

Violence against Women in Politics in Nepal

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List of abbreviations

CA	Constituent Assembly
CAS	Constituent Assembly Secretariat
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Violence Against Women
CFUG	Community Forestry Users Group
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal
FEDO	Feminist Dalit Organization
FPTP	First Pass The Post
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GBVIP	Gender Based Violence In Politics
GDI	Gender Development Index
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HH	Households
HoR	House of Representatives
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFES	International Foundation For Electoral Systems
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGs	Local Governments
LGOA	Local Government Operation Act
MOFAGA	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration

MoWCSC	Ministry of Women Children and Senior Citizen
NA	National Assembly
NC	Nepali Congress
NCCR	Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research
NEC	National Election Commission
NLC	Nepal Law Commission
NLS	Nepal Law Society
PEW	Political Empowerment of Women
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
PR	Proportional Representation
PSPN	People's Socialist Party Nepal
RJP	Rastriya Janata Party
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAWIP	Violence Against Women in Politics
WC	Women's Caucus

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Violence against Women in Politics in Nepal

Abstract

This paper examines state of violence against women in politics in Nepal specially focusing to the difficulties women face in political participation in the past three decades. The main objective of this paper is to document and analyze the state of violence against women active in politics. The study employed mainly qualitative approach and complemented by some quantitative data. The paper demonstrates that there is remarkable progress in the constitutional and legal part to enhance the participation of women in politics especially from the constitutional provision of 33 percent quota to women. However, the resistance from male political decision makers, nepotism and socio-cultural barriers women are not able to actively participate in the politics and acquire the higher political positions in the party-structures like chair persons or deputy chair or secretary or in the government and parliament. However, this is also gradually changing. The paper concludes that though some resistance is observed, there are tremendous opportunities for female politicians to lead party or parliamentary committee or even the government.

Key words:

Empowerment, Gender, Politics, Violence, Women

1. Introduction:

A constant concern expressed in Nepal is about lack of meaningful participation of women in politics and associated complications despite being more than half of population of country (Upreti and Shrestha, 2017). Demographically, Nepal hosts population of about 30 million with the population of 50.4 percent women. However, several studies have revealed that in politics the representation of women is low and even they are facing enormous challenges and violence (Upreti and Shrestha, 2017a&b; RSN, 2009; Upreti, 2011; Rai, 2015; Pandey, 2019; TAF, 2018; Manchanda, 2010). Violence against women in politics (VAWIP) is one of the common forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) which includes, *'any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women politicians during their political career including threats of such acts, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life, within the family, at the inter or intra political party level, within society, or by the state'* (Women's Caucus, Constituent Assembly Secretariat, Nepal Law Society, and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2011: 67).

Table 1: Overview of position of Nepal in global ranking by various indexes

Nepal's global rating in	Rank	Description
Human development Index (HDI)	0.602	Nepal's HDI value for 2019 is 0.602—which put the country in the medium human development category—positioning it at 142 out of 189 countries and territories.
Gender development Index (GDI)	0.581	The GDI is calculated for 167 countries. The 2019 female HDI value for Nepal is 0.581 in contrast with 0.623 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.933, placing it into Group 3.
Gender Inequality Index (GII)	0.452	Nepal has a GII value of 0.452, ranking it 110 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index.
Economic power and opportunity Index (Female opportunity Index 2021) ¹	92	Nepal Rank – 92 out of 100 countries In 2020 it was 63.51
Educational Index	0.512	Rank 142 in 2019
Political Empowerment of Women (PEW)	33.5	33.5 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women
Educational Empowerment of women	29.3	29.3 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 44.2 percent of their male counterparts.

Source: UNDP (2020)

The Table 1 presents the position of Nepal in global ranking by various indexes such as Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, Gender Inequality Index, Economic Power and Opportunity Index (Female Opportunity Index),

¹ <https://n26.com/en-eu/female-opportunity-index>

Educational Index, Political Empowerment of Women, and Educational Empowerment of Women.

In this paper, we are discussing women's political participation and related political violence against women and associated challenges. Women's political participation for the purpose of this paper means their engagement in political parties, local bodies, parliament, government, Constituent Assembly, council of ministers, in the constitutional bodies and other political positions. Similarly, violence against women in politics (VAWIP) for the purpose of this paper is taken from the definition of the UNWOMEN and Centre for Social Research (2014; 12) which defines it, "*as violence that occurs within the political sphere but that specifically targets women... VAWIP is 'the connotation of any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women politicians, including threat of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life including the inability of women to use their constitutional rights to participate in politics as a voter, an activist or an active and engaged citizen'*". The report further argues that "*VAWIP is used to reinforce traditional social and political structures by targeting women leaders who challenge patriarchy and the prevailing social expectations and norms'*".

2. Context: diversity yet to reflect in politics

Nepal is diverse in many respects, demography, physiography, language, culture and religions. When we look the demographic landscape of Nepal, concentration of population is associated with particular geographic locations. The Terai-Madesh, southern plain belt of Nepal occupies 50.27% population whereas 43% population resides in the hills and the remaining 6.73% population resides in mountains. The population growth rate of Nepal is 1.35% (see Table 2). The highly skewed distribution of population is shaped by availability of

infrastructures like road, electricity, employment opportunities and livelihood options.

Table 2: Demographic Overview of Nepal- Population size, growth and distribution

Population size, growth and distribution	Percentage
Population size of Terai constitutes	50.27 %
Population size of Hill constitutes	43 %
Population size of Mountain constitutes	6.73 %
Annual average growth rate	1.35%

Source: CBS, (2014)

The Table 3 shows that out of total 5427302 households, 74% (4030610) household heads are male and remaining 26% (1396692) are women, which demonstrate variation in household held. However, this situation is changing. The table 2 shows that the situation of female-headed household is changing. Household head is recognized with higher social status because of its decision-making role.

Table 3: Households Heads by Sex and Age Groups

Sex of HH head	Total	Age of the HH Head							
		10-14	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 and 70+
Total	5427302 (100%)	7403	66325	778426	1285500	1251777	972773	695160	369938
Male	4030610 (74%)	4777	40321	458730	890329	995013	807586	548149	285705
Female	1396692 (26%)	2626	26004	319696	395171	256764	165187	147011	84233

Source: CBS, (2011)

According to CBS (2011), only 14.87% households were headed by women in 2001 which is increased to 25.73% in 2011 (see Table 4).

