



Economic Empowerment of Dalits through I/NGOs**Tilak Biswakarma**

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Abstract

Empowerment is generally understood as raising people's present status by providing various means such as knowledge, skills, and resources. Currently, in Nepal, various I/NGOs are working in the field of political, social, and economic empowerment of poor and disadvantaged people through different programs and plans. International donors and the government working towards poverty alleviation have tended to give priority to Dalits because they are one of the poorest and most backward groups in Nepal. On one hand, Dalits' issues of development are being talked about by all sectors of Nepal, but their poverty rate is double the national average. Therefore, this study examined whether Dalit-focused development interventions lead to economic development. The findings of this study revealed the fact that everyone has experienced a change compared to the past, but it is very hard to determine the sole change maker. Also, the projects and programs have often had no meaningful participation from Dalits. Despite the widespread use of the term Dalit in the field of development, not a single project targeting Dalits is in operation. This fact indicates that the economic empowerment of Dalits is in only slogans and in the progress reports of the organizations rather than in a real sense. On the one hand, there is politics in the name of Dalit inclusion, and on the other hand, they are unable to prosper in their life from the support. The majority of Dalits' situations are almost the same in as the past whereas the majority of non-Dalits bring comprehensive change in their life. If this situation continues to lead to a huge socio-economic gap between Dalits and non-Dalits will be perilous for the future.

Keywords: empowerment, I/NGOs, dalits, development

Introduction

Empowerment is generally understood as raising people's present status by providing various means such as knowledge, skills, and resources. Likewise, economic empowerment denotes the economic growth of poor people. Currently, in Nepal, various I/NGOs are working in the field of political, social, and economic empowerment of poor and disadvantaged people through different programs and plan.

According to the Census Report of 2011, there are 125 caste/ethnic groups in Nepal. Among them, Dalits cover around 14 percent of the total population (CBS, 2012). Despite their large share in the national population and contribution to Nepali society through their skills and knowledge (such as caste-based occupation), they are in a very low position (Biswakarma, 2007). Moreover, Dalits are in a very low rank as measured by every development indicator. Historically deep-rooted caste-based discrimination and untouchability have restricted Dalits in the social, economic, educational, political, and religious spheres, and alongside they are also deprived of human dignity and social justice. Concurrently, the health and education status of Dalits is very low than the national average; their representation in government and political parties is also very poor (UNDP, 2004). According to the living standard survey (2011), Pahadi Dalits are one of the poorest (43.63 percent of Dalits are under the poverty line) people in the country followed by Tarai Dalits (38.16 percent) out of 125 caste/ethnic groups of Nepal. The majority of Dalits have food deficiency as the foremost form of inadequacy. Similarly, in the Himali area 89.66 percent, in Pahad 56.73 percent, in Tarai, 53.61 percent of Dalits are suffering (Bhattachan et al. 2008). The per capita calories are far below the minimum required; the lower food intake and the unhygienic dwelling and sanitation practices of the Dalit communities are manifested in malnutrition, disease, morbidity, and low labor productivity (Gurung 2005). Not only from the perspective of physical indicators such as education, health, per capita income, inclusion in bureaucracy, etc but Dalits are also deprived of enjoying the basic rights and dignity of being citizens. Therefore, it is no doubt that Dalits are one of the poorest and most marginalized people in Nepal who always gets the attention of development agencies.

The government of Nepal put Dalits in special consideration in the 9th to 11th five-year plan but since the 12th, Dalits were similarly treated as other marginalized people. Unlike the Government of Nepal, more than 245 INGOs have agreed with the Social Welfare Council till July 2019 to support Nepal's development. Likewise, there are 49347 NGOs registered in the Social Welfare Council till January 14, 2019.

This shows that non-governmental organizations are increasing and contributing to various sectors for Nepal's prosperity. Despite the huge number of I/NGOs working in various parts of Nepal, except for Dalit-led organizations, there is no such project of INGOs that directly targeted Dalits, but criteria set by many I/NGOs' projects need to include Dalits as target groups. Various organizations are providing training awareness campaigns and providing seed funds for the economic empowerment of Dalits.

