



NJ: NUTA

Situational Analysis of Women Empowerment and Gender Equality

Susmita Gautam

Department of Rural Development, Tri-Chandra Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Email: Susmita.gautam@trc.tu.edu.np

DOI: 10.3126/nutaj.v8i1-2.44110

Abstract

This study demonstrates the role, opportunity, decision making, responsibility and different issues of gender and the status of the women in the society. Women with comparative to their counter-partners with respect to household works, economic condition, education, health, political and community participation of women with decision-making process. Therefore, the main objective focused on the situation analysis of women empowerment and rural development which has been carried out by using primary and secondary data focused on gender inequality, socio-economic, political, and demographic status. The major findings revealed that the as women are on the process of their empowerment, they need position help and support from their family, society, and country as well. They are lacking various opportunities for income, employment, access to decision making, ownership of property and participation in political parties. Majority of women engage in household work as a result the socio-economic status of women is low. This research focuses to improve the women status in the study area as the government formulates policies and program to integrate the women in development program. Thus, their problems should be addressed properly through empowerment that will lead to economic development in the community as well as the country.

Keywords: Gender disparity, gender equality, multidimensional, rural development, women empowerment

Introduction

Generating women's power is referred to as women empowerment. Academic enhancement, economic independence, and removal of discriminatory laws are prime keys to the women empowerment, which play the crucial roles to strengthen and boost up their status; and ultimately human prosperity and dignity leads to accelerate the completeness of human civilization. Therefore, women empowerment plays a vital role to gear up the pace of development of a well-cultured society.

Basically, large part of women's work, still, not considered as economic activity. Women's active participation in the informal sector has increased significantly in both urban and rural areas – like vending, petty trade, liquor making, and vegetable selling. These are common employment ventures of women. In rural areas, the employment opportunity outside the household generally was limited to planting, weeding, and harvesting. Whereas, in urban areas, they were employed in domestic and traditional jobs, and in the government sector mostly in lower-level positions.

Nepal is a signatory to various national and international declarations such as the first world women's conference held in Mexico, 1975; second in Copenhagen, 1980; long-term work plan Nairobi, 1985 and the Beijing declaration 1995. The Beijing conference in 1995 had identified 12 critical areas of concern for women; Nepal however has condensed it to seven (Bhattarai, 2004). The Millennium development goals (MDGs, 2000) and convention of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1978) also focused on the areas of women empowerment.

Though, every year women participation is increasing in the decision-making sector however, significant participation and contribution is yet to be achieved. Nepal human development report, 2015, shows 26.6 percent women are head of household. There are 17.7 percent of women have at least secondary education level, 79.9 percent women are labor force participation, 25.9 percent of women are human inequality coefficient and 41.4 percent of women inequality in education and 15.1 percent women are inequality in income (UNDP, 2015). The problem of gender inequality has been persisting with and among the country worldwide. Under-developed countries are more affected than developed countries with respect to gender issue.

Methods and Materials RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study has carried out at Dukuchhap, Godawari Municipality of Lalitpur district on the basis of exploratory research design and the present study is based both on primary and secondary data. The research applied participatory method and simple random sampling method was adopted to determine the household to be surveyed. Required data were collected using household questionnaire, KII, and FGD. The data are analyzed according to the objectives of the study.

Findings

Education

Education referred as one of the most important factor for overall development and empowerment of an individual. Education helps on behavioral change of the people's knowledge and many other social factors. The level of education and their level of knowledge is also high on the social and other status. In the case of women, it is the brightness of their children and to maintain civilized family as well. The level of education is always closely related to the other factor like awareness, social values, knowledge, skill etc.

Table (1) shows that literacy status by sex. The male literacy was 98.1 percent of the total population and female literacy rate was 94.7 percent of the total population. The proportion of illiterate population in the study area was found to be 5.3 percent. Male 0.9 percent and female 4.4 percent are illiterate of the total population. Similarly, 49.9 percent male and 44.8 percent female are literate. Similarly, out of 94.7 percent literate population, 21.4 percent population are only literate (but not schooling), 5.8 percent male and 7.8 percent female are primary level of schooling. The lower secondary level of education of male was 9.4 percent and female was 8.8 percent, secondary level of education of male was 13.4 percent and female was 8.2 percent, +2 level male was 8.6 percent and female was 9.0 percent, bachelor level of education of male was 4.0 percent and female was 2.6 percent and master and above education level of male was only 0.4 percent and female was not attend.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Study Population Aged 5 Years and Above by Educational Attainment