Table 4: Situation of Women Headed Households

Year	Percentage
2001	14.87%
2011	25.73%

Source: CBS, (2011)

Nepal is a country of diversity in terms of composition of population as it hosts more than 123 castes and ethnicities who speaks different ethnic dialects and follows different religions. The Table 5 shows that of the total population, almost 17% Chhetri and 12% Brahmin are the dominant caste groups among the others. Among the indigenous nationalities, there are different castes and ethnicities in the range of 1.5 to 7 % (see Table 5).

Table 5: Demographic Overview of Nepal- Caste/ Ethnicity

Caste/ Ethnicity	Percentage
Chhetri	16.6%
Brahman-Hill	12.2%
Magar	7.1%
Tharu	6.6%
Tamang	5.8%
Newar	5%
Kami	4.8%
Muslim	4.4%
Yadav	4%
Rai	2.3%
Gurung	2%
Damai/Dholii	1.8%
Thakuri	1.6%
Limbu	1.5%
Sarki	1.4%
Teli	1.4%
Chamar/Harijan/Ram	1.3%,
Koiri/Kushwaha	1.2%
Other	19%
Total	100%

Source: CBS, (2014)

Likewise, there are different castes and ethnicities within Dalit communities existed in the range of 1.2 % (Koiri/Kushwaha) to 1.8% Damai/Dholii (Table 4). Among the diversified castes and ethnicities, the Chhetri and Brahmin and Dalits speak Nepali as their mother tongue and other indigenous nationalities have their own mother tongue (See Table 6).

Table 6: Demographic Overview of Nepal- Mother Tongue

Mother Tongue	Percentage
Nepali	44.6%
Maithili	11.7%
Bhojpuri	5.98%
Tharu	5.77%
Tamang	5.11%
Newar	3.2%
Bajjika	2.99%
Magar	2.98%
Doteli	2.97%
Urdu	2.61%
Others	6.4%
Unspecified	0.2%
Total	100%

Source: CBS, (2014)

The Table 6 shows the percentage of Nepali people speaking different mother tongue. Mother tongue language is an identity of people but sometime it also restricts women’s political participation because still the dominant languages are only few (Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu and Tamang who are more than 5 percent of population). Though the language diversity is an asset of a nation sometime, linguistic minorities face problems and people speaking dominant languages have more advantages in politics.

Table 7: Women’s Literacy Status

Date	Adult Literacy Rate (Female)	Adult Literacy Rate (Male)	Adult Literacy Rate	Adult Literacy Rate (15-24 Female)	Adult Literacy Rate (15-24 male)	Adult Literacy Rate (15-24 male)
2011	48.84%	71.71%	59.63%	80.21%	89.88%	84.76%
2001	34.89%	62.71%	48.61%	60.14%	80.62%	70.05%
1991	17.38%	49.22%	32.98%	32.67%	68.23%	49.60%
1981	9.15%	31.67%	20.57%	14.97%	45.10%	30.04%

Source: CBS, (2011)

Similarly, there is variation in literacy rate among the different caste and ethnicities (see Table 7), that has direct bearing in political participation of women. Even though literacy rate of women is quite increased in the last 40 years (9.15% in 1981 to 48.84% in 2011), the difference between men and women is still a major concern. Literacy and level of education is quite important for political empowerment of women as it enhance their access to analyze available policy provisions and placement in leadership.

Table 8: Population of Nepal by religion

Religion	Percentage
Hindu	81.3%
Buddhist	9%
Muslim	4.4%
Kirant	3.1%
Christian	1.4%
Other	0.5%
Unspecified	0.2%
Total	100%

Source: CBS, (2014)

Though religious diversity exists in Nepal, it is quite skewed in terms of its percentage. Vast majority is Hindu (81%) followed by Buddhist (9%), Muslim (4.4%), Kirat (3.1%) and Christian (1.4%). The highly gendered nature of religion has often been

seen as leading to a limitation in the roles of women excluding them from mobility, participation and influence in public decision-making spheres.

The above scenario of diversity clearly expects representative of each group in the political sphere and particularly the representation of women. The reality is that representation remains limited with the over dominance of higher caste groups and few women (of any caste but especially lower). Further, women face numerous structural hindrances to participation in political structures and processes and encounter violence because of their attempts to exert political agency. Addressing his violence is now a matter of urgency if Nepal is to achieve democratic diversity. The rest of this paper will examine Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWIP).

3. Objectives and research questions

Our research into VAWIP has two objectives:

- a. To examine the situation of Violence Against Women in Politics in Nepal
- b. To explore possible ways out to address Violence Against Women in Politics

The following research questions are framed to seek answers anticipated by the above two objectives:

1. What is the status of participation and representation of women in politics?
2. Are women recognized in politics as leaders are they visibility and accepted?
3. What are the major forms of Violence Against Women in Politics?
4. What are the barriers of political participation of women?
5. What are the mechanisms to break the barriers and address VAWIP?

4. Methodology

We have used a qualitative approach to understand experiences and the reality of Violence Against Women in Politics. In the study, we used the following qualitative methods and complemented by some quantitative data:

Literature review: We have extensively reviewed available literature, both grey and academic as well as qualitative and quantitative, related to female politicians and their struggle.

Content analysis of media reporting (print press) and other relevant materials such as official policy documents.

Key-Informant Interviews (KIIs): Another method we used to collect the data for this paper was key informant interviews. We have conducted 25 KII to collect the qualitative data. We interviewed female leaders and cadres from across political parties, female members of the parliament [National Assembly (NA), House of Representatives (HoR)] and local governments (LGs) were also interviewed.

The study has some limitations. First, we were not able to have extensive consultation with the key stakeholders such as wider number of women candidates of the parliamentary elections, elected female members of local governments from remote areas due to covid-19 imposed mobility restrictions. Second, the time frame is short to go for more survey based rigorous quantitative analysis.

5. Major findings and analysis

In this section, we have presented the major findings and analysis of the study. The political participation of women and related political violence is not a recent phenomenon in Nepal. It has a long history in fact. They are clustered in the following sections.

