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Intrastate Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding in Nepal: An Assessment of the Political and Economic Agency of Women

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An Assessment of the Political and Economic Agency of Women

by

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Abstract

The proliferation of intrastate armed conflicts has been one of the significant threats to global peace, security, and governance. Such conflicts may trigger resource exploitation, environmental degradation, human rights violations, human and drug trafficking, and terrorism. Women may suffer disproportionately from armed conflicts due to their unequal social status. While they endure the same effects of the conflict as the rest of the population, they also become targets of gender-based violence. However, women can also be active agents of armed conflict and perpetrate violence. Therefore, political and scientific communities at the national and international levels are now increasingly interested in developing a better understanding of the role of women in, and effect on them from, armed conflict. A better understanding of the roles of women in conflict would help to prevent conflicts and promote peace. Following in-depth interviews with civil society members who witnessed the decade-long armed conflict between Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and the Government of Nepal (GoN) (1996-2006) and thereafter the peacebuildng process, I assess the political and economic agency of women particularly in terms of their role in, and impact on them from, the armed conflict and peacebuilding processes.

My research revealed that a large number of women, particularly those from rural areas, members of socially oppressed groups, poor and productive age (i.e., 14 – 45 years) - participated in the armed conflict as combatants, political cadres, motivators, and members of the cultural troupe in CPN-M, despite deeply entrenched patriarchal values in Nepali society. The GoN also recruited women in combatant roles who took part in the

armed conflict. Women joined the armed conflict voluntarily, involuntarily, or as a survival strategy. Women who did not participate directly in the armed conflict were affected in many different ways. They were required to perform multiple tasks and unconventional roles at both household and community levels, particularly due to the absence or shortage of men in rural areas as they were killed, disappeared, or displaced. At the household level, women performed the role of household head- both politically and economically. However, in most cases the economic agency of women was negatively affected. At the community level, women's role as peacebuilders, members of community based organizations and civil society organizations either increased or decreased depending on the situation. Despite active participation of women in formal and informal peacebuilding processes at different levels, they were excluded from most of the high level formal peace processes. However, they were able to address some of the women's issues (e.g., access to parental property, inclusion in the state governance mechanism) at the constitutional level. The armed conflict changed gender relations to some extent, and some women acquired new status, skills and power by assuming new responsibilities. However, these changes were gained at the cost of grave violations of human rights and gender-based violence committed by the warring sides. Also, the gains made by women were short-lived and their situation often returned to *status quo* in the post-conflict period.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, my *baba* Homnath Gautam and my *ama* Purnima Gautam, who are no longer with me. They are always in my thoughts, and I am forever indebted to them for everything they did in educating me.

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I am thankful to conflict resolution graduate program at PSU for all the support in my education and completion of my thesis. I am particularly indebted to Professor Robert Gould, co-founder PSU's Graduate Program in Conflict Resolution, for providing me opportunity to work as a Graduate Assistant, which provided me financial support in completing my study. I would also like to sincerely thank Karen Estella Popp, Office of Graduate Studies - PSU, for giving me an opportunity to work as a Graduate Assistant, which was crucial to me financially. Also, she helped me in finding financial support in completing my last term. I would like to acknowledge Stephenie Jahnke, conflict resolution graduate program, for all her support during my study including research. I would like to thank all colleagues of conflict resolution cohort - 2013 for giving me opportunity to learn from them.

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CA	Constituent Assembly
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CAT	Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Accord
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DEVAW	The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
EU	The European Union
FPTP	First Past the Post
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GC	Geneva Convention
GoN	Government of Nepal
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HURDEC	Human Resource Development Center
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICCPR-OP1	First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICCPR-OP2	Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law

IHRL	International Human Rights Law
INGOs	International Non-government Organization
INSEC	Informal Sector Service Center
LPCs	Local Peace Committees
MoPR	Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction
MWCSW	The Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare
NGOs	Non-governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OP-CEDAW	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
OP-CRC-AC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict
OP-CRC-SC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PR	Proportional Representation
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	The United Nations
UNDP	The United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	The United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
UNSCR	The United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAW	Violence Against Women
VDCs	Village Development Committees

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the research

Since the end of the Cold War to the beginning of the 21st century, the nature of warfare has changed dramatically. The most common form of violent conflicts today is intrastate armed conflicts, which are internal in nature. Intrastate armed conflicts (also referred to as armed conflict, or conflict, or war in this thesis) have been proliferating in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries. Since 1990, there have been over 60 armed conflicts in 48 locations, and with the exception of four of these conflicts, all were intrastate conflicts (United Nations [UN], 2006). A key feature of intrastate armed conflicts is that civilians have, in many instances, become the primary victims of violence, as well as the main combatants. Intrastate armed conflicts caused 300,000 direct deaths worldwide in 2000, and they account for 0.5 percent of all global deaths. The indirect effects are significantly larger (Murray, King, Lopez, Tomijima, & Krug, 2002). Intrastate armed conflicts and their aftermath affect virtually every aspect of society, including human rights, law and order, socio-economic development, education, food security, economic wellbeing, basic health services, and the environment (Council of Foreign Relations, 2015). Intrastate armed conflicts have also emerged as one of the significant threats to global peace and security, and global governance, because they may affect other countries across borders and trigger other negative consequences such as resource exploitation, environmental degradation, human and drug trafficking, small-arms sales, and terrorism.

Intrastate armed conflict can be prevented, mitigated, or resolved either through political actions or by adopting prevention, mitigation, and resolution measures. Prevention, mitigation, resolution of intrastate armed conflict, promoting peace by including voices of both men and women, and rebuilding war-torn societies have been some of the most intractable challenges for the international community, and most serious concerns for the conflict-affected countries in contemporary society (Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, 2006). The importance of preventing intrastate armed conflict has been prioritized by governments, intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations (UN), and various international and regional organizations since the end of the Second World War. The UN is the key international actor seeking to prevent intrastate armed conflict by promulgating international human rights laws that are applicable both during peacetime[1] and armed conflict periods. It also acts as a third-party negotiator in resolving armed conflicts. Several other regional and sub-regional actors like the European Union (EU), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the African Union (AU), and the Organization of American States (OAS) have increased their role in preventing intrastate conflicts (Newman & Aloyo, 2015). Non-governmental organizations are also working actively to prevent armed conflict both at community and national levels. However, efforts for conflict resolution have not been effective due

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[1] Peacetime: The peace is usually negative, where there is absence of war or violence, but there remains an underlying structural violence (Galtung, 1975).

partly to unavailability of adequate empirical knowledge.

Intrastate armed conflicts affect both men and women directly and indirectly (Gardam & Charlesworth, 2000). However, women suffer disproportionately because of their unequal social status in society. Estimates show close to 90 percent of armed conflict casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2000). Women suffer not only from the consequences of war, but they are also targeted as a strategy of war because of their important roles within the family (Seifert, 1993). In many parts of the world, women have been used as a weapon of war by perpetrating sexual violence against them. In fact one of the strategic weapons and methods of torture is sexual violence in various forms, including rape, against women (Hynes, 2004). Increasingly, women in contemporary armed conflicts are not only passive victims. They are becoming active agents by exercising their agency as perpetrators, peacebuilders, and members of civil society. Women play a multitude of roles and some of them are crucial. These new roles challenge gender norms about women's "proper" roles and behavior in society (Kaufman & Williams, 2013).

Nepal was engulfed in a decade long (1996-2006) armed conflict waged by the Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (CPN-M) - now known as the United Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (UCPN-M) against the government of Nepal (GoN). The armed conflict led to widespread devastation and security threat in the country. One of the most reported/discussed aspects of this armed conflict was large participation of women as combatants in CPN-M military and political structure despite deeply entrenched

patriarchal values in Nepali society. Women joined all three fronts or instruments of

CPN-M; the Party, United Front, and the CPN-M army called the People's Liberation

Army (PLA) (Yami, 2010). While, the CPN-M reported that women constituted 30 to 40

percent of combatants (Sharma & Prasain, 2004), the United Nations Mission in Nepal

(UNMIN) reported approximately 20 percent (3,846 out of a total of 19,602 combatants)

(Arino, 2008). Nepal is going through political transition and conflict transformation in

which most of the activities related to re-instatement of peace have taken place such as

integration of CPN-M combatants into the Nepal Army and promulgation of a new

constitution. Therefore, Nepal provides an opportunity for various research and academic

institutions to understand armed conflicts more thoroughly, so as to produce theoretical as

well as practical knowledge that help prevent, mitigate, and resolve armed conflicts in the

future. It will also help assess the role of, and impact on, women in armed conflict and

peacebuilding which could be helpful to suggest effective and coherent responses to

policy makers, and other concerned stakeholders both at national and international levels.

In recent years, intrastate, armed conflicts and their impacts on women have

received the attention of scholars, policy makers, representatives of intergovernmental

organizations, and international and national non-government organizations. Though

literature in the field of women and armed conflict exists, significant gaps remain in the

understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women from a gender perspective.

Most literature stereotypes women as victims of conflict and men as perpetrators of

violence, denying women agency and associated voice as actors in the conflict and peace

process (Parpart & Marchand, 1995). Such literature has not adequately analyzed the

varied roles played by women, and their participation in armed conflict.

The active participation of women in intrastate armed conflicts, and the diverse roles played by them have been a prominent area of investigation. Failure to recognize women's roles results in marginalization of their voices in the post-conflict peacebuilding process. Therefore, there needs to be more research to find out the impact of armed conflict on women's economic and political agency, and their roles in peacebuilding both during and after conflicts. Such research would be helpful to strengthen current efforts of conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution by contributing to theory and practice.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

My thesis is divided into eight chapters. The remainder of chapter 1 highlights the objective of the research, including the research questions. Chapter 2, focuses on Nepal, where I discuss the political history of Nepal; give an overview of the country and status of women; discuss the emergence of the armed conflict, including its causes; discuss the perspective of the CPN-M on women question; and describe the peacebuilding process that is ongoing since 2006. Chapter 3 includes theories and concepts related to intrastate armed conflict, peacebuilding and women, including feminist theory of war and peace, women in intrastate armed conflict, women and peacebuilding, and women's agency and empowerment. Chapter 4 discusses international and national mechanisms that exist to protect and promote the rights of women during armed conflicts and peacetime. Methodology is found in Chapter 5, including selection of research site, data types and date collection methods and instruments, literature review, data analysis and interpretation, and the limitations of the

study. Chapter 6 includes the result section, which has been divided into eight subsections, including women's participation and role in the armed conflict; role played by women at the household level; role played by women in community activities, role played by women in peacebuilding both at the community and national levels. The chapter also discusses the economic and political implications of the armed conflict for women. The situation of violence against women (VAW) during and after the armed conflict is also discussed in chapter 6. Chapter 7 includes discussion and reflections based on the findings and literature review and information collected from in-depth interviews with key informants. This chapter has been divided into six sub-sections, including problematization of essentialist and constructionist theoretical perspectives, increased feminization of agriculture and poverty, ambiguous economic and political empowerment of women, increase in violations of women's rights during and after the armed conflict, exclusion of women from the peace processes, and future research. Chapter 8 concludes the paper.

1.3 Objective of the study and research questions

The main objective of my research is to assess the political and economic agency of women in Nepal. Particularly, my aim is to assess the role of women in armed conflict and peacebuilding. I also assess the impact of armed conflict and peacebuilding on women. I developed the following specific objectives to achieve the main objective of the study.

Specific objectives of my research are

1. To assess the roles of women involved directly in the in armed conflict.

2. To assess women's role in peacebuilding during and after the conflict.

3. To assess the economic role of women not engaged directly in the armed conflict.

4. To assess the impact of the armed conflict on economic and political agency of women in private and public domains.

5. To assess the situation of VAW during and after the armed conflict.

The main research question that I address is "what were the roles of women in the Nepal's decade long armed conflict and how were they affected by the conflict?" I also developed the following research questions to direct and guide my research achieve above-mentioned objectives and answer the main research question.

1. Women from which social groups participated the most in the armed conflict?

2. What were the various roles played by women in the armed conflict?

3. Why did large numbers of women participate in the armed conflict?

4. How did the armed conflict affect the economic agency of women?

5. What were the roles of women in peacebuilding at the community and national levels?

6. How did the armed conflict contribute to change in the political role of women in the state governance mechanism both at the local and national levels?

7. Were the changes that took place in Nepali society during the armed conflict sustainable?

8. How was the situation of violence against women during and after the armed conflict?

Chapter 2: Political history, intrastate armed conflict, and women in Nepal

2.1 Brief political history

2.1.1 Overall history

Nepal's struggling democracy has experienced a tumultuous history due to political instability, infighting, violence, and corruption. Since the formation of the Nepali state in the 18th century, the country has been ruled by a hereditary autocratic monarchy for more than 240 years (1769-2008) (Hutt, 2007). In 1846, the country also fell under the sway of hereditary oligarch Prime Ministers knows as "Ranas", who ruled the country for more than one hundred years (1846-1951) by dominating the monarchy and curtailing the democratic rights of the people completely. The pro-democracy movement in 1951 ushered in the path for democracy and a multi-party system by overthrowing the Rana Dynasty and re-instating the monarchy with a mandate to hold constituent assembly elections to draft the country's new democratic constitution. However, the monarch failed to keep the mandate, and tightened its grip by banning all political parties and introduced the autocratic, party-less panchayat system which lasted for 28 years (1962-1990).

Several political parties, including the Communist parties, were dissatisfied with the party-less panchayat system, and struggled to topple it. In 1990, political parties with the support of the people started a political movement called the *Jana Andolan-I* (People's Movement I), which was successful in overthrowing the autocratic party-less panchayat system. The country restored multi-party parliamentary democracy and the monarch became the head of state with a prime minister as the head of the government.

However, the democracy restored in 1990 was not effective in bringing political stability. Several governments were formed and disbanded since the first general elections in 1991.

Another big hurdle to Nepal's democracy came in 2002 when then King Gyanendra suspended all political parties. Until June 2004, the country was governed by a clique of Royalist officials who were directly appointed by the King (Huma Rights Watch [HRW], 2004). This arrangement failed to garner public support and led to the uprising called *Jana Andolan-II* (People's Movement II), which was led by different democratic political parties with the support of the CPN-M and civil society in 2006. The People's Movement II was successful in establishing Nepal as a democratic republic by abolishing the monarchy.

2.1.2 History of Communist Parties in Nepal

Communist parties have long been a part of the political landscape in Nepal. The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was established in 1949 to struggle against the autocratic Rana Regime, feudalism and imperialism (Bhandari, 2014). The party spread its network quickly to the entire country. The CPN played an important role in the 1951 uprising that overthrew the Rana regime and established democracy for the first time in Nepal. Since then, the communist parties have participated in politics. The communist movement of Nepal had its own native issues (e.g., reform land ownership, institute a republic, and create nationalism based on anti-India and anti-West sentiment), in addition to the adaptation of core components of communist ideology introduced by Marx, Lenin, and Mao i.e., class struggle, armed revolution, and dictatorship of proletariat (Hachhethu, 2009). However, the history of the communist movement in Nepal is complex. The

movement has experienced much turbulence due to infighting resulting in the formation of several communist factions/parties. Such divisions continue to be prevalent even today.

In 1971, one group of communists launched a violent movement against feudal landlords, who they considered "class enemies". Although the government quickly and brutally suppressed the movement, the uprising ushered in the political path for communist parties to play a substantial role in the national politics (Dhungana, 2006). Due to disagreements with the mainstream political parties in 1994, some of the communist parties abandoned their legislative seats and their leaders went underground to engage in armed struggle. The CPN-M, which was formed in 1995 is considered to have the most leftist ideology of the various communist factions. In 1996 CPN-M led the armed insurrection against the GoN under the leadership of its leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal also called "Prachanda", with a professed goal of radical social transformation in Nepal (Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). In the background of these political developments, the political path of a protracted armed insurrection as the route to a "democratic republic revolution" emerged (Verma & Navlakha, 2007). The armed conflict ended in 2006 after which CPN-M was mainstreamed into the national politics. They took part in the Constituent Assembly (CA) which recently promulgated the new Constitution.

Nepal's politics continue to be volatile due to quarrels between political parties. Simmering tensions between the CPN-M, royalists and more-centrist political parties have led to coalition governments forming and swiftly collapsing (Tharoor, 2015). The peacebuilding process continue to be tenuous due to political quarrels between

feuding political parties, who keep their political parties' interest higher than the greater goal of nation-building.

2.2 Women's Status in Nepal

Nepal has a highly diverse population of about 27 million people with 103 caste and ethnic groups, and 123 living languages (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2014). The country is ranked consistently as one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, with about one-fourth of the population living below the poverty line (International Business Publications, 2012). There is widespread livelihood insecurity, low life expectation, and poor health indicators. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, providing livelihoods for more than 70 percent of the population and accounting for a little over one-third of Gross Domestic Product. Land distribution is unequal, which has resulted in the majority of the land being consolidated under the ownership of a few individuals, leaving the majority of the population landless or semi-landless. Over 37 percent of the land is in the hands of 5 percent of the population and 65 percent of poor peasants own only 10 percent of the land (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2004). According to the census 2011, a mere 19.71 percent of females own land or house or both and only 25.73 percent of women are the head of the household.

Women constitute 51.5 percent of the population of the country (CBS, 2014), but they lag behind men in many human development indicators, including health, education, employment, political participation, and social welfare (Tiwari, 2007). The *de facto* (based on social and cultural practices – e.g., gender, caste, ethnicity, and economic

status) and *de jure* (based on state laws and regulations) discrimination that is prevalent in the country leads to the marginalization of women. Strict gender roles confine women to the private sphere, where they are relegated to mostly reproductive roles. Women carry out a large share of subsistence agricultural work as compared to men; 87 percent of the female populations of the country live in rural areas (Bhadra, Shrestha, & Thapa, 2007, p. 107; Mair, 1999).

At the same time, women in Nepal are not a homogeneous group; they are highly diverse and therefore, women's social status and relative equality with men varies among various ethnic groups, regions and castes. Overall, women face discrimination both in private and public spheres due to deeply ingrained patriarchy, which is reinforced by religion. In the Gender Inequality Index 2014 conducted by the UNDP, Nepal ranked 145 out of 187 assessed countries. Some of the statistics related to women's situation are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Selected statistics related to women's situation in Nepal

SN	Indicator	Women	Men
1	Life expectancy at birth (years)	70	68
2	Population (+25yrs) with at least secondary education (%)	18	40
3	Labor force participation rate (%)	63	80
4	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments in 2014 (%)	30	
5	Maternal Mortality Rate, 2011 (per 100,000 live births)	170	
6	Female ownership of house, land or both (fixed assets)	19.7	
7	Women's share in agriculture (%)	44.8	
9	Female labor force participation, 2012 (%)	54.3	

Source: World Bank, 2015; Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere [CARE] - Nepal, 2015

2.3 An overview of the armed conflict in Nepal and perspective of the CPN-M on

women

Despite momentous political change in 1990, CPN-M claimed that the democracy

in Nepal was a pseudo-democracy in the presence of a monarchy. Historical class

exploitation was accompanied by national, regional, gender and caste oppression of the

overwhelming majority of the population. This resulted in the continuation of poverty,

inequality, dependency and all-round underdevelopment (Bhattarai, 2003 as cited in

Shornstein 2010, p. 13). Such a situation led to frustrations of the people with the rulers

in Kathmandu, and they desired radical social change. This sense of frustration and

desire for change enabled CPN-M to mobilize people, particularly in rural areas by

offering promises of improvement that the current government had failed to provide

(Pettigrew & Shneiderman, 2004).

The CPN-M submitted a 40-point demand (Appendix A) to the government on

Feb 4, 1996 with a warning that if the demands were not addressed, they would launch an

armed insurrection. Following Mao Zedong guerrilla warfare, the CPN-M launched the

first armed attack on a government police post in the Rolpa district in mid-west region on

February 13, 1996 with the professed aim of overthrowing the age old monarchy and

establishing Nepal as a people's democratic country (Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). Right from

the inception of armed conflict, the CPN-M had the greater support of rural people. The

radical social transformation agenda, including gender, caste, ethnicity and class, was

successful in mobilizing a large number of people in rural areas, including women,

against the government. Though the number of women combatants is contested, the CPN-

M initially reported that up to 40 percent of all combatant and civilian political supporters

were women (Gautam, Banskota, & Manchanda, 2001; Sharma & Prasain, 2004). In the early stage of their insurgency, the CPN-M mainly concentrated their activities in the mountainous region of the western part of the country. They progressively expanded their armed forces and increased their access across the country, by attacking state forces and carrying out military actions on police stations. Over the subsequent decade, the conflict spread and affected several parts of the country, particularly the rural areas of western Nepal. Initially, the government regarded the CPN-M attacks as a minor problem of law and order in a distant part of the country. However, with the escalation of attacks by the CPN-M, the government launched retaliatory and repressive attacks.

The conflict resulted in the killing of more than 16,000 people, forcible disappearances of more than 1200, displacement of more than 52,000 people, maiming of several hundreds, and loss of properties worth millions of dollars (Table 2) (United Nations Nepal Platform Information, 2015). Thousands of people were directly or indirectly affected by the conflict in other ways. Many individuals and families were displaced from their homes; there were large-scale disruptions to education, health and basic government services across the country. The insurrection also caused economic disruption and placed tremendous hardships on rural people. These devastating consequences have led experts to rank Nepal's intrastate armed conflict as one of the most intense armed conflicts in the world in recent times (Murshed & Gates, 2005).

Table 2. Regional statistics of killed, disappeared and displaced during the armed conflict

SN	Region	Number of districts	Killed	Disappeared	Displaced
1	Eastern	16	2529	130	10284
2	Central	19	3499	242	10697
3	Western	14	2362	137	5298

4	Mid-Western	15	5664	643	17287
5	Far-Western	9	1955	55	8583
Total		**64**	**16009**	**1207**	**52163**

Source: United Nations Nepal Platform Information, 2015

Table 2 depicts that mid-west region suffered the most in term of death, disappearance, and displacement. The armed conflict started from this region and it was reported that more than 90 percent people in the region supported the conflict (Lawati, 2008).

From an isolated rebellion in remote mountainous districts of western Nepal, the CPN-M armed conflict spread throughout the country, even reaching the capital Kathmandu. By 2001, the CPN-M claimed that 80 percent of the Nepali territory was under its control (Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008). They established alternative power structures in the areas it controlled and called them "People's Government". Violence escalated further in June 2001 when the Royal massacre took place in which the entire royal family was shot dead. Gyanendra, the brother of the former king succeeded his brother. After coming to power, he declared a state of emergency, dissolved the Parliament by disbanding all the political parties and assumed absolute power. This action subsequently resulted in bringing CPN-M and mainstream political parties – the seven political parties' alliance (SPA)[2] - together to start the People's Movement II against King Gyanendra's direct rule. Consequently, a 19-

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[2] The Seven Party Alliance was a coalition of seven Nepali political parties, including Nepali Congress, Nepali Congress -Democratic, Communist Party of Nepal -United Marxist-Leninist, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, Nepal Sadhbhawana Party -Anandidevi Party, United Left Front, and United People Front, seeking to end autocratic rule in the country. They spearheaded the democratic movement in the country.

day long uprising took place in April 2006 that resulted in an end of the King's rule and the parliament was re-instated and democracy was restored.

The map below depicts the geographical patterns of armed conflict in Nepal measured by the number of reported deaths per 1000 population (Figure 1) (Do & Ayer, 2007).
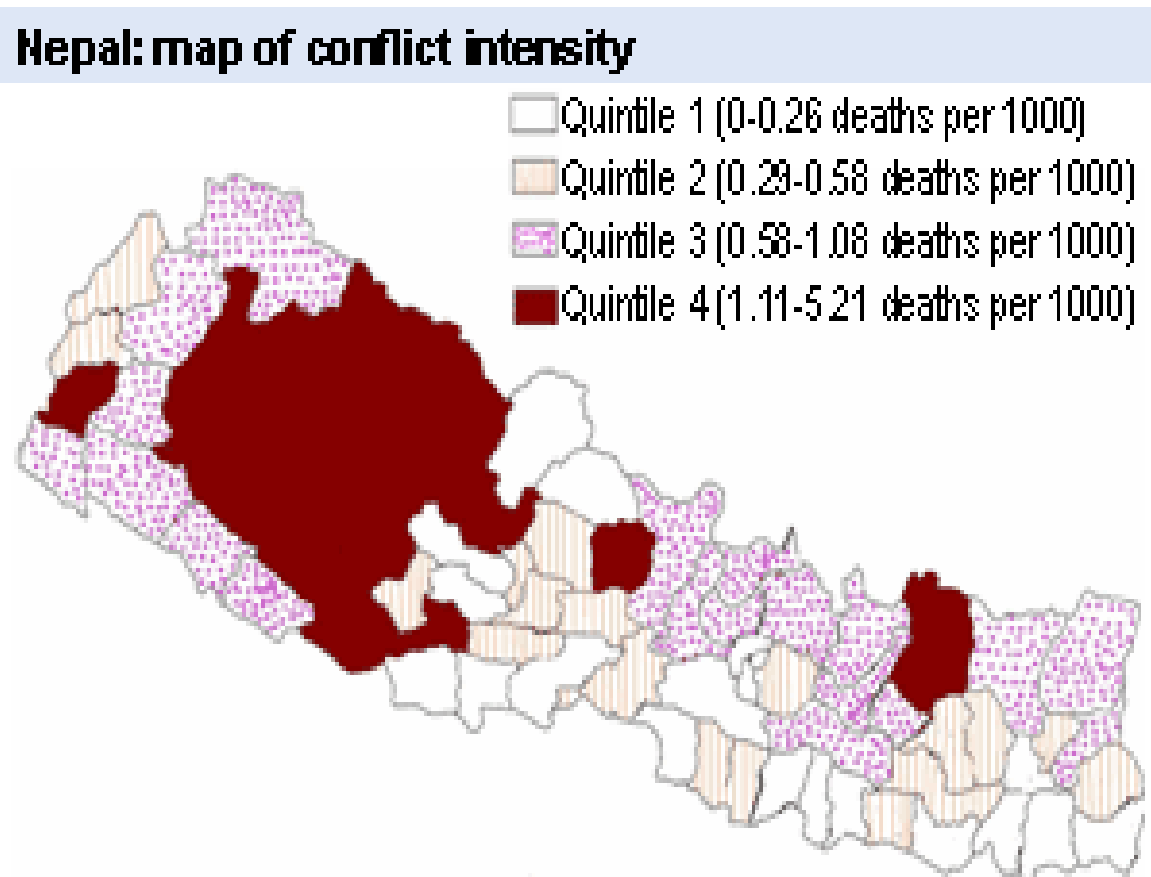
Figure 1. Intensity of killings during the armed conflict period
Source: Do & Ayer, 2007

The maps below depict the number of killings by the state actor (blue) and CPN-M (red) across the country (recorded by districts) measured by the number of reported

deaths in the year 1996 (Figure 2) and during the year 1996-2002 (Figure 3) (Informal

Sector Service Center (INSEC), 2010 as citer in UN Office of the High Commissioner for

Human Rights (UN-OHCHR), 2012).
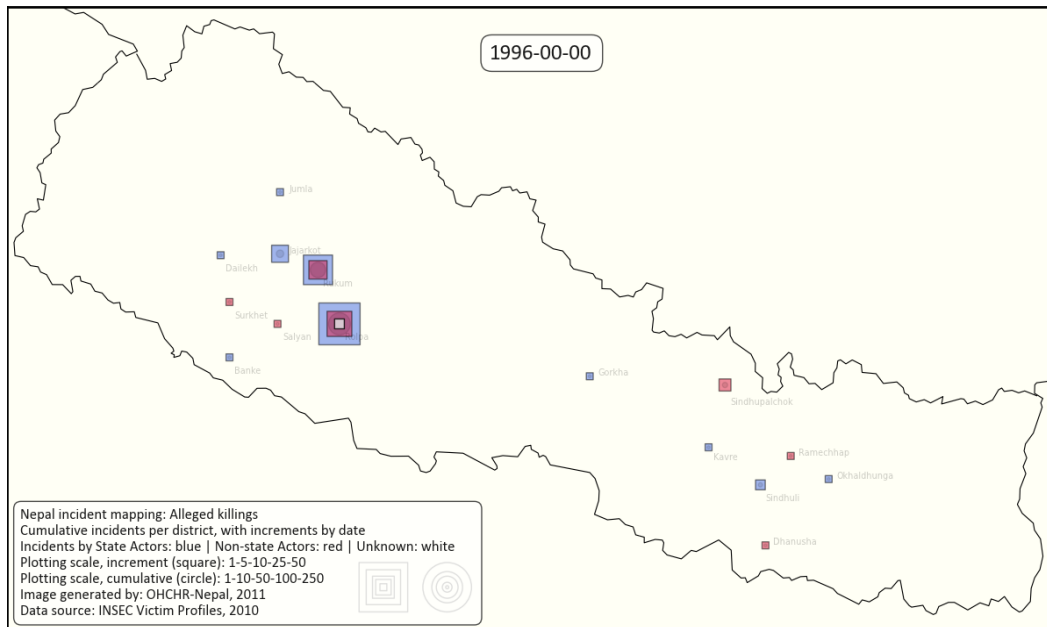
Figure 2. Intensity of killings, 1996

Source: Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), 2010 as citer in UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN-OHCHR), 2012
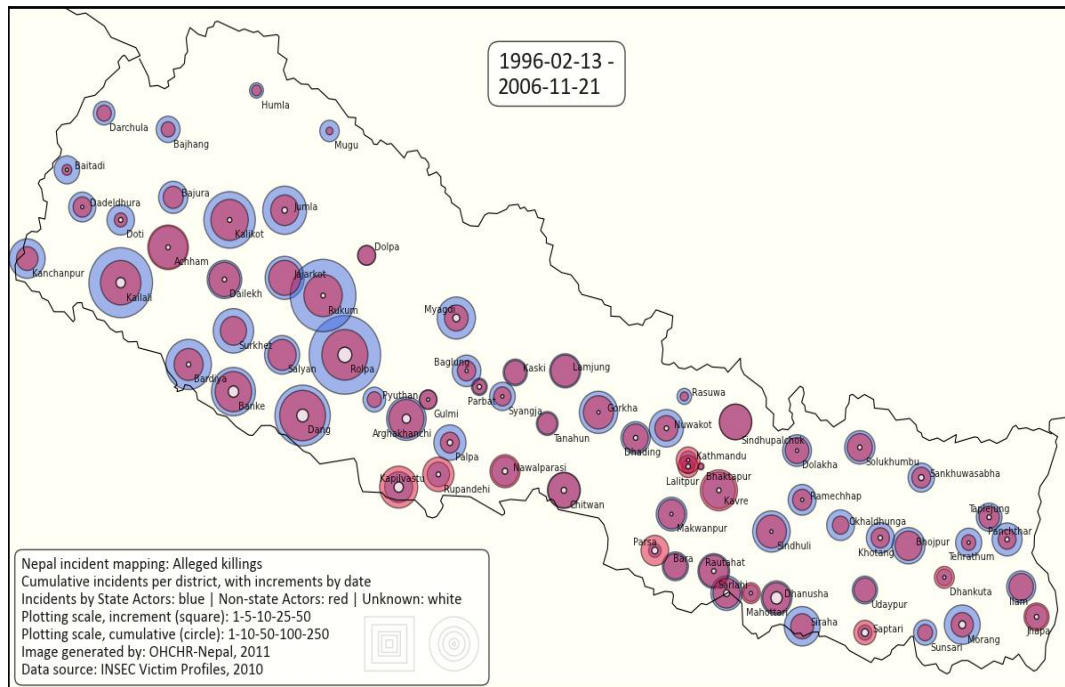
Figure 3. Intensity of killings, 1996-2006

Source: Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), 2010 as citer in UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN-OHCHR), 2012

2.3.1 Causes of the intrastate armed conflict

Several researchers explored different causes of the armed conflict in Nepal.

Some studies suggest that CPN-M insurgency stemmed from rage against a long legacy

of oppression based on caste and ethnicity (Sengupta, 2005). There are other studies that

report economic factors, such as inequality, landlessness, and a general lack of

opportunity reinforced by complex systems of caste and related discriminatory patterns,

which have provided sufficient motivation and support for the CPN-M cause (Bray,

Lunde, & Murshed, 2003; Sengupta, 2005 as cited in Do and Iyer, 2010). Some others

attributed the conflict mostly to poverty and underdevelopment of country, and argue that

caste and ethnic divisions are not a major contributor to the conflict (Gersony, 2003 as

cited in Do & Iyer, 2010; Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). However, Shrestha (2004) explained

that the armed conflict is the emergence of unaddressed grievances and disparities from ethnic, caste, gender, regional, political and economic point of views, which have sought a solution in the CPN-M ideology.

The armed conflict, as with many other conflicts, had a notable gender dimension in its origin and consequences (Arino, 2008). Structural violence in the form of patriarchal exploitation has been identified by scholars as the cause of the armed conflict. Friedman (2005, p. 2) explains that the CPN-M insurrection is the result both of 'structural violence' (i.e. the failure to provide "equal rights and opportunities" to its population) and 'socio-cultural violence' (i.e. regional, caste, ethnic and gender based discrimination) carried out by the state. Even when poverty is taken as a source of conflict, it has to be analyzed from a gender perspective as the poverty is gendered. There is a feminization of poverty, meaning that women are disproportionately affected by poverty as they were poorer due to their limited access to productive resources. In Nepal, 87 percent of the female population lives in rural areas, and their economic income is low since most of them are engaged in subsistence agriculture (Bhadra et al.,2007), which is not counted and recognized properly as part of formal economy of the country.

2.3.2 CPN-M perspective on women

CPN-M leaders believed that the semi-feudal, semi-colonial structure and capitalism are the main causes behind the subordinate position and patriarchal oppression of Nepali women (Ashmita, 2007). The CPN-M perspective on women and women's issues was/is based on orthodox Marxism, and therefore, in their opinion, class liberation is a prerequisite for women's liberation. Female leaders of CPN-M argued that the

women's movement should be brought within the overarching framework of class movement to liberate women from both class and gender oppression (Parvati, 2003). However, defining an approach to the 'woman question' that is consistent with international ideological expectations and applicable to Nepal-specific social context, there was a challenge for Nepali Maoist leaders in negotiating between two hegemonic ideologies -Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought and conservative Hindu cultural norms (Pettigrew & Shneidermen, 2004). In a sense, the CPN-M has presented a Nepali interpretation of what thought-leaders from Marx to Zetkin[3] have written about 'the woman's question'. The chairperson of the CPN-M, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, in his article 'Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the Question of Women's Liberation' wrote, "...The question of women's liberation is inevitably and essentially linked to the question of class struggle" (Ashmita, 2007, p. 26). The CPN-M 40 points demand to the government prior to the armed conflict had indicated the need to stop patriarchal exploitation and discrimination against women by allowing daughters access to paternal property, eliminating all forms of patriarchal exploitation of women, providing special rights to women; eradicating commercial sex work; permitting marriage only by mutual consents; and permitting abortion (International Crisis Group, 2005).

2.4 Peacebuilding in Nepal: An overview

The notion of peacebuilding emerged in Nepal during 2001-2002 when the intrastate armed conflict was at its peak; prior to that, nothing substantive was done for

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[3] Clara Zetkin (1857-1993) was a German Marxist theorist, activist, and advocate for women's rights.

peacebuilding (Bhattarai, 2013). From 2001 onward, several rounds of peace talks were

held between the warring sides, without international third party intervention, however,

they failed to reach a negotiated settlement (Upreti, 2006a). However, since the beginning

of the armed conflict, different actors/ and stakeholders, including the UN, the EU,

I/NGOs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and countries like Norway and Finland had

tried to facilitate/negotiate peace agreements to end the armed conflict, and create

conditions for durable peace. However, the GoN, the CPN-M and the king were not yet

ready to accept the role of an international third party as a negotiator/mediator. On the

question of involvement of the UN as a third party, the CPN-M seemed more positive

than the GoN. Civil society Organizations pressurized warring sides for peace talks by

organizing mass meetings and rallies (Dahal, 2005).

Several rounds of peace talks held between GoN and the CPN-M after 2001 failed

to forge peace before November 2005. On November 22, 2005 the SPA and the CPN-M

signed the 12-points agreement. This agreement paved the way for further negotiations.