For more than 50 decades ago, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have been working in various fields in Nepal. Their major support has been in education, health, income generation, human rights, and so on. Almost all donor agencies and non-governmental organizations have been working in Nepal, their main aim is to contribute to Nepal's development and poverty alleviation. In doing so not only INGOs and government, but all development practitioners focused on empowerment as one of the essential tools to overcome poverty which has been used all over the world. Therefore, this study has been done to highlight the fact that what kind of contribution has been made to the development of the Dalit community through economic empowerment.

Statement of the Problem

scholars have different arguments about the role of I/NGOs in development. In these regards, Nepal also is allowing the non-governmental sector to work for the benefit of the people. In such a situation, Dalits as a target group of almost all I/NGOs may provide benefits for socio-economic prosperities. Therefore, this study examines such programs of I/NGOs and their impact on Dalit's lives I/NGOs who are working in Nepal have different programs to empower disadvantaged and marginalized communities. For example, they are working to ensure the rights of women, Dalits, and children, livelihood, education, health and sanitation, climate change, disaster risk reduction, infrastructure development, and so on. As per the nature of the goal of the project they are launching a program that can empower people. In this regard, on one hand, all governments and non-government organizations are giving priority to Dalits, and in another hand, their poverty rate is nearly double the national average.

Besides this, in the context of poverty alleviation discourse in Nepal, there are different perceptions and arguments. On the one hand, some non-Dalits perceive that all the facilities and services are being distributed to Dalits and they are getting all benefits from state and international donor agencies. On the other hand, Dalit communities argue that their name is being used as a buzzword since they are not benefitting from such poverty alleviation programs in reality. In this situation, this study tries to find out the

cases of Dalit impoverishment and problems of their socio-economic upliftment. After the restoration of democracy in Nepal, Dalit has become a buzzword. Every policy maker, development activist, rights activist, and politician talk about Dalit deprivation and advocates for their development. In this regard, on the one hand, all governments and non-government organizations used to say that they are giving priority to Dalits, and on the other hand their poverty rate is higher (43%) than other communities and they are still one of the poorest groups of the country. In this situation, it is essential to understand to what extent Dalit's economic status is uplifted due to the development programs of I/NGOs. Do Dalits benefitted from the adhered programs or it is just the politics of their name? If development intervention seriously accentuates overcoming Dalit poverty? If yes, what would be the barriers to such interventions?

Therefore, this study tries to answer these questions:

1. How Dalits are being economically empowered by I/NGOs and how are I/NGO programs helping to reduce their poverty?
2. How are Dalits using support to enhance their economic status?
3. What is the understanding of Dalits about the role of I/NGOs in their Development?

Concept of Empowerment and Economic Empowerment

There is no exact meaning and concrete definition of empowerment. This term is frequently used in development discourse. Although empowerment has been interpreted in different ways by many organizations and scholars, capacity building is accepted by all as an important aspect. It is not wrong to understand empowerment as raising a person from his current situation by providing him with knowledge, resources, tools, or skills. There are different types of empowerments on which many organizations are focusing they are, social empowerment, economic empowerment, and political empowerment.

Some scholars define empowerment as a power that can change their present status and bring them to their desired status. In the same line, Rosalind, Kabeer, and Cornwall (2008, p. 5) write:

“Empowerment is fundamentally about power – about the power to redefine our possibilities and options and to act on them, the power within that enables people to have the courage to do things they never thought themselves to be capable of, and the power that comes from working alongside others to claim what is rightfully theirs”

Similarly, defining empowerment in the Indian Context Biteille (1999), argued that empowerment is the contradiction between hierarchical social order and democratic political systems. He further argued that empowerment can be defined in any context such as human rights, economic security and basic needs of poor people, capacity enhancement, providing skills, and dignified social status (Biteille, 1999).

The World Bank focused on the people's decision-making capacity as empowerment. According to the World Bank, empowerment entails more than just taking part in decision-making: It must also encompass the processes that allow individuals to regard themselves as capable of and entitled to make decisions (As cited in Rosalind, Kabeer, and Cornwall, 2008).