5.1 Women's access to politics: state of participation and representation

Women's struggle for their political, social and economic rights is not new in Nepal (Lotter, 2017; Mahato *et.al.*, 2019; Manchanda, 2010; Pandey, 2019). It was already started 107 years ago in the name of Women's Committee (*Nari Samiti*) by Yog Maya Devi and Divya Devi Koirala for campaigning against the Rana Regime and demanding for 'women's education', which is still continuing (Pandey, 2019; Thapa *et.al.*, 2015; Shrestha *et.al.*, 2017; Upreti, 2009). Continuing this tradition, women were actively participated in the labor movement of Biratnagar Jute mill in 1947 and the Rana rulers arrested protesting women leaders. Consequently, women leaders (Ms. Mangala Devi Singh, Ms. Kamaksha Devi, Ms. Shreemaya Devi, Ms. Rajani Champa, Ms. Sahana Pradhan, Ms. Sadhana Pradhan) formed Nepal Women's Association in 1947 to start a more systematic protest and started fight for their rights and freedom (Pandey, 2019; Upreti, *et.al.*, 2018). They also associated with the banned political parties. Since then different women associations were formed and affiliated with different political parties and actively worked for the rights of women (Upreti and Shivakoti, 2018; RSN, 2009).

The RSN (2009:40) states, “*although no woman was elected to the executive posts of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, or District Development Committee Chairperson, 36,000 women made their entry into local governance following the adoption of the Interim Constitution. Moreover, for the first time Dalit, Janajati/Indigenous, Madhesi, Muslim, and other disadvantaged communities were represented in the Constituent Assembly and legislature*”. According to IDEA (2011: 63), the majority were *Janajati* or indigenous people (35.7 percent), followed by Brahmins (22.4 percent), Madhesi (15.8 percent), Dalits (10.7 percent), Chhetri (10.7 percent), Muslims (2.6 percent), and others (including *Kirat*) (2 percent), all of which

were nearly proportionate to the national average (Upreti and Shrestha, 2017c).

The Article 63 of the Interim Constitution (2007) had made 33 percent compulsory representation of women in all state structures (NLC, 2007). Further, the Article 142(3) clause 3 made compulsory provision of women's participation in the executive position of the political parties (NLC, 2007). This was a big change as compared with the Article 114 of the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1991, which had stipulated only 5% reservation of women in the lower house of parliament and three seats in the upper house (WC, CAS, NLS and IDEA, 2011). The 2007 interim constitution also raised the reservation for women at the district and ward levels from 20% as stipulated under the Local Self-Governance Act (1999) to 33% under the new legislative framework (Upreti and Shrestha, 2017c).

The study conducted by the Renaissance Society Nepal (RSN) immediately after the first Constituent Assembly Election in (2009:5) found that “*women's representation at central level of the political parties was 28.7%, 12.4% in executive committees, 33.5% in all sister organizations and 14.7% in sister organizations other than women. Similarly, this ratio is 25.88%, 10.42%, 32.47% and 15.59% respectively at the district level*” (RSN, 2009).

While 197 women were elected into the first Constituent Assembly (CA), the number of women members in central committees of political parties nearly doubled (from 8% to 15%) (Shrestha *et al.*, 2018).

Women's access to highest position is very restrictive. So far, only Ms. Sarita Giri has become Chair of the Sadbahwana Party (Sarita Giri), Ms. Bidhya Bhandari became vice-chair of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) and chair of the All Nepal Women's Association. Ms. Bhandari also became first women Minister of Defence from May 2009 until

February 2011. Ms. Sujata Koirala once became Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. This is a clear change in the gender-stereotyped portfolios usually given to women, traditionally the Defence Minister was always male as well as the positions of Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

Interestingly female combatants' participation in the Maoist's 'People's Liberation Army' was remarkable because a) there were no such large number of women revolted in the history of Nepal and b) empowerment of women from marginalized and excluded groups. Though they were exploited and sexually abused in the Maoist army (Upreti and Shivakoti, 2018; Upreti and Shrestha 2017a&b), their participation changed the gendered stereotypic view of society which did not see women as militants. Arguable as a result of participating in the Maoist movement Nepali women challenged patriarchy and began to more forcefully engage in politics (Yami, 2008; Lotter, 2017; Upreti and Shrestha 2017a, b & c; Shrestha *et.al.*, 2017; Thapa *et.al.*, 2015). Most of the female combatants at that time were from oppressed groups and rural areas which again challenged the status quo of who was thought to have the right to a political voice (Upreti, 2006 & 2010; Menon and Rodgers, 2015; Kolas, 2017) and later in the CA election more than two dozen of them were elected as members of the CA.

In an interview, one of the Maoist female ex-combatants winning the first Constituent Assembly election in 2008 April said, *“getting candidacy from our party to female in the first CA was because of the revolutionary spirit of the party and the thirty three per cent women's participation provision of the Interim Constitution. Surprisingly we (including me) won the election. However, in the second Constituent Assembly election, our party lost and female candidates lost”*².

Though women played significant role in the Maoist insurgency, they were blatantly excluded from the peace

² Interview with the first CA member on 11 September 2021

negotiation (Upreti, 2009 & 2010). Neither Maoist nor other political parties sent female negotiators during the several negotiations. Instead, the royal government had nominated one female state minister Ms. Anuradha Koirala as negotiator for peace negotiation with the Maoists (Upreti, 2009).

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) in its Article 84 provisions to ensure one third of its elected members in the parliament are women (NLC, 2015). However, the situation is not straight forward. The National Assembly constitutes 59 members, out of which 56 are to be elected from each province and 3 experts (national figures) appointed by the President. While selecting members from each province, at least one should be woman in the list. Currently, there are 22 women members out of which 21 are from provincial representation and one was nominated by the President³.

In terms of female participation in politics, first and foremost is their representation in the party structure. Situation of women's representation in the political parties is not satisfactory and female leaders are suffering from marginalization, exclusion and suppression. For example, the largest political party is Nepal Communist Party, which had 441 members with strong Central Committee but women were just 75 in number (only 17%)⁴. Moreover, even the elected deputy mayors/vice chairs are experiencing discriminatory behaviors from the male mayors/chairs. For example, Sita Devi Yadav, Vice Chair of Aurahi Village Municipality has not been allowed to use her office by the administration staff in instruction of the Chair. Her major complaints are: she is not allowed to use her office, not being part of any policies, plan, budget discussion, ignorance of

³ Interview with Ms. Dil Kumari Rawal (Parbati) on 13 September 2020 by one of the authors.