One year after the signing of the 12-points agreement, the CPN-M and GoN signed the

historic Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on November 21, 2006, which ended

the decade long armed conflict, and began peacebuilding and political transformation.

The CPN-M was mainstreamed into national politics through the CPA.

The CPA contained a mandate to write the interim constitution, hold the CA

election, integrate the CPN-M combatants into the Nepal Army, and promote sustainable

peace by rehabilitating displaced people and former CPN-M combatants into society. The

Interim Constitution of Nepal came into effect on 2007. The first CA election was held in

2008 that included a mixed electoral system – a combination of first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) (i.e., nominated by political parties and council of ministers). The mixed electoral system comprised 601 seats - 240 from FPTP and 361 from PR (by 335 from political parties and 26 from the cabinet). The CPN-M became the largest party winning nearly 50 percent seats. Women won nearly one-third of the seats. The CA election transitioned Nepal from a monarchy to a multi-party, federal, secular, and democratic republic.

Since the singing of the CPA, several national and international actors, including the UN, the EU, the World Bank, and international and national non-government organizations (I/NGOs) are contributing to peacebuilding process in Nepal. An important actor is the UN, which has been actively engaged in peacebuilding efforts in the pre, peri, and post-conflict period. UN involvement in Nepal was twofold with a human rights mission and a political mission (Subedi, 2007). In May 2005, the human rights mission was sent by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to monitor human rights violations with a broader and long-term mandate (Upreti, 2006b). Similarly, on January 23, 2007 a political mission of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) was established by the UN Security Council through its Resolution 1740 (2007) to assist in the peace process by managing arms and armies of the opposing sides upon joint invitation of the CPN-M and the GoN (UN, 2003). The UNMIN monitored over 19,602 combatants, including 3,846 (19.62%) women who were kept in cantonments, which were supervised and managed by the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee constituting the representatives of the government, the CPN-M

and UNMIN.

The Nepal Army was also confined within the barracks. Through a verification process, UNMIN verified 19000 combatants as eligible, and out of this 1462 joined the Nepal Army and rest went for volunteer retirement taking a rehabilitation package. 4,008 CPN-M combatants were verified as minor and late recruit combatants (VMLR). Out of 4,008 individuals verified as VLMRs, 30 percent were girls (UN INSTRAW, 2009). Disqualified combatants were discharged from the cantonments with financial compensation, and were integrated into society. The final decision to integrate CPN-M combatants into the Nepal Army took place only in 2013. It took more than six years for political parties to reach to a consensus on this issue. The combatants spent six years in various cantonments.

The Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) was established in 2007 and was mandated to facilitate all the peacebuilding processes in the country. It serves as the key government agency that is facilitating and coordinating all the peacebuilding activities including; compensation to conflict victims; reparations; promotion of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) at district and village development committee levels; reconstructions of damaged structures, and other support to conflict affected people (UN Women, 2012a). The MoPR formed LPCs, which was a temporary mechanism to promote and facilitate the peace process at the local level until the new Constitution was adopted. The primary objective of these LPCs is "to create an environment conducive for a just system through restoration of sustainable peace by resolving the remnants of conflict at the local level and systematically promoting the processes of peace and

reconstruction through mutual goodwill and unity"(MoPR, 2006, p. 1). The objective of establishing an LPC is to make the peace process inclusive, which emphasizes participation of local individuals and CSOs, local political leaders, and various government agencies at the district level.

Since 2007, LPCs have been established in all districts (75) of the country, and in more than 1, 000 village development committees (VDC), and 19 municipalities. These LPCs work in line with the CPA and other peace agreements. The district level LPC committees are comprised of 23 members, including one coordinator. This role rotates among committee members every six months (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2011). At the VDC level, up to nine member committees have been established (Carter Center, 2011). As per the Term of Reference (ToR) of LPC, the committees should be inclusive in terms of representation of people from different walks of life, including political parties, victims' representatives, human rights activists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), CSOs, and influential people in the district. Similarly, the LPC ToR requires one-third of the members to be women on the committees. Two of the nine members in the LPC Secretariat should also be female. The ToR requires that four members must also be conflict victims.

The first CA charged with drafting a new constitution could not reach an agreement on key issues, including the federal structure resulting in political stalemate. After it went beyond its initial two-year mandate and four extensions without finalizing a constitution, the first CA was dissolved in 2012. In the second CA, elected in November 2013, CPN-M became the third largest party. The second CA promulgated the new

constitution of the country in 2015.

After many years of repeated failed attempts, the Nepal's CA passed the Act "The Commission on the Investigation of Disappeared Persons, Truth and Reconciliation Act" in May 2014 as per the mandate of CPA. The Act will establish a transitional justice program to respond to conflict period human rights abuses by creating two commissions, truth and reconciliation commission (TRC), and the commission on enforced disappearances. The Act will also make provision for the establishment of a Special Court to try past abuses and incorporates systems to enable vulnerable witnesses to participate in truth seeking (Bissett, 2014). The Commission on the Investigation of Disappeared Persons shall investigate disappearances while the TRC shall investigate other incidents of gross human rights violations, including establishment of the truth about the past, bringing the perpetrators of such incidents to justice, rehabilitating and compensating victims of such crimes, and ending impunity. However, the Act was passed despite serious concerns raised by the national and international human rights community on its provision. The main concerns are that the Act fails to meet international legal standards, particularly in the possibility of amnesty for international crimes and gross violations of human rights (Advocacy Forum, TRIAL, & Redress, 2014).

The new Constitution of Nepal (September, 2015) promulgated as per the mandate of CPA and the Interim Constitution has institutionalized Nepal as a secular, federal, republic with multi-party democracy. The provision of the constitution is much inclusive that aims to end centuries' long exclusion of the marginalized groups and create the basis for socio-economic transformation. However, peace and democracy in Nepal is

still tenuous due to dissent expressed by some social groups, who feel that their issues

and concerns have not been fully addressed in the new constitution.

Chapter 3: Conflict, peacebuilding and women: theories and concepts

3.1 Feminist theories of war and peace

The plethora of literature that exists on war and peace is gender-blind. Women's roles as active agents of war and peace have not been adequately identified and recognized. Women tend to be viewed as passive victims of armed conflict, while men are seen as violent aggressors. Both war and peace are gendered, and essentialist and constructionist views are dominant. The essentialist view believes that the experience of men and women in war and peace is determined by their biological and physiological dispositions. However, constructionist rejects the notion that gender roles are natural and inherently determined by biology. They argue that gender attributes and roles are ascribed by society and are the result of socialization, which can be modified. The key highlights of essentialist and constructionist theories of war and peace are briefly presented below.

3.1.1 Essentialist perspectives on war and peace

Essentialists primarily focus on the biological dispositions of men and women to determine how they approach war and peace. They not only argue that women and men have different physical and mental ability for war and peace due to their biological differences (i.e., determined by hormones, genes, and brain factors) in terms of their strength, courage and power, but also contend that women are not physically, psychologically, or emotionally capable of waging war as their biological dispositions make them unfit for war, particularly in combatant roles (Ember & Ember, 2004). They perceive women to be biologically inferior to men in waging and perpetrating violence. In addition, essentialists argue that women are inherently more peaceful because of their

capability of bearing children. Fukuyama (1998), for example, referring to Neo-Darwinist research, suggests that women are genetically predisposed to peace and men are genetically predisposed to violence. The childbearing ability of women makes them more protective of life, and the essence of women is reduced to motherhood (Schrich, 2012). Similarly, some feminists also believe that women are more 'naturally 'peaceful, emotional, and bound by relationships due to their nurturing and rearing ability. They believe that the innate caring and nurturing traits of women make them aversive to wars, violence, and aggression (Melander, 2005).

In the same vein, essentialists view men as innately capable of waging war and perpetrating violence because of their strength, and power, which are biological assets. Some essentialists argue that the presence of testosterone, which is linked by some researchers to violent behavior in humans, induces aggression in men. They further believe that the gender gap and differences in roles during warfare arise from biological differences; they do not believe that the gap can be closed. In other words, men will not become more peaceful, nor will women become more aggressive (Nincic & Nincic, 2002).

3.1.2 Constructionist perspectives on war and peace

Constructionists believe that the approaches taken by men and women to war and peace are influenced by social environment rather than their biology. Biology does not have much influence on male aggressiveness, and female deference to war. Constructionists believe that gender is not innate; rather our socialization process fosters masculine and feminine traits. Therefore, inequality stems from the gender characteristics

and gender roles assigned to individuals at birth (Tickner, 1992). Hilhorst and Frerks (1999) argue that gender differences are context-specific and determined by each situation. From this perspective, female aversion, and male predisposition, to violence is not biologically inherent but rather associated with socially constructed definitions of femininity and masculinity that coerce women to embrace feminine traits such as caregiver, nurturer, social worker, peace lover, while men are coerced into being tough, breadwinners, aggressor, warriors, independent, and leaders in war (Melander, 2005).

Constructionists believe that human biology has not much role in how individuals behave, and they reject the idea that men are 'naturally' more aggressive than women or that women are naturally more fearful than men (Burris, 1992 as cited in Conover and Shapiro, 1993). They believe that the ability of women to give birth does not make them naturally pacifist and women are not inherently peaceful, emotional or aversive to violence. If this was the case, all women would have been peaceful and all men violent. Physical traits such as aggressiveness/passiveness or competitiveness / cooperativeness are taught to individuals from an early age, and therefore, the "...differences between women's and men's orientation to war are founded in childhood or earlier and cannot be explained away by any other aspects of their lives"(Burris, 1992 as cited in Conover and Sapiro, 1993, p. 1080). Constructionists believe that evolving cultural norms and stereotypes could modify the current 'social construction' of gender and therefore have the ability to close the gender gap (Nincic & Nincic, 2002).

3.2 Women in intrastate armed conflict

Intrastate armed conflicts have been a persistent pattern of interaction between

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and within states in many countries, particularly in developing countries (Levy &
Thompson, 2010). Intrastate armed conflicts are defined as those which occur largely
between the government of a country and a non-state belligerent largely within the
territory of the state in question, leading to at least 25 battle deaths per year (Upsala
Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2015). Several factors act as
drivers of armed conflicts, including poverty; social, political, and economic inequality;
weak governance; competition for scarce/abundance resources; ethnic and religious
animosities; dwindling economic conditions and declining standards of living, ideological
differences; territorial dispute, and political repression by authoritarian governments.
Although the intensity and length of intrastate armed conflicts varies, they have deep and
long lasting effects on the overall growth pattern of a country and its citizenry.

   Intrastate armed conflicts target and victimize civilians on a massive scale.
Women and children are more vulnerable due to their physical, political, socio-cultural
and economic marginalization. For instance, approximately 95 percent of all causalities in
armed conflicts are non-combatant (Organization for Economic Co-operation and
Development, 1999). While available statistics suggest that more men than women
continue to die and suffer as a result of armed conflicts, women suffer disproportionately
from numerous harmful consequences because of prevailing oppressive gender relations.
Many women are killed in both civilian and war zones, injured, and displaced by
intrastate armed conflicts. Also, women and girls are vulnerable to VAW specifically
targeted against them (UN, 2002). Furthermore, women suffer from an increasing burden
of productive and reproductive labor, deprivation of education, food insecurity, poverty,

and larger numbers of dependents, disease, and malnutrition (Ormhaug, Meier, & Hernes, 2009). Massive displacement of population occurs as a result of armed conflicts, and the majority of the displaced or refugees are women. The displacement of women to refugee camps or settlements or to a new location profoundly affects gender relations both in private and public spheres. The traditional roles carried out by women are redefined, and the entire institution of the family may be affected (Kumar, 2001).

Armed conflicts affect both men and women in many ways. However, a major difference between men and women in armed conflict and peacetime is the experience of gender-based violence (GBV). Women experience different types of violence in different domains of their lives such as economic, political, physical and mental either explicitly or implicitly in private and/or public spheres (Pillay, 2001). During war time, VAW is exacerbated due to the destruction of physical, economic, social and institutional infrastructures that protect women. The causes of VAW are complex and multiple. However, VAW occurs mainly due to structural inequality between men and women (Sideris, 2001). The violence faced by women is given different names, including GBV, VAW and domestic violence. The various concepts related to VAW are briefly presented in the Table 3 below.

Table 3. Concepts and definitions of VAW

VAW	Concepts and definitions
Conflict related sexual violence	The term "conflict-related sexual violence", refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is linked, directly or indirectly (temporally, geographically or causally) to a conflict (UN, 2015, p. 1).

Violence against women	The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW), Article 1 defines- VAW as "any act of GBV that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." Similarly, Article 2 of DEVAW elaborates that VAW encompasses but is not limited to the following: (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs (UN, 1993a).
Gender-based violence	Recommendation 19 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee defines GBV as, "violence that is directed at a person on the basis of gender or sex. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty (UN, 1997).
Domestic violence	The UN General Assembly Resolution 58/147 entitled "Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women." defines domestic violence as violence that occurs within the private sphere, generally between individuals who are related through blood or intimacy; that domestic violence is one of the most common and least visible forms of VAW and that its consequences affect many areas of the lives of victims; that domestic violence can take many different forms, including physical, psychological and sexual violence; that domestic violence is of public concern and requires States to take serious action to protect victims and prevent domestic violence; [and] that domestic violence can include economic deprivation and isolation and that such conduct may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well-being of women (UN, 2004).

3.2.1 Economic violence

Women not only face physical, sexual, and psychological violence, but they also

face economic violence that has several manifestations. Economic violence takes place in the form of limited access to funds and credit; controlled access to health care; inequality in employment and education; lack of access to agricultural resources and trainings; lack of access to financial decision-making and property rights; and lack of access communal land (Fawole, 2008). Economic violence results in deepening poverty, vulnerability to food in security, and compromises educational and health attainment, and developmental opportunities for women.

3.2.2 Political violence

Women may encounter political violence in the form of exclusion from engaging in political activities; taking part in the conduct of public affairs; assembling peacefully; expressing their opinions; and seeking, receiving, imparting information and ideas freely; and decision-making processes (UN, 2012). Though women have the ability to play a variety of roles as voters, political party cadres/candidates/office holders, and members of civil society, there are several obstacles to their political participation, which result from structural barriers, discriminatory laws and institutions. The UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation 2011 states:

> Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women (UN Women, 2012a).

3.3 Women and peacebuilding

We can no longer afford to minimize or ignore the contributions of women

and girls to all stages of conflict resolution, peacemaking, peace-building, peacekeeping and reconstruction processes. Sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men (Annan, 2002).

The term "peacebuilding" first emerged in the 1970s through the work of Johan Galtung, who called for the creation of peacebuilding structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing the "root causes" of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution (UN System Staff College, 2010). Since then the term peacebuilding has been interpreted differently by different people. Peacebuilding became a familiar concept within the UN and beyond following a report, *An Agenda for Peace*, prepared by the UN General Secretary, Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992. The report defined peacebuilding as the post-conflict action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid relapse into conflict (UN, 1992). The understanding of peacebuilding has continued to evolve ever since.

There are other scholars who believe that peacebuilding not only refers to post-conflict peacebuilding but it refers to activities both pre and post armed conflict. Lederach (1998, p. 42) states that "peacebuilding is more than just a post-conflict reconstruction; it encompasses, generates and sustains a full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform a conflict towards a more sustainable relationship." According to Schirch (2004, p. 12) peacebuilding involves values, skills, analyses and processes distributed among diverse activities and approaches including:

Conflict Transformation; Restorative and Transitional Justice; Legal and Judicial
Systems; Environmental Protection; Human Rights; Humanitarian Assistance; Early
Warning and Response; Civilian and Military Peacekeeping; Economic, Social and
Political Development; Education; Activism and Advocacy; Research and Evaluation;
Trauma Healing; Military Intervention/Conversion; and Governance and Policymaking.

Women play an active role in peacebuilding at the household and community
levels. The peacebuilding work that women do at household levels has an impact both at
the household and community level. It helps to maintain peace within the home as well as
influencing social norms and behaviors in wider society (Moosa, Rahmani, & Webster,
2013). Despite their practical interventions to support their communities during armed
conflict, and to rebuilding peaceful societies, women's roles are often overlooked or not
recognized in formal and high level decision-making processes at the national and
international levels. Women are limited to community level peacebuilding efforts.
Women's work at the community level is labeled as "volunteer" even it has a political
impact, and women are frequently excluded from high level negotiations (Sorenson,
1998, p. 10). Women's efforts are not supported by various stakeholders, including
governments, and by their own community as a result of which they rarely reach national
prominence. High level negotiations are identified as male domains, and discourses and
practices that are closer to men's reality are discussed in such negotiations. As a result of
this, women continue to remain overwhelmingly marginalized from formal peace
processes at all levels. Even when women are given space to participate in formal
peacebuilding processes, their involvement is often tokenistic; women voices are not

adequately incorporated, and they are sidelined from participating in key decisions.

Recognizing the fact that women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes, the UN has taken several measures to bring gender equality to peacebuilding to ensure women's equal participation and full involvement in all peacebuilding efforts. In 2000, the UN passed its ground-breaking resolution-UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR) that addresses not only the inordinate impact of armed conflict on women, but also recognizes the important role women should, and do, play in conflict management, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace (United States Institute of Peace, 2015). Since then the UN has passed several other resolutions – 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, and 2106 – providing frameworks for tackling sexual violence in conflict, calling for global indicators to monitor women's participation in peace-building processes, and demanding that state and non-state actors pay due regard to international laws, in particular those prohibiting the use of VAW and girls (Moosa et al., 2013). The various resolutions with their main objectives are discussed further below.

However, these commitments have not been translated into reality and women's participation in national and international-level peacebuilding processes continues to be nominal. Formal peace processes continue to be dominated by males, and women's contribution, needs and views are largely excluded, marginalized, or overlooked. A review of 31 major peace processes since 1992 showed that only 4 percent of participants – 11 out of 280 – were women (UN Women, 2012b), and that women made up only 2.4 percent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses, and 9 percent of negotiators. Women make up just 2.5 percent of signatories to peace agreements (UN Women, 2012b).

Furthermore, there has yet to be a woman chief-mediator in any UN-backed peace process despite UNSCR 1325. The statistics clearly suggest that there is no gender equality in peacebuilding process. Men continue to dominate most of the peace negotiations. Many scholars argue that peacebuilding is gendered.

3.4 Women's agency and empowerment

Women exercise their agency in a number of roles during and after armed conflict such as combatant, peacebuilder and the heads of household in the absence of men. Therefore, women's experience and roles in armed conflict as active agents of change with their implications for their lives in the post-conflict period has been an important areas of investigation. One dimension is the analysis of level of women's empowerment. Understanding the concept of empowerment is critical in the context of developing countries, where women have been historically marginalized mostly perceived as passive recipients of violence, and their agency has not been recognized or has been ignored in the political, economic and social domains.

Empowerment is a multidimensional concept and has been assigned different meaning in various socio-economic contexts (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005). Empowerment refers to the ability of an individual or group to make effective and meaningful choices and translate their choices into desired actions and outcomes (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005). In the literature on women and gender, different concepts and terminologies are used to discuss women's empowerment, including "women's empowerment," "gender equality," "female autonomy," or "women's status" (Malhotra, 2003). Feminist scholars have different interpretations of empowerment, which are full of contradiction as the premise

of feminist theory rests on women's identity as victims of patriarchy (Andermahr, Lovell, & Wolkowitz, 1997, p. 13). Feminists argue that women's empowerment should lead to the liberation of men from false value systems and ideologies of oppression; leading to a situation where each one can become a whole being regardless of gender, and use his/her fullest potential to construct a more humane society for all (Akhtar, 1992 personal communication quoted in Batliwala 1994, p. 131). A guideline prepared by the UN in 2001 to guide its development program includes five components for women's empowerment such as (i) women's sense of self-worth; (ii) their right to have and to determine choices; (iii) their right to have access to opportunities and resources; (iv) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and (v) their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally (UN, 2001).

The concept of women's empowerment can be further understood through two other inter-related concepts – agency and structure.[4] Agency refers to about the capacity of women (either individually or collectively) to make an effective and meaningful choice indicating the need of women themselves to be significant actors in the process of decision-making and/or change itself. It marks a shift in view that recognizes women as active agents rather than passive victims of patriarchy. Agency recognizes that women can be both agents and victims in war and peace (Gardnier, 1995). The concept of agency views individuals as knowledgeable and capable rather than always constrained by social norms and values (Moser & Clark, 2001, p. 4-5). Similarly the Feminist Glossary of

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[4] More on the theoretical underpinnings on these concepts can be found in Bennett (2003) and Kabeer (2001).

Human Geography identifies agency in binary terms: agency of individual humans to act versus the determining role of structures (McDowell & Sharp, 1999, p. 3). Structure is defined as the formal and informal contexts within which actors operate. The structure emphasizes that empowerment is a process of progression from one state (e.g., gender inequality) to another (e.g., gender equality) (Kabeer, 2001; Oxaal & Baden, 1997; Rowlands, 1995). According to Sen and Batliwala (2000), women's empowerment is a process by which women learn to gain better control over their everyday life circumstances. Understanding both the agency and structure helps to describe the degrees of empowerment enjoyed by a woman in a given context.

Economic empowerment of women is the ability of women to advance and succeed economically through their ability to exercise agency and power to make and act on economic decisions (International Center for Research on Women, 2011). Both economic advancement, and agency and power are connected. They are necessary to achieve better lives for women. Women's participation in household decision-making, as it relates to power and control, is a widely accepted indicator of empowerment (Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender, 2002, p. 13). According to Institute of Development Studies (2008), economic empowerment of women is the capacity of women to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth and development processes, which recognizes the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and benefits of growth are shared and distributed in an equitable way. Paragraph 26 of the Beijing Platform for Action spoke of the need to promote women's economic independence, including employment, and "ensuring equal access for all women to productive resources, opportunities and public services" (Beijing

Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, p. 4). Economic empowerment increases women's access to family income, relative contribution to family income, access to and control over family resources, economic resources and opportunities including financial services, employment (including high paying jobs), property and other productive assets, skills development and market information (Malhotra, 2003).

Political empowerment refers to the equitable representation of women in decision-making structures and institutions, both formal and informal, and their voice in the formulation of policies affecting their lives and lives of others in their societies (World Economic Forum, 2005). It is the ability to speak about, as well as speak for themselves, gaining a right to engage in political processes (Pettit, 2012). Political empowerment of women increases women's knowledge of the political system, and the means of access to it; participation as voters and as an elected representatives; domestic support for political engagement; women's representation and participation in political parties; and women's representation in national and regional governance mechanism (Malhotra, 2003).

Women's empowerment is conceptually complex and methodologically challenging to measure because of its multidimensional aspects. The nature of gender power relations, and the source of empowerment, differ from culture to culture and context to context (CARE, 2015). No standard list of indicators for measuring empowerment can be relevant in all places and times, for all kinds of women.

Chapter 4: International and national mechanisms for women's rights

During armed conflicts, a substantial body of international humanitarian law (IHL), and international human rights law (IHRL) becomes applicable. These laws have been promulgated to protect the rights of people, who do not take part in armed conflict or withdraw from hostilities. In the past, there were arguments among scholars about the applicability of IHL and IHRL. Some argued that IHL was applicable during an armed conflict, and IHRL was applicable during peacetime. However, recently, IHL and IHRL are merging into a single set of rules which are complementary to each other (Arnold & Quénivet, 2008). A number of human rights treaties and other instruments have been adopted to implement IHL and IHRL. By becoming parties to international treaties, States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfill human rights (UN, 2011).

Nepal is a state party to many international treaties, and has developed laws and policies in line with them. In the chapter, I discuss international laws that were applicable to Nepal during the armed conflict period as well as the various mechanisms developed at the national level to implement those laws effectively. I also focus on international human rights mechanisms that promote economic and political rights of women, and laws that proscribe VAW during armed conflicts.

4.1 International humanitarian law

International humanitarian law is the branch of international law that regulates means and methods of warfare. It seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of both combatants and noncombatants during armed conflicts. A major part of IHL is contained

in the four Geneva Conventions (GC) and its two additional protocols, which contain the most important rules limiting the barbarity of war. They protect people who do not take part in the fighting (civilians, medics, aid workers), and those who can no longer fight (wounded, sick and shipwrecked troops, prisoners of war). Nearly every State in the world, including Nepal has agreed to be bound by those conventions and treaties. The brief summaries of four Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols have been presented in the Appendix B.

International humanitarian law provides women the same protection as men – be they combatants, civilians or persons who are injured and out of war. However, recognizing their specific needs and vulnerabilities, IHL contains a number of provisions that give women "special protection" during armed conflicts (Tabory, 1989). There are 43 provisions in the GC and their optional protocols that specifically deal with women and the effects of armed conflicts (Tabory, 1989). However, these provisions do not deal with women as an individual in their own right, but they deal with women in their relationships with others. For example, IHL requires humane treatment for the wounded and sick, prisoners and civilians caught up in a conflict without any "adverse distinction" based on sex, race, nationality, religion, political opinion or any similar criteria. This protection is provided by the four GC (1949) and their optional protocols (1977).

The IHL also forbid hostage taking and the use of human shields. GC I and II, Article 12 states that women must be treated with all consideration due to their sex (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2010). With regard to prohibition of sexual crimes during armed conflict, Article 27 of the GC IV states, "Women shall be

especially protected against any attack on their honor, in particular against rape, enforced

prostitution, or any form of indecent assault." The threat of sexual violence against

women is also prohibited. In order to avoid sexual abuse, IHL requires that women

prisoners must be housed separately from men, and must be under the supervision of

women (ICRC, 2004). International humanitarian law further requires that expectant

mothers and mothers of young children, in particular nursing mothers, be treated with

particular care (four GC and optional protocol I). This applies, for example, with regard

to the provision of food, clothing, medical assistance, evacuation and transportation.

Women are particularly vulnerable to the separation of family members and the suffering

caused by the unknown fate of a missing relative, both during and after an armed conflict.

International humanitarian law provides families with the right to know the fate of their

missing relatives and obliges parties to armed conflicts to take all feasible measures to

account for persons reported missing (ICRC, 2004).

4.2 International human rights law

International human rights law is a system of international norms, which is adopted

by the international community to protect the human rights of everyone. These rights are

inalienable, and everyone irrespective of their nationality, origin, sex, ethnicity, color,

religion, language, and any other statues is entitled to them. Since the formation of the

UN in 1945, it has adopted several treaties, customary international law, general

principles and soft laws, which guarantee the rights of people (UN, 2011). Human rights

include both rights and obligations. As per the IHRL, the primary responsibility of

implementing human rights rests with the State. The State is required to domesticate

international norms by enacting law in line with international standard. In case domestic laws fail to address human rights abuses, there are mechanisms and procedures for individual complaints or communications at the regional and international levels to help ensure that international human rights standards are respected, implemented, and enforced at the local level (UN-OHCHR, 2012).

Several treaties, conventions, resolutions, recommendations, declarations, and expert bodies have been promulgated by the UN to protect people during armed conflicts and in peacetime. Realizing that armed conflicts affect women and men differently, the UN has adopted many conventions, treaties and other bodies that specifically address the needs of women during armed conflicts. These mechanisms were developed to help protect women from vulnerabilities they face due to their gender and low status in society.

During the armed conflict period, Nepal was party to six out of the nine core human rights instruments, and some optional protocols to deal with specific concerns (UN-OHCHR, 2012). The fundamental international human rights conventions/treaties that are applicable in times of both armed conflict and peacetime, their dates of accession at the intentional level, including date of signing, ratification, and implementation of Nepal are briefly presented in the Table 4 below.

Table 4. Human rights instruments that applies during war and peacetime

SN	Human rights instruments	Date of accession	Signed by Nepal	Ratified by Nepal	Entry into force
1	International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	21 Dec 1965	Not available	Jan 1971	May 1971

2	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	16 Dec 1966	Not available	May 1991	Aug 1991
3	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	16 Dec 1966	Not available	May 1991	Aug1991
4	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	18 Dec 1979	Feb 1991	Apr1991	May 1991
5	Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)	10 Dec 1984	Not available	May 1991	Jun 1991
6	Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	20 Nov 1989	Jan 1990	Sep 1990	Oct1990
7	First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR-OP1)	16 Dec 1966	Not available	May 1991a	Aug 1991
8	Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR-OP2)	15 Dec 1989	Not available	Mar 1998	Jun 1998
9	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (OP-CEDAW)	10 Dec 1999	Dec 2001	Jun 2007	Sep 2007
10	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OP-CRC-AC)	25 May 2000	Sep 2000	Jan 2007a	Feb 2007
11	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OP-CRC-SC)	5 May 2000	Sep 2000	Jan 2006a	Feb 2006

Source: UN-OHCHR, 2012

The conventions and treaties listed above protect several rights of women both during armed conflicts and in peacetime. They are legally binding for those States that are party to the convention and/or treaty. All human rights laws are equally applicable in armed conflict, apart from derogable rights in certain circumstances. For example,

ICCPR–based rights associated with assembly, movement, press, privacy, property,

certain remedies, and access to information was curtailed by the GoN as derogable rights[5]

of the state for one year when it declared a state of emergency on two occasions during

the armed conflict; nine months during 2001, and three months during 2005 after

notifying the UN (UN-OHCHR, 2012).

These human rights laws promote equality between men and women. The

conventions/treaties protects range of rights of women during armed conflicts, including

the right to life, the right to equality before law, the right to freedom of speech, the right

to political participation, the right to freedom of assembly, the right to free and fair trial,

the right to protection, the right to effective remedy, the right to freedom from torture,

and the right to protection from sexual violence. For example, Article 6, 9 and 21of

ICCPR protects the right to life, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to liberty

and security of the person, respectively. Likewise, Article 7 of ICCPR and Article 2 and

16 of CAT protects people from cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment.

Similarly, Articles 16 and 22 through 27 in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights

encompass economic, social, and cultural rights of people, including rights to work, right

to an adequate standard of living (food, water, and housing), to education and to health

(UN, 2005). These rights are further elaborated in ICESCR, as well as articulated in the

CRC and CEDAW. Similarly, Articles 7 and 8 of CEDAW reaffirm women's right to

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[5] According to the Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966, derogable rights allow state parties to suspend part of their legal or covenant obligations temporarily and thus restrict some rights of the citizens, under certain unexceptional circumstances. Derogation enables state to respond to a serious public emergency that threaten the life of the nation. It should generally be non-discriminatory and proportionate to the emergency.

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participate in the political and public life of their countries, at the national and international level, prohibiting discrimination against women in political and public life (UN-CEDAW, 1979). Article 7 requires State parties to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life, and to ensure that they enjoy equality with men in political and public life" and Article 8 requires States parties "to ensure the presence of women at all levels and in all areas of international affairs" (UN-CEDAW, 1979, p.3).

Human rights conventions that pertain to sexual violence fully operate during armed conflicts. For example, CAT prohibits sexual violence and torture against women during armed conflicts. It also protects rights to life, freedom and safety for women. Similarly, CEDAW prohibits discrimination against women on the basis of sex, which incorporates VAW. Similarly, CRC protects the rights of children during armed conflicts, including a prohibition on their recruitment into the armed forces.

Several declarations, guidelines, resolutions, and treaties have been adopted by the UN to complement the work done by the international human rights mechanisms to protect women in armed conflicts. These declarations, resolutions, and guidelines are not legally binding, but they are morally binding since they represent a broad consensus of the international community. The UN passed the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict in 1974, which recognizes the particular suffering of women and children during armed conflict (UN, 1974). It emphasizes the important role that women play "in society, in the family and particularly in the upbringing of children", and the corresponding need to accord them special protection. It

also urges States to comply with their obligations under international instruments, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions that offer important guarantees of protection for women and children (UN, 1998, p.1).

The DEVAW passed in 1993 by the UN General Assembly also proscribes sexual VAW whether committed in armed conflicts or in peacetime and regardless of whether committed by a state official or private actor. The Declaration identifies three main categories of VAW, namely physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community, and that perpetrated or condoned by the State. It explicitly recognizes that women in conflict situations are especially vulnerable to violations of human rights (UN, 1993a). The Article 38 of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Program of Action states all violations of human rights and humanitarian activities including in particular murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery, and forced pregnancy, require a particularly effective response from the state and non-state actors (UN, 1993b). Similarly, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action calls on governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector to take strategic action in relation to the effects of armed conflict or other kinds of conflict on women including those living under foreign occupation (UN, 1995).

Equality between men and women is at the very heart of international human rights norms. Several conventions/treaties, guidelines, resolutions, and treaty bodies have been adopted by the UN to promote goals of equality. For example, The Convention on Political Rights of Women adopted in 1953 is the first human rights convention committed to the protection of political rights of women. It states that equality between

men and women should be there in the enjoyment and exercise of political rights. The Convention formulates important principles providing that women, without any discrimination, shall be (a) entitled to vote in all elections (Article 1); (b) eligible for elections to all publicly elected bodies established by national law (Article 2); (c) entitled to hold public office and exercise all public functions established by national law (Article 3) (UN, 1953). Similarly, the equal participation of women and men in public and political life was one of the cornerstones of CEDAW (UN-CEDAW, 1979). In the same vein, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action also emphasized the need to improve women's access to, and full participation in, power structures and decision-making. It exhorted all governments to adopt affirmative-action measures to ensure that women make up at least 30 percent representatives in national parliaments.

The UN has been increasingly responsive to the impact of armed conflict on women. It recognizes that armed conflicts have differential impacts on women and men requiring a gender-specific set of responses to needs during and after the conflict. The UN has adopted seven resolutions on women, peace and security to address the needs of women during and in the aftermath of conflict. These resolutions have primary focus on the participation of women in the peace process, and prevention of GBV against women. Though these resolutions are not legally binding, they are accepted by many States which are then obliged to implement them effectively. The various UN Security Council Resolutions and their main objectives are discussed in the Table 5 below.

Table 5. United Nation Resolutions on women, war, and peace

SN	UNSCR	Main focus and objectives

1	UNSCR 1325 (2000)	Stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and peacekeeping at all levels. Urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspective in all areas of peacebuilding.
2	UNSCR 1820 (2008)	Explicitly links sexual violence as a tactic of war with women peace and security issues by reinforcing Resolution 1325. States that sexual violence in conflict constitutes a war crime and demands parties to armed conflict to immediately take appropriate measures to protect civilians from sexual violence.
3	UNSCR 1888 (2009)	Mandates that peacekeeping missions protect women and children from sexual violence during armed conflict, and requests that the Secretary-General appoint a special representative on sexual violence during armed conflict (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict).
4	UNSCR 1889 (2009)	Follows-up to UNSCR 1325. Emphasizes the participation of women in all phases of the peace process. Most important, it calls for monitoring and introduces accountability mechanisms UNSCR 1325 lacks. The resolution strongly encourages cooperation with civil society, particularly women's organizations. .
5	UNSCR 1960 (2010)	Calls for an end to sexual violence, particularly against women and girls during armed conflict. Provides measures aimed at ending impunity of perpetrators of sexual violence by strengthening accountability mechanisms, including through sanction and reporting measures.
6	UNSCR 2106 (2013)	Focused on conflict related sexual violence with a specific focus on measures to combat impunity for violence against. Introduces greater operational detail to previous resolutions. Focuses on empowerment of women.
7	UNSCR 2122 (2013)	Highlights the critical issue of gender equality and women's empowerment in international peace and security. Puts stronger measures in place for women to participate in all states of conflict prevention, resolution and recovery.

Source: United States Institute of Peace, (n.d.); Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center, (2014).

4.3 National mechanisms for women's rights in Nepal

In the last few decades, significant changes have been made in Nepal regarding protection of women's rights as a result of the changed political environment, and advocacy by various non-government organizations (NGOs) and CSOs (Asian

Development Bank [ADB], 2010). The country has committed to constitutional and legal equality between men and women in all aspects of life by becoming party to most of the important international mechanisms that exist to protect the rights of women. Similarly, international standards are adapted into national instruments and frameworks, including the constitution, laws, policies and programs. In line with its commitment to UN resolution 1325, and 1820, the GoN has adopted the National Action Plan on implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and 1820 in February 2011 to ensure meaningful participation of women in all stages of peacebuilding in the post conflict period, and to address the security concerns of women.

