter, Chapter 1, is followed by Chapter 2) *Disaster, Gender and Nepal: Reviewing the Literature and Positing the Theory*, where I provide a comprehensive review of the literature around the research topic, demonstrating how different facets of the literature relate to Nepal as a case study and therefore justify a new area of research and posit the theoretical frameworks that guide this study; Chapter 3) *Situating Contemporary Nepal*, where I introduce the context in which the research is situated, with the intention of positioning the project and highlighting the complexities surrounding the research topic before outlining the methodology, participants, instruments, procedure, data analysis, and the ethical considerations of this research, along with its problems and limitations; Chapter 4) *The Government of Nepal, Women and Capacity-Building: Rhetoric of Reality?* and Chapter 5) *Preparing Women for Disaster*: *I/NGOs and Capacity-Building*, in which I analyse the ways governmental and non-governmental institutions build the capabilities of women post-disaster, and argue that a policy-implementation gap exists, and that although gender provisions may exist within plans and strategies, they are much more difficult to implement in practice; Chapter 6) *Integrating Women's Perspectives into Disaster Risk Reduction*, where I draw upon the unique lived experiences of Newari women living in Bhaktapur municipality in order to explore the gendered barriers that may serve to constrain women's participation in disaster risk management, the actions undertaken by women in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, and how post-recovery conditions are fostering long-term positive social and economic change; Chapter 7) *The Role of Gender in Post-Disaster Nepal and Recommendations for Gender-Responsive Planning*, which provides recommendations for gender-responsive planning based upon my research findings; and Chapter 8) *Conclusion*, in which I summarise my research project and suggest directions for future research in this area.

I anticipate that my research will be of particular interest to practitioners who are concerned with the role that governmental and non-governmental institutions can play in expanding capabilities in post-disaster contexts. Specifically, those with an interest in risk governance in praxis and how it is related to gender and power will find this research topical. My research will have the potential to inform future institutional policies and practices related to gender and disaster risk, and in turn, help the people whose lives they affect.

CHAPTER 2: DISASTER, GENDER AND NEPAL: REVIEWING THE LITERATURE AND POSITING THE THEORY

Given that this research is grounded in an exploration of gender and disasters, this chapter reviews the literature around this topic and demonstrates how it relates to Nepal as a case study. It also posits the theoretical frameworks that guide this study: gender and development and the capabilities theory. I begin by introducing gender and development, including the policy and practice implications of a push towards gender mainstreaming, along with feminist theory. Next, I discuss gender, vulnerability, second order disasters, before introducing resilience and then the capabilities theory, a normative approach that conceptualises freedom in terms of people's capabilities. Finally, I conclude with an assessment of the literature surrounding gender and disasters. This chapter also provides a justification for a new area of research crosscutting each of the above themes and featuring largely unexplored aspects of the literature. For a more comprehensive overview of literature relating specifically to disasters, please refer to Appendix I, which introduces the broad terminologies, international frameworks and guidelines for disaster risk reduction.

Gender and Development: An Introduction

The issue of gender has long concerned development practitioners, particularly given that men and women have different needs and experiences related directly to their gender. Gender and development, an interdisciplinary field of research cross-cutting both of these areas, emerged in the 1980s as a result of this concern. Gender and development emphasises the relationship between social norms and relations and hierarchical power relations embedded within institutions, and has been backed by international finance institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which have implemented policies and programs such as microfinance and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in an attempt to advance gender equality. Gender and development is associated with a plethora of buzzwords that have come to be commonplace within this field, including empowerment and gender mainstreaming.

The concept of 'empowerment' has gained purchase within conversations of gender and development; though not without concerns from development practitioners regarding the term's high prevalence of use and ambiguity and the lack of universal agreement regarding how it can be measured (Cornwall and Brock 2005; Ritchie 1997). Empowerment has been conceptualised in many ways: some academics have described it as an ongoing process rather than an 'end state' (Malhotra et al. 2002); others have emphasised the importance of individual agency whereby people must be active agents of

change, rather than just the recipients (Hjorth 2003). It is widely considered to be a participatory process that enables marginalised individuals and groups to gain greater control over their lives and environment through the development of assets and capabilities, which then allows them to influence political and economic relations (Maton 2008). However, it is important to note that the conditions that foster empowerment are not always positive. For instance, the catalyst for the empowerment process can be an event that creates enormous insecurity or loss, such as conflict or, in the case of Nepal, disaster.

Gender Mainstreaming and Disaster

With the onset of the gender and development approach has come a push towards gender mainstreaming; a process which involves integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of policy and practice as a strategy to overcome gender inequalities. Gender mainstreaming is a policy concept that involves assessing how people of different genders may be affected by planned policies. Within disaster risk reduction it refers to promoting awareness about gender equality and promoting awareness and understanding of women's differential needs. Gender mainstreaming is important because it has the potential to make policy-making and legislative work more relevant to women and interventions more effective. As a process, it entails a multi-stage cycle of defining, planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluation (United Nations 2002). Figure 1, on the following page, highlights the conditions and methods and tools required for effective gender mainstreaming.

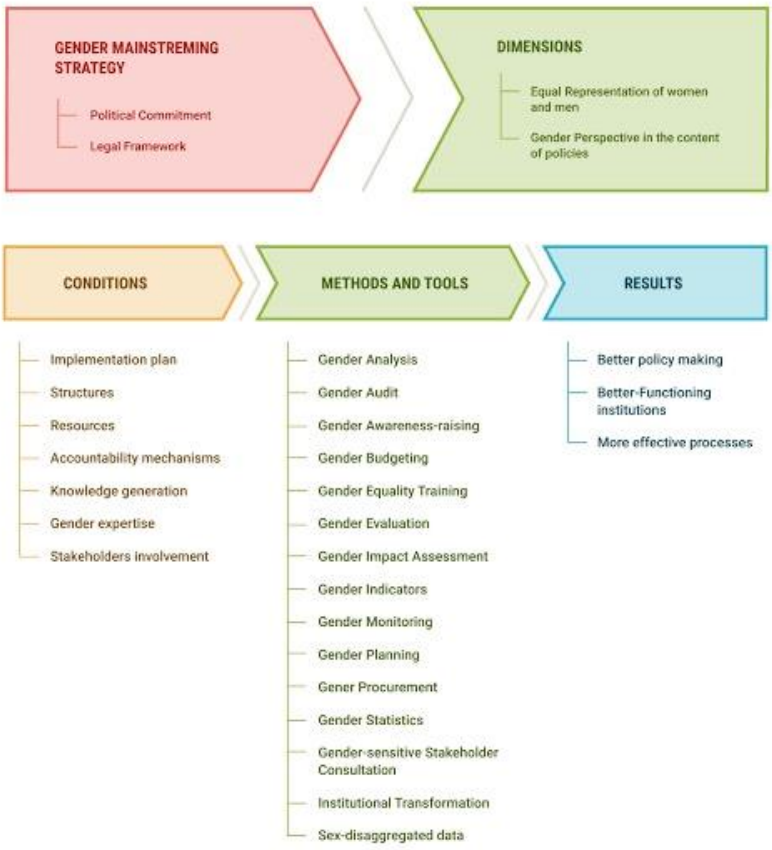

Figure 1. Gender Mainstreaming. European Institute of Gender Equality (2020)

As demonstrated above, gender mainstreaming has a number of principles deemed crucial to its success, including but not limited to, the use of gender-sensitive language in texts referring to or addressing men and women, the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data, equal access to resources and services, equal involvement in decision making, for instance, gender ratios at all levels of decision-making, and equal treatment is incorporated into steering instruments, for example, quality management and gender budgeting. Gender mainstreaming can have numerous policy and practice implications; for instance, policies addressing women's inclusion may facilitate the greater participation of women in both decision-making pertaining to their needs and advancement and development programs. Gender mainstreaming within disaster risk governance has the potential to help reduce the

impact of disasters, particularly through addressing women's needs and incorporating gender analysis within disaster management.

As stated in the UNISDR report *Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction* (n.d.):

> Gender and DRR are both cross-cutting developmental issues; without successfully addressing these two issues, it is difficult to achieve sustainable development in any society. Likewise, it is impossible to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters without the equal and active participation of men and women in DRR.

Through looking at disaster risk reduction through a gendered less and attempting to encourage greater women's participation in policy making and implementation within DRR, it is possible to build disaster-resilient nations and communities. However, for this to occur, it is essential that gender rhetoric becomes institutional reality through genuine commitment at the policy level. Previous research examining institutional gender equality in other countries, such as Pakistan, has found gaps between the policy and praxis level fuelled by contextual and sociocultural differences (Ali and Syed 2017). Similarly, Deepa's (2002) study of gender equality within domestic water policy in India identified clear discrepancies between policy statements, institutional capacities, and the lived realities of women. It has been suggested that efforts to incorporate gender mainstreaming into policy have been hindered by their failure to address the underlying patriarchal norms that serve to define gender relations and power dynamics, which must be transformed to ensure more equitable gender relations (Strickland and Duvvury 2003). Furthermore, it is important to note that gender mainstreaming, as a concept and tool for achieving gender equality, has been subject to a number of critiques from feminist scholars. For instance, in addition to being perceived as a Western concept that is part of the neoliberal agenda, it has been critiqued for its ambiguity, the loss of feminist political objectives through making them more 'palatable' to development agencies and governments, and the inability to show linkages between gender mainstreaming and real changes in women's lives (Milward, Mukhopadhyay and Wong 2015).

Feminist theory is a sociological approach that enables engagement with critical intersectional perspectives through shifting the analytic lens and topical focus away from the viewpoint and experiences of men, with the purpose of highlighting social problems that may be marginalised or misidentified by the typically male perspective present within social theory. Ferguson (2017: 270) states that:

> feminist theory flourishes best through scholarly practices that cast a capacious net across fields, thinking interrelationally about power and resistance.

Furthermore, feminist theory requires the researcher to disengage from their taken-for-granted assumptions around variables like culture, gender and class.

Feminist theory is fitting for this project because, as Davoudi *et al.* (2012: 309) state, "resilience should be viewed as having the potential to develop a more radical and transformational agenda that opens up opportunities for political voice, resistance, and the challenging of power structures and accepted ways of thinking". Feminist theory provides an excellent framework for uncovering power relations in Nepal.

Liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, postmodernism feminism and global feminism all take different standpoints when exploring linkages between gender and disaster. Of these, liberal feminist theory is the most prominent framework within disaster scholarship, and primarily focuses upon the barriers that prevent women's inclusion in disaster risk reduction processes and suggests that disaster risk reduction often evokes stereotypical notions of femininity and the family (Enarson 2006: 28).

Feminist theory is an ideal conceptual framework for analysing gendered experiences in the context of disaster risk reduction. Enarson (2006: 23) writes that:

> Gender is shorthand for very complex and dynamic social processes based on difference and inequality with respect to biology (reproduction, health, sexuality), the gender identities to which we are socialised (personality, interaction, gender norms), and the dominant gender relations of the societies we inhabit (life chances, opportunities for personal security, achievement, and self-determination.

It is evident, then, that there is a clear link between gender, capabilities, and livelihoods and many ways to consider the relationship between sex, gender and disaster (Enarson 2006: 21; Hanass-Hancock *et al.* 2019). Despite this, there is a lack of consideration of gender within the social construction of disaster theory (Enarson 2011; Tierney 2011; Bolin, Jackson and Crist 1998), meaning there is space to consider disaster risk reduction within the framework of feminist theory. Gender has linkages with social vulnerability (Enarson 2009; Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2006) and climate change (Dankleson 2011), and through utilising feminist theory, the everyday realities confronted by women in post-disaster settings can be revealed.

Gender, Risk, Vulnerability and Second Order Disasters

Given the need to better understand the burdens women face in times of disaster, it is critical to understand the factors that underpin women's increased vulnerability It is critical to understand how gender relations shape women's and men's experiences of disaster as a result of their different roles,

responsibilities and access to resource influence how each will be affected by different hazards, and how they will cope with and recover from disaster. Although natural hazards cannot be prevented, risk can be managed with a focused attention to limiting exposure and reducing vulnerability. Hence, this section will explore the relationship between risk, vulnerability, and social characteristics including gender, caste and ethnicity, culminating in a discussion of second order disasters.

The concept of vulnerability is multifaceted and diverse, with contributions from a range of disciplines resulting in an abundance of definitions that have varying implications for policy development. Within development discourse, vulnerability has been developed as a theoretical idea grounded in the study of disaster and hazards, most notably that of famine (Adger 2006). Vulnerability has also been closely linked with concepts such as resilience and adaptability, which have the potential to decrease vulnerability (Kirkby et al. 2001; Prowse 2003; Swift 1989; Watts and Bohle 1993; Wisner and Luce 1993). More specifically, vulnerability has been applied to the study of disasters and disaster risk within specific locations or within particular socio-economic or demographic populations, livelihoods, food security, transient and chronic poverty, environmental change, and more recently, gender (Chambers 1989; Moser 1998; Swift 1989; Watts and Bohle 1993). Resilience, that is, both capacity to absorb, adapt and respond to shock, and an individual's ability to exercise their capabilities, has the potential to alleviate vulnerability. Greater adaptability, in turn, is crucial for the facilitation of resilience, as it relates to a person's ability to adapt to unexpected or difficult conditions and withstand them (Cutter *et al.* 2010). Hence, both resilience and adaptability are key factors that can help alleviate vulnerability.

Watts and Bohle (1993: 118) define vulnerability as:

> … a multi-layered and multi-dimensional social space defined by the... capabilities of people in specific places at specific times.

From this perspective, a theory of vulnerability should be able to chart the historically and socially specific realms of choice and constraint, which in turn determine the three 'co-ordinates' of vulnerability: 1) exposure (risk for a social actor in a certain context); 2) capacity (a social actor's capacity to cope with a threat) what capacities are required – having finances, knowledge of disaster risks etc; and 3) potentiality (consequences of risk) (Watts and Bohle 1993: 118).

Moser (1998) recognises that assets (for example, natural, financial, environmental, and social) can mitigate the two sides of vulnerability and be mobilised in response to adverse events, and asserts that vulnerability is therefore closely linked to asset ownership. Consequently, Moser's conceptualisation of assets has been widely integrated into development literature, and expands upon Sen's works upon entitlements, capabilities and assets (Moser 1998; Watts and Bohle 1993).

Literature around disaster risk reduction suggests that disaster vulnerability should be understood as combined characteristics and efforts of individuals, communities and governments, along with the social, economic and political factors that impact whether they have a quick response and sustained recovery (Galea et al. 2007; Kilmer and Gil-Rivas 2010; Norris et al. 2002; Norris and Elrod 2006; Weisner et al. 2004). As Fothergill and Squier (2018: 269) state:

> It is important to consider the environment before and after a disaster, to see how children, women, and their families may experience cumulative vulnerability, or an accumulation of risk, such as poverty, isolation, few educational opportunities, and lack of sustainable work and income.

Disaster vulnerability is closely linked to poverty, a fact that can hinder recovery while posing additional challenges to reconstruction (Fothergill and Peek 2004). Oxfam (2019) notes that the human and economic costs of disaster are disproportionately borne by the poorest and most marginalised people. The correlation between vulnerability and poverty is particularly relevant for disaster risk reduction, especially given that the majority of disasters occur in developing countries where poverty is still wide-spread. Fothergill and Squire (2018: 269) state:

> As has been seen in disasters globally, an individual's social location – such as their race, gender, access to resources, age, amount of power, income, education level, community status – prior to a disaster often largely influences her or his ability to regain stability and wellbeing and have other positive outcomes in the long run.

It is critical to understand the experiences and challenges faced by vulnerable groups in disasters in order for these issues to be addressed throughout the post-disaster reconstruction process, and to consider their capabilities and potential in disaster risk reduction. Although the experiences of all vulnerable groups are deserving of attention and research, this thesis focussed on the vulnerabilities of women in Nepal.

Often, pre-existing vulnerabilities are compounded when disaster strikes. This secondary impact that arises from disasters represents a 'double disaster' and is thus known as a second order disaster (Fothergill and Squier 2018). Research has indicated that groups such as women, children, the elderly, minority groups, rural areas, those belonging to an ethnic or racial minority group and those from low socio-economic regions, among others, are particularly vulnerable and therefore susceptible to enduring second order disaster (Fothergill and Squier 2018). Such vulnerability stems from a number of factors, the overarching being a lack of resources, including economic, education, health, and social networks, which are critical for allowing people to cope with hazardous events and build resilience.

Furthermore, women experience power imbalances within households and are typically burdened with greater household labour responsibilities. This, along with age discrimination and increased risk of sexual assault, is only compounded by natural hazard (Fothergill and Squier 2018: 253; Phillips et al. 2010; Thomas et al. 2013). Often, access to assets such as resources and valuable economic, education, health and social networks may be gendered, meaning that women have less access and control than their male counterparts (Bradshaw and Fordham 2013). This limited access makes it even harder for women to build resilience and decrease vulnerability. The next section looks more specifically at the characteristics deemed fundamental to building resilience.

Resilience

'Resilience' is a term that originates from the Latin root resi-lire, meaning to spring back (Davoudi et al. 2012: 300). Initially, this concept was used by scientists to describe the resistance of materials to external shocks. In the 1960s, resilience entered the field of ecology, when Canadian theoretical ecologist Crawford Holling distinguished engineering resilience from ecological resilience (Holling 1973). Here, ecological resilience was defined as "the magnitude of the disturbance that can be absorbed before the system changes its structure" (Holling 1996: 33). According to Davoudi et al. (2012: 301) this distinction is critical, as Holling's definition does not only take into account the length of time it takes for the system to bounce back after a shock, but also how much disturbance it can take. Within ecological terms, the ability to persist and adapt was considered critical to resilience's meaning (Adger 2001: 1). However, although the term 'resilience' has garnered increased attention, there is considerable disagreement regarding how the term should be defined (CPSSC 2011; Gil-Rivas and Kilmer 2016: 1320), although there is common consensus that community resilience involves undertaking adaptive processes in the face of adversity (Bonnano et al. 2010; Masten 2001; Norris et al. 2008). The UNISDR (2018) defines resilience as:

> ... the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.

A substantial body of literature exists discussing the characteristics deemed fundamental to the development of resilience. Of these, community resources are the most substantially discussed. Other dimensions that have garnered significant attention include high diversity (Cutter *et al.* 2010), equity (Nelson *et al.* 2007; Twigg 2007), learning (Moser 2008; O'Brien and O'Keefe 2010), effective and

decentralised governance (Ostrom 2009; Rockefeller Foundation 2009;), positive thinking and acceptance of uncertainty (Norris *et al.* 2008), community involvement and inclusion of local knowledge (Ostrom 2009), and disaster preparedness (Bahadur *et al.* 2013: 59). Resilience and capabilities are also closely interrelated, given that in order to attain the characteristics fundamental to the formation of resilience, a person must be able to develop their capabilities to do so. In order to develop the characteristics, a person must have the ability to exercise a particular capability, and this is dependent upon the three conversion factors (personal, social and environmental). This will be discussed in greater depth in the next section, which posits the first theoretical framework that guides this study.

Capabilities

Recognising the need to capture a more holistic picture of the multiple burden women face, the capabilities approach is ideal for exploring what roles and capacities women have and could have in the context of disaster-risk reduction in Nepal. Although the capabilities approach has merits in regards to exploring the impacts of the external environment upon a person's capabilities, there is a limited amount of studies explicitly linking the capabilities approach with disaster risk reduction. Khanh That *et al.* (2018) examines the potential for expanding the capabilities of people with disabilities in disaster risk reduction using a human capability-centered framework. They argue that many vulnerability frameworks focus on the means of vulnerability (i.e. resources), as opposed to the ends (what people are able to do and be).

The 'capabilities approach' is a conceptual framework pioneered by economist-philosopher Amartya Sen (1985) and based upon notions of well-being and justice. Rather than attempting to explain inequality, Sen's capability framework takes a normative approach that instead conceptualises freedom in terms of people's capabilities, that is, their ability 'to be and to do' (Sen 1992; Robeyns 2005; Qizilbash 2008).

Martha Nussbaum (2000) has further developed Sen's rights-based approach to capabilities in an attempt to conceptualise how universal social justice can be established and proposes ten human capabilities that she considers central to human dignity. These include life; bodily health; bodily integrity; sense; imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation (being able to live with and toward others) and (being treated as an equal regardless of race, sex, caste etc.); other species; play; and control over one's political and material environment. Nussbaum (2001: 55-56) presents this list in an effort to:

> …preserve liberties and opportunities for each and every person, taken one by one, respecting each of them as an end, rather than simply as the agent or supporter of the ends of others... recognising that each person has just one life to live.

Nussbaum expands upon the three 'co-ordinates' of vulnerability (exposure, capacity and potentiality) proposed by Watts and Bohle (1993). Together, the two provide a means for the underlying causes of inequalities to be examined (Nussbaum 2003).

'Functionings' and 'capabilities' are two central tenants of the capabilities approach that attempt to explain the realised and the effectively possible. Essentially, functionings are what people are actually able to be and do in reality; in comparison, capabilities are the opportunities people have to realise those functionings. Capabilities are categorised into three groups: 1) basic capabilities, which are the innate qualities of individuals through which more advanced capabilities can be built; 2) internal capabilities, which may be defined as individuals having sufficient conditions to enable requisite functions; and 3) combined capabilities, which are essentially internal capabilities combined with suitable external conditions that make the function possible (Nussbaum 2000: 234). Changes in social and political environments can either positive or negative implications for a person's ability to exercise combined capabilities, thus entrenching or alleviating vulnerability.

The relationship between capabilities and functionings is mediated by three conversion factors: personal (internal factors encompassing an individual's health, skill and education); social (external factors such as social norms, gender roles, caste and power relations that affect an individual's choices) and environmental factors (external factors such as geographical location and proneness to natural hazard) (Moser 1998; Robeyns 2005; Sen 1992). Each of these factors capture inter-individual differences between individuals and together, can be used to assess an individual's ability to exercise a particular capability (Robeyns 2005).

Nussbaum has developed Sen's capabilities theory with an emphasis upon women, who she claims "have lacked support for central human functions, and that lack of support is to some extent caused by them being women" (Nussbaum 2000: 242). By considering women's own interests and reasoning behind personal choice, Nussbaum's approach has particular relevance for this project, which will analyse the capabilities of individual women to 'be and do' within the realm of disaster risk and reconstruction in Kathmandu. A clear link between capabilities and vulnerability is underscored by Sanchíz (2010: 540), who states that "an abrupt change in the social and political environment may undermine a person's combined capability and leave only its related internal capability in place". Essentially, natural hazards undermine women's combined capacity, thus entrenching vulnerability in

those who already tend to "lack essential support for leading lives that are fully human" (Nussbaum 2000: 222).

It is possible that environmental conversion factors (natural hazards) reinforce pre-existing gender inequalities (Sanchíz 2010: 545). Social conversion factors are of special importance in the context of this project as they influence resource allocation and power relations, thus impacting upon vulnerability. This project analysed women's survival strategies in post-disaster strategies and investigate unequal gender relationships by asking what women are really capable of being and doing in post-disaster recovery. Therefore, social conversion factors such as public policy, gender roles and power relations were considered focusing initially on three combined capabilities on Nussbaum's list ('combined', that is, in the sense of requiring both personal states and external provisions enabling to exercise the capability): affiliation, control over one's environment, and bodily health.

The capability for affiliation includes not just diverse forms of social interaction, but also the capability of being treated like a dignified being whose value is equal of that to others, with equal ability to exercise capabilities. The question, again, is not just to look at available resources, but also to examine how (and whether) such resources can come into action to enable these women to function in a fully human manner (Sanchíz 2010: 543). Essentially, as Nussbaum (2000: 227) states:

> "We need to consider not just the aggregate, whether in a region or in a family; we need to consider the distribution of resources and opportunities to each person, thinking of each as worthy of regard in her own right".

In order to understand the relationship between women, institutions and natural hazards, this project examined how institutions have enabled the capacities of Nepali women living in Kathmandu, along with the abilities of these institutions to enhance women's capabilities. In particular, the research analysed social conversion factors that may influence women's decisions, including those related to their gender and caste.

Gender and Disaster

It is widely acknowledged that women are more vulnerable to disaster than men and have different needs in the aftermath of disaster (Aryal 2016; Fothergill and Squier 2018). This vulnerability is contingent on a number of factors and can be heightened or mitigated depending on the context, and is often addressed by incorporating gender mainstreaming into policy and practice. Vulnerability of women in Nepal is further compounded by a number of root causes of gendered vulnerability that make women more susceptible in instances of natural hazard. First, social taboos and norms prevalent in

Nepal and South Asia often prevent women from expressing their needs to humanitarian workers, as these are often men and strangers to the community, deputed by humanitarian or state agencies (Aryal 2016: 1). These cultural norms are deep-rooted within society, and they increase the vulnerability of women to disaster risks as they prevent women from expressing their needs and potentially accessing valuable resources such as disaster relief, regardless of whether they are natural or created by humans (Dhungel and Ojha (2012). In certain communities, disaster reconstruction efforts that have attempted to build resilience of Nepali women have been unsuccessful due to a lack of consideration of traditional beliefs and customs (Thurairajah and Baldry 2010: 356). The same cultural norms that prevent women from expressing their needs also serve to constrain Nepali women's access and control over resources before, during and after a disaster, compounding their vulnerability. Many women are also restricted by illiteracy, poverty, a lack of awareness regarding what to do in the event of a disaster, domestic and other violence, and reduced ability to gain influential positions of power, and diminished decision-making capacity as a result of being undermined by male counterparts, all stemming from patriarchal gender norms (Aryal 2016: 1). The patriarchy, a system through which these gender norms are embedded, maintained and reproduced within society, essentially refers to the relationships, beliefs and values ingrained within political, social and economic systems that produce gender inequality between women and men (Nash 2020; Strid and Hearn 2022). Essentially, this system sustains a hierarchy of male domination by privileging 'masculine' attributes, while maintaining women in a position of subordination and devaluing attributes perceived as 'feminine'.

In addition to the lack of access to invaluable assets that can mitigate disaster risk, women may also choose not to access resources that are available for them. Women face increased risk of domestic and sexual violence in the aftermath of disaster, and research has indicated that in the instance of disaster, women may even avoid using temporary shelters for fear of sexual assault (United Nations 2010). Disasters also place immense stress upon women who are already suffering the immediate effects of a natural hazard and who undertake unpaid work because they are often considered the primary caretakers for their households and therefore responsible for providing care for their households (United Nations 2010). This post-disaster increase in familial responsibilities means women's workload become even higher (Fothergill and Squier 2018) which is further magnified if they have less support and resources (Enarson et al. 2006; Humanitarian Coalition 2016).

Although women play a fundamental role within their households, this work is often disregarded as it lacks financial value. Consequently, women lack access to economic resources and must rely on their male counterparts, who act as gatekeepers, for access to finances. Thus, their economic vulnerability is compounded because of their gender. In addition, many women lost their homes in the disaster.

This lead to increased labour. Not only did women have to continue to cook, clean and care for their family (and in some cases carry on farming), women also had to sort through rubble in an attempt to locate any surviving belongings and plan the relocation of a temporary home (Fothergill and Squier 2018: 258). The majority of the women involved in the study were unable to afford to hire workers to build a stronger home. This was even more of a challenge for women who were also the head of their households. In these instances, women had to continue to undertake labour in the household and look after their children while providing income for their family. Many of the women participating in Fothergill and Squier's (2018: 259) study were not living with their husbands, either because their spouses had passed away, or emigrated outside of Nepal for work purposes. The villages affected by the earthquake had a high migration remittance rate, meaning that the populations of the villages were mostly the elderly, female-headed households, and children. In their comprehensive assessment of how gender shapes disaster vulnerability, based upon numerous case studies from across the globe, Enarson *et al*. (2006) emphasises that although household management in impoverished areas is always difficult, for female-headed households after a disaster, it is even more difficult. It is evident that many Nepali women faced financial struggles in the aftermath of the disaster through a lack of access to economic resources. This was in part because women whose livelihoods were farming did not farm immediately after the earthquake due to fears of another earthquake. However, they soon had to return to work to gain income and food for their families.

Health was also a major concern for women in the aftermath of disaster. Women's health is already a source of anxiety in rural areas at any time, but is especially so when disaster strikes. Many villages affected by the earthquake had no access to hospitals, the nearest of which were days away. This meant that the injured could not receive medical treatment. Furthermore, other health issues such as psychological health and pregnancy were also critical following the earthquake. The risk of domestic violence is also heightened in the aftermath of disaster, as women faced increase risk by strangers or by male partners (Fothergill 2004; Fothergill and Squier 2018: 261).

A lack of education greatly reduces women's opportunities and contributes to gendered disaster vulnerability. Figures estimate that over half of Nepali women are illiterate, which is a greater proportion than in the male population (UNESCO 2016). After the earthquake, many women wanted to do work other than farming, however, their options were limited because of their lack of education and they had to continue their previous employment (Fothergill and Squier 2018: 269).

Numerous scholars have pointed to the importance of including women's perspectives within research in order to triangulate findings (Enarson 2006; Momesen 2006: 4; Scheyvens 2014; Tierney 2011). It is

evident from a review of development literature that there is a dearth of literature explicitly discussing women and disaster risk governance. Although this area is beginning to capture academic interest, with a number of works discussing the importance of gender inclusiveness within disaster risk governance (De Silva and Jayathilaka 2014; Dhungel and Ojha 2012; Gell 2010; Gingie, Amaratunga and Haigh 2014; Thapa and Pathranarakul 2018) the fact remains that gender has been frequently ignored within disaster research (Enarson and David 2011; Tierney 2011). Enarson (2006: 2) makes the contention that within disaster research, "a conspicuous silence around gender has been maintained – a looking away, perhaps a calculated blindness".

Recent exploration in this area has suggested that overall community resilience would improve if women are better included at the local level of disaster management (Islam et al. 2014) and some studies have examined the social constraints upon women in times of disaster (Sharma, Kurmar and Raja 2015). The next section explores disaster risk governance – namely, what this encompasses and how this relates to the research.