Literacy status	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Illiterate	5	0.9	23	4.4	28	5.3
Literate	263	49.9	236	44.8	499	94.7
Total	268	50.9	259	49.1	527	100
Education Level						
Literate (but not schooling)	55	11.0	54	10.8	109	21.8
Primary (1-5)	29	5.8	39	7.8	68	13.6
Lower secondary (6-8)	47	9.4	44	8.8	91	18.2
Secondary (9-10)	67	13.4	41	8.2	108	21.6
+2 level	43	8.6	45	9.0	88	17.6
Bachelor	20	4.0	13	2.6	33	6.6
Master & above	2	0.4	0	0.0	2	0.4
Total	263	52.7	236	47.3	499	100

Source: Ward Profile, 2021

Occupation Status

Occupation is one of the most important variables that affect the women empowerment. It also determines the socio-economic condition of household. The household questionnaire includes a question as whether each person aged 10 years and above was involved in any type of occupation or not. Distribution of household population by employment status is presented in table.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Study Population Aged 10 years and Above by Occupation

Occupation status	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture	53	10.6	65	13.2	118	23.8
Services	41	8.5	16	3.3	57	11.8
Business	23	4.8	22	4.5	45	9.3
Foreign employment	40	8.3	6	1.2	46	9.5
Housework	2	0.4	44	9.1	46	9.5
Daily wages	16	3.3	27	5.6	43	8.9
Unemployment	73	15.1	71	14.7	144	29.8
Total	248	50.2	251	49.8	499	100

Source: Ward Profile, 2021

Although the highest number of populations of Nepal is involved in agricultural sector. 23.8 percent of population in the study area involved in the agriculture; 11.8 percent population involved in service sector. Similarly, foreign employment and housework was found to be same percentage which was 9.5 percent, 9.3 percent population involved in business sector and 8.9 percent population involved in daily wages. Similarly, majority of the population (29.8 %) was unemployment.

Health Service Availability

According to WHO, “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases and infirmities in all matters related to reproductive health and its function and system”. This definition also shows that health is an important factor for human life. Therefore, health is always taken as a quality of life of the people of any country.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Study Population by Types of Health Facilities Available in Locality

Types of Health Facility	Number	Percent
Hospitals	2	1.6
Health posts	84	65.6
Private clinics	42	32.8
Total	128	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table (3) shows that the majority of the respondent i.e; 65.6 percent women revealed that health post is available in their locality, whereas 32.8 percent women said that private clinic is available in their locality and only 1.6 percent women said that hospital is available in their locality in the research area.

Ownership of Property

Ownership of property also play the vital role in the women empowerment in the society.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Opinion on Female Property Right

Opinion	Number	Percent
Yes	128	100
No	0	0
Total	128	100
If Yes, What is the Reason?		
Rare and care of child	19	14.8
To fulfill the necessities	26	20.3
Sustain the social status	26	20.3
Happiness for the future	56	43.8
Others	1	0.8
Total	128	100

Source: Field Survey,2021

Table (4) shows that the majority of the respondent cent percent of women said that female property right are important in the research area. The main reason of female property right is important was 43.8 percent women said Happiness for the future. Similarly, 20.3 percent women said to sustain the social status and only 0.8 percent women said to another reason in the research area.

Equal Wage

Equal wage is also the main component to improve the women status in the society. The equal wage determines the status of women in the society, country or the nation. In the context of Nepal majority of the women are working under the low level paid comparing to their male counter parts. Women are also facing the dangerous work which directly affecting to the women and children health. In the cast of labor work, Government of Nepal has discriminated, and majority of the young male and female population are going to the Arab countries, and they contribute the GDP in the national income. From this fact, Higher level of wage it would be better for improvement of the women status in the society.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by their Opinion to get Equal Wage as compared to Men