The country's development plans since the 1950s have adopted policies that are appropriate for improving women's status. A few other mechanisms have been set up to promote and protect the rights of women For example, the Ministry of Women, children and Social Welfare (MWCSW), the Women's Commission, the Women's Division in the National Planning Commission, and the Women and Development Division-in the Ministry of Local Development. The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare is the key ministry for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Department of Women's Development under the MWCSW looks after women's and children's programs and implements them with the support of Women Development Offices, which are the key gender focal points [6]at the local level (ADB, 2010).

By agreeing to the Beijing Platform for Action, the government has committed to

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[6] The government of Nepal has sought to integrate a gender perspective in the development policy framework through establishment of a gender focal point in all governments' ministries to ensure that the needs and interest of women and men from different groups are addressed in governments' budget.

promoting women's empowerment by ensuring formal and informal equality in economic, social, and political fields. Similarly, Nepal has committed to the Millennium Development Goals to achieving education, health, and poverty reduction targets and making sure that women and girls share benefits equally as these goals are achieved.

The CPA signed in 2006 gave high accord to women' rights. The Interim Constitution 2007, which was drafted after CPA was gender inclusive in many ways. It recognizes the right to equality as a fundamental right, and had provisions that supported gender equality. Article 63(5) guaranteed one-third of the seats in the CA to women, and this provision was also included in the new electoral law that was passed by the Interim Parliament in 2007. As a result, 33 percent of the elected candidates were women in the first CA elections held in 2008. Similarly, 29.91 percent women were elected in the second CA elections held in 2013.

The government also took some positive steps to prevent VAW. For instance, the Gender Equality Act passed in 2006 paved the path for enactment of Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act in 2009, which has declared sexual violence against women as a punishable crime, and legal provisions are in place for punishment of the perpetrators. Similarly, the GoN has adopted a five year National Strategy and Plan of Action for Gender Empowerment and Ending Gender Based Violence. This strategy has provision for zero tolerance for violence; one stop crisis management center for the protection of survivors/victims; gender mainstreaming in economic and social development related programs, and greater access to justice, such as free legal aid and fast track courts.

The newly promulgated Constitution of Nepal 2015 is even more gender inclusive

and participatory. Many women participated in the constitution making process through

their engagement in the CA and its various committees formed to draft the constitution.

The issue of gender equality has been explicitly recognized by the new Constitution. It

has opened new political and economic space for women by providing them equality with

men in many areas of life, including political arena. The new Constitution provided

quotas for women in local and national legislative bodies so as to ensure their

representation and participation in every political structure. Furthermore, proportional

electoral systems at the federal and state levels have been introduced to increase

participation of women and other excluded groups. Similarly, VAW based on any cultural,

religious, or traditional practices has been criminalized; and property rights are now equal

for men and women. The new Constitution also ensures fundamental rights, including

economic, social and cultural rights, with the possibility of "progressive realization"

[7](Phuyal, 2015).

Furthermore, specific constitutional commissions (such as the Women

Commission, Dalit Commission, Indigenous People Commission, Madhesi[8] Commission,

Tharu[9] Commission, and Muslim Commission) were created along with the National

Human Rights Commission. These commissions have a mandate to receive complaints or

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[7] The concept of "progressive realization" describes a central aspect of States' obligations in connection with economic, social and cultural rights under international human rights treaties. At its core is the obligation to take appropriate measures towards the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum of their available resources (UN-OHCHR, n.d)

[8] The flat southern region of Nepal bordering India is known as Madhes and its indigenous inhabitants are called Madhesi.

[9] Tharus are ethnic groups in Nepal living in the southern foothills of the Himalayas.

recommend changes in the laws, policies, and practices of areas that discriminate against or deny rights to their respective communities. The National Women Commission, which has a mandate to monitor and investigate cases of VAW, has been made a constitutional body with greater power and autonomy. As in other constitutional bodies, at least one of the members will be a woman.

Despite some positive outcomes for women in the new constitution, it bars women from conferring citizenship to their children independently of men. It also prohibits children born of a Nepali mother and a foreigner father from holding high office.

4.4 Summary of international and national mechanism for women's rights

International human rights law and international humanitarian law offer a series of protections to persons in armed conflict, including civilians, persons who are no longer participating directly in hostilities. These two bodies of law are largely complementary and mutually reinforcing, with the shared objective of protecting life and human dignity. They are applicable both in peacetime and during armed conflicts. Parties to the conflict have legally binding obligations concerning the rights of persons affected by the armed conflict. These human rights entail both rights and obligations, and States assume obligations to respect, protect and fulfill human rights under international law.

Nepal was party to six out of the nine core human rights instruments, including ICCPR, ICERD, ICESR, CRC, CEDAW, and CAT. As a state party, the country has an obligation to abide by IHL and IHRL, which protect civilians and combatants who no longer participates in hostilities. Similarly, Nepal is required to adhere to Common

Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which applies to armed conflicts that are not of an international character.

Nepal has adapted international standards into national instruments and frameworks, including the constitution, laws, policies and programs so as to domesticate international laws in line with international norms. The Constitution of Nepal also requires the State to implement international treaties and agreements effectively to which the country is a party. The CPA, Interim Constitution 2007, and the new Constitution of Nepal have given high priority to women's rights, including economic and political rights. The new Constitution of Nepal guarantees gender equality and provides equal rights to women. Furthermore, the new Constitution also provides a long list of fundamental rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, with the possibility of progressive realization.

Chapter 5: Methodology of the research

5.1 Selection of research site: Rationale

Despite widespread occurrence of armed conflicts in different parts of the World; South Asia is regarded as one of the most violent regions, which drew my attention for research. I decided to take the case of Nepal's recent armed conflict for several reasons. First, Nepal's armed conflict had a high participation of women in different roles that ranged from combatants to peacebuilders despite deeply entrenched patriarchal values in Nepali society. Hence the armed conflict impacted women in many ways. This conflict provides an opportunity to understand why and how women were affected. It also provides an opportunity to understand the various roles played by women in peacebuilding and political transformation both during and after the armed conflict at community and national levels. As Nepal is heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, caste, geography, political ideology, and economic opportunity, the CPN-M might have mobilized their resources differently to attract women from different social groups in their armed struggle, and the conflict might have impacted women from different social groups incongruously. Knowledge gained from Nepal can be useful to understand the impact of armed conflict on women in other parts of the world. The knowledge gleaned in this research cannot be generalized to all women without considering the context, but may be used to guide other research into the impact of intrastate conflicts on women. .

Second, the evidence of armed conflict is still fresh and easy to collect since Nepal is still in a transitional phase. Only in 2012, the final re-integration of former CPN-M combatants, including female combatants into the Nepal Army was completed.

However, combatants who opted for voluntary retirement have not integrated as intended into the society as of yet, and new challenges to successful reintegration into civilian life are emerging for female combatants. Nine years have already passed since the armed conflict ended with the signing of the CPA. The CA was mandated to write the new constitution of Nepal through the CPA. Due to the failure of the political parties to reach consensus on several issues, including federal structure, the constitution writing process was delayed. Nepal has recently (in September 2015) promulgated the new Constitution of the country after nearly eight years of political debate.

Third, I am a Nepali national and lived in Nepal during the time of the armed conflict. I personally witnessed Nepal's armed conflict closely and gained a fairly good background knowledge about it. Throughout the armed conflict period and the aftermath of the conflict, I worked protecting the rights of victims, including women who were affected by the armed conflict, through my engagement as an employee in human rights organizations in Nepal. I worked closely with female victims in various parts of the country, who were struggling for their rights to truth, justice and reparation by organizing themselves as a network during and after the armed conflict. While working with the victims of armed conflict, I got an opportunity to work in collaboration with various other stakeholders, including the delegation of EU and its embassies in Kathmandu, OHCHR-Nepal, National Human Rights Commission , National Women Commission, and various other national and district level non-government organizations. I am constantly updated on the ongoing peacebuilding process in Nepal through the media and other sources. My experience of working with victims of armed conflict both during and after the conflict

helped stimulate my interest in exploring the impact of armed conflict on women. Furthermore, my work with various stakeholders, both at the national and community levels, gave me leverage in accessing information sources (participants and documents) readily.

5.2 Types of data

I collected both primary and secondary data that are of qualitative and quantitative nature to accomplish this research. Both primary and secondary data were collected June through September 2015.

5.2.1 Primary data

As a researcher, I collected primary data as part of my principal and original data for this research and used them in my analysis. Primary data as the original data collected and used in the analysis by a researcher (Kothari, 2004). Primary data is of the utmost importance in my research as it gave me not only information about the armed conflict's role, and impact on, women but also perspectives, opinions and standings of different groups of men and women directly engaged in different capacities (e.g., service delivery, rights activism, media person, research and analysis) with conflict-affected rural women.

5.2.2 Secondary data

To inform and augment the analysis of the primary data, I collected both qualitative and quantitative secondary data that had been collected and maintained by different organizations. Following Cnossen (1997) secondary data as data collected by someone else for some other purpose in the past and kept open for public consumption. Secondary quantitative data was collected to assess the background situation of women

and VAW, results of CA elections and human rights treaties signed by Nepal, and to triangulate the information collected through in-depth interviews. Such data were collected from the databases (e.g., archives, books and decisions) prepared by various organizations, including the Nepal Police, Government of Nepal (GoN), human rights organizations and political parties.

5.3 Data collection instruments and methods

5.3.1 Preparation and testing of data collection instrument

I used qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured and open-ended questions to collect data from interviewees. The questions were organized in such a way that allowed accommodation of emerging questions during the course of the interview. The questions helped me to stay focused on my research questions and objectives. Based on the insights from literature, and prior knowledge of the researcher, a total of 18 questions were developed for the interview. These questions were focused on two themes: armed conflict and peace. The questions were designed in English and translated into Nepali during the interviews because most people prefer talking in Nepali, the commonly used language in Nepal.

After preparation of the questions, I tested them with three interviewees. The pre-test allowed me to check the flow and sequencing of the questions, and also to see whether they elicited relevant information to meet the research objectives. The questions were then revised after the test adding six more questions with the aim to make them more relevant and effective. Altogether, the final 24 questions guided my interview and primary data collection processes (Appendix C).

5.3.2 In-depth interview with key informants

5.3.2.1 Understanding about in-depth interview

While there are different methods available for collecting qualitative primary data, I used reflective and reflexive in-depth interviews with select key informants to obtain qualitative data and information regarding observations, experiences, lessons, perceptions, opinions and ideas of the interviewees about the role of women in armed conflict and peacebuilding, and impact of conflict on women. Such interviews involve interviewing a select group of individuals who are likely to provide needed information, ideas, and insights on a particular subject for collecting primary data (Kumar, 1989). Using an in-depth interview is an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences so as to gain insight into how people interpret and order the world (Milena, Dainora, & Alin, 2008). The advantage of this method was that I could exercise some amount of control at the same time as allowing participants to discuss the issues and ideas that were more important to them as well (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p.116). It was important to develop trust with the interviewees. Similarly, it was crucial to capture different information, observations, experiences, perceptions, opinions, and lessons from interviewees, which helped in receiving precise, rare, and targeted information that is less likely to be received from other methods, including literature review.

5.3.2.2 Selection of participants for in-depth interviews

In order to collect data from in-depth interviews, I prepared a list of potential key informants, who could provide the most credible information to the study. During and

after the armed conflict period, civil society in Nepal played an important role in pressurizing the warring parties in resolving the conflict peacefully, mitigating the effect of the armed conflict and facilitating the conditions necessary for building a sustainable peace. Members of civil society had engaged voluntarily in those initiatives with little support from international communities, political parties and the conflicting parties. They were not inclined to any warring parties or sharply divided in their views on the armed conflict rather they brought critical insights and potential long-term consequences of armed conflict in Nepali society both politically and economically. Most of such members have been engaging in human rights including political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights particularly those of women, indigenous peoples and poor. During my professional work in different human right-based non-government organizations in Nepal, I found such civil society members as a critical repository of balanced knowledge about the role of women in armed conflict and the implication of the conflict on them. Therefore, I decided to select interviewees who were active during and after armed conflict in dealing with human and women's rights issues.

Initially, I listed 25 potential key individuals, which was more than double the interviewees I planned. I created this long list anticipating a 50 percent turn down rate to participate in my research. In order to obtain appropriate and qualified candidates for interview, I used variety of selection criteria. First, I chose participants based on their knowledge on the armed conflict, women's rights, peacebuilding and the Constitution making process. Second, I took into consideration their role during the armed conflict as a member of civil society. Third, following Creswell (2007, p. 133), I selected

participants who were ready to share information openly and honestly.

After listing the interviewees, I started contacting them so as to ascertain their availability. I was able to fix an interview schedule with only 11 Nepali interviewees (Table 6). The interviewees selected were mostly from non-government organization (NGOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) from various geographical locations maintaining gender, caste and ethnic balance. My previous experience working in collaboration with NGOs and CSOs made it easy for me to select appropriate interviewees. Also, I selected some interviewees purposely on the basis of snowball sampling - recommendations made by the some of the interviewees (Neuman, 2010). The majority of interviewees has long experience of working in Nepal in different capacities (e.g., service delivery, rights activism, media person, research and analysis) and has closely witnessed the armed conflict as a member of civil society. Most of them were working for the political and economic rights of different social groups, including women, Dalit and Indigenous communities during the conflict period and continue to work in the same area even today.

Table 6. Brief profile of the in-depth interviewees

Interviewees	Gender	Profile
Interviewee 1	Male	Dalit activist worked with the victims of armed conflict during and after the conflict period particularly for the capacity building of the victims. He is currently working in a non-profit research institute in Nepal. His primary focus of research is human rights particularly those of marginalized such as Dalit, Indigenous Peoples and women.
Interviewee 2	Male	A columnist in national daily newspaper for more than two decades. Worked as a journalist during the armed conflict period, and traveled extensively in rural areas during armed conflict to collect cases to publish. He also visited the people's court run by CPN-M during the

		conflict, and cantonments where ex-combatants of CPN-M were housed for monitoring after the end of the conflict.
Interviewee 3	Male	A development practitioner cum researcher in the field of local governance, capacity development, and service delivery. He worked at the district level for the delivery of development supports during the conflict period. Currently, he is actively engaged in the development research, particularly in the local governance issues.
Interviewee 4	Male	A development practitioner particularly specialized in the capacity building of grassroots stakeholders managing natural resources. He extensively trained resource managing women in many parts of the country in the last 20 years. Currently, his focus of work is to facilitate the negotiation of the natural resource base conflicts in Nepal. He is responsibly engaged with US based University to implement alternative dispute resolution program in Nepal in the field of natural resources at community level.
Interviewee 5	Female	An activist promoting woman's rights in natural resources management and governance. She worked actively during the armed conflict period through community forest user's networks in rural parts of Nepal. She also dealt with the policy makers at the national level on behalf of women's network.
Interviewee 6	Male	A facilitator who organized the district and local level activists and technical supporters at the national level and help them organize conflict-sensitive capacity development and service delivery packages. He also documented some local level cases studies regarding the impact of armed conflict on women.
Interviewee 7	Male	He extensively worked with victims/survivors of the armed conflict during and after the armed conflict in Nepal. He engaged in the security and protection of victims of armed conflict and human rights defenders. He engaged in the national level advocacy to ensure victims' rights to truth, justice and reparations.
Interviewee 8	Male	He worked in a human rights organization during the armed conflict period. He has been actively engaged as research assistant for national and international researchers, particularly focusing on the human rights violations during the conflict.
Interviewee 9	Female	An activist working for the rights of Indigenous women in Nepal during and after the armed conflict. Currently, she runs an NGO, which support conflict-affected women for livelihoods.

Interviewee 10	Female	A development practitioner working for the rights of local communities, particularly poor and marginalized through organizing them for the management of local resources. She was academically trained in conflict resolution program and started working for the resolution of conflicts in the natural resource management, local development and community governance through a national NGO.
Interviewee 11	Male	He worked with the armed conflict victims for their security and livelihood support during and after the conflict. Currently, he works at the conflict affected district through the national human rights NGO.

5.3.2.3 Conduction of in-depth interviews with key informants

As per the research ethical guidelines prepared by Institutional Review Board (IRB) and recommended by Portland State University (PSU), I informed interviewees about the subject of the study by explaining to them the purpose and use of the study. I also informed interviewees that their participation was voluntary. Before proceeding to the interview, I read the verbal consent form to each interviewee (Appendix D). I also assured all interviewees of anonymity, confidentiality and intended and appropriate use of the data for this research only. Finally, I took the verbal consent for the audio record of the interview in advance.

I conducted the interviews using Skype between June and August 2015. The interviews generally lasted for 1 to 1.5 hours. I recorded the audio of each interview to use for careful study during data analysis process. While recording, the interviewees were given a number as an identity to maintain their anonymity in this study. The question list prepared served as a guide for the interviews. Inevitably, once the conversation began different informants pursued different interests and concerns with the result that the guide was consulted as needed not followed verbatim.

5.4 Literature review

I reviewed academic publications, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and media articles from Nepal and beyond to augment my research. While the published papers helped me to broaden conceptual and theoretical understanding related to my research, reports prepared by different agencies gave examples and data that are comparable with or and/or contradicted with my findings.

On the basis of my research objectives and background knowledge, I focused on six themes to organize literature review. The first theme was gender and armed conflict, which helped me in understanding armed conflict from gender lens, including change in gender roles brought by the armed conflict. The second theme was the agency (both political and economic) exercised by women during the armed conflict, which helped me in understanding how the armed conflict-affected women's economic and political agency. The third theme focused on situation of violence against women, which helped me in understanding the relation between armed conflict and VAW. Also, it helped in understanding violence inflicted on women during armed conflict due to gender. The

fourth theme, which was focused on women's experiences in peacebuilding both during and after the armed conflict, helped me in exploring women's participation in decision-making processes. The fifth theme focused on international humanitarian law that applied during armed conflict period, and how these laws protected specifically women who were vulnerable to armed conflict because of their gender and social status. The sixth and final theme discussed the international human rights law that applied during war and peacetime, focusing on the role played by the UN in protecting women during armed conflict, and promoting their agency in peacebuilding process at the national and local levels.

Similarly, I reviewed documents prepared by the GoN such as action plan, project documents, policies, acts and regulations, and periodic reports submitted to treaty monitoring bodies of the UN to understand the measures taken by the government in protecting and promoting the rights of women during and after the armed conflict. I reviewed some project reports published by the international organizations such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the EU, and bilateral agencies about armed conflict in various parts of the world that gave me insights regarding the impact of armed conflict in various cultural contexts. Also, I reviewed reports, policy briefs, working papers published by national and international non-government organizations, civil society organizations to get information, and compare information collected from government documents. I also reviewed human rights conventions, treaties, guidelines, resolutions, declarations and reports published by the UN.

5.5 Data analysis and interpretation: approaches and methods

I chose to use qualitative data analysis method, and inductive process to analyze the data and information collected from in-depth interviews, secondary sources and literature review. This method helps to capture and discover meaning in a situation. Since my research could greatly be informed by the social context, qualitative data analysis would be crucial for understanding the social world. To allow flexibility and triangulation, I kept the data analysis process reflexive and iterative. I incorporated different perspectives of interviewees that were depicted during the interview regarding the armed conflict and its impact on women.

I repeatedly listened to the audio-taped data and transcribed them in English verbatim form so that they could be studied in detail, linked with analytic notes and/or coded (ten Have, 1999) (Appendix E). For each recording, participant and transcription was given alpha-numeric code to protect the participant's identity. Transcribing and translating data is itself an interpretive process that involves making judgements and therefore may form the first step of data analysis (Bailey, 2008).

To analyze the transcripts, I used the content analysis method so as to generate key themes and sub-themes that helped identify emerging patterns based on the meanings that seem to be conveyed (Berg, 2009). The themes were further analyzed by using steps of the framework analysis (Krueger 1994; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). The process followed was: a) familiarization of the recurrent themes; b) identifying a thematic framework; c) indexing; d) charting and e) mapping and interpretation. Content analysis helped me in analyzing not only the manifest content of the interview, but also the latent

concepts.

Some of the quantitative data collected from secondary sources such as the Nepalese police database on VAW, Election Commission of Nepal on CA elections results, and UN treaties and conventions databases to see ratification status of Nepal was analyzed to assess trend and pattern. Data collected from in-depth interviews were triangulated to assess reliability and validity by consulting literature from similar studies. Multiple research tools such as literature review, and in-depth interviews allowed me to cross-check the validity of information towards strengthening the research findings. While interpreting data, I considered specific issues that emerged or issues that were surprising and/or unique. Also, I compared and contrasted my findings with already published literature.

5.6 Limitations of the study

My research has some limitations, particularly in relation to the research method and time spent, which was dictated by limited resources. Due to financial resources and time constraints, I was not able to travel to the field, and therefore, I had no alternative but to collect data *via* skype interviews from key informants. Though initially I planned to conduct a focus group with a select group of women that were either negatively affected (e.g., conflict survivors, former combatants, displaced, disabled, injured) or empowered (e.g., CA members who participated actively in the armed conflict and the peacebuilding process) as well as interviews with key informants from CSOs, I was limited to interviews with key informants only.

Despite the fact that I prepared a comprehensive list of interviewees and attempted to contact them several times, I was not able to make contact with some of them for various reasons (e.g., many rural women do not have access to a computer, skype and even a telephone, difficulty in contacting them due to time differences or because they were busy with farming activities and therefore unavailable, some were not interested in talking about these issues anymore). Also, it was challenging for me to contact interviewees on Skype due to their limited access to Skype. Their access to Skype was limited primarily due to their computer illiteracy and the reliance of all family members on a single computer. In addition, unprecedented electricity cut offs for 14 or 16 hours a day in Nepal severely hampered my ability to reach intended interviewees. Due to such technical difficulties, I could not conduct planned interviews with two Dalit women based in a rural part of the country. I was also not able to find and contact appropriate international professionals who worked in Nepal during the armed conflict period to get their (i.e., *etic*) perspectives. However, I obtained the perspectives of such professionals through their writings and publications.

My research could have been further strengthened if I were able to include the perspective of women combatants, female survivors, and women who obtained economic and political opportunities during and after the armed conflict. Conducting focus group discussions with all those categories of women would have strengthened my research findings from *emic* perspectives by including accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed by the conflict-affected people.

Chapter 6: Findings of the study

The findings of the study have been organized into eight broad themes under which various dimensions and elements are discussed. The themes under which the results are organized are (i) participation and roles of women in the armed conflict, (ii) the economic and other roles played by women as the head of household, (iii) the roles played by women in community activities, (iv) the role of women in peacebuilding at the community level, (v) the role played by women in peacebuilding at the national level, (vi) the economic impact of the armed conflict on women, (vii) the political impact of the armed conflict on women, and (viii) the situation of VAW during and after the armed conflict.

6.1 Women's participation and role in the armed-conflict

My research revealed that socially oppressed and economically marginalized women of productive age (i.e., 14-45 years) from rural areas participated in the armed conflict. All the interviewees said that the majority of female political cadres and combatants in CPN-M were from Indigenous and Dalit communities, who were not only oppressed socially but also excluded from the state-led mainstream development process. Generally, poor and economically disadvantaged women participated in the armed conflict actively. Interviewee 4 discussed what motivated poor, indigenous and Dalit women to join the Maoists movement.

> Poor, Indigenous and Dalit women joined the Maoists movement in large
> numbers since they had nothing to lose as they were deprived, marginalized
> and discriminated historically by the state. Women from these social groups

had the perception that if they joined the Maoists movement they would be emancipated from class, caste, ethnic, and gender marginalization.

However, three interviewees said that women from high caste social groups, including Brahmin and Chettri also participated in the CPN-M military, albeit in relatively low proportions. Almost all of those women were from the rural areas (i.e., hill region of the country where road access is very limited), where very few economic and development opportunities are available. .

The interviews revealed that women extensively and actively participated and played different roles in both political and military structures of CPN-M. In the CPN-M political structure, women played multiple roles such as political cadre, political leader, social activist, cultural artists, and propagandist. There were several women in the political structure of the party including central committee, district committee and local committee. They also actively engaged in the 'peoples' government' structures, including the 'parallel justice' system run by CPN-M in their strongholds. They also worked as motivators and propagandists who performed a door-to door campaign to spread information about CPN-M movement and educate the rural people about their ideology. Some of the young women engaged in critically reflecting on political and socio-cultural oppression and exploitation that existed in Nepalese society and disseminating CPN-M's strategy to address those issues through locally suitable cultural programs such as folk song, street play and drama. Gradually increasing numbers of rural women supported the armed conflict actively. Interviewee 7 shared that, "During the conflict period, I saw live television coverage of a battle between Maoist combatants and Police force in Prithvi

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Highway near Kathmandu. I was surprised seeing the bravery of women combatants. They attacked government police post and fought with men".

In direct connection with military structure, women worked as combatants, informers, health workers and logistic supporters. As combatants, women were actively engaged not only in fighting with government security forces but also in developing strategic war plans. While women fought valiantly in the battlefield as front-line fighters, they were also able to hold command positions during battles. Looking at the effective fighting skills and courage displayed by women during armed conflict, the CPN-M made some female-only squads and platoons in their military structure to boost the confidence of female combatants (Interviewee 8). The fighting skills and courage displayed by Nepali women during the armed conflict were captured well by some journalists and writers, at both the national and international levels. Many journalists wrote that Nepalese women demonstrated the same level of bravery, as that shown by Nepali soldiers in the Anglo-Nepal war against the British 200 years ago (Interviewee 2). Women were also extensively mobilized for spying on the activities of government security forces, as security forces were less suspicious of them. Similarly, they were also mobilized as health workers in providing health services to injured CPN-M combatants, and engaged in carrying out daily routine works such as cooking and cleaning in the CPN-M military bases. Some of the women also performed reproductive roles of caring and nursing children that were born in the military camps of CPN-M.

Most of the interviewees stated that the armed conflict gave women an opportunity to gain prominent roles as combatants in the CPN-M military and

Government Security Forces as well. Before the armed conflict, women were enrolled only in civil service but not in combatant roles in the government security force, particularly the Nepal Army. However, the Nepal Army started recruiting women for combat roles to counter the women CPN-M combatants in 2004 (Interviewee 4). The participation of women as combatants in both military structures gave women an opportunity to challenge the traditional societal perceptions that considered women as defenseless victims needing protection from men.

My research suggested that women joined the armed conflict voluntarily, involuntarily, or as a survival strategy. Almost all (10) interviewees stated that women voluntarily joined the armed conflict first as political supporters then later as combatants. They also identified different reasons for women joining voluntarily. Some women joined the movement out of conviction that the CPN-M ideology was correct and agreement with the goals of the conflict. The issue of ethnic and caste identity raised by CPN-M in parallel with class agenda attracted Indigenous and Dalit communities to the CPN-M armed groups. Interviewee 1 talked about the mass campaigns conducted by CPN-M in rural areas.

> Maoist political leaders conducted several awareness campaigns in the
> rural areas; and in those campaigns they used to say that they would treat
> women equally irrespective of caste, ethnicity, gender, class, language, and
> geographical locations once they win the battle. They also repeatedly said
> that they would abolish all the cultural discriminations against women

such as Chhaupadi[10] and Jari[11]. Therefore, those campaigns attracted rural and marginalized women to join or support the Maoist movement.

Similarly, the agenda of gender equality consciously taken by the CPN-M in their 40 points demand submitted to the GoN before the commencement of armed-conflict was successful in attracting a large number of rural women. Some other women joined because of social reform campaigns launched by the CPN-M in rural areas against social practices that were harmful to women, including *Chhaupadi,* caste-based discrimination, VAW, polygamy, child marriage, *Jari* practice, alcohol, and gambling. Similarly, quick justice to victims of violence by the parallel courts (also known as kangaroo courts) run by CPN-M peoples' government as 'People's Court' in their strongholds attracted women to join the armed conflict. The interviews revealed that Indigenous and Dalit women joined the movement of their own accord to liberate themselves from the class, caste, gender, and economic oppressions that are a part of Nepalese culture. One informant, (Interviewee 2), shared that women from the upper caste joined the armed conflict to liberate themselves from conservative and inhumane social practices that prevail in Nepali society, which is reinforced by Hindu religion.

Many interviewees argued that the CPN-M adopted strategic propaganda and persuasion tactics to recruit women, and for which they mobilized major resources. They were successful in convincing and/or indoctrinating women that the armed-struggle is

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[10] *Chhaupadi* is a social tradition in the western part of Nepal, which prohibits a woman from participating in normal family activities during a month cycle and post-partum because they are considered impure as per the Hindu religious value.

[11] *Jari* is a *de facto* divorce in Nepali tradition prevent in some parts of Nepal, where a man elopes with a woman who is someone else's wife. The new husband has to pay financial compensation to the first husband for taking his wife.

indispensable for social transformation that provides dignified social status to women. They capitalized on the grievances of women by visiting them regularly, and convincing them to join armed conflict (Interviewee 6). The CPN-M mobilized political-cultural teams with skilled motivators who traveled extensively to rural areas and were able to attract large number of young women to their movement. Their cultural teams were well trained to educate rural people about their ideology and to convince them to join the armed-struggle. Similarly, the CPN-M adopted other propaganda tactics such as mass meetings, cultural campaigns, poster campaign, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and holding political classes. Interview 10 said:

Maoist's leaders and cadres went to villages and interacted with young girls and boys every day. They primarily persuaded the young people to join the Maoist movement. They said that they will provide them job and economic incentives along with certain level of political power. In many cases, Maoists also coerced the young people to join their movement threatening that if they do not join, they will invite trouble in the future.

Seven interviewees stated that many women were forced to join the armed-conflict because of a forced recruitment strategy and tactics of coercion and threat adopted by CPN-M. The forceful recruitment policy was introduced primarily in their strongholds, where they asked every family to send at least one person to their armed-group. Many parents sent their girl child to the armed group of CPN-M, as they were considered less valuable than boys in Nepali society. Interviewee 2 argued that the CPN-M used tactics of abduction, where they abducted entire classes or schools of children, to

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forcefully recruit them. Those children were usually taken to remote areas, where they were indoctrinated and then released. Such intense indoctrination convinced some young girls of their ideology and they were subsequently motivated to join the rebellion.

On the other hand, three interviewees believed that the women joined the movement as a survival strategy in order to escape brutality of government security forces in the form of arrests, torture and false allegations. Many women joined the CPN-M to protect their families from possible harassment and threats likely to take place if the family denied support to the CPN-M armed movement.

Interviewees in my study revealed that CPN-M was paradoxical in terms of its commitment and implementations of the gender equality agenda, and therefore expressed both positive and negative views. Interviewee 8 argued that there was no gender hierarchy in the CPN-M military structure and women were given equal space and opportunities as men in all areas, including political party, military and sister organizations such as student organizations, women's organizations, farmer's organizations, and trade unions. Women were promoted up to the level of vice-commander and commissar in the CPN-M military; they were trained with skills of war so that they could fight valiantly on an equal footing with men wielding their weapons in the battlefield.

Some interviewees argued that gender equality was just rhetoric, not reality, and the CPN-M did not practice it within their own political and military structure. For instance, women were absent in the higher ranks, and in decision-making positions in the party structure. The gendered roles that were visible in other social institutions were

visible in CPN-M political institutions and equality between men and women was never

achieved in the CPN-M leadership structures (Interviewee 4). They further claimed that

the CPN-M military exhibited sexist structures in the division of labor; there were no

single female commanders that headed the divisions of the CPN-M military. Similarly, a

few interviewees argued there was no gender equality in roles in CPN-M since women

continued to do reproductive roles that they had been doing before the armed conflict at

the household level (e.g., nursing injured, cooking, cleaning, carrying food for male

combatants, porter, mending clothes, singing and dancing, taking care of children, and

collecting donations).

Some interviewees stated that the agenda of gender equality forwarded by CPN-M

was not their innovation; in fact, women have been struggling historically to ensure their

rights, and to promote gender equality agenda. For example, their demand for women's

equal right to parental property was a very old and important demand of Nepali women.

They further elaborated that women and women's organizations have been struggling to

ensure property rights historically. In the same way, the anti-alcohol campaign was not

pioneered by CPN-M; in fact women groups, particularly the *Ama Samuha* (Mothers'

Groups) had started anti-alcohol campaigns before the onset of the armed conflict in

many rural areas of the country.

6.2 Women's role at the household level during the armed conflict

My research suggested that armed conflict forced women to perform

unconventional roles and increased the existing roles of women at the household level.

Women performed some unconventional roles due to the death, disappearance, disability,

displacement and out-migration of men during the armed conflict. Secondary data collected from the transitional justice archive revealed that married men suffered the most in terms of death, disappearance, injuries or displacement. The killing and disappearance of men resulted in the large number of single female survivors (e.g., war-widows or half widows[12]) automatically increasing household responsibilities of women as they became *de jure* and *de facto* head of households[13].

Two interviewees said that women not only became the breadwinner for the family but also the protector of the family, particularly of children, elderly and the injured. Single women were compelled to come forward to negotiate the safety of their families with both the CPN-M and government security forces, who often targeted families for supporting their rivals. Women also negotiated to prevent their children going in the CPN-M military forces. Even in families with male members, women took the responsibility for dealing with the government security forces and the CPN-M combatants because they were less vulnerable to the hostile treatment of belligerents. Whenever, CPN-M cadres and government security forces visited rural areas they coerced rural women into providing food and shelter to them, which made possible for rural women to engage in social interaction with them. For the safety of their family and to avoid potential violence from warring parties, women started negotiating with them while providing food and shelter to them.

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[12] Half-widow is a woman whose husband is missing but not known to be dead.

[13] *De jure* head of household is considered to be the permanent head of a particular household, for e.g. widows run the household. *De facto* head of household refers to a head of a household who is temporarily taking care of the household i.e. acting as a head in absence of the actual head of the household, for e.g. household headed by wives of displaced men.

My research also suggested that armed conflict increased the level of on-going agricultural responsibilities of women at the household level primarily due to the absence of men. Eight interviewees responded that women were compelled to take up all agricultural responsibilities, including decisions regarding crop production and livestock management, and economic responsibilities such as marketing of agricultural inputs and outputs of the households. In addition, women were also responsible to carry out all the agricultural activities on the farmland (e.g., land preparation, planting, weeding, irrigating and harvesting) and caring for livestock (e.g., milking, feeding and cleaning sheds). Interviewee 1 said, "I know a war-widow of a policeman, who was killed by the Maoist. After her husband's death she has taken all the responsibilities of the house, including buying agricultural products, cultivating the land, and selling the food-grains in the market".

Women generally played a supportive role in these types of activities in peacetime. The increased responsibility that fell upon the shoulders of women changed the nature of their role in the households. Women who were previously performing only reproductive roles were forced to perform productive roles. Trespassing on the gender stereotypical boundaries of agricultural labor, which hitherto allowed women to fulfill specific roles, some women added the roles that were previously carried out by men. They even started performing traditionally forbidden economic roles such as roofing houses and ploughing fields, and religious and cultural practices such as attending funerals and performing certain

types of death rituals.

Seven interviewees said that women took up these new roles out of necessity, and not out of social change brought by the armed conflict. According to interviewee 2, poverty and necessity compelled women to be creative. For example, in Rolpa district, the hardest conflict-hit and CPN-M stronghold district, women developed a single-yoked plough (as opposed to normally practiced two oxen plough), which could be draught-pulled by a single ox[14] as it was easier for women to keep and feed one ox instead of two. Interviewee 3, however, argued that such practices were not welcomed by the society in general as the stereotypical gender roles did not change at the societal level.

My research suggested that the decision-making power of women related to agricultural activities as well as household decisions increased, albeit temporarily, during the armed conflict. All the interviewees opined that women were able to make agricultural decisions (e.g., selection of crops, selection of farm implements, selling grains and livestock products, mobilizing income, and buying livestock), and family decisions (e.g., education and health of their children and other family members). However, the decision-making power of women varied on the basis of several factors including competency, freedom, state laws and policies, societal norms and beliefs, social status and religion. One informant stated that women lacked knowledge, skill and confidence to make decisions single-handedly in the absence of men. Similarly, discriminatory state policy became a barrier to women's decision-making roles. For instance, women were not able to confer citizenship to their children independently of

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[14] Two oxen drawn plough with a wooden yoke is common in Nepal

men, which hindered their children's access to higher education. The interviews revealed that women from indigenous groups, who are mostly Buddhist or Animist, exercise greater socio-cultural freedom within their households than high caste Hindu women. Social taboos related to widowhood in Hindu culture (i.e., widows are believed to bring misfortune) discouraged many women from exercising their economic roles within the family.