⁴ This figure was at the time of single Nepal Communist Party, which was formed from the Unification of CPN (M) and Maoist Centre. But now, from the court order both parties separated and this structure is not valid. In Nepal the parties unify and separate so frequently with change in name and structure it is hard to keep proper record and make reliable analysis.

phone calls by the chair, no involvement in assemblies, not allowed to use office vehicle, no services received by the citizens and there are many forms of corruptions⁵. To substantiate the facts more, a deputy mayor from different municipalities in different platforms expressed that their participation in the crucial meetings are either restricted, or not-informed and or lack capacity to bring argumentations.

In this context, one member of the parliament very active and well known for women’s equal participation in politics, in informal conversation said, *“still the main leaders of all political parties (all are male) are not able to internalize the need to engage female in central level of political party structures as well as election position and often they make decision to pick up some female as cosmetic arrangement. Though the political change has made favourable constitutional and legal arrangement for women but the male political decision makers are not ready accept women’s leadership role in senior positions”*⁶.

Table 8: Gender distribution of contested candidates and elected candidates, 2017

Sex	Contested Candidates		Elected Candidates	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	90517	61.00	20712	59.04
Female	57847	39.00	14329	40.96
Total	148364	100.00	35041	100.00

Source: Calculated from the Election Commission record (2017)

The Table 8 provides overview of the contested and elected candidates in the 2017 election. Though political parties are reluctant to provide women candidacy in the elections, the performance of women is better than men in terms of success (See Table 8).

⁵ <https://ratopati.com/story/196815/2021/8/29/aurahi-gaupalika-?fbclid=IwAR26ksgR7hiur1AtXDEVjp-TA9zKGuEfO6UORxiMCmegBJHrG4tzh97d7U>

⁶ Interview with her on 1 January 2021.

Of the 77 chairpersons appointed to the district committees on 22 April 2019, only three were women (3.8%). If we look into those structures, there is no women or Dalit representation in the nine-member Secretariat, the party's highest body. It has only two members from the indigenous community.

Table 9: Overview Party-wise representations of women in central committee

Parties	Number of women in central committee	Total member central committee	Percentage of women
Communist Party of Nepal (CPN)	75	441	17%
Nepali Congress (NC)	18	85	21.17%
People's Socialist Party Nepal (PSPN)	52	425	12.23%
Rastriya Janata Party (RJP)	124	765	16.3%

Source: Shrestha, (2020); and Rai, (2019)

The Table 9 shows that none of the parties has fulfilled the constitutional requirements of 33 percent of women. The population of women in the country is more than half but representation in the central committee is less than 22 percent. Parties claiming them for ensuring inclusion like People's Socialist Party Nepal has the least representation of women in its central committee compared to other 3 parties (e.g., only 12.23%) (See Table 9). It is also to be noted that the Chair/President of all the four parties are of male. Moreover, the largest party NCP has only two women in the 45-members permanent committee (*sthayi samiti*). Likewise, in the second largest party NC, all the Chair/Vice Chair/Secretary General/Vice-Secretary General are male with one woman as treasurer. Likewise, out of 77 district chairs, only 3 are women (Rai, 2019). The Nepali Congress has only 18 women in its 85

members Central Committee. The Samajbadi Party has only 52 women (12.2. %) in the 425-member Central Committee.

Even within the representation of women in the party structures, women from excluded groups are further excluded (Upreti *et.al.*, 2020). One common feature observed while discussing female representation in politics is the nomination (or picking up) of wives and relatives of powerful male political leaders without evaluating their capacity to deliver. This has arguably severely undermined the possibility of representation of talented women in party structures and cabinet⁷. This malpractice was started by the then Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) while sending their cadres in the negotiated parliament in 2006 and later in the election of the Constituent Assembly (10 April 2008). This practice was also copied by all other political parties and now became institutional. Looking in to the data of election in 2017, there are only three Dalits able to win in the federal parliament and four in the provincial assembly all are male. Likewise, the participation of Dalits in the national assembly was only 7 in total and all were male. In the provincial parliament, Dalit women representation is better as 13 women and three men represent through proportional representation as compiled by FEDO. It shows that Dalit women's participation and representation is even more challenging. It is also evident from many studies that many women leaders in the local governments are representatives from people's organization such as forestry users' groups, agriculture groups, and cooperatives from where they built their leadership capacity and gained understanding of development politics at least.

During the field visits and interactions with female leaders, it was found that women's representation in some cases is merely tokenistic and their actual contribution to politics limited. In

⁷ For example, of the 144 married women CA members of the first CA, the majority (57 or 39.6%) of them were wife of politicians (Women's Caucus, Constituent Assembly Secretariat, Nepal Law Society, and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2011), that made them easy to get ticket in the election.

this regard, one local woman social leader said, “*in our municipality, most of the women nominated for the election candidates were either wives of relatives of the powerful male politicians. The women candidates also won the election. In the proportional representative seat, also women relatives of powerful political decision makers were given chance. Hence, these women holding political positions are not able to perform and in many cases male members are taking decision on the behalf of women politicians*”⁸.

Table 10: overview of women’s participation in election

Election	Results for Women Candidates
1959 Parliamentary Election	6 women contesting in election lost where total 109 men were elected (Suwal, 2013)
Rastriya Panchayat 1986 (legislative) Election	Out of total 140 members, 3 women were elected (Mongbay, 2013)
Parliamentary, 1991	Out of 205 legislative representatives only 7(3.4%) women were elected (Yemi, 2010)
Parliamentary and Local Bodies, 1999	12 (5.85%) of total 205 member of parliaments were women and 806 (19.4%) of total 4146 local elected representatives were women (UNESCO, 2001)
Constituent Assembly, 2008	30 out of 240 elected CA members were women of the total 601 CA members (Election Commission, 2008)
Constituent Assembly 2013	Out of 240 elected candidates total 10 (4.1%) candidates were women (Shahi, 2013)

Source: Upreti *et. al.*, (2020); Dhungana, (2014)

We found cases where Husbands of elected members actually controlled the decisions that their wives then presented. This is not only an exploitation of the political process, but weakens women’s ability to grow as political leaders.

⁸ Interview with the leader of Laxmi Women Group at Mayadavi Rural Municipality on 17 November 2019.

Upreti *et.al.*, (2020) state that “*the reinstated legislature Parliament of 2007 saw participation of approximately 17.3% women from the major political parties, demonstrating that women were outnumbered by men, with only 57 women participating out of 330 candidates belonging to the major political parties even after 83 members were added from the CPN, of which 31 were women 37.4%*” (Table 11).