Opinion	Number	Percent
Yes	16	12.5
No	112	87.5
Total	128	100

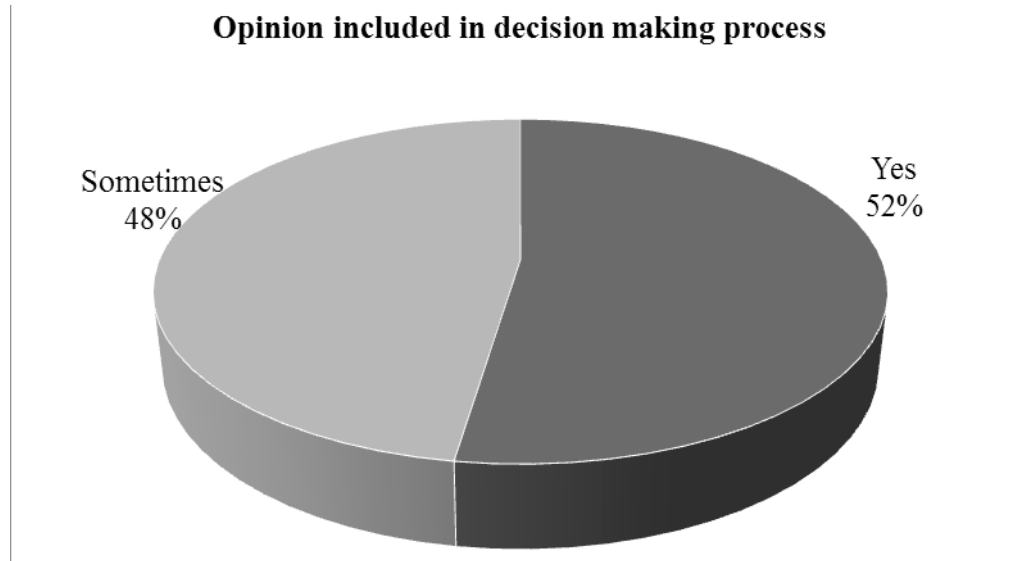
Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table (5) shows that the majority of the women 87.5 percent didn't get equal wage as compared to men, only 12.5 percent of women get the equal wage compared to men. Thus, this report indicates that the women were discriminated in the field of labor work. Male is the superior in the community, so the women status is low in the salary-based work.

Women's Participation

Women's participation in the development program is also plays the vital role to improve their socio-economic, political as well as to raise the awareness in the different issues. Active participation of male and female in the development program is also the major agenda of the Millennium Deceleration. So that women participation in the household decision making, political and policy making level is highly encourage in the UN Conversation and Declaration. Nepal also ratified the different conversation of women and development.

Figure 1: Pie-Chart of Respondents by women opinion is included in HHS Decision Making Process

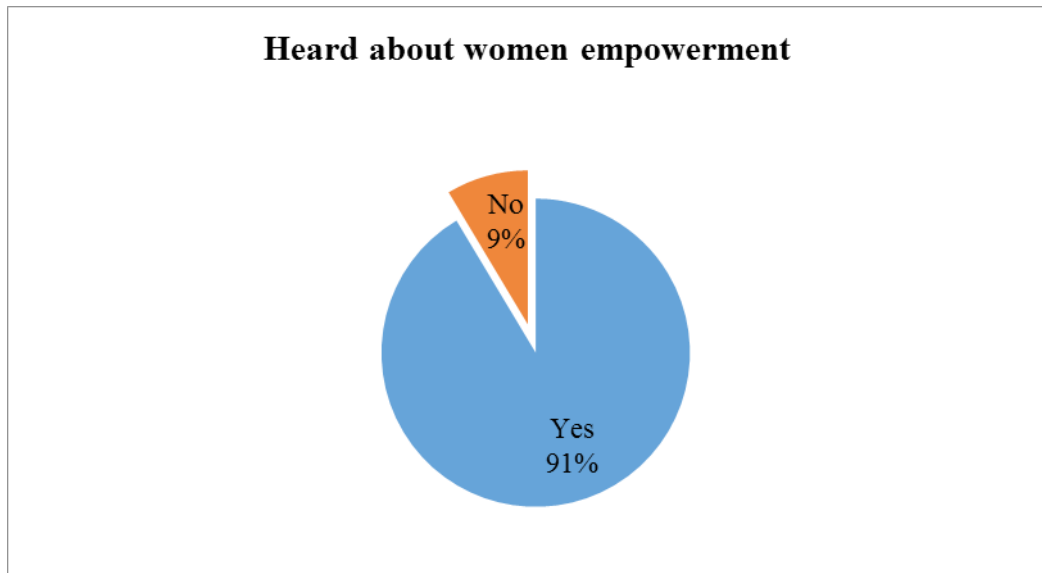


Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure (1) clearly shows that, the majority of the women 52 percent were actively participate and their opinion is included in the decision-making process. Similarly, 48 percent of women have taken decision only sometimes in the household decision making process in the house-hold issues.