Unlike empowerment, there are different opinions and notions of economic empowerment. According to Rosalind, Kabeer, and Cornwall (2008), economic empowerment is the ability of underprivileged women and men to engage in, contribute to, and benefit from growth processes in conditions that respect their dignity, value their efforts, and enable them to negotiate a more equitable division of the rewards of growth. Economic empowerment entails people being able to recognize and exercise agency and choice and thinking beyond their immediate survival demands. They further argued that there should be essential elements of economic empowerment i.e., consisting of assets of poor people, social protection, decent work, and collective action.

Development and I/NGOs

There are various perspectives, principles, and models of development. Development is itself a very vague and debatable subject. However, Cowen and Shenton (1996,p.2) delineate that development should be considered not only as an act of broadening people's choices but also as a process of enhancing people's ability to make decisions and shape their own lives, equipping people with the opportunity to advance their enormous potential, to enable them to organize themselves to work together and also to enhance their participation of democratic processes. Likewise, Sen (2000), views development as the freedom that should be observed with the perspective of real freedom rather than with the point of view of economic measures so that people can enjoy economic facilities and social opportunities to the fullest. Jamal (2006, p. 439) describes the development as growth with the relationship between poverty and inequality. According to him "growth is, in practice, the main tool for fighting poverty." However, they also reiterated that the imperative of growth for combating poverty should not be misinterpreted to mean that "growth is all that matters". Growth no doubt, but inequality also matters and should also be on the development

agenda. Sanae Ito (2010), traces the historical aspects of development along with paradigm shifts in development priorities. In the 1960s to 70s, economic theories were pervasive in development. At that time, development was measured as modernization, infrastructure, technology, and industrialization. Likewise, the participatory approach to development came into existence in the 1970s to 1980s. From the 1980s to the 1990s empowerment approach and women's participation were also highlighted in the development practices that were related to social development. Finally, in the 1990s to 2000s, the concept of human development emerged as a development discourse. For Dalits, development is sufficient access to resources that caliber of their livelihood without any difficulties and living with dignified life without facing any symbolic and direct discrimination based on their caste.

Poverty reduction is the prime concern of every country in the world. To uplift the socio-economic status of the poor people, government and non-governmental organizations have been implementing different programs and support packages. In the same line, Fletcher Tembo (2003) argued that NGOs that seek to empower rural communities may, in the context of the reform of the state that is taking place in many developing countries, get caught up in pursuing the agenda of the state and market rather than that of the poor. On the face of it, the reformed state and development NGOs both advocate the agenda of empowering the poor and avoiding the negative effects of market liberalization on people's social values (Tembo, 2003,p.527).

Rajasekhar (2002), analyses the impact of the economic programs of SHARE, an NGO in Tamil Nadu India, on poverty reduction. According to him, "the economic program contributed to savings and income increase for the women. However, the member of the group was not found to be significantly different from the comparison group in terms of control over income and decision-making" (Rajasekhar, 2002, p.3063). Sajjad Zohir (2004), highlighted the role of NGOs in the social development of Bangladesh. According to him "that the social development scene in Bangladesh is characterized by a strong presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). With assistance from foreign donor agencies, they expanded their activities to deliver a variety of services including micro-credit, essential healthcare, informal education, women empowerment, and rights advocacy (Zohir, 2004, p.4109). Based on the study of the Nasirabad area of Pakistan Khan and Bibi (2011) argued that there is a positive impact of empowerment in the poverty alleviation of poor women, especially who are engaged in livestock keeping.

I/NGOs of Nepal also support poor people to enhance their economic and social status through different types of programs. Despite spending huge amounts of money on economic and social development it is also said that they program used to be

showcased rather than solving the needs of people. They are only citing the slogans of poverty eradication rather than bringing comprehensive solutions.

Methods

For the study purpose, Phalewas rural municipality of Parbat district ward no. 1 Karkineta was selected because the research site sufficiently fulfilled the requirement of the study. Likewise, a simple random sampling procedure was used for the selection of households for administering the survey questionnaires. In this study, a total of 40 households were selected out of 100. Before selecting 40 households, a pilot study was carried out to collect the total number of Dalit households in Karkineta Ward no. 1 of Phalewas rural municipality. The survey questionnaires were applied to collect data from 40 Dalit households, ten key informants were also interviewed, and the informants were the personnel of the municipality, members of the Non-Government Organizations (I/NGOs), Dalit activists, development experts, politicians, and local people who have sound knowledge and experience in the development strategy and practice of the study area. In addition to this, three Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held to understand the strengths and limitations of the development interventions. The participants of the FGD were Dalit men and women, young and old aged Dalit people, Dalit development activists, and beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the program.