Table 11: Women's Participation in the reinstated Legislature Parliament in 2007

Party	Total	Participation by Women	
		Number	Per cent
Nepali Congress	133	10	7.5
CPN (UML)	83	12	14.5
CPN (Maoist)	83	31	37.4
Others	31	4	12.9
Total	330	57	17.3

Source: Upreti *et al.*, (2020) cited in WC, CAS, NLS and IDEA, (2011)

5.2 Recognition of women leadership: visibility and acceptance

Some of the important determinants of Nepali female leadership is public recognition, visibility, and acceptance of women as equal political decision makers to men. The study found some important legal and policy provisions recognizing women as equal to men in the political processes. For example, the constitutional provision ensures one third of political participation of women in all state bodies (NLC, 2015). Likewise, the Political Party Registration Rules, 2017 in its Article 9C mentions that there must be an inclusive provision that the Executive Committees (EC) at various levels include the members from women, Dalit and deprived and oppressed sectors.

However, the actual translation of these provisions is yet to realize. The situation is especially worse in political parties.

Recognition of importance of women in politics is extremely poor in all political party structure. Women political cadres and the leaders are facing major challenge in terms of recognition to and visibility of women in every political party. Dr. Binda Pandey, Member of Parliament from House of Representatives (HoR) and one of the senior women leaders of Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist) which is the largest political party in Nepal shares her experience as: *“women have played very important role in the political process right from the public mobilization, opinion making and confronting with the odd-scenarios. However, when the political positions are assigned for certain roles and responsibilities, women are not considered as co-cadre/leader (sahayoddha), rather they are seen as beneficiary of the overall political achievement”*.

After the appointment of Ms. Dwarika Devi Thakurani as Assistant Minister for Health and Governance in the first Nepalese cabinet in 1951, no other woman was appointed to the Council of Ministers until the first popular movements. Discouragingly, there were only 43 female members (4.8%) in all 41 cabinets formed between the first and second popular movements (RSN, 2009: 41).

Table 12: Women's Participation in various committees of the first Constituent Assembly (2065 B.S.-2070 B.S.)

Different Committees of the first Constituent Assembly (CA)	Number of Women in the committee	Women chairing the committee
Constitutional Committee	16	
Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles	15	Binda Pandey
Minority and Marginalized Community Rights	17	
State Restructuring and State Power Sharing	12	
Committee for determining the pattern of Administrative Organs	11	
Committee for Determination of State Government	12	
Jurisdiction	16	
Committee for Structure of Constitutional Body	15	
Natural Resources, Financial Rights and Revenue Sharing	7	Amrita Thapa Magar
Committee for determining the basis of cultural and social solidarity	19	Nabodita Chaudhary
National Interest Conservation	9	
Civil Relations	15	Meena Pandey
Civil Concept Compilation and Coordination	14	
Capacity Building and Source Management	18	
Total	14	196
		4

Source: Upreti *et al.*, (2020), also cited in (Upreti, et. al, 2018)

The Table 12 clearly indicates that women's leadership is gradually accepted in Nepal and their visibility and recognition is increasing in the political circle.

Until 2015, the highest positions held by women in the government were Deputy Prime Minister Ms. Shailaja Acharya

and Ms. Sujata Koirala and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Ms. Onsari Gharti Magar. However, situation was changed after the promulgation of the new constitution in September 2015 that woman became the President (Ms. Bidya Devi Bhandari) and the Speaker (Ms. Onsari Gharti Magar).

Referring to the study of IIDA (2011) Upreti and Shrestha (2017) shows that the majority of female Constituent Assembly members joined mainstream politics after working in student unions (45.9%); many were involved in social service (16.8%), women’s associations (22.4%), the academic sector (4.6%), or had professional backgrounds (1.5%). The report also states that 57 (39.6%) of female Constituent Assembly members were married to politicians. As explained elsewhere in this paper, this is a clear example of nepotism in the political decision making system. A detailed re-examination of the data in the report reveals that though the report confirms only 39.6% women with political backgrounds, more than half of the female Constituent Assembly members had political familial connections before they joined politics or student unions. Interestingly, in the majority of cases these women belong to relatively elite families and have been supported and encouraged by the male members of the family to enter politics.

Table 13: Number of Women in Parliament and Cabinet

Constitution Assembly	Date	Total Number	Female	%
Constituent Assembly-1	2008	601	197	32.78
Constituent Assembly-2	2013	575	191	33.20
Cabinet 2014	2014	26	6	23.00
House of Representative	2017	275	90	32.70
National Assembly	2018	59	22	37.30
Cabinet 2021	2021	25	4	16.00

Source: compiled from IIDEA, (2012); Women in National Parliament, (2014 & 2019); Federal Parliament of Nepal (2020) and Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, (2021).

A study of UN Women⁹ (2014) in India, Nepal and Pakistan has documented main forms of gender-based violence in politics as sexual, physical, emotional, character assassination, verbal abuse, threat, and kidnappings. Persistent patriarchal mindset rooted in the society is the major reason cause of political violence. Patriarchy still considers women as subservient to men, and also reflected in social and political structures such as family, judiciary and police (ibid).

Further, women are engaged in multiple roles in both care work and public spheres but still their engagement in politics is low. Socially, treated lower status and low level of political education in society have demoralize women and negatively impacted in political participation.

The study in particular to Nepal identified the main forms of gender-based violence as: i) 32 gender based discriminatory laws were reformed but its implementation is weak and many of women and girls are unaware of those enactments; ii) not yet eliminated discriminatory social and cultural practices; iii) need to investigate violence against human rights defenders, women rights activists, iv) domestic violence and sexual harassment is still rampant in workplace and public spaces, v) almost 74.8% of the unpaid labors are women, vi) failed to take steps for justice to victims of political conflicts, vii) refusal of taking first information reports for the sexual violence victims if are from state actors, and viii) Nepalese women under-represented in both public and political life. Therefore, it is suggested to put continuous efforts to end discrimination based on gender, religion and culture that inhibits women leadership in public spheres in particular as non-discrimination is guaranteed in the Constitution, continue efforts to end gender-based violence, mandates to the local authorities to deal with the complaints on

⁹ See <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/violence%20against%20women%20in%20politics-report.pdf?la=en&vs=4441> for details.

domestic and gender-based violence, sectoral inter-linkages to understand the impact of GBV for e.g. National Demographic Health Survey has dedicated chapter on women empowerment and spousal violence impact on health, implement measures to take legal training by girls and women, enactment and implementation of procedural guidelines to prevent GBV and sexual harassments, design and implement programs to ensure women's rights in all spheres,

In the violence against women participated in politics, perpetrators are family members, political contestants of women, members of the same political party and even state machineries like police.