Women's Empowerment

Empowerment is multidimensional, social and political process that people attain to control over their own lives through learning and earning of knowledge, skill etc. It is a process to enhance the capacity of the people, the communities, their society, and the nation as well. Empowerment is a process which is similar to a path or journey where one develops their own way to achieve the goal. Unlike, other aspects of empowerment, women empowerment is very specific context. Furthermore, empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected to each other.

Figure 2: Pie-chart of Respondents by Heard about Women Empowerment

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 2 shows that the majority of women 91 percent are heard about women empowerment and only 9 percent are don't heard about the term women empowerment. Since various initiatives are important for women empowerment, multiple choices were provided to the respondents to mark what are the important factors for women empowerment. Among them, education stand as a most important factor for the women empowerment in the society.

Discussion

Education and Health status of women

Education is the most important factor for the development of human personality as well as of a nation, education for life itself because it is that element which equips a woman with the tool to solve her problems in life and helps her to live in a better life. Education is a critical agent of change therefore essential for the rural women in a measure as well as in a form that they need to become more productive and worthier citizen of the country. Education is therefore essential for women and girls to become self-dependent, more productive, skillful, and creative and to recognize their right place in the society and to enter the mainstream of development of the nation. Giving emphasis on women's education and educational qualifications, these are vital indicators showing women's social status in the society. These are determining factors, for not only it generates availability of employment opportunities in the process of modernization, but also for the communication with the outside world in comparison to increasing educated males. Therefore, education is an important agent to empower women.

Nepalese women's health is in miserable condition in the sense that they are quite neglected from their very childhood stage. The cultural norms, economic conditions, and professional attitude of parents towards the boys are in the center ill/poor health of women. High growth rate of population is the low

status of women in society, low level of literacy, high infant mortality rate, socio-economic tradition which favoring son, poverty and universal child marriage. Most of the contraceptives are directed to women. Even in sterilization the focus has been on women. Between 1981 and 1991 female sterilization increased by a more 13.4% while the male sterilization rate was half of female sterilization rate in 1991. Given the greater right to male over resources, higher education level, greater mobility and independent social status, these figures indicate a distinct gender bias against women in population programmes (Acharya, 1994). The health condition of rural women is very pathetic as they have to get busy in agriculture, fetching firewood and drinking water. Nutritional anemia is one of the major contributors to the high maternal mortality in Nepal. Women's iron requirement increases during pregnancy and in normal delivery some blood is lost, additionally increase the iron requirement. After delivery women need to make up rapidly for the blood loss, for iron is required for breast feeding. Women with subsequent pregnancies are greater risk. Adequate supplementations of iron foliate is required refried to rise hemoglobin lends and ensure the women can cope with the risk of delivery when a woman is anemic even relatively small blood loss during delivery can increase the risk of mortality. High infant and maternal mortality are also a product of unhygienic traditional birthing practices and a health care system, which reaches only 15% of the population.

Economic Status of Women

From the economic point of view, Nepal is too much backward. More than half of the population lives in rural areas. The major economic activity of the country is agriculture, and the rest includes manufacturing, trade, commerce, and service-oriented activities. The economy is basically Agro-based, about 90 percent people are dependent on this sector whereas above 60 percent national income is generated from this sector. Agriculture covers above 70 percent of exportable goods though it is profoundly based on agriculture, but the output of agriculture is promising. The higher dependency on monsoon and use of traditional mode of production are the major constraints seen in agriculture sector. In actual sense the agro-production can't suffice the demand of growing population per year. Traditionally women's responsibilities have been restricted to the homes, cooking, cleaning, childbearing, and child rearing and looking after the home. In the absence of her male partner who usually goes out for employment, her burden of work and responsibilities also, increase even more. Women are more disadvantaged than their counterpart due to inadequate access to exposure technology, credit, and environment. Women economic activities are related to their economic strata. Women of higher economic strata are educated and are from the urban area, so they are involved in jobs, projects and programs. But women of lower economic strata are uneducated and are not involving in gainful economic activities. They are mostly confined within the household. But the rural women earn money by selling crops. If they get some leisure time, they weave hay-mat, basket, rope etc. and earn extra money. Women who are able to earn money and make a visible contribution to the household enterprises may be expected to have to a higher status within the household.