Similarly, women's decision-making power at the household level also varied based on whether they were *de jure* or *de facto* heads of household. Women's decision-making power generally increased when they become the *de jure* head of household, which is not true in the case of *de facto* head of household. Another informant argued that women took household level decision-making and the masculine role for the short-term, until such time as their sons were ready to take the responsibilities. Once the son was ready to take up the roles and responsibilities of households, the women would be pushed back into their traditional reproductive roles. Along this line, a third interviewee said that there was not much change to the traditional decision-making power of women in an extended family and/or where the women became *de facto* heads of household. Interviewee 1 shared that

> There is a war-widow in my neighborhood, who lost her husband after
> three years of marriage. I noticed there is no change in her decision-
> making role in the house. This is particularly due to her extended family
> where she was limited to perform household chores. She was not allowed
> to go to district headquarters to take the compensation given by the

government alone.

Women in extended families primarily relied on male members' decisions regarding agriculture and other household matters, particularly those having financial implications. An informant stated that in a *de facto* female headed household, women possessed authority to make only some minor decisions, such as which grain to be consumed and which to set aside for selling. However, women had limited decision-making power in financial matters, particularly with buying and/or selling land, house and agricultural products, and taking loans from financial institutions (e.g., banks, saving-credit cooperatives). They cannot practically and/or often legally decide without consultation with, and consent from, a man. Interviewee 4 shared a case of man-dominated decision making in de facto female headed household, where a woman was entirely dependent on her husband for making decisions related to financial matters.

> A man, the head of household of a family, of Dhading, which was CPN-M affected district, went to India to escape the armed conflict and work that generated the livelihood for his family. The family had an adult male goat, which was considered as a good source of income for his family. His wife raised that goat and wanted to sell it to get money for household expenses. Though she was de facto head of household, she was not able to practically make the decision without her husband's consent and therefore she phoned several times to convince him. As a result, she had to spend almost half of the selling price of that goat to pay phone bills.

6.3 Women's role in community activities during the armed conflict

My research revealed that the roles of women in the public sphere particularly in

community activities have been ambiguous; they increased or decreased depending on the situation. The majority of interviewees opined that economic and political hardship induced by armed conflict necessitated that women come out from the house to the public sphere at a community level. They stated that in the absence or with a shortage of men in the village, women were compelled to come out from the house to participate in various community level development activities, including forest management, irrigation canal construction, drinking water supply, community school management, and saving-credit management. Engagement in such activities was necessary for them to support their subsistence livelihoods.

The interviewees further emphasized that vulnerability brought by the armed conflict forced women to be organized, united and to work collaboratively for the survival and protection of not only their families but also of their community. This situation in conjunction with different participatory development initiatives encouraged women to participate collectively in implementing community level development initiatives. Interviewee 5 said:

As many men who took the leadership role in different community development activities were displaced because they were threatened by the Maoist to stop their work or were asked donations forcefully. As a result, community development activities such as community forest management were managed by women during the armed conflict.

Gradually, women gained new skills to deal with political leaders and government officials and started taking responsibilities of decision-making and leadership in

community-level development initiatives. Many women, who never attended community meetings before the armed conflict, took the lead official position such as Executive Committee member in such institutions that implement such development initiatives. Many women were elected in the local election held in 1997 particularly in the conflict-hit villages.

Interviewee 2 stated that the village women had to deal with government officials at the district headquarters to get different services such as making citizenship cards, receiving health services, accessing agriculture and livestock input, getting budget for small-scale infrastructure developments in the village, and receiving technical and administrative services for forest management. Travelling to district headquarters for such services was necessary as the local governance mechanisms (e.g., local development councils, and village and district development committees) in rural areas were absent due to the inability of the government to hold local elections. The village level offices of different line agencies were often destroyed by CPN-M combatants. In addition, women were compelled to play unconventional cultural roles including religious rituals (e.g., attending funerals, participating in death rituals) that were traditionally prohibited to them in Nepali society.

However, not all informants had seen such expansion in women's role. On the contrary, several interviewees noted that women were restricted to household work or not allowed to take decision-making role in community level development activities. For instance, two interviewees suggested that there was not much change in the traditional roles of women at the community level during the armed conflict period as they were

mostly confined to their homes. Interviewee 4 said:

> Our society normally restricts women to go outside and take responsibility
> of community development activities due to orthodox religious and cultural
> practices, low level of security, low level of education and capacity. I have
> noticed that women's role in community level decision making has been
> severely limited in the community development activities (e.g., community
> forestry meetings, saving-credit cooperatives) in rural villages during the
> conflict period. Women were also worried about their own safety and
> security so they could not do much for the community development in the
> villages.

Due to the absence of government security support at the village level, women felt
higher security risks for both physical life (e.g., sexual assault) and property (e.g., theft of
jewelry) and therefore limited their mobility outside home for common social and
economic activities. For example, women reduced their work hours outside the home
(e.g., farm, village) so as to stay safe at home. The destruction of social capital, network
and infrastructure by armed conflict created distrust among community members
resulting into limited sharing of ideas, opinions and perspectives in the community.

Women were not able to get organized during the conflict period due to fear,
terror and insecurity. Interviewee 4 stated that both CPN-M combatants and the
government security forces created a certain level of terror to demonstrate their
dominance in the villages, and therefore, women were very scared to engage in
community development activities. In many conflict-affected villages, both the warring

parties imposed restrictions for conducting meeting and mass gathering in the village. Villagers were required to have prior permission from both warring parties informally. Ironically local people, who engaged in getting permission with both warring parties, were normally suspected as spies of other parties and therefore became more vulnerable from a security point of view. In such situations, women generally were not interested and competent enough to organize community development activities.

Interviewee 3 argued that the armed conflict neither contributed nor restricted much in enhancing women's engagement at the community level. The community development activities were primarily dominated by patriarchal values and practices as a result of which women's roles were either dominated or show cased. Interviewee 3 shared a case of marginalization of women's role in community development.

> As a project monitoring and evaluation team member, I monitor a drinking water scheme managed by a female-only user group. I found that all 11 members in the Executive Committee were women from the establishment of the project. The project was implemented for more than 16 years. I observed the meeting and noticed that men dominated the committee meeting and made all the decisions. The female-only user committee was made to show to the government agencies and donors so as to get their attention for further support – financially, technically and politically.

6.4 Women's role in peacebuilding at the community level

My research suggested that women played a crucial role in building peace at the community level during the armed conflict period. Five interviewees stated that women

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maintained domestic peace by performing multiple tasks both inside and outside the house, and saved the family from disintegration. Particularly, those women who were left alone in the village, individually and collectively worked to build peace in the family and the community, respectively. Three interviewees said that women contributed to peace through their association with civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and other social institutions (e.g., community forestry user groups, community irrigation groups, community water user groups) that were present in the village. When women participated in such meetings, they kept the security situation in the village as one of the main agenda items. Consequently, they used to create strategic plans to deal with government security forces and CPN-M combatants who usually visited the village during the day and terrorize villagers by night. Women played a crucial role in community-based service delivery, and conflict prevention at the community level. For instance, women intensified their affiliation with CBOs like *Aama Samuha* (Mother's Group), which contributed significantly in community-level conflict prevention through different activities such as banning alcohol and gambling in the village, mediating conflicts, carrying out infrastructure development and organizing cultural activities. Interviewee 3 shared how a CBO was able to mediate a dispute between the CPN-M and the local community.

> A man in a family in Dang district was serving in the Nepal Police. The CPN-M pressurized the family to convince the policeman to quit his job and join their party. The CPN-M threatened the family. However, the policeman refused to quit his job because of his low economic status. The CPN-M abducted policeman and

kept in their party's bonded labor camp. For the release of the policeman, women

played a crucial role in negotiating with the CPN-M by mobilizing the social

capital of one of the women-led CBOs in that area, which had good reputation for

its service delivery. Recognizing the collective efforts made by women to protect

the policeman, CPN-M signed an agreement with the women's group. As per the

agreement, the policeman was released and was not required to quit his job;

however, CPN-M demanded two commitments from the women. First, the CBO

was asked to maintain transparency in their financial transactions, and other

activities with CPN-M; and second, the women were asked to cooperate with

CPN-M combatants and party cadres by not revealing their movement to the

government' security forces.

My research revealed that increased women's roles were sought principally but

ignored practically. Most of the interviewees indicated the ineffectiveness of LPCs that

were established after the end of the armed conflict, despite their good objectives in

taking women's contribution in peacebuilding and re-integration processes. In this line,

most of the interviewees said that LPCs have not been able to address the concerns of

female victims, due to marginalization of their voices. This was due primarily to political

reasons since female victims were also divided into two groups – a CPN-M affected

group and a government security forces affected group. Since many powerful party

cadres of different political parties were selected in the LPCs, they influenced the major

decisions as guided by higher-level decisions of their parties. This situation always

prevented women's voices, concerns and agenda from being prioritized. However, women's representation in the LPC was always sought to legitimize the LPCs decisions.

6.5 Women's role in peacebuilding at the national level

My study found that women contributed to peacebuilding at the national level during and after the armed conflict through their engagement and participation in CSOs, peace negotiations, and CA.

6.5.1 Women building peace through CSOs

Many interviewees noted that female CSO activists played an active role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention during the conflict period by facilitating public discourse and media campaigns, communicating their concerns and demands to both warring parties, and organizing peace rallies to pressure the warring sides for a peaceful solution of the armed conflict. They continuously showed solidarity with the organizations that were promoting human rights and justice in the country and beyond such as the UN and the EU. Interviewee said:

> Many women's organization such as Women's Rehabilitation Center,
> Jagaran Nepal and Sancharica Samuha played active roles during the
> conflict period. They were effectively bringing the voices and concerns of
> rural, conflict-affected women at the national level. They also help
> facilitate women's human rights networks at local and national level to
> advocate for the rights of conflict-affected women.

Women also played a crucial role in internationalizing the issues and concerns of conflict survivors, women, and the entire community thereby creating international

pressure to settle the conflict peacefully. Many women presented papers and ideas in international meetings and conferences as an attempt to draw the attention of the international community to resolve the problems. Several national and regional workshops, trainings and awareness raising activities were conducted by women-led CSOs to create mass awareness about human rights, including political, civil, cultural, social, economic rights of all. However, special attention was given to the rights of vulnerable populations such as women, children, elderly, indigenous communities, and marginalized people.

The efforts of women through CSO initiatives were full of challenges. For instance, interviewee 3 questioned the legitimacy and credibility of CSOs as there was no clear demarcation between members of civil society and political parties; and almost all CSOs were dependent on donor funding. Also, some of the CSOs were in media scandals for their lack of transparency, corruption and political bias. There was lack of coherence in CSOs' stands at the national level and work carried out at the grassroots levels. Most CSOs focused their activities in easily accessible regions ignoring the support needed in remotely located rural villages. Similarly, interviewee 10 said that the CSOs could not carry out many of their activities during the conflict period due to strict rules introduced by the Government for operations of CSOs that virtually curtailed their roles. It was made mandatory for CSOs to have prior consent from the government before organizing programs. Also, many I/NGOs discontinued their support in conflict-affected areas due to fear and extortion from CPN-M. CPN-M threatened some of the organizations supported by the US government and stopped their work. For instance, the US Peace Corps

volunteer program presence was suspended for many years during and after the armed

conflict in Nepal. The program returned to Nepal in 2012.

6.5.2 Women building peace through political negotiation

It was revealed that women continuously contribute to political processes that

shape the overall peacebuilding process. All interviewees stated that the role played by

women in the nationwide political movement, "People's Movement II" in April 2006,

was highly appreciated and recognized. Interviewee shared:

A civil society activist, Chhaya Devi Parajuli, actively participated in

democratic and anti-monarchy protests and shouted the slogans for liberty

and democracy in the People's Movement II despite her old age (80 years).

Her participation in the movement became legendary and inspired many

young men and women to participate in the democratic movement.

Women at the national level from different sectors and disciplines worked

together to inform political leaders, high-level administrators, and security officials.

During and after the armed conflict, they formed different types of issue-based networks

and alliances to advance issues and concerns about women, armed conflict and

peacebuilding.

My research also revealed that women were marginalized in the peace process.

The majority of the interviewees stated that there was a lack of political will on the part

of political parties to engage women in the formal peace negotiation processes at the

national level. For instance, women were not given opportunity to be engaged in the CPA

and various other agreements that were signed at the highest political level relating to

different components of the peace process such as constitution drafting, re-integration of

former combatants, and state restructuring. They also noted that men mostly exercised

political power of decision-making, considering women as mere beneficiaries, rather than

decision-makers capable of creating changes. Even female combatants who fought

bravely during the armed conflict were excluded in peace negotiation processes,

particularly in the rehabilitation and integration process. Interviewee 2 added that women

themselves were hesitant to participate in higher-level peacebuilding and conflict

transformation negotiations processes, primarily due to low self-confidence, which

resulted from lack of education, knowledge, skill, and motivation.

6.5.3 Women building peace through CA process

My research suggests that the CA elections held in 2008 and 2013 after the end of

the armed conflict heralded a new era of gender inclusive politics in Nepal. Secondary

data showed that a large number of women had an opportunity to play an active role not

only in the immediate peacebuilding process but also in political processes that shaped

the sustenance of peace by participating in the CA. The majority of interviewees said that

women created a caucus, a cross-party alliance of 197 female CA members from 19

political parties, to promote women's human rights in the CA to make their role effective

and influential in the constitution making process. Through the caucus, female CA

members not only advocated for the proportional inclusive representation of women in

the state governance mechanism, but also lobbied for equality in granting citizenship

rights to their children and the right to inherit property. They also pressured the political

parties and government to address socio-cultural issues related to women, which were

not taken seriously into account before. Examples of this include such things as the dowry system and *kamalari*[15] traditions. In addition, they also played an active role for minimum and equal wage policy and preferential rights for women over natural resources.

Some of the interviewees opined that addressing women's issues at the constitutional level would contribute to minimizing structural inequalities prevalent in Nepalese society in the long run so as to make the peace sustainable. It is revealed from the recently promulgated constitution that women were able to make some exclusively women-friendly provisions in the constitution such as that 33 percent of members of parliament should be women; at least 50 percent of state's constitutional positions should be filled by women (e.g., president/vice-president, speaker/vice-speaker, chair of constitutional commissions), and that daughter share equal rights to son with regard to parental property. The National Women's Commission was constituted as a constitutional body to make sure that these constitutional provisions are implemented effectively.

Two CA elections were held in 2008 and 2013 as per the mandate of the CPA that included a mixed electoral system – a combination of first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) (i.e., nominated by political parties and council of ministers). The mixed electoral system disposes of have 601 seats - 240 from FPTP and 361 from PR (335 from political parties and 26 from the cabinet) (Table 7).

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[15] The *kamalari* is child slavery practiced in Nepal, where rural families who cannot pay rent sell young girls to landlords. The phenomenon is especially prevalent in the mid-western region of Nepal. Though law prevents slavery, the sale and use of *kamalari* is still a widespread practice in the country.

Table 7. Number of members elected in the first and second Constituent Assemblies

Political parties	First CA members 2008									Second CA members 2013								
	Men			Women			Total			Men			Women			Total		
	FPTP	PR	Total	FPTP	PR	Total	FPTP	PR	Total	FPTP	PR	Total	FPTP	PR	Total	FPTP	PR	Total
CPN-M	96	56	152	24	53	77	120	109	229	25	27	52	1	27	28	26	54	80
Others	114	138	252	6	114	120	120	252	372	205	182	387	9	125	134	214	307	521
Total	210	194	404	30	167	197	240	361	601	230	209	439	10	152	162	240	361	601

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008; Legislature Parliament of Nepal, 2015.

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It was revealed from the CA databases that proportional representation in the CA was effective in bringing female representatives from different political parties. While the proportion of female CA members is not only much less but also decreased from first to second CA elections in the FPTP system, the PR system was effective at maintaining the constitutional provisions requiring one-third female CA members.

6.5.3.1 Women in the first Constituent Assembly

A total 197 (32. 8%) women were elected, out of which 30 (15.23%) were elected from FPTP, and 167 (84.77%) were elected by political parties through PR system. Out of 197 women, 77 (39.09%) were from CPN-M and 120 (60.91%) women from other political parties. While the CPN-M was able to send 77 (33.62 %) women out of 229 CA members from the party, other parties were able to send 120 (32. 26%) women out of 372 CA members from the parties, indicating all parties followed the agreement to send one-third female CA members. Additionally some other important political positions, including Vice Chair of the CA, head of seven different legislature and constitutional committees were assigned to women.

6.5.3.2 Women in the second Constituent Assembly

A total 162 (27. 0%) women were elected out of which 10 (6.2%) were elected from FPTP, 152 (93.2%) were elected by political parties through PR system. Out of 162 women, 28 (17.3%) were from CPN-M and 134 (82.7%) women were from other political parties. While the CPN-M was able to send 28 (35.0%) women out of 80 CA members from the party, other parties were able to send 134 (25.8%) women out of 521 CA members from the parties, indicating only CPN-M followed the agreement to send

one-third female CA members. Again, some other important political positions, including Vice Chair of the CA, head of seven different legislature and constitutional committees were assigned to women.

My research revealed that female CA members faced a range of challenges. The majority of interviewees stated that female CA members had to challenge patriarchal values and perspectives deeply seated in the mindset of many political leaders including both male and female CA members. Similarly, their limited capacity in understanding women's issues in the broader context of human rights, and cultural superstitions hindered their influence. Though they formed the caucus, they were not effective to bring the issue of women collectively to the forefront in the discussion due partly to their different and often conflicting political ideologies, backgrounds (e.g., based on caste, class, ethnicity, geography, and language).

6.6 Economic implications of the armed conflict for women

My research indicated that armed conflict affected the economic agency of women directly and/or indirectly. However, impact varied depending on the circumstances of the family. Almost all interviewees opined that armed conflict had a direct negative impact on women's lives, including health, education, food security and livelihood, albeit the economic impacts were disproportionate due to existence of oppressive gender relations and heterogeneous social groups based on caste, ethnicity, economic class, and wellbeing status. However, the most severe impacts that completely disturbed the pattern of livelihood were in those families where the sole earner husband was killed, disappeared, or displaced. Since the armed conflict destroyed social and physical infrastructure that

support family livelihoods, women lost their means of livelihood such as crops, livestock, poultry, home and farmland.

My research also indicated that women's employment opportunities reduced drastically in the conflict-affected areas. Interviewee 2 opined that CPN-M forcefully collected "taxes" and/or "donations" from different organizations, families and individuals in the rural areas. Those taxes or donations could be in cash or in kind. Locally operating CBOs, national CSOs and development projects funded by the government or donors could not work effectively because of the forceful tax or donations collection or extortion of money by the CPN-M. The government services delivery mechanism was also stopped significantly due to security threats by CPN-M. Ultimately, many outside supports in the rural areas ceased, which hampered not only community development but also reduced the employment opportunities for the local people resulting in economic hardship. Since women's mobility outside the home for employment was limited to the local area, generally that limited their employment opportunities. Interviewee 5 said the armed conflict exacerbated the unemployment rates in rural areas. He said, "The armed conflict had negative economic impact on already poor and marginalized peasants who worked for elites or landlords in rural areas. As most of the rural elites or landlords were displaced due to personal threats of the CPN-M, they kept their land barren resulting in the loss of employment opportunity for the poor and marginalized".

Female-headed households faced many challenges in performing productive work effectively due to the lack of access to land, knowledge, skills, credit, and agricultural

inputs (e.g., implements, labor, seeds, and fertilizers). Their access to forest resources, which is indispensable to fulfill their demand of energy, fodder and leaf litter, was also limited due to the poor security situation. This situation hindered them from maintaining the productivity of their land and therefore their only source of income, crop production, dropped. Women were overburdened to carry out both household chores and productive roles singlehandedly. While the increased workload of women affected their health, their children's education was also negatively affected. Also, the majority of interviewees stated the women were forced to provide food for the CPN-M combatants, either from her home or borrowed from others, resulting in further economic hardship for them. Interviewee 3 shared a case of reduced productivity of agricultural land:

> I was part of a research team assessing the impact of conflict on the livelihood of agriculture dependent rural families in Gulmi, a conflict-affected district. My assessment team drew few conclusions from the research. First, the conflict had a negative impact on the income level of family because most of the farmland remained uncultivated due to the lack of agricultural labor. Second, the productivity of land reduced substantially in families that were able to cultivate their farmland, due to limited supply of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, and seeds. Third, in families where women came forward to manage their farmland with the support of their children, education both in quality and/or access was negatively affected.

Many interviewees noted that war-widows and half-widows faced challenges in legally accessing their family property – either ancestral or earned by their deceased

husbands. This was particularly due to entrenched social attitudes, which prevented

women from taking possession of family property, including land. Widows in some

extended families faced violence from their family members while claiming property

rights. Half-widows faced legal and administrative challenges in claiming the property of

their disappeared husband, due to the difficulties in producing a death certificate. Also,

some women faced difficulty in securing compensation provided by the government,

which was deceitfully taken by other family members and/or middlemen.

My research revealed that displaced families faced many kinds of economic

hardships. All interviewees agreed that displaced families completely lost their means of

livelihood, particularly their agricultural land, and therefore became fully dependent on

daily wage labor for their survival. In the absence of required social capital and adequate

safety nets (at family and community levels), due to social fragmentation and disruptions

of homes, it was challenging for women to meet their daily livelihood needs. Women

lacked the skills necessary to start new/different work after their displacement in

new/host areas. Interviewee 3 shared a case of a challenge faced by displaced families in

mid-western region:

> A large number of farming women from Rukum and Rolpa, highly conflict-
>
> affected districts, whose husbands were either serving in the Indian or British
>
> Army, were forced to leave their villages, where they had land, house, and other
>
> physical assets, due to frequent armed fights between the CPN-M combatants and
>
> the government security forces. They migrated to my district, Dang, leaving
>
> behind their home and land. In the host place, those women had to start

everything afresh. Since they did not have land there, they settled in unused public lands close to the forests. To survive in the new area, they started alternative livelihood activities, including small shops, for which they were under-equipped and untrained, and therefore, they were not able to generate sufficient income to support their families.

My research revealed that some women were able to generate income for their family by engaging in income generation activities. A couple of interviewees provided evidence to support this finding. Interviewee 6 said that women who were not able to manage their farmlands started doing off-farm income generation activities such as tailoring and carpet making, and they were able to earn as much income as from their farmlands. The confidence of the women was boosted and they are able to generate income from multiple sources. A case of women's economic empowerment is discussed in Box 7. Interviewee 7 further opined that female-headed households were likely to be less constrained by patriarchal authority at the household level, and they may experience greater self-esteem, personal freedom, flexibility in taking paid-work, and control over finances. Interviewee 6 shared a case of empowerment of women during the conflict period:

> While conducting a case study in Banke, a conflict-affected district, during the conflict period, I met groups of war-widows and half-widows. After the death or disappearance of their husbands, those women organized as a farmer-group with the support of a CBO. Gradually, they increased the economic productivity of their farmlands by starting cultivation of cash crops such as vegetables at a

commercial scale. As the market was accessible to them, they were able to

improve their financial situations within few years.

Interviewee 1 opined that the armed conflict did not impact already economically

vulnerable rural women such as landless freed[16] bonded laborers, Dalit, Indigenous

communities, and other economically marginalized social groups because they did not

have anything to lose. Rather, such groups of women were able to get some support from

the CPN-M campaign which promoted the idea "land to the tiller". Also, CPN-M

provided labor support to small-landholder households headed by widows, especially for

those women whose husbands were killed by the government security forces. At times,

CPN-M also supported such economically vulnerable groups of women by collecting

taxes or donations from rich farmers and landlords.

6.7 Political implications of the armed conflict for women

My research suggested that there were both positive and negative political

implications of armed conflict on women. Surprisingly, the positive implications

outweigh the negative. All interviewees stated that that the armed conflict helped in

promoting political participation of women in development initiatives, and governance

mechanisms at various levels. They further opined that awareness and confidence levels

of women increased substantially. Women were empowered to raise their voices, more

aware of politics, laws, and national and international mechanisms of human rights,

participated in educational and employment opportunities, and participated in politics and

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[16] Bonded labor was prevalent in Nepal due to unequal agrarian relations. The government of Nepal declared bonded labor illegal by passing an Act in 2001. However, these freed bonded laborers continue to be landless.

CSOs actively. Furthermore, women were more aware of their rights and responsibilities. In many instances, by speaking out and by being aware of their rights, they were able to challenge patriarchal superstitions, social taboos, and cultural practices that encouraged women to be coy, docile, shy, and fearful. Interviewee 2 said the conflict brought positive change in the society through an enormous increase in awareness. He further said that the armed conflict made women more mature in political decision-making. Interviewee 2 shared a case of mature politics of women as voters:

> During the first CA elections, a large numbers of women voted for the CPN-M to bring them into the mainstream politics. They voted the CPN-M not because they were impressed by, or they had access to, CPN-M, but to give them the chance to be a party more accountable and responsible to the nation and the people. Consequently CPN-M became the single largest political party in the first CA, and was mainstreamed into national politics. However, after observing the political activities of CPN-M for a few years, women identified their shortcomings as a responsible and accountable political party. Women realized that not only did the CPN-M fail to translate their commitment into reality, but also exhibited the same weaknesses as other political parties in the past including corruption, insecurity, impunity, poor governance, ineffective service delivery, and lack of capacity. In the second CA elections, women decided to turn away from CPN-M, this resulted in CPN-M being demoted to the third largest party.

My research suggested that the political roles and responsibilities of women in the post-conflict period expanded widely, which impacted the lives of Nepali women in

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many ways. Many interviews revealed that the political lives of women in Nepal have

changed considerably in the last 15 years, which can partially be attributed to CPN-M.

The armed conflict gave women the ability to exercise their political agency, including

decision-making and participating in public life. Interview 2 stated that the armed conflict

was successful in training a large number of women politically in an informal way, which

is more than what the formal sector (e.g., education institutes) could do in same period of

time. The dramatic increase of female members in the CA, including conflict survivors

and the marginalized, gave a symbolic value to all women in the country to project their

self-confidence in different sectors. Interviewee 6 shared how women from grassroots

level got an opportunity to be politically empowered:

> Women CA members, who were elected from the proportional
>
> representative system, have really developed their ability and status. Take
>
> example of CA member Shanta Chaudhary, an illiterate woman who spent
>
> several years of her life as a *kamlahari,* was able to successfully accomplish
>
> her role as the chair of a parliamentary committee that dealt with natural
>
> resource management of the country. She became a legendary figure for
>
> many women in the country that motivated them to develop their capacity,
>
> and get engaged in the political discourses.

The increased number of women's organizations (e.g., saving-credit cooperatives,

CBOs, and networks) during the armed conflict period emerged as a powerful force in

expanding women's roles in the public domain. However, some interviewees opined that

most of the political opportunities at national and district levels were grabbed by political

and economic elites.

The majority of interviewees opined that the politics of inclusion in Nepal was strongly supported by the CPN-M armed conflict. Excluded groups, including women, have now become vocal in advocating their socio-economic and political rights. Women were successful in advocating and ensuring their political rights (e.g., 33% participation in state governance and 50% in constitutional executive positions), civil rights (right to confer citizenship to their children without their husband), and economic rights (inheritance of property rights, which was conferred only to sons before) in the new Constitution of Nepal. Likewise, the Women's Commission has been made a constitutional body with a mandate to monitor, and an authority to ensure, the constitutional rights of women.

My research also suggested that there were grave violations of human rights during the armed conflict. For instance, the majority of interviewees claimed that both the warring parties violated IHL and IHRL during the armed conflict. Evidence was reported about the violation of civil and political rights of women through summary execution, torture, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killing, enforced disappearances, abduction, and sexual violence. The right to life of women was violated as many of them were killed. Similarly, women's rights to freedom of expression and assembly, and freedom of mobility were also seriously violated.

My research also revealed that there were challenges to institutionalizing the political achievements gained by women up to now. For instance, an interviewee opined that the courage, competency and valor demonstrated by women during the armed

conflict period was short-lived. This is evident from the emerging challenges in re-integration of former female combatants into the society in the post conflict period. He further said that the CPN-M taught women only to use weapons, but failed to impart other technical knowledge and skills necessary to sustain family and professional life in the post-conflict period. Former female combatants were offered two options: voluntary retirement or integration into the Nepal Army. However, many female combatants decided to choose voluntary retirement because they had children and family to take care of. The number of new mothers in the cantonments increased dramatically because many marriages were solemnized during the six years of waiting for the political process to play out. The new roles adopted by female combatants in the cantonments made them lose their confidence, and they are now facing challenges in integrating into mainstream society because of negative stereotypes against them. Also, one interviewee argued that the CPN-M did not contribute adequately to the political empowerment of women since they did not present the gender agenda in a true spirit and with good intentions. Instead, they brought up the women's agenda just to get shelter in the community and support from women, so as to establish and strengthen the foundations for their armed fight. He further suspected that the CPN-M focused on regime capture by using the tactics of oppression and suppression at the community level.

6.8 Violence against women during and after the armed conflict

My research showed that women faced many forms of violence during the armed conflict. All the interviewees said that both the government security forces and the CPN-M rebels committed grave human rights abuses, including enforced disappearance,

extrajudicial killings, torturing, beating and threatening during the armed conflict period. There were even some reported cases of sexual VAW perpetrated by male combatants against female combatants in the CPN-M military. Secondary data published by different human rights organizations also gave evidence of sexual violence against women. For instance, both the warring parties raped and sexually harassed women and girls suspected of supporting armed opposition groups (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2014); the armed conflict resulted in the death of 912 women, the disappearance of 137 women, and the abduction of 267 women by the year 2005 (INSEC, 2005); the warring parties raped 367 women and abducted and attempted to rape 1000 women in 2004 alone (Human Resource Development Center [HURDEC], 2007); the armed conflict internally displaced approximately 52,000 people, of whom more than 80 percent were women and children (HURDEC, 2007).

The majority of interviewees said that marginalized women such as poor, Dalit and indigenous women, and women from remote areas, were more vulnerable to VAW due to limited protection from their families, community and government. Economic hardship brought about by the armed conflict made many women vulnerable to trafficking. In addition, half-widows faced stigmatization in their communities for not conforming to traditional widowhood norms dictated by the Hindu religion. Two interviewees stated that a high level of frustration among men due to unemployment, destruction of social networks, disturbances of livelihood patterns, and political tensions led to increased consumption of alcohol. This underpinned VAW during and immediately after the conflict. Widows and half-widows became the prime target of sexual

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exploitations, including trafficking and prostitution.

Violence against women is manifested in many forms in Nepal including sexual violence, domestic violence, rape, trafficking, polygamy, child marriage, killing and torture. Also, there are several cultural practices, including dowry,[17] polyandry,[18] polygamy,[19] *chauupadi,* and witch-hunts,[20] that are harmful to women. The government works to prevent VAW with its state apparatus such as the Nepal Police and the judiciary. Victims/survivors report cases of VAW to the police to seek justice. Table 8 below shows VAW statistics during and after armed conflict period, including rape, attempt to rape, trafficking, abortion, polygamy, child marriage, and domestic violence as recorded by the Nepal Police.

Table 8. VAW statistics during and after the armed conflict as recorded by the Nepal Police

Period	Year	Rape	Rape attempt	Traffic king	Abortion	Polyga my	Child marriage	Domestic violence	Total
	1995-96	112	34	117	74	101	5	337	780
	1996-97	181	34	130	101	135	3	228	812
Conflict Period (1996-2006)	1997-98	41	18	110	81	96	1	432	779
	1998-99	186	33	120	89	96	5	711	1240
	1999-00	122	35	92	55	75	1	449	829
	2000-01	129	21	40	14	51	-	410	665
	2001-02	157	18	55	15	69	2	569	885
	2002-03	154	19	56	8	44	3	922	1206

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[17] Dowry is a practice of giving money, property, and special gifts to the bridegroom or his family by the father/brother at the marriage of a daughter.

[18] Polyandry is a system of marriage where a single woman shares multiple men as husbands at a time.

[19] Polygamy is a system of marriage where a single man has multiple simultaneous wives

[20] Witch-hunt is labeling a woman as a witch and abusing her for her alleged involvement in practicing witchcraft.

	2003-04	188	25	72	11	66	1	730	1093
	2004-05	195	38	97	14	65	1	939	1349
	2005-06	317	70	112	3	94	7	1100	1703
Post-conflict period (2006-2012)	2006-07	309	73	123	13	122	4	881	1525
	2007-08	391	75	139	12	170	2	968	1757
	2008-09	376	101	161	8	146	7	983	1782
	2009-10	481	151	183	12	197	3	1355	2382
	2010-11	555	156	118	13	249	12	2250	3353
	2011-12	677	245	144	28	350	19	1800	3263

Source: Nepal Police, 2015

It is evident from Table 8 that all types of average yearly VAW (except abortion) were much higher in the post-conflict period in comparison to the armed conflict period. There could be many different reasons for this. As some interviewees said, many women did not report VAW to the police, especially during the armed conflict. CPN-M discouraged rural women to report VAW cases to the police as a strategy to ignore the government structure. In rural areas, the local elected governments and the local police stations were defunct as a result of which women had to travel to the district headquarters; this made reporting violence costlier for them socially and economically. Also, as a strategy to increase the legitimacy and acceptability of armed conflict, CPN-M encouraged women to report such cases in the 'People's Court' run by their parallel government in conflict-affected districts. The 'People's Court' framed charges, investigated the cases, and gave punishment to the culprit instantly according to "conscience" and not according to law in all types of cases, including caste-based discrimination and VAW. Some people in rural areas felt that the justice provided by the

'People's Court' was more efficient in delivering justice than the government. One informant shared that beating and even killing were part of the justice system in the 'People's Courts'. Interviewee 2 shared about people's court:

> I am a student of Law, and during the conflict period I got an opportunity to visit Kailali, a district hard hit by the armed conflict, with few CPN-M cadres. They were running parallel courts called 'People's Court' in some parts of Kailali district to deal with cases of VAW, and other social issues reported to them at the community level. In comparison to government's justice mechanisms, those courts were fast in giving decisions. Once the case was reported to the CPN-M, they summoned both the perpetrator and the defendant, discussed about the case and immediately gave the verdict. The 'People's Court' was able to deliver justice to victims quickly as compared to government justice system, which is marred by corruption, and often subject to political interference.

Some interviewees opined that reduction of VAW during the conflict period was possible because most VAW is committed by men against women, and since very few men were in the village, there was less likelihood of VAW. Some opined that reduction in reporting of VAW during the armed conflict period was due to fact that survivors were scared to report because of the possible reprisal from alleged perpetrators.

One interviewee stated that the CPN-M perpetrated VAW during the armed conflict by forceful recruitment of women, including young girls. The CPN-M encouraged girls at marriageable age to go for inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages between the combatants in their military so as to ensure their loyalty to the party and

reduce defections. Also, marriage of female combatants was encouraged so that they were less suspected to be CPN-M by the government security personnel. Unmarried-young-girls were mostly suspected to be CPN-M and targeted by the government security personnel. The CPN-M violated the right of female combatants to personal freedom of marriage. Also, there are cases of failure of such forced marriages. Interviewee 8 shared how forced marriages fell apart in post-conflict period:

> During the armed conflict period, the CPN-M promoted love, inter-caste, and inter-ethnic marriages to fulfill some vested political interests as well as to break the feudal chains of caste-, class- and ethnicity-based discriminations. Many female combatants married their male counterparts. However, with the end of the conflict, many of those marriages fell apart because their families forced the woman's husband to remarry a girl chosen by them from their own caste or ethnic group. The CPN-M female combatants, who took up arms to fight social injustice, became victims of injustice and VAW after the end of the armed conflict. Even they were deprived of legal recourse because they did not have legal or social records of their marriages.

Chapter 7: Discussions and reflection

7.1 Women's role in war and peace: problematization of essentialist and

    constructionist theoretical perspectives

      The approach taken by women in war and peace cannot be simply explained either by essentialist and/or constructionist perspectives. Both perspectives fail to embrace the diversity among and between women and men, and to accurately represent their lived reality on the ground. The ability of women to wage war or peace is affected by several factors such as bodily structure, personal capability, ideology (political and religious), class, caste, ethnicity, and economic status. It is far more complex than can be explained simply through essentialist and constructionist perspectives. Women have the capability to carry out many kinds of roles, including those of fighter, peacebuilder, and nurture. However, they should be able to make deliberate and conscious decisions to engage in war or peace based on their own accord, and assessment of their own best interests, without being stereotyped as defenseless victims or being protected by men.

