

Status of Women in Far-West Nepal

UN Women worked to improve the status of conflict affected women in far west Nepal in three districts of Bajhang, Doti and Kailali from 2012 to 2016. Search for Common Ground prepared this document based on the study of women, peace and security during the first and last year of the UN Women project "Strengthening Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Nepal (SIWPSAN): Towards Implementation of NAP on UNSCRs 1325 and 1820."

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A quick brief

Far-west Nepal has a literacy rate of 66% – male 79% and female 55%. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood and households headed by women have increased from 14% to 25% over a decade (2001 to 2011). Violence against women was widely prevalent in all three districts, conflict affected families had not received support to which they were entitled, awareness of special provisions and rights of women and girls was very low, and awareness of UNSCRs 1325, 1820 and NAP was non-existent.

Women of far west Nepal suffer various types of violence. Use of obscene language targeted towards women was believed to be 62% of the abuse in 2012 and 73% in 2016. 45% female respondents admitted that they suffered physical violence. 11% of women identified dowry as a cause of violence against women. In 2012, 44% felt child marriage caused violence against women and girls. The culture of taking, or kidnapping, girls or women (whether married or not) and forcing them into marriage without their consent was part of Bajhang district's culture. "Ten to twelve year old girls have become victims of such 'marriage' practices."

Tharu women of Kailali said polygamy is still common in their community.

"Within the household, men decide how and where to spend the income or what to do with property."

Almost 66% believed adolescent girls from poor families are married before the age of 18, while 9% believed all girls are married before the age of 14 years. Only 7% of women in Kailali felt that they had taken on a decision-making role. "A child who was married into my community was physically assaulted on a regular basis until she died. The mother-in-law was imprisoned for two years. Is this justice?" Weak and ineffective laws were identified as the main reason for violence against women and girls by 27% of respondents from Doti. Five out of 100 women feel unsafe when outside of their homes.

Localization of NAP

SIWPSAN worked to help localize and promote the national action plan on UNSCRs 1320 and 1825. In 2012, 4% had heard of the UNSCRs and the national action plan whereas 30% were aware of the resolutions and the plan in 2016. 52% female respondents had participated in skill development or awareness programs by 2016. Women in Bajhang can now take refuge in a safe house. Women and Children Service Centers in project districts helped victims of violence with the help of the police. 75% of respondents stated awareness of legal provisions with 57% women aware of legal provisions related to violence.

Suggested solutions to issues proposed by grassroots women



The national action plan was integrated into the district planning process. 16% of female respondents said they were in key positions such as chairperson, secretary, or treasurer in organizations in 2016. 90% of respondents felt violence against women and girls had decreased. Awareness, discussion programs, and training affected this change. District specific policies have been implemented based on the national action plan. A total of 89 decisions made at these district level meetings influenced local policies.

23% female respondents were aware of women's security, laws and legal provisions in 2012, in 2016 the figure rose to 70%. In 2012 15% of domestic violence victims did not share their experience and only 9% of those reported such cases. By 2016 93% victims reported awareness of the UNSC resolutions and 58% about the five pillars of the NAP.

Former women combatants used to be perceived as a problem. This study found 53 out of 100 ex-combatants feeling secure within their communities. Sabitra Acharya, previously a combatant, said. "SIWPSAN provided training with seed grants and IEC material that helped start enterprises. I am economically empowered now so people treat me differently. I tell others how important it is to be economically able."

Representing women

A mandatory provision is set for women to be president, secretary, or treasurer in organizations. But 56% female respondents said they could not participate in meetings as they lacked education. They were reluctant when it came to taking part in forums, networks and organizations. 18% female respondents felt they are not allowed to move freely outside their households. In the Dalit community of Sanagaun only one woman was aware of an event organized for women's empowerment.

Representation in women's groups increased from 20% in 2012 to 74% in 2016. Participation of women in the 12

local structures increased from 13% to 36%. 18% of respondents agreed that restriction by family members hindered their participation in groups, networks, or organizations. 22% said they could not participate because of engagements within the household. 71% male respondents believed women are qualified to fulfill roles and responsibilities demanded by key decision making positions. Observing role models such as active entrepreneurs, leaders, and coordinators, encouraging women to participate in events and workshops has increased confidence levels.

"Women have now become presidents, vice presidents, secretaries and treasurers in institutions that impact our communities such as cooperatives and school management committees." 13% of conflict affected women and 15% of former women combatants said that they are affiliated with inter party women's network. Established networks in project districts like mothers' groups, IPWN, and women's cooperatives were able to increase leadership capability, coordination skills, and management knowledge through SIWPSAN. 53% of female respondents participated in most discussions at the grassroots level and 35% felt they influenced decisions.