I/NGOs and Dalits' Participation

Various non-governmental organizations are working in different areas in Parvat District. As per the district-wise NGO data published on the NGO Federation Nepal's website (visited on 16 Nov 2022), 120 NGOs are working there. Out of 120 NGOs, there are community, district, regional, and national level organizations providing service in the Parvat district. Youth clubs, mother groups (AmaYamaha), women groups, ex-students groups, school alumni associations, ex-teacher groups, and ex-army welfare associations are some NGOs that are just working in their local community. Among these, some organizations work in health, nutrition, education, drinking water, child rights, Dalits rights, women's rights, disabled people's rights, environmental conservation, agriculture, livelihood, awareness, peace and democracy, community development, infrastructure development, and so on and their area of coverage is larger than community organization. Many organizations are working with the fund of INGOs whereas some are working with government funds. Likewise, in the study area, some INGOs are still working, and some have already accomplished their

project. With the support of INGO, some NGOs are working in Falebash Municipality along with the Karkineta areas. Most projects are related to health and education.

Participation in the Program

Dalit is one of the groups whose name was frequently and necessarily used in the current development discourse of Nepal. Political parties, policymakers, development activists, and scholars never miss the name of Dalit when they used to talk about development or inclusion issues. However, this study revealed the fact that some Dalits never get a chance to participate in development activities.

Table 1

Status of Participation

Participation in Project		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	87.5
No	5	12.5
Total	40	100

Source: Field Study 2022

This study found that there is the majority of Dalit people (87.5%) are getting a chance to participate in the programs organized by different institutions. However, 12.5% of Dalits never got a chance to get benefits from the program. Those respondents who did not participate in the program informed that their participation in any program would depend upon the interest of the organizers. If any person was found who was close to them, they provided an opportunity to them rather than needy ones. Sometimes they didn't even know about the program that was going on in their nearby residence. They came to know about the program only when they heard the gossip about it after the accomplishment of the program. Those respondents who are not getting a chance to participate informed that any Dalit member's participation is determined by the interest of the organizer. Moreover, sometimes, Dalit's name is mentioned on the attendance sheet to show the inclusion in the report.

Table 1 shows that 87.5 percent of Dalits have participated in the program but there is a lack of meaningful participation of Dalits the in program as per the goal of the project. Unlike the participation in the program, there was not any meaningful participation of Dalits in the program planning and designing phase. As informed by

the respondents they never participated in any phase of planning and designing the program. No, organization neither I/NGOs nor GOs called them to know their opinion, idea, and need in the project designing phase. Similarly, there is no meaningful participation in the planning and implementation phase. All programs either target Dalits or all groups, and implementers used to be non-Dalits who were almost unaware of the experiences and status of Dalits.

Service Providers and Dalit Engagement

As there are NGOs and GOs are implementing their program in different areas such as health and nutrition, education, infrastructure livelihood, environment protection, etc. Ultimately, their target groups are community members, basically who are poor and marginalized. In this context, this study tried to know who provided opportunities to participate in their program more and how frequently they are being participated.

Table 2

Types of Projects

Organizers		
Response	Frequency	percentage
Government-led Project	5	14.29
I/NGO-led project	25	71.43
Both	5	14.29
Total	35	100

Source: Field Study 2022

As stated by table number 2 the percentage of providing the chance to participate in a project headed by GOs and I/NGOs along with both organizations. As we can observe, the above opportunity provided by I/NGOs possesses a high percentage of 71.43% whereas Government based project has only 14.29%. On the other hand, the people benefit from both I/NGOs and Government-led projects hold 14.29% of the total percentage. There can be seen as a drastic difference between the government-led project and the non-government organization-led project. This information has proved that several programs are being run by non-governmental sectors compared to the government.

Those people who have a good network (such as politics, bureaucracy) and

education are frequently getting a chance to participate in many programs. However, those Dalits who are illiterate, poor, have no network and primarily depend on daily wage-based earnings to survive have been deprived of participating in the program. In the study area, it is found that several non-governmental organizers implement several types of programs compared to government projects. They also used to make Dalits participate as per the nature of their program.