7.1.1 Problematization of essentialist perspectives

      Female combatants in CPN-M challenged the essentialist notion by actively participating in armed conflict as combatants both in the CPN-M military and in the government security forces. A large number of women participated in the CPN-M military as combatants and performed various roles, from common soldiers to vice-commanders. Manchanda, (2001) document that in the Somalia conflict women made up thirty-three percent of the rebel group, in Nicaragua they made up thirty to fifty percent of the rebel group, in Columbia thirty to forty five percent of the rebel group, and in Sri

Lanka they made up thirty to forty percent of the rebel group. Women performed the same military duties and responsibilities as men. They fought in the front line, demonstrating the required physical strength, courage, and warfare skills. Women were engaged in perpetrating violence against their enemies, and they supported violence committed by their male counterparts. They were engaged in killing, abduction, torturing, bomb making, and laying ambush. A female combatant Kausila Tamu was killed while laying an ambush against the security forces (Pettigrew & Shneiderman, 2004). Many female combatants displayed aggressiveness, and committed war atrocities like men. Similar findings have been documented by Mazurana, McKay, Carlson, and Kasper (2004) who reported that large numbers of women who were involved as fighters in African countries such as Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe committed atrocities against their enemies. By participating in armed conflicts in large numbers around the world, women showed that they are inherently aggressive and violent like men and that there is nothing peaceful about them.

Women challenged the normative notion of motherhood in Nepali society, which perceives women to be nurturing and caring due to their capability to give birth, and motherly instinct that is inherent in them, by participating in the CPN-M armed conflict in larger numbers. Female CPN-M combatants, who gave birth in the camps, embraced the dual roles of mother and combatant concurrently. They showered their motherly love on their child, on the other hand, they perpetrated violence against their enemy. For example, a survey conducted by the women's department of the CPN-M party showed

that more than 25 percent of their female combatants were married, and more than 50 percent of the women have had children (Aryal-Khanal, 2009; Yami, 2007).

The essentialist standpoint, which posits that biology acts as a barrier to women's capability to wage war like men, is true in certain cases and under certain circumstances. For example, though female combatants performed both the roles of mother and combatant during the armed conflict, but they were biologically not capable of going to the battlefield during their pregnancy and post-partum period in Nepal. Motherhood is not only about the birth of child but also about the mother (Knowles & Cole, 1990, p. 5). Even in the safest conditions, women may risk their lives during childbirth. Similarly, due to their biological disposition women combatants became vulnerable to rape and gender-based violence at the hands of their male counterparts or enemies during the armed conflict.

7.1.2 Problematization of constructionist perspectives

CPN-M female combatants challenged the constructionist notion that women are socialized to be aversive to war and non-aggressive. By participating in the armed conflict as combatants and committing atrocities, they demonstrated that violence is not the exclusive domain of men; women can be equally violent as men in certain circumstances. Socialization doesn't make all women peaceful and all men violent, but both women and men decide to follow the path of peace or violence on their own accord. For example, female fighters were implicated in the rape of women, including rape with objects such as guns, and in sexual crimes against men, such as cutting off their genitals in Liberia (Specht, 2006).

Nepalese women challenged the gender norms that confined them to the private sphere of the home expecting them to be coy, docile, shy, and the moral guardian of the family. A large number of women participated in the armed conflict as combatants, breadwinners, and protectors of their family as well as peacebuilders both at the community and national levels during and after the armed conflict. They trespassed their culturally defined social boundaries and became active in the public domain for the survival of their family and community. In contrast, the majority of women have participated in the public sphere during peacetime through their father or husband.

Gender socialization, however, including the deeply entrenched patriarchy in Nepali society that implanted gender inequality, acted as a barrier to women's equal participation in warfare on an equal footing with men despite the physical strength and courage demonstrated by them. Many women in the CPN-M military were relegated to traditional reproductive roles (e.g., cooking, cleaning, and nursing children and the sick in the CPN-M military camps) that they were performing before the war in the private domain, which became a barrier to their equal participation in war. Few women who actively engaged in war like men have been pushed back into the traditional gender normative roles in the aftermath of war by the society. For example, former female combatants in Nepal were not able to capitalize on valuable strengths and skills developed during combat roles in the post-conflict period. Their gender socialization became a barrier for women to retain some of the gains, such as increased courage and confidence, achieved during wartime. Women sacrificed their career option of integration into the Nepal Army during the re-integration process by accepting voluntary retirement

to take care of their children and family. Furthermore, female combatants who went for inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages, defying gender and cultural norms, are now facing new social challenges (e.g., domestic violence, social violence) because their families and the society did not accept their marriages.

7.2 Increased feminization of agriculture and poverty

The armed conflict in Nepal further exacerbated the "feminization of agriculture"[21] and poverty due to the increased number of female headed households that resulted from the killing, disappearance, disability, and displacement of men in large numbers in rural areas. This feminization of agriculture compelled women to perform both reproductive and productive work for the survival of the family, which increased their workload markedly. Also, because discriminatory social structures limited women's access to and control over productive resources and other economic and political opportunities, women were unable to manage the farmland efficiently and effectively. The increased workload and unfriendly social structures adversely impacted the productivity of farmland managed by women. The decline in productivity led to the feminization of poverty

Armed conflict forced a large number of women to participate in agriculture and the informal economy in rural areas, either as self-employed farmers or as agricultural wage laborers, for the survival of the family. Statistics shows that 55 to 82 percent of

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[21] The term "feminisation of agriculture" is first used by Boserup in 1970. According to Deere (2005, p. 17) feminization of agriculture is an increase in the percentage of women in the agricultural labor force relative to men, either because more women are working and/or because fewer men are working in agriculture.

women are engaged as part of the agricultural labor force (Lohani & K.C, 2001).

Similarly, 90 percent of women are involved in agriculture in Nepal (Human

Development in South Asia, 2002, p. 107). This existing high level participation of

women in agriculture led to an exacerbated feminization of the agriculture sector, which

took place in Nepal even before the onset of the armed conflict due to poverty and a lack

of employment opportunities that had resulted in the large-scale outmigration of men.

Kumar (2001b) and Gartaula, Niehof and Visser (2010) also reported similar findings. A

study by Menon and Rodgers (2011) reported that the trend of male migration increased

from 16 percent in 1996 to 26 percent in 2006, resulting in the growing incidence of

female-headed households from 7 percent to 15 percent in the armed conflict period.

The feminization of agriculture double-burdened women, as they were forced to

take up both productive and reproductive roles to sustain their families. Women started

assuming roles that were earlier carried out by men such as ploughing fields, roofing

houses, and preparing land for cultivation (Ghale, 2010). However, due to lack of

financial resources and access to market, female-headed households often lacked

resources to purchase seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers, and to hire laborer. Also, lack of

access to property limited opportunities for female-headed households to obtain loans and

credit from banks, which usually require collateral. As per CBS (2011), only 19.71

percent of households (26.77 and 18.02% in urban and rural areas, respectively) reported

the ownership of fixed assets, particularly land or house or both, in the name of a female

member of the household. Lack of access to resources (e.g., reduction in agricultural

inputs) and destruction of social networks adversely affected the agriculture dependent

female-headed households and resulted in a decline in production, income, employment opportunities, food, services, and access to natural resources (Adhikari, 2010). Also, in cases of households in which the husband was displaced, women lacked decision-making power, despite taking most of the agricultural responsibilities of the households. Furthermore, deeply entrenched social and cultural values that stigmatize widows created obstacles for war-widows and half-widows to actively take the agricultural responsibility of the family.

The feminization of agriculture led to the "feminization of poverty"[22]. A couple of other studies also report such findings. For instance, a study by Kimnyi and Mukum-Mbaku (1995) states that female-headed households are more susceptible to poverty than male-headed households. Research carried out by Thapa and Shrestha (2003) revealed that all households headed by widows suffered economic hardship. Such households had little access to basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter, and health care, and they were compelled to have their children drop out of school. Rijal and Gartula (2012) also show that livelihood opportunities such as employment are limited in the case of female-headed households. Similarly, a study by World Food Program (2007) on food security and vulnerability analysis shows that there is a negative correlation between conflict and livelihood/food security indicators. The hurdles faced by women in gaining property rights affected their ability to generate an adequate income from farming (Sørenson, 1998).

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[22] The concept "feminization of poverty" was coined by Pearce in 1978 and its talks about gender dimension of poverty.

Female-headed households are poorer than male-headed households due to gender discrimination in access to and control over productive resources, education, heath, and other economic and political opportunities. Similar findings are also documented by other studies. For example, NPC (2003) shows that widows are more vulnerable to poverty as a result of a low level of access to productive resources, including disputes with in-laws over property. Poverty also led to the excessive work burden of the female headed households and limits access to food and nutrition, education, and other human development opportunities. Women in the female-headed households had very limited opportunities for employment in both formal and informal sectors due to gender inequality in educational opportunity (e.g., low enrollment rates and higher drop-out rates for girls). This finding is also supported by CBS (2005), which states that women comprise only 31 percent of all paid workers. Whatever limited resources women had for their livelihood were also affected by the armed conflict. A study conducted by Seddon and Hussein (2002) showed that the traditional livelihood opportunities of local poor people, including women, were affected by the armed conflict because the security personnel prohibited women and other people from entering forests to collect forest based means of livelihood (e.g., mushrooms, young sprouts of plants, medicinal herbs, non-timber forest products, firewood, etc.). This affected the income and food security of the families. Similarly, research by Adhikari (2010) revealed that the armed conflict has made the food security situation (e.g., availability, access, utilization, and stability) worse.

7.3 Ambiguous economic and political empowerment of women

The armed conflict negatively impacted the economic wellbeing of women and other development support. The socio-economic environment was not conducive to women's empowerment. However, the economic vulnerabilities brought about by the armed conflict necessitated women to develop survival strategies, coping skills, and resilience capacity to help sustain their families and communities. Women were compelled to take up new economic and political roles to support their family and the community that changed their gender roles. Women became economically and politically active, and their awareness level and participation in politics increased. The so-called 'public' and 'private gendered division of labor was not clearly delineated during the armed conflict period.

7.3.1 Economic dimension

The dwindling economy, absence of local governance mechanisms, and reducing donor's support in rural areas during the armed conflict period negatively impacted the economic wellbeing of women, and other development support. The armed conflict destroyed the fledgling economy of the country. Economic growth declined from an average of 7 percent between 1988 and 1992 to nearly zero growth till 1996, which started recovering to 2.8 percent with $386 per capita income only in 2007 (ADB, 2007 as cited in Aguirre & Pirtropaoli, 2008). The low economic growth negatively impacted development delivery and other support by the government. Furthermore, the substantial increase in military spending resulted in a cut in the government budget for basic amenities that further impacted the supply of essential commodities in rural areas. The

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local governance mechanisms were non-functional due to the inability of the government to hold local elections and provide security. Absence of local governance mechanisms negatively impacted the government's service delivery of daily essentials. The individuals and households faced severe economic insecurity, and their socio-economic rights were violated. Already limited basic human needs, such as food, water, housing, sanitation, and health facilities in rural areas worsen during the conflict period. Similarly, donors' support in the form of health assistance, food and livelihood support, and education failed to reach rural areas as they had very limited presence in rural areas. The government was unable to provide security to them. Instead, CPN-M threatened them and discounted their services.

The socio-economic environment during and after the armed conflict was not conducive to the empowerment of women. Women during armed conflict and peacetime lacked access to various capitals, including financial, social, human, physical, and natural capitals. Women lacked access to land and other natural resources due to discriminatory laws and social practices, which deprived them of ownership rights. The inability of women to produce collateral prevented them from accessing loans and credits from formal institutions. Similarly, the destruction of social infrastructures, social networks, and trust further exacerbated the economic vulnerability of women. In addition, lack of knowledge, education, skills, and training limited women's access to technical equipment, markets, human resources, and livelihood opportunities. The social structures in the forms of policies, and institutions were also not supportive of women's economic advancement.

The overall economic vulnerabilities brought by the armed conflict necessitated women to develop survival strategies, coping skills, and resilience capacity to help sustain their families and communities. Those survival strategies and coping skills allowed women to assume new economic responsibilities in both private and public domains, including some masculine economic roles that were culturally forbidden in peacetime. As a survival strategy, women resisted family pressures and broke social barriers by taking over men's work and protecting family welfare (Harcourt, Pradhan, Raman, & Kothari, 2010).

The public and private spheres and the gendered division of labor became destabilized and irrelevant during the armed conflict period. This finding is in line with Sharoni (2001) that discusses how women's role in public space transcends the public-private divide. The changes in gender roles emerged due to necessity of survival; however, women still followed social expectations as appropriate. The survival strategy, coping skills, and resilience capacity demonstrated by women during the armed conflict should not be mistaken as empowerment since it did not contribute to long-term change in their lives and gender roles (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p.120). Van-der-Wijk (1997) also reported that female-headed households adopted different strategies for the survival of their families during armed conflict in Sri Lanka and Cambodia. The changed economic roles played by women in the absence of men were short term and their sons or other male members may perform those roles once they are ready to take responsibility.

A few women who got employment opportunities in the public and private sector, political parties, CA, and CSOs; were economically empowered. However, their number

is negligible in comparison to large numbers of women who actively participated in various roles both at the community and national levels during the armed conflict. These women do not represent the entire female community in Nepal, as most of them are wives, sisters, or relatives of the male influential leaders of political parties and therefore, were able to grab opportunities by mobilizing their social capital.

7.3.2 Political dimension

My research suggests that women's political participation and political role increased, both at the community and national levels, during and after the armed conflict. This finding is in line with various studies such as Anderlini (2000), Sorenson (1998), and Tripp, Casimiro, Kwesiga, and Mungwa (2009). This finding is evident from the participation of large number of women in the CPN-M military and party structure, CSOs, People's Movement II, and the historic CA elections held in 2008 and 2013. In comparison to the political participation of women in the parliament before the armed conflict, which was never more than 6 percent before 2007,[23] a large number of women won seats in the first and second CA elections (women made up 33% of parliament in year 2008, 2013. Similarly, women also got an opportunity to participate in the constitution drafting process through their engagement in Constitution drafting Committees.

The awareness level of women has increased, particularly in rural areas. Women are now aware of their socio-economic and political rights, and possess the ability to

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[23] Women representatives occupied 5.7, 3.8 and 6.6 percent in the parliament in Nepal in 1986, 1991 and 2000, respectively and women's representation in the cabinet has generally been limited to 1-2 out of a total of 20-45 ministerial positions during that period (Acharya 2003, p. 49-50).

demand equality. The political lives of women have changed in the last few decades. Women not only have more freedom to participate in community activities, but also are confident, self-reliant, and ready to take leadership roles in both political parties and CSOs. The armed conflict and the women's movement can partially be credited for this change. The armed conflict helped to give momentum to the women's movement in Nepal. In the new Constitution of Nepal promulgated in September 2015, the civil and political rights of women are well incorporated. However, it is too early to determine the effectiveness of such provisions. The implementation of the provisions in the Constitution depends on the political will of future governments to follow the true spirit of these provisions as well as the policy and legal framework that will be in place.

I have identified several reasons for the increased political awareness and participation of women during and after the armed conflict. For instance, the gender equality agenda promoted by the women's movement in the country, enactment of laws in line with international norms and commitment to enforcing them, the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission and the National Women Commission, the gender equality agenda promoted by CPN-M through their 40 points demands to the government, the provisions of the mixed electoral system in the Interim Constitution, the provision of 33 percent participation of women in the CA that compelled many political parties to include women in their candidate list, and the increased participation of women in CPN-M both as political cadres and as combatants all helped in promoting women's participation and awareness.

The armed conflict, although it contributed to the increase in the political

participation of women, did not ensure inclusion; effective and sustainable participation of women, and empowerment of women. Fewer women in leadership positions in CPN-M reflect the low level of inclusiveness. Rather, they were relegated to caring or support positions. Women's leadership in the CPN-M Military was not fully accepted (Yami, 2007, p.7). This is in contradiction to the claim by the Center for Peace Studies (2012), which argues that women in the CPN-M military shared the same duties and responsibilities as men. Only a few female ex-combatants who were already powerful within the party got opportunities for leadership positions and other jobs after the conflict. Most female combatants who were politically active during the armed conflict period did not get equal opportunities, and are now having difficulty in re-integrating into mainstream society. Picking up guns during the conflict did not help them to be empowered in the post conflict period. They have been sidelined from the discussions on the rehabilitation and integration process of combatants. Female combatants are forced to conform to the gender *status quo* with the restoration of peace, irrespective of the nontraditional roles assumed by them during the armed conflict (Bouta, Frerks, & Bannon, 2005). Many of them felt disempowered and marginalized. The political advances and gains achieved by female combatants were unsustainable, as it was difficult for women to consolidate those gains due to marginalization of their roles in the post-conflict period.

The participation of women brought about by the introduction of a quota system was not effective and sustainable, therefore, women's rights have been limited in the constitution-making process. I have identified several reasons for this, which include

limited education and literacy capacity of women; deeply entrenched patriarchy leading

to hostility and an unreceptive attitude from some male politicians; lack of political skills,

knowledge, and experience; and pressure from their respective political parties to focus

on the various agendas of the parties.

A mere increase in the political participation of women in CA cannot be called

political empowerment. For political empowerment to take place, women should have

equitable participation (full, meaningful participation at all levels and structures both

formal and informal), and the ability to influence political decisions. Though the Interim

Constitution mandated inclusion of 33 percent women in all governance structures at all

levels, most of the structures continued to be without female participation. The political

commitment has not been fully implemented due to a deeply entrenched patriarchy that

fosters political inequality. Also, the decline in the number of female CA members in the

second CA elections is probably due to a lack of political will in political parties to

embrace the inclusion of women sincerely. Women's representation in politics does not

necessarily equate with greater decision-making on peace and security issues. Without

genuine empowerment, participation can quickly become a token exercise; and without

meaningful participation, empowerment can remain an empty, unfulfilled promise

(Cornwall & Brock, 2005).

7.4 Increase in violations of women's rights during and after the armed conflict

Despite commitments to several international human rights laws that were

applicable during the armed conflict period, both the GoN and the CPN-M failed to

comply with the international commitments. There were grave violations of the rights of

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women resulting in their suffering both physically and psychologically. Women were affected both directly and indirectly. The direct effects included killing, torture, rape, sexual violence, and maiming. The indirect consequences of the armed conflict were greater, including displacement, loss of home or property, loss of livelihood, loss of markets, family separation and disintegration, poverty, and deprivation of health and education facilities. Women also became victims of verbal and sexual violence committed by warring sides. While government security forces raped and sexually abused female combatants after arrest, while they were detained, and harassed female relatives of CPN-M suspects for providing information, CPN-M combatants raped women who did not support their party's activities (HRW, 2014). Violence against women affected the fundamental rights and freedoms of women, including rights to life, security, and liberty, and the right not to be subjected to torture. Similarly, violations of the socio-economic rights of women took place through the destruction of social and physical infrastructure, restriction of food supplies in the poorest regions, collection of arbitrary taxes, and the requisitioning of accommodations and food from community people (Pasipanodya, 2008). Destruction of social infrastructures denied women the right to work, the right to social security, the right to an adequate standard of living including food, clothing and housing, the right to physical and mental health, the right to education, and the right to protection against discrimination (UN, 1966).

There was no decrease in VAW during the armed conflict, though the CPN-M took some measures to prevent some forms of VAW. The severity of VAW committed by the warring parties during the armed conflict, including killing, abduction, rape, forced

recruitment, or enlistment of women and girls was higher than that of VAW prevented by CPN-M. Moreover, there was sexual and gender-based violence against women, which is a violation of human rights. Kumar (2000a) and UN (2002) argued that VAW increases during armed conflict because of sexual violence against women perpetrated by both the warring parties, and an increase in everyday VAW due to the breakdown of social structures. Women faced direct and indirect violence during the armed conflict: direct violence in the form of killing, abduction, disappearances, displacement, and torture, and indirect violence in the form of socio-economic, political, and psychological violence resulting from losses of family members, loss of livelihood, and loss of property and assets. Women also suffered due to forced recruitment into the CPN-M. However, Basnet (2004), Bouta et al. (2005), and UNIFEM (2006) stated that there was a decrease in domestic violence and social violence against women during the armed conflict period, particularly in CPN-M controlled areas, due to restrictions imposed by them against alcoholism, gambling, child marriage, polygamy, and other social practices that are harmful to women. Similarly, statistics of VAW maintained by the Nepal Police also showed that in comparison to the post conflict period, there were fewer cases of some forms of VAW (e.g., polygamy, trafficking, and domestic violence) during the armed conflict period. However, Nepal Police's databases might not be comprehensive due to underreporting. Moreover there are no databases of socio-cultural VAW.

The armed conflict was not able to bring a long-term positive impact in the society by changing the mental frames of people in a way that could bring changes in the lives of women by reducing VAW. This is evident from the database maintained by Nepal

Police, which shows more cases of some forms of VAW in the post conflict period (e.g.

attempted rape, trafficking, polygamy, and domestic violence). However, it is difficult to

completely deny the fact that some measures taken by CPN-M to mitigate VAW,

including a parallel justice system in their strongholds, were quick in providing justice to

victims of violence and reducing VAW. The fear of possible violent actions by the CPN-

M against perpetrators might have prevented VAW to some extent in their strongholds.

Also, many women who were engaged with the CPN-M were strong enough to fight

against VAW, and people were scared of harming women due to a fear of retaliation.

Since violence prevention measures were adopted by the CPN-M using excessive force,

coercion, and intimidation, they were not sustainable and relapsed back to the *status quo*

in the post conflict period. This is evident from the fact that there has been a rise in VAW

in the post conflict period. The change was short-lived. The armed conflict was not

successful in bringing about true gender equality in the society or in changing the mindset

of people so that they would abstain from practicing social norms and values that were

harmful to women (Lama -Tamang, Manandhar-Gurung, Swarnakar, & Rana-Magar,

2003).Ultimately the momentary decrease in VAW did not contribute to gender equality.

The increase in VAW during the post-conflict period might be due to the failure of

the government in the timely promulgation of the Constitution and a delay in

implementation of the transitional justice mechanisms. The government failed to hold the

perpetrators accountable for IHRL and IHL violations in the post-conflict period. The

victims of armed conflict are still waiting for justice. Similarly, the government has not

been able to support the female combatants who decided to take voluntary retirement.

They are facing discrimination and stigmatization, being perceived as highly sexual, as aggressive, as transgressors of traditional gender norms, and as a threat to the society because of their past engagement in armed conflict (UN INSTRAW, 2009). Likewise, the government has not been able to address the specific needs of women who have been affected by the armed conflict. For example, the Interim Relief Program established by the GoN in 2008 to provide immediate financial and in-kind assistance to victims of armed conflict has not adequately met victims' need and expectation (Center for Civilians in Conflict, 2013).

7.5 Exclusion of women from peace processes

The peace process of Nepal was deeply gendered. This is evident from the fact that women were absent from the formal peace negotiation processes at different levels. Women were glaringly absent in the historic peace negotiation (i.e., CPA) that was held between the GoN and the CPN-M, which formally ended the armed conflict. No political parties, including CPN-M, included any female representatives (although CPN-M had senior female leaders) in their peace delegations as mediators, participants, observers or signatories (Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2010). The negotiation was conducted by male-only delegations on both sides, and even CPN-M women combatants who fought bravely during the armed conflict were excluded from the entire peace process. As a result of the exclusion of women, the CPA lacked specific provisions for women (Pant Ghimire, n.d). As noted by Ian Martin (2007), the head of the UNMIN at the time, "At all the political negotiating tables I have seen in Nepal during the peace process, not once have I seen a woman at the table." Even the discussions regarding rehabilitation and

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integration of combatants did not formally include women combatants.

Despite the involvement of women informally in peacebuilding initiatives, both at the national and community levels, their voices have been marginalized in the formal peace processes, including peace negotiations and political decision- making processes. Though women's involvement in peace negotiations does not always guarantee gender-sensitive results (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ], 2014), negotiations with women's meaningful participation are more likely to be inclusive, sustainable, gender-informed, and take community needs and perspectives into consideration (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, n.d). Similarly, women were excluded and/or thinly represented in political decision-making processes, including the formation of the government, and in the re-integration and rehabilitation of former combatants in the post-conflict period.

The Local Peace Committees that have been formed in the aftermath of the armed conflict at the community level have not been effective in promoting the role of women. This is evident from the fact that among 1094 LPCs (75 districts, 1000 village development committees, and 19 municipalities), a woman led only one committee. Coordinators or LPC secretaries make most of the decisions without seeking the voice of other committee members, including women (Carter Center, 2011 & 2009). Women have not been able to exercise their agency in the LPCs because they lack political links to influence the decisions and lack knowledge about political processes and governance. Several other reasons may explain the marginalized situation of women. First, the provisions of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 that exist to promote participation of women in

peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction have not been implemented effectively by the GoN due to lack of domestic mechanisms in Nepal (e.g., the National Action Plan for Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820); and lack of proper understanding of the provisions by various stakeholders hindered meaningful participation of women in the peace processes during and after the end of armed conflict. Five years after the end of the armed conflict, in February 2011, the GoN launched the National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820. Second, at the international level, the UN is struggling to bridge the declared intent of the international human rights provisions and the reality of domestic action, where human rights provisions are most needed.

Nepal is a State party to all the human rights conventions that are relevant to ensuring women's participation in peace processes. However, the government has not been able to implement the provisions in various international documents effectively and in a true spirit. There has been difficulty in implementing provisions of the documents, including a national action plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 due to lack of adequate technical competency and resources; lack of awareness about the content of the UNSCR 1325 and 1820 at the political and decision making levels; lack of realization or internalization of the importance of women in peace processes by the politicians; a patriarchal, feudal, exclusionary socio-cultural system that gives direct benefits to political elites who dominate all of the decision making structures; (v) unhealthy competitions among women CSOs; (vi) intra-political party conflict, and groupism (UN Women, 2012b; Upreti, 2008).

7.6 Suggestions for future research

While conducting this research, I had a few realizations that lead to some suggestions for future research. These are primarily related to research themes and research methods. Although there are some published works on social discrimination faced by female-headed households during and after the armed conflict, there is an acute shortage of research and literature on the economic impact of armed conflict on female-headed households. Therefore, research on the economic impact of armed conflict on female-headed households would be useful in understanding the extent and severity of the economic impacts of armed conflict in Nepal. Such research would help policy makers and planners to formulate suitable policy and programs that aim to support not only basic needs but also the economic growth and prosperity of female-headed households. Such study will help answer the research question whether gender roles, particularly traditional masculine economic roles that women performed during the conflict period have contributed to permanent transformation of gender roles or returned to the *status quo* in the post-conflict period.

Although the armed conflict in Nepal generated political consciousness among women to an extent, only a few politically active women were able to capitalize on their knowledge in the political domain after the armed conflict. While some former female combatants have been successful in achieving higher political positions in the post-conflict period, many have been facing challenges in re-integrating into the mainstream society. There is no adequate knowledge on why these situations came into existence and what could be done to minimize such challenges. Also, an examination of how women

enjoyed opportunities and faced challenges to advancing women's rights in the

Constitution writing process and in peacebuilding is critical. Further research on this

would help understand how women will be able to sustain and practice the gains at the

constitutional and political levels in their daily lives.

As studies of the impact of armed conflict could be influenced by the political

ideology of the interviewees, there could be problems in identifying attribution of causal

impact of the armed conflict. Therefore, it is advisable to conduct a study that can infer

the causal impact of the conflict. This study could either compare before and after

conflict data or could consist of current observational data of both conflict-affected and

unaffected areas of similar kinds.

In terms of methods, I would suggest applying mixed methods to collect and

analyze data to effectively explore and examine the complex issues of armed conflict in

relation to women's political and economic agencies. As the armed conflict was

connected with historically rooted unequal and discriminatory cultural, political, social

and economic processes, much wider and more in-depth methods would help to examine

such issues effectively. Research would be more effective in reaching to the root of the

issue if it uses multiple methods and triangulates the information both during collection

and analysis. Also, it is advisable to focus the research either upon a particular group of

the conflict affected women, or upon women actively engaged in the peacebuilding

processes, taking more affected geographical areas into account. As the effect of the

conflict is widely varied throughout the country, geographical consideration is crucial. To

identify the differences in the impact among women across different social groups, I

would suggest applying a comparative approach to a future study. It is also advisable to employ in-depth interviews using a phenomenology methodological approach with the conflict-affected women to better understand the depth and severity of the impact on their economic and political lives, including VAW. Equally important is the collection and analysis of quantitative data (e.g., household income, physical assets, VAW) to see the impact of the armed conflict on women at the regional and/or national levels.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The intrastate armed conflict waged by CPN-M against GoN in Nepal was a highly intensive that affected large numbers of civilians and impacted every aspect of life, including human rights, law and order, socio-economic development, and the security situation in the country. Women bore the brunt of the armed conflict disproportionately due to multiple structural inequalities that existed historically, which were further exacerbated during the armed conflict period. Furthermore, women became susceptible to sexual violence during the armed conflict as both parties of the armed conflict targeted them due to their gender roles and social responsibilities. The negative impacts of the armed conflict on women were significant and were manifested as sexual and gender based violence, displacement, socio-economic and political rights violations, loss of family members, and loss of livelihood and other physical assets.

Despite the fact that the armed conflict broke down social and political structures, which had significant negative impacts on women, it opened economic and political space for women to exercise their agency to some extent. The breakdown of traditional customs motivated women to take up new (social, economic and political) roles, from which they were forbidden culturally – and therefore, they gained new freedom, flexibility and opportunity. Women performed both reproductive and productive roles, and met the economic and other needs of the family. They learned new skills for the survival of their family. They took charge of the community by becoming engaged in community activities and participating in local political institutions and networks to sustain the community. They protected their families by negotiating their safety with

belligerents. Though women earlier were marginally represented in political institutions, the use of affirmative action, such as quotas, proved to be an effective mechanism for accelerating women's representation in CA and in other political positions. The quota system has made political institutions more inclusive and made women more visible in a political space that was previously reserved for men.

Women were not only passive victims of armed conflict, but they played multiple and active roles as perpetrators, heads of households, political activists, political cadre, and peacebuilders during the armed conflict. Despite deeply entrenched patriarchal values, women were able to come out into the public space and participate in large numbers as combatants in CPN-M. Women's roles as combatants and peacebuilders challenged the essentialist and constructionist view on war and peace that perceives men as warriors and provides of the family, and women as victims and moral guardians of the community. Women become warriors as well as providers, and in some cases, the protector of the family, a traditionally male role. The difference between men and women clearly cannot be explained only through their biological or social differences, but is much more complex, as several other factors affect their decisions to engage in war and peace.

Women also became economically active in the absence of men, which gave them space to exercise their agency. However, such economic space was not able to economically empower them. Increased death and displacement of men resulted in the feminization of agriculture. In the absence of responsive policy and institutional mechanisms, the livelihood of the agricultural-based rural population, including women,

was adversely affected, which further led to the feminization of poverty. Women became active in politics both at the national and community levels, which led to their increased participation in the political space. However, true female empowerment and gender equality could not be achieved despite the commitment of the government to include women at various levels of governance. This is mainly because the political parties are guided by patriarchal norms and values, and the representation of women in decision-making positions in political parties came from a tokenistic perspective and this representation was not intended to foster systemic change. Furthermore, deeply entrenched patriarchal institutions and social hierarchies remain one of the main barriers preventing women from meaningful participation in decision-making. The abysmally low presence of women in peace negotiations during the conflict period, peace processes after the armed conflict, and in the state-restructuring process, is mainly due to the perpetuation of an exclusionary cultural and political attitude towards women.

The small advances in both the political and economic arenas achieved by women from joining the armed conflict as combatants as well as peacebuilders were short-lived. Though women's political participation dramatically increased in CA, their participation was not fully effective or meaningful for various reasons, including the capacity of the CA members and the patriarchal attitudes that are prevalent in all aspects of Nepali society. Similarly, changes in gender roles brought by the armed conflict did not improve the overall situation of gender equality. When the conflict moved through the transitional period, the social status of women achieved during the armed conflict period was not given due recognition. Many women combatants who felt emancipated during the armed

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conflict are now suffering from disempowerment and marginalization.

There were grave violations of IHL and IHRL due to the failure of the warring sides to comply with provisions made in various international human rights conventions, treaties, resolutions, treaty bodies, and declarations that are applicable during armed conflict and peacetime. Despite some formal communication to the warring sides, the international actors such as the UN, the EU, and the SAARC were not effective in making the GoN and CPN-M comply with IHL and IHRL. The human rights situation has not improved much even after the end of the armed conflict probably due to the failure of the GoN to end impunity for IHL and IHRL committed during the armed conflict. Despite passage of transitional justice mechanisms and a National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, 1820, their implementation has been ineffective partly due to the lack of financial resources as well as lack of political commitment. The economic and social rights of people have not been adequately ensured in the post-conflict period because the government programs tend to focus more on civil and political rights.

Carrying out research on economic impacts of the armed conflict on female-headed households would be extremely helpful in understanding the dynamics of transformed gender relations in the Nepalese society. Such research would be helpful for policy makers and programmers to make effective policy and plans to support the economic prosperity and political rights of such families. An important part of future studies to understand the impact of armed conflict is inferring causal impact by taking socio-economic information from the household level as well as case studies of affected

households.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Forty points demand[24]

Demands related to nationalism

1. Regarding the 1950 Treaty between India and Nepal, all unequal stipulations and agreements should be removed.

2. HMG [His Majesty's Government] should admit that the anti-nationalist Tanakpur agreement was wrong, and the Mahakali Treaty, incorporating same, should be nullified.

3. The entire Nepal-Indian border should be controlled and systematized. Cars with Indian number plates, which are plying the roads of Nepal, should not be allowed.

4. Gurkha recruiting centers should be closed and decent jobs should be arranged for the recruits.

5. In several areas of Nepal, where foreign technicians are given precedence over Nepali technicians for certain local jobs, a system of work permits should be instituted for the foreigners.

6. The monopoly of foreign capital in Nepal's industry, trade and economic sector should be stopped.

7. Sufficient income should be generated from customs duties for the country's economic development.

8. The cultural pollution of imperialists and expansionists should be stopped. Hindi video, cinema, and all kinds of such newspapers and magazines should be completely stopped. Inside Nepal, import and distribution of vulgar Hindi films,

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video cassettes and magazines should be stopped.

9. Regarding NGOs and INGOs: Bribing by imperialists and expansionists in the name of NGOs and INGOs should be stopped.

Demands related to the public and its well-being

10. A new Constitution has to be drafted by the people's elected representatives.

11. All the special rights and privileges of the King and his family should be ended.

12. Army, police and administration should be under the people's control.

13. The Security Act and all other repressive acts should be abolished.

14. All the false charges against the people of Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Gorkha, Kavre, Sindhuphalchowk, Sindhuli, Dhanusha and Ramechap should be withdrawn and all the people falsely charged should be released.

15. Armed police operations in the different districts should immediately be stopped.

16. Regarding Dilip Chaudhary, Bhuvan Thapa Magar, Prabhakar Subedi and other people who disappeared from police custody at different times, the government should constitute a special investigating committee to look into these crimes and the culprits should be punished and appropriate compensation given to their families.

17. People who died during the time of the movement should be declared as martyrs and their families and those who have been wounded and disabled should be given proper compensation. Strong action should be taken against the killers.

18. Nepal should be declared a secular state.

19. Girls should be given equal property rights to those of their brothers.

20. All kinds of exploitation and prejudice based on caste should be ended. In areas having a majority of one ethnic group, that group should have autonomy over that

area.

21. The status of Dalits as untouchables should be ended and the system of untouchability should be ended once and for all.

22. All languages should be given equal status. Up until middle-high school level (*uccha-madyamic)* arrangements should be made for education to be given in the children's mother tongue.

23. There should be guarantee of free speech and free press. The communications media should be completely autonomous.

24. Intellectuals, historians, artists and academicians engaged in other cultural activities should be guaranteed intellectual freedom.