Disaster Risk Governance

Origins, Definitions and Applications

Disaster risk governance is a concept that originated after the civil defence of the Cold War (1948-1989) where a hazard paradigm became dominant and focused largely on contingency plans on how to relocate large civilian populations, based upon vulnerability mapping and anticipating possible scenarios, such as nuclear attack (Jones *et al.* 2015: 47). In this context, many nations developed defence organisations that were bolstered by legal frameworks and resources (Coppola 2011). This influenced and informed disaster risk governance, which also followed a top-down approach supported by legal and institutional frameworks, and the use of military rather than civilian resources. Over time, however, academics began to question the efficacy of this approach. O'Keefe *et al.* (1976), for instance, put forth the proposition that disasters were not simply the consequence of natural factors, but the result of socioeconomic vulnerability. This led to a shift from the hazard paradigm, which focused on responding to disasters to 'vulnerability' which instead perceives disasters as the result of a natural hazard combined with particular physical, social and economic factors. This is grounded in the theory that the impact of disasters can be alleviated through lessening vulnerability (Jones *et al.* 2015: 47). Disaster risk governance is based on the view that the catastrophic impact disasters wreak upon society are not 'natural' but socially constructed. As the UNDP (n.d.) state:

> Disasters are triggered by human acts and decisions. For example, building a new road may attract people to settle in an area that is flood prone, creating increased exposure to floods.

> Every disaster is unique, revealing actions by individuals and governments that lead to catastrophe.

According to the UNDP (2013: 1), disaster risk governance encompasses:

> … the way in which the public authorities, civil servants, media, private sector and civil society coordinate at community, national and regional levels in order to manage and reduce disaster and climate related risks.

There are numerous existing disaster governance paradigms which inform how disasters are framed within policy and practice (Hall 1993; Howlett 2009; Manyena 2012; McEntire *et al.* 2002). As Viji *et al.* (2020: 1) states:

> A disaster governance paradigm is a comprehensive set of prevailing and institutionalised ideas that shape disaster plans and policies that are eventually implemented on-the-ground.

Vij *et al.* (2020: 2) suggest that disaster governance paradigms are configured by three key aspects: 1) the framing of disasters and disaster risk; 2) the policy goals which govern disasters; and 3) the use of both financial and legislative policy instruments to achieve the policy goals. By this conceptualisation, framing refers to how disasters are interpreted, for instance, in terms of natural hazards or vulnerability. Policy goals, on the other hand, are the outcomes that actors hope to achieve through the enactment of policy. Finally, policy instruments are the tools utilised by actors in order to achieve policy goals, for instance, mandates, information and organisation.

It has been argued that changes in the political and economic landscape brought about by the neoliberal agenda have resulted in a multitude of actors and processes being involved in disaster risk governance, as opposed to only the state (Jones *et al.* 2014; Jones *et al.* 2015: 45; Chaudhury *et al.* 2016; Vij *et al.* 2020). Buckeley and Jordan (2012) contend that as a consequence of broadening governance, the functions of the nation-state have been redistributed in three key ways:

1. "Upward" to international institutions;
2. "Downward" or decentralised to local authorities and communities;
3. "Outward" to nonstate actors.

This redistribution has served to diffuse power (Batterbury and Fernando 2006), and as a consequence, responsibility regarding disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery has been diversified, raising questions such as, "Who really governs disaster risk reduction?" (Jones *et al.* 2015: 45). The following three sections will explore the ways in which disaster risk governance has been reoriented upward, downward, and outward.

"Upward" Disaster Risk Governance

One way that disaster risk governance has been distributed is upwards, whereby governments are increasingly accountable to international institutions such as the United Nations, the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Risk Reduction and the World Bank (Jones *et al.* 2014; Aitsi-Selmi *et al.* 2015; Djalante and Thomalla 2012; Vij *et al.* 2020: 1). The "upward" shift in disaster risk governance began with the establishment of the United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO) in 1971, which was grounded in the hazard paradigm and therefore informed by response and recovery (Jones *et al.* 2014). In 1987, the influence of the UN became more pronounced when it adopted a resolution (42/169) which declared that the 1990s were the International Decade for Natural hazard Risk Reduction (IDNDR) and called upon governments to inform the UN of their disaster risk reduction plans and coordinate international efforts in this area (Jones *et al.* 2015: 46). This required Member States to report on their country's progress and was further bolstered by the development of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in 1999. The International Decade for Natural hazard Reduction (1990-2000) also served as a catalyst for the creation of global frameworks such as the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and the Sendai Framework (2015-2020) (Jones *et al.* 2015: 48). Every 2 years since 2007, signatory countries are obligated to report to the UN regarding their progress on framework implementation, using the framework's monitor ratings as a guide (UNDRR 2021). Nevertheless, the upward shift of disaster risk governance has received some critiques, for instance, the fact that fiscal incentives put into place by the UN to encourage this shift is not sustainable (Jones *et al.* 2015: 49).

"Downward" Disaster Risk Governance

At the same time as being oriented upwards, disaster risk governance has simultaneously been redistributed downwards, decentralised away from state governments and reoriented towards local governments and communities. The premise of decentralisation is that decisions will be localised, which has merits for disaster risk governance given that natural hazards tend to affect a specific area of the country. As Skidmore and Toya (2013: 102) note in a study that analyses the findings of many studies examining the correlation between decentralised governments and disaster preparedness from across Asia and the Caribbean:

> Our findings suggest that decentralised governments are more effective in disaster preparations and/or responses relative to more centralised government systems.

The literature points to a number of advantages of the decentralisation of disaster risk reduction, including that local government are able to respond quickly and efficiently (Bang 2013); local

communities have the best knowledge of their own situations and contexts (Escaleras and Register 2012); and finally, that localised public services can play a critical role in disaster response (Skidmore and Toya 2013). Decentralised governance has also been linked with building resilience within nations (Adger 2000; Dovers and Handmer 1992; Folke 2006; Osbahr 2007; Ostrom 2009; Rockefeller Foundation 2009; Mayunga 2007). This is because decentralised organisational structures and policies are considered to be more flexible to manage shocks, in addition to being more transparent and accountable to local communities (Dovers and Handmer 1992; Folke 2006; Osbahr 2007; Ostrom 2009; Rockefeller Foundation 2009). In this context, community-based disaster management (CBDM) has emerged as a form of decentralisation beyond the state. CBDM has a number of merits for disaster risk reduction, namely, that they focus on "grassroots" community involvement and can provide representation for local people and their needs (Batterbury and Fernando 2006; Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins 2004; Scott and Tarazona 2011). However, as Scott and Tarazona (2011) suggest, it is still vital that state governments are involved in the design and implementation of disaster risk management systems. The importance of national governments in disaster risk management is further underpinned by Global Assessment Report (2009), which argues that they must retain responsibility over disaster risk management to ensure that policies and laws are enacted, stakeholders are coordinated, and sufficient resources are able to be obtained. Furthermore, local governments may not have skilled disaster specialists in their employ and may generally lack experience in responding to natural hazards (Bang 2013).

"Outward" Disaster Risk Governance

The "outward" dimension of disaster risk governance, also referred to as the 'mainstreaming' of disaster management by Jones *et al.* (2015), refers to a process whereby disaster risk reduction is incorporated into agencies' relief and development agendas. This outward expansion of disaster risk governance has been fuelled by the failure of governments to effectively implement disaster risk reduction, creating a void which is increasingly being filled by nonstate actors, particularly from the NGO sector (Jones *et al.* 2015: 51). This failure has been linked with the fact nationally formulated policies and plans are not in fact generating widespread systemic change in practice or engaging with vulnerable peoples (Global Network for Disaster Risk Reduction Views from the Frontlines 2009).

In more recent years, NGOs have increasingly been involved in different aspects of disaster risk reduction, including influencing policy-making through advocacy and supporting community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives (UNISDR 2006). In developing countries that receive official development assistance (ODA), this involvement is often facilitated through aid channelled to and through NGOs (Suleiman 2013). The UNISDR secretariat (2006: 1) stated:

> Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters cannot be done without the active participation of NGOs.

Nonstate actors are perceived as being more effective than national governments for numerous reasons, including working more closely with local communities through grassroots initiatives, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; their clear mission objectives; and lower overhead costs (Suleiman 2013; Davis and Murdie 2012; Benson et al. 2001; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Jones *et al.* 2015: 52; Lewis and Kanji 2009). This is why I chose to analyse the role of I/NGOs in disaster reduction and gender in Nepal. Nevertheless, NGOs have been criticised for being more accountable to donors than the society they serve, lacking coordination, and being economically dependent upon external funding (Booth 2011; Ebrahim 2003; Frewer 2013; Lewis and Kanji 2009; Jones *et al.* 2015; Suleiman 2013; Townsend et al. 2004).

Disaster risk governance is an expanding area, with a number of different approaches to its implementation. In recent years, literature around disaster risk governance has shifted focus from the physical catastrophe itself to the factors that may increase the capacities of individuals and communities in order for a quicker response to be undertaken and recovery to be sustained (Bonnano et al. 2010; Committee on Increasing National Resilience to Hazards and Disasters 2012; Norris et al. 2008). Gil-Rivas and Kilmer (2016: 1318) propose four key areas that are critical to disaster risk reduction, a component of disaster risk governance: 1) community capacity for disaster preparedness, response and recovery; 2) capacity and support of individual community members; 3) power relations and resource inequalities; and 4) contextually and culturally appropriate interventions. The capacity building of communities is the most important aspect of disaster preparedness and it lessens the dependence on external assistance. Community members are perceived as being experts on both their contexts, their needs, the resources available, and how these should be organised (IASC 2007; Gil-Rivas and Kilmer 2016; SCRA Task Force 2010). The capacity and support of individual community members is also critical to disaster risk reduction, however, this is an area with less literature attention as it is typically in relation to entire communities. Power and resource inequalities are a hindrance to disaster risk reduction.

Disaster risk reduction is often discussed in relation to whole communities, with minimal attention paid to the special needs or circumstances of minorities or disenfranchised groups. Vulnerable groups, including women, children, disabled people, minority groups and those located in rural areas have less access to resources based on their positioning in society and unequal power. There has been scant acknowledgement of how cultural norms, ethnicity, gender and caste may prevent some community members from actively participating in disaster risk reduction (Bahadur et al. 2016; Enarson 2006).

It is critical that contextually and culturally appropriate interventions are undertaken in order to fit the social and cultural circumstances of a country. In particular, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have attempted to identify the vulnerabilities and needs of communities by undertaking direct consultation and facilitating dialogue within communities considered to be 'at risk' (Bhandari, Okada and Knottnerus 2011; Gil-Rivas and Kilmer 2016; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2004). This is essential to the recovery process as communities affected by disaster have a deeper understanding of their local context than outsiders (Haghebaert 2007). The literature indicates that in order for 'good' disaster risk governance to take place, the community must participate, all stakeholders must be included, and gender must be a topic of focus (Ali *et al.* 2021; Ginige *et al.* 2009.

Nepal and Disaster Risk Governance

Viji *et al.* (2020: 1) conducted a study assessing disaster governance paradigms in Nepal, and found that four major paradigms have evolved since the early 1980s, as summed up in the table on the following page:

1. Response and recovery;
2. Disaster risk reduction and management;
3. Integrated climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; and
4. Federalised disaster risk reduction

Disaster Governance Paradigms and Related Aspects			
Disaster governance paradigms in Nepal	Aspects		
	Framing	Policy goal(s)	Financial and Legislative Instruments
Disaster Response and Recovery	Assist communities hit by disasters, especially floods and landslides	To support and protect life and property in a post-disaster context	National Calamity Relief Act (1982); District Disaster Relief Committee and Local Disaster Relief Committee established; Natural Calamity Aid Fund created
Disaster Risk Reduction and Management	Reduce vulnerability and risk of communities	To reduce water-induced risk and use data and information to map vulnerable areas	Department of Water Induced Disaster Management established (2000); National disaster fund for relief and rehabilitation
Integrated DRR [disaster risk reduction] and CCA [climate change adaptation]	CCA can assist in increasing the adaptive capacity of the vulnerable and disaster-affected communities	To establish climate-resilient disaster risk systems	Nepal Climate Change Support Programme was initiated; 80% of CCA funds at the local level
Federalised DRR	DRR and management is a national priority and it is a priority to improve coordination among local, provincial and federal levels of government	To reduce disaster mortality and increase resilience by investments in critical infrastructures and basic services	National policy for disaster risk reduction (2018); Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2017)

Table 1. Disaster Governance Paradigms and Related Aspects. 'Evolving Disaster Governance Paradigms in Nepal' by S. Vij, C. Russell, J. Clark, B. Parajuli, P. Shakya and A. Dewulf, 2020, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction,* vol. 50, p. 2.

The response and recovery paradigm remains the most prominent disaster governance paradigm in Nepal. According to Jones *et al.* (2005) and Jones *et al.* (2016), this is underpinned by the fact that disaster risk governance remains mandated by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), one of the most influential ministries in the country. The MoHA also has close ties with the Nepal Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (NRCRCS), which Viji *et al.* (2020: 6) describes as being:

> … extremely efficient in response and recovery, but with little experience in disaster risk reduction and building resilience in vulnerable communities.

Nepal's disaster risk governance is also heavily influenced by the "upwards" dimension with a strong reliance on global agencies for funding (Shrestha and Pathranarakul 2018). Some researchers have suggested that in Nepal, I/NGOs have typically aligned their mandates with disaster risk reduction in order to secure funding from overseas (Jones *et al.* 2014; Chaudhury *et al.* 2016) (Vij *et al.* 2020: 2). The results of Viji *et al.* (2020) study also demonstrated major gaps in disaster risk governance; for instance, a lack of coordination between multiple state and non-state actors, in addition to competition over finite resources.

The literature is critical of the Nepali government's lack of action regarding disaster risk reduction (Jones et al. 2014; Shaw and Nibanupudi 2015; Thapa and Pathranarakul 2018; Tuladhar et al. 2015; Watson 2017), with Tuladhar et al. (2015: 2) writing that:

> A high number of human casualties and loss of public and private property in Nepal may be attributed to inadequate public awareness, lack of disaster preparedness, weak governance, lack of coordination among the concerned government agencies, inadequate financial resources, and inadequate technical knowledge for mitigating the natural hazards.

A case study conducted by Jones et al. (2014) examines the challenges of integrating disaster risk reduction initiatives in Nepal. The key contention made by the authors is that the state apparatus in Nepal is weak, despite the integration of the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management and the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium. In comparison, Watson (2017) argues that the Nepali state's disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies are being used in order to promote a particular form of national identity that paradoxically excludes ethnic minority groups while exploiting their 'traditional knowledge'. There is a breadth of literature documenting disaster risk reduction issues in Nepal (Tuladhar et al. 2015; Thapa and Pathranarakul 2018; Shaw and Nibanupudi 2015), which is often delineated by region or topic. Shaw and Nibanupudi (2015), for instance, aim to combine literature on disaster risk reduction problems in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region of Nepal. Many case studies undertaken in Nepal around disaster risk reduction emphasise social aspects, including the importance of local knowledge and gender in disaster risk reduction. Tuladhar et al. (2015) conducted an independent study exploring local knowledge around disaster risk reduction, undertaking interviews that explored disaster knowledge, readiness and awareness. In this instance, there were no findings of significant gender-based differences. Nevertheless, Thapa and Pathranarakul's (2018) study, for instance, explored women's roles and participation during disaster recovery through undertaking extensive interviews and focus groups, among others, in selected regions of Nepal. The results suggested that gender inclusion efforts are hindered by a lack of knowledge and traditional patriarchal culture. This research project has similarities to the studies conducted by Tuladhar et al. (2015) and Thapa and Pathranarakul (2018), however, it has more of an emphasis on resilience, the power relations between governmental organisations and women, and the capabilities of these women. Some studies have examined land management in disaster risk reduction efforts, for instance, illustrating how disaster risks can be managed or reduced through methods related to land use (Banba and Shaw 2017; Shrestha et al. 2015), although this has taken a lesser priority compared with other facets of the literature. My research is clearly distinguished from previous research in this field: by undertaking an institutional analysis which focused specifically on gendered disaster policies and practices undertaken

by the Government of Nepal and non-governmental organisations, I was able to evaluate the efficacy of these policies and practices for the advancement of women's capabilities.

Conclusion

A review of the literature demonstrates that although it is widely acknowledged that women are more vulnerable to disasters than men, there is a dearth of literature explicitly discussing the ways in which institutions in Nepal have built the capabilities of Nepali women in a post-disaster context. Furthermore, although there is a broad range of literature discussing disaster risk governance, there is limited research addressing the power dynamics that may impact upon the effectiveness of such initiatives. There is a clear need for further research exploring social factors that enable or impede the development of resilience. Through considering gender and other variables, this research has the potential to contribute to a largely unexplored aspect of the literature.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT AND METHOD: SITUATING CONTEMPOARY NEPAL

Nepal is a country that is both rich with culture, history and tradition; yet vulnerable to disaster. This chapter introduces the context in which the research is situated, with the intention of positioning the project and highlighting the complexities around the research topic. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first, 'Situating Nepal: People and Places', provides an overview of the context in which the research occurred and posits the participants that engaged in this research and the methods used to elicit data. The second, 'Methodology', introduces the methodology, participants and analyses related to this project.

Situating Nepal: Places and People

Themes central to this overview include Nepal's geography; ethnicity, language and religion; history; development successes and failures; the rural-urban divide; social stratification and the Hindu *Chaturvarnashram* system; gender and everyday life; and finally, the prevalence of natural hazards in this region of the world.

Geography

The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, a landlocked country in Southern Asia situated between China and India, comprises of 147,181km² and has an estimated population of 28.98 million (World Bank 2018). Located in the Himalayas, this multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and predominately Hindu nation is diverse in both its geography and its people.

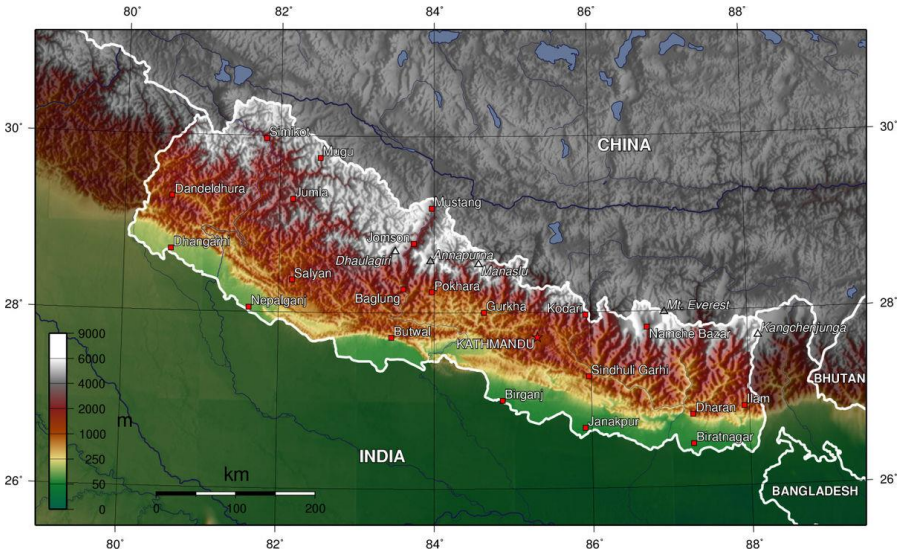

Figure 2. Geographical Map of Nepal. Alliance Himalaya (2020)

Nepal is varied in its topography and climate, ranging from harsh mountain peaks in the North to humid, sub-tropical plains in the South. This composition has heavily influenced settlement in each of the country's three distinct regions: the Himalayas, the central hill region, and the Terai. Each region stretches horizontally from east to west. The most northern region of Nepal, the Himalayas, is sparsely populated owing to its rugged geography and extreme climate. In stark contrast, the more densely populated central hill region is comprised of fertile valleys, rivers, and most notably the capital city, Kathmandu. The second largest cities in Nepal, Pokhara and Patan, are also located in the central hill region and contain between them some 400,000 people (World Population Review 2018). Finally, the tropical Terai region consists of sprawling farmland, jungle, and intense heat. Although development has primarily taken place in the major cities, 90% of Nepal's inhabitants live in rural areas (Chhetry 2001). And just as Nepal's topography is varied in its composition, so too is its people.

Ethnicity, Language and Religion

In terms of culture, Nepal is a melting pot of ethnicities, languages and religion. This context has arisen from a number of dynamics, including migration over time, the colonial and state-building eras of Nepal, emigration, and internal migration resulting from civil war and employment opportunities, both of which have altered spatial distribution (Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011; Guam 2006; Schneiderman and Tillin 2015). For the purpose of this overview, however, there are three distinguishable and overarching ethnic identities present in Nepal: those that populate the Himalayas, of Tibeto-Burmese descent, the

Newar people who settled the central hill region of Kathmandu valley, and those of Indo-Aryan descent who inhabit the Terai (GoN Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022). This multi-ethnic population has given rise to a host of different cultures. According to the 2015 National Census conducted by Nepal's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS 2015), more than 120 ethnic groups are present in Nepal, the two largest being the Chhetri (16.6%) and Braham-Hill (12.2%) (CBS 2015). In terms of religion, Nepal is a predominately Hindu nation, with approximately 81.3% of the population practicing Hinduism. Buddhism is the second most salient religion at 9%, with Muslims (4.4%) and Christians (1.4%) forming minority groups (CBS 2015).

Situating Contemporary Nepal

Nepal's history is deeply intertwined with the history of the broader Indian subcontinent and the surrounding regions, including South and East Asia. Its positioning between China and India has allowed it to bridge cultures and absorb elements of its neighbours, including the waves of Hinduism and Buddhism that have swept over the subcontinent. Despite its ancient roots, however, the modern nation state of Nepal has only existed since the 18th century. King Prithivi Narayan Shah, the last ruler of the Gorkha Kingdom in Western Nepal, and the first monarch of the Kingdom of Nepal, saw the need for unification and united Nepal under one administration in the 1760s. Nevertheless, many distinct cultures remain (Sharma 2012), along with many beliefs surrounding unification. In more recent years, Nepal has been characterised by tumultuous civil unrest deriving from the so-called 'Maoist Conflict' (1996 to 2006) that propelled the country into a state of civil war and is estimated to have killed over 19,000 people (Douglas 2005). Indeed, Karan *et al.* (2018) hails the early 21st century as a "transformative period in Nepal's governmental history", whereby armed conflict took place between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the government of Nepal because of the Maoists aim to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republic. With the 2006 Peace Accord between both parties, the period of instability and conflict ended, but it had a lasting impact upon the Nepali people. Some have suggested that this period was born partially out of economic deprivation and exacerbated poverty (Lagace 2007). Indeed, DFID (2006: 7) acknowledges that:

> Countries that are in or emerging from violent conflict present special challenges, both in terms of increased vulnerability of the poor and weak or non-existent governance structures.

Civil war has only served to exacerbate pre-existing development problems in Nepal.

Economic and Human Development in Nepal

Owing to its geography, diverse peoples, history and a struggling economy, among other factors, Nepal has been characterised by tumultuous conflict, poverty, rural-urban disparity, social stratification, gender inequality and natural hazards. These political, social and environmental factors have had wide-reaching consequences upon the country's development and its people, who are still in the process of rebuilding and preparing for the future. Sharma (2006) contends that historically, development efforts in Nepal have failed to benefit the poor, thus compounding poverty, social stratification, and rural-urban inequalities. However, according to the Government of Nepal, multidimensional poverty was reduced from 30.1 percent to 17.4 percent between 2014 and 2019 (GoN 2020). Nevertheless, the second half of the 20th century saw substantial progression towards development in Nepal, chiefly in areas of road construction and education (Chhetry 2001). However, a steadily increasing population rate has rendered many of these advances obsolete. Development efforts were further hindered when the Maoist conflict erupted, diverting much-needed government funds away from development and toward military spending (Rana and Sharma 2004), which reached US$108 billion by the end of the 20th century. During this time, aid programs active in Nepal were also forced to suspend activity due to mounting security concerns. Thus, despite making substantial progress towards economic and human development, Nepal's Human Development Index (HDI) places the country at 142 out of 188 (UNDP 2020), even after half a century of outside assistance and more than US$4 billion in aid (60% of its development budget). Nevertheless, prior to the Maoist conflict, Nepal's HDI was 0.411 in 1995, the year before the conflict begun, and 0.493 in 2006, the year the conflict ended, demonstrating some very slow movement over almost a decade. A rural-urban divide, social factors such as caste, ethnicity and gender, and natural hazards continue to present barriers to economic advancement, social inclusion, and the country's development (CBS 2006).

The Rural-Urban Divide

The diversity of geographical features and people across each of Nepal's three distinct regions – the Himalayas, the central hill region and the Terai – has had a significant impact upon the subsequent livelihoods, land and resource distribution, development and socioeconomic growth of each region. Consequently, the magnitude and depth of poverty varies between each of these regions, although a clear rural-urban divide exists between the central hill region of Kathmandu Valley and the surrounding mountains and sub-tropical plains. This is evidenced through the fact that although nearly 90% of the national population of Nepal live in rural areas (Chhetry 2001), 33% of that population are considered to be multidimensionally poor. Comparatively, only 7% of the urban population fit this categorisation

(Relief Web 2014). This discrepancy is partially owing to the fact that nearly four fifths of the labour force in Nepal are employed in the agricultural sector, particularly in regional areas, where this constitutes the main source of livelihood (Chhetry 2001: 6). However, rural poverty has only been aggravated by this overdependence on the agricultural sector, which has performed poorly due to years of under-investment, and a lack of technology and services for workers (Chhetry 2001).

Wide discrepancies are also evident through social indicators such as literacy and healthcare. The literacy rate, an indicator of educational development, differs dramatically between each of the three regions. Literacy rates are highest in the nation's central hill region, followed by the Terai region and then the Himalayas (Chhetry 2001: 8). Literacy rates are almost twice as high in urban areas as in rural areas, and although gender inequalities in literacy is evident everywhere, it is least prevalent in urban areas. Healthcare discrepancies across urban and rural areas are also telling, with surveys suggesting that only 28.1% of rural populations have accessed a medical facility (Paudel, Upadhyaya and Pahari 2012). In addition to these indicators of a rural-urban divide, the traditional social stratification that delineates Nepali society is more prevalent in rural areas, presenting barriers to those from lower castes to gain social and economic advancement.

Social Stratification and the Hindu Chaturvarnashram

The traditional Hindu *Chaturvarnashram* system of caste has dominated everyday life in Nepal since its arrival with Hindu migrants from India in the 18th century. During the Rana regime (1854-1951) it was incorporated into *Muluki* Ain (law of the land) and imposed upon the broader community for almost a century (Hofer 2005), although it was not followed by the Tibeto-Burmese migrants in the mountains or the ethnic Nepalis who practiced Buddhism. The original codification, influenced by religious scripture, stipulated how the diverse peoples of Nepal could be categorised. Gray (2015: 205) writes:

> [*Chaturvarnashram*] encompasses all recognised castes and ethnic groups in Nepal and places them into five castes; each caste's existence, characteristics and location within the whole system are defined by the same series of exogenous distinctions that differentiate it simultaneously from all other castes.

This complex system consisted of four broad social classes or *varna*, which literally dictated all aspects of an individual's daily life, including a person's dress, occupation, marriage, access to resources, ability to own land, position of political power, and ritual status, purity, and pollution (Bennett 2005; Gurung 2003; Onta 2005). The *varna* include: 1) *Braham* (priests and scholars); 2) *Kshatriya* (warriors); 3) *Vaisya* (merchant and traders); and 4) *Sudra* (labourers or non-Hindus). The rules prescribed by *Chaturvarnashram* were both inherited and permanent, and those who ignored the

obligations of their *varna* faced social ostracism. Tradition demanded that the *Sudra*, who were deemed 'untouchable', 'impure' and 'polluted', are kept separate from higher caste individuals, deprived from entering temples and other public places, and banned from using public drinking water, among other requirements. With the advent of democracy in 1950 came the breakdown of the *varna*, particularly in major cities such as Kathmandu. In 1962, a law was passed that officially made it illegal to discriminate against an individual based on caste. Nevertheless, although caste-based discrimination has diminished with the onset of modernity and increased educational, legal and social awareness, the caste system still continues to permeate everyday life. Despite the caste system being abolished by law, the inter-generational poverty generated by several centuries of caste continue to perpetuate modern life, resulting in a socio-economic divide between lower and higher castes (Aasland and Haug 2011). Research has demonstrated a clear tendency for caste and ethnicity to determine the resource basis of individual households (Bohle 2007). Additionally, it has highlighted that people who belong to particular castes (for example the *Sudra*, the lowest of the *varna*) are more susceptible to risk and vulnerability as a result of their diminished position within social fields of recognition and power. A person's social identity is linked to their capacity to successfully live with risk: access to and control over economic, political and other resources is determined, at least in part, by their caste, ethnicity, and gender (Pradhan and Shrestha 2005). In recent years, issues of equality between castes have frequently dominated the agenda of the new republican government, particularly since higher *varnas* such as *Brahim* and *Kshtriya* have continued to remain powerful and be disproportionately represented within politics.