Moreover, the non-government-led program is highly a software type of program such as training, seminars, workshops, interaction, and so on. Besides this, on the one hand, government-led programs are very limited and on the other hand to benefit from such programs power relations matter for people. As we all know Dalits are highly marginalized in the power structure of Nepali society. Therefore, Dalit participation seems to be lower in government programs.

Nature of Program and Participation

Out of 40 sampling respondents, only 35 got a chance to participate in programs run by different organizations. According to the table 3, the respondents who participated in the income generation-related program were 12 (34.29%), the awareness empowerment-related program 18 (51.43%), and infrastructure 5 (14.29%) respectively. As per table no3, the majority of Dalits have participated in awareness and empowerment-related programs followed by income-generating programs.

Table 3

Nature of Program

Response	Frequency	percentage
Income generation	12	34.29
Awareness and empowerment	18	51.43
Infrastructure	5	14.29
Total	35	100

Source: Field Study 2022

This study found that the majority of participants benefitted from awareness and empowerment-related programs. It is because there are several non-government organizations are people. They used to organize training, workshops, seminars, and interactions through which they aimed to empower rural people. Most of their programs were related to preserving human rights such as women's rights, rights of

people with disabilities, and Dalit rights. Dalitry, their program is also related to environment conservation, health, and sanitation, formal and informal education, and the celebration of different international days such as World Peace Day, Human Rights Day, Child Rights Day, and so on. As per the nature of their program, they have to launch a campaign in the community. Therefore, the majority of Dalits benefitted from empowerment-related programs more than income generation. Likewise, livelihood is the major concern of the non-government or government sectors. They have also some kind of income-generating program to strengthen livelihood. Similarly, some micro-finances provide loans to their members for economic activities. All these activities are supporting to generate income. Therefore, Dalit's participation in income generation-related programs is in the second position.

In addition to this, Dalit were also benefitted from infrastructure-related programs such as 'Janata Awash Karyakram' (people's housing program). This program was mainly targeted at Dalit and Marginalized groups such as Chepang, Bankariya, Mushahar, etc. Like the housing program, some Dalits were also supported to build toilets under the open defecation-free zone mission of the Government/District.

Project Works and Development

The meaning of development is very vague. Moreover, it is contextual as development in one context may not be developed in another one. For example, according to the Nepal Living Standard Survey (2011), the percentage of poor people is 25.16%, whereas in the study carried out by Oxford University using the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (education, health, and living standard) this figure reaches to 28.6 % (NPC 2018). Therefore, development can't be limited to certain aspects because it covers all aspects of social and human life. Despite the ambiguous meaning of development, this study tried to know the understanding of Dalits about the impact of projects and programs led by either I/NGOs or GOs on the development of Dalits. However, they were asked about their understanding of development in education, health, income, and empowerment.

Table 4

Area of Impact on Dalit's Life

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Health and Education	6	15.00
Economic empowerment	10	25.00
Awareness and Empowerment	24	60.00
Total	40	100.00

Source: Field Study 2022

This study tried to get the opinion of respondents about the impact of GOs and INGOs programs in the lives of overall Dalits. The information provided by the respondents, the major help is done in awareness and empowerment factor by the project. 60% of people said the project's intervention helps in raising awareness and different subjects such as hygiene and sanitation, environment conservation, human rights, and so on. Likewise, about 15% claimed that the project helps to improve the health and education status of Dalit people. Only 25% of respondents believed that the project helps income generation.

Compared to a few decades ago, Dalits were unaware of their rights, development issues of the state, the meaning of inclusion in development activities, and their rights as citizens. Likewise, they were also unfamiliar with maintaining personal hygiene, followed by a profound belief in conservative thought such as Dharmi-jhakri and devi-delta. But nowadays, they are aware of their rights, they can express their opinion whenever needed. They are also informed about the ways to maintain hygiene and sanitation. They gave more priority to medicine than dharmi-jhakri. All these indicators proved that their awareness level has increased. As we go through the opinion about the impact of income generation, the majority of Dalits do not believe that their income is increased by the activities of the project except in some exceptional cases.