25. In both the tarai and hilly regions there is prejudice and misunderstanding in backward areas. This should be ended and the backward areas should be assisted. Good relations should be established between the villages and the city.

26. Decentralization in real terms should be applied to local areas, which should have local rights, autonomy and control over their own resources.

Demands related to the people's lives

27. Those who cultivate the land should own it. (The tiller should have right to the soil he/she tills.) The land of rich landlords should be confiscated and distributed to the homeless and others who have no land.

28. Brokers and commission agents should have their property confiscated and that money should be invested in industry.

29. All should be guaranteed work and should be given a stipend until jobs are found for them.

30. HMG [His Majesty's Government] should pass strong laws ensuring that people involved in industry and agriculture should receive minimum wages.

31. The homeless should be given suitable accommodation. Until HMG [His

Majesty's Government] can provide such accommodation they should not be removed from where they are squatting.

32. Poor farmers should be completely freed from debt. Loans from the Agricultural Development Bank by poor farmers should be completely written off. Small industries should be given loans.

33. Fertilizer and seeds should be easily and cheaply available, and the farmers should be given a proper market price for their production.

34. Flood and drought victims should be given all necessary help

35. All should be given free and scientific medical service and education and education for profit should be completely stopped.

36. Inflation should be controlled and laborers salaries should be raised in direct ratio with the rise in prices. Daily essential goods should be made cheap and easily available.

37. Arrangements should be made for drinking water, good roads, and electricity in the villages.

38. Cottage and other small industries should be granted special facilities and protection.

39. Corruption, black marketing, smuggling, bribing, the taking of commissions, etc. should all be stopped.

40. Orphans, the disabled, the elderly and children should be given help and protection.

Appendix B. Four Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols

Convention	Main Focus	Provision
First	The Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (August 12, 1949).	It protects soldiers who are out of the battle. The 10 articles of the original 1864 version of the Convention have been expanded in the First Geneva Convention of 1949 to 64 articles that protect; Wounded and sick soldiers; Medical personnel; facilities, and equipment; Wounded and sick civilian support personnel accompanying the armed forces; Military chaplains; Civilians who spontaneously take up arms to repel an invasion.
Second	The Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (August 12, 1949).	It adapts the protections of the First Geneva Convention to reflect conditions at sea. It protects wounded and sick combatants while on board ship or at sea. Its 63 articles apply to; Armed forces members who are wounded, sick, or shipwrecked; Hospital ships and medical personnel; Civilians who accompany the armed forces.
Third	The Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (August 12, 1949).	It sets out specific rules for the treatment of prisoners of war (POWs). The Convention's 143 articles require that POWs be treated humanely, adequately housed, and receive sufficient food, clothing, and medical care. Its provisions also establish guidelines on labor, discipline, recreation, and criminal trial. Prisoners of war may include; Members of the armed forces; Volunteer militia, including resistance movements; Civilians accompanying the armed forces.
Fourth	The Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (August 12, 1949)	Civilians in areas of armed conflict and occupied territories are protected by the 159 articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
Protocols I	Protection of civilian and military population, 1977	Protocol I expands protection for the civilian population as well as military and civilian medical workers in international armed conflicts.
Protocol II	Protection of victims in civil wars, 1977	Protocol II elaborates on protections for victims caught up in high-intensity internal conflicts such as civil wars. It does not apply to such internal disturbances as riots, demonstrations, and isolated acts of violence. Protocol II expands and complements the non-international protections contained in Article 3 common to all four Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Source: American Red Cross, 2001.

Appendix C. Interview Questions

Armed conflict related

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, road head, remote areas) participated in the armed conflict?

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and motivators) played during the armed conflict?

4. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

7. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict-affected women's participation in agricultural labor?

8. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's role in agricultural decision-making?

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

10. Does increased participation of women in household agricultural roles lead to women's empowerment?

11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house?(community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

12. What impact the armed conflict had on women's access to land, labor, capital and market (input and output)?

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

14. How did the armed conflict affect women's access to education (school, college, informal education, and training)?

15. Do you think women's economic vulnerability often increases significantly during armed conflict, especially in the case of female-headed households?

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

17. What are the types of destruction to social network (….......) that occurred during the armed conflict, and how they affected women?

18. To what extent have women been able to participate in national decision making process and in civil society during the armed conflict? What have been the main obstacles to their political participation and influence?

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment and disempowerment.

<u>Peace related</u>

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

23. Women from which ethnic group, caste group, age group, economic status, occupation, educational background participated in the establishment of peace?

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Appendix D. Portland State University consent information sheet

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY CONSENT INFORMATION SHEET
Effects of armed conflict on women in Nepal

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INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT:

This form is to request you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to

take part in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' we will have you provide verbal consent; you will receive this information page to keep for your records.

PURPOSE

The research is being carried out to better understand the implication of armed conflict on economic and political lives of women in Nepal. We are asking you to take part in this research so that you can share your knowledge and experience in the field and help to make this research academically rich.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to take participate in this study we will ask you to respond to a series of open ended questions. This semi-structured interview should take about one hour and will be conducted over skype.

RISK, STRESS and DISCOMFORT

The researchers do not anticipate risk to participants in this study. In the case that you find questions uncomfortable, you may skip questions or refrain from participating at any time. We will maintain your privacy and your name will not appear next to your responses.

BENEFITS

The researchers do not anticipate that individual participants will obtain direct benefits from this study, but we do hope that the results of this research will help academicians and other concerned stakeholders to better understand the effects of armed

conflict on women in Nepal, and provide valuable inputs in ongoing conflict transformation process in the country to the policy makers and other stakeholders.

OTHER INFORMATION

Your participation in the study is voluntary. **Your responses during this interview will be audio recorded.** We will keep your study records in a safe place and use them for research only. You will be assigned an alpha-numeric identifier to help protect your anonymity. Links between your responses and any identifying information will be destroyed within five years of your participation. Your name and work history will not be published or reported to anyone. You should also know that the U.S. Government or university staff sometime review studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk or harm.

SUBJECT'S STATEMENT:

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research I can ask one of the investigators listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Portland State University IRB Administrator at (503) 725-2227. I will receive a copy of this information sheet.

Appendix E. Interview transcriptions

1. Interviewee 1

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

      Rural women, and people who had limited access to the resources, and mostly Indigenous, and Dalit women.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

      Women who had limited access to the national resources and their voices have been marginalized by the state for years. Women from marginalized social groups had placed some of their demands for equality, however, government had failed to address their grievances. Women from marginalized section of the community had a feeling that if they participated in the movement they would be able to change the system of governance in the country, and their voices would be heard by the state and they would be gaining all kinds of opportunities that were deprived earlier.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

      I heard from many other people that women were really motivated to join the Maoist rebel. Women were engaged in motivating people at the grassroots level to join the movement. Women even played the role of combatants and were leading some of the platoons of the Maoist. They were particularly involved in awareness raising and conveying positive message about the movement, and some of those women were successful in conveying positive message about the movement.

4. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

Majority of women joined the rebel group out of choices since they had grievances with the government. Women were deprived from leading a dignified life so they joined the movement in large number out of will. However, there were some cases where women were forced into joining the Maoist through abduction.

Compare to other regions in Nepal, the far-west region or society is more orthodox, narrow-minded and conservative. Some of the harmful social practices such as Chhaupadi and caste-based discrimination are still pervasive in the region. People in the community had both positive as well as negative perception towards women who decided to join the Maoists rebels. Some people had the opinion that those women were doing the right work for society, while others said those women were characterless/or were not able to live in harmony with their family so they decided to join the Maoists. Some people thought what those women were doing was absolutely right and they also decided to join the movement following those women. In majority of cases, people thought that those women were fighting for the cause of the nation and were right.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (Loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

In the absence of earning member in the houses, where the men went to the war women had difficulty managing the house, including education, food and other household responsibilities. In the household where women went to join the rebel group, it conveyed positive message that women were capable of doing things that were not anticipated from them earlier.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on the situation of VAW?

There were reduction in the cases of violence against women. Men who were engaged in teasing women earlier were scared of teasing them during conflict period because of association of those women with the Maoist. They were discouraged from doing anything that were harmful to women. Maoist movement helped in raising confidence of women. People were now scared to talk or undermine women presuming

that they had the ability/capability to retaliate. Maoist movement helped in reducing/mitigating VAW. However, in families where women did not come forward to join the movement the situation of VAW remained status quo and old traditions and customs which discriminated women were still in practice.

7. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's participation in agricultural labor?

In families where women were heading the households they took the decisions. In case of women, who were living in extended families, where their husband were killed, disappeared or displaced there was not much changes in the decision making capacity/ability of women. War widow had to follow all the social customs related to widowhood. In my neighborhood and in a far related family, a woman lost her husband with whom she was married for three years. We noticed that there was no changes in the life of that woman. This woman was not allowed to come out of her house to take even the compensation. She was just performing the regular household chores.

8. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's role in agricultural decision-making?

This has to be analyzed from two aspects- during the conflict, and after the end of the armed conflict. During the conflict period many women were frightened to come out of their houses, and therefore they reduced their visibility. After the end of conflict the positive impact can be observed. Women are not motivated to come forward and are aware about their rights. They are now actively involved in various networks that exists at the community level. The government has also taken some positive steps by mainstreaming gender in the community level networks. The credit for such achievement should go to the Maoist movement.

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

In extended families other members of the family helped in managing the family

farmland. In nuclear families, where women were left by themselves they even took up agricultural roles that were culturally prohibited from performing, including plowing the land. There was a movement of women in the far west region of Nepal, where they demanded that the women should be given the right to plow the land. The movement was led a by war-widow. Some women also did some unprofessional jobs outside the house to support their families. I know a war widow of a policeman whose husband was killed by the Maoist during the conflict. In the absence of her husband, she took all the responsibilities of the house, including buying agricultural inputs from the market, cultivating the land and finally selling the out product back to the market.

10. Does increased participation of women in household agricultural roles lead to women's empowerment?

Majority of women who participated in the movement were landless women. Also, in families where there was no man, there was a decline in family income. However, some women can do well in agriculture in the absence of man.
It is women who mostly encourage their children to go to school. Even in the absence of their husbands some women were able to send their children to school, particularly in public schools that are free. Women sent both their sons and daughters to school.
Income level of many families declined in the absence of men as traditional methods of farming are used and women were overburdened with work.

11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house? (community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

There are many networks, including religious and government networks. The conflict has brought great changes in the lives of people. In the past, they were really scared to face police and other government officials but now they are comfortable and confident enough to fact them. People including women are not without hesitation are interacting with police and other government officials. Similarly, more VAW cases are

registered now than before conflict because women are coming forward to register cases of VAW.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

There were some significant positive changes in the status or roles of women during the Maoists movement. There was reduction in the practice of social customs that were discriminatory to certain social groups, including caste based social discrimination and other harmful social practices like *Chhaupadi*. However, after the end of armed conflict, the gains made were not sustainable. I know a family, where the father was actively engaged in Maoists' movement during the conflict and was advocating for the abolishment of some of the social practices prevalent in society that were discriminatory to women. After the end of armed conflict and establishment of peace, this same man practiced untouchability. One of his daughters eloped with a boy from a lower caste. However, the father brought his daughter back from her husband citing some false legal reasons like his daughter was underage. I personally feel that the Maoists movement had some positive impact in the society.

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment and disempowerment.

Women are now more confident, informative, have access to education and there is equality in education between boys and girls, political empowerment and women aware on governance issues. Though conflict had economic costs to women but it was really empowering for women and other socially excluded groups.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

The key players in national level negotiations were mostly men. This is because of old customs and traditions that are prevalent in society.

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

Women at the community level served in the police, army government offices, teachers, social sector, mediators etc., for establishing peace at the community level.

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

Women were engaged in civil society organizations to promote peace at the national level, and some of these women from civil society were engaged in mediating conflict between the parties to the war.

After people's movement II, old structures were re-instituted and women were marginalized from the peace process during the national level negotiations. very few women who got space in peace processes at some levels were mostly from certain privileged groups that had access to resources, and whose husbands occupied dominant political positions.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Gender and social inclusion (GESI) adopted by government of Nepal talks about inclusion of women at all levels. I personally feel even marginalized groups like Dalit is not homogeneous. Such programs brought by the government should be able to include all the Dalits even from far-flung regions of the country. There can be peace if government policies are inclusive.

It is very hard to retain gains made during the conflict period since these changes were brought with the use of excessive force and not out of will. Changes that are brought about through use of force cannot become sustainable. When people are granted all types of rights, including right to choose partner than conflict can be reduced. In society that are equitable, conflict is reduced and peace can be sustained.

2. Interviewee 2
1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic

location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

Rural women, women from marginalized region. Semi-literate or less educated women. Areas that were deprived from development benefits. Mixed group of women, particularly women from so called lower caste groups, economically marginalized women from all caste and ethnic groups. Furthermore, women who did not have access to education and other opportunities.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

I have had the opportunity to visit all the United Nations supervised cantonment in the Far-west region where ex-Maoist combatants were stationed for monitoring of arms and for the process of reintegration in the society. I wrote some news article on that during that time. Many women were there in those cantonments from mid-west and far-west region, where there are many traditional beliefs and social practices such as Chhaupadi that hinders the growth of women.

When I talked with those women they said they were motivated to join the Maoist as a result of their age. As most of them were youths and they developed the feeling that they should do something worthy and new in the society. Another reason why large number of women joined the Maoist was because of ideological campaign run by them, which inculcated hope and optimism in them for radical social transformation in society. The propaganda campaign launched by the Maoist motivated them to join the movement. Hoping for radical transformation in the society they left their homes to join the movement.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

Women in Maoists played some vital roles, including combatants and provided other supportive roles such as cooking food, carrying food for the combatants. Women

were mobilized in large numbers by the Maoists as motivators for promoting their radical agendas. Furthermore, women were also mobilized for nursing injured combatants, transporting them for treatment, porters.

4. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

Some women joined the Maoists through conviction; others out of coercion has been more than 10 years since the conflict ended. Many women joined the Maoist out of fear, coercion and enticement for the Maoist. Also, the desire for change motivated women to join the Maoist. Maoist were not unpopular like today during the conflict period. Women felt that if they joined the Maoist they would be able to contribute to bring about the desired change in society. Women I interacted talked confidently. On the other hand, the Maoists also used strategy of intimidation and coercion. They abducted women/girls to forcefully recruit them or to indoctrinate them. The social environment in rural areas were seeking social change, and the Maoists promised gender and social equality.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

Many men from rural areas were serving either the Maoists or the government forces during the conflict period, and they were trained to kill each other. It was difficult for families of both Maoist and government forces to live in the village due to fear of victimization and reprisal killings from each other. This fear of reprisal made it impossible for them to live in the village and they were forced to leave the village to some safer places. Though our society is conservative, many women were compelled to join the Maoist because of fear of reprisal. It was really difficult for people to survive in the villages. Innocent citizens were manipulated by both the Maoist and the government forces. Army sometimes asked the villagers to cook food for them and when the Maoist came to learn about this they would start suspecting the family for being supporter of government and vice versa. Ordinary citizens were trapped in this fear of being labeled as

a supporter of the enemy by either side.

Civilians who were neutral and not supporting either side often faced fateful consequences. Refuging to provide shelter to the rebels puts villagers at risk from the Maoist who are ruthless in their punishment, providing such support, however, leaves them vulnerable to reprisal attacks from the security forces.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

What is considered as violence against women varies from culture to culture and from urban to rural areas. Certain kind of cultural practices that are considered as VAW according to law may not be considered as VAW by some people who have been practicing such cultural practices since long. When we go back to history and we find that women were leading life as in medieval era before the start of Maoist armed conflict. In such conservative societies, Maoist were successful to indoctrinate some young girls/women with their revolutionary ideas, and agendas of revolutionary transformation, and many women got attracted to their political ideology. Women in the rural areas got attracted and impressed by the changes brought about in the lives of women recruited by Maoist and the level of confidence they demonstrated to the community when they came back to their village to visit their family. They really got impressed and carried away with the way the Maoist presented themselves, spoke and shared their views. The changed in their behavior and also the empowerment they have gained in the Maoist force also affected the society and people at the community level.

However, there were other group of people, who were more conservative in their thinking, believed that those women combatants have trespassed their cultural and societal boundary and have defiled the society. While open minded people were more open to these women combatants, and think that many women joined the Maoist forces. The Maoist claim that around 40 % of their combatants were women. The status and courage of women greatly increased in rural areas due to conflict. Journalists and writers in urban areas had expressed in their writing that history was repeating itself after 200 years, as Nepalese women were fighting courageously in the same way as Nepali

soldiers, including women had fought in Nalapani and Sugauli war against British rule in the fort of Khalanga. The story of women's bravery was discussed in TV channels and news media. I personally feel women made a leap in Maoists movement.

I am a student of Law, and during conflict period I got an opportunity to visit Kailali with few Maoists Cadres. Maoists were running parallel courts called 'People's Court' in many of the districts with its domination to dealt with cases of VAW and other social issues reported to them at the community level. In comparison to government's justice mechanisms these courts were fast in giving decisions where both the perpetrator and the defendant were called and immediately the verdict was announced. As a result many cases of VAW that were pending in the government legal system were reduced. The Maoist provided fast justice to victims of violence.

7. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's participation in agricultural labor?

Not many studies have been carried out to assess the impact of conflict on agricultural decision making power of women. There should be some study on this. I will share a story from Rolpa, which I wrote in the newspaper. All men left the village either to join the Maoist forces or in the government forces. They found it challenging to live in the village. All the decisions (cent percent) was taken by women. Though it was challenging for them they were forced to do so. In the absence of men, women were forced to develop single yoked plough that could be driven by singly ox since it was easy for women to take care of one ox than two of them. Unfortunately, there has not been much study on this.

8. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's role in agricultural decision-making?

Men who were left behind in the village were forced to join the gathering organized by the Maoist and also many of them were mobilized as porters by Maoist to support them in organizing various activities in the rural areas. Entire school students

were abducted in order to indoctrinate them, and women had to take all the responsibilities, including protecting their children and negotiating with the Maoist for the safety of their kids.

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

In extended families, women had to take support from other male members, including father-in-law and brother-in-law etc. All decisions were left to women and those women had to do all the household works. They had to keep ox for ploughing the field. There has not been study on this. Women also played the role of supporting their husbands who were displaced due to fear of being conscripted by either of the warring parties. Women managed to send money to their men by selling the livestock like goats, calf, cash crops or other food grains. All the works were carried out by women in the absence of their husbands, including raising livestock, educating their children, ploughing and cultivating their land. Women in fact did multiple roles.

Women developed the ability to face both the Maoist and government forces. Also, they develop capacity to negotiate with the belligerents to protect themselves from threat and other risks and also to save them from their abuses. Women did all sorts of roles. In areas most affected by conflict everyone was affected, including old men, young boys were not spared and they had to join or escape and women were left by themselves. 11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house?(community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

Women were compelled to take support from all sorts of organizations during those difficult time in order to sustain their family. Women were forced to become very active during that period, and were compelled to use their hands, feet and brain to fight for compensation from government etc. Women were able to negotiate with the Maoist and discussed their concerns. Local bodies were inactive during that time and village development secretary were running them. Similarly, representatives from other political

parties, including Nepali Congress, UML were nearly absent at the community level due to fear of Maoists. Except for Maoists, the presence of other political parties was negligible. Very few cadres from other political parties who were living in the village were hiding their identity, or were mostly inactive. In such situation, the only functioning bodies were social networks at the community level, including community forestry, irrigation, health etc. Women themselves were members of such networks so their role in decision making of such networks increased significantly during the conflict period.

12. What impact the armed conflict had on women's access to land, labor, capital and market (input and output)?

In the rural context of Nepal, resources means different things for people. In rural areas the only source of income is subsistence agriculture and whatever food is produced is not sufficient for more than three months in many families. Animal husbandry, including raising goats, buffaloes, and other livestock is another source of livelihood for many villagers. The source of income in rural areas is very low and always subsistence even before the conflict when the men were at home. However, in some families where the men were working outside were able to send remittance and the income level of such families was different. Those women whose husband left the villages for safety were in communication with their husbands who usually supported them in making household decisions from the new place where they were living. In the families where the husband was killed, women got support from other family members, including in-laws and relatives. In Nepali culture, we have the practice of self-help and such motivations really played an important role during the conflict period. As a result of self-help culture, families could survive and sustain even during insurgency or economic hardship. Out of sympathy for those war-widows, the other male members in the family extended support to them. However, the decisions relating to household were taken by the widows only.

We saw a very good example of how community people can get organized in difficult situations during the recent earthquake that hit Nepal. Aftermath the earthquake, during the first week, the presence of government and other I/NGOs was almost absent. There was no food, drinking water, and tent. People at the community level managed to

survive in those difficult hours with the help and support of each other.

Similarly, during the conflict period women received help from her family members in some way or other. It is true for both Maoist and police/army war-widows. Those families who were affected by the government, the Maoist cadres came during the night and helped women with her farm work. Indirectly or directly women received some support from other family members.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

Psychological stress reduces the earning capacity of an individual. During the conflict period, the question of mere survival was more important than income or saving for many families. Households with had more income sources felt vulnerable from Maoist as Maoist extorted rich families so people who owned more feared for safety from them. All the families in the villages were surviving in vulnerabilities and felt they could to drag to war any time. People were less concerned about their income, instead they were focused on saving their lives or strategies for survival.

Productivity of agricultural products did not decrease substantially in the absence of men. However, sometime due to lack of adequate rainfall, unavailability of pesticides or chemical fertilizers, there was decrease in productivity. Since in Nepal people still follow traditional way of farming; women were able to manage that in the absence of men also. Agriculture in Nepal is not modernized or mechanized. Women did not leave their farm barren or uncultivated. Women from economically marginalized families with very little landholding were affected. Also, productivity of those households decreased which had large area of farmland. Such households faced tow types of challenges. First, Maoist labeled those households as exploiters and bourgeois, second those households faced difficulty in finding adequate number of agricultural labor to work in their fields and they were compelled to leave their farmland uncultivated. Landlords, people who owned large area of land, were expelled from villages and the Maoist use them as a commune land and cultivated them.

15. Do you think women's economic vulnerability often increases significantly during armed conflict, especially in the case of female-headed households?

The armed conflict affected the schools. The schools were either closed, non-functional or Maoist captured the entire school. Education was greatly affected. Villagers did not get medicines as the health system was affected. Many times the Maoist looted or captured the medicine that was being transported to rural areas saying that they needed those medicines during the war. All the government offices were defunct during those time. In war footing situation, people were intimidated, and socket bombs were found everywhere. The Maoist looted food grains from the households and people feel trapped between the Maoist and the fermenter forces and were compelled to lead life of a soldier in a barrack ready to be at war any time. Intimidated and fearing for their life. It affected all aspects of people's lives, and life was not normal. To live during war time was not to earn but just to survive. In Maoist affected areas, the situation was tense. When people talk with those survivors now they find that they are very courageous and are able to put forth their voices and concerns confidently. Even old women speaks confidently and without fear. I feel women in urban areas are more traditional and conservative with limited knowledge. When we travel to remote areas in Nepal, we will be surprised to see how empowered women are. The hardships they had encountered during conflict period have made them tough to face any types of challenges.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

There has been a great leap in the lives of women, particularly Dalit and other marginalized groups during conflict. I had a discussion with a professor in Kathmandu University and he said that he had been able to supervise 70 PhD students to date. I told him, in the history of Kathmandu University you may have been able to supervise 100 students, however, the movement which involved hauling stones, killing people for pressurizing government to address their demands have been able to mobilize more than

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50 hundred thousand people at a time. No university can give such training than that was given by the armed conflict in Nepal. The changes brought about by the decade long armed conflict in Nepal was such great that no university cols have brought such enormous changes in the lives of people. The armed conflict made inactive people, who were like buffaloes, to very active people. The overall social environment during conflict was do or die so people became active and aware at an unprecedented level. The positive impact of Maoist movement is that the marginalized people developed a greater awareness of their rights as well as their ability to stand up and demand equality. In the aftermath of conflict, people in the rural areas have changed and nobody can manipulate them easily. Conflict has brought some great social transformation in the lives of people.

17. What are the types of destruction to social network (….......) that occurred during the armed conflict, and how they affected women?

During the conflict period, community organizations like Community Forest User Groups in Nepal (FECOFUN) and other NGOs worked for the rights of women. Women were included in the managing committees of those local level networks and their access to health services was enhanced. Saving and credit groups were opened for women, and the savings from therm were invested in income generating activities for women. Such initiations by NGOs and Community organizations contributed to motivating state agencies such as health and other to be active in the rural areas being inspired from them. These days there are many saving and credit organizations in the rural areas. In my recent visit to Far West, I talked with few women and they told me that they are associated with nearly 8-10 saving and credit organizations. In order to maintain their stake in those saving and credit they said that they borrow loan from one and deposit in other. The positive aspect of such saving and credit organizations is that they are always in the lookout for new women member in the district who have not been included by other saving and credit organizations. Such initiatives helps more women to come forward and join the group.

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment

and disempowerment.

People who were killed or disappeared were disempowered by the conflict. More than 15,000 people were killed during the conflict. The achievements were incomparable to lose. In my opinion, no other country in the world that went to Maoist movement in the past could bring about such enormous changes. The conflict brought some positive vibration in the society. Overall, the conflict raised the awareness level of people. People are aware now what country implies and what are their rights. Recently, I came back from a field trip to Darchula, in far west region of Nepal. While in Darchula I traveled by public buses where the bus driver played folk songs with very amazing empowering and motivating lyrics. The songs played were very informative, and contributing to awareness building. This clearly indicates that the awareness level of people, including women have greatly increased. People are now talking about the changes in society as a result of this great social changes have taken place in our society. People are using technology to help them updated about their rights. Even women are now carrying cell phones and how they got the money to buy cell phone is a difference aspect. Technology has helped them to be updated about their family members, including where, how and what happened to them. The role of cellphone and FM Radio was very important during the conflict period. Even in small town like headquarter of Darchula there are two FM stations which runs for 18-20 hours and gives the people all sorts of information, including news, views, discussions both local and national, and BBC. People are listening to news and this has really contributed to social transformation in society.

Why the gains made during war cannot be sustained in post conflict period?

Women need to develop their ability to sustain the gains made during the conflict period. Lack of literate women, and lack of adequate exposure on the part of women results in reversion of rights made during the conflict period to status quo. Women should possess technical as well as administrative knowledge to retain the leadership positions and other gains made during the conflict. After the end of conflict, women tends to become weak as there is the saying," Tiger tends to become mouse again". More able women should come forward to join the politics. Women really needs to work hard to

make themselves able and confident and this will depend on the will of women themselves.

Coping strategy or empowerment

Only on the basis of their ability women can progress politically. Readymade or easily achieved gains cannot be retained. Women needs to learn many things from men so that they are able to consolidate the gains made in war. In many organization headed by women there are male figure who are supporting the organization from behind the scene. Men struggle really hard to gain position and status in the society so women should also struggle to achieve the same. Lack of adequate education and training make women less able for political positions.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

Mostly, men participated in the peace negotiation. It was hard for women to come to that level as par with men. Some women came forward and they also got an opportunity to be trained. Many women came to the Parliament through 1st and 2nd Constituent Assembly (CA) elections (from both first past the post and proportional representation). However, final decision making power rests with men rather than women. Men have been engaged in politics for a long time and they have been leading the political arena historically. Women are in the process of following the footsteps of men. When we compare participation of women in politics in comparison to past, their participation is relatively high now.

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

Women played crucial role in establishing peace at the local level during the conflict period. Women showed maturity in their decisions. During the first CA elections, large number of women voted for the Maoist just to bring them to the mainstream politics. They voted the Maoist not because they were impressed by their activities or they had access to them, but just to give them chance and to be a party more accountable

and responsible. Women voted the Maoist and helped them to be elected as the single largest political party in firs CA. However, after watching their activities women were able to identity the shortcomings within the Maoist party. Women realized that the Maoist after coming power also displayed some political weaknesses and women decided not to vote o them in the next elections. In the 2nd CA elections, Maoist ended up being the third largest party from first largest party with very less votes. Maoist turned to be very weak party after 2nd CA. Rural women and women who were engaged in community groups and community based organizations realized that the Maoist failed to translate its commitment to reality and therefore, they decided to turn away from them.

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

Many women raise the question of participation or women. I personally feel that if women are represented in peace talks then they will be able to include women's concerns. Even men can promote the rights of women in such negotiation tables by advocating for women's 33 % representation. 33% representation of women was approved in comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2006. When cabinet was formed, women asked for representation of women. Similarly, other caste and ethnic groups demanded for their representation. Mere participation of women will not result in inclusion of their voices in the decision making processes. There are many other social factors that limits women's abilities to participate in decision making.

23. Women from which ethnic group, caste group, age group, economic status, occupation, educational background participated in the establishment of peace?

Women who had access to power, education mostly got an opportunity to come to the forefront. Whatever the political system may be, people look for women who are able to work for them. Women who had capacity, even-though they did not have any university degree (B.A, MA or PhD) in the rural areas were recognized by all and were motivated to join the political parties. Women from well to do families who lacked capacity to talk in public spaces did not come forward and were not encouraged by the

political parties. Active and capable women irrespective of their caste, ethnic or economic background were selected to join the political parties. For tokenism also women were encouraged to join the politics.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Women can contribute enormously for establishment of sustainable peace. In the first CA, there was large participation of women. Women are also working in large numbers in I/NGOs. Women should work to further enhance their ability. Instead of demanding rights in the form of positive discrimination, women should try to enhance their ability. Just being represented by virtue of their gender, women will not have effective contributions in different forums. We know very well that in first CA there were 33 % women, and those women were from different backgrounds, including housemaids, and grass cutters and so on, but those women were not able to do anything or any effective work. To actively contribute in constitution writing process, we need to have people with knowledge and skills. Therefore, women need to enhance their skills so as to make meaningful and participation in constitution making process of Nepal. On the basis of their capacity women can progress and move forward. Mere presence of women or only number is not important, but quality contributions and meaningful participation matters.

3. Interviewee 3

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoists rebel group?

The Maoists promoted militarization of women and they convinced women that once capture state power or regime they will be able to promote women in varied areas. They provided such schooling to women. Once the women became combatants the gender roles changed and there was similar gender roles for both men and women. It was not possible to capture or change state power through violent power struggle. Several factors play role in this. In the context of Nepal, the Maoists were not successful

to overthrow the regime through violent power struggle. Both external and internal factors played roles in this. The armed struggle was not successful and the Maoist combatants were sent to cantonment as part of the peace process. However, the society has failed to provide livelihood option to combatants who were reintegrated to the society. Though the government decided to provide around 5-10 lacs to the combatants, Maoist party took away some of those money from the ex-combatants. The amount provided was not sufficient to choose future options for livelihood. For the sake of livelihood women had to go back to their old gender roles in society. So, there was not any big changes in the roles of women after the end of conflict. Only few women (social and political elites) benefited from the Maoist movement. They were able to some political position in the party or get some jobs. For the common women, it had no positive impact and overall the conflict did not contribute to change in gender roles.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

Social harmony, social empowerment and social capital was destroyed by the Maoists movement. Such situation harmed the lives of people who were responsible for leading the household and the entire villagers. The livelihood of the poor and marginalized groups were severely threatened during the armed conflict, and it is still at great risk.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

Recently, I did a research on situation of VAW in Banke district. The research showed that more than 45 % of married women in that district continue to face VAW. This clearly shows that there has not been any changes in the situation of VAW. Despite some positive actions by Maoist to curtail VAW, the armed conflict has not contributed to reducing VAW. Banke is one of the districts that had strong hold during the conflict period. Thousands of Maoist combatants were mobilized in between Banke and Bardiya district areas, and many people had died in that area. Also, recently the government report

developed for developing strategic plan recently showed that 40 % of rural married women were victims/survivors of VAW.

The so called change in situation of VAW brought about by Maoist rebellion was not consistent. Too often the Maoist resorted to the force of punishment rather than the power of persuasion to solve a problem in society and people due to fear abstained from such activities not out of will. Any change brought about in society should be consistent and long-term. Also, the changes should be spontaneous with change in people's mentality. However, this is not see in society. When we talk about the practice of Chhaupadi, recently I came back from Accham and found that still today this practice is widely prevalent in that district. This cultural practice is still prevalent in all the 79 VDCs in the district. We got democracy in 1990 and still the situation of women continue to be like that when we are already in 2015 AD. The government has not been able to prevent/stop chhaupadi practice in that region. It shows that even during the decade long Maoist armed conflict people had not abandoned such ill practice of chhaupadi. Women are even today sent to Chhaupadi during their menstruation cycle and people have not given up this old tradition. Maoist movement has not wrought any changes in social values and attitudes of people.

The Maoists used force to mitigate social violence. When was found to abuse alcohol and engaged in polygamy they chopped off their hands in public. Such severe punishment inflicted by the Maoist discouraged other men from perpetrating VAW in the form of polygamy and alcohol abuse. Due to fear of punishment many people were discouraged from performing violent acts. They knew if they did that their hands might as well be chopped off as a punishment.

VAW is controlled by women groups in our society. For example I may have a legal wife at home and in the course of my work, I decide to get married with another woman or I may develop an intimate physical relation with a man. If I am caught by a women group then they will take actions against me. This type of work of punishment is not done by the Maoist but by our indigenous governance system or community governance system that is functional at the community level which has been playing

important role in reducing alcohol abuses. Though Maoist cut off hands of people for practicing Chhaupadi practice, it is still prevalent in many parts of Nepal. Also, the rape cases against young girls are still widespread. If Maoist were able to bring about social changes then people would have been fearful or sensible not to commit such act of violence, including rape of girls. Maoist were able to bring some change in society by wielding power of pressure. The mere objective of the Maoist to establish themselves in the society because politically they were weak. During 2048 BS elections they were able to win only 6 seats. In the next elections after that they were able to win 69 seats, and subsequently in the elections following that they won 3 seats. They were jealous of other parties that formed the government. They were struggling to come to power and used all means so that they could form their government. Internally, the Maoist had only political agenda of state capture. Therefore, to achieve their political agenda and also to bring this to operation they developed the strategy of gaining the sympathy of society. They knew it very well that without the sympathy of people it would have been very challenging for them to get voted during election. Therefore, they brought some populist agenda. The women's agenda was already there in Nepal before the Maoist movement started. Polygamy law was there from 2048 BS and not only from 2052 BS. The physical abuse against women was criminalized from long before and the provision for punishment was included in 2024, 2025 and not in 2052.

Equality in rights for women was clearly spelled out in the National Civil Code of 2021. These agenda were not only the agendas of the Maoist. To establish their political base in rural areas, the Maoist adopted all types of agendas. However, those agendas alone were not able to bring any change in society. Instead of adopting power of force, if Maoist were able to create enabling environment so as to bring changes in legal mechanisms in society, it would have been better and they would have been successful in bringing about the desired social change. We know that though voices and grievances of women may not be heard or recognized, their 33 % representation ensured in legal documents fosters participation of women. In the Interim Constitution it was written that 10 % of women should be there in Constitution writing process. This provision gave

women space to come to that forum. These types of women friendly legal provisions have contributed to empowerment of women and not by the Maoist movement. I don't agree that Maoist movement resulted in reduction in cases of VAW.

8. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's role in agricultural decision-making?

Many women gained sufficient confidence to articulate their needs during the conflict; they may be more effective campaigners and activists. Large number of men fled their homes during the conflict in Nepal. Despite significant improvements, women are still able to access fewer political rights than men in th post war context, as in most others. Women were mostly affected by the conflict. Many women lost their husbands. Similarly, many women combatants also became war-widows as their husband died while fighting for the rebels as combatants. The deaths of many men in the conflict resulted in the large of single women or war-widows. Such situation created more psychological problems and depression on women.

The conflict was not able to contribute significantly to the economic empowerment of women. In fact before the conflict, in rural areas of Nepal, indigenous communities had their own traditional way of governance structure. They had formed their own groups which founded financial groups (saving and credit) scheme, and other small enterprises. Those enterprises were supported by development agencies. Even the government had adopted/endorsed bottom-up approach to support people after restoration of democracy. People were given space to put their voices, including grievances and local elected bodies were responsible to address the voices of people. All those social structures and mechanisms were paralyzed by the armed conflict. Those women who were able to earn some income from small enterprises lost their income sources. This resulted in the increase of dependency syndrome of women.