Further complicating issues of caste within Nepal are the differing social systems that exist within different ethnic groups – for instance, the Newari people of Bhaktapur follow a *Guthi* system that is used to maintain the socio-economic order. There are many classifications of *Guthi*, but they generally fall into three main categories: (1) death *guthi*s, who are in charge of cremation and other activities related to death, including collecting fines from family members who do not attend cremation; (2) lineage deity *guthi*s, who command the worship of family deities; and (3) private worship *guthi*s, who carry out festivals such as the chariot festival of Karunamaya-Machhendranath. Many *Guthi* do not own land; instead, the system is a trust, whereby land is donated by family members and this land is then tilled by members of the local Newari community. Revenue generated is not only economy for the community, but additionally utilised for the upkeep of the community and its temples. This system has an overarching patriarchal heritage: male family members are given the responsibilities associated with the *Guthi.*

The Modern 'Nepali' Woman: Gender and Everyday Life in Nepal

The status of women in Nepal is inextricably bound to the dominant Hindu social structure, which dictates all facets of their everyday lives. Traditionally, and in accordance with this system of beliefs, women have a lesser social status than men and are considered subordinate in every aspect of their lives. Social norms and values have favoured men, who are considered to be the patriarch of the family. Comparatively, women have historically been frequently perceived as liabilities and deprived of fundamental rights, including education, healthcare, and social status. In 2015, for instance, 48.05% of women older than 15 years of age did not have any form of education (The Borgen Project 2018). The primary role of women in Nepali society is to attain to the cultural construct of the 'good woman', which is reached after following the ideal path derived for women: marriage (Bennet 1983; Skinner 1990; Skinner and Holland 1998; Stone 1978). Additionally, the Hindu social structure designates strict responsibilities for women, most of which are oriented around the household and familial obligations. Women's lesser social status has been reinforced by many women, who have internalised this system and passively accepted the roles imposed upon them, thus perpetuating gender discrimination (Enarson 2006).

Although, generally speaking, women are still constrained by traditional gender norms, the past century has seen movements towards gender equality. The most prominent has been the 1990 Constitution, which states that women cannot be discriminated against on the basis of sex. Furthermore, modernisation and increased development, particularly access to education, has slowly begun to change perceptions of women in modern Nepali society, particularly in Kathmandu. In recent years, there has been an increased effort by the government to honour gender equality commitments, such as making Chhaupadi, a practice that does not allow women inside their homes during menstruation and childbirth, illegal (World Bank 2020) and endorsing the Kathmandu Women's Declaration (2015) and include women in leadership roles and decision-making. The number of women in government, although still low, has increased to 29.6% in 2017 (Statista 2019). Nevertheless, gender discrimination is particularly notable in rural areas of Nepal, where the traditional Hindu system is more prominent than major cities such as Kathmandu. In many cases, women in Western Nepal are still subjugated to the outlawed practice of *Chhaupadi*, whereby menstruating women are considered impure and thereby not allowed to touch drinking water, must not enter their homes, and must be secluded in a shed for the duration of menstruation. Additionally, women still face problems of child marriage, sex trafficking, and gender-based violence (Burke 2015), which continues to endure because it is perceived as a private family matter and has wide social approval (Fothergill and Squier 2018: 262). These obstacles all serve

to compound and entrench women's inequalities which make them particularly vulnerable in circumstances of natural hazard.

A Ticking Time Bomb? Natural hazards in Nepal

Over the centuries, Nepal has proven susceptible to earthquakes, floods, landslides, fires and the impacts of climate change (Aryal 2014), many of which are attributed to the country's tenuous geography, seismic activity, steep slopes, and monsoon climate (Paudel *et al.* 2003). This thesis examines the gendered implications of disaster relief following the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. The 7.6 magnitude earthquake took place at 11:56 local time, striking the Barpak district of 'Gorkha', located approximately 76km from Kathmandu (GoN NPC 2015). This was followed by more than 300 aftershocks. Subsequent to the earthquake, the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) was activated at level four, following the guidelines of the National Response Framework 2013 (Shrestha and Pathranarakul 2018: 2). Of the 75 districts in Nepal, 31 were affected, and 14 were affected severely (Shrestha and Pathranarakul 2018: 1). Figure 1 categorises each of the affected districts. Road damage in western rural areas posted challenges to relief and rescue operations (GoN NPC 2015).

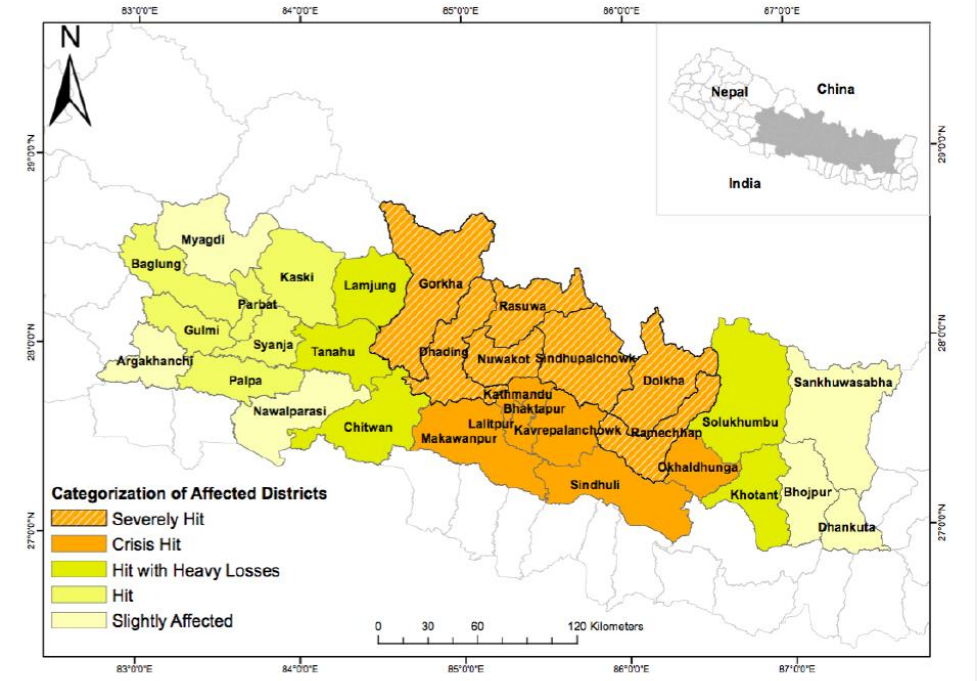

Figure 3. Categorisation of Affected Districts. The Government of Nepal NPC 2015 Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Report, p.6.

The earthquake killed nearly 9,000 people, while affecting over 22,000 people and causing a loss of $10 billion (about half nominal GDP) to the country (Aryal 2014: 165). According to Rajbhandari (2016), 55% of casualties in the Gorkha earthquake were women and children. Additionally, women were disproportionately affected after the earthquake, with everyday risks increased, including those of gender-based violence, trafficking, domestic violence, child marriage and sexual abuse (Fothergill and Squier 2018: 253; Phillips et al. 2010; Thomas et al. 2013). Furthermore, it was difficult for women to access sexual and reproductive health services and psychological support – there were even instances where women refused shelter for fear of sexual assault. UN Women (2016) suggest that this statistic arises from gender roles that disproportionately assign household chores to women. Lack of good governance, stemming from the Maoist conflict and civil war, has delayed the country's disaster management planning (Vij 2020), along with a lack of public awareness.

This subsection has explored the broad context of the research, covering such diverse matters as Nepal's geography; inhabitants; history; development successes and failures; the rural-urban divide;

social stratification and the caste system; gender; and Nepal's status as a disaster-prone country. The following subsection will now draw attention to the immediate research context, Kathmandu Valley and Bhaktapur municipality.

Kathmandu Valley

Initially, upon my arrival in Nepal, I lived in Swayambhu, a district of Kathmandu famous for Swayambhunath, or 'Monkey Temple'. Swayambhu became my headquarters from where I travelled in order to acquire my student visa and conduct interviews with I/NGOs involved in disaster risk reduction. These I/NGOs were located in different districts throughout the valley, but most commonly in Lalitpur (historically Patan), the third-largest city in Nepal. These organisations are discussed in more detail in the subsection 'Participants'. It was also here in Kathmandu that I undertook government interviews.

Bhaktapur

In order to better understand the lived experiences of Newari women, I relocated from Swayambhu, Kathmandu, to the heart of Bhaktapur and immersed myself in their rich culture. Bhaktapur municipality, an urban centre located approximately one hour drive from Kathmandu, hosts a population of 304,651 people who mostly belong to the Newars, an ethnic group that comprises Nepal's sixth-largest community (GoN CBS 2021). The Newari people are characterised as the traditional inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley and possess their own distinctive language, culture and religion, which follows the Vajrayana tradition of Buddhism.

The entire city is an open-air, living museum rich with medieval art and architecture which pays homage to the ancient culture and traditions of the Newar people who live there. The city is especially famous for its well-preserved squares (including Durbar Square, from where the king once ruled): the red bricks and woodcarvings adorning the pagodas and shikhara temples are characteristic of Newari artists and artisans. It was this architecture that prompted UNESCO to declare Bhaktapur a World Heritage Site in 1979. Figure 3, on the following page, illustrates some of the famous sites in Durbar Square.

Figure 4. A woman sitting atop an ornate structure in Bhaktapur's Durbar Square. At the entrance are two *Komainu* (guardian lions) carved from wood. Photo taken by the researcher during fieldwork in 2019.

The city and its inhabitants are famous for their pottery and handicrafts industries: the narrow, cobble-stoned streets that lead into vast open squares bustle with open markets and small, higgledy-piggledy shops that sell everything from finely crafted Hindu and Buddhist idols of gold, silver and bronze, brightly coloured scarves and wood carvings to typical imported tourist junk.

Figure 5. Clay pots sitting in the sun to dry at Bolachha Tole (Pottery Square). Bhaktapur is famed for its pottery. Photo taken by the researcher during fieldwork in 2019.

Despite Bhaktapur's World Heritage status, the site was wreaked by the Gorkha earthquake in 2015 and underwent extensive damage. Over 30,000 houses and 116 monuments were significantly damaged. As I adjusted to day-to-day life in Bhaktapur, I observed that although much of the rubble had been cleared, the scars of the earthquake still remained visible in day-to-day life. My research assistant, Sanish, showed me parts of the city where buildings were still unsafe to inhabit and people continued to live in tents, more than 4 years after the earthquake. He introduced me to his friend, who had been buried up to his neck in rubble in the immediate aftermath of the quake. And in the town squares, local people were mobilising to rebuild famous monuments: for instance, towards the end of my stay in Bhaktapur (December 2019), Nyatapola Temple was being readied for repairs.

It was through VSO Nepal, a German Language School, that I connected with Sanish, who worked there as a volunteer. Sanish was a bright and passionate young Newari man who at 22 years of age possessed many connections in the community, great charisma, and idealistic views. He was involved quite enthusiastically in a number of community projects and would often tell me about his ideas; for example, he proudly took me to his friends' house and showed me how they were attempting to breed fish in an aquarium to sell and raise money to buy female hygiene products for remote and impoverished villages. Sanish became both my research assistant and my translator, and it was with his help that I gained rapport within the Bhaktapur community.

Methodology

In this subsection, I provide an overview of the methodology used, detail the location where the study took place and the research participants, list the instruments used in the study and justifies their use, outline the procedure used, discus how the data was analysed; and finally, discuss the ethical considerations of the research, along with its problems and limitations.

Fieldwork and Methodology

Fieldwork was conducted across the Kathmandu region of Nepal over an eight-month period in 2019. A case study approach was deemed appropriate for this research given that it generates a detailed and multi-faceted understanding of an issue in its real-life context. This approach is an established research design which is employed across a range of disciplines, most notably within social sciences (Yin 2009). Stake (1995) suggests that case studies can be characterised into three main types: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. Intrinsic case studies focus on a unique phenomenon, whereas instrumental case studies use a particular case to gain an understanding of a particular issue.

Collective case studies, on the other hand, involve the study of multiple cases in order to generate a deeper exploration of an issue or phenomenon. For the purposes of this project, an instrumental case study was undertaken in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, focusing on the ways in which institutions support, strengthen and build women's capabilities in a post-disaster context.

Case studies generally involve data triangulation, or collection from multiple sources, which has been perceived as critical to increasing the study's validity and assisting in the development of a holistic picture of the issue or phenomenon (Stake 1995). This research utilized a mixed-methods approach whereby participant observation, interviews, focus groups and document analysis were the primary methods of data collection. As a research design, the case study approach has been critiqued by some who argue it lacks scientific rigour and does not necessarily produce findings that may be transferable to other contexts (Yin 2009). Nevertheless, these concerns can be addressed through drawing upon theoretical frameworks throughout the research process, providing participants with the opportunity to check emerging findings and the researcher's interpretation, and maintaining transparency throughout the project (Crowe *et al.* 2011: 7).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, encompassing research approaches that focus on the human experience and social life, has emerged from what Mason (2002: 2) describes as a plethora of "intellectual and disciplinary traditions". These traditions seek to acknowledge and understand the varying contexts, details and experience that comprise the world (Bailey 2007; Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Scheyvens *et al.* 2014). This particular method of inquiry aims to collect data around social phenomena that take place within naturalistic settings. Thus, researchers undertaking qualitative research typically within particular locations or sites known among development practitioners as 'the field'.

The goal of qualitative research is to understand and find meaning; for instance, it asks "what is this" and "what is happening here?" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2010: 39). Ultimately, this approach aims to generate better understanding of social phenomena or gain new insights into their occurrence. Marshall and Rossman (2006) describe qualitative research an ideal approach when seeking to peruse people's attitudes, values, and behaviours. Thus, this approach is well-suited to addressing the social factors that enable or impede the participation of Nepali women in disaster risk management. According to Scheyvens *et al.* (2014: 60), qualitative research has three key attributes: first, the researcher is considered to be the methodological 'instrument' of data collection and analysis; second, the positionality of the researcher; and finally, power imbalances between the researcher and the

participants. Qualitative research's dependency upon human elements has a number of strengths and weaknesses – as Patton (2002: 513) states, it has:

> … strength in allowing human insight and experience to blossom into new understandings and ways of seeing the world, [yet] potential weakness in being so heavily dependent on the inquirer's skill, training, intellect, discipline and creativity.

Thus, it is critical that researchers both understand and acknowledge their role in the construction of knowledge, and how their position in relation to the research conducted may influence information collection and interpretation (Sultana 2007: 376). Through maintaining a reflexive journal throughout the fieldwork process, I considered my positionality in relation to the research, encompassing age, gender, life experience, history; and considered the development of relationships with participants.

Instruments

A variety of instruments were used throughout the study to obtain data, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. All of these were undertaken face-to-face. Participants were provided with the opportunity to decide which, if any, activities they would like to participate in. Depending on participants' levels of English, some interviews were conducted in Nepali by my research assistant, Sanish. Document analysis was also undertaken to establish the extent to which government policies on disaster risk management have included gender mainstreaming. This section will provide a brief overview of each instrument, including its merits and their theoretical underpinnings. Copies of interview and focus group questions are included in the appendices for reference.

Participant Observation

Throughout the course of fieldwork, I undertook participant observation in numerous settings. Participant observation is a qualitative instrument that requires the researcher to become immersed within the location or site of their research and live closely with the people they are studying. I observed and attended activities and events recommended to me, including disaster trainings run by a prominent INGO in Kathmandu, and a community event run by an NGO in Bhaktapur which encouraged participants to discuss their experiences of disaster.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Throughout fieldwork, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from each category in order to gain insight into the social context that influences women's choices. Interviews are a

qualitative instrument that can take a range of forms, from open conversations (unstructured interviews) to semi-structured discussions around particular topics. Interviews were conducted in public places (i.e. town squares, building offices etc.); however, some interviewers were also conducted within participant's homes. The content of all interviews and conversations in public places were still relatively private, as they were conducted away from others; however, these participants still may have been seen engaging in conversation with me by other members of the community. It is possible that this public setting may have influenced interview responses by participants who felt exposed or feared reprisals from the greater community as a result of participating in the research.

Interview duration varied depending on the participant; for participants from category three (I/NGO employees) and category four (government officials), interviews were approximately 60 minutes in duration. Interviews with participants from categories one and two (Nepali women and Nepali men) typically ran between 30-45 minutes and a local male research assistant served as a translator.

I asked a range of open-ended, flexible questions that were guided by the answers provided by participants. Furthermore, due to the technical content in the project, I localized questions with the guidance of my research assistant, Sanish, and by testing on locals. After, some questions were modified to ensure comprehension by research participants. Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible questions that were compiled for each category of participants.

Focus Groups

Over the course of the field work, focus groups were conducted with a combination of participants from categories one and two, and provided participants with the opportunity to hear and respond to different views around women and their role in disaster risk reduction. Focus groups consist of a group discussion around a particular topic, where the researcher can observe group dynamics in addition to what is said. All focus groups were conducted with single-sex participants; i.e., were comprised of either entirely male or female participants, and all participants within focus groups were known to each other and generally from the same friendship group. Focus groups took place in public settings, such as cafes or parks, with the assistance of my research assistant, Sanish, and typically ran for 45 minutes in duration.

Participants

53 participants from four different categories partook in the research. The sample size for this project was been chosen based upon several factors: first, the number of participants required to generate rich and detailed data; and second, the length of time that I spent in the field (8 months).

All participants were required to be aged between 18 and 75 years of age. The following selection criteria applied for each participant group:

- Category one: Nepali women from any caste who lived in Bhaktapur municipality (key participants) aged 18 years or older
- Category two: Nepali men from any caste who lived in Bhaktapur municipality aged 18 years or older
- Category three: I/NGO employees who ran community programmes aimed at increasing community capacity and disaster resilience
- Category four: municipal and federal employees who worked in the area of disaster risk reduction

There were 28 participants from category one (Nepali women), 13 participants from category two (Nepali men), 11 participants from category three (I/NGO facilitators), and one participant from category four (municipal and federal employees).

Category One and Two: Nepali Women and Men who Reside in Bhaktapur

Participants from categories one and two were typically of a Newari background; in fact, almost all men and women that I interviewed belonged to this ethnic group. For this reason, my case study research on local participants reflects almost entirely on the experiences of this particular section of Nepali society. Participants ranged in profession: I interviewed many university students, teachers, shop employees and housewives with the assistance of Sanish.

Category Three: I/NGO Employees

Initially, I resided in Swayambhu, Kathmandu, and conducted interviews with I/NGOs located within Kathmandu Valley. During this time, I interviewed 11 employees from a range of I/NGOs, most of which were located in Lalitpur. Their positions within organisations ranged from deputy director to programme advisor. I/NGOs were selected based upon their interest in participating in the project. I also attended training sessions run by the Nepal Red Cross, including First Aid Training for the military and police. Below, I provide a brief overview of the organisations who participated in my study.

1) Nepal Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (NRCRCS)

The NRCRCS is affiliated to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and is considered to be the largest humanitarian organisation in Nepal, with networks in

every district of the country (NRCRCS 2020). The branch of the NRCRCS that I attended was located in Kalimati, where I interviewed three men: two from the department of disaster risk management, and one from the department of gender equality and social inclusion.

2) Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)

VSO, an INGO with a Nepal branch, runs programmes with a broad emphasis upon education, health, and resilient livelihoods. As part of my research, I interviewed a female employee with a background in environmental engineering who was working in VSO's disaster climate change sector. Her particular role focused on resilience and involved distributing disaster relief, undertaking community assessments, and running disaster awareness programs, particularly in rural communities.

3) Tearfund

Tearfund, another INGO with a Nepal branch located in Lalitpur, is an organisation with a diverse range of aims, including disaster resilience, supported by community consultation and initiatives. Here, I interviewed one male employee working on disaster risk reduction projects.

4) Humanity Inclusion

Humanity Inclusion's primary focus is on supporting people with disabilities; however, they also aim to help people who may belong to vulnerable groups (for example, gender, caste and ethnicity) and ensure that these groups are able to participate equally in initiatives and have their voices heard. Humanity and Inclusion work with local authorities and the wider community to develop earthquake contingency plans, particularly focusing on the specific needs of persons living with disabilities. They also support rehabilitation centres that enable people to receive physical therapy in earthquake-affected districts. I undertook an interview with two males working in the area of disaster risk reduction and social inclusion.

5) Lutheran World Relief

Lutheran World Relief is an INGO that works globally to support humanitarian assistance, rural economies and agricultural livelihoods. This work also extends to disaster. It was at Lutheran World Relief's Lalitpur branch that I met with and interviewed a man working on disaster projects.

6) National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET)

A Nepali NGO located in Lalitpur, NSET works to alleviate disaster risk through educating builders and communities about affordable construction techniques and new technologies. In addition to this, they also retrofit schools and other infrastructure using this information and run earthquake drills. Here, I interviewed a female employee.

7) ADARA Group

The ADRA Group, an INGO with an emphasis upon health and education, does not have a history of working in disaster management in Nepal. Nevertheless, the organisation immersed itself in disaster relief in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and according to the male participant I interviewed, is now undertaking disaster planning for the future.

8) Kedar's Food Camp

Kedar's Food Camp, in association with Landmark Forum Graduates, mass-produced food for communities in the aftermath of the earthquake and raised funds towards disaster programs. I interviewed a man who assists in fundraising and has run programs teaching women how to build resilient livelihoods since the earthquake.

Category Four: Municipal and Federal Employees

This research examined linkages between institutions, capacity-building and post-disaster recovery. Thus I attempted to ensure that multiple perspectives of the research context were collected and presented in this thesis, including that of employees representing the Government of Nepal. The inclusion of government employees' voices was also important given the likelihood that other participants would criticise the Government's response to the 2015 earthquake. Over the course of my fieldwork, I made contact with hundreds of government employees via email or phone calls; regretfully, my attempts to secure an interview were unsuccessful. I did, however, manage to make contact with a male employee from the Ministry of Health and Population after posting in a Facebook group for expats. He contacted me and let me know that he was willing to be interviewed – under the condition of anonymity. The lack of response from Government employees indicates a culture of silence around the topic of disaster response and recovery, particularly where government involvement is concerned.

Recruitment

Before recruiting commenced, I obtained ethics approval from the University of Adelaide (H-2019-003). In the early stages of recruitment, category three participants (I/NGO employees) were targeted based on their association with organisations of interest to the me. Initial contact to introduce the study and invite participants was made through email (see Appendix B 'Email to Potential Participants'). Initially, I focused on building rapport with the participants from category three. Upon establishing rapport with the facilitators, I was then introduced to a volunteer who worked at an I/NGO, who became my research assistant. Passive snowball sampling was utilised in order to access their social networks and recruit participants from category one and two, with my details distributed by the research assistant and their organisation to people they believed might be interested in participating. Furthermore, participants from categories one and two were also able to introduce me to family members and friends who they believed may be interested in participating in the study.

Emails were sent to potential participants and including participant information sheets and consent forms. Initially, I contacted potential participants from categories three and four via an email of introduction. Furthermore, printed copies of Participant Information Sheets were made available to contacts attending community meetings and programmes designed to build community capacity, who expressed interest in the project. Please refer to the Participant Information Sheet for each category of participants (Appendix C, D, E and F), Consent Form (Appendix G), and Email of Introduction (Appendix B).

I only obtained and used publicly available information to recruit, for example, contact details available on organisation websites. Participation by all informants and participants was voluntary and sufficient information regarding the proposed project and the implications of their contribution was made clear from the outset. Informants and participants also had the freedom to withdraw from the study without question at any time. In the instance that a participant chose to withdraw, they were also free to ask me to remove any information that may have been gathered prior to the point of withdrawal.

All forms were translated into Nepali. A research assistant who was fluent in Nepali, Newari and English assisted participants who have difficulty understanding English in order to ensure comprehension of the research information. The research assistant was used in order to help with translation and transcription. Once I established relationships with potential participants, I met with them and undertook semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

Consent was gained from key informants and participants prior to commencement of photographs, interviews and focus groups through written consent to confirm that participants were comfortable throughout interviews and focus groups.

Analysis

I undertook thematic analysis of the data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and interpreting the patterns of meaning that exist within qualitative data (Clarke and Braun 2017), whereby systemic procedures are used to generate codes and themes relevant to the project's research questions. It is particularly useful for identifying patterns related to participants' lived experiences, views and behaviours, and thus is an ideal method for experiential research which seeks to understand what participants think, feel and do. Personal identifiers were removed from individually identifiable data and replaced with code; however, it is possible for specific individuals to be re-identified through using the code or linking different data sets. Interviews were coded according to specific themes that emerged as I read through the interviews – for instance, I categorised the different types of barriers to women's participation in disaster management (social norms, physical barrier to participation, etc.) and identified which of these were contained within interviews, and with what frequency.

According to Scheyvens *et al.* (2014: 76), qualitative data analysis has four stages, as noted in Table 4, below:

Data Analysis Stages			
Data Collection	**Data Organisation**	**Data Coding (Deconstruction)**	**Developing Theory (Reconstruction)**
The first part of the analysis process Write memos; reflect in your journal Catalogue and index material Think about naming and numbering systems	Begin organising ideas when entering data Transcribe as soon as possible Read your transcriptions Use your indexing system Start coding your data: use broad categories and find common threads Compare transcripts Aggregate stories Keep writing memos/reflections	Read raw notes and begin to apply some conceptual or thematic order to them Do this through a combination of description and analysis Revisit your codes. Identify patterns in the data Think of terms and concepts used in your research that draw from your literature review or theoretical framework Think back to your research question	Theoretical coding Ask questions of the data. Compare and contrast codes Find alternative explanations Examine fit between your data, relevant literature and theories Describe emerging theory

Table 2. Data Analysis Stages

A key feature of qualitative research is the iterative process, that is, the researcher is able to move between data collection and analysis (Mason 2002; O'Leary 2010). Scheyvens *et al.* (2014) note that field journals are useful for noticing patterns, themes or questions emerging in the interviews conducted, and can subsequently help sharpen the focus of fieldwork.

Ethics and Limitations

This section will outline ethical considerations associated with the research, including conducting research with marginalised, vulnerable or privileged groups, including women, the poor, and the elite and powerful. Over the course of this research, I was in contact with a number of groups, including women, the poor, the elite and powerful. The ethics of development research have routinely faced criticism, with Hooks (1990: 151-152) stating:

> Often the speech about the 'other' annihilates, erases: 'no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the coloniser, the speak subject, and you are now at the centre of my talk. Stop.

It is critical to recognise that an individual's position within society has the potential to affect and influence the interactions between that individual and the researcher. Scheyvens *et al.* (2014: 188), for instance, address several pithy questions to researchers:

> How should you behave when you are interacting with people who are obviously so much poorer than you, or who are minority ethnic groups, lower-class women, or children? How will they react to you?

Given this, researchers must, as Wolf (1996: 35) expresses, "critically and self-consciously examine their positionality" and reflect upon how this may impact the researcher, while maintaining self-awareness and being reflexive when working across ethnic, class, age and gender lines. Krog (2011: 384) contends that researchers must "find ways in which the marginalised can enter our discourses in their own genres and their own terms so that we can learn to hear them". Herod (1999) suggests that researchers must be able to move up and down the "sliding scale of intimacy", that is, strike a balance between representing themselves as either an insider or an outsider according to the situation. I was, in many ways, an 'outsider' – an unmarried, white, educated Australian female who was exploring a culture that was not my own. However, it was the very factors that marked me as an outsider that fostered natural curiosity in the community. Who was I, and how had I come to be in their community

for an extended amount of time? Where was I from, and what was like life there? I found that many Nepali people had idealistic notions of Australia, and great interest in the cultural differences that separated us. This juxtaposition led to shared conversations whereby cultural knowledge was exchanged, particularly with Newari women, who asked me about music, dance, weddings and food in Australia. In order to ensure that research did not merely constitute a self-serving exercise (Schevyens *et al.* 2014), I aspired to uphold respectful, friendly, and ongoing relationships with participants. Although my research was central to many discussions, I attempted to engage with participants on a more personal level and learn about their broader lives and culture.

Conducting Research with Women

Throughout the course of fieldwork, I interacted with Nepali women, who comprised participants in category one. It was critical that during the course of my research that I to maintained awareness around the fact that:

> Women are not all vulnerable or disadvantaged in relation to other members of society; however, societal structures which vary from culture to culture mean that many women do face specific forms of oppression in their daily lives and are less able, in general, than men to be able to access resources to improve their quality of life (Scheyvens *et al.* 2014: 193).

Furthermore, mistrust or low-self-esteem may result in reluctance for a woman to speak to an outsider, or perhaps a sense of inadequacy, because they are not used to being asked to express their opinion (Momsen 2006). Additionally, sensitive topics around women's disadvantages or personal issues, such as gender inequalities in household decision making which challenges the status quo, as such research "may upset power brokers within a society and others who benefit from women's disadvantaged position" (Scheyvens *et al.* 2014: 194). Although some academics suggest female research participants respond better to same-sex researchers (Oakley 1981), it should not be assumed this is always the case and that same-sex researchers guarantee access and rapport (Mazzei and O'Brien 2009). In the instance of this research, I felt that female research participants responded well to my being female. It is important to note, however, that my translator - although a respected member of the Newari community - was male. Given the patriarchal hierarchy that persists in Nepali culture and the gendered power dynamics that impact everyday life, it is possible that the use of a male translator may have had some implications for the way that female participants responded during interviews and conversations relating to their experiences of disaster.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have positioned the project within the context of Nepal, drawing attention to the nuances that surround this research topic. First, I have situated the broad context of this research within a melting pot of ethnicity, language and religion, a tumultuous history, the advancement of economic and human development, the rural-urban divide, and gender and social norms. Next, the I drew attention to the immediate research context and described the municipality in which the research took place. Finally, I have also explained the research design, including the research participants, instruments, ethical considerations and limitations. The forthcoming chapter discusses how the Government of Nepal has built the capabilities of Nepali women in a post-disaster context and whether this is sustainable.

CHAPTER 4: THE GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL, WOMEN AND CAPACITY-BUILDING: RHETORIC OR REALITY?

In recent years, there has been an increase in the occurrence of natural hazards and the scale of their devastation in Nepal. This development has underscored the importance of strengthening the capacity of individual community members to absorb and adapt to shocks and stress, while simultaneously addressing the root causes of their vulnerability. In this chapter, I show that although the Government of Nepal have taken initial steps towards enhancing the capacities of vulnerable groups such as women post-disaster, a policy-implementation gap exists whereby many policies are yet to be translated into practice. This gap must be addressed by the Government in order to positively transform gender relations in favour of women.