Women and Property Right

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

Despite constitutional guarantees for equal rights for all, women suffer injustice of all kinds, social, economic, religious, legal and political. The existing property rights laws are against the spirit of the constitution of the kingdom of Nepal (1990) which guarantees equal rights for women. And the deprivation of rights on parental property is one of the major causes of women's backwardness (Shrestha, 1996). In respect of guaranteeing equal property rights to women, the existing laws are silent about modalities of giving rights. The Hindu law in respect of property rights is different from other laws and laws in the western countries. Flexible in nature, there are sufficient rooms in the Hindu laws for its amendments to address new social problems. In order to get rid of religious and cultural value which is basically characterized by negative values of social thinking, we have to look into things objectively and better analyze the issue in a legal prospective (Sangroula, 1996). Women are deprived of all rights socio-cultural, economic, legal and political. Economic discrimination against women is root cause of kinds of backwardness-socio-cultural, legal educational and political. The existing laws are gender-biased and silent about the women's property rights. In case of personal properties of women, they were found very few in numbers who have their own property. Most women's personal property is "Dowry" which they get during marriage from maternal home some women were found having cows, goats, hens, ducks and little land as their own property called "pewa". They were free to use their property (Thapaliya, 1996).

Women in Decision Making

Women have little role in family decision-making due to their illiteracy and non-involvement in direct income generating works. Nepalese society is male dominated where women's decision-making authority come only after the men. The women make decisions only when male is not in the home, or they have gone outside their village. In the same manner, while making decisions on agricultural sectors, women's role is limited only to seed and manure selection. The women make 18.5 percent decision by themselves and 12.5 percent jointly with men. Religion, low, tradition, history and social attitude based on patriarchal and patrimonial superstructure of the social system limits women's participation in public life. This is the fact that less than 1 percent women are involved in professional, management and household decision making position in the country and major decisions are mainly made by men (Shtri, 1995). According to CBS, data, "*The status of women in Nepal*" (Volume II, Chapter 7), the role of women in household decision-making and the allocation of household resources depend upon a number of factors. These factors include type a composition of the household age and lifestyle of the women in question and the number of household males absent from the village (Bennatt, 1983).

In the context of Nepal, only in the area of choosing which staple food grain day and deciding about small-scale gifts and loans to neighbors and relatives did women lead. Female decision-making on medical treatment, education, travel, purchase small household necessities, food, clothing and durables etc. even on expenditures for religious and social obligations are dominated by men. As for major capital decision about giving or taking large-scale credit, purchase of sell of animals and other property or embarking on business ventures, make more decision on their own without female input. Besides, in 2004 B.S. (1947) adult women have also received the right to vote along with men to elect members of the town and village Panchayats. This right to adult franchise has given equal opportunity to men and women. Despite this provision, if we exclude the number of the lady members in Rastriya panchayat and lower bodies representing the reserved seats for women's organization and nominated lady members

the number of women representatives is almost nil. (Bhattarai, 2004)

Similarly, the numbers of women in policy making bodies of the country are extremely small. Though political rights are equally granted to both men and women are not yet able to contribute equally in various fields of national life is that women have an unequal position in the family, the basic unit of the society. The movement of women for equal rights should be based on a struggle for equal economic rights. It is definite that only by enjoying full economic rights can women have free existence in the society (Majupuria, 2007).

Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to find out the gender inequality presenting in our country and women's participation in household decision making as well as which are close to underdevelopment. The study shows that the female situations were weaker as compared to male. They have low status in education, occupation, health, nutrition, political participation, ownership of property, weaker in household decision making process etc. however, the main contribution of studying is to level role, decision making, responsibility, barriers and opportunities in household decision making work, education, occupation, health status, political participation, reproductive health rights, specific economic issues, and leader and community participation. It also tries to know the view of women's parental property right among different sectors. Women have limited access to resources and even they are deprived from their rights. They are disadvantaged, deprived, and discriminated socially, economically, and politically with among the nations. Women are regarded as the second-class citizens of the country having subordinate role. They get fewer opportunities to involve in mainstream of development.