In two areas, social and economic sector, the armed conflict had played negative role than positive role

Some people became aware of their rights and they were capable of putting their

concerns confidently to concerned agencies. However, the number of such women is very few and the majority of the women at the community level who were victimized during the conflict were not empowered. The victims of armed conflict are community people and they have not been empowered by the movement.

Many civilians lost their family members. In all the 75 districts of the country (in thousands of communities) families lost their loved ones which resulted in insecurities of entire family. People started living in fear and anxiety. Loss of a family member will not increase the confidence of women instead it will result in loss of confidence. Women lost their small enterprises, lost their income and enterprise, and they lacked additional support to revive from such loses. The conflict has played negative role in terms of awareness and empowerment.

Though conflict gave opportunities to few women to come to national and meso level politics, only women who had access to power and resources gained from that and not all women did. I personally feel that the conflict had suppressed women rather than empowering them. As a combatant also women faced suppression from their own military structure.

During the conflict, women were forced to cook food for the Maoist. In case they didn't have food they were even compelled to get from neighbors and cook. This resulted in economic hardship for women. In rural areas, where men had gone to foreign country or India in search of livelihood, women faced liabilities because of this pressure from the Maoist to cook for them. As a result of this those women lack economic security even now.

10. Does increased participation of women in household agricultural roles lead to women's empowerment?

I had done a research in Gulmi district to find out impact of conflict on agriculture. In my research, I came up with two conclusions. First, in many areas during the conflict period the land remained barren or uncultivated and it had a negative impact on the overall economy of the country. For example in houses they were able to produce

two mana of rice earlier were not able to produce anything during the conflict. It negatively impacted the overall income of the family. Second, in families where women came forward to do the agricultural work themselves and with the support of their children for the sake of their livelihoods, the education of their children was negatively impacted. In the absence of male figure (father, uncle, grand-father), the children in the family had to give up their full time to agricultural work. Young girls were forced to join the Maoist as result of this the rural areas in Nepal no youths were left. In the absence of youths, old people were compelled to engage in agriculture. Therefore, they cultivated only in small patches of land which was within their ability and majority of land remained uncultivated. This resulted in forced labor of old people and children and deterioration of education of children.

In joint families, where old in-laws are not capable of leading the house in the absence of son who got killed or left home to join the Maoist, and other men left home due to fear from both Maoist and the government forces, women were compelled to lead the households. Women in such families had to do multiple roles from domestic work to productive and reproductive roles. Also, those women were also fulfilling their community obligations as well. Women were forced to take up such roles. For example women were compelled to be participate in community forestry user groups. Apart from this, women had to attend social events such as birth and death rituals. Women also took care of old in-laws, and livestock etc. Women worked extra hard to get money for the treatment of their elderly in-laws.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

Economic situation of women further deteriorated during the conflict period. To improve an individual's economic status one should have an alternatives. Women just replaced the role played by men in their absence. For economic empowerment to take place there should be additional income opportunity for women. In houses where husbands were absent, women just performed the roles that were performed by the men

who are now in the battle field fighting the war, or got killed or disappeared. When husbands were around they kept the money they earned after selling surplus agricultural products, for example rupees 500 earned from selling the grains like was kept by men but in the absence of men women got that 500 rupees. Economic empowerment means that if I earn rupees 2000 today and due to changes in my life I have started to earn around rupees 5000. Also, in those families where men survived the war and came back home after end of war, the women were reverted back to their stereotypical gender roles. There were some changes in the roles of women when men died in the war, and women got the role of her husband. However, in families where father-in-law or other male figure were there then those responsibilities were taken by them and not by women.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

Gender roles of women changed. The family farm land would have been left uncultivated if women had not taken initiatives. In many areas we saw that women took the role of ploughing the land, which is culturally not allowed to women. When men were around women were engaged in rice plantation work and men did the plowing work. In the absence of men women started ploughing work as well. Also, these changes in the roles of women were out of compulsion. In families where men returned home after the end of war the role changed to status quo. In those families where the husband died, women took the role of men for certain period of time till her son is ready to take the responsibilities. Those roles will be short-term and once will continue the role carried out by his father, and the mother will be pushed back to her traditional roles again. The son/sons will take over the role from mother, including work of plowing the land and women are freed from that role. Till the time her son was child and her in-laws old to take up the responsibilities women took up the role of her husband. Once the son is adult they took up the all the traditional responsibilities of men. Women were compelled to take up those roles out of compulsion. However, when the situation eased in the rural areas women did only their own traditional gender roles. It was only short term survival strategy adopted by women.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

I will give you an example of a field experience of a research that I was involved. For this research, we went to field to oversee a drinking water scheme handled by women only. We found that 11 women are there in the committee of this drinking water project and they are there since the very beginning of the project. It has been more than 16 years since the project was started. Though only women are there in the committee, the committee decisions are always made by men behind the scene and without visibility. These women were incorporated in the committee out of compulsion or out of necessity not out of will by men. Few women might have been politically empowered, but I still feel that the rate is negligible statistically. Though women might have got opportunity to take part in the committee meetings, there are very rare instance where their voices and concerns have been incorporated in the minutes of the meetings. It was surprising to find out that in a water scheme headed by women, men were taking all the decisions on behalf of those women from behind the scene.

The main reasons for this is our patriarchal structure. Only big revolutions can change this. It is hard for even educated people (graduates) to change that. Second, lack of literate people in the community. In our communities we have more illiterate people than literate people. In development work, when people who are illiterate and use finger prints starts using their signature than the donors report those people in the category of literate people. Such people who simple learns to write his name fail to understand policy related issues. Also, the government that exists in order to help them to understand such policies are reluctant to help them in understanding such policies. Development working at the grassroots levels do not put adequate efforts so as to help them to understand state policies. Instead of working with grassroots people, development workers get hold of some elite people in the community and explain them such policies and fees that their task has been completed. They submit their report to the donor on the basis of their interactions with few elites in the community. Furthermore, the representative of NGOs

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who are present at the grassroots tend to dominate the community people and deprived them from putting their real and genuine concerns. Also, class disparity, social and economic, that exists in society prevents women from putting their concerns. People from lower economic class cannot put their concerns to people from higher economic class even today. Also, there is problem in governance structures.

From micro to meso levels the government have developed programs for empowerment of women, but the implementation of such programs are not effective. NGOs have programs but they are not able to take such programs to real needy groups because of lack of education and other factors. Also, such programs are captured by the elites who have access to education and can influence the donor's or NGO's representative. Such program never reach the target community who needs them the most. Implementation and monitoring of such programs are weak since monitoring are usually not result based. Monitoring are normally done for the sake of formality where NGOs representatives hire a vehicle and ask some very basis questions to the women group like- is everything fine with yo? How is the situation of drinking water and so on? Monitoring should be indicator result based. We don't not have legal provisions in Nepal and it seems we have developed Nepali system of monitoring. Result based monitoring should include indicators like- How many women got drinking water? How many couldn't get? Why those women couldn't get? How many women are getting quality drinking water supply? Where do they complain about this? What actions have been taken to address their grievances? Because of very weak governance aspects women cannot get hold in decision making. Outer elite tend to overlook them.

Maoist had some positive gender equality agenda

Some of the agenda brought forth by the Maoist for gender and economic equality in the 42 point agenda pushed by them was very impressive and good. However, the Maoist did not bring those agenda in true spirit and with good intension. Just to get shelter in the community they brought up those agenda. The ultimate goal of the Maoist was to capture the state, and they mobilized women to win the hearts of community people. Maoist used gender card to gain power and once it got its weapons it worked for

regime capture, and they used the tactics of depression, oppression and suppression at the community level. All the empowerment related agendas were left behind. Let me give you an example; many NGOs as well as donor other agencies supported organizations worked through CBOs such as women's group, men's group, saving and credit groups etc. Those group got support from the donors for their work. The Maoist started collecting taxes on the income of such groups and snatched their income. The taxes became really high. The taxes were collected by the Maoist to run their government called by them as people's government that they had formed in areas with their domination in rural areas. After that they started imposing taxes on houses, farmland, income etc to increase their revenue sources. It became really hard for community people to pay all such taxes so they decide to flee their home to get rid of those taxes and lived their lives in displacement. Those people who could continue to tolerate the suppression continued to live there. Such kind of activity will not lead to economic empowerment of women. The Maoist brought the women's agenda just to help them settle in the communities. The Maoist did not see to take the women agenda seriously and therefore it did not work in the long term.

17. What are the types of destruction to social network (…........) that occurred during the armed conflict, and how they affected women?

At the community level women individually or collectively could not contribute much for conflict transformation. However, they contributed to mitigating conflict and for the establishment of peace. Let me give you an example. In the course of writing my thesis, I wrote a case study about a family affected by the Maoist in Dang district. In a family where all three sons of the family were working for Nepal police. The Maoist compelled the family and the three policemen to quit their job in the police. But these three men said to Maoist that due to economic poverty they cannot do that. The Maoist then decided to give death sentence to them for not obeying them and the family was communicated this. In the meantime, they sent two of the sons in the Maoist run bonded labor camp and they abducted the other son. After their abduction, the community particularly women played very crucial role in negotiating with the Maoist for freeing

those detained policemen from the clutches of the Maoist. The women were able to sign a deal with the Maoist in which it was stated that those three policemen were not required to quit their job. This is an example of women's role in conflict transformation. The women who had participated in the negotiation for freeing those policemen were engaged in a community organization. The Maoist asked them to make a commitment that they will make their work transparent. Also, the women were make a commitment that they will not report to the government or police or army when Maoist venture in their villages.

The initiatives taken by women was successful in saving lives of three policemen. Another example- there was an irrigation project in Banke district. However, the Maoist had ordered to stop the project because the committee failed to pay tax to the Maoist. The community people were stopped from irrigating their fields. Women played an important role in negotiating with the Maoist and restarting the irrigation project. What they did was they immediately gave the amount demanded by the Maoist including the tax. Though women did not have the money, they collected donations from the group members and gave the money to them and restarted the irrigation project. Women were able to mitigate the conflict to some extent. Role played by some women, particularly from Gurung and Magar ethnic groups was substantive as compared to women from other social groups. Women from those two social groups played dominant role in Mothers group where they were associated and contributed to mitigating conflict to some extent.

There is another example where women from Magar ethnic group were successful in releasing District Forest Officer in Dadeldhura district. These are only few successful cases.

Did women gain negotiation skills after negotiating with the Maoists?

This has two aspects. Women were capable of negotiating with the Maoist who were from their own geographical location, whom they knew them well, including their weaknesses. Their per-existing connection with the local Maoist sometimes protected them during such negotiations. Also, in many cases people who joined the Maoist were

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local hooligan who were illiterate boys who had not very good profile and past records. Women from the community who went to negotiate with those Maoist translated the weaknesses of those boys as an instrument during their negotiation process. Those women had earned some kind of capacity building trainings from development organizations through some CBOs. Those women seem to be sensitive on the issues of women and have developed some skills of negotiation. They talked about win-win approach of negotiation or collaborative negotiation. Only those women who are reputed in the community for their past work and their fair roles in society can participate in the negotiation process. Furthermore, women who possess high social capital and the Maoist also give them due respect and recognition for their selfless work come forward to take part in negotiations.

At the community level, only few people are educated. Mostly community teachers are involved in negotiation process since they have been teaching people at the community level. Similarly, women are working at the community level as health workers also worked as negotiators. These community health workers are close to people at the community level because of their work. They help everyone in need, including Maoist combatants who had been hit by the government forces in extracting bullets from their bodies. Their community support works makes them easy for community health workers to act as negotiators during the conflict period.

18. To what extent have women been able to participate in national decision making process and in civil society during the armed conflict? What have been the main obstacles to their political participation and influence?

What we call civil society in Nepal are not truly civil society because civil society is not structured. In Nepal, the leader of an NGO who establishes an NGO becomes a civil society. Take example, Arjun Karki and Netra Timsina, who was the chairperson was NGO federation Nepal, calls them civil society. Civil society should be unstructured. These so called civil society people are mobilized by some people for their vested interest. Civil societies in Nepal sometimes criticized the Maoist while some other times they supported them. Civil society should be consistent in their dealing and thoughts.

Maoist movement was not successful in bringing about any miracle change in the society. Maoist were able to bring some issue to public discourse but did not bring any social and economic aspects of people lives. The so called civil society organizations (CSOs) are funded by some outside agencies, and they did not contribute to gear up the social movement. As long as they get funding, CSOs push the movement and once the funding discontinues their movement dies. Though CSOs contributed to some extent to make the People's Movement II successful, their role after the end of conflict has not been appreciate worthy.

The governance situation of Nepal and grim in these years following the end of conflict and signing of peace agreement in 2006. If CSOs was active and its support was there, the governance situation would haven't been like that. When you visit any government office for some official work, you cannot expect to get your work done without bribing the officials. Governance structure would not have been like this if there was active CSO in Nepal. The access of people to government employee is really limited and you cannot talk with any government staff. Civil society should possess power and should work to support governance mechanism. Furthermore, they should be able to raise their concerns about mal-governance practices by mobilizing the media. Some journalists who bring up such issues in media calls themselves as civil society. These journalists are affiliated with political parties and some are close to Nepali congress, Maoist, or UML or Madheshi parties. They are also structured and hence they are also not civil society. That is why the so called civil society has not been able to contribute significantly in the post conflict state building and more than nine years have passed by without much achievement. All so called civil society representative have established their own NGOs and they are supported by different donors such as DFID, USAID and the UN. Kunda Dixit, who calls himself civil society has a big project on earthquake support funded by USAID. He speaks what DFIF asks him to speak. True CSOs should be unstructured and should not have their vested interest. Common people like you and me should come forward and form civil society. How the representative of a civil society can can take up political appointment like Nepal's Ambassador to the US. Take example of Arjun Karki.

These so called civil society leaders in Nepal are not civil society, but they are NGOs leaders who have been mobilized by some political parties or some donors. People from so called civil society are given some high or key positions by the donors or by the political parties and they become focused on their own organizations or own position and their commitments to civil society movement decreases. This results in weakening of civil society movements. The ineffectiveness of civil society has resulted in weak governance mechanisms in Nepal. Leaders of so called civil society free themselves from this criticism by saying that after the People's movement II (which lasted for 19 days) we gave the responsibility of taking the country in right direction to the political parties. They blame the political parties in failing to keep their commitments.

Activist like Chayya Devi Parajuli should come forward to work as civil society member. Women like Bhawani Rana who contested the elections from Nepal Chamber of Commerce should not come forward as member of civil society. Arju Deuba is also not civil society. When people from community level come they are civil society. These women do not have any political interest and are not involved with any political party, and they have commitment to social welfare only. During the conflict period, women who came to represent civil society had their vested interest and that is why the governance system became weak aftermath conflict. Though the 19 days People's Movement had large participation of women, those women were not from civil society. They were cadres of political parties who had their own political ideology and were educated by political parties. It is important to understand this.

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment and disempowerment.

Our society is patriarchal. After the end of conflict, many displaced men came back home (either from India or Gulf Countries). Those returnees regained and reestablished their roles in the family. Women were sent back to their traditional gender roles and hierarchies. In case of widows or half-widows, they were forced to continue with the roles that male figure had been taking in their families. It didn't contributed to

their empowerment so much. Women had no option but to take the responsibility of the family. Those widows might have got opportunity to learn about community forestry if they had to attend the CFUG meetings regularly in the absence of men in their family. During her visits to CFUG those women might have learned about the process of CF. Similarly, those widows might have participated in various citizens forums in the absence of their husbands and while doing so they might have learned few things. However, it doesn't mean that those women will have decision making influence in such forums because of their mere presence. I do not feel that. Those widows might have learned something from other women in the process of their interaction with them, but this will make them influence in decision making process. Simply being aware and learning something from others will not make those widows influential in social networks. Political awareness was there not empowerment. Only those women who had access to power got opportunities to be politically empowered. For example, my mother had access to power so she has been empowered, but in my neighborhood there is a Dalit women, who lost her husband to the conflict, who has not been empowered. Though this Dalit women has been regularly participating in community level various networks, she has influence in decision making process.

Economic empowerment of women and conflict.

In Dang, where I am from, there is a big field called Narayan Pur in present Municipality. Before the conflict this field was vacant. However, during the conflict period, many families migrated from conflict hard hit areas such as Rukum and Rolpa and started living in this vacant field. The migrants were mostly women whose husband were either in Indian army or British Army. Those women fled their home in search of safety due to fear of Maoist. After arriving there, those women started small business. We cannot call this economic empowerment because women simple searched alternatives for their survival. They were economically more secure in their hometown or village where they had their own house, means of livelihood, own business or jobs. They left all those things and came to this new place where they had to start everything from scratch. It is always

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challenging for migrating population to adopt to a new place. It was not economic empowerment because they just adopted another option for their livelihood. For economic empowerment there should be a substantive increase in your income. For example, economic empowerment should be such that if you ride a Kia car today you should be able to drive a Mercedes car after economic empowerment. It was hard for those women to meet both ends meet of their families. They somehow managed to meet the livelihood needs of the family. People who abandon their house, property, land etc due to fear of conflict and come to a new place they can never be economically empowered. Instead such new roles adopted by them out of compulsion can be said survival or coping strategies. For example in CF people do saving and credit. They cut the trees and sell it to the market and save money. With that saved money that start some enterprise which helps in enhancing their income from 5 lacs to 8-10 lacs. People who come and start something small enterprise cannot be called as economic empowered; it is just survival strategies.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

Historically, during different political systems in Nepal like monarchy, democracy or when leftist groups came to political power, no women leader were given the opportunity by the Maoist within their own party to higher political positions. This is because our social structure is patriarchal. Even senior women leaders like Pampha Bhusal and Hisila Yami were not brought to the negotiation table when the stake went high. There may be several reasons for their exclusion from the process of negotiation, including patriarchy, intra political conflict, groupism and so on. It was quite surprising that women of their caliber were excluded from the peace negotiations.

At the district and community level also there are several committees now but only 2% women are present as head in those committees. Currently, we have peace committees in all the 75 districts of the country. As far as I can recall, only one committee i.e. Taplejung has woman as its head. However, she is not from the Maoist party.

At the district level, the government has formed political mechanisms to drive the development process. In that mechanism also less than 5% women are there and mostly it is dominated by male politicians. Similarly, at the ward level to drive the development initiatives, citizen forums have been formed. Though those forums have provision for inclusion of at least 33 % women, women who are capable of fighting politically with men have been included in those forums under the quota provision. However, grassroots women who struggled, fought courageously during the decade long armed conflict, who suffered suppressions in the absence of men, and women who managed the entire system of the community were not give space in such forums. The sacrifices made by those women to sustain their families and community were not given due recognition, and therefore they were excluded from such forums.

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

We know that large number of women got an opportunity to be elected in the CA elections. There were two main reasons behind this. First, it was legally decided that more women should be brought in political arena that is why many women got opportunity in the first CA. Second, many women got opportunity to come to politics from Maoist side because of their political access. Those women who came to power or got political opportunity from the Maoist side like Jaipuri Gharti Magar, from Rolpa was not from grassroots. She had political access from before since she had contested for VDC level chairperson position. She was a school teacher with access in the community. Statistically, very few women from grassroots were given an opportunity to gain political power within the Maoist and this might be less than 1%. Just to show that they are committed to women's agenda, the Maoist gave political opportunity to few grassroots women. Also, in the first CA elections there was lot of rigging. To give you an example, I was out of country during the time when first CA elections was held, however, somebody else voted in my name without my knowledge. After winning the first CA elections the Maoist gave opportunity to elite women. I can say less than 1 % women who came to CA either through first past the post or proportional representation) were from grassroots.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

We have to see how women can contribute to establishing sustainable peace in Nepal can be seen from two angles. First, from community level/grassroots/subnational level and second from national level. At the grassroots level women can contribute to peace-building process by supporting community governance mechanisms and strengthening them. If the voices of women are not heard there then they should launch movements from there. If the women lack ability to launch movement then government should make enabling environment for those women. Mere participation of women will not solve the problem in my opinion. I already gave an example of women only managed water group which for the last 16 years is being led by women group. However, all the decision of the group are made by men on behalf of their women folk. Though in the 11 membered committee there is no single man, everything for the group was done by men behind the scene for the group. For promoting women, we should try to bring changes in the legal structure, which supports our governance mechanisms. For example if I bring two wives then women should be able to take actions against such man legally and to protect the law. This should be done at the bottom level. This will help in improving and strengthening existing governance structure. The law should provide adequate space for strengthening community governance. The government should make provision to give legal recognition to women's groups. In the rural areas there are paralegal committees has been formed by Women Development Organization with their own relatives.

At the district level, women development officer are relatively powerful and they lobbied with the Chief District Officer and police at the district level to make paralegal groups active in rural areas. The paralegal committees have been successful in reducing the cases of domestic violence nearly to 50 %. The government need to support such structures. Legally such groups should be upgraded and there should be greater space for such forums to perform well. Once such groups are formalized it gives power to such groups. This type of community governance system will be very helpful at the subnational level. At the national level, in the CA we are talking about proportional representation as well as elected representation. More and more women should be created

for women to come forward in politics. Women should be given 50 % representation in all government structure and this should be written down in the law and not endowed to women as a favor or tokenism. Take in the Parliament there a forum for women called women Caucus, there from all political parties participate.

I am not update women from which ethnic group is playing the leadership role in that forum. Such types of forum provide space for women to act effectively. It is a formal space and it should be formalized further sot that it can function effectively. At the central level such forums will be effective. At the district level there are many networks of women and such networks should be given greater space by the law itself. Only policies will not help to change situation of women because people at the Ministry levels can change such policies. Legally such provisions should be made in the Constitution itself. In that way such networks will become sustainable. If legal space are ensured for women then women from marginalized groups can also find space. In the past, women like Mangala Devi who was active got opportunity in NC party and got elected to the post of chairperson but now women from other background have also come forward. Many women have come to that position by being elected. Once there is democratic exercises, women from all background find space in such platforms. Overall, peace process in Nepal should focus in these three areas discussed here. At the national level space should be created legally. At the middle level, for example, when we have federal structure in our country, there will be some structure at the district level to address this. There should be some networks at the district level. These networks should be able to work for the rights or voice of women.

At the community level, community governance should be strengthened. If this happens all women will be able to put their concerns to such networks. For example, in Terai and many other regions of Nepal women are more comfortable sharing their concerns to women than men due to our societal norms. Even powerful leaders like Ramkumari Jhankri cannot put her voice. Though she has much access, and she has taken leadership roles here voice in not heard. Legally women should be given space so that it will give women ability to get organized and practice democratic exercises. This will give

them space to exercise democratic practices both at the central and grassroots levels. This will help in improving and strengthening local democracy at the community level. More the democracy is strengthened in a country, people will be more powerful and there will be empowerment. I feel that it should be in parallel from three levels and the law should give adequate space. Only policy will not solve the problem, but it should be included in the Constitution. There should be provision for 33% representation of women in every governance structure and women should be brought to such structure through democratic exercise instead of bringing lay women and endowing them political position.

4. Interviewee 4

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

Women who were economically deprived were mostly engaged in the Maoists' movement. These women were between 15-20 years of age. They were mostly engaged as combatants. Women from rural areas where the access of government and security forces was not there. The Maoist war started from rural areas so women from rural areas mostly participated in the conflict.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

Women had nothing to lose since they were always deprived, marginalized, exploited, and discriminated by the state. They had the perception that if they got engaged in the Maoist movement they would be emancipated from this. That is why they became attracted to the movement.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

Women in the Maoist movement were mobilized by their leaders as per the plan

developed by them. Many women played the role of combatants. Before the war, women were not enrolled/attracted in army and police. Even in social movement and social activities, the participation of women was nominal. When came to the forefront in People's War taking up arms and fighting as combatants, women were taken to be active. They took up arms and were engaged in battle and fighting. Some women who were in leadership position were also engaged in developing war plans. However, the gender differences in roles that are prevalent in other social institutions were visible in Maoist military structure as well. Women were mostly engaged as low rank cadres. Even within the various political party structure, including the Maoist we can see marginalization of women to lower positions, and very women are present in the central level committee of political parties in decision making process. Though the interim constitution of Nepal ensured 33% representation of women in every level, the presence of women at the higher level of decision making structure in various institutions is not adequate. Even within the Maoist movement the role of women in strategic plan making process have been minimal.

4. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

Some women were self-motivated to join the Maoist while others joined out of fear or coercion. Majority of women joined the Maoist movement out of fear and as per the information given in the media the Maoists use power of force to recruit women. Women who were in higher position or at the planning level of the party joined the movement out of will. While many women joined the party out of fear.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

The conflict had negative impact on the family. Many children became orphan at an early age by losing their parents to the war. Many people lost their lives during the conflict. The families which lost their loved ones suffered the most and they continue to suffer even now because of the legacy of conflict. The families of victims continue to

suffer and are in trauma.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

        VAW was perpetrated by both the parties to the war during the conflict period. Women were targeted by both Maoist rebels and government forces. Also, during the conflict period the security situation of the country further deteriorated and people felt less secure. There was no government mechanisms in the rural areas where women could go and file cases of VAW. Everyone, including women were fearful from both the parties to the war of reporting cases of VAW. There might have increased cases of VAW during the conflict period as there was no government mechanisms functional at the local level that could prevent such incidents. Even if state mechanisms existed, the survivors of VAW were scared to report cases fearing reprisal from alleged perpetrators.

I personally feel the Maoist revolution empowered women to some extent. Many people, including people from marginalized social group became aware about their rights and they realized that in order to ensure their rights revolution and fighting against the discrimination was the ultimate way out. The Maoist movement helped in developing social ties among people and they felt for the needs of each other. The Maoist started to engage women in political discussions that took place at the local level, and such engagement helped women to be empowered. Once women become empowered they start realizing that they should speak up against violence and discrimination committed against them and they come forward to raise their voices against such practices. We cannot say that VAW was reduced during the conflict period as women were fearful of both the parties to the war and not sure they were able to report the cases or not. Overall, women were empowered by the Maoist movement.

7. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's participation in agricultural labor?

        The survivors of the conflict had to fact the double burden. In families, where men got killed women bore the brunt of the conflict and vice versa. Both women and men

were compelled to take the leadership of the house in the absence of their spouse. Women were forced to take the leadership of the house.

8. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's role in agricultural decision-making?

When men were around, some of the agricultural roles such as getting the fertilizers, and the seeds from the market was done by them. In our culture women are not allowed to take any decisions without the consent of men in family related matters. A friend of mine told me a story about a conflict affected family in Dhading district. In a family, the male and head of the household had gone to India to work. The family had a he-goat. The wife wanted to sell that so that she would get some money for house expenses. However, she could not do that without taking permission from her husband. In most of the Nepalis families the general rule seems to be that whenever money is involved, the final decision is the man's. In order to convince her husband in selling that he-goat that woman called him several time in India. The cost of her telephone bill of that woman was more than what she earned from selling that goat because it took so long for the man to give his final decision.

Interestingly, it was that woman who had raised that goat, fed it but when time came to decide whether to sell it or not she had no decision making power. She had to take permission of her husband to do that. In the absence of husband of her husband the workload of women increased but her decision making did not increase. This case discussed above clearly shows that women had possessed no decision making either in the presence of her husband or in his absence. After the death of husband all the decisions of the household, such as what to do? What not to do? How much manure to buy? Where to buy them? How much to spend every month? Had to be made by women alone and all those responsibilities automatically came to women's shoulder. Though this resulted in increased in workload of women, they gained the ability to manage things on self. They learned the skills to do things on their own despite lacking previous knowledge and skills. This clearly shows that women were empowered in the process. I personally feel that

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when people learn to do things on their own even though that might be out of compulsion they will learn many things. Doing things youself will help in enhancing their knowledge and skill slowly. Though women were doing this out of compulsion without their will, this will help them to learn something. Similar is the case with women, in the process of taking responsibility of the household the women will develop her ability and capacity to do things on her own.

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

The existence of discriminatory laws/policies made the lives of women difficult not only during the conflict period but also aftermath. Though women have been shouldering all the responsibilities of the household in our society, they are deprived from their rights to control the resources. Women only have access to resource but not control. *De facto* and *de jure* there is discrimination against women. Women are deprived from granting citizenship to their children when their husband die. Women in Nepal are still struggling to ensure their rights to grant citizenship to their children through their lineage. Discrimination in citizenship acquisition and adds extra suffering to women.

With the start of conflict, men either got killed or left their homes to participate in the conflict as a combatants. In many rural areas there were only women. Even women started ploughing the land, which as cultural norms women are forbidden from doing. All the responsibilities of the family, including farming, and financial were taken by women and these multiple roles that women had to take out of compulsion made the life of women more difficult and challenging. Furthermore, women took the entire responsibility of the family like the education of children, arranging food and clothing, and other needs of the family. Those women had no other option than to take the responsibility. As a result of financial difficulties in the family, women were either forced to compromise the education of their kids by discontinuing their education or reducing the cost of food and clothing. In case women were not able to compromise the basic need of the family they were forced to take up extra work responsibilities to meet those financial needs. All the

household responsibilities came to the shoulder of women.

11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house?(community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

Women's role in decision making outside the house in public sphere was nominal during the conflict period. Our society dictates that women should not go outside of their houses and they should always be indoor. In rural areas where the education level of women is low, women were discouraged/stopped from talking in public spaces. In community forestry user group also men who never went to the forest to collect wood, fodder, and grass were in the Executive Committee of CFUG. While women did all those work and went to forest everyday were not included in the Executive Committee of the forest user groups. All-important policies were made by men and women were supposed to implement them. This resulted in lack of coordination. In rural areas where families had livestocks as a source of income, women did all the work like feeding the animal, cutting grass, milking the cattle, and cleaning the animal sheds. However, when time came to be part of milk collectors groups, it was men who came forward and represented instead of women. It was women's duty to drop the milk to the milk's center every day, but men went to collect the money. Such inequality in representation was more during the conflict period.

However, there has been some changes in that situation now. When we talk about CFUG women are still struggling for their space. Armed conflict started in 2051 BS while the concept of community forestry started in 2040 BS, and in 2045 the Master Plan was developed and in 2049 this was passed by the law. Right from the very beginning of conceptualization of community forestry in 2046 BS, the CF policies has spelled out that there should be 33%participation of women. These policies were already there from the very first. The community forestry users groups were either destroyed or became non-functional during the conflict period. Many user group even could not conduct their yearly general assembly meeting because of the conflict. There was disturbances in the

normal functioning of the community forestry groups during the conflict and I don't think so women could do much in such committees. After the end of the conflict only the CFUG became functional. Conflict contributed to some extent in empowerment of women. Even in rural areas women were talking about their participation, inclusion and their rights. Women got motivated and inspired to see their peers and other women in combatants fatigue with rifles in their hand.

In rural areas, under the *parma* system, a traditional form of labor exchange practiced between several farm households, people helped each other in their farm work, particularly plantation work. On the plantation day, all your neighbors would come to your house and help you. Similarly, when there is plantation on your neighbor's house you need to go to help them. This system helped villages affected by conflict to exchange labor for labor at times of need.

Even during the conflict period when the social network was fragile people who were close to each other worked collaborative and shared labor. In my village, there are few households which used to irk closely with each other so those few houses helped and supported each other. This was possible in my village even during the conflict period, and I feel it must have been true in other villages as well.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

Overall, it was a situation of compromise for the families. The conflict pushed the families further backward. People in rural areas were trapped into situation of crisis. For example, large number of Maoists came to people's houses and demanded food and shelter. Villagers were forced to give food and shelter as they had no choice. This resulted in depletion of food that family had stored for difficult and dry time. After the Maoist had left, the army came and they blamed the people for supporting the Maoist and tortured those families. People were deeply fearful and fear pervaded the lives of everyone. The conflict affected negatively the livelihoods of women.

Maoist movement negatively impacted the education. It went backward by one

decade. Many young school going boys and girls left their school and joined the rebel group. There has been one generation gap in education level of a family. Many academic institutions were destroyed, vandalized and attacked during the conflict period. Also, school teachers were attacked and many schools were forced to shut down. There was negative impact the education of children by the armed conflict. Those who joined the Maoist their education attainment was completed disturbed, the very few who managed to stay away from conflict couldn't do well in their school due to fear and stress. Children who were left behind in the villages were always in dilemma whether to go to school or not. Parents were always worried about the whereabouts of their children because of fear of their kids being abducted by the Maoist from their schools or on the way to school. Income level of families declined during the conflict period because of fear, death or disappearances of family member, and insecurity felt by people to invest in new income generating activity. Economically the families were lagging behind.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

Some roles of women changed during the conflict period out of compulsion. I have discussed some points earlier as well. In the absence of man, women were forced to do all the work that was done by men earlier.

17. What are the types of destruction to social network (…........) that occurred during the armed conflict, and how they affected women?

It was really hard to get organized during the conflict period due to fear and terror. I still can recall when we used to travel to rural areas as a part of community forestry work, people were frightened to come together and congregate. For any sort of gathering community people were supposed to take the permission from the security forces. People could have been easily indiscriminately fired or shot dead by the security personnel when they gathered without taking prior permission. As a part of my work, I had to go to Nuwakot during the conflict period to conduct a forest survey and on our way my entire

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team and some villagers were encircled by the army suspecting us as Maoist and they nearly fired at us. Luckily, we could survive when you told them who we were and they asked several questions to verify our identity. The security forces personnel looked with suspicion all those people who congregated in rural areas without their prior approval or permission. The various networks that existed in rural areas such as women's groups, saving and credit, mother's group had their gatherings and meetings rarely. It was really a fearful situation in the village and all the social organizations were more or less inactive during that period. To some extent, CFUGs were found to be active while other networks couldn't do much.

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment and disempowerment.

Coping strategy is also a part of medium of empowerment of women. When women do things out of compulsion to survive they will learn something and will be able to capacitate herself in some ways or other. When women are forced to do things with or withhold skills, they will develop some skill sand become empowered. We have seen that women have been empowered now. Women who had a perception earlier that they cannot do anything now have developed her ability to do things that were considered impossible for them to do. Empowerment is the development of positive feeling that says I can do and I am able to do it. I personally feel empowerment can be in two ways. First, from positive environment, or positive way and other is through negative way. When women are forced to do something without the adequate knowledge and skills it leads to empowerment of women due to negative environment. It is like throwing someone without swimming skills in a swimming pool, where he/she tries to save herself/himself flexing her hands and feet. In the process of this struggle, they may learn the skill of swimming. Ability to develop coping strategy also lead to empowerment but in such situation women do that out of compulsion and not out of will.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

In the negotiations that took place during the conflict period which were participated by many political, including UML, NC, Maoist, it was mostly men who participated in them. There should have been inclusion of women in all the negotiations from various political parties but it didn't happen. Not only in the negotiations but in all decision making processes women are excluded. There might be few negotiation where women might have participated but I do not have information on that. Also, all the mediators were men.

From time immemorial our society have been dominated by men. It is the role of political party to promote women. Though political party verbally talk big regarding inclusion of women, they are not able to give adequate spaces to women in various political arenas. Basically there are two things that affect this. First, men are not interested in promoting women, and second, women are accepting their exclusion without complaining. In my interaction with women leaders from various political parties, I frankly tell them if you keep on accepting your marginalization, men will not be willing to give you adequate space. Recently, I had attended program organized by Ministry of Local Development, which was also attended by Local Development Officer (LDO), Leela Adhikari; a woman from Sankhuwasabha. During the program she said that there is discrimination even in the way we communicate with men and women in our society. She gave her example, when she has interaction with people face to face or over phone they address her as sister, aunt and so on. However, when people interact with a man who has similar position like her people will call them Sir. People are hesitant to call a woman LDO with the Sir title which is common in case of men in similar positions. How people recognize, respect or treat a man and a woman government officers who are in similar positions varies because of their gender. The differential treatment is because of our culture which tries to subjugate women. There has not been much changes in the mentality of men to promote women, and ability of women to advocate for political space for them due to our cultural values and norms. Even within their own political party women are not able to advocate for ensuring 33% representation for them in different committees. Women should be able to demand this. There should be enhancement in

participation of women from grassroots level so as to foster their participation at all levels. Our culture continue to be male dominated.

When laws and policies are made favorable for women it becomes easier for them to come forward and participate. Representation and participation are two different things, where there is representation of women we cannot say for sure that there will be participation of women, including in the decision making process and inclusion of voice of women.