In this chapter, I examine the extent to which the government has acted to identify and prioritise the needs of women post-disaster, planned for their sensitive recovery, and worked to enhance their capacity through the development of skills, knowledge, tools and equipment that can better address their vulnerabilities and help them to more successfully mitigate the effects of disaster. I begin by introducing the international frameworks that have been ratified by the Government of Nepal, with a particular focus upon the gender-based strategies they promote. Next, I discuss the steps taken by the government towards meeting these guidelines, and planning for gender-responsive recovery, including the enactment of policy and the establishment of government bodies. It is important to note that the Government of Nepal is still relatively new to disaster planning, with the first legislation specifically addressing disaster - the *Natural Calamity Act* - not introduced until 1982. Although this Act has since been replaced by the *2017 Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act*, the slow enactment of disaster policy demonstrates that disaster risk governance has only become a recent focus of the Nepalese government priority.

Since the 2015 earthquake, the Government of Nepal has updated pre-existing Acts and created new ones (*Act Relating to Reconstruction of the Earthquake Affected Structures 2015; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2017*), in addition to developing a number of policies and frameworks that purport to guide future disaster preparedness and response (Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Policy 2016; Disaster Risk Reduction National Policy 2018) and endorsing the 15-point Kathmandu Declaration on Disaster Risk Management. Figure 2, on the following page, provides a visual representation of disaster planning in Nepal between 2005-2015.

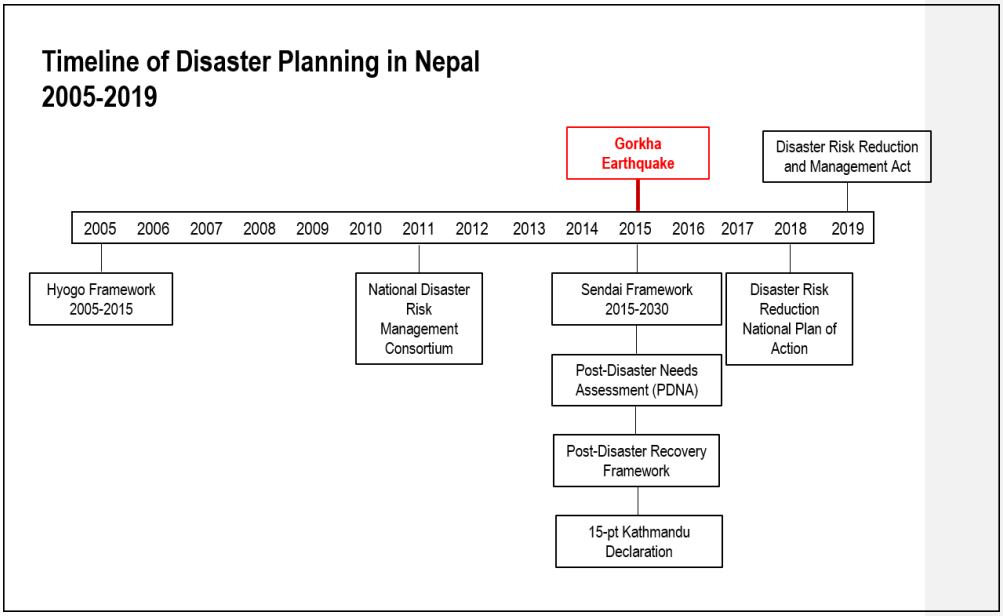

Figure 6. Timeline of Disaster Planning in Nepal 2005-2019. Constructed by the researcher.

As demonstrated in this figure, disaster planning in Nepal has accelerated drastically since the Gorkha earthquake in 2015.

International Policies and Frameworks

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) (2009) has provided global guidelines for mitigating the outcomes of natural hazards and fostering an ethos of prevention within states, governments, and local communities. Nepal was a signatory of the most recent international frameworks, ratifying the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, and the subsequent Sendai Framework 2015-2030. Both of these documents provide gender- and social- inclusive strategies that seek to guide member states through responsive recovery. Table 5, on the following page, provides an overview of gender-based policies and strategies endorsed within the Hyogo Framework for Action and Sendai Framework.

International Frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction		
Framework	**Year**	**Gender-Based Policies and Strategies**
Hyogo Framework for Action	2005-2015	*A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training (HFFA 2005: 4).*
Sendai Framework	2015-2030	*While recognizing their leading, regulatory and coordination role, Governments should engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards (2015:10)* *Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to the people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted (2015: 13)* *Women and their participation are critical to effectively managing risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes; and adequate capacity-building measures need to be taken in order to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations (2015: 23)*

Table 3. International Frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction

As documented in Table 5, above, the international frameworks promote the incorporation of a gender perspective in the disaster risk reduction cycle and undertaking actions through which their capacities can be built. The following section, which discusses national policies and frameworks, will pay special attention to the actions undertaken by the Government of Nepal towards implementing the recommendations outlined in the Hyogo and Sendai Frameworks.

National Policies and Frameworks

A number of key disaster policies and frameworks have been enacted or endorsed by the Government of Nepal. Appendix H (Government of Nepal (GoN) Policy Analysis), attached, presents a document analysis of these, highlighting their efficacy (or lack thereof) for promoting gender-based policies and strategies in disaster management.

As demonstrated in Appendix H, the Government of Nepal has increasingly incorporated gender and social inclusion within policy documents. However, the extent to which these have been implemented in practice is unclear, especially due to analytical evidence and evaluation reports on government websites.

National Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC) (2011)

Prior to the occurrence of the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC) had been established in 2011 as the result of a collaborative efforts between key individuals within government and development agencies. Although government-led, it utilises strong partnerships with international and national partners through the Steering Committee of the NRRC, which includes the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The purpose of the NRRC is to assist the Government of Nepal in achieving its long-term development risk reduction action plan through mitigating disaster risks. It is stated in the National Disaster Risk Management Consortium (NRCS 2018: 15) that:

> Safeguarding lives, livelihoods and assets of communities by promoting disaster-resilience; developing appropriate institutional, policy and legislative mechanisms for holistic disaster risk management at all levels, with involvement of all-stakeholder approach is essential for achieving the national goal of sustainable development and poverty reduction… being accountable to the communities at risk and communities impacted by disaster, and being sensitive to such values as social equity, justice and inclusion, gender- and ethnicity-equality, and putting especial efforts in case of marginalised communities, Dalits, deprived and physically handicapped.

This statement contains a plethora of buzzwords that promote a narrative of inclusive recovery – terms such as 'resilience', 'sustainable development', 'poverty reduction', 'social equity' and 'gender equality' all seek to reinforce the idea that the government is, in fact, actively reflecting the positive connotations associated with these words in practice. As Cornwall (2007: 472) points out:

> Development's buzzwords gain their purchase and power through their vague and euphemistic qualities, their capacity to embrace a multitude of meanings, and their normative resonance. The work that these words do for development is to place the sanctity of its goals beyond reproach.

To emphasise this point: despite this emphatic use of language, the NRRC does not actually contain any guidelines as to how this rhetoric can become grounded in reality, demonstrating a clear hiatus between policy and practice.

Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) (2015)

The most prominent example that the Government of Nepal has taken some initial steps towards identifying the recovery needs of women is the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) 2015, which was undertaken by the government one month after the earthquake in collaboration with the EU, World

Bank, UNDP, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The purpose of the assessment was to identify the impacts of the earthquake and recognise the differential recovery needs of affected communities. The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment served as a valuable tool for the collection of disaggregated data revealing the needs and priorities of vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women and ethnic groups. It covered thirty-one districts affected by the earthquake, including the fourteen considered to be the worst affected, including Gorkha, Dhading, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, among others. The damages to infrastructure and financial costs of recovery presented within the report also provided the basis for requests for international development assistance (Lallemant *et al.* 2020: 437). The Prime Minister at the time of the disaster, Sushil Koirala, remarked that the catastrophe provided a 'window of opportunity' for Nepal to 'build back better', espousing a rhetoric of resilience:

> In the wake of this tragedy also comes an opportunity… to put the new Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) adopted in March 2015. Three major issues highlighted in SFDRR will play a key role: the concept of 'Build Back Better': a move away from silos to working on integrated model of recovery which takes into account environmental factors, underlying vulnerabilities and community knowledge; and recognition of the importance of various stakeholders, with particular emphasis on communities themselves' (Government of Nepal 2015: III).

As this statement demonstrates, the earthquake was conceptualised as an opportunity to address underlying vulnerabilities. However, my analysis suggests that this has not happened, and that although a narrative of gender inclusion is promoted through policy, in practice, the concept of 'building back better' has instead focused only on infrastructure. The importance of rebuilding infrastructure has been covered to a much greater extent in government documents and policies (PDNA 2015; Act Relating to Reconstruction of the Earthquake Affected Structures 2015; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2017), and there is a great deal of tangible evidence that demonstrates building back in the form of infrastructure is occurring on the ground, according to both government sources (National Reconstruction Authority 2018) and independent sources (Adhikari and D'Ayala 2020; PreventionWeb 2018). There are many evaluation reports available on government websites such as the NRA regarding this topic – compared to the lack of evaluation reports available on gender equality and social inclusion within disaster management, which show that building back better in the form of social issues such as gender inequalities has not happened. Great enthusiasm for redressing gender and social inequalities through 'building back better' after disaster is at odds with the slow progress on the ground in the years since the earthquake – as demonstrated in Annex H (Government of Nepal (GoN) Policy

Analysis), numerous policies have yet to make it into reality, suggesting the initial prospect was too optimistic by the Government. I suggest that this lack of policy implementation results, at least in part, from existing issues that have been discussed at length within the literature in regards to the Government of Nepal - financial mismanagement (Regmi 2016; Timalsina 2016), corruption (Baniamin and Jamil 2018; Jarvis 2020; Timalsina 2016) and a lack of human resources and knowledge (Acharya 2018; Malla *et al.* 2020; Regmi 2016).

The process of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment involved multiple consultations and discussions with numerous stakeholders from a multitude of backgrounds and included vulnerable groups, members of parliament, employees from a number of government departments (such as housing and human settlement, health and population, education, cultural heritage, agriculture and livestock, irrigation, commerce and industry, and community infrastructure, among others), the UNDP, UN Women, and the World Bank, experts on disaster management, and academics (Government of Nepal 2015: IV; PDNA Volume B 2015). The multitude of partners involved in this exercise, and the diverse range of governmental and non-governmental actors consulted, suggests that the assessment considered a range of perspectives. Data collected throughout the assessment was segregated according to gender, age, caste and ethnicity, in order to better identify vulnerable community members and highlight their specific needs.

One key finding of the Post-Disaster National Authority was that women constituted the single largest disadvantaged group to be adversely affected across key sectors such as housing, health and agriculture, suffering from the greatest amount of damage and loss (Government of Nepal 2015: 61). The document highlighted a range of gender-specific vulnerabilities women face in the aftermath of disaster including increased risk of sexual assault, greater probability of exclusion in housing recovery programmes, and heavy reliance upon disaster-affected sectors, such as agriculture (Government of Nepal 2015: 59-62). It also revealed that approximately twenty-six percent of the damaged houses belonged to female-headed households, forty-one percent to Dalits and indigenous communities, and about twenty-three percent to the elderly (Government of Nepal 2015: 62), demonstrating the need to prioritise these groups in housing reconstruction. However, the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment also identified women, indigenous communities, Dalits and other caste-based and ethnic minorities as groups who may face difficulties accessing and benefiting from housing reconstruction programmes as a result of their lower position in society. As a result, I would argue that long-term initiatives should aim to address these gaps in the current social protection system, to ensure that no minorities – such as women, Dalits, marginalised ethnic minorities and people living in remote geographical regions - are left

behind. In this way, both the issue of physical infrastructure and the social vulnerability experienced by minority groups would be addressed.

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment included a range of recommendations to address the barriers faced by minority groups in the recovery process and provide the opportunity for a more equitable approach to be implemented. This included strengthening social protection:

> The provision of additional cash injections through existing cash transfer programmes to all existing cash transfer beneficiaries (elderly, widows, PLWDs [people living with disabilities], disadvantaged communities and children from Dalit families) will help vulnerable groups in affected districts and improve social protection service delivery. Introducing the mid-day school meal programme, better identification of beneficiaries, child-friendly local governance, and measures to strengthen the social protection MIS [management information system] to enhance the efficiency of all cash transfer programmes, along with improving the capacity of the service providers, is recommended (Government of Nepal 2015: 60).

However, there is no evidence on government websites or in the form of evaluation reports to suggest that any of these recommendations were actually implemented in reality. It is unclear why evaluation reports are not available, but this is possibly related to a lack of political will given the wider social and patriarchal context in which this research is set.

Post-Disaster Recovery Framework (2015)

Subsequent to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, supported by UN Women, drafted the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) component for the Post-Disaster Recovery Framework (PDRF) in 2016. This component is grounded in the Constitution of Nepal and aligned with the priorities of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and builds upon the findings of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment. The principal strategies of GESI are to ensure the participation of women, end all forms of sex and gender-based violence (SGBV), provide gender-, caste- and ethnic- sensitive programming, and enhance the capacities of women and other vulnerable groups.

Administrative barriers hindered vulnerable community members in accessing benefits. For example, many people from minority groups either did not possess identification cards or had lost these in the earthquake. As a result, they did not receive entitlements such as financial assistance (International Commission of Jurists 2016; Wendelbo 2016). Furthermore, analysis of the Nepal earthquake recovery indicates that the disaster policies and practice present at the time of the earthquake created only a limited opportunity for local communities to be actively involved in their recovery, echoing similar

findings in other studies (Miller and Douglass 2015; Shrestha *et al.* 2019; Zia and Wagner 2015). Shrestha *et al.* (2019: 211), for instance, found that earthquake recovery efforts in Nepal took place in a "society characterised by historically rooted exclusionary institutions", and that opportunities to participate in disaster recovery were limited to a few individuals and did not account for the diversity of communities. The very nature of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment was limited and ad-hoc, given the pressure to produce fast data on a very short timeline (the assessment was conducted two months after the earthquake). As a result, wider conclusions were drawn about the whole population from a limited scope (Lallemant *et al.* 2020: 438). The European Commission *et al.* (2013: 71), nevertheless, noted that:

> It is always preferable to have an extrapolated estimate that can be used for assessment rather than having no data or an elaborate database which is excessively time and resource-intensive.

However, given that no additional PNDAs were undertaken in the months after the earthquake, the data collected in the two months after the earthquake was unable to be supplemented and substantiated by further evidence, which would have helped to highlight patterns and trends, and resulted in more accurate distribution of resources.

Nevertheless, the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment did acknowledge some gender-specific nuances – for instance, the difficulties women face in gaining support in housing reconstruction as a direct result of their husbands working abroad, and the increased risk of SGBV in the aftermath of disaster (Sthapit 2015: 685). Actions were taken to alleviate the increased risk of SGBV after the earthquake in line with recommendations; for instance, gender-based violence responders established women's security committees in some displacement sites and hosted eleven trainings on gender-based violence in eight districts after the earthquake in an attempt to raise awareness (UN Women 2015). These trainings reached approximately 300 participants, which although valuable, is quite a limited sample of the population. A multipurpose women's centre was also established in the Sindhupalchowk district to help women experiencing gender-based violence. Sthapit (2015: 685) noted one of the issues with how women's needs are addressed:

> There is a tendency to take up women's issues as technical problems requiring technical solutions, such solutions can indeed be helpful, but they do not address women's diverse social positions and the barriers women face on account these positions.

Here, Sthapit (2015) is referring to the fact that many solutions intended to address women's needs fail to take into account the gendered power imbalances that are inherent within Nepali women's lives: she provides the example that although easing women's workloads may

technically create time for women to rest, women typically lack decision-making power over their work.

Post-Disaster Recovery Framework recommendations to undertake programmes for skills development and livelihood enhancement support have been implemented by the National Reconstruction Authority and are discussed later in this chapter.

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and Post-Disaster Recovery Framework are concrete examples of the Government of Nepal undertaking steps towards identifying the gender, caste and ethnic needs of communities. However, the extent to which many key recommendations have been implemented in practice is questionable, and my analysis of documents critiquing the government response to the earthquake reveals that the implementation of key recommendations made in the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment was sporadic. It has been proposed by the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction (n.d.: 4) that although there has been an increase in countries undertaking post-disaster needs assessments since the publication of guidelines in 2014, in many instances:

> … these impacts have yet to be translated into gender-specific differentiated needs, policies, interventions and projects in recovery and reconstruction efforts.

There is also a dearth of further information available on government websites regarding progress in this area. For this reason, it is difficult to find concrete evidence of many recommendations making the transition from policy to practice – for instance, whether administrative issues that hindered women from accessing post-disaster aid have been addressed.

The next section looks more specifically at gender-responsive budgeting, one of the tools espoused by the government (and mentioned within the PDNA) as a tool through which funding can be directed towards gender concerns.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting is promoted as a tool through which gender and social inclusion initiatives can become reality; however, no concrete evidence can be found actually demonstrating that gender-responsive budgeting has resulted in gender-specific disaster programmes. Furthermore, in addition to a lack of evidence that disaster programs have, in fact, been implemented, gender-responsive budgeting has, more generally, faced a number of critiques, for instance, being a tool that requires a very specific and specialised skillset to understand and implement it (Clancy and Mohlakoana 2020: 1). Although the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) formulated the Gender Responsive Budget Localisation Strategy in 2015 with the intent of translating

national policies into definitive action, mainstreaming gender perspectives into budgeting has remained a challenge due to a lack of technical capacity and understanding (United Nations 2018). According to the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (2021), gender budget coding in Nepal is utilises five key indicators: 1) women's participation in formulating and implementing programmes; 2) women's capacity development; 3) women's share in benefits; 4) support to women in employment and income generation; and 5) quality reform in the time spent on and minimisation of workload for women. However, a study conducted by the Ministry of Finance (2017) indicates that no actions had been undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of gender responsive budgeting, despite the fact that gender budgeting had been in place for more than a decade (MoALMC 2018). In fact, according to the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (2021), there is no existing evidence to prove that gender-responsive budgeting is being utilised to develop climate resilience of women in Nepal.

The existence of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment demonstrates that there has been some degree of opportunity for minorities to have their voices heard; nevertheless, resource and time constraints and a lack of implementation of key recommendations has hindered its implementation. It is clear that as a consequence, the Government has failed to harness a prime opportunity to redress pre-existing social and gender inequalities that were exacerbated by the earthquake. It is not enough to espouse rhetoric and enact policy; resources and funding must be utilised to ensure that plans and recommendations make the transition from paper to practice, resulting in clear, measurable outcomes (Hudson *et al.* 2019).

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA)

The Government established the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) on December 25th, 2015. The NRA is the legally mandated agency charged with overseeing recovery and reconstruction in Nepal, with the aim of accelerating national coordination for financing and long-term recovery under the build back better principle (GoN NRA 2017). Nevertheless, clear contradictions exist - it is evident that the NRA's gender-friendly facade does not extend to its council. The analysis of policy documents reveals that, at the time of writing, only 2 out of 95 members of the NRA are women – a mere 2%. This in itself is a testament to women's limited representation in disaster management. Women's participation in the NRA is also hindered by legal barriers; to be eligible for the council, one must first have held a prominent position in parliament, for example, a ministry position, which is hardly ever held by women (Shrestha et al. 2018: 212). Similarly, Nepal's Constitution requires the mandatory representation of 33% of women across all public decision-making bodies, as iterated within the Disaster Bill. Although women are disproportionately affected by disaster, they are underrepresented in

disaster risk governance. There is also no such stipulation pertaining to caste or ethnic representation in disaster risk management in Nepal.

The Post-Disaster Recovery Framework recommendations in gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) included the establishment of a GESI unit in the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to enhance governance and accountability; increased availability of psychosocial counselling and undertaking programmes for skills development and livelihood enhancement support (Government of Nepal 2015: 38). There is evidence that several of these recommendations have, in fact, been implemented: the NRA established a GESI Committee in early 2017 which aims to contribute to the closing of development gaps related to gender inequality. So far, the committee has conducted several workshops that have aimed to establish the GESI mandate and commitments, while teaching government officials about the nuanced issues related to gendered vulnerabilities. The committee has also identified a number of priority areas for action, for example, identifying disaster resilient livelihoods and building the capacity of local governments to implement GESI (NRA 2020). Nevertheless, it does not appear that any tangible progress on the ground has actually been made; instead, a lack of available information on government websites would suggest that these good intentions are yet to transpire in reality. This could potentially be due to resource and financial restraints. According to the MoHA (2017: 18), budget constraints are a major obstacle in achieving disaster risk reduction goals, as the sectoral allocation for this area is very marginal - 55 billion rupees for the reconstruction of infrastructure in the Nepal budget for FY 2020/2021 (GoN Ministry of Finance 2021). There was no allocation within this budget for non-infrastructure related disaster recovery or preparedness initiatives. As a result, it is difficult for local governments to fulfil their goals in disaster risk management if there is not the required financial support. However, a recent report shows that more than half of Nepal's climate budget for FY 2017-2018 remained unutilised (GoN Ministry of Finance 2018), despite the government's budget for climate change and disasters having increased almost sixfold since FY 2013/2014 (Jones *et al.* 2014). This points to serious mismanagement of government funding and suggests that a lack of organisation and communication between government departments has led to funding not being distributed or used. There is a broad range of literature suggesting mismanagement and corruption exists within the Government of Nepal (Jarvis 2020; Gemperle 2021; Truex 2011).

Regardless, information about how the GESI section of the National Reconstruction Authority is resourced and funded is unavailable, indicating a lack of transparency in this area. Jones *et al.* (2014) suggests that the Government's inability to effectively integrate disaster risk reduction into development stems from Nepal's weak state apparatus as a post-conflict state following the Maoist war, which ended in 2005. One government employee, from the Ministry of Health and Population, opined in the

interview that the government is constrained by a lack of institutional capacity and scarce resources, and that the way forward must include diversification of resources and partnerships:

> The full responsibility [of disaster management] is on government, but that doesn't mean government alone can do activities, they will need aid. I will repeat, we are developing, we are not developed. And so we need aid, we need different resources, and maybe holistic measures; that's why we need developing partners, as the government role will be how to equally distribute resources, on a demand basis. That will be the most vital part. And the ultimate responsibility will be for government, but the government alone cannot do all the activities.
>
> (Government Official #1)

According to the Government of Nepal (GoN Ministry of Finance 2021), 50 billion rupees of aid has been given to Nepal for FY 2020/2021, although it is unclear which portion is specifically for disaster governance. Nevertheless, the government remains under pressure to meet the demands and expectations of international donors (Regmi 2016), particularly those who expect gender and social inclusion to be promoted, and place pressure upon the Government. The Government of Nepal may pay lip service to these organisations in order to try and obtain funding (Dhungana and Cornish 2021; Hlupekile Longwe 1999). In Dhungana and Cornish's (2021) case study examining international aid and the Gorkha earthquake, they found that:

> [Early responders] are not only expected to comply with the protocols and policies of the government, but they are also expected to address the criticisms of members of affected communities and the wider public… the tension exposes a gap in the current discourse of accountability that concentrates primarily on two forms of accountability demands: (i) accountability to donors; and, to a lesser extent, (ii) accountability to disaster affected communities (241).

The Government of Nepal's role in disaster management has largely been in the realm of policy-making rather than implementation, however, the NRA has actively instigated targeted livelihoods programmes for vulnerable groups, using vulnerability identification criteria to select participants. This includes masonary training, which served two purposes: to teach valuable and necessary skills to unskilled labourers while also assisting them in rebuilding their houses and other physical infrastructure. As of the 31st of May, 2018, 91% of construction had started in community mobilisation areas, and 59% of construction had been completed in these areas (Government of Nepal National Reconstruction Authority 2018). There have also been examples of community-driven livelihood recovery, for instance, when the NRA supported women's capacity-building by assisting them with vegetable and goat farming, using cooperative-based activities and collaboration between the NRA and local organisations,

resulting in increased awareness of how to grow their income, ownership, capacities and empowerment among women. However, although the NRA has achieved some positive experiences for women and outcomes from these livelihoods programmes in the form of anecdotal short stories (Government of Nepal National Reconstruction Authority 2018), there is a dearth of documentation regarding the number of women who have participated and a lack of statistical and numerical evidence demonstrating links between participation in these programmes and improved income and/or livelihoods opportunities.

15-point Kathmandu Declaration (2015)

In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake, women's groups advocated for the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts. This resulted in the so-called 15-point Kathmandu Declaration, which has been endorsed by the Government of Nepal, and development partners alike, including UN Women. The Declaration sets out key demands for gender-responsive recovery and reconstruction. However, despite five years passing since the Government's endorsement, numerous demands outlined in the Declaration have not been met (see Appendix H), pointing to implementation failures. Although the government has made progress in some areas – for instance, women's membership in parliament has increased to just over 40% (Upreti et al. 2020: 1), which is close to the 50% demanded within the declaration. However, as aforementioned, only two of the ninety-five membered NRA Council are women – despite the Government of Nepal's endorsement of the Kathmandu Declaration. Similarly, a women's political resource centre has yet to be established, and it is unclear which – if any – demands have actually been achieved. It seems that much greater effort is required to turn these commitments into substantive action.

Disaster Risk Reduction National Plan of Action (2018-2030)

It is clear that the Government of Nepal has enacted some guidelines for gender equality and social inclusion and established the NRA and NRRC in an effort to prepare and plan for disaster. However, although the Government has undertaken some initial steps towards social inclusiveness, there are still no specific laws that provide an explicit perspective upon gender-, caste- and ethnicity within the *Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Plan of Action 2018-2030*. A 'Gender and Social Inclusion' thematic working group was formed in 2005 by volunteers and rebranded in 2015 under the Social Cluster of the International Development Partner Group, led by the head of the Disaster Management Division of Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). Although the International Development Partners Group have released a framework for incorporating GESI into policy and practice in Nepal (2017), it does not

contain any references to disaster. Nevertheless, some strategic activities related to this have been planned by the MoHA, for instance:

- Implement gender sensitive and inclusive approach in all the processes of Disaster Risk Management; and
- Establish and institutionalise disaster risk concern groups to promote their empowerment and partnership by increasing participation of the most affected, weak in resilience and highly vulnerable groups in disaster risk governance activities (MOH 2018: 101).

These activities are vague in description, do not have a definitive time frame for completion (for instance, specifying what 'short term' and 'long term' mean) and lack detail as to how outputs will be achieved, measured and evaluated for effectiveness. Despite the Government of Nepal's willingness to be a signatory to international frameworks that promote social inclusion and endorse declarations for the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment within disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts, it appears to have been somewhat limited to blueprint. The extent to which implementation has occurred is limited – particularly as there is no evidence of completion available on government websites or in the form of evaluation reports, despite international development agencies such as the United Nations describing evaluation as an essential component of the project cycle. According to the United Nations Women (2013), gender-responsive evaluations provide credible evidence-based information regarding the progress (or lack thereof) of interventions towards achieving gender-related goals and the empowerment of women.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2019)

The most recent document pertaining to disaster management in Nepal, the *Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2019*), contains limited references to gender inclusion in disaster management. Again, there is a recurring theme – the document contains some policies that relate to gender inclusion, yet there is no evidence of implementation on government websites and no evaluation reports available.

Disaster Risk Reduction Report (2019)

There is some evidence (albeit rather limited) that demonstrates the Government of Nepal is making progress towards achieving each of the four priorities outlined in the Sendai Framework. The Disaster Risk Reduction Report, released by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) in 2019, attempts to

comprehensively map the Government's progress and convey its commitment towards fulfilment. Nevertheless, analysis of the document reveals inconsistencies with the government's narrative of recovery. Despite the Ministry's claims that "Nepal is making good progress" (MoHA 2019: 31) and "has been steered by the principles of disaster risk reduction" (iMoHA 2019: 40), it also makes the admission that "the implementation of the key actions is still at the initial stage". It would appear, then, that for the Ministry, 'good progress' is defined by little more than simply designing policy – rather than implementing it. Furthermore, given that the Government of Nepal endorsed the Sendai Framework in 2015, and experienced disaster in the same year, it seems strange that key actions towards disaster risk reduction would only be reaching the initial stages of implementation, some four years later.

Under Priority 1, 'Understanding Disaster Risk', the Ministry states that Nepal has a regular mechanism for collecting disaster related information (MoHA 2019: 13) – but does not elaborate what this mechanism actually is, nor does it describe how data is actually collected and reviewed. Similarly, it fails to include what types of data are deemed important for collection – for example, whether the mechanism prioritises scientific seismic data or even includes socially disaggregated data that highlights vulnerability according to gender, caste, class, ethnicity, and other factors. It does state that the MoHA is mapping multi-hazard risk assessments with the intention of establishing a Disaster Information Management System (DIMS) to serve as a repository of disaster information; however, this is not yet complete.

In terms of Priority 2, 'Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk', the Government's efforts towards integrating a gender perspective in disaster management can be seen. Here, the MoHA points to the enactment of legislative frameworks and the establishment of agencies such as the National Inclusion Commission and the Indigenous Nationalities Commission in 2017. These entities, established under the constitution, are portrayed as being fundamental to ensuring GESI within disaster risk management. However, it is difficult to know what impact – if any – that these agencies have had upon social inclusion within disaster risk reduction. This is because – despite the fact that the National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2018 emphasises their role within disaster management - both agencies fail to make any reference to disaster risk reduction on their official websites, and although the National Inclusion Committee of Nepal have an annual report, it is only available in Nepali. Furthermore, neither the National Inclusion Commission or the Indigenous Nationalities Commission have released any kind of document relating to disaster beyond the National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2018.

Nevertheless, significant political advancements have been made in regards to the participation of women in disaster risk governance. In recent years, women's representation in parliament has risen, pointing to a greater possibility of the inclusion of women's perspective in the formulation of policy. Nevertheless, there is still significant action yet to be undertaken towards ensuring the participation of women in disaster risk reduction is meaningful and impactful, and goes beyond numerical quotas in political bodies. The Disaster Risk Reduction Report (2018) highlights difficulties in achieving priority 3, 'Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience', noting that fund management is ad-hoc. It also states that the MoHA has *started* discussion with wider stakeholders about disaster management (but does not state with whom).