In general, there is a tendency of or less willingness to accept women's leadership. To give an example, out of the seven provinces, only one province chief in Gandaki was woman. However, there are 10 parliamentary committees and six national assembly committees out of which, six out of 12¹⁰ and three out of six NA committees are led by women¹¹.

Despite of challenges, women parliamentarians found more active in tabling issues of public concern in zero-hour of session (Pradhan and Ghimire, 2021). Despite of the evidences that women parliamentarians raise issues of public interest, there is less interest of male parliamentarians to join the team for submissions of issues of public concerns led by women. Interestingly, on the contrary, women parliamentarians quite easily accept male leadership in doing so. At the local levels, in most of the cases, Dalit women representative appointed through proportional representation are misinformed and overly manipulated by the heads of municipalities.

Some representatives shared their understanding as: *I am told by the mayor as you might have many tasks at home, so you do not need to office. I will send the documents for your signature*

¹⁰ <https://hr.parliament.gov.np>

¹¹ <https://na.parliament.gov.np/np#>

at your home if there is a need. The Dalit member of young age considers that as a favor made to her rather than systematic exclusion that mayor is restricting her presence, learn from the process, build the network, put her voices and prepare for political leadership for future.

Moreover, if we look in to the decade long armed conflict, there were 19602 people engaged as guerrilla force, out of which 3846 (19.63%) were female. With the signing of National Peace Accord (NPA), UNMIN verified only 19602 out of 32,250 ex-combatants, of which only 3846 (19.63%) were female.

Likewise, out of the total of 17,052 categorized for integration, voluntary retirements and rehabilitation, 3,558 (20.87%) were female. Of the 15,624 who opted for voluntary retirements, 3,454 (22.11%) were female (Upreti and Shivakoti, 2017). It shows female being engaged in the armed political fight, 22 percent being out with voluntary retirement shows how their potential to become political leader got lost (can we draw this inference?). Similarly, women combatant shared their feelings as: *we were glorified as heroines during the people's war by the Maoist leadership but did not get any opportunity when Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) male leaders were in power.*

5.3 Major forms of political violence against women

The Prevalent type of VAWIP faced by female politicians in Nepal identified from the review of literature, intensive interactions with female parliamentarians, female political party workers and leaders, journalists are related to abusive texts in social media such as Facebook and Twitters, attempted murder, or murdered, physical assault, threat, intimidation, online, psychological abuses, sexual activities, molestation, physical attacks, manipulating election outcomes or obstructing voters of women candidates, intentional disruption of political activities of women, threatening to the supporters/voters of female politicians, obstruction of movement of women politicians, buying voters of women

politicians, political assassinations, bombings, and violent public protests, obstacles, hostility, and violent attacks, etc.

We observed that female politicians experience violence because they are female and are forced to compete with male members. VAWIP are often committed in gendered ways. It is important to see motives, timing, actors, and activities while examining VAWIP.

According to the study¹² of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2016), psychological violence was most common experienced by the parliamentarians in the forms of humiliating sexist remarks (experienced by 65% parliamentarians), threats of death (44%), rape, beatings or abduction with the aim of dissuading them from participating in politics.

Perpetrators are political opponents and members of their own political parties and their supporters and even rented criminals and people known to the victims. Political violence is also a part of criminal violence. VAWIP can be of different types, election-related violence or post-election violence, motive (such as affecting the electoral process) and timing (during the electoral process), forms of violence (e.g., homicide versus rape), targeting, frequency, and technique, and impacts, intimidate or eliminate the opposition, or prevent women's political participation. The perpetrators use religion, culture, traditional practices, age, class, wellbeing, etc. in VAWIP.

The respondents explained that female politicians of first generation (no parental history in politics), new to politics and young women face more violence than women coming from the families of politicians, experienced women or elder women. Further, if the guardians make decision about political activities

¹² IPU had conducted a survey among 55 women parliamentarians from 39 countries on the issues of their experiences of political violence.

of women the violence is less severe than the women taking their own decision about the political activities.

It was also reported that it is not necessary that the perpetrators are from opposition parties and more importantly, they are from their own party who feel politically insecure or threatened from the women leaders.

It was stated by a respondent that "*women politicians are not given the scope and space for decision making because they are not in such position. Men make decision for them and often such decision are not favorable for the women candidates. For example, in the past several women were given ticket for candidacy in such electoral constituencies where the party has no chance or very low change to win*¹³."

Humiliation, distress, frustration, feeling of injustice, loneliness, marginalization, exclusion helplessness are very common problems of women politicians, especially if they are not strongly aligned with the male political decision makers in parties.

A study conducted by Women's Caucus, Constituent Assembly Secretariat, Nepal Law Society, and IIDEA (2011), show the state of violence against women in the CA. This study states (pp 67-68):

Of the 196 women CA members, 70 per cent reported facing violence as a result of their participation in politics. A total of 137 women CA members reported having experienced violence during their political career. The types of violence faced by the women CA members in their political journey are: Physical violence 55 (40.1%), Psychological violence (116 (84.7%), Sexual violence & (5.1%), Threats and coercion 96 (70.1%) and other violence

¹³ Interviewed in 10 May 2021 by the lead author and as per the request of the respondent the identity is not revealed here.

(13 (9.5%¹⁴). This study had highlighted that psychological violence was most common one and that included discrimination, domination, character assassination, public humiliation and social stigma. Many also reported facing threats and coercion, the most extreme being death threats against the women or their families

5.4 Barriers and accelerators of political participation of women

The most influential barrier or hindering factor for women's political participation and their recognition is the patriarchy deeply rooted in the political parties (Pandey, 2019; Upreti *et.al.*, 2020). The patriarchy has strongly influenced everywhere in within the women circle. Hence, social norms and value systems, culture and tradition, religious practices and social behaviors are often not favorable for women.

Strongly embedded patriarchy in Nepali society that always view women as subordinate (Upreti and Shivakoti, 2018). Culture, norms, religious and customary practices are shaped by the shadow of patriarchy and therefore severely obstructs women's participation in political, social, economic affairs and representation in state structures.