All development interventions' prime concern is to uplift the socio-economic condition of poor and vulnerable people. But most progress can be seen in paper rather than in practice, said the respondents of the Karkineta. As shared by key informants, it's hard to get enough successful stories from Dalits in the community. Somehow only one or two successful stories can be heard. Such cases can merely serve as a representative of the total Dalit population. Nonetheless, the significant outcome of development intervention is the enhancement of the awareness level of people. Besides, the development intervention brings successful outcomes in the health and education sectors rather than the economic sector. For instance, almost all people are aware of health-related issues. Likewise, the majority of families send their children to school without discriminating between son and daughter. People can raise their voices, and gender-based physical violence is decreasing as compared to the past.

Economic Empowerment

Money matters in all spheres of life. To fulfill all the basic needs such as food, education, health treatment, entertainment, and so on. Due to the lack of money, Dalits are unable to have access to these things. Therefore, the economy is the main reason for Dalit's backwardness. Moreover, poverty alleviation is directly linked to the economy.

It is assumed that if people are economically well off then they can easily fulfill their additional needs such as education, health, etc. Therefore, the economy is an essential factor for development.

Table 5

Economic Empowerment through I/NGOs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Only supported economic empowerment	14	35.00
Main help for income generation	5	12.50
Not any role in economic development	21	52.50
Total	40	100.00

Source: Field Study 2022

This study tried to know whether any project has helped Dalit's economic upliftment or not. Table number 5 demonstrates the percentage of opinion on Dalit's economic empowerment made by a project. According to the given table no 5, only 12% said that I/NGOs played a leading role in the income generation of Dalits while 35% said that I/NGOs acted as an assistant role in the economic empowerment of Dalits. Hence, 52% of respondents said that the I/NGOs program doesn't hold any impact on the Dalit's economic development.

Projects have enhanced the capacity through which they could harness their potential. Due to the project's impact, many of them were engaged in saving and credit cooperatives and microfinance. This micro-finance helps them to solve some sort of financial problem. Similarly, they can get a loan to run any sort of business and they can invest money in foreign employment too. The easy access to loan facilities helped them to move on the path of prosperity. Likewise, some respondents who participated in vocational training through which they can gain a skill that is helpful for income generation. Besides this, the project does not have a direct impact on economic development. Therefore, a second large group of people is not certain of the role of projects in assuring the economic upliftment of Dalits.

I/NGO's Impact on Social Aspects of Dalits

Social development is itself a very vague meaning to understand, however, in this study, social development connotes participation, equality, and social behaviors as parameters of it. This study tried to reveal the fact about Dalit's participation in the

decision-making process and any other development-related activities. Equality is to get rights and freedom along with their social behavior of them.

Table 6
Impact of I/NGO on Dalit's Social Development

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strengths Leadership capacity and network	5	12.50
Mix up with non-Dalit	11	27.50
Aware of their rights	24	60.00
Total	40	100.00

Source: Field Study 2022

This study found that (as stated in table number 6) the percentage of impact done by the project regarding Dalit's social progress. Out of the total respondents, 12.50% claimed that Dalits enhance their leadership capacity and network in the community, about 27.50% claimed that I/NGOsprogram helped to get a chance to mix up with non-Dalits, another 60% argued that Dalitscan fight for their justice and while other 6.2% do not have any idea about the social impact of the project on the life of Dalits.

Antarghulan (mix-up) with Dalit and non-Dalit is determined as per social settings. If society is composed of different caste groups along with Dalit, then that type of society has less problem with mixing up between Dalit and non-Dalit. However, discrimination against Dalits based on the caste system is in practice. In a mixed society when Dalits and non-Dalits come in contact and cross the norms of the caste system, in that situation violence takes place. For example, fights usually occur between Dalits and non-Dalits while using public amenities such as water taps, and temples. etc. non-Dalits never want to forsake the practice of Hindu caste ideology. But surprisingly when any organization organizes any program such as training, workshop, seminar, or public event, both Dalit and non-Dalit participants sit together. At the program venue, on-Dalit hardly restricts Dalits from coming close to them and misbehaving. Due to frequent visits to programs, Dalits and non-Dalits are getting a chance to mix up with each other and have started to eat and drink together. Mixing up with different caste groups in the social arena helps them to develop closeness. Unfortunately, non-Dalit can't abandon the discriminatory practices of Dalits. Some Dalit women experience untouchability practices in the training and seminars. Anjali Sunar frequently participated in the NGO-led training but her neighbor who also

participated in the same program did not eat together. According to her experience, some non-Dalit women eat in public places but continue untouchability practices in their homes whereas some non-Dalit even do not eat and sit together in programs and training.