Finally, priority 4, 'Enhancing Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response to "Build Back Better"', focuses on houses and other physical infrastructure, as opposed to social aspects. This reinforces that for the Government of Nepal, 'building back better' encapsulates physical infrastructure, and does not extend to addressing social and gendered inequalities. In its recommendations, the document states:

> Further targeted efforts should focus on the empowerment of children, women, senior citizens and people with disabilities and strengthen the capacities of the stakeholders for participatory approaches in planning, preparedness, response and rehabilitation.

It is certainly the case that efforts should focus on vulnerable groups; however, it is imperative that policies are implemented so that they can be evaluated for effectiveness. At this stage it remains to be seen what impact policies may have on improving the participation of women in disaster risk management. The National Gender Equality Policy was officially released by the Government of Nepal on March 10th 2021, with the objectives to institutionalise a gender responsive governance system in all three tiers of government (Himalayan News Service 2021). This mandates that women are able to participate in all bodies of the state, thus dissolving pre-existing political barriers and making politics more accessible for women. It remains to be seen what impact the new policy will have upon society, particularly regarding the advancement of women's rights.

The Government of Nepal has been guided by the Sendai Framework following the 2015 earthquake, including formulating the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, which followed the principle of collecting and disseminating gender-disaggregated data. The Government has also established the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium 2011, and the National Disaster Response Framework 2013. However, I argue that the Government's policies exist, yet are not implemented, culminating in a policy-implementation gap. It would appear that in some instances, gender-responsive planning is little more than a formality undertaken to meet the expectations of international development agencies and donors. For example,

there has been a notable absence of reporting on initiatives, and not a great deal of evidence to support reporting on the use of sex and age disaggregated data SADD in gender analysis. A disaster risk reduction status report released by the UNDRR in 2019 reveals that Nepal's current strategies are not meeting their objectives; rather, progress is hindered by a lack of clear guidelines and standards, a lack of comprehensive understanding of risks, and conflicting information regarding roles and responsibilities of different departments, and a lack of implementation and clear outcomes (UNDRR 2019). By understanding disaster risk reduction as a discourse that is promoted and disseminated through language, it becomes apparent that such a process can easily be shaped and influenced by those who have power and dominance within the discourse. Consequently, the policy documents that are produced and dispersed are a reflection of these particular hegemonies, objectives and ideologies. Buzzwords contained within government documents serve to reflect, reinforce and transmit a particular narrative of recovery – one that accounts for women's needs. The use of development buzzwords demonstrates in what ways government policy texts reflect the increased influence of the international community on DRR policy and practice. Terms such as 'gender equality' and 'gender mainstreaming' are used frequently and uncritically, with limited discussion of what these actual mean and how this can occur in practice. Greater discussion of these concepts and evidence of their usage within programs would support the government's claims that the narrative of recovery is not simply narrative, but reality. The Government's narrative of 'build back better' may yet be fulfilled; however, in order for this to happen, funding needs to utilised rather than wasted, and concerted efforts need to focus on translating available funding into initiatives and programs with clear measurable outcomes. Evaluation and audit reports analysing the successes and failures of gender mainstreaming within disaster programmes and planning are also a necessity if sustainable development is to be encouraged. Clancy and Mohlakoana (2020: 1) describe gender audits as:

> …a tool to identify and analyse the factors that hinder efforts to mainstream gender into policy. Initially, conducting a gender audit was seen as a means for an organisation to carry out an internal evaluation of how gender issues were addressed in its programming portfolio and internal organisational processes. The approach was taken a step further by adding an external evaluation of the organisation's policies, programmes and activities.

Gender and Disaster Governance: Policy-Implementation Gap

I contend that the Government's efforts to incorporate gender inclusion in disaster risk management remain superficial. Although gender equality and social inclusion have increasingly become a feature

of government policy documents since 2015, implementation is yet to occur six years later – despite evidence that funding for climate change and disaster risk reduction is clearly available. The government has promoted a narrative of gender inclusiveness within disaster recovery and preparedness for future disasters; however, this narrative is inconsistent with the evidence and thus remains unsubstantiated. The mere existence of policy does not constitute success of a policy in achieving its objectives. There is limited evidence that government policies have actually resulted in positive change for Nepali women. Instead, a policy-implementation gap has limited corresponding change in practice. Thus, there is a gap between the expectation of disaster risk reduction as a tool to 'build back better', as anticipated in government documents, and the reality of change on the ground. Nevertheless, it is important to note that some change has happened for women; for instance, increased participation in the politics of disaster risk governance, and livelihoods and skills trainings.

It is critical that planning for gender-, caste- and ethnic- responsive recovery is better integrated into the government's recovery frameworks and sector-based recovery plans in order to fulfil their obligations to policies and frameworks that they have endorsed, for example, the 15-Point Kathmandu Declaration, and lead the way for future disaster risk governance. Although the Government has undertaken initial steps in this area, it is not enough for the Government of Nepal to incorporate social inclusion into legislation, frameworks and policies relating to disaster management until implementation and evaluation occurs. Within the Sendai Framework, it is stated:

> Adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations (2015: 23).

Interviews conducted with NGO and INGO facilitators working in the field of disaster risk reduction confirmed that there is doubt regarding how seriously the government considers its commitments. As one senior interviewee from a prominent INGO stated:

> The governments have the full authority [re disaster management]. But actually, they still don't have the big priority… the people need to put positive pressure on the government also about disaster management plan… [our organisation], we have the opportunity to make positive waves to those elected parties.
>
> (Interviewee #1, male)

This statement clearly indicates that some employees perceive there to be a lack of coordination and trust existing between I/NGOs and the Government of Nepal.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have shown that although it is evident that the Government of Nepal is in the early stages of planning for gender-, caste- and ethnic-responsive disaster recovery, disaster preparedness, and disaster risk governance, despite six years passing since the earthquake. I have revealed that, although superficially, these institutions seem eager to impart change, a more nuanced investigation reveals a lack of implementation and tangible, quantifiable outcomes. Instead, I have contended that a policy-implementation gap exists, and that gender inclusion within disaster risk reduction in this context is shaped more by rhetoric than physical reality, and that government policies in this area do little more than promote a narrative of recovery. Whilst gender received greater consideration in recent years when it comes to setting disaster policy and strategy, in the case of Nepal, it is evident that despite promises of gender equality, significant implementation and evaluation of existing policies is yet to be undertaken. I have demonstrated that although gender provisions may exist within often good-intentioned plans and strategies, they are much more difficult to implement in practice, highlighting a slippage in policy and practice. In the following chapter, I explore the relationship between INGOs, women, and capacity-building in Nepal, particularly, the ways in which INGOs have identified and prioritised the needs of women.

CHAPTER 5: PREPARING WOMEN FOR DISASTER: I/NGOS AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

This chapter explores how NGOs ad INGOs have identified and prioritised the needs of women, low-caste and ethnic groups. I will demonstrate that the majority of interviewees from I/NGOs simply espoused standard development speak and discussed the routine cycle of disaster risk project management, rather than proposing new and innovative solutions to address gender inequality within disaster risk governance.

Many NGOs and INGOs discussed the importance of having a dedicated Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) department within their organisation that focuses upon gender and social inclusion. Organisations with a GESI department are often perceived as having an increased likelihood of having considered the needs and situations of women and girls in their programmes. The Deputy Director of the largest INGO in Nepal for instance, stated:

> In our organisation… we are very sensitive about gender inclusion, minorities and everything. Actually, in [our organisation], we have the Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Department. We have different policies and guidelines for the projects on gender, how to mainstream people with disabilities, aging peoples in the disaster management.
>
> (INGO interviewee # 1, male)

This INGO does have a range of gender-inclusive policies espoused by their GESI unit, although there is a lack of documented evidence demonstrating how these policies have been used or provided guidelines for programs. Similarly, an interviewee working as a Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Advisor at another organisation emphasised how social inclusion at the organisational level sets an important precedent for community interventions:

> We are very much concerned with diversity and inclusion, where we talk about different views, different caste, different ethnicity, different religion, different race, all are equally welcome in [our organisation]. Similarly, in our interventions in the community, they are equal participation in the whole process, from design to implementation, monitoring to evaluation, and yeah, even more in the whole project cycle management.
>
> (INGO interviewee #7, male)

However, there is no evidence to substantiate the interviewee's claim that equal participation exists within the whole disaster management project cycle at their organisation, indicating that 'development speak' using all the relevant buzz words are being used without necessarily being accurate.

As shown by a study by Shrestha (2017) on GESI departments within Nepal, a disconnect exists between the process on paper versus implementation. Shrestha's study suggested that the gender mainstreaming process does not adequately address the issue of diversity and intersectionality within Nepali society.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, many NGOs and INGOs initially undertook a blanket approach to resource distribution. In the weeks after the earthquake, however, many took the initiative to identify and prioritise the recovery needs of vulnerable groups, including women, low-caste and ethnic peoples through undertaking extensive community consultation. Many interviewees noted the importance of grassroots participation at every stage of the disaster management and recovery cycles, for instance:

> From the beginning, when we started the assessment, we were implementing the programmes, when we started assessment of the local community, during the assessment phase, we consider those types of things – protection of gender, equity, minorities, participation and everything. We try to ensure the participation of those people, in the assessment, in the planning process, in the implementation process, monitoring and support process, and all the evaluation, all the cycle of the project, we consider all those things.
>
> (INGO interviewee #1, male)

There was evidence to suggest that grassroots participation does form an integral part of participating INGOs' mandates: websites generally include specific examples of how this has taken place in regards to disaster risk reduction, for instance, disaster resilient livelihoods programs that relied heavily on community involvement and feedback (NRCRCS 2021). The desire to include minority groups in the disaster management and recovery cycle was also expressed by interviewees, including a Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Advisor who described how her organisation uses a toolkit to undertake vulnerability and capacity assessments within communities:

> We go to that community and we do the assessment, and in the vulnerability and capacity assessment, there are many tools, so many tools, volunteer tools… and we can know the exact situation of that particular place, so we used to apply those tools and know the exact situation, and what is need of that community, and what we can provide. If not, if we can't provide, we can advocate them also… we can act as bridge between the community and the local authorities… if we can't support them financially, we can support them by lobbying, by advocating, by capacity, by doing the capacity-building also.
>
> (INGO interviewee #4, female)

This statement also highlights how organisations can advocate for the needs of minority groups, in an attempt to encourage governments to prioritise the needs of these communities and to assist them in gaining the resources and support that they need to build their capacities after disaster. By coming together and advocating for their needs, communities can raise awareness to their plight and put pressure upon the government and organisations to take definitive action (Yanacopulos 2015). Furthermore, my research highlights that I/NGOs are much more participatory than the Government of Nepal. The concept of grassroots participation is nothing new or innovative within development organisations, however, does not necessarily occur within project cycles (Alexis 2020; Azzam 2014; Thiesenhusen n.d.).

There was a broad consensus among interviewees that community consultation and involvement has occurred and that participatory approaches towards fostering disaster preparedness have been critical in ensuring that the differentiating needs of these groups are heard and addressed. The collection and analysis of this data is essential as it would be otherwise impossible for organisations to know the specific needs of vulnerable communities in the immediate aftermath of disaster, and how organisations can better support, strengthen and build the capacities of these affected groups (Jamal *et al.* 2014). (Jamal *et al.* 2014. with this information, NGOs and INGOs undertook community consultation in a number of ways after the earthquake, including door-to-door surveys and interviews, and hosting community meetings with the general population (NRCS 2019; Tearfund 2019). A range of topics were covered relating to needs after disaster, particularly, issues such as housing and access to basic necessities. However, no NGOs or INGOs suggested that any gender-specific community consultations were undertaken, although some data collected during broader consultations has since been disaggregated by gender.

Community consultation also provides organisations with the opportunity to continually refine their programs and ensure that their initiatives are context-appropriate and relevant to targeted communities, although this is a common project cycle management feature and is to be expected (Khang and Moe 2008). Through undertaking direct consultation with community members and facilitating peer exchange and learning, development practitioners can have a better understanding of where to invest their resources to best support the community. Through encouraging bottom-up practice at all levels of project design and implementation through undertaking surveys, interviews and running community meetings, NGOs and INGOs involved in disaster risk governance can create spaces for the voices of community members and encourage them to utilise participation channels in order to strengthen the capabilities of the local communities.

One key respondent provided an example of how her organisation learnt valuable knowledge from community consultations that was then influenced into program planning and project design. She explained that while conducting disaster risk reduction training with a group of men and women in the Terai, she noticed that only the male participants were actively participating in the program. The female participants, on the other hand, were very quiet and withdrawn, although upon questioning, they reassured her that they found the training very useful. She later asked a local partner in that area why the women were not actively participating, and he explained that some of the male participants in the training were relatives of the female participants, for example, in-laws. As the facilitator explained:

> I realised that we have to keep them separate also, to get the things out of them. In front of in-laws, how can they speak? So that is the thing… so I asked for male staff, female staff, to collect their problems, issues, what they want to say, *separately*, so we can get the things from the community what is actually happening.
>
> (INGO interviewee #4, female)

Following this realisation, the facilitator ensured that gender-specific training occurred. This example demonstrates a lack of understanding of local cultural norms. However, it also demonstrates the benefits of community consultation for identifying and prioritising the needs of vulnerable community members for building their capacity to prepare for future disasters. Through this process, the facilitator was able to incorporate this knowledge into her planning and able to better tailor the disaster program to ensure that female participants felt comfortable to share their differentiated problems and perspectives. As another interviewee stated:

> The first thing is, targeting is very important… the second thing is finding out what the barriers in their participation, and uh, finding the barriers and trying to overcome the barriers in whatever ways you can.
>
> (INGO interviewee #7, male)

Interview participants also noted the importance of anticipating how cross-cutting factors, such as gender and caste, can influence resource distribution, with women, Dalit and other low-caste groups being marginalised. One deputy director remarked:

> My organisation knew that this dynamic is there – the smart one, the educated one, the higher caste, those with more access will get more access. That is why we do most remote, most isolated area – the earthquake-devastated villages. We choose the ignored ones, you know, knowing that… I think NGO who are in Nepal basically, is pretty sensitive now… they wanted to

> go to the ladies, they wanted to empower the ladies, they wanted to go to Dalit, they wanted to go to the ignored areas, so the thought was there to make it inclusive.
>
> (INGO interviewee #5, male)

This statement highlights how that particular organisation prioritised the needs of low-caste communities in rural areas in an attempt to offset what they perceived to be uneven resource distribution due to unequal power relations. This theme recurred throughout interviews with NGO and INGO facilitators who work in the field of disaster risk reduction:

> Those who are poor, marginalised, cannot speak, those who don't have power and, like, they are appearing scared of talking… we just talk to them and see some of the local people and consult with them. We just try to support what we had, in terms of disaster relief too, reconstruction. But we have rolled out accountability mechanism, like, they can call us through our phones, and they can email us, but that is not always practical to the community. Because they can just ask people to text message, and we have a box in the community saying they can just drop a letter, and sometimes, if they are daring enough to say, they can just say it to us while visiting there.
>
> (INGO interviewee #7, male)

As these quotes demonstrate, I/NGOs have prioritised the needs of women and low-caste communities through undertaking extensive community consultation and prioritising communities who are more likely than others to be excluded and marginalised. This engagement also provides NGOs and INGOs with the opportunity to listen and learn from community members, who know their own needs and vulnerabilities best. Thus they can adjust their disaster risk reduction programmes accordingly to target these specific communities using this knowledge. This specific targeting, undertaken over a long period of time, has the potential to contribute to gender equality and social inclusion through redressing inequalities. This is illustrated by the following example from an interviewee:

> We are supporting a toilet. It was interesting case and there were [sic] support in the community and the community have the idea, like include bathing space inside toilet yeah, so that women have private bathing space for bathing… we agreed on that, and started building, like the bathing space. And that was some kind of a new thing, yeah, for the community, and that was a new learning thing for us too.
>
> (INGO interviewee #5, male)

This action, in turn, has been supported by active listening and collaboration between the organisation, who have supplemented the project with their resources, and the local community. Peer-to-peer

exchanges of information and skills are considered to be components of sustainable capacity-building (Eitzinger *et al.* 2019; Jensen 2012).

There are extensive examples which demonstrate that NGOs and INGOs working in the field of disaster risk reduction do in fact undertake community consultation – the Nepal Red Cross's SURE (Strengthen Urban Resilience and Engagement) programme, for instance, engages community members of vulnerable groups through working with four target groups in each of the seven municipalities. Each vulnerable group in turn nominates thirty members with whom the NRCS works with closely to better understand their needs, enhance their confidence, and create partnerships with. The SURE program has resulted in tangible results, such as Participatory Campaign Planning, which ensures that context-appropriate disaster messages are disseminated to each different vulnerable group, based upon their own concerns and recommendations. Internal reviews undertaken by the NRCS also found strong commitment to resourcing and prioritising community engagement (Nepal Red Cross 2019), although the same review also contained expressions of concern regarding a lack of key objectives in this area, particularly relating to time-frames for completion and what would actually happen on the ground. However, as another interviewee from an INGO with an emphasis upon social inclusion noted, physical barriers to participation in disaster risk reduction initiatives can sometimes be difficult to address:

> Information [about disaster is provided] irrespective of the caste, ethnicity, age group, these kinds of things. But sometimes, due to uh, maybe some kind of physical disability, is not able to go to training, so there is a chance of getting excluded from that… all the citizens with chronic illnesses, that live at home, I mean, we don't have access, information to that certain percent… but it goes through the mass media, the municipal offices.
>
> (INGO interviewee #8, male)

It is clear that NGO and INGO facilitators have identified the needs of and prioritise minorities through actively including vulnerable groups within their disaster planning. This includes social inclusion at the organisational level, for instance, having a department dedicated to gender and social inclusion or having diverse representation within staff; incorporating vulnerable groups into the project cycle; addressing barriers to participation; and providing feedback mechanisms whereby community members can anonymously provide feedback. These approaches are invaluable for the participation of minority groups, providing them with opportunities to participate in disaster risk management and develop their capacity to respond to disaster and recoup losses.

Gender-Responsive Planning and Capacity-Building

NGOs and INGOs were also asked how they have planned for gender-, caste- and ethnic- responsive recovery. First, one interviewee emphasised the importance of situational awareness and timely and disaggregated assessment prior to planning:

> If you take six months to get information from the community, by the time you go to the community with your meals, the community already had them devoured… in the case of disaster, it's very important, act timely… within 3-4 days, you have to be able to do something, and your priorities should be decided beforehand… you have to decide, at the government institution, the agency, you have to decide what sort of things you are going to do, even if you don't have completed asset, that's a main challenge. And NGOs and INGOs go there without any assessment… it happens all the time.
>
> (INGO interviewee #5, male)

Comparatively, another organisation which, prior to the earthquake, historically focused its efforts upon education and children, has begun incorporating disaster-planning into their activities since the Gorkha earthquake:

> We were here in the last 20 years, there was no earthquake in that time. But we now have started thinking about retrofitting, disaster preparedness, awareness, drills, training for the children in their schools. They are all thoughts at the moment, because at the earthquake 2015 made us think, we [our organisation] have got to be prepared. So disaster preparedness is a priority [for] our organisation only after disaster, I am sorry to say.
>
> (INGO interviewee #6, male)

This example demonstrates that the earthquake, in some ways, has served as a catalyst for organisations to increasingly consider the importance of disaster preparedness.

One interviewee provided an example of how her organisation has attempted to address gendered barriers to participation:

> There are some situation that prevents the people getting the… information… sometimes, even for women, you see, training, uh, by gender norms is under control [regulated by social norms], eight o'clock, five o'clock, they won't be able to participate, because they have to cook their food, send their children to the school, so we have to very carefully design the training.
>
> (INGO interviewee 4#, female)

By considering traditional gender roles and norms, this organisation has sought to address a key barrier to women's participation in disaster programs. It is important to note that gender roles influence gender relations, and thus changing roles is not an end goal in itself, but rather a factor that may lead to transformative changes in the power relations they may produce.

NGOs and INGOs have played a prominent role in enhancing the capacities of women, low-caste and ethnic groups post-disaster through employing a bottom-up approach to disaster risk reduction, incorporating social inclusion content and gender mainstreaming into programs and trainings, transforming discriminatory structures, and undertaking partnerships with a range of actors from civil society, as well as the government and private sector. Examples include:

- Disaster resilience projects that target minorities (people with disabilities, the homeless, senior citizens, and those who live in the slums) (NRCS)
- Building a school with a focus on girls in the epicentre of child trafficking in the aftermath of the earthquake in an attempt to mitigate child trafficking. This has now grown from 17 students to over 400, of which 51% are girls (ADARA)
- Child Centre Disaster Risk Reduction Project (NRCS)
- Livelihoods trainings for women, including engineering (NSET), electrician work (Tearfund), first aid training (NRCS), knitting and sewing (NRCS; Tearfund), welding (NRCS), carpentry (NRCS), masonary (ADARA), farming and agriculture (Tearfund), business and management (NRCS).

One interviewee attributed womens' high participation in disaster programs such as first aid training and disaster risk reduction trainings to increased social inclusion content:

> Seventy percent of participants in our disaster programme are female. Actually, it has been increasing because most of the trainings, such as like first aid training, health related training and disaster risk reduction training… we have been incorporating this social inclusion content. Therefore, training part also has been revised from the eye of gender sensitive.
>
> (INGO interviewee #1, male)

Nevertheless, another key informant from a different organisation pointed out that sometimes high participation rates of women may be due to the fact many men have emigrated overseas for work::

> At that time it [participating in disaster programs] was a burden, like they were already overwhelmed with the husband, responsibility, they had to take that, that responsibility, but take on, a means of additional income, and women were involved in the reconstruction, most of the

> reconstruction, and the livelihoods programme, basically in the livelihoods programme, I would guess like, more than 70% were women, not because [the] program was that successful… but [otherwise] you have no one else to include in the program, I think with have to include the male who is always very old and cannot do anything and not moving, and not doing anything, and so yeah, young women, who is taking care of the family.
>
> (INGO interviewee #5, male)

There was a consensus among interviewees regarding the benefits of targeted programming. This facilitator gave an example of how women are often targeted with specific skills trainings that differ from those targeted to male participants:

> In this like recovery programme, mainly female were provided with different kinds of skill because male are engaged with their other, regular incomes, so we are focusing on women. Like even, many of the female population, there is information training, knitting, welding, carpentry, management, how to start a business… these kinds of training were provided. They have started their own business, now we can see some examples inside valley as well, some trainings were provided and they are generating better income, since the earthquake time, you know, there have been different kinds of trainings so the opportunities increase for female.
>
> (INGO interviewee #1, male)

Similarly, another interview participant noted that, in some situations, gender-targeted training can be instrumental in increasing women's participation in disaster risk reduction initiatives:

> We have been providing training to the women as well as the men, and sometimes they have, like, the targeted program. Sometimes the mix male and female, that works well, but in some societies and places, targeting, the specific training targeting to the specific women's groups helps a lot, and also increased participation. We are taking two approaches. Like, one is mixing them with the men and something like that, that supports this thing, and sometimes targeting to the women some more, and providing the training, they get trained.
>
> (INGO interviewee #4, female)

By running women's only programs, program facilitators hope to address the gender and cultural norms that prevent women from openly discussing their issues in front of men. Similarly, the same interviewee reiterated the benefits of running gender-targeted programs:

> We can do the woman-focused programmes, like preparing go-bags, they can do, women can do. They can take care of it very safely and in proper manner. If any disaster happens, just grab it and they can go. So we can aware them in this kind of small things, we can change the behaviour, change but by small things, not big things - doesn't need lots of big changes, small things also matter. We are changing the perceptions of the people.
>
> (INGO interviewee #4, female)

One organisation gave an example of how the organisation focused on increasing the capacity of girls while also protecting them from SGBV:

> The school is built in a place that is called epicentre of girl trafficking… so knowingly, we did that school in that place, so girls are supported… after earthquake, we started to build new school, focusing on the girls. We include boys, we positively discriminate, we put idea about schooling to address this structure called trafficking, so that means having girls in the school. We started with 17 kids, now we have 400 kids, but we have supported 70 schools after the earthquake. That's 680 kids in 70 schools, so 51% of them are girls… after the earthquake, they have a fantastic school. So if you go and talk to the villages, they think like, the earthquake was bad, yes, but not as bad… you know, we have a fantastic school, good things are coming out of the disaster, though they lost many lives, like 86 lives. But they think earthquake was very beneficial, everyone has now, earthquake friendly house, a good house, and a very good school there where there was no school there. too many quotes this section
>
> (INGO interviewee #11, male)

Moreover, this example also highlights how post-disaster recovery and capacity-building in order to prepare for future disasters can seek to redress gendered disparities while simultaneously enhancing community capacity. The majority of NGOs and INGOs interviewed emphasised their links to the Government and role in enacting policy.

NGOs and INGOs working in the field of disaster risk reduction have encouraged women's participation through running training activities at times which are more convenient for women. Post-disaster recovery programmes that made it to the implementation stage have culminated in positive outcomes for women, for example, masonary training has seen an increase in the number of women working in the building sector according to the World Bank (2018), although they do not provide figures of how many women have joined the building sector.. However, although NGOs and INGOs are increasingly taking steps to incorporate gender mainstreaming within their organisations, targeting and organising gender-specific programmes, and considering women's and girl's needs in design, some NGOs remain gender blind to some of the obstacles women face when it comes to participating in disaster risk

reduction initiatives. For example, one interviewee asserted that their organisation had supported women through housing grants:

> We supported 600 housing grants… so all of these households, male and female, had equal participation.
>
> (INGO interviewee #1, male)

Here, the assumption is made that by distributing grants to households, gender equality can be achieved. However, this assumption fails to take into account the fact that in Nepali society, asset ownership falls largely into the domain of men, as a result of gender norms (UN 2020). Assumptions that issues are neutral from a gender perspective should never be made, and in this instance, this is a gender-blind assumption. This assumption also serves to reinforce the gender norms and power relations that are present in Nepali society that hinder equality. These gender biases need to be addressed and dismantled. It is clear from this statement that INGOs/NGOs focus on households without taking the gender relations that exist within into account. Similarly, another INGO facilitator remarked:

> What happens during disaster… [the disaster] doesn't bias, that this is men, and this is women. It's not biased, so equally risk portions [for men and women].
>
> (INGO interviewee #4 female

This statement perpetuates the belief that disaster does not discriminate by gender and that men and women are equally affected by disaster. It ignores the reality that women are more vulnerable to disaster risk than their male counterparts. Here, the facilitator is making the assumption that men and women are equally vulnerable to disasters.

NGOs and INGOs working in the field of disaster risk reduction have helped strengthen the agency of women through building their disaster awareness and skills (NRCRCS 2019; Tearfund 2019). Through providing skill and awareness-building opportunities, NGOs and INGOs have provided opportunities for women to build their own capacities to respond to and recover from disaster. Nevertheless, there are still assumptions that need to be addressed for more gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction.

There is some evidence to suggest that NGOs and INGOs have empowered women for sustainable and resilient recovery through engaging them in recovery implementation and developing their capacity to become key contributors and take ownership of their own recovery; however, the majority of this evidence appears to be anecdotes, and there is a lack of hard evaluated data and statistic which support this assertion. One key aspect of this which featured prominently in interviews was the

promotion of their economic livelihoods, which women felt earned them more respect in their community. This will be discussed further in the following section.

Transforming discriminatory structures and undertaking partnerships

Many NGO and INGO interview participants explained how their organisations work in partnership with a range of actors from civil society, such as community groups, as well as the government and private sector, to collaborate on projects and transform discriminatory social norms, custom, values, and laws. Facilitating capacity-building and resilience necessitates collective efforts from stakeholders across the community (Norris *et al.* 2008), and several NGOs and INGOs have sought to enhance the capacities of minority groups through advocacy. One of these explained:

> The Government of Nepal, they have clearly mentioned that there is a provision for those people [minorities], that is called social security, you know. And that is our goal at [our organisation]. Many peoples of the local community from the remote area, they did not know the provisions of the government to us. For example, there is provision to the minority people, people with disability, single women, but they don't know that. They don't have the access to those kinds of provisions from the government, so it is necessary to advocate them, to aware them. So this is our goal, we are advocating those people, tell them provision from the government agencies, to get those kinds of supports.
>
> (INGO interviewee #1, male)

Another interviewee explained how their organisation seeks to support vulnerable communities:

> There is not only vulnerability risk and, they may have capacity as well, which they may not know also, and some traditional knowledge, they are adapting but they do not know of their capacity, that is also the things, um, we are, what we do, we support them with our technical knowledge and let them know… and if necessary we provide, improve the techniques that they are using, improving with the time, with the nature of the community.
>
> (INGO interviewee #7, male)

It is broadly accepted that gender-, caste- and ethnic- differentiated impacts of disasters exist; however, this does not always translate into differentiated capacity-building efforts to better equip individuals to cope with future disasters.

Interviews with NGO and INGO facilitators revealed that various initiatives are underway to assist communities in strengthening their capacity, rebuilding their lives and their homes, and preparing for future calamities, such as livelihoods trainings and disaster awareness training. However, there appears to be limited quantifiable results which clearly demonstrate that women's capacities have been

built in the aftermath of the earthquake. The solutions which NGOs and INGOs provide – engaging in gender-responsive planning, undertaking community consultation, and incorporating gender and social inclusion content into their programs – are in fact nothing new and innovative. Rather, interview participants simply espoused the routine project cycle management which is already taking place – and does not have hard empirical evidence of strengthening the capacity of women to respond to disaster.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how non-governmental institutions have sought to build and strengthen women's capabilities post-disaster, through examining to what degree they have identified and prioritised the needs of vulnerable groups, planned for their sensitive recovery, and enhanced their capabilities. My analysis of I/NGOs working in the field of disaster risk reduction demonstrates that although preliminary action has been taken towards building the capacities of women after disaster, there are still many opportunities for improvements in this area. Disaster recovery has provided an opportunity for inequalities to be redressed, however, many initiatives relating directly to gender are yet to make it beyond the planning stage. There is a lack of real, substantive evidence that capacity-building initiatives have played an instrumental role in transforming gender roles and norms in Nepali society. The next chapter, 'Integrating Women's Perspectives into Disaster Risk Governance', examines this issue from the perspective of women who live in Bhaktapur and are members of the Newari community.