One of the accelerators of the increase in participation of women in politics is the decade long (Feb 1996-Nov 2006) armed conflict waged by Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), which had not only make the social and political awareness on importance of women's engagement in state affairs but also created environment for women's participation with minimum 33 percent provision in the Interim Constitution 2006 of Nepal.

¹⁴ This was a multiple choices question on the survey and respondents may have selected more than one answer. Hence, the percentages are not cumulative. The study of Nepali, RK (2008) Women's Representation and Violence, Exploring Constituent Assembly in Nepal. (1st Edition)Kathmandu: SAP International and International IDEA, p.1 has also shown the similar result.

The Interim Legislature-parliament had passed a resolution on 30 May 2006 to have minimum of 33% representation of women in all state structures. Consequently, women's representation in the Constituent Assembly reached 33%.

The Interim Constitution (2006), the second Constituent Assembly, the Constitution of Nepal (2015), election laws were some of the powerful instruments and mechanisms to facilitate women's participation in politics and state affairs.

The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Caste Discrimination, 1965 are two powerful instruments.

Similarly, the Declaration of the House of Representatives, 2006 and Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2006 were very powerful accelerators for increased women participation in the context of post conflict context.

As Nepal is a conflict-ridden country until recently, the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 1820 are important instruments for creating a gender-sensitive political environment.

5.5 Mechanisms for breaking barriers and addressing violence against women in politics

Several legal and policy provisions exist to deal with VAW and remove the barriers facing women in politics.

Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen has recently brought Gender Equality Policy (2021) which attempts to address the deep-rooted patriarchy and subordinate position of women embedded in the unequal society.

The number of representations always does not guarantee voices to be raised and get heard. Though 41 percent of the

local governments are of women representatives, 98% of them are holding deputy positions in the municipalities and wards.

In fact, deputy mayors are responsible to manage different committees including justice, program planning and budgeting. However, in most of the cases, they find it difficult to convince the Mayor and assembly to make their voices heard. For an example, majority of the representatives prioritize programs and budgets on hardware related developments and tendency of overlooking and or least prioritizing the social issues. It directly correlates with the empowerment process that helps women to develop their leadership quality.

There are also cases where deputy mayors were highly frustrated and resigned from their elected position due to continued differences with male Mayors which presents them for fulfilling their duties. For example, the resignation of deputy mayor in Belaka, (Udaypur) Belaka Udaypur who shared that she felt suppressed and constantly silenced.

The frustration felt by many female leaders is triggered lack of acceptance by the state authorities especially administrations which hampers their access to services such as GBV responses mechanisms.

Some feel excluded from information sharing. For example, a dalit member in the executive committee selected through PR does not get comprehensive information about local government program planning and budgeting process (example of Baluwani, Jhapa). She said, *“Our mayor knows everything. He includes me in some discussions when he thinks I should be there. I have no clue how the plans are prepared, how much budget is there, how the programs are approved through council. I just say ok when and what mayor says to do for program and budget approval forums”*. Given that many felt information is knowledge, knowledge is power and therefore exclusion from knowledge has significant implications for participation. There is also a lack of professional development

and technical support to women politicians (example of Khotang, Okhaldhunga, Rautahat).

5.6 Situation of execution of existing Policies

The Article 9 of the Party Registration Act put forward conditions for registration of party and mentions that “*there must be inclusive provision that the executive committee at levels include members from women.....*”. However, in practice, major political parties still not able to implement this provision. For example, Nepali Congress (NC) has only 21.17% (18/85), Nepal Communist Party (CPN) has only 17% (75/441), People's Socialist Party Nepal (PSPN) has only 12.23% (52/425 and Rastriya Janata Party (RJP) has only 16.3% (124/765 in their executive committees (see Table 9).

The major political parties have not gone through their regular assemblies. Assembly is the formal mechanism to ensure proper implementation of different provisions including female representation as per the Act. Likewise, there is a weakness from National Election Commission to monitor and act upon ensuring the inclusive provisions among others.

In the Party specific constitution and political manifestoes, each party commits for inclusive structures, their actions and support in mobilization in an inclusive manner. However, there is no such mechanism that helps to make the party structure gender inclusive.

Article 176 (6) of the Constitution provisions for fielding candidacy by political parties for the election to the State (Provincial) Assembly under the proportional electoral system, representation shall be ensured on the basis of a closed list.

The Federal law shall provide that, in fielding candidacy by political parties for the election to the State Assembly under the proportional electoral system, representation shall be ensured on the basis of a closed list also from women, Dalit, indigenous,

indigenous nationalities, Khas Arya, Madhesi, Tharu, Muslims and backward regions, minority communities, on the basis of population. In so fielding candidacy, regard shall also be had to geographical balance of the concerned State. The result of the 2017 elections is as below:

Table 14: Elected Candidates in House of Representatives (Pratinidhi Sabha) and Provincial Assembly (Pradesh Sabha) of 2017 based on the gender

Gender	Elected House of Representatives	Elected Representatives in Provincial Assembly	Elected Representatives in National Assembly	President	Vice-President	Total	%
Male	313	159	35		1	508	91.86
Female	17	6	21	1		45	8.13
Grand Total	330	165	56	1	1	553	100

Source: NEC, 2017 as cited by BR Upreti et al., 2017

Though a woman representative has been able to retain the position of President (1), 17 in the House of Representatives, 6 in the Provincial Assembly and 21 in National Assembly, the ratio of male and female elected representatives still shows a huge percentage gap difference of 98.16%:8.13% (See Table 14 and Table 15).

Table 15: Women in provincial assembly

Province	1	2	Baghmata (3)	Gandaki (4)	Lumbini (5)	Karmali (6)	Sudur paschim (7)
Proportion of women	34	35	34	35	37	33	34

Source: ECN, (2018) cited by Mahato et al, (2019)

5.7 Systematic/structural exclusion and attitudinal behavior

The systematic and or structural violence is rooted in the patriarchal mindset of the family, society and the party leaders. The party as well as public keep questioning on capacity of women leaders but not the same case for men.

A study of HAMI, SAAPE and Oxfam (2019) documents the evidences of how extreme economic inequality often goes hand in hand with inequality of power and by exercising excessive influence over politics, policy and public debate.

Looking in to the party structure, no appointments are made of women leader despite of their long years of contribution in the party building process despite of several demands are made to the top leaders, clustering of themes which is given to seniors and no promotion of women, seriousness of speaker, seriousness of government.