Besides this, Dalits also get a chance to enhance their network with the development and human rights activities due to their participation in programs. It is also an opportunity to share their status, experiences, and problems with district and national-level activists, leaders, policymakers, and scholars. According to the respondents, they used to meet district-level activists while they used to come to programs as facilitators, trainers, and moderators of programs. Similarly, they also get a chance to meet with national-level development activists in such programs. Besides this, Dalits can also meet the person who comes to monitor and evaluate the project. In this way, the project helps to enhance the network and interaction with people.

I/NGOs, Development and Empowerment

This study tried to find out how Dalit people can progress through the support they get from I/NGOs. In the development practice, some people progress in their lives with the small support of GOs and I/NGOs whereas some people do not see any significance. This study also tried to find out the implication of support and knowledge in the life of Dalits.

The number of non-governmental organizations providing several types of support to people. Table no 7 revealed information about the percentage of applications of support in their practical life. People who applied in practice were 32.50% (13 out of 40) and those who did not see any applicable was 25% (10 out of 40). At the same time, those who need further assistance to apply the support given by any project was 42.50% (17 out of 40).

Table 7

The Implication of I/NGOs Support

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, we apply in practice	13	32.50
Not applicable in practice	10	25.00
No further support to apply	17	42.50
Total	40	100.00

Source: Field Study 2022

Despite the interest of people sometimes they can't get any benefits from such training and programs launched by I/NGOs. RadhaSunar resident of the study area said that she got a chance to participate in the off-seasonal vegetable farming program, but she didn't utilize it because of a lack of money to buy instruments and materials for vegetable farming. In addition to this, the key informant also said that some organizations provide programs to those people which was not beneficial to them. Organizations provide agriculture-related support to those who have no land for farming. This case indicates that the organization did not pay serious attention to designing the program including the selection of the participants.

People's successes and failures are not just determined by their interest and hard work, but they also must have the extra support and capacity to utilize the knowledge and skill provided by any organization. Those families who are economically sound and can invest to run a business using the skill they got from training might progress in the future. However many Dalits are still economically poor, and they must earn a wage to manage their hand-to-mouth problems. They can't even invest to run a business. Moreover, they have no sound knowledge of marketing and other necessary skills which are required for business. In this way, someone can progress from small support, and someone can't. Once, Shanta got hotel-related support from an organization but due to the lack of further investment, she can't run a tea shop in her community despite knowing hotels. The same fate of Shanta is facing almost all the Dalits in the study area. In addition to this, hierarchical social order is the main obstacle for Dalits to run such businesses which is regarded as an issue of the caste system. For example, if Dalits run a hotel, tea shop, or grocery shop non-Dalits seldom eat or buy goods.

Moreover, various kinds of support for economic growth are not suitable for the Dalit community. For example, some of the organizations have provided support to agriculture-related activities (cash crops) for income generation and have provided all the materials. But, Dalits can't get benefits because they have no sufficient land for farming. Consequently, Dalits couldn't capitalize on the support.

Opinion on I/NGO's Programs

Several projects have been going on in the study area. Some projects have already been accomplished and some are going on so far. People have experience and knowledge about the project along with its strengths and limitations. As per the perspective of the respondents, the examination of the project their strengths parts are categorized into different themes i.e. economic development, awareness and empowerment, and infrastructure (road, drinking water, school building, etc.) development.

Table 8

Strengths of I/NGOs Program

Response	Frequency	percentage
Helps with economic development	3	7.50
Awareness and Empowerment	31	77.50
Infrastructure development	6	15.00
Total	40	100.0

Source: Field Study 2022

Strength of the Program

If we go through Table number 8, the strongest part of the project as per the respondent's perspective is increasing awareness and empowerment is high in number i.e., 77.50%, and the least 7.50% regarding help for economic development whereas 15% believed that the project's strength part is to support for infrastructure development. The project's impact on economic development seems very minor than other indicators because most of the I/NGOs projects are based on empowerment-related activities. There is no significant program for economic development. If an organization launches any income generation program, then people won't progress because on the one hand program itself is not applicable in their life whereas, on the other hand, they can't get further support even if they wish to apply.