CHAPTER 6: INTEGRATING WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES INTO DISASTER RISK GOVERNANCE

In this chapter, I draw upon the unique lived experiences of 28 Newari women who reside in Bhaktapur municipality and experienced the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. I begin by discussing how these women have navigated disaster risk since the earthquake, with a particular emphasis upon their participation (or lack thereof) in programmes that aim to enhance their capacity to cope with future disasters. In this way, I include not only the perspective of I/NGO employees, but also the participants themselves. Next, I discuss the gendered barriers that may serve to constrain these women and impede their ability to build disaster resilience, thus further entrenching their vulnerability. By recognising these factors, we can then begin to address them in order to make participation more equitable. Following this, I explore the actions undertaken by women in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. I demonstrate that traditional gender roles were both reinforced and challenged, with many women conforming to traditional notions of women's behaviour, yet many also undertaking actions that fall outside the domestic sphere and are traditionally perceived as being 'men's work'. Finally, I will show that although Newari women living in this community have encountered new forms of insecurity as a direct result of the earthquake, post-recovery conditions have fostered long-term positive social and economic change.

Navigating Disaster Risk: Women's Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes

The question of who participates in disaster programs – as well as who is excluded or self-excludes, and why – is pivotal to understanding how sustainable, inclusive and comprehensive disaster risk management can be fostered within communities. My research found that 4 out of 5 female participants located in Bhaktapur had participated in at least one disaster risk reduction activity since the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. First aid training was the activity most commonly undertaken by women, followed closely by disaster preparedness meetings and community events focused on disaster preparedness. 52% of women had participated in more than one disaster risk reduction activity since the earthquake, and 90.9% of women said that participating in disaster risk reduction activities has led to a change in their understanding of disasters. For example, one female interviewee who had participated in many disaster risk reduction activities since the earthquake (first aid training, disaster simulation drill or evacuation exercise, disaster preparedness meeting and community event focused on disaster preparedness), explained in her interview that her participation had resulted in a change of her perspective with an increased self-awareness of the pivotal role she could play in the event of a disaster. Similarly, another female participant described how her involvement in disaster risk reduction

activities (first aid training and a household visit from a volunteer) had led to increased knowledge and confidence about what to do in the event of a disaster:

> There has been a change in terms of helping victims who get injured and what to do when such incidents happen. (Baijanthi)

A change in understanding fell into four main categories: self-awareness of individual power and responsibility in the event of disaster, the importance of early preparation, increased first aid knowledge and being able to act calm and collected in the time of disaster. However, 44.8% of female participants admitted that they did not currently have a disaster preparedness plan, indicating that this is an opportunity that institutions aiming to foster disaster preparedness can utilise to build capacity within the community.

Barriers to Women's Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction Activities

My research found that 1 in 5 women had not taken part in any type of disaster risk reduction activities. Interview participants discussed a number of barriers that they believed may constrain women's participation in disaster risk reduction programmes. These fall into five main categories: gendered barriers, physical barriers, practical barriers, psychological barriers, and the belief that no barriers exist. Table 7, below, demonstrates the broad responses provided to the question, 'Why do you believe that women may not participate in disaster risk reduction activities?'

Barriers to Women's Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction Activities				
Gendered Barriers	Physical Barriers	Practical Barriers	Psychological Barriers	Other
Not allowed by family or husband Lack of family support Household role results in limited free time Programmes are male dominated and no platform exists for women's voice Fear of harassment Busy looking after children and family members Not comfortable speaking in front of family members, for instance, husbands and in-laws Programmes are run at inconvenient times, e.g. when women must take their children to school	Lack of mobility e.g. disability Physical location Poverty (must work in order to survive; therefore limited time and resources to participate)	Education level Language barrier Lack of awareness of disaster programmes	Lack of confidence	Belief that no barriers exist

Table 4. Barriers to Women's Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction Activities

Here, I draw upon my fieldwork to suggest that the capacity of women to exercise 'choice' in the realm of disaster risk reduction is complex and dependent upon a range of factors, for instance, the time and energy women have available after undertaking household chores and caring for the family and their level of confidence to participate, which in turn can depend on their social status, level of education, and other factors.

Gendered Barriers to Women's Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction

The most common responses provided by women relate to directly to traditional gender roles and gender norms in Nepali society – for example, some women stated that they are not allowed to participate in programmes because it is forbidden by their husband or family or discussed the social expectations that accompany the traditional role of women as housewives. Sanjiya, a 28-year-old woman who was running her own shop selling brightly coloured pashminas and bags covered in ornate designs, was also studying part-time for her Masters in accounting, explained:

> In Bhaktapur there is a traditional concept, traditional concept of the family after marriage. The women have to stay in the home and do housework within household, none of them are allowed to go outside, and if they go outside they have much, much more knowledge… the main thing is, we [society] have to educate the women… when they are educated they automatically know, what is preparedness. They know to take some measure to protect from the earthquake –not only the earthquake, but any kind of natural hazard. (Sanjiya)

This statement highlights that in order to participate in disaster programmes, some women must negotiate gendered power structures and challenge traditional gender norms, potentially resulting in reprisals from men or their communities. Women's difficulties in attending disaster risk reduction programs are further compounded by motherhood and their socialisation as caregivers:

> In Nepal, women mostly have work to do at home, especially they are for home, that is why. And they have children… (Kasmitha)

Within Nepali society, women are traditionally characterised as wives and mothers, and much emphasis is placed upon the notion of being a 'good' woman: that is, a woman who is focused on the family and obedient to her husband (Skinner and Holland 1998: 9). These historical gender norms serve to constrain women's participation in disaster risk reduction initiatives and are inextricably bound to the dominant Hindu social structure. In accordance with this system of beliefs, women have a lesser social status than men and are considered subordinate in every aspect of their lives. As one woman explained:

> They [the women] have to take care of their children. Like I cannot go anywhere, with all my children, and sit there. (Hitu)

Further compounding this issue is the fact that disaster programmes are sometimes run at times which are inconceivable for women, for instance, at times when they must take their children to school (Cornwall 2008). As the feminist theorist Enarson (2006: 27) asserts:

> Growing up female' increases women's disaster risk, for example when women socialised as caregivers ignore their own physical or psychological needs and put the safety of others first – or are placed second or third in cultural contexts that value the lives of girls less than those of boys.

The power that husbands and (typically male) family members have over women's participation in disaster programmes was also listed as a constraint, as some women may experience scolding and reprisals from their family. As one female participant stated:

> If your family do not want you to participate, then it can be very hard (Fatehjit)

Disaster risk reduction is founded on the notion of active agency and citizenship (Watson 2017: 487), however, there are many reasons why individuals and groups may choose not to participate in the initiatives available. It is important to recognise the constraints in women's lives that serve to limit their agency and shape their choices. The capabilities of women to 'be and do' within the realm of disaster risk reconstruction in Bhaktapur is directly correlated to their position in society and the power structures that govern their lives. Women's decisions regarding participation in disaster programs are multifaceted and governed by power structures, meaning that they are not always in a position where they are able to fully exercise choices without facing some kind of reprisal or compromise (Nussbaum 1999). The capacity of women to exercise individual agency is dependent upon their ability to mitigate power relations and make choices that are reconfigured in relation to others. As Cornwall (2008) notes:

> For some [women], the opportunity costs of taking part [in programs] simply do not outweigh the benefits of doing so; these costs are rarely taken into account.

For many women, participating in disaster risk reduction is challenging, as it requires them to navigate a terrain filled with power imbalances and possibly sacrifice valuable time that could be better spent working in the home, caring for children, or building their livelihood (Enarson 2009). In some instances, for example, it would appear that limited planning has gone into the timing of disaster risk reduction activities, which are sometimes run at times that are inconvenient for women because they must take their children to school. For some women, the perceived costs of attending disaster risk reduction initiatives is not seen to outweigh the benefits. It is important to remember that a woman's decision not

to participate in disaster risk reduction programmes may be a voluntary decision, which in turn enables her with more time for her livelihood, household chores and other tasks, meaning it can be a positive choice in some ways. Women's decision to self-exclude themselves from participating in disaster risk reduction activities was in some cases associated with a lack of confidence and a fear of speaking in front of esteemed and powerful family members, for instance, parents, husbands, and in-laws. This demonstrates that participation is not a seamless process; instead, the power relations between different actors shape the outcomes, and that these relations need to be mitigated to facilitate better gender inclusion in disaster risk management.

Other Barriers to Women's Participation in Disaster Risk Governance

Interview participants also discussed a number of other barriers that they believed may hinder women's participation in disaster risk reduction programs. Women are disproportionately affected by all barriers as they begin with less mobility, resources and power, whether it be economic, social, or physical (Enarson 2009). Many women are at increased risk of higher levels of illiteracy, poverty, and sex and gender based violence as a direct result of their gender (Aryal 2016: 1).

Physical barriers were cited as a constraint to participation, for instance, a lack of mobility, physical location (i.e., their location being too remote to participate), and time constraints as a result of being impoverished and therefore required to work long hours. The literature suggests that women experience restricted mobility when compared with men (Uteng 2002; Silvey 2000), and further, that women are typically more time poor as a direct result of their socialisation as caregivers, putting their family members first (Enarson 2009).

Practical barriers, such as education level, language barriers, a lack of awareness of programs and the belief that participation is not necessary were also discussed by women. Many of these also have gender as a cross-cutting factor; for example, the male literacy rate is 75.1%, compared with the female literacy rate of 57.4% (Central Bureau of Statistics 2011), and therefore, it is possible to conclude that women are more likely to be affected by practical barriers to participation than men. Women also mentioned that psychological barriers may serve to constrain women; for instance, some women lack confidence and are afraid to participate. This may be related, at least in part, to their submissive position in society.

This research finds that patriarchal culture hinders gender inclusion in disaster management through the maintenance and reproduction of gender norms within disaster management. Discussions with women evidenced that many women feel their participation is socially unacceptable or that their

position within the domestic sphere prevents them from the time and resources necessary to be actively involved in their own disaster management. It is evident, then, that participation of women in disaster risk reduction initiatives is influenced by physical, practical and psychological factors related to gender norms and relations. My research highlights the gendered experiences of women navigating disaster risk reduction in a post-disaster era, with an emphasis upon the obstacles they experience that impact their ability to enhance their capacity to cope with future disasters. It is vital that these barriers are considered and addressed by institutions aiming to enhance women's capacities to cope with disaster.

Disaster, Gender Roles and Short- and Long-Term Change

My interviews undertaken with Nepali women and men, NGO and INGO employees and a government official demonstrated a strong consensus that women played a pivotal role in the immediate aftermath of the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. Traditional gender roles were both adhered to and challenged, with many women conforming to traditional notions of women's behaviour, yet many also undertaking actions that fall outside the domestic sphere and are traditionally perceived as being 'men's work'. I explore how gender roles shifted at different stages of the disaster, including in the immediate aftermath and short-term recovery stage, and in the longer-term, and discuss the conditions that have fostered these changes.

Short-Term Change for Women

Table 8, below, lists the responses received from women regarding actions they undertook following the earthquake.

Actions Undertaken by Women After the Earthquake	
Traditional 'Women's' Roles	Traditional 'Men's' Roles
Mass cooking for the community	Clearing bricks and debris
Stay within the temporary shelters	Engineering and technical assistance
Care for children, elderly, the wounded and animals	Leadership and management
Offer emotional and psychological support	First responders
Worry about children and family	Spread disaster awareness within community

Table 5. Actions Undertaken by Women After the Earthquake

As demonstrated in the table, many women adhered to traditional 'women's roles'– caring for the wounded and their families, providing emotional support, cooking for the community, and staying within

their tent (aka re-enacting their 'household' role and domestic duties). Many women described how they provided psychological support in the aftermath, for instance:

> After the earthquake, I just help the people to be calm, and to be not worry, and to be safe in the place, and also not to worry, worry, because… if you worry a lot then and our mind is so distracted and we are so confused what to do and what not to do. (Sanjiya)

Similarly, another female participant recounted how she witnessed women assisting in the community:

> Most of them, they are taking care of the children, family, community peoples… helping them. (Lopika)

Interestingly, this same participant categorised herself as having taken no actions after the earthquake, despite stating that she provided emotional support to her children and family. This suggests that she does not place value upon her actions. Another participant stated:

> After two week, we have made a plan in school, for those people who are suffering from mentally… we help there, and help the mental problems, and help to not stress and to relax, like meditation, for children there are kinds of programmes for small children who were not going at that time, they are not going to school, so they spend time there playing games, things like that.
> (Dhanvi)

Many women and men discussed how women undertook mass cooking within the community. This was widely recognised by male participants:

> The women gathered to make a group, feed them, cook food in the same place for everyone. (Bikash, male)

> They play a different role, like they were cooking in the tents.
> (Bishal, male)

This finding corroborates Moreno and Shaw's (2018) case study in Chile, where "women recalled that they spontaneously expanded their skills from a domestic/household level to a community level by cooking for the community… this was an opportunity to make women's domestic role more visible and change their vulnerable position of housewife to a more active community role."

Women's lesser social status has been reinforced by many women, who have internalised this system and passively accepted the roles imposed upon them, thus perpetuating gender discrimination. Some participants expressed biological essentialist beliefs regarding men and women's ability to help after the

earthquake - for instance, suggesting that women have different strengths and skills to men and therefore they play different roles during times of disaster. For example:

> Women helped yes, but it was difficult to play the role, duty of male during that incident, and so on. It is difficult due to strength, ideas, skills, things like that. (Salmee)

However, there was evidence to suggest that many women challenged stereotypical notions of femininity in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Many women discussed how they undertook physical labour and/or saw other women helping to clear bricks and debris:

> Because of the earthquake, the houses destroyed, and I'm going to help them… I just help them to move the brick… we just go to help, to carry the stones and the repairs. (Sanjiya)

It is estimated that approximately 42% of people engaged in clearing debris were women (Shakya 2016: 78). My research corroborates other studies that have found women acted as powerful agents of change during and after disasters; for instance, in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, which devastated Honduras and Nicaragua in 1998, women played a crucial role in recovery efforts, including hauling cement and building temporary shelters (GFDRR n.d.: 3). It is likely, in the instance of Nepal, that the actions undertaken by women were stimulated by the post-earthquake conditions – for example, many men were overseas at the time of the disaster due to out-migration (Kari and Salike 2019) and slow action undertaken by the government and NGOs in some communities led to women having to fill the gap. As one woman stated:

> There was no help from NGOs... we had to establish shelter, women helped to move the bricks. (Tika)

This statement shows that, contrary to the perspectives of many NGO and INGO interviewees in the last chapter, some community members did not believe that they received adequate assistance after the earthquake.

The Gorkha earthquake served to diffuse the boundaries between traditional gender roles, enabling women to extend their domestic duties beyond the household and also undertake tasks typically deemed as 'men's work', thus realising their own potential and also changing their perceptions by males in the community. This study supports the findings of Mulyasari and Shaw (2013: 2137) – that women "can become active agents of change and thus act beyond their usual domestic roles and responsibilities in order to contribute to the overall enhancement of community resilience."

Long-Term Change for Women

Although there is broad consensus among disaster scholars that disasters provide a 'window of opportunity' through which gender disparities can be addressed (Alston 2013; Drolet *et al.* 2015), less is known about the extent to which this change can be triggered (Moreno and Shaw 2018; Pacholok 2013). My research suggests that post-disaster recovery conditions have fostered long-term social, economic and psychological change, in addition to increased disaster awareness. Newari women discussed these changes, as indicated in Table 9, below:

Long-Term Change for Women				
Social Change	Economic Change	Psychological Change	Disaster Awareness	Other
Positive: Increased social mobility – it is more socially acceptable for women to leave the household and communicate more freely with men from outside the family unit More awareness regarding women's needs Increased unity Increased involvement in decision-making and increased bargaining power at home and in the community Earnt respect by helping in the community *Negative:* More working women means that the elderly feel lonely	*Positive:* More skills training available e.g. handicrafts, reconstruction More livelihood programmes and projects Small work – but not position work More jobs available in NGOs, reconstruction and labour *Negative:* Livelihoods destroyed Houses destroyed	*Positive:* Increased confidence *Negative:* Trauma	*Positive:* Better understanding of disasters More disaster programmes and workshops available	Not aware of any change

Table 6. Long-Term Change for Women

Long-term social changes were most commonly discussed by women when they were discussing positive outcomes from the earthquake. Many women felt that there was a strong sense of community cohesion and unity after the earthquake that strengthened long-term bonds, corroborating findings from previous studies that in the aftermath of a disaster, unity can be fostered within the community (Hillebrand and Closson 2015). As one participant stated,

> They [men and women] worked together. After the earthquake, the next day, the family all worked together. All the women… all the men, all together, all participating. I think women were maintaining pace with the men and everyone was working together. (Ishya)

This led to a sense of pride among many women. One participant proudly summed up her feelings about women's contribution in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake:

> I think women lead in the society, even though they lose their house, family members. They change so much, and get respected and awarded. (Hanka)

There was a broad consensus among women that their contributions in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake had changed men's perceptions of women's capabilities in society, and that women had gained respect and prestige from their male counterparts, who now recognise their ability to undertake tasks that fall outside of their usual domestic sphere. This perception was corroborated by NGO and INGO observations, for instance:

> After the earthquake, the first thing they [the community] thought, like our unity has become stronger than before, like, we were divided in the different roles in a different way, but now they realise that we have to come together and make a combining force
>
> (INGO Interviewee #5, female).

Some women also expressed an increase in their confidence as a result of this gained respect. My research showed that women felt empowered through their participation in disaster risk management after disaster, and that they felt they received recognition and praise from the men in the community. However, this still indicates that women are seeking validation from men within a patriarchal system. One male interviewee from an INGO stated that he believed women contributed more than their male counterparts in the aftermath of disaster and demonstrated leadership:

> I think woman [are] not just equal, they have more role in managing disaster after, that's what I think, I have seen it… women play bigger role, in emergency, stitching people, treating people, nurses, even the doctors, so definitely equal participation but if you include household management, the ladies, the woman contributed more.
>
> (INGO Interviewee #9, male)

This interviewee also expressed that in his opinion, the role of women had changed drastically, particularly in the employment sector:

> [Prior to the earthquake] if you ask any people in Nepal, who are carpenter[s], they will pick a man, right? Now, the whole mindset is changed. Now, women are trained, hundreds and thousands of women, women are trained on those masonry skills… and in our mind there is a man who builds the house, but now woman can too, so that has changed the mind [of the people]. So earthquake was not that bad for gender empowerment, actually, to change the notion and mindset.

For Nepali women, who are traditionally submissive to patriarchal relations, leadership is an example of social transformation, and also resilience (Shaw and Goda 2004). Research has suggested that overall, women are more likely to encounter challenging environments and resistance than men as a consequence of traditional gender roles that dictate women should be submissive (Chaturvedi et al. 2012).

Positive economic changes were also cited as a consequence of the earthquake. There was a drastic increase in paid employment opportunities for women, particularly in the field of reconstruction. The NRAs mobile masons, for instance, was made up of 20% women, which was described as being an unprecedented number (World Bank 2018). Many female interview participants expressed the view that more employment opportunities were available for women after the disaster:

> Now women can get job and they also get more respect, and have the chance to gain more skills and knowledge. (Biswabandita)
>
> After the earthquake and after the home destroyed, they [women] are compelled to go to some places in the community and have new opportunities. (Lopika)

> They gain the chance to change their ideology and way of thinking. This led to more economic growth activities, like job opportunities and skills workshops. (Feshikha)

Livelihood diversification is a key component of resilience (Goulden 2006; Goulden, Adger and Allison 2013; Marschke and Berkes 2006). One key example of women building their capacity can be seen after disaster, when they were able to adapt to the environmental shocks and resulting economic condition by seizing new livelihood opportunities and filling pre-existing skills gap in the market, particularly in the field of reconstruction, by working as masons. This has led to a new source of income, although women in the reconstruction industry still typically perceive themselves as facing greater sources of adversity and challenges than their male counterparts (World Bank 2018). There is some evidence to suggest that livelihoods programs have lessened the gap between men and women in the workforce in sectors, such as building (Nepali 2020), and some interview participants perceive the earthquake as a catalyst for social change in Nepal. One male INGO participant, for instance, enthuses:

> Women are also learning, you know, mason skills, like making walls, carpentry, women are learning that, and that was not the case in the past. So disaster mason were working, we had lots of discussion, lets making this opportunity is given to the ladies, training is given to the ladies… and that will steer the motion... you know, all that time, if you ask any people in Nepal, who are carpenter, they will pick a man, right? Now the whole mindset is changed. Now women

> are trained, hundreds and thousands of women, who are trained on those masonary skills… and in our mind there is a man who builds the house, but now woman can too, so that has changed the mind. So earthquake was not that bad for gender empowerment, that happened actually, to change the notion and mindset.
>
> (INGO interviewee #11, male)

This quote perpetuates the belief that there are now many women who have gained employment and independent income as a result of post-disaster training in this field. The hard evidence stacks up: the NRA's World-Bank supported Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Project's masons is made up of 20% of masons recruited, which is purportedly a drastic increase (Nepali 2020). It remains to be seen whether work in this area will continue to boom after post-earthquake reconstruction has taken place; given the increasing population and urbanisation occurring across Nepal, it seems likely that this trend may continue into the future. Nevertheless, it is possible that this profession may now be 'devalued' as it becomes 'women's work', whereby gender roles shift but gender relations do not change in the long-term.

A general increase in disaster awareness was also viewed as a positive change by women, for example:

> It has passed these three years (since the earthquake), and at that time, people get more awareness, aware to be in a safe place after the earthquake, they get much more knowledge, and there are lots of awareness programmes conducted in Bhaktapur as well. (Sanjiya)

An INGO employee also explains how awareness training for women has resulted in positive change in some communities:

> I see the awareness raised in the women. When they see people are making houses in a traditional way of making, they just go there and collect a few other women, and they just go there and just worry and make that person who is building house aware of latest technology and resilience concepts, and they go and say that this is not good. Like they teach them and make them aware, and make them understand. Sometimes, in the mind, it is difficult to work on the traditional practices, so they go and say, 'No, we have learnt this, this, and this thing. We learnt this just last year, 2015 earthquake'. Learnt quite a lot because of this traditional way of making houses, something like that, so awareness raised and practiced raised, we can see lots of changes in women. (NGO interviewee #11, male)

However, it remains to be seen how sustainable this will be in the long term, or whether people will become complacent, especially given that ambivalent attitudes towards disaster preparedness remain

quite common, with some participants stating that disasters are unpredictable and may not occur for some time. It is my opinion that those who directly experienced the disaster have gained knowledge; however, during my fieldwork I observed that disaster awareness programs are less available than what they were immediately after the earthquake. This may mean that new generations of Nepalis have less opportunities to partake in disaster risk reduction programmes, making them less disaster aware, notwithstanding the knowledge passed onto them from their family members.

Although post-disaster conditions have fostered some positive changes, there are some new insecurities which have come to light as a consequence of the earthquake. As Moser (1993) observes, women can be simultaneously vulnerable and resilient to disasters. Moreno and Shaw (2018) found that shifts in gender relations are often characterised by contradiction; disasters can both entrench vulnerability for women, yet also accelerate some positive social and economic changes for women. The gender-based vulnerabilities faced by women and girls are well-documented in previous research: after the 2015 earthquake, women experienced increased risk of sex and gender-based violence (Alston 2013; UNDP 2019), trafficking, domestic violence, child marriage and sexual abuse (Thurairajah and Baldry 2010: 356). The earthquake also had a devastating effect upon the economy, estimated at half of Nepal's GDP (Internal Displacement Monitoring System 2018: 1). These vulnerabilities are compounded in the aftermath of disaster, undermining the need for women to increase their disaster resilience (Eastin 2018: 289).

Some female participants noted the detrimental psychological effects of the earthquake upon their mental health. One participant, for instance, has been on medication since the earthquake to help her cope with trauma. Similarly, many women lost husbands and lost work as a direct consequence of the earthquake. Women have experienced trauma and been crippled by the loss of their livelihoods, homes and family members. For example, one woman stated:

> People have found it so hard to recover from that stress, and how to manage the home that was destroyed by the earthquake, they can't do any other activities. (Gavya)

There is a broad consensus among scholars that natural hazards can foster 'windows of opportunity' to promote gender equality (Bradhsaw 2013; Horton 2012); nevertheless, there is also evidence to suggest that in many instances, these changes may be temporary, and traditional gender norms re-established and upheld after the disaster (Pacholok 2013). In the instance of Nepal, I contend that the Gorkha earthquake has led to pathways for transformative change in the social and economic landscape, although there is still resistance from historical patriarchal patterns. Evidence shows that in the aftermath of the earthquake, women increasingly undertook skills training in areas traditionally

deemed to be 'men's work', particularly in the building sector, in order to counteract the large skills shortage largely caused by male migration overseas.

Some scholars have argued that natural hazards have the propensity to promote major change within societies (Prince 1920); others have theorised that disasters instead accelerate or decelerate pre-existing trends (Oliver-Smith 1986). I contend that these theories are not mutually exclusive: instead, both can be triggered by environmental conditions. For instance, the number of women employed in reconstruction drastically increased after the earthquake (World Bank 2018), as homes and infrastructure needed to be rebuilt. At the time of the earthquake, male emigration was high, causing a skills shortage in this area; however, there is no evidence to suggest that women had begun to fill this gap prior to the earthquake. Instead, this societal change was directly triggered by the occurrence of the earthquake, which forced women into this role. On the other hand, other changes, such as increased women's ability to undertake traditional 'men's roles', could be perceived as a pre-existing trend which was accelerated by the occurrence of the earthquake. However, the extent to which progressive shifts in social and economic relations are triggered by natural hazards, as opposed to other factors in the socio-political and economic landscape, is unclear (Pacholok 2013). For example, there is much change in Nepal. For instance, the country has averaged a growth rate of approximately 7% in the last few years (CBS 2020a), resulting in more employment opportunities (GoN 2020: xi); the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita has drastically increased by 130.5% in the last 20 years (GoN 2020: 2); Nepal has made progress in the Human Development Index (HDI), increasing from 0.380 in 1990 to 0.579 in 2018 (GoN 2020: 2); and Nepal has increased its ranking in the Global Innovation Index (NPC 2020a).

Although women are still constrained by traditional gender norms, the past century has given rise to a number of movements towards gender equality. The advent of modernisation and increased development, particularly access to education, has slowly begun to change perceptions of women in modern Nepali society, particularly in Kathmandu and other major cities. Nevertheless, multidimensional poverty, difficult geographic terrain and other circumstances pose challenges to this development. It is foreseeable that these trends will continue: Nepal's 15th plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, envisioned as 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali', aims to increase national income per capita, stimulate a higher average economic growth per annum and reduce the poverty rate, while simultaneously boosting literacy and the agricultural, industrial and service sectors respectively (GoN 2020: 9). Regarding gender equality, the plan states that it aims to eliminate wage discrimination, SGBV and child marriage, while simultaneously increasing women's proportion is public

service decision-making positions 4-fold, to 7.5% of total employees in this sector (GoN 2020: 9). However, as the figure below demonstrates, gender still remains the least financed sector:

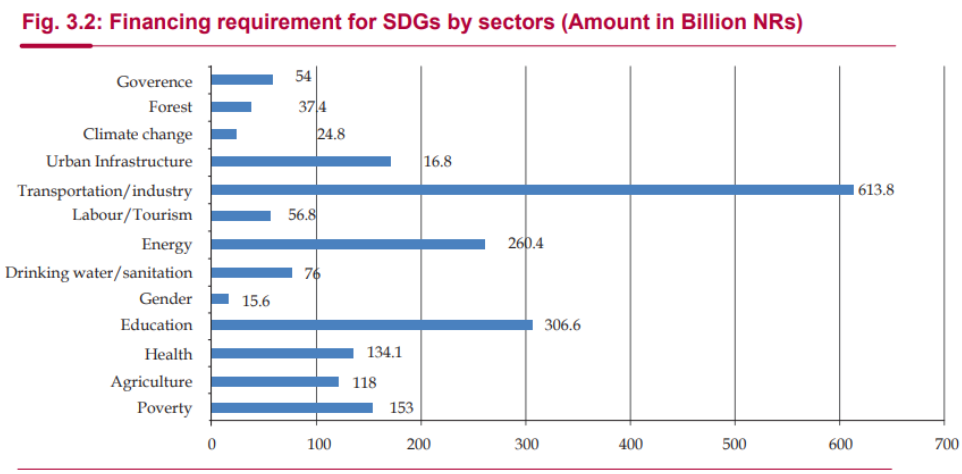

Figure 7. Financing Requirement for SDGs by Sectors. Adapted from the 'National Review of Sustainable Development Goals', Government of Nepal 2020, p. 9.

Currently, the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP-2016-2023), which aims to facilitate gender equality within the education sector, is being implemented across Nepal (GoN 2020: 10). The President's Women Empowerment Program is also planned to promote women's rights (GoN 2020: 10); of course, it remains to be seen how effective these initiatives will be in practice.