While talking about the resources, all forms of state resources such as financial, institutional, regulatory provisions and their enforcement are impacting on political leadership of women. Along with the financial resources, role of civil society, media and general public also matter a lot. The role of civil society in raising public awareness about inclusive leadership, advocacy for process related transparency specially of financial management, evaluation of regulations of its effectiveness as well as search for evidences of such illegitimate behaviors that put women in discriminatory positions (IFES, 2013). Moreover, there is no special support for the women leaders, not understanding women's role and provide support, no interest in power sharing, no nomination of women in different positions.

The attitudinal dominance is reflected in the daily communications and the way men colleagues in the party behave to women leaders. The dominance is much more prevalent in politics as in other fields of engagements. Giving an example, the male co-leaders address contemporary women leaders as honorable, fellow cadre in the initial days of working together. As the working relation continues, meet quite regularly and establish inter-personal relations as co-leaders, men start to address to women leaders as younger sister (bahini). If women leader start to question, they interpret it as

age-based relations and try to prove their right to exhibit women leaders as their juniors or less competent.

There are also cases when women leaders from remote districts speak at the parliament in her way with local tone, express her genuine concerns about innocence of plan and budget making process, it become viral for news including in the social media. Likewise, there are tendencies of character assassination, intra-party ego among the members, feeling of threat, no trust over women and positional biasness.

The Electoral Legal Framework 2017-18 mention of “no campaign activities that undermines the feelings or character of women”. However, there are many evidences that women are demoralized, character assassinated and physical abuses during as well as after election both from family members as well as in the party.

Women leaders in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) training organized by Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) and Development Partners (Dhanpalthan, Morang, at Biratnagar) shows that there is a zeal among the women leaders about the overall political process, linkage with the overall development process, resource management, leadership quality.

However, there is a massive challenge of right to information as the laws, policies, directives as they receive from the federal and provincial governments, sectoral ministries and donor supported projects also are in Nepali language.

On one side, some of them are illiterate, more so are not able to understand Nepali. Therefore, they have to rely on others how much information they are provided and how it is interpreted to them. It refrains them raising their voices without comprehensive understanding of the issue as well as policy provisions and the implications it may bring in future.

While asking them about their future scope of leadership even to prepare themselves for the FPTP candidacy, they have no clue how the PR and FPTP relates, why they are being nominated and how best they can build on it. They think that they are there as the space is given but they cannot think of giving candidacy for the FPTP as they do not have any support base to go for these positions. It thus promotes transactional actions rather than of promoting transformational leadership.

5.8 Financial and other resources constrain women

In many instances, women do not file candidacy due to lack of fund, lack of political network, lack of time, lack of commitment, women do not hold property as mentioned in the table below. Moreover, women do not have access and networks with the private sectors who can support in funding. Therefore, proportional representation (PR) still remains relevant. The study by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2020 shows that women's access to fund for campaigning, fund raising, invest against counterpart male candidate and lack of support from family and party leaders.

The Electoral Legal Framework 2017-18 provisions for reduction of candidacy fee for women by half. Likewise, there is an election code of conduct for the First Past the Post (FPTP) to spend up to 100,000 for media campaigning and no cash or in-kind incentives to voters. However, the practice is different where women cannot make such expenses. Moreover, there is no comprehensive political finance policy to empower women candidates. On their personal side, women's low level of property rights status also remains as a major constraint for the purpose of political gains during election as well as for their livelihoods.

There are many other external factors that influence and or encourage women to face gender-based violence. In this regard, there are many other players that plays crucial role in shaping

women's political leadership and related violence. Among those actors, media, civil society, public in general and development partners also influence on what issues and how to raise it for justice.

However, due to patriarchal mindset rooted in those institutions and management bodies also makes a lot of difference. Giving an example, the media hardly talk to and or check with women leaders before they write and or air the news. In most of the cases, media approaches to women political leaders only when there are some radical issues in discourse.

6. Conclusion

Overall, women are recognized by the constitution and other policy documents. However, there is still lack of proper implementation of those provisions. Further, role of oversight mechanisms (such as National Women's Commission, Parliamentary Committees, etc.) is weak in monitoring and correcting the course.

Most common VAWIP reported in Nepal are related to physical (including sexual), psychological, and economic in nature. Similarly, online and social media are becoming major platform and extensively used for VAWIP in addition to public and private spaces. Gender-based violence (GBV) is common to women politicians in addition to political violence.

In terms of women's representation, there is a good number of women's representation in the local governments. However, most of the women are in deputy position and their voices are less heard.

The party system as such is mandated to have inclusive provisions. However, there is very little and or negligible representation of women in party structures at all levels.

Moreover, among women representation, Dalit's representation is much lesser. Though they are represented in the local governments mainly through the provision of proportional representation, they are not given space for voice and empowering for leadership development.

In conclusion, there is an increasing awareness on role of women, however societal norms, behavior and practices are not yet supportive to accept women's leadership.

7. Ways forward

Recognition, Visibility and acceptance of Leadership: there should be review of current scenarios, its major constraints and success cases to build on to recognize, make women visible and enhance their leadership quality with proper positioning;

Space for Participation and Representation: the party structure with due representation of women in the party structure at all levels, and mechanism to ensure election related rules are equitable for women candidates should be ensured;

Mechanisms, Voices and Influences: there should be a mechanism for raising voices against any gender-based violence within the party system and government mechanism;

Situation of Execution of Existing Policies: the provision for translation of policy provisions in to reality through appropriate mechanism, over sight mechanisms to ensure appropriately execution and capacity building to enhance women's leadership should be in place;

Systematic/Structural Exclusion, Attitudinal Behavior: the party system, state mechanism and government functionaries should be made accountable to behave equitably to ensure not to behave mis-appropriately and make it punishable in certain ways;

Financial and Other Resources Constrain Women: there should be gender-responsive policies and practices that ensure women's access to fixed collaterals and finance for their mobility for people's organizing, networking, knowledge building and election related campaigning. Moreover, there

should be a mechanism for positive discrimination to women candidates for the support from public and private sector to support their campaign;

Strong enforcement of the law to the perpetrators irrespective of their power and position, strengthening capacity of oversight mechanisms like National Women's Commission and parliamentary committees, massive awareness campaign to deal with the VAWIP are some of the practical measures to be implemented.

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