The prominent factor for the overall decision-making process in family was social empowerment. Then the reproductive rights and the property rights on women are also important for gender equality in Nepal. In fact, the overall development of our country is impossible unless both men and women in productive work can enhance the rate of economic development. Unfortunately, Nepalese women have not been able to fully participation in development process due to illiteracy, low status of health, passiveness in decision-making, low rate of economic activities as males, low participation in politics and overall developmental activities. Indeed, the demand for modern labor is increasing day by day in both urban and rural areas. However, demand for women labor has been increased specially in agriculture, governmental industries, traditional occupation, and low-price job. Educational status of female is lower than that of men. So, it is essentials to increase women's participation in decision-making activities. Though it seems women empowerment from the grassroot level is difficult, but it is very essential. Therefore, the traditional concept that has charged for women must be erased and the society should be positive towards the empowerment of women.

References

- ADB (1999). *Women in Development: Issues, Challenges and Strategies in Asia and the Pacific. Philippines*: Asian Development Bank.
- Acharya, M. (1997). *Gender Equity and Empowerment of Women*. Kathmandu: UNFPA.
- Acharya, M. R. (2002). *Busyness of Bureaucracy*. Kathmandu: Pulchok Enterprize.
- Acharya, M. (1981). *Status of Women*, (vol. I) Kathmandu: CEDA.
- Acharya, M. (1994). *The Statistical Profile on Nepalese Women*. Kathmandu: Institute for Integrated Development.

- Bennett, L. (1983). *Dangerous Wives and Scared Sisters*. Columbia University Press, USA.
- Bhattarai, N. (2004). *Women Participation in Local Governance*. Kirtipur: (A Case Study of Salyan District). An Unpublished MA Thesis submitted to the Central Department, Tribhuvan University.
- CBS. (2011). *National Population Census*. Kathmandu: CBS.
- CBS. (2011). *Nepal Demographic Health Survey*. Kathmandu: CBS.
- CBS. (2011). *Population Monograph of Nepal*. Kathmandu: CBS.
- CBS. (2011). *VDC Profile*. Kathmandu: CBS.
- CBS. (2002). *Women in Nepal*. Kathmandu: CBS.
- CEDA, (1972). *Population Development Policy in Nepal, Internal Working Document* CEDA T.U. Constitution (2063). *Interim Constitution of Nepal*, Government of Nepal, KT
- Dahal, R. (2002). *State and Rural Development*. Kathmandu: New Hera Books Enterprises.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. In *Development and Change* (pp. vol30, 435-464).
- Ministry of Health (1993). *Annual Health Report*: Department of Health Services, HMG, Kathmandu.
- Nepal South Asia Center (1998). *Nepal Human Development Report*, NSAC.
- PRB. (2010). *World Population Data Sheet*. UN: UNFPA.
- Sharma, P. (2011). *Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women(A case study of mehelkuna VDC of surkhet district)*. Kathmandu: An Unpublished.
- Shtri, S. (1995). *Women Development Democracy, A Study of the Socio-Economic Changes in the status of women (1981-93)*. Kathmandu: Stri Shakti.
- Thapa, D. B. (2003). *Gender Disparity in Nepal*. An Unpublished MA Thesis Submitted to Central Department of Population Studies. Tribhuvan University.Kirtipur.
- UN. (1995). *The Fourth Conference on Women, in Beijing, China*. New York: UN.
- UNDP. (2005). *Empowering women migrant workers*. Retrieved 2010, from United National Development Fund for Women East and Southeast Asia: <http://www.unifem.org/globalsanner/index.php>
- UNDP. (2014). *Gender Development Index*. Kathmandu: UNDP.
- UNDP. (2015). *Human Development Report*. Kathmandu: UNDP.
- UNDP. (2005). *Nepal Human Development Report*. Kathmandu: United Nations Development Programs.
- UNFPA. (1996). *Program of Action*. Kathmandu: UNFPA.
- UNICEF. (1991). *Child and Women in Nepal*. Kathmandu: UNICEF.