Similarly, some of the strengths of the projects run by I/NGOs are that first they have the professional manpower, and the managerial part of the project is effective, staff mobilization, handling the programs, monitoring, and evaluation, and reporting all these parts are well. Second, I/NGOs have a sufficient budget as per the nature of the program and number of the beneficiaries. The third and most important strength is that they can bring awareness and empower people.

Limitation of the Program

Unlike the strengths of the project, limitations are also categorized into different themes such as program reached the target group or not, period, factualness of the program, and addressing the problem of people. In the given table 9, the perspective of the respondent regarding the limitations of the projects is different. By observing Table no 9, the main problem as per the majority (57.50%) of respondents seems to be the program does not reach the actual target group, and 32.50 % said that programs

were not based on the real problem. Likewise, 10% of the program is just conducted to show or just for formality.

Table 9

Limitation of I/NGOs Program

Response	Frequency	Percentage
The program is just for show	4	10.00
Not based to solve real problems	13	32.50
Programs do not reach actual target groups	23	57.50
Total	40	100.00

Source: Field Study 2022

Key informants and FGD participants provided information about the study's various I/NGOs' shortcomings. The first and most significant drawback is that they are unable to significantly improve the lives of the impoverished. It indicates that their initiative failed to reach really low-income and vulnerable people. Elite social classes benefit from the program. Second, there is inadequate coordination and cooperation among all I/NGOs-led activities. Without consulting one another, they are putting the program into action in their unique ways. Third, duplication of initiatives is another significant obstacle that prevents comprehensive improvement in the lives of the poor. Fourth, political party interests have an impact on all programs. Because of the party's influence, needy individuals like Dalits are used to being deprived to get benefits. GO programs have a higher level of political impact than I/NGOs. Fifth, the project's fundamental shortcoming is also its lack of proper governance, including artificial participants, false reporting, a lack of openness, manipulation of the problems facing the real target groups, etc.

Conclusion

To improve people's lives, GOs, INGOs, and other organizations work on several projects. Various facets of human life are covered by projects as well. In the name of the impoverished, a huge budget has been used. People now have slightly higher levels of consciousness, health, education, and economic position than in the past. However, identifying the sole change agent is quite challenging. However, as stated

by the field study, I/NGOs contributed to making aware and empowering people, all these outcomes are very few than that of investment. Similarly, to this, none of the development agencies can incorporate the actual poor people in any location, and Dalits are not given significant participation opportunities. Dalits participate in programs in some way, but their involvement in the phases of program design, planning, and implementation is essentially nonexistent. Additionally, the study did not come across a single project that focused solely on the economic empowerment of Dalits.

On the one hand, there are politics in which Dalits participate, but on the other, Dalits themselves are unable to take advantage of support because they need to work to survive. Even if they have the necessary abilities and knowledge, they are unable to devote the necessary time and financial resources to a new career. Because their demands differ from the assumptions made by the project, Dalits occasionally do not benefit from the nature of the program itself. In addition, if development organizations truly want Dalit development, they must determine the true requirements and include Dalits in nearly every phase of the project cycle, from project designing to project implementation to project evaluation. All groups should work closely together and establish a strong network to prevent program duplication.

The majority of Dalits are still in the same condition due to a lack of additional support and the pressure to spend more time resolving their hand-to-mouth issues rather than launching new businesses as instructed by the I/NGOs. Only a small percentage of Dalits are economically empowered and able to improve their economic status. Moreover, the existing social order is the major obstacle to Dalit's economic prosperity. Field information indicated that there is a contradiction between the hierarchical social order and the democratic political system in the context of Dalit empowerment. As per the guiding principle of the democratic system, Dalits should be given priority by organizations in development activities, but the social hierarchical order and status quo didn't allow Dalits to be socially, and economically well-off positions in society because there are various politics and manipulation in the course of program implication.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this report to all the poor people who are still struggling to manage hand-to-mouth problems.

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