Conclusion

It is clear that traditional gender roles were both adhered to and challenged in the aftermath of disaster, with many women taking on traditional 'men's' work. The post-earthquake conditions also fostered long-term societal change for women, including improvement in women's involvement in the economy and increased disaster awareness. Nevertheless, the catastrophe also created new areas of insecurity which need to be addressed, such as trauma and loss of livelihoods for some women, and gender-based discrimination in new livelihood roles traditionally designated for men. Women were able to become active agents during the recovery process, extend beyond their usual domestic duties, and undertake new opportunities made available by the earthquake, contributing economically and socially, as seen in similar disaster research (Dhungel and Ojha 2012; Gaillard et al. 2017; IFRC 2010; Moreno and Shaw 2018; Shah 2012). It is evident, then, that Nepali women possess capacities, skills and

knowledge that are able to positively contribute to disaster risk reduction and recovery. These should be acknowledged and supported as they can lessen vulnerability, reduce losses, and increase resilience for their families and communities. It is critical to understand the experiences and challenges faced by vulnerable groups in disasters in order for these issues to be addressed throughout the construction process, and to consider their capabilities and potential in disaster risk reduction. The next chapter will discuss how power structures need to be transformed in order to promote more equitable opportunities for women to participate in disaster risk reduction in Nepali society.

CHAPTER 7: TOWARDS GENDER-RESPONSIVE DISASTER GOVERNANCE IN NEPAL: A DISCUSSION

This research has highlighted that a policy-implementation exists in disaster management in Nepal; whereby there has been a fairly weak translation of policy commitments into practice. In this chapter, I discuss what is required to transform current gender relations and to decrease gender inequalities so that women's involvement in disaster governance is improved. In particular, I discuss the implications of the policy-implementation gap and provide suggestions as to how this gap can be addressed to reduce slippages between policy and practice and hence improve gender-responsive disaster governance in Nepal.

There are a number of implications associated with the policy-implementation gap that exists in disaster management in Nepal. It means that gaps in gender equality are not being addressed and rectified as a result of government action. A lack of clear guidelines as to how appropriate institutional and policy mechanisms for gender-responsive disaster management at all levels can be implemented indicates that this will not occur; and a lack of policy/program evaluation makes it difficult to assess what is actually happening on the ground, whether it is effective, and what improvements can be made, in line with the policy cycle. Similarly, confusion surrounding gender-responsive budgeting and it being co-opted for other purposes implies that women, who are already more disadvantaged to their male counterparts, will continue to leave women vulnerable and unable to reap the benefits of programs and facilities funded with this money, meaning they will have less chances to participate, develop their capacities, and share in the benefits of disaster risk knowledge. Furthermore, unequal gender representation within government means that women's voices will continue to be unheard and that decisions surrounding disaster risk management will be made by men who have different experiences and needs in times of disaster. Given its status as an earthquake-prone country, it is foreseeable that in the future, Nepal will experience an earthquake again, and how the people respond and bounce back is largely dependent upon equal and inclusive participation and knowledge in and of disaster risk management and reduction. For these reasons, it is imperative that the gap is addressed. Here, I provide a range of recommendations as to how this can be achieved.

Addressing the Policy-Implementation Gap

Policy Implementation

In order for the policy-implementation gap to be overcome, a range of steps must be undertaken to address the root causes of this gap. It is possible that, in this context, 'effective' policy implementation is hindered by a lack of political will. Policy rhetoric is an important means through which funds can be secured from international development agencies and other funding bodies, however, as evidenced by other studies (Deepa 2002; Ali and Syed 2017), does not mean more equitable gender relations in reality within a highly patriarchal society. In this instance, it is critical the Government is held accountable by donors. First, it is imperative that financing is available and utilised to support gender-responsive disaster management. The Ministry of Home Affairs (2017) argues that budget constraints are a major obstacle in achieving disaster risk reduction goals; nevertheless, a recent report demonstrates that more than half of Nepal's climate budget for FY 2017-2018 has not been used. It is possible that this results from either mismanagement or corruption, particularly given that previous research has suggested this is prevalent within the government (Baniamin and Jamil 2018; Jarvis 2020; Timalsina 2016). This could potentially be addressed through a corruption commission. Through promoting transparency, the public (and donors) can be confident that money is not being co-opted for other purposes. Furthermore, through allocating funding specifically for gender-responsive development, more financing can be available to support programs.

Currently, the United Nations (2018) have claimed that gender-responsive budgeting in Nepal has been misunderstood due to a lack of technical capacity and understanding, and thus has been and co-opted for other purposes and poorly institutionalised. In order to ensure that gender-responsive budgeting actually strengthens gender mainstreaming perspectives into disaster budgeting (and in other areas), it is critical that a clear guide for gender-responsive budgeting is developed and followed, as has happened in other countries, such as South Africa (Republic of South Africa n.d.: 9). Furthermore, concise gender response indicators should be used, and outputs should be considered explicit indicators of performance. According to the 'Gender Responsive Budgeting Tool' produced by Oxfam (2020), the budgeting process for gender-responsive budgeting should involve three key elements: gender analysis, gender-disaggregated data, and costing for gender equality. Furthermore, it is vital that women are sufficiently represented within budget decision-making positions, in order to ensure that their needs and priorities are addressed.

The success of gender-responsive disaster policies, once implemented, must then be determined by monitoring, evaluation and refinement. Successful policy implementation is dependent upon a range of factors; for instance, whether the policy is based upon evidence (Galea 2013; Rycroft-Malone and Bucknall 2010), engaged a range of stakeholders in its design and implementation (Rechel *et al.* 2019), and is gender-inclusive (Enarson *et al.* 2006). The next section will emphasise the importance of policy coherence.

The UNEG Norms for Evaluation (2005) define evaluation as:

> an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity… it focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and casualty, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof.

By ensuring that policy documents, project plans and evaluation reports are accessible to the public, the Government can provide transparency while simultaneously remaining open to policy analysis and critiques from external reviewers. This, in turn, could inform future policy and lead to better practice. For this reason, I argue that evaluation reports should be mandatory, and that wherever possible, these evaluation reports should include gender analysis. This in turn will provide critical information regarding the outputs of programs, which can also inform changes to programs, and this should provide the basis of all decisions regarding gender mainstreaming (Clancy and Mohlakoana 2020: 6), which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Policy Coherence

One aspect of successful policy design which is particularly relevant to the Nepali context is policy coherence. A clear gap exists between policy and practice, exacerbated by a lack of clear guidelines and standards, a lack of comprehensive understanding of risks, and conflicting information regarding roles and responsibilities of different departments, and a lack of implementation and clear outcomes. There is a need to ensure that existing and future policies are clear, concise, and detailed, as previous studies have revealed this is critical for effective implementation (Garashi *et al.* 2021; Giradrdi 2019). My research reveals that many national policies and frameworks are vague in description, do not have a definitive time frame for completion (for instance, 'short term', 'long term') and lack detail as to how outputs will be achieved, measured and evaluated for effectiveness. This lack of detail means that there are no or few guidelines for the implementation of projects and policies. Furthermore, there is a clear need for policy coherence across various domains, for instance, disaster, housing, and health (The Development Dimension 2005), and these must also align with gender policies. To this purpose,

the adoption of gender mainstreaming across all levels of government will assist in clarifying gender dimensions of policies.

Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Audits

Academic literature has also highlighted the importance of government agencies undertaking gender mainstreaming and the goal of women's empowerment through coordinating their efforts about gender inclusion, particularly since this has been shown to be particularly effective by feminist theorists (Enarson 2006). Gender mainstreaming involves integrating a gender perspective into policy and practice as a strategy to reduce gender inequalities; by facilitating the conditions, methods and tools required for effective gender mainstreaming within the government, policy-making and legislative work can be made more relevant to women and interventions more effective.

In addition to an implementation plan, gender mainstreaming can be bolstered by resources, including funding, accountability mechanisms, for instance, audits, and gender equality training for government departments. The government should also ensure the use of gender-sensitive language in policies and texts relating to disaster management. In line with gender mainstreaming principles, women and men should have equal involvement in decision-making; by enforcing gender ratios within departments involved in disaster planning, a number of policy and practice implications could arise, including more of a focus on women's specific needs, and result in turn in the greater participation of women in programs. It is important that an intersectional approach is undertaken which considers women's differential positions because of their gender based upon cross-cutting factors such as caste, class and ethnicity. This is highlighted by my interview with an I/NGO facilitator, who discussed how community feedback led to gender-specific training to ensure women felt comfortable to express their needs to outsiders. Through recognising gender differences in adaptation needs, opportunities and capacities; equitable participation and influence in adaptation decision-making processes; equitable access to financial resources and other benefits. Gender mainstreaming and gender audits promote accountability to gender equality while simultaneously providing data on the differing ways in which women and men experience development programs (UN Women 2013). This information can also help to promote social change through the continual improvement of development programs based upon this two-way exchange of knowledge, which additionally provides opportunities to engage women in the evaluation process and the communication of its results. For these reasons, it is important that the capacities of institutions are built and enhanced to enable gender mainstreaming into disaster risk reduction. A human capability-centred framework should also be introduced and utilised by the Government of Nepal and I/NGOs. By using a human capability-centered framework, which focuses upon what people

are able to be and do, as opposed to a vulnerability framework that instead examines the means of vulnerability (i.e. resources), the potential to expand the capabilities of women in disaster risk governance is greater (Khanh That *et al.* 2018). Given that each individual woman's ability to exercise the capability to participate in disaster governance is determined by three conversion factors – personal (health, skills and education); social (gender roles and power relations); and environmental factors (geographical location) (Moser 1998; Robeyns 2005; Sen 1992), it is critical that the Government of Nepal and I/NGOs undertake steps to ensure that personal and social factors can be developed, for instance, through providing skills-training and encouraging the education of women and girls, and working to actively transform the gender roles that dominate Nepali society. Only when this happens will women be able to gain control over their environment and exercise the capability to participate in disaster risk governance. Through increasing the capacities of institutions, the capabilities of women can be enhanced.

The UN (2009: 30) recommends that organisations establish gender specific data and statistics on the impact of disasters, carry out gender-sensitive vulnerability, risk and capacity assessments and develop gender-sensitive indicators to monitor and measure progress. It is also critical that gender audits are supported by stakeholders to ensure their impact. As Clancy and Mohalkoana (2020: 7) underscore:

> the handing over of a document, no matter how well formulated by all the key stakeholders, is not enough to change policy. There is a need for influential stakeholders to demand policy change and the implementation of changes recommended by a gender audit.

Gender audits are beginning to become more commonplace in Nepal; for instance, gender audits have been undertaken in regards to both energy policies (Clancy and Mohlakoana 2020) and education (Koirala *et al.* 2002). Given the heightened vulnerability of women in times of disaster, it is critical that audits are undertaken in the area of disaster risk management. Furthermore, gender-specific trainings should be undertaken within government departments to ensure that all municipal and federal employees have the knowledge and tools to develop more inclusive policies and programs. These trainings would also have the ability to dispel inaccurate stereotypes and assist policy-makers in better understanding the differential needs and experiences of women (GFDRR n.d.). It is also critical that I/NGOs provide evaluation reports to clearly demonstrate linkages between their activities and outcomes achieved.

Coordination Between Government Departments and I/NGOs

The findings of my research support those of Viji *et al.* (2020), which indicated a lack of coordination between the Government and I/NGOs. Indeed, my interviews with non-state actors highlighted that I/NGO employees in particular are becoming increasingly frustrated by what they perceive to be the Government's lack of urgency regarding disaster risk reduction and management. My research findings support the assertion made by Jones *et al.* (2014) that the state apparatus for managing disaster risk in Nepal remains weak, despite the adoption of numerous policies. In order to increase widespread coordination between government departments, and the Government and I/NGOs, there should be constant consultations and communications to ensure recommendations do not contradict or overlap. Furthermore, research has suggested that governments can provide I/NGOs with valuable leverage to support innovation and accountability, assisting I/NGOs in achieving things that the government themselves may not have the capacity to do (Gbeleou and Schechter 2020).

Overcoming Barriers to Participation

In order to ensure that 'good' disaster governance is taking place, it is critical to ensure that, wherever possible, opportunities for women to take part in disaster risk reduction are available and inclusive (Ali *et al.* 2021; Ginige *et al.* 2009). Interviews with women located in Bhaktapur municipality highlighted a range of barriers that may hinder women's participation, including social, physical, practical and psychological barriers. For this reason, there should be more gender-specific targeted trainings available for women that take into account their unique practices, concerns and needs; in addition to gender-specific trainings targeting men and working to alleviate gendered barriers (Tuladhar *et al.* 2015). Gender-sensitive dissemination of disaster-related information is vital to ensure that women are able to access important information. For example, the UNISDR (2002) highlights that men and women often access information differently, depending upon their social and cultural context. This can play a critical role in mobilising women and fostering their participation in local sustainable initiatives. Differences in the knowledge base, roles, responsibilities, access to information, preferred medium of communication and opportunities for learning, social constraints and cultural practices that impact men and women, and girls and boys differently need to be considered to ensure that as many community members as possible receive, understand and are in a position to respond as best able to early warnings. Furthermore, it is critical for that the underlying causes of these barriers are individually addressed to ensure the advancement of women's rights and inclusion, not just in disaster risk planning, but a vast array of areas. My research found that traditional patriarchal culture hinders gender inclusion efforts within disaster risk governance, in line with previous research (Thapa and

Pathranarakul 2018). Similarly, it corroborates findings by Tuladhar *et al*. (2015) that the current disaster risk reduction education initiatives implemented in Nepal are insufficient. In order to address the first barrier, social norms, programs and trainings undertaken should involve dispelling gender stereotypes and educating both men and women about the differential needs and experiences of women in times of disaster. There should also be a range of programs offered, including mixed-gender and female-only groups that provide women with a safe space to express their needs. Physical barriers could also potentially be addressed through partnering with non-for-profit disability sector and the section of government that aims to help persons with disabilities. Further, persons who specialise in disaster mitigation could visit remote communities to better understand their needs and provide disaster-specific information relating to their context. By forging partnerships across a range of sectors with different specialisation and access to resources, it is foreseeable that innovative ideas and programs could be undertaken and implemented by I/NGOs and government.

Practical barriers, for instance education level, can be dismantled by fostering women's education. Not only does education provide women with the practical tools they need to participate in disaster risk management – for example, the ability to read and write – it also provides them with the opportunity to build confidence to express their ideas and their needs. Through educating women, cultural perceptions and stereotypes given to women will also gradually shift over time, thus contributing to gender equality. Furthermore, in order to ensure other barriers to participation are dissolved, such as a lack of women in parliament as a result of lengthy laws that limit women participating, these should be addressed. Research highlights a direct link between women's inclusion in political representation and the advancement of women's rights (UN 2014). Although the Government of Nepal has made some attempts to increase the involvement of women within the political sphere, a 50:50 political representation is needed, which would fulfil the second demand made in the Kathmandu Declaration (2015). Similarly, entities such as the NRA require female representation. There is also the need to dissolve legal barriers that stipulate women's participation in politics; for instance, rules that mandate women to have already served in politics for many years. Mechanisms should also be created that provide opportunities for women from the grassroots to have more political power, as many women in politics are from privileged backgrounds (Luna 2019: 170). Language barriers can be addressed by using local translators. It is possible that through addressing the other factors, psychological factors will also be addressed at least in part. A lack of confidence can also be mitigated through valuing women's voice and contribution in the realm of disaster risk governance and appointing women in important roles.

National Gender Equality Policy (2021)

The newly released National Gender Equality Policy (2021) suggests that the Government of Nepal will be undertaking a number of measures to build women's capacities, enhance their rights, and advance gender equality in the country. The Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration is the executing agency of this policy and are supported by international development partners such as the European Union, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations (GoN 2021). The overarching aim of the policy is to achieve gender equality through strengthening provincial and local governance systems and enhancing their capacity to deliver services and development outcomes effectively to citizens (GoN 2021: 3). The government intends to achieve this through employing a range of mechanisms, including: (1) collecting sex and gender-disaggregated data; (2) ensuring that the Government's policy and implementation plans are informed by this data; (3) address the barriers of women, excluded and vulnerable groups through building the capacities of government representatives and officials; (3) facilitating policies; (4) building the capacity of government departments to better respond to women's needs, for instance, undertaking gender-training for male staff and employing more women in governance and decision-making processes; (5) undertaking monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programs; (6) reviewing existing policies and practices to better promote gender and social inclusion; (7) sharing knowledge with key stakeholders, including I/NGOs, the private sector and the public; and (8) engaging with civil society organisations promoting the rights of women and marginalised groups. According to the Himalayan News Service (2021), the policy states:

> In order to carry out these objectives, the government will implement the fundamental rights of women and the relevant laws in an effective manner; conduct social awareness programmes; bring about consistency among the federal, provincial and local laws; develop gender-friendly family and society; and enforce the policy of zero-tolerance against gender-based violence.

This policy has the potential to positively impact women's participation in disaster risk governance through dissolving political barriers and generally advancing women's position in society; however, this policy does not include a timeframe within outputs must be achieved. There is a danger, then, that this policy may not be implemented, monitored, evaluated and revised – in a similar manner to the findings of this research, that this has not happened previously. In a similar manner, the policy document states that monitoring, reporting and evaluation will occur 'regularly' and include women – but, again, does not provide a more definitive timeframe. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation will not be undertaken by an independent third party, but rather by the same agency implementing the policy (GoN 2021). In

order to ensure transparency and accountability, the government should instead delegate the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation to I/NGOs, who can make an impartial assessment. I/NGOs can assist the Government of Nepal in transforming gender relations and decreasing gender inequalities by providing the government with technical support, expertise, and improved relations. Given that previous research has indicated that corruption exists within the Government of Nepal (Baniamin and Jamil 2018; Jarvis 2020; Timalsina 2016), I/NGOs can monitor, evaluate and reviews government policies and programs, holding government bodies accountable and thus increasing public trust in the Government (Karkee and Comfort 2016).

Providing slippages between policy and practice are addressed, it is foreseeable that this development will enhance women's capabilities, including in the realm of disaster risk reduction, but particularly will mainstream gender through all departments.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the conditions that need to be in place in order for better gender-responsive disaster policy implementation in the context of Nepal 2022. Throughout this chapter, I have provided key recommendations that should be undertaken by the Government of Nepal and I/NGOs in order to enhance social inclusion, redress gender inequalities, and build women's capacity to respond to future disasters. By implementing these recommendations, governmental and non-governmental institutions can address key gaps in policy, planning and implementation in order to better support equitable participation and involvement in disaster risk governance and support more resilient and sustainable recovery. Until these changes are made and women's capabilities are enhanced, it is not foreseeable that disaster planning in Nepal will be sustainable.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This thesis examined the ways in which governmental and non-governmental institutions have supported, strengthened and built the capabilities of Nepali women since the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. It also explored the earthquake's impact on the role of women in Nepali society, focussing particularly on Newari women who live in Bhaktapur municipality.

Based on a qualitative analysis, encompassing interviews, focus groups, participant observation and document analysis, a number of conclusions can be reached. First, the results indicate that although the Government of Nepal has undertaken a number of steps towards women's inclusion in disaster management, including the formulation of numerous disaster policies, a clear gap exists between policy and practice, exacerbated by a lack of clear guidelines and standards, a lack of comprehensive understanding of risks, and conflicting information regarding roles and responsibilities of different departments, and a lack of implementation and clear outcomes. Second, there is evidence that I/NGOs have undertaken gender-responsive planning in a number of ways, for instance through community consultation and advocacy, although there is a lack of evaluation reports available to clearly demonstrate outcomes in this area. Thirdly, although the majority of Newari women who participated in the project had participated in at least one disaster risk reduction program since the earthquake, the belief was expressed that Nepalese cultural norms about women are the biggest barrier to women's participation in disaster reduction programmes. It is vital that these barriers are considered and addressed by institutions aiming to enhance women's capacities to cope with disaster. Fourthly, my research findings suggest that in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, traditional gender roles were both adhered to and challenged, with many women conforming to traditional notions of women's behaviour, yet many also undertaking actions that fall outside the domestic sphere and are traditionally perceived as being 'men's work'. This finding is closely linked with my fifth finding, that women are experiencing long-term positive social and economic change since the earthquake, including increased respect within the community, and diversification of livelihood opportunities, particularly in the building sector. Through investing in actions that promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the disaster risk management cycle, institutions can potentially transform unequal power relations that contribute to gender-differentiated vulnerabilities.

This research fills an important gap in the literature through analysing both the steps taken by institutions to simultaneously promote women's inclusion in disaster management and build their capabilities to respond to catastrophic events, while also investigating the gendered barriers that continue to constrain women and limit their involvement in disaster risk governance.

This research clearly demonstrates that a policy-implementation gap exists in the Government of Nepal's disaster management planning. Evidence suggests that more sustainable disaster recovery can be achieved when gender equality and women's empowerment are promoted as part of the recovery process (GFDRR n.d.: 4). Essentially, the aftermath of a disaster can present opportunities for new and progressive gender roles and relationships to emerge, and for pre-existing inequalities to be redressed. I therefore recommend that the Government of Nepal and non-governmental institutions mitigate this gap through a combination of policy coherence, gender mainstreaming, widespread coordination across governmental and non-governmental organisations, gender responsive budgeting and evaluation reports.

There are a number of limitations associated with this study. First of all, the scope of the study is very limited as only 53 people were interviewed. Furthermore, it focused on one location – an urban city, Bhaktapur, located one hour from Kathmandu. It also focused on Newari women and therefore does not account for differences between women, such as caste, class, ethnicity, and location. Another limitation of this thesis is that the private sector was not analysed, despite its crucial role in disaster governance. To better understand the implication of the policy-implementation gap, future studies should further examine whether gender mainstreaming of disaster risk governance in Nepal has occurred and the capacities of vulnerable people to cope with disaster. It should also examine the role of the private sector for enhancing women's capabilities in times of post-disaster. Furthermore, future research could examine the impact of changing gender roles on gender relations in the longer term, and what this means for women's and men's lived realities.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions Category 1 Participants (Nepali women)

1. What does the term 'resilience' mean to you?

2. Do you believe that living through natural hazards has made you more resilient? Why/why not?

3. What actions have you undertaken in order to cope with disaster?

4. What factors have affected your ability to be resilient?

5. Do you believe your role in the community has changed in the aftermath of disaster? Why/why not?

6. What role do you believe women play in post-disaster recovery? Do they play a different role to men?

7. What actions did you take following the Gorkha earthquake?

8. Since the disaster, have you participated in any of the following activities?

- First aid training
- Disaster simulation drill or evacuation exercise
- Disaster preparedness meeting
- Community event focused on disaster preparedness
- Household visit of a volunteer on disaster preparedness

9. Do you actively prepare for future disasters? How? What actions have you taken?

10. In the event of an earthquake in the community, what would you do?

11. Do you have a family plan for earthquakes? What is it? Who knows it?

12. If you are involved in disaster risk reduction, why have you chosen to participate? How long have you been participating, and what is your motivation for participating? If not, why have you chosen not to participate?

13. In the aftermath of the earthquake, did you learn any new skills or become more involved within your community? Were there any positives to come out of the disaster?

14. In the past 12 months, has there been a change in your understanding of disaster?

15. Do you believe there are any barriers that may prevent particular members of the community from participating in disaster risk reduction activities? If so, what?

16. How many women do you know in your community who participate in disaster risk reduction activities?

17. Why do you think women may choose not to participate in disaster risk reduction activities? What steps could be undertaken to increase their involvement?

18. Do you believe that women in your community are better positioned in the aftermath of disaster, or are they experiencing new forms of insecurity?

19. Do you believe that you have a voice in post-disaster recovery? Is your voice heard?

20. Do you believe that you are capable of making a difference in post-disaster recovery?

21. Do you believe that gender, ethnicity and cast dictate which individuals have access and control of community resources in post-disaster recovery? Why/why not?

22. Do you believe that resources are distributed evenly across the community? Does everybody have equal access to these resources, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, caste and location?

23. Do you believe that minority groups are participating in post-disaster recovery? If so, to what extent?

24. Do you believe there is a difference between post-disaster recovery efforts between rural and urban regions?

25. Who do you believe has power in disaster risk reduction efforts? Why?

26. Who in the community has provided you with information about disasters in the last year?

27. Do you believe your community has adequate services and programs to help people after a disaster?

28. Who is most likely to provide you with assistance in the event of an earthquake?

- Family
- Friends
- Neighbours
- Community committee
- Government agencies
- NGOs

29. Do you believe the community can prepare for future disasters? Why/why not?

Interview Questions Category 2 Participants (Nepali men)

1. What does the term 'resilience' mean to you?

2. What actions did you take following the Gorkha earthquake?

3. Since the disaster, have you participated in any of the following activities?

- First aid training
- Disaster simulation drill or evacuation exercise
- Disaster preparedness meeting
- Community event focused on disaster preparedness
- Household visit of a volunteer on disaster preparedness

4. Do you have a family plan for earthquakes? What is it? Who knows it?

5. Do the women in your family and/or social group participate in disaster risk reduction activities? Why/why not?

6. Do you believe the role of women has changed in the aftermath of disaster?

7. Do you believe that women are capable of making a difference in post-disaster recovery?

8. Do you believe women in your community are better positioned in the aftermath of disaster, or are they encountering new forms of insecurity?

9. How many women do you know in your community who participate in disaster risk reduction activities?

10. Why do you think that women may choose not to participate in disaster risk reduction activities? What steps could be undertaken to increase their involvement?

11. Do you believe there are any barriers that may prevent particular members of the community from participating in disaster risk reduction activities? If so, what?

12. How many women do you know in your community who participate in disaster risk reduction activities?

13. Do you believe that gender, ethnicity and cast dictate which individuals have access and control of community resources in post-disaster recovery? Why/why not?

14. Do you believe that resources are distributed evenly across the community? Does everybody have equal access to these resources, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, caste and location?

15. Do you believe that minority groups are participating in post-disaster recovery? If so, to what extent?

16. Do you believe there is a difference between post-disaster recovery efforts between rural and urban regions?

17. Who do you believe has power in disaster risk reduction efforts? Why?

18. Who in the community has provided you with information about disasters in the last year?

19. Do you believe your community has adequate services and programs to help people after a disaster?

Interview Questions Category 3 Participants (I/NGOs)

1. What does the term 'resilience' mean to your organization?

2. How does your organization contribute to disaster risk reduction efforts?

3. Do you believe women in your community are better positioned in the aftermath of disaster, or are they encountering new forms of insecurity?

4. What role do you believe women play in post-disaster recovery? Do they play a different role to men?

5. Do you believe the role of women has changed in the aftermath of disaster?

6. Do you believe that women are capable of making a difference in post-disaster recovery?

7. How many women do you know in your community who participate in disaster risk reduction activities?

8. Why do you think that women may choose not to participate in disaster risk reduction activities? What steps could be undertaken to increase their involvement?

9. Do you believe there are any barriers that may prevent particular members of the community from participating in disaster risk reduction activities? If so what?

10. Do you believe that gender, ethnicity and caste dictate which individuals have access and control of community resources in post-disaster recovery? Why/why not?

11. Do you believe that resources are distributed evenly across the community? Does everybody have equal access to these resources, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, caste and location?

12. Do you believe that minority groups are participating in post-disaster recovery? If so, to what extent?

13. Do you believe there is a difference between post-disaster recovery efforts between rural and urban regions?

14. Who do you believe has power in disaster risk reduction efforts? Why?

15. What steps are being undertaken to ensure activities run by your organization are inclusive of all members of the community, regardless of gender, ethnicity and caste?

16. Do you believe your organisation has adequate services and programs to help people after a disaster?

Interview Questions Category Four Participants (municipal and federal employees)

1. How much money has the government spent over the last year on disaster-related activities?

2. What disaster risk reduction mitigation projects are currently planned, ongoing, or have been completed in the last year?

3. In your opinion, do gender, ethnicity and caste present barriers to participation in disaster risk reduction activities? If yes, is this being addressed?

4. Why do you think that women may choose not to participate in disaster risk reduction activities? What steps could be undertaken to increase their involvement?

5. Do you believe there are any barriers that may prevent particular members of the community from participating in disaster risk reduction activities? If so what?

6. Do you believe that gender, ethnicity and caste dictate which individuals have access and control of community resources in post-disaster recovery? Why/why not?

7. Do you believe that resources are distributed evenly across the community? Does everybody have equal access to these resources, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, caste and location?

8. Do you believe that minority groups are participating in post-disaster recovery? If so, to what extent?

9. Do you believe there is a difference between post-disaster recovery efforts between rural and urban regions?

10. Who do you believe has power in disaster risk reduction efforts? Why?

11. What steps are being undertaken to ensure activities run by the government are inclusive of all members of the community, regardless of gender, ethnicity and caste?

APPENDIX B: EMAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

You are invited to participate in the research project: Post-Disaster Recovery: Nepali Women's Roles in Resilience and Capacity-Building.

The project seeks to understand how 'resilience', referring to the ability of individuals and communities to 'bounce back', is built, lost, or understood by Nepali women who have experienced disaster. Research aims to identify the assets and skills that Nepali women are able to access after disaster, and the choices they make around disaster risk reduction. This project will also examine the role of cultural norms, ethnicity, gender and caste in post-disaster recovery.

Should you be interested in participating, I would appreciate the opportunity to interview you, or somebody from your department. The interview would be approximately one hour, and may be undertaken in either English, Nepali, or Newari.

This research will form the basis for the degree of PhD in International Development at the University of Adelaide, Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Wanner and Professor Andew Skuse.

For further information, please refer to the participant information sheet (attached).

If you are interested in participating, please contact the research team via telephone or email:

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APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – NEPALI WOMEN

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Post-Disaster Recovery: Nepali Women's Roles in Resilience and Capacity-Building
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER: H-2019-003
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Thomas Wanner
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Mackintosh
STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD in International Development

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

The project seeks to understand how 'resilience', referring to the ability of individuals and communities to 'bounce back', is built, lost, or understood by Nepali women who have experienced disaster. Research aims to identify the assets and skills that Nepali women are able to access after disaster, and the choices they make around disaster risk reduction. This project will also examine the role of cultural norms, ethnicity, gender and caste in post-disaster recovery.

This research focuses on building resilience and capacity at the local level while facilitating gender inclusion, to better equip women in the aftermath of natural hazards, and assist them in preparing for future events.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by Natasha Mackintosh. This research will form the basis for the degree of PhD in International Development at the University of Adelaide, Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Wanner and Professor Andrew Skuse.

The project is funded by Adelaide University through the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies Field Research grant.

Why am I being invited to participate?
You are being invited as you are a Nepali woman who lives in either Bhaktapur or Bhimeshwar, aged 18 years or older, or a member of her family or social group.

What am I being invited to do?
You are being invited to participate in the following activities undertaken by the researcher:

1. **Participant observation**: the researcher will attend and observe community meetings and events around disaster risk reduction. Photographs may be taken in order to provide the researcher with visual data, but only at appropriate moments and only with your informed consent.
2. **Semi-structured and unstructured interviews**: the researcher intends to ask a range of open-ended, flexible questions about your opinions on disaster risk reduction. Interviews will take place in a public setting where possible (i.e. cafes, parks etc.), however, if this is not possible, the

interview can take place within your home. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. You may be asked whether they are interested in attending a focus group.

3. **Focus groups**: these will be conducted with a small group of community members and will provide you with the opportunity to hear and respond to different views around disaster risk reduction. Focus groups will take place in a public setting. All focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed. Photographs may be taken in order to provide the researcher with visual data, but only at appropriate moments and only with your informed consent.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?
Participant observation will run for the duration of community meetings and other events around disaster risk reduction (estimated duration 1-2 hours). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups will have a 1 hour duration.

Additional meetings will be offered to you for the purposes of reviewing and editing their transcripts of interviews and focus groups, and discussing possible withdrawal.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
You could be inconvenienced by filling in consent forms and giving up your time to participate in research. It is possible that you may become distressed during interviews or focus groups. In this instance, you will not be coerced to provide information that you are not comfortable with sharing; and can stop the interview or leave the focus group.

If talking about these matters has raised issues you would like to speak with someone about further, please consider contacting the following services:

CMC Nepal (Center for Mental Health and Counselling):
Jeetjung Marg, Kathmandu 44600, Nepal
+977 1-4102037

Nepal Hypnosis Psycho-Social Care Center:
195/77 Thatu Marg, Dhalku, Bhat Bhateni, Kathmandu 44601, Nepal
+977 984-1231389

What are the potential benefits of the research project?
Potential benefits of the project to the participant and the wider community may include the contribution of knowledge to development policy and practice around resilience approaches to community development.

Can I withdraw from the project?
Participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may also decline to answer questions if you choose. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time up until the submission of the thesis.

What will happen to my information?

Confidentiality and privacy: Your identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms in any published form of the data collected. While all efforts will be made to remove any information that might identify you, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, the upmost care will be taken to ensure that minimal identifying details are revealed.

Storage: Data collected throughout the fieldwork process and through the interviews and focus groups will be kept confidential through the use of secure storage. Digital data will be stored on the University of Adelaide's box, where Dr. Thomas Wanner and Professor Andrew Skuse will have access, and on an external password-protected hard drive that will only be accessible by the researcher. Hard copy and primary materials will be stored in a fireproof lockable box while the researcher is in Nepal, and transferred to a locked filing cabinet upon the researcher's return to Australia. Data will be kept by the University of Adelaide for a minimum of 5 years.

Publishing: Data and results will be reported and publicised in the researcher's PhD thesis, along with possible associated publications and conference papers. Your responses from interviews and focus groups will not be individually identifiable in publications – rather, only summary data will be published. However, if you have consented to have photos taken during focus groups or community meetings or activities, these may be published in the thesis unless you withdraw consent to have these included in the thesis.

Sharing: You will be given the opportunity to access interview and focus group transcripts and provided with the opportunity to review and provide feedback. Qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups will be stored in a re-identifiable format. However, if you have consented to have photos taken, these will be stored in an individually identifiable format. The results will be made available to participants upon requests. There is a possibility that the data collected in this project may be used in future projects. Data will be uploaded to the University's data repository, adelaide.figshare.com, which can be accessed by other researchers, and for the purpose of sharing research.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
If you have any questions about the project, please contact the researchers via telephone or email. Contact details are as follows:

Primary Contact
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+61 8 8313 3084
thomas.wanner@adelaide.edu.au

Professor Andrew Skuse
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andrew.skuse@adelaide.edu.au

Natasha Mackintosh
natasha.mackintosh@adelaide.edu.au
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What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
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Phone: +61 8 8313 6028

Email: hrec@adelaide.edu.au

Post: Level 4, Rundle Mall Plaza, 50 Rundle Mall, ADELAIDE SA 5000

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?
If you are interested in participating, please contact Natasha Mackintosh at natasha.mackintosh@adelaide.edu.au

If you know other friends or colleagues who you believe may be interested in participating, please consider distributing the Participant Information Sheet amongst your networks in order to generate awareness.

Yours sincerely,
Natasha Mackintosh, Dr. Thomas Wanner, and Professor Andrew Skuse

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – NEPALI MEN

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

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PROJECT TITLE: Post-Disaster Recovery: Nepali Women's Roles in Resilience and Capacity-Building
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER: H-2019-003
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Thomas Wanner
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Mackintosh
STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD in International Development

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

The project seeks to understand how 'resilience', referring to the ability of individuals and communities to 'bounce back', is built, lost, or understood by Nepali women who have experienced disaster. Research aims to identify the assets and skills that Nepali women are able to access after disaster, and the choices they make around disaster risk reduction. This project will also examine the role of cultural norms, ethnicity, gender and caste in post-disaster recovery.

This research focuses on building resilience and capacity at the local level while facilitating gender inclusion, to better equip women in the aftermath of natural hazards, and assist them in preparing for future events.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by Natasha Mackintosh. This research will form the basis for the degree of PhD in International Development at the University of Adelaide, Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Wanner and Professor Andrew Skuse.

The project is funded by Adelaide University through the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies Field Research grant.

Why am I being invited to participate?
You are being invited as you are a Nepali man who lives in either Bhaktapur or Bhimeshwar, aged 18 years or older, who participates in community meetings and programmes designed to build community capacity and resilience.

What am I being invited to do?
You are being invited to participate in the following activities undertaken by the researcher:

1. **Participant observation**: the researcher will attend and observe community meetings and events around disaster risk reduction. Photographs may be taken in order to provide the researcher with visual data, but only at appropriate moments and only with your informed consent.
2. **Semi-structured and unstructured interviews**: the researcher intends to ask a range of open-ended, flexible questions about your opinions on disaster risk reduction. Interviews will take place in a public setting where possible (i.e. cafes, parks etc.), however, if this is not possible, the

interview can take place within your home. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. You may be asked whether they are interested in attending a focus group.

3. **Focus groups**: these will be conducted with a small group of community members and will provide you with the opportunity to hear and respond to different views around disaster risk reduction. Focus groups will take place in a public setting. All focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed. Photographs may be taken in order to provide the researcher with visual data, but only at appropriate moments and only with your informed consent.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?
Participant observation will run for the duration of community meetings and other events around disaster risk reduction (estimated duration 1-2 hours). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups will have a 1 hour duration.

Additional meetings will be offered to you for the purposes of reviewing and editing their transcripts of interviews and focus groups, and discussing possible withdrawal.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
You could be inconvenienced by filling in consent forms and giving up your time to participate in research. It is possible that you may become distressed during interviews or focus groups. In this instance, you will not be coerced to provide information that you are not comfortable with sharing; and can stop the interview or leave the focus group.

If talking about these matters has raised issues you would like to speak with someone about further, please consider contacting the following services:

CMC Nepal (Center for Mental Health and Counselling):
Jeetjung Marg, Kathmandu 44600, Nepal
+977 1-4102037

Nepal Hypnosis Psycho-Social Care Center:
195/77 Thatu Marg, Dhalku, Bhat Bhateni, Kathmandu 44601, Nepal
+977 984-1231389

What are the potential benefits of the research project?
Potential benefits of the project to the participant and the wider community may include the contribution of knowledge to development policy and practice around resilience approaches to community development.

Can I withdraw from the project?
Participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may also decline to answer questions if you choose. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time up until the submission of the thesis.

What will happen to my information?

Confidentiality and privacy: Your identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms in any published form of the data collected. While all efforts will be made to remove any information that might identify you, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, the upmost care will be taken to ensure that minimal identifying details are revealed.

Storage: Data collected throughout the fieldwork process and through the interviews and focus groups will be kept confidential through the use of secure storage. Digital data will be stored on the University of Adelaide's box, where Dr. Thomas Wanner and Professor Andrew Skuse will have access, and on an external password-protected hard drive that will only be accessible by the researcher. Hard copy and primary materials will be stored in a fireproof lockable box while the researcher is in Nepal, and transferred to a locked filing cabinet upon the researcher's return to Australia. Data will be kept by the University of Adelaide for a minimum of 5 years.

Publishing: Data and results will be reported and publicised in the researcher's PhD thesis, along with possible associated publications and conference papers. Your responses from interviews and focus groups will not be individually identifiable in publications – rather, only summary data will be published. However, if you have consented to have photos taken during focus groups or community meetings or activities, these may be published in the thesis unless you withdraw consent to have these included in the thesis.

Sharing: You will be given the opportunity to access interview and focus group transcripts and provided with the opportunity to review and provide feedback. Qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups will be stored in a re-identifiable format. However, if you have consented to have photos taken, these will be stored in an individually identifiable format. The results will be made available to participants upon requests. There is a possibility that the data collected in this project may be used in future projects. Data will be uploaded to the University's data repository, adelaide.figshare.com, which can be accessed by other researchers, and for the purpose of sharing research.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
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thomas.wanner@adelaide.edu.au

Professor Andrew Skuse
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andrew.skuse@adelaide.edu.au

Natasha Mackintosh
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What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
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Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

If you are interested in participating, please contact Natasha Mackintosh via email natasha.mackintosh@adelaide.edu.au

If you know other friends or colleagues who you believe may be interested in participating, please consider distributing the Participant Information Sheet amongst your networks in order to generate awareness.

Yours sincerely,
Natasha Mackintosh, Dr. Thomas Wanner, and Professor Andrew Skuse

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – I/NGO FACILITATORS

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Post-Disaster Recovery: Nepali Women's Roles in Resilience and Capacity-Building
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER: H-2019-003
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Thomas Wanner
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Mackintosh
STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD in International Development

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

The project seeks to understand how 'resilience', referring to the ability of individuals and communities to 'bounce back', is built, lost, or understood by Nepali women who have experienced disaster. Research aims to identify the assets and skills that Nepali women are able to access after disaster, and the choices they make around disaster risk reduction. This project will also examine the role of cultural norms, ethnicity, gender and caste in post-disaster recovery.

This research focuses on building resilience and capacity at the local level while facilitating gender inclusion, to better equip women in the aftermath of natural hazards, and assist them in preparing for future events.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by Natasha Mackintosh. This research will form the basis for the degree of PhD in International Development at the University of Adelaide, Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Wanner and Professor Andrew Skuse.

The project is funded by Adelaide University through the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies Field Research grant.

Why am I being invited to participate?
You are being invited as you are an I/NGO facilitator who runs community programmes aimed at increasing community capacity and resilience.

What am I being invited to do?
You are being invited to participate in the following activities undertaken by the researcher:

1. **Participant observation**: the researcher will attend and observe community meetings and events around disaster risk reduction. Photographs may be taken in order to provide the researcher with visual data, but only at appropriate moments and only with your informed consent.
2. **Semi-structured and unstructured interviews**: the researcher intends to ask a range of open-ended, flexible questions about your opinions on disaster risk reduction. Interviews will take place in a public setting where possible (i.e. cafes, parks etc.), however, if this is not possible, the

interview can take place within your home. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. You may be asked whether they are interested in attending a focus group.

3. **Focus groups**: these will be conducted with a small group of community members and will provide you with the opportunity to hear and respond to different views around disaster risk reduction. Focus groups will take place in a public setting. All focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed. Photographs may be taken in order to provide the researcher with visual data, but only at appropriate moments and only with your informed consent.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?
Participant observation will run for the duration of community meetings and other events around disaster risk reduction (estimated duration 1-2 hours). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups will have a 1 hour duration.

Additional meetings will be offered to you for the purposes of reviewing and editing their transcripts of interviews and focus groups, and discussing possible withdrawal.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
You could be inconvenienced by filling in consent forms and giving up your time to participate in research. It is possible that you may become distressed during interviews or focus groups. In this instance, you will not be coerced to provide information that you are not comfortable with sharing; and can stop the interview or leave the focus group.

If talking about these matters has raised issues you would like to speak with someone about further, please consider contacting the following services:

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Nepal Hypnosis Psycho-Social Care Center:
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What are the potential benefits of the research project?
Potential benefits of the project to the participant and the wider community may include the contribution of knowledge to development policy and practice around resilience approaches to community development.

Can I withdraw from the project?
Participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may also decline to answer questions if you choose. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time up until the submission of the thesis.

What will happen to my information?

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Publishing: Data and results will be reported and publicised in the researcher's PhD thesis, along with possible associated publications and conference papers. Your responses from interviews and focus groups will not be individually identifiable in publications – rather, only summary data will be published. However, if you have consented to have photos taken during focus groups or community meetings or activities, these may be published in the thesis unless you withdraw consent to have these included in the thesis.

Sharing: You will be given the opportunity to access interview and focus group transcripts and provided with the opportunity to review and provide feedback. Qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups will be stored in a re-identifiable format. However, if you have consented to have photos taken, these will be stored in an individually identifiable format. The results will be made available to participants upon requests. There is a possibility that the data collected in this project may be used in future projects. Data will be uploaded to the University's data repository, adelaide.figshare.com, which can be accessed by other researchers, and for the purpose of sharing research.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
If you have any questions about the project, please contact the researchers via telephone or email. Contact details are as follows:

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If I want to participate, what do I do?

If you are interested in participating, please contact Natasha Mackintosh by email natasha.mackintosh@adelaide.edu.au

If you know other friends or colleagues who you believe may be interested in participating, please consider distributing the Participant Information Sheet amongst your networks in order to generate awareness.

Yours sincerely,
Natasha Mackintosh, Dr. Thomas Wanner, and Professor Andrew Skuse

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – MUNICIPAL AND FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Post-Disaster Recovery: Nepali Women's Roles in Resilience and Capacity-Building
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER: H-2019-003
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Thomas Wanner
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Natasha Mackintosh
STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD in International Development

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

The project seeks to understand how 'resilience', referring to the ability of individuals and communities to 'bounce back', is built, lost, or understood by Nepali women who have experienced disaster. Research aims to identify the assets and skills that Nepali women are able to access after disaster, and the choices they make around disaster risk reduction. This project will also examine the role of cultural norms, ethnicity, gender and caste in post-disaster recovery.

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Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by Natasha Mackintosh. This research will form the basis for the degree of PhD in International Development at the University of Adelaide, Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Wanner and Professor Andrew Skuse.

The project is funded by Adelaide University through the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies Field Research grant.

Why am I being invited to participate?
You are being invited as you are either a municipal and federal employee who works in the area of disaster risk reduction.

What am I being invited to do?
You are being invited to participate in the following activities undertaken by the researcher:

1. **Participant observation**: the researcher will attend and observe community meetings and events around disaster risk reduction. Photographs may be taken in order to provide the researcher with visual data, but only at appropriate moments and only with your informed consent.
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How much time will my involvement in the project take?
Participant observation will run for the duration of community meetings and other events around disaster risk reduction (estimated duration 1-2 hours). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups will have a 1 hour duration.

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Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
You could be inconvenienced by filling in consent forms and giving up your time to participate in research. It is possible that you may become distressed during interviews or focus groups. In this instance, you will not be coerced to provide information that you are not comfortable with sharing; and can stop the interview or leave the focus group.

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Natasha Mackintosh
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Yours sincerely,
Natasha Mackintosh, Dr. Thomas Wanner, and Professor Andrew Skuse

APPENDIX G: CONSENT FORM

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

CONSENT FORM

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

Title:	**Post-Disaster Recovery: Nepali Women's Roles in Resilience and Capacity-Building**
Ethics Approval Number:	**H-2019-003**

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, and the potential risks and burdens fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have about the project and my participation. My consent is given freely.

3. I have been given the opportunity to have a member of my family or a friend present while the project was explained to me.

4. Although I understand the purpose of the research project, it has also been explained that my involvement may not be of any benefit to me.

5. I agree to participate in the following activities outlined in the participant information sheet:
   ☐ Interview
   ☐ Focus group
   ☐ Observation session

6. I agree to be:
   ☐ Audio recorded

   ☐ Photographed

7. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.

8. I have been informed that the information gained in the project may be published in a thesis, journal article and/or presented at a conference.

9. I have been informed that while I will not be named in the published materials, it may not be possible to guarantee my anonymity given the nature of the study and/or small number of participants involved.

10. I agree to my information being used for future research purposes limited to future journal articles. The information will be non-identifiable.

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. My information will only be used for the purpose of this research project and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except where disclosure is required by law.

12. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

Participant to complete:

Name: _____ Signature:_____ Date: _____

Researcher/Witness to complete:

I have described the nature of the research to

_____

(print name of participant)

and in my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX H: GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL POLICY ANALYSIS

Government of Nepal (GoN) Policy Analysis			
Policy/Framework/ Document	**Year**	**Gender-Based Policies and Strategies**	**Evaluation**
National Disaster Risk Management Consortium	2011	*"… being sensitive to such values as gender equity, justice and inclusion, gender- and ethnicity-equality, and putting especial efforts in case of marginalised communities, Dalits, deprived and handicaps"*	Vague in description, does not provide details of how this will be achieved
Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)	2015	Data collected was segregated according to gender, age, caste and ethnicity Highlighted a range of gender-specific vulnerabilities faced by women in the aftermath of disaster (increased risk of sexual assault, greater probability of exclusion in housing programmes, heavy reliance upon disaster-affected sectors, such as agriculture Included a range of recommendations to address gender-specific vulnerabilities and needs, including: • Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) • Creating a Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) unit in the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) • Increased availability of psychosocial counselling • Programmes for skills development • Livelihood enhancement support	There is evidence that some recommendations have been implemented: • the National Reconstruction Authority established a Gender Equity and Social Inclusion unit in 2017 (however, there is a lack of available information on government websites regarding any tangible progress on the ground) • Programmes for skills development and livelihood enhancement support has been undertaken by the NRA • Increased availability of psychosocial counselling However: • there is limited information on government websites regarding whether GRB has actually resulted in gender-specific disaster programmes • Other studies have found that administrative barriers prevented women from receiving financial assistance (for example, not possessing identification cards)
Post-Disaster Recovery Framework	2015	Included a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) component aligned with the priorities of the Sendai Framework for DRR and builds upon the findings of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment *"Mainstream Gender Equality and Social Inclusion throughout the recovery and reconstruction process" (p.12)* *"Particular efforts will be made* [by the NRA] *to organise community groups to support reconstruction of houses of single women, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, marginalised groups and communities living in remote and inaccessible areas… mechanisms will be developed through the formation of CBOs, to give priority assistance*" (p.17)	Lack of specific examples of how strategies outlined will be achieved The NRA has held monitoring and evaluation interactions in 29 districts as of Feb 2021 (Relief Web 2021); however, there is no mention of gender or the participation of women No evaluation reports are available on government websites. There is no hard evidence to demonstrate that the NRA have organised community groups or incorporated indicators on gender and social inclusion into its monitoring system.

		"The NRA will also incorporate indicators on gender and social inclusion such as the following into its monitoring system: • *Percentage of women, vulnerable and marginalised groups who:* - *Engage in designing, planning, implementation and monitoring of the reconstruction and recovery programme* - *Receive information about the recovery and reconstruction programmes* - *Have equitable access to recovery and reconstruction services* - *Consider that their recovery needs are being addressed* - *Use the grievance redress mechanisms, and of those, whose grievances have been addressed* • *Percentage of district, VDC and municipalities where:* - *Disaggregated data is collected, analysed and utilised to inform recovery planning and monitoring* - *Gender and social inclusion are standing agenda items at coordination meetings" (p. 38)* Principal strategies of GESI are: ensure the participation of women, end all forms of SGBV, provide gender-, caste- and ethnic-sensitive programming, and enhance the capacities of women and other vulnerable groups The PDRF recommendations on GESI include the establishment of a GESI unit in the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to enhance governance and accountability; integrated protection and support for women regarding SGBV, increased availability of psychosocial counselling, and undertaking programmes for skills development and livelihood enhancement support (p. 38)	
15-point Kathmandu Declaration (sets out key demands made by women's groups after the earthquake; endorsed by GoN)	2015	1. Progressive initiatives to ensure gender justice for building democratic culture will be taken by the individual, family and political parties; movements for eliminating gender insensitive social traditions and practices will also be advanced; 2. Efforts to ensure 50% political representation from a minimum one-third will be taken; 3. Surnames, languages and proverbs will be made women-friendly; 4. Arrangements will be made for women-friendly work venue; 5. All political programs will be made for women-friendly work venue; 6. All political programs will be made inclusive in terms of women's participation; 7. Initiatives to ensure 50% leadership at every tier of the party will be taken; 8. Women membership will be increased in political parties	Point 2 is not fulfilled – only 2 out of 95 members of the NRA were women – a mere 2%. Women's participation is hindered by legal barriers – to be eligible, one must have first held a prominent position in parliament, for example, a ministry position, which is hardly ever held by women; similarly, Nepal's constitution requires the mandatory representation of only 33% of women across all public decision-making bodies No women's political resource centre has been established Women's membership in parliament has increased – women now occupy 41.8% of political positions across the country (Upreti *et al.* 2020: 1); however, the 50%

		9. Special programs will be launched for women's leadership 10. Options for economic self-sufficiency of women will be explored and implemented as a campaign 11. Policy of zero tolerance towards gender-based violence will be implemented in a stringent manner 12. Complexities arising out of the marital relations in between Nepali citizens and foreigners will be resolved in a woman friendly manner 13. An integrated concept on women's issues will be developed through the platform such as the Joint Party Mechanism for Political Party Support; 14. For overall women's development, a process to establish a women's political resource centre will be initiated 15. Commitment is hereby expressed toward ensuring 50% women representation in both the FPTP and PR races of the elections	political representation demanded in the Declaration has not been met
Disaster Risk Reduction National Plan of Action	2018-2030	GESI is one of 6 key thematic areas included within the plan, which emphasises that women's leadership and inclusive risk reduction must be promoted through increasing accessibility, representation and meaningful participation in the process of disaster risk reduction and management Five strategic activities (2020 deadline): 1. Implementing gender sensitive and inclusive approach in all the processes of Disaster Risk Management 2. Establishing and institutionalising disaster risk concern groups to promote their empowerment and partnership through increasing participation of vulnerable groups in DRR activities and networking 3. Preparing a gender equality and social inclusion action plan for disaster risk reduction and management at each level and sector 4. Conducting social mobilisation programs at the local level for accessibility and representation of citizens 5. Develop and implement special disaster risk reduction programs targeting marginalised groups, such as women, senior citizens, children, and people with disabilities	Activities are vague in description, do not have a definitive time frame for completion (for example, 'short term', 'long term') and lack details as to how outputs will be achieved, measured, and evaluated for effectiveness There is little evidence of gender sensitive and inclusive approaches having been *implemented*, although many policies exist on paper No evidence of the establishment and institutionalisation of disaster risk concern groups is available on government websites No evidence of gender equality and social inclusion action plans for disaster risk reduction and management at each level and sector, beyond the NRA having a GESI department No evidence of social mobilisation programs relating to disaster or special disaster risk reduction programs that have been carried out since the publication of this document No evaluation report available
Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act	2019	The Act states that the three disaster experts to be nominated for the National Disaster Risk Management Council must include one woman Point 7.21 *"Access, representation and meaningful participation of women, children, senior citizens, people with disabilities and people from economically and socially marginalised communities will be ensured in all steps and structures of disaster risk reduction based on inclusive disaster management concepts"*	The three disaster experts on the National Disaster Risk Management Council are not publicly listed on government websites (or at least not in English) There is no hard evidence of implementation of either point 7.21 or 7.29; again, there are no evaluation reports available

		Point 7.29 *"An inclusive mechanism will be established at federal, provincial and local levels for effective monitoring and evaluation of the activities related to disaster risk reduction and management"*	
Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)	2007/2008	The Government of Nepal adopted Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in 2007/2008 in an attempt to ensure that the needs and interests of women are met by the government budget	There is evidence that the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare have increasingly made efforts to translate policies that aim to redress gender inequalities into targeted and funded programs (PDNA 2015 B: 226), such as establishing a Gender Responsive Budgeting Committee to allocate gender-responsive budgeting based upon set criteria, which intends to provide programmes that promote employment and income generation for women However, although the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (2015 B) refers to GRB as a mechanism that will ensure women's needs are addressed in programs, there is very limited information regarding any implementation, particularly due to a lack of evaluation reports

APPENDIX I DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Disaster Risk Reduction

Terminology

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR 2019) emphasises that there is no such thing as a 'natural' disaster, only a natural hazard. The disaster is the event that follows the occurrence of the natural hazard. Therefore, the disaster's severity is dependent on the effect the hazard has upon society and the surrounding environment. Societies can attempt to mitigate the impact of natural hazards through undertaking systematic efforts to prepare for adverse events, including decreasing exposure to hazards, reducing vulnerability, and managing the environment (UNISDR 2019). These efforts are known as disaster risk reduction, which aims to reduce the damage caused by natural hazards like earthquakes, floods, droughts and cyclones, through an ethic of prevention. Every decision and action taken can either strengthen or weaken a community's ability to withstand natural hazards and the subsequent disaster that follows.

Disaster preparedness is a key component of disaster risk reduction, and a concept that has increasingly received academic attention. According to the UNDRR (2022), disaster preparedness distinctly refers to:

> ... the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organisations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current disasters.

This definition indicates that these actors must coordinate their efforts and resources, from the community down to the individual, in order to strive towards reducing disaster risk (IASC 2007; IFRCRCC 2004). Preparedness can include analysis of disaster risks, contingency planning, provision of emergency shelters, the stockpiling of equipment and supplies, early warning systems, public information, and training and field exercises (Bhandari, Okada and Knottnerus 2011; Gil-Rivas and Kilmer 2016; Norris *et al.* 2008). The term 'readiness' is also closely associated with disaster risk reduction terminology and describes the ability of actors to respond promptly and effectively to the threat of disaster (Tierney 1993). Global frameworks for disaster risk reduction regularly use these terms, along with 'disaster risk' and 'disaster vulnerability', which will be explained in greater depth in a forthcoming section.

Global Frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) has provided global guidelines for mitigating the outcomes of natural hazards and fostering an ethos of prevention within states, governments, and local communities. A new document outlining disaster strategies is released every 15 years by the organisation, with the intention of coordinating global efforts. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is the current international agreement espoused by the UNISDR. It is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. The current guidelines acknowledge the primary obligations of the state in disaster risk reduction, but also posits that this responsibility should be shared by other stakeholders, such as local government, the private sector, and civil society organisations. The Sendai Framework has one overarching goal (UNDRR 2015: 9):

> Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience.

The document contains seven global targets and four priorities for action that seek to implement that goal (UNDRR 2015), which are demonstrated in Table 1 and Table 2, below.

Seven Global Targets	
1)	Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015
2)	Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015
3)	Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030
4)	Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030
5)	Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020
6)	Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030
7)	Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.

Table 1. Seven Global Targets. Adapted from The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015, p. 12-13.

The inclusion of seven global targets differentiates the Sendai Framework from its predecessor. Nevertheless, these targets have proved to be a controversial addition for some countries, who argued that the targets should contain specific percentage goals. Still, many were placated by the provision of a working group dedicated to developing indicators to measure target progress (Rowling 2015).

Four Priorities for Action

Understanding Disaster Risk	Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk	Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for resilience	Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'build back better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction
Disaster risk management should be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment. Such knowledge can be used for risk assessment, prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response.	Disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels is very important for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation. It fosters collaboration and partnership.	Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment.	The growth of disaster risk means there is a need to strengthen disaster preparedness for response, take action in anticipation of events, and ensure capacities are in place for effective response and recovery at all levels. The recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase is a critical opportunity to build back better, including through integrating disaster risk reduction into development measures.

Table 2. Four Priorities for Action. Adapted from The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015, p. 14-15.

The four priorities for action require focused efforts, crosscutting sectors at local, national, regional and global levels.

The Sendai Framework broadens the scope of disaster risk reduction, emphasising the need for disaster risk reduction initiatives to focus on both natural and human-made hazards and related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks (UNDRR 2015). It also builds on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2000-2015 which identified gender as a guiding principle that should be considered throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of disaster risk reduction activities:

> A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management plans, policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training. UNDRR (2015: 4)

A report produced by the Hauirou Commission (2009) entitled 'Women's Views from the Frontline' conducted a survey to assess how women's organisations perceived the Hyogo Framework for Action. This report found that insufficient funding, a lack of organisational capacity and lack of institutional leadership roles for women presented barriers to their meaningful engagement in the Hyogo Framework for Action. Criticism of the Hyogo Framework's lack of gender mainstreaming was taken into consideration when developing its successor. A review of the Sendai Framework discloses that women are discussed on ten separate occasions, including when relaying lessons learned from the Hyogo Framework. Women are identified in one of 13 guiding principles, which states that (UNISDR 2015: 13):

> A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted.

This declaration was welcomed by women's rights experts. Also praised were the guidelines, that state access for women for sexual and reproductive healthcare in disasters must be provided, in addition to those that call for data to be broken down according to gender, age and disability. The document also explicitly mentions that governments should engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, and that women must be empowered to lead and promote gender equity (UNISDR 2015).

However, the Sendai Framework's approach to gender has also been critiqued. Bradshaw (2015) analysed the extent to which women's issues are being addressed through the Sendai Framework. She argues that the Sendai Framework fails to mention women's rights, a contention supported by Nhamo *et al.* (2018), who expresses that although the framework presents women as resources to be employed in disaster risk reduction processes, it does not portray the essential role that they play within disaster risk management. It is clear that although gender is increasingly included within global frameworks for disaster, it remains to be seen how these mechanisms will meet the needs of women. My research advances knowledge in this field by contributing to the rich literature on the role of gender in post-disaster governance.