Women from civil society raised strong voices for the inclusion of women as a part of their responsibility. After 33% representation of women was ensured by the Constitution, women civil society members pressurized members of the political parties for 33 % representation in all the political parties. The lobbied and advocated on this issue. However, political parties did not show their political will for this. The lack of will on the part of political parties can be seen from how have excluded women form their Central Level Committee and other committees. Civil society women were strongly raising voice against such practices within the political parties.

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

Women were worried about their own safety and security so they couldn't do much for the peace making or peace-building in the villages. Nepalese people in rural areas were caught between the government forces and the Maoist, and experienced extreme hardship. There were always fear in the psychology of people that the government security forces and Maoist can come to their village any time and there could be cross-firing leading to several deaths. People were more worried about their own safety than development efforts. They were interested to keep that agenda for later stage in their life and in the time of peace. Community level organizations could not work for the promotion of peace during the conflict period.

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

I am not very well updated on this. However, when we look at the various

statistics related to wellbeing of women, we can visualize the situation of women. I ask the question about the status of women in various program where leaders of political parties participate. When we look at the structure of various big political parties (NC, UML, and the Maoist) and representation of women, particularly in their central committee, the representation of women is nominal despite their big claims that they have really done much for women. Similarly, in government jobs also the representation of women is nominal. We can analyze from this that in the national policy and law making processes the role of women have not been effective.

23. Women from which ethnic group, caste group, age group, economic status, occupation, educational background participated in the establishment of peace?

This is an important point for discussion. Women in Nepal as such is not a homogeneous group. You cannot compare Arju Deuba with an agricultural labor woman. By including Arju Deuba, one cannot say that she is representing entire women folk. Those women who already have some access to various resources are in CSOs. Take example of Renu Rajbhandary. These women try to present everywhere. Many women in CSOs are either wives or family members of leaders of political parties. It seems like tricky situation, where by these political party leaders have access to both men and women through their wives who are in CSOs. They try to balance power in such a way. Representation of women from marginalized social groups are not adequate in CSOs as yet.

Women from marginalized social groups can be promoted in CSOs in a number of ways. For this, all CSOs should start inclusion of women from grassroots. Many times women from excluded groups like Dalits, Indigenous, and poorly represented social groups are represented for reaching a certain numerical target. This is not just an allegation but this is a reality. Women from poorly represented groups should be given opportunity for meaningful participation rather than tokenism. The government should bring policies as well as activities that promotes women from marginalized social groups. CSOs should also include such policies in their organizations for the promotion of

women from excluded groups representation and participation. Women from diverse group should be represented in various organizations. Same women should not be given opportunity to be associated in many organizations in different positions as this restricts other women from participating. Even in rural areas such trend is common where same woman is given different positions in different organizations. Women who are active or have access to people and resources tend to be participating in all the meetings and organizations. Such a culture in CSOs will not lead to meaningful participation of women. Women should not be represented just for tokenism, but they should be given opportunity to meaningfully participate as well. Women should be given opportunity to come forward otherwise their situation will remain status quo for years. The news laws and policies that are formulated by the country should be supportive to the rights of women right from grassroots. It should not only be just for the sake of representation but should be for the meaningful participation.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Women's role will be central for sustainable peace. Women constitute 52 % of our population. Women who are in CSOs should realize that only elite women are not women, but women as such are heterogeneous group and include those women who work at the grassroots as well as women who work on pebbles and as sand strainers. The policies should be designed in such a way that is inclusive to women who are from marginalized social groups. CSOs representatives should not only think about women who are similar to their status but also for women who are from lower economic or social status. CSOs women should advocate for the formulation of policies and implementation of those policies equally for all social groups of women. Women at the grass-roots should also come forward from the private sphere to public space. They should understand that without being self-confident and self-dependent it will be difficult to ensure their rights. Organizations working at the grassroots should work actively to increase awareness level of women. Women at the grassroots level should develop the motivation of "I can do" instead of "I cannot do" to ensure their rights.

The main instrument to bring women from grassroots to national levels is the national policies which are developed by the government. Also, effective implementation of such policies should be given priority. Women organizations working for the rights of excluded women should come forward and play active role in empowerment of rural women. The structure of political parties should be inclusive right from grassroots level so that women will be able to come to central level and then to the government. When women get opportunity to be the part of the government including cabinet to other positions there will be greater gender power balance. When women from all social groups are in decision making and policy making structure, they will help in formulating policies that are supportive to women itself. Such inclusive policies will help in making the role of women meaningful and effective in days to come.

5. Interviewee 5

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

As compared to women from other districts and zones, in the 12 years armed conflict mostly women from Karnali Zone, Far West, and some districts in eastern region (Sankhuwasabha, Taplejung, Panchthar) actively participated in the conflict. Some of the women in the Terai region were from both North and South of the highway. Women from indigenous and Madhesi community mostly participated in the conflict.

Women from 15-16 to 60-65 years were engaged directly in the conflict but majority of those women were from 20-45 years of age. Let me give you reference of Kavre and Sindhupalchok. In Sindupalchok, I had a discussion with women and on the basis of my discussion it shows that women from 35-40 years were participating in large number. Also, children around 8-9 years were maximally involved in the conflict and they went underground. These children were mostly mobilized in collecting information.

2. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

Women became involved with the insurgency either voluntary, coerced or a

mixture of both. Some women joined the Maoist out of will/voluntarily and spontaneously. In some cases husband went to join the rebel and got killed then their wives joined the movement to avenge their husband's death. Similarly, sisters went to join the Maoist to take avenge for the death of their brothers. Some women and family also decide to join the movement to take revenge from the security forces for the atrocities committed by them to their family members. Some women decided to join the movement out of conviction. While some women joined the movement to come out from their oppressed situation, which had made them victims of domestic violence, inequality in education, lack of education. The Maoist carried out propaganda work aimed at educating villagers they if they are supported in their struggle they will be able to bring out radical change in society that will help them in free people from all sufferings and oppressions. Some women made conscious decision to join the Maoist to free themselves from the shackles of discrimination, exclusion and exploitations.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

When we focus only on women, many women in those districts were from 15-16 or 45-50 years age. Participation of women who were more than 45 years of age was in my opinion. Women from Dalit and other marginalized social groups were mostly attracted by the conflict. Women played several roles ranging from information collection, combatants and as full-fledged fighters, members of cultural troupe that was engaged in motivating people to join the movement, propagandist and so. Women facilitated in raising awareness of people in the various social groups in order to persuade more people to support the Maoist cause.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

When we visited people in the post conflict period and interacted with them many

people believe that the conflict had a negative impact on family structure of people. Many people think that if those women who had participated in the conflict instead of being at the war field if they were at home with their family they would have been in a better situation now economically, and socially. While some other women who returned from war are now are able to support their families because of their increased leadership roles, self-development, and capacity development. However, what percent of women have been able to benefit from their engagement in the Maoist force is not very clear. In my opinion, there was improvement in the leadership ability of some women who were involved in Maoist movement, however, overall, there was negative implication on their family, house, social aspects of life rather than positive.

Women who devoted their time to their home and family remained vacuum in case of combatant women during the conflict period. Women who left their home to join the rebel, another kind of family structure or alternative support system was developed in such families spontaneously, and overall, their family structure was really disturbed. In the absence of young and energetic women, who had been leading the household responsibilities, old people, particularly their parents or in-laws were forced to take the responsibilities of the household. However, those old people couldn't do much. Rebel women left their families with the motivation that they would be able to do something for the society, but in the process their own they had to sacrifice their own families and homes responsibilities to achieve that. The sacrifices made by those women gave opportunities to very few only as 33% women were represented in the CA as per the mandate of the Interim Parliament. This provision provided some women who were engaged in the Maoist movement to come forward in political arena. However, not all women who were engaged in the Maoist movement got the opportunity. Few who got opportunities after the war were able to support their family. Our social structure was supportive to all women, and all women were not equally mobilized positively. Overall, once women leave their home and family to join the movement it will definitely have negative impact on the family as a whole. Furthermore, lack of capacity and adequate social infrastructure on the part of government to rehabilitate those war returnees' women

created problems for them in reintegration and their family structure.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

The situation of VAW differs from place to place. For example, if you look at the case of Sindhupalchok (focusing on tis more than 50% VDCs), women from Bahun and Chettri social groups are mostly engaged in the Maoist movement. In Pyuthan it is again Bahun and Chettri women. When you see in Jajarkot, Salyan it is mostly Dalit and Indigenous women. It depends on the geography and needs of people, and also it depends on who takes the lead and who plays the role in facilitation.

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

In my interactions with some conflict victims, they said it was challenging for women to take decisions in the absence of men. When men die or leave their family women feel that they have become guardian-less. The society did not give them any recognition, and they felt isolated, stigmatized, or discriminated by the society. Widowhood in Nepali society leads to further challenges for women in decision making. Not only in decision making process but also in participation in social activities war-widows faced difficulties. In some cases due to allege involved of their deceased husband in Maoist, some war-widows were ostracized by the society. Women encountered many social challenges. In many cases, war widows whose man died while fighting for the cause Maoist movement were intentionally and without will included in social activities due to fear of actions from Maoist for neglecting those families whose husband died of their cause. Due to fear and terror of Maoist, the society forcefully gave some space to their wife and family in the community.

10. Does increased participation of women in household agricultural roles lead to women's empowerment?

Despite several challenges, women continued to work. Many women who had

limited agricultural knowledge and skills left their farm land uncultivated saying they are compelled to do so since they lacked the required knowledge. Majority of women were forced to take up agricultural roles that were previously carried out by men. They forced themselves to learn the technology related to agriculture. They developed their skills in various agricultural roles such as seed collection, how where, and when to collect them, and to take care of them. The impact of armed conflict on agriculture was negative when you look analyze the situation in entire country. Many families who were displaced during the conflict are still not able to resettle their return and ownership of their land, and their farm lands continue to be uncultivated even today. Overall, the economy of the country was adversely affected by the impact of armed conflict. Women out of compulsion changed some of those challenges into opportunities.

11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house? (community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

Challenges sometimes can be converted into opportunities. Though the Maoist war widows faced difficulty in being accepted by the society because of their husband background, the society was compelled to include them in various social networks (CFUGs, drinking water, agricultural, and mother's group) that were functional at the grassroots levels in the absence of their husband. Those Maoist war-widows were given some opportunity in social organizations offered social services to people like the school management committees etc. We can call that opportunity or the ability gained or learned by women to face challenges.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

This again depend on the position of people in the Maoist party that were involved in the conflict. Those Maoist cadres who were active and aware they will arrange to keep their social status good and would support their family, and manage their

farmland from where they were based even when they were working as a combatants. While there are many other cases where the male head of the household left and their dependent wives were not able to do anything in the absence of them.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

Conflict had more negative impact than positive. This is because women could not work openly and freely due to fear. However, it was positive for some people because of conflict some people developed their ability. To be aware. Overall, I feel it was negative.

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

Women tried to contribute for establishing peace. In some places, they initiated small groups. Similarly, women tried to contribute to peace through thee organizations they were affiliated. Though it was very risky to conduct discussions during the conflict period, women tried to conduct both formal and informal discussions. Many people during the conflict got killed by both the parties to the war because of their alleged involvement in spying. Women played crucial role in raising awareness of people from home to community to prevent spread of wrong information during such sensitive period. Secondly, women in rural areas contributed to peace by taking up sole responsibility of running the household single handedly. If women had not done this then the situation would have been more chaotic. By taking double burden of running the household women contributed to peace. Women took care of their children and elderly people in the family and this is also part of peace making. Women could have deflected from this responsibility saying if my husband in snot taking any responsibility why should I only take the responsibility. Such thinking on the part of women could have led to more chaotic situation at the community level. The entire community and society could have completely collapsed in such situation. For saving the society women played crucial role though it was really challenging and not easy responsibility. This is because when one

person is asked to do the work of two people it is not easy.

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

I am not very sure on this. I just heard few things from outside source. I still remember few women who had participated in the Maoist movement were in the Community Forestry User group in leadership positions. Many of the women whom I had trained were involved in conflict and now they are leading various positions in different areas. Many of those women fee that they were not adequately represented in the peace process and their voice and concerns were not addressed adequately. Though women contributed enormously by fighting as a worrier with a rifle in their hand, their voice and concerns were not addressed.

Political empowerment of women was brought about by the conflict. When we look at the number of women who has come to political level we can say there was political empowerment of women. If the efforts made by women were recognized and women were given sufficient space in such a way it would have been better for their political growth. Conflict lead to political empowerment of women.

The reduction of women in second CA elections is due to power struggle between political parties. It depends a lot on the political parties will and their mentality for promoting women. Overall, after the end of conflict the political representation of women has increased. There are still some men who are not interested to include women in decision making process. The political forces which says that women shouldn't be given opportunity is stronger than forces that says women should be given equal opportunity like men. Only number cannot say that the representation of women had increased or decreased. A question might come, should women be included or should women come? Our social structure encourages that all women should be given opportunity to participate in many forums.

23. Women from which ethnic group, caste group, age group, economic status, occupation, educational background participated in the establishment of peace?

Those women who were economically poor, backward, and marginalized including Dalit did not get adequate opportunity even after joining the Maoist movement. Women from indigenous group were able to come forward in the role of combatants as well as leadership roles. This is because they had courage and strength. In the Maoist movement also people/women who was in higher position and who were active earlier as well got opportunity to come forward.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

For sustainable peace women can contribute enormously. First women can play a crucial role in transforming the entire political institutions of the country. Second, women can support peace building efforts that are currently ongoing at their households and community levels. Third, women can contribute to resource generation by contributing to livelihood support activities. However, within the peace committees itself there are some problems regarding roles and resources distribution. Women have very limited access to them and many people create problems in peace committees. However, peace committees are not a total failure. It is better to have a peace committee rather than not to have any. Peace committees are engaged in number of ways and they are conducting socio psychological support to victim and their families.

6. Interviewee 6

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

Women mostly from marginalized areas that had no access to any resources participated during the conflict. Women from Dalit and indigenous groups, and also other marginalized social groups. Women from 17-18 and below 40 years it is my guess.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

There are two to three main reasons why women form certain ethnic and caste

groups joined the Maoist movement in large numbers. The Maoist leadership capitalized on the poverty of people. They communicated to people that without social transformation it is not possible to free people from excluding social group from class oppression. They communicated to community people that everyone needs to work together to bring about radical transformation in Nepal and this can only be achieved though armed rebellion. Class oppression and disparity should be ended was the propaganda used by the Maoist which attracted large number of people from excluded groups including youths. They mobilized large number of youths from excluded and marginalized groups as they were local and fully aware of the problems faced by the villagers. They were able to win confidence of people by spreading messages that the de facto and de jury discrimination against certain section of population in Nepalese society prevails due to caste, class, ethnic disparities. The Maoist convinced women, particularly young girls from local areas saying that they also share many of the economic and other grievances suffered by rural population and they are there to fight for their cause. The Maoist leadership was able to motivate women with such propaganda and they encouraged them to be united and fight for the cause.

Second, we all know that de facto discrimination prevailed in our society since long and the state mechanisms had failed to end such discriminations. The discriminatory state policies motivated many people to join the armed rebel in order to free themselves from such state supported social exclusion. Third, people were compelled to join the Maoist forces because they were more close to people   than the state instruments. Maoist rebels came to the village or community almost every day, interacted to them, mixed up with them, which made people from rural ares to be automatically close to them. There is a saying in Nepal, "Tada ko devta bhanda najikaiko bhoot jati"meaning (A ghost that is nearer to you better than god that is far away from you). Local people had no other alternatives than joining the Maoists.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the

armed conflict?

First, they worked as combatants carrying weapons. Second, they also played the role in disseminating information (passing information, letters, and messages). I also heard that they played the role in nursing the wounded fighters. I saw some video clips where women were actively engaged cooking food for the rebels.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

I had a great impact on the family structure. Many women were forced to leave their families and were completely disconnected from them. We heard many cases where women even left their small kids to join the rebel groups. We also heard that many women got married with male combatants in the camp. How eve, it was hard for them to live together and they were constantly moving from one place to another. Many women became war widows. The family life was tensed and disturbed by the Maoist movement and it was really not easy for families to survive those days. Even after the end of conflict we can see its impact on the family, for example, many women left their husband and family to join the rebel and while in the camp they remarried.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

Those women who were involved in conflict voluntarily had some knowledge about the Maoist movement while some other were forced to join the movement. Those women whose son/sons or husband left home to join the Maoist insurrection had to face many atrocities from the security personnel who harassed and tortured them and forced them to bring back their son or husband. In some cases women from such families were even raped by the police. Also, in cases where men went to the war leaving behind his wife, and got killed while fighting then such women really faced many challenges, including oppression from her own family member. The family made such women responsible for the cause of their son's death and verbally abused them for not being able to control her husband and sending him to join the Maoist. Families abuses the war-

widows for the loss of their son. There are many cases where the in-laws have shown the frustration of losing their son to the war to their widows. Women who did not go to war and left in the village, in my perception suffered more than women who went to work as rebels.

Both Maoist and security personnel widows suffered a lot during the conflict. In my perception, widows of security personnel suffered more than Maoist widows and they continue to face the challenges even today. For example widows of armed personnel killed in the war were supposed to get 10 lacs compensation from the government. Many women got those compensation money in paper and not in reality because the money either went to their children or to the in-laws. The main reason for this was that the family did not trust the young war-widow and thought she might end up getting married again. In some cases, women were forced to buy property with that compensation money, however, land entitlement was not given to them.

The statistics that shows that VAW decreased during the conflict period. This may be due to few reasons. First, may be due to less reporting due to fear and second due to Maoist severe actions against the defaulters. Maoist used tactics of severely punishing those who committed violence against women and others which made community people fearful of committing such crimes. My father told me a story of Tamang community close to our village. In the past, they had traditional way of handling conflict, where conflict used to taken care of by the village headman. Whenever a case of interpersonal conflict was reported, disputants were supposed to go to the village head's house with a bottle of home brew wine. The village head then nicely trashed the disputants and send them home. This discouraged other people in the community to engage in disputes with others in future. Maoist adopted similar strategies to curb VAW. The fear factor of possible actions by the Maoist might have prevented VAW to some extent. Maoist used power of punishment rather than persuasion to prevent VAW. Also, during the conflict period women might have been scared to report cases of VAW due to volatile security situation in the country. They thought if they went to report VAW to the police they may be wrongly perceived by the Maoist as police spy. Nepal police have maintained statistics of

only the reported cases. Also, during the conflict period women had to go to district headquarter to report VAW cases as there were no police posts located at the VDC's level. Women did not want to take the risk of going to the district headquarter and reporting the VAW.

10. Does increased participation of women in household agricultural roles lead to women's empowerment?

The farmers in Nepal are mostly subsistence farmers, therefore, it became really difficult for women. Our agricultural practices and also culture are biased towards women, culturally, women are prohibited from ploughing the land and making the plough. Such discriminatory cultural practices compels women to take help from other men who might set some conditions for helping them. Families which were dependent of agriculture for their livelihood were really impacted by the conflict. Women who were engaged on other professions such as sewing, knitting and so on could move forward in life without taking support from men. The families which were dependent on subsistence farming were really affected by the conflict.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

It was really difficult for women to run their livelihood. When men are around, the level of income of the family from agriculture will be definitely different when they are away from home. After the death, or disappearances of their husbands, women became economically dependent on their in-laws including brother-in-law. It became really difficult for widows or half widows to get money, food grains, and vegetables from her extended family members. Their extended family captured all their income and treated them like a servant. Due to oppression from their extended family, many childless war-widows, half widows try to go to overseas jobs in Gulf countries. Many such incidents happened in my village, where war widows left to India or Gulf countries and started working there. The cases of VAW increased during those period.

Women could not get income from their farmland because of their dependency on others. Also, this made women to really work hard. I will give you an example of wage discrimination between men and women on the basis of their gender in agricultural labor. Lathey (a male agricultural labor) who makes the land ready for plantation gets more wage than women who are engaged in plantation. Even for the same work women get less wages than men it is still prevalent in our society. In comparison to men's one day work women had to work for 1.5 days, which is open discrimination. During war time, it was difficult for single women to manage their responsibilities because of discrimination. Also, in culture many work are culturally entitled to men, particularly ploughing the land even today. During the conflict period when went and worked for 1.5 or 2 days then only men would come to their house and work for one day as exchange of labor. There was economic violence against women during that period. War widows and half widows faced many challenges in order to cope up with their livelihood need.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

During the conflict period, I got an opportunity to conduct a case study in Banke. There I met group of single women who were organized with the help of some organizations. These women became war-widows or half widows during the conflict period when their husband were killed or disappeared. Those women got organized and were working in a professional way. While writing the case, I wrote a saying which later I had to omit because many people gave me their strong feedback on that. I think the report has been published by CECI (Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators Program). I do not have the hard copy of that report but I do have soft copy with me. The outcome of the report was such that like if sounded like, "the death of the husbands open doors of opportunities for women". Those studied would have not got those opportunities and status if their husbands were alive. After the death of their husband, those women became organized in order to survive. They looked up for income sources and became professional. It was found that some of those women are now capable of riding scooty

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from their own income. This can be seen as the positive impact of conflict on women. In difficult time people are willing to chew even iron is a saying in Nepali. Those women had no option so they were willing to take up any challenges. When we are traveling by a car and suddenly the care overturn, we put all are efforts to save our life. Those women were in do or die situation so they put in all their efforts to come out of that situation. However, very few will be able to overcome that situation while many others succumbs to that difficult situation. Few war widows have been able to enhance their capacity and do things and have been able to improve their status. There are many examples and if you look it from leadership perspectives and talk about single women, conflict victims have organized themselves, where they share their feelings and concern. During my interaction with those women they told me not to extent sympathize them and address them as poor victims. Those women were empowered and do not need any sympathy from others. Conflict created some space for empowerment of women. Though we can say that conflict is good, it has created conducive environment for some women to come forward.

17. What are the types of destruction to social network (…........) that occurred during the armed conflict, and how they affected women?

In my interactions with war-widows in Banke they shared with me some of their stories of oppressions suffered by them from their family members and the society. They told me that out of compulsion they started wearing red clothes (symbols of married woman) which is strictly prohibited for widows in Hindu culture. When they walked on the street as a widow people started teasing, harassing, passing bad comments, and even clicking their tongues but when they started wearing red people stopped doing such mischief. Women in red clothes and red beads hinders others from misbehaving with them. Widowhood is a vulnerability in Hindu culture so those women trespassed the cultural norms and started wearing red clothes and other things worn by married women so as to being harassed by others. Basically, I feel mainly because of three factors single women could survive during the conflict, including personal capacity and support from family members. Some kind of family support mechanisms might have existed which

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helped those single women to survive. Also, there were organization such as Oxfam, CARE which extended some kind of support to those women to help them survive and sustain. When women become organized they develop the feeling that they are not alone and they have people around them to support them. You all were not here during the earthquake and aftermath. I had gone to my ancestral home Dolakha to visit my family. Before going home, I had some worries about the state of mind of my family members there, particularly my father who is already 80 years now. I had a feeling that my parents, and other villages would be really stressed and also weeping for the losses they incurred due to the earthquake.

When I arrived home I was surprised not to observe that. They were smiling and coping with the situation. My parents and other villagers said that the earthquake had affected not only them by many other people throughout the country. There is another example, in Charikot, a place near my house, one the first earthquake that hit the country, only one house collapsed there. The owner of that house became very frustrated and he became like mad for losing only his house. He started using abusive languages to everyone in that area, including Chief District Officer, Local Development Officer, and others. However, during the biggest aftershocks, where almost all the houses in Charikot became flat, and this person who had complaint why only his house collapsed became quiet and stopped complaining. If many people suffers, as a group they develop coping or survival strategies for all of their survival. The same feeling came to women throughout the country who became victims during the conflict. By seeing other women also suffer during the conflict period they develop a feeling that we are not only suffering, there are other women who are also going through difficult time like us. They consoled themselves by comparing with other women who were also going through such situation.

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment and disempowerment.

Loss of infrastructure resulted from the conflict. In the absence of conflict, Nepal would have really move forward in infrastructure development. The conflict dragged the

nation to economic backwardness. We could have access to more roads, eg., the spirit that came after 1951 BS (with the slogan let us make our villages ourselves). All the major projects that were in place to increase access of people to roads completely halted during the conflict period. Roads are an important component of development and we can very well reflect that. All those work of road construction stopped during the conflict period. Nepal would have really progressed economically in the absence of conflict. Women who came to represent political parties or positions of power could not do much for the improvement of women. In the first CA less than 33 % women were elected, and 197 women were there in total. This number got decreased during the second CA elections.

All women who came to CA were not equally gender sensitive. I can give you an example because these women CA members couldn't be united on the issue of women. They instead represented their own political parties. Instead of women representative, they were representing various political parties such as UML, Maoist and the NC. Therefore, those women CA members couldn't be united on the issue/agenda of women. They were not gender sensitive, and I do not feel so. They were interested in advocating or promoting party's agenda rather than women's agenda. I am not saying that they did not push women's agenda at all. They were not CA members of women but they were their party's representatives.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

At the central or political level women didn't have much access because of which women did not get opportunity to participate in negotiations or engage in the process of negotiations. Everything is determined by the fact that who represents the political parties' leadership. I found one positive aspect in it, given an opportunity women can really do well. I am not very updated on women CA members in second CA elections. However, if you look at the women CA members of first CA election, they have really develop their ability and status. Take example of CA member Shanta Chaudhary who was able to reach to the status of chairperson despite being a semi-literate woman. She was

able to support the career growth of her family members and her community. Overall, women did have some engagement in high level political discourses and debates. Women who were at the central level of the political parties also had nominal or minimal representation. Those women did not have the capacity or ability to move forward on their own and the men did not the will to take them to negotiations.

There are several reasons why men did not want to promote women to negotiation tables. One reason is that every human body first thinks about himself/herself. First, they will think about themselves than others. People want to help them first then their family members. How the concept of inclusion is developing in Nepal is that first ensure your own space and then only think about others. If one or two people from political parties gets to represent a high-level meeting, mostly it is the main leaders of the party who will attend such high level meetings. Rarely, there will be any political party leader who would say I will not attend the meeting so you go to a woman leader. Whether women will get to participate in a negotiation largely depends on the number of people attending such negotiations. If more people are attending then women might also get the opportunity. If in case few people are attending it is always men who attends such meetings. Also, in most of the political parties, the main leaders or head of the political parties are mostly men. Second, if for example from UML the vice chairperson, Bidhya Devi Bhandari, is sent to a high level meeting representatives from other political parties in the meeting will the chairperson of the party K.P Oli, who is a male, did not come. When men turns up from other political parties, they expect to meet a man rather than a woman. They undermine the capacity of women and insist men, who is considered more responsible party member to join the meeting. Women who attends such forums feel uncomfortable and harassed. Such tendency and environment within the party may discourage women from coming forward, and they themselves may back out from going to meetings saying please send somebody else to the meeting. Even if Bidhya Bhandari leads a meeting, she has to take approval from party's Chairperson to commit on anything.

However, chairperson are not required to take permission from anyone. They have

decision making power. They might reach to an agreement in the meeting itself without consensus from other party members. They hold high level of authority. However, when women attend they have to take permission from others who are mostly men and this tends to make the decision making process lengthy and slow. There are not many women in the leadership positions. Also, lack of decision making authority discourages women to attend meeting that are high in stake.

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

The roles played by women in community changed during the conflict period. All the roles played by men in the community earlier were now played by women out of compulsion. In rural areas, community level works such as discussions and interactions were carried out by women. Most of the men left home to either participate in the revolution or went overseas to Gulf countries to escape the conflict. Only women were left in the villages. They somehow managed all the household responsibilities. Women carried out their own roles as well as the roles that were carried out by men previously. It can be seen in the past there has been increase in the number of women in CFUGs and water group committees and this may be due to gains made in the conflict.

In the aftermath of the conflict also the roles taken by women have not changed and women continue to be active in those committees. There are few things that is leading to inclusion of women in Nepal. At the national level, there is a whim for inclusion. So those women who came forward during the conflict period had to be supported to move forward; it was a kind of compulsion to do so. In the context of CF, a women has to be there either in the post of chairperson or secretary mandatory. Women who are capable are automatically given space. Men may not be interested in assigning women such positions from which they can benefit at the central level but they do have any hesitation to assign community level positions to women that do not entail benefits. Those are social position and women's leadership have increased in such positions.

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

The impact of conflict at urban areas was very different as compared to its impact in rural areas. At the national level, women were already established and came forward to the leadership positions. There was very limited space for women from grassroots who suffered during the conflict period to come forward and take the leadership roles and positions. To take the national leadership women needs to take a leap which is not possible to attain within a short span of 2-4 years. Several steps have to be taken by women to arrive in that position. In my opinion, all women cannot be categorized in one group. Some women might have taken leadership position and positions of power at the national level, but how many of those women were from the rural areas, and how many of them are conflict victims remains a question. Many women organizations headed by women were active during the conflict period that committed to represent community women, including WOREC, Jagaran Nepal, and Sancharika Samuha and so on. These organizations were really in highlight during the conflict period, however, they are not no highlighted now. These organizations played some positive roles during the conflict period.

23. Women from which ethnic group, caste group, age group, economic status, occupation, educational background participated in the establishment of peace?

Women from marginalized social groups were not adequately represented in civil society mostly. Mostly educated women, women who had access to resources from the donors, and women from well to do families were mostly associated with civil society organizations. Women from low income families cannot have access to the donors and it is true even after the end of conflict. It should have been really hard for women from low income families to come forward even during the conflict period. Women who represented CSOs were just in contrast to women who joined the revolution. It is just my assumption.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Women can play many roles for establishing sustainable peace in the country,

including taking the leadership of community based organizations. Second, men are mostly migrating to Gulf countries and other destinations and the responsibility of managing the home, family, community, and society rests with women. Many community level organizations are managed by women. We can see now there is not much difference in education between girls and boys. Parents are sending both their sons and daughters to schools to educate them. I personally fee in present society whether it is boy or a girl they will not live with their parents, and therefore they are equal and I have that feeling now. Our society has changed now. In the past people in the rural areas had less mobility. Very few men who left home either worked in the Nepal police or army. Those women worked for 20-25 years and after getting their pensions they went back to their homes and they were engaged in regular farm work in the village and they looked after their aging parents and they were the ones who offered water to their parents in the dead bed. Men had no other job options then. Now, mobility of people have really increased. For, attaining higher education youths are leaving country to study abroad every day. You cannot expect that your children will be beside you in your old age and they will be able to give you water when you are ready for dying. In old err days, people had the feeling that daughter/daughters would leave their natal home after their marriage, whereas son would always remain with the parents in the village. Now the society has changed a lot. Women are getting opportunities in many areas including education and therefore they can play crucial role in peace-building. New generation has access to education and other resources to do something for the country. However, new challenge that is surfacing. New generation girls are interested in going abroad and earning their degrees from US, UK and other countries. I am not sure what this new trend will have in our society. For sustainable development contribution from new generation is tantamount. Even after the end of the conflict, women victims have been doing well. For example all those CFUGs that are managed by women are better managed in comparison to other CFUGs managed by men. There is less corruption, mismanagement of funds in women only managed CFUGs. There are many examples of such women headed CFUGs. I think the lesson learned from CFUGs can be replicated in other areas as well. We all know one of the

drivers of conflict is corruption and mismanagement and so on. When women lead organization transparency and accountability is high. This will contribute to sustainable peace in the country if it can be replicated in other areas.

<u>7. Interviewee 7</u>

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

The armed conflict started from Rolpa district and mostly women from Mongolian (indigenous group) from this district and entire western region participated in the conflict. Women from Bahun and Chettri social group were not included in large numbers though they were in leadership roles. Mostly women from Dalit and indigenous groups like Limbus, Magar, Gurung and Rai. Dalits, who are economically low class group mostly participated in the movement particularly in the initial phase of the movement.

Mostly the Maoist mobilized the youths as it was easy to motivate them to join the movement. Those who were partially educated and interested to learn more about national issues of concern. The Maoist also capitalized on the grievances of excluded groups, including Dalits. They communicated to people that state has de facto discriminated them. Similarly, Maoist also talked about class and opportunity disparity issues. Maoist were particularly successful in attracting people from far-flung mountain areas that had not received any benefits of development. Maoist made it clear to people that should they come to power the excluded group will be socially included and they will be free from all sorts of discrimination and will be equally treated. They committed to promoting social equality and inclusion. They were really able to convince the people from excluded groups.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

Women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebellion

mainly because of two reasons. Caste and class disparity that prevailed in our society. By class I mean financial and economically backward people who had limited access to resources, policy making institutions, employment opportunities, and people who had lower representation in every state mechanisms. People from these excluded groups were mostly confined to lower level jobs in state bureaucracy so they were not in a position to help much their people. It was easier for the Maoist to capitalize on the discontent of marginalized groups. Communist philosophy is based on class equality through class war. Initially the Maoist started their movement as class war but later they named it People's War.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

Women performed all types of roles as fighter, motivators. They went to rural areas to educate and motivate people to free themselves from old social practices that were harmful to people and society at large. They tried to motivate people so that they could be changed. Those people who didn't believe in their philosophy they used power of coercion to convince such people and bring them under their grip. In the initial phase of Maoist movement the government was strong and they targeted the Maoist and those who were caught were imprisoned. Maoist then went underground and the war started. It was a guerrilla war where there was no gender difference between male and female combatants with the Maoist force. They fought equally as fighters. It may be that the Maoist mobilized the women in easy work as compared to men. We saw in Television live telecast when Maoist attacked the police in Pritivi Highway during the war time. In the footage we could see more women fighting there and both men and women fought equally. They might have divided the work, and some of the women might have been given the role of cooking, and motivators. The Maoist sent both men and women to the battlefield and they were equally engaged in fighting. Maoist philosophy say all people are equal and there is no difference between men and women. The difference is only

biological. They said that there should be no differences in work as a result of which they were able to involve both men and women.

4. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

It is hard to say what percent of women joined the Maoist voluntarily. I think there should be some kind of research to find out exactly what percent of women joined the Maoist voluntarily. Many women were forced to join the group. After the signing of the Peace Accord it was also found that 75% of the women combatants joined the Maoist voluntarily. Many women joined the movement voluntarily while some others were forced to join the movement because of the circumstances. Some war widows whose husbands became target of security personnel and lost their lives decided to join the movement to avenge the loss. To take revenge from the police force was the main motivation for some women to join the Maoist forces and this feeling came spontaneously and nobody forced those women to join the rebel. While some others joined the movement with the hope of bringing some positive changes in society. Many joined to take revenge of the loss of their family members. In families where some members had joined the Maoist, other members also followed the suit fearing that the security forces might target them alleging them to be supporter of Maoist. After the start of war, the police started searching the villages and fearing the atrocities from police in suspect for support of Maoist, many villagers joined the Maoist. Also, Maoist assured them of protection from the security forces. Initially for some people circumstances made them to join the movement but later on they were convinced by the Maoist cause. May be we can give it a terminology forced voluntarism. Majority of women, particularly from Dalit and Indigenous community joined the movement to bring about the social change after they became convinced by Maoist political ideology and education.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

The conflict had negative impact on family. Many women lost their husbands and

became war-widows. There is an NGO for single women in Kathmandu, which advocates for the rights of single women. In some families, due to conflict there were cases of divorce and polygamy. Also, when wife died in the war husbands remarried. However, conflict brought about a positive changes in the awareness level of people. We cannot say conflict had negative or positive impact on the family structure. Many women married comrade of their choices within the party after joining the rebellion. After the end of conflict many of them got divorced and those couples are now living separately. Some of those marriages were inter-caste marriages and they later had problem adjusting in their family due to social stigma attached to caste in Hindu society. The family and social life after the end of the conflict was not easy for such couples. Inter-caste marriage is reported to be common among Maoist combatants despite being highly unacceptable in the society.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

During the conflict period there was reduction in cases of VAW. One positive aspect of Maoist movement is that people, including women became aware and sensitive about their rights. During the Maoist war there was reduction in the cases of VAW as they provided justice to survivors of VAW. To some extent, VAW results from lack of awareness. Maoist movement really helped in increasing awareness level of women, therefore, women were aware about their access to rights. Even after the end of conflict, the largest number of women from Maoist party went to the Parliament.

There were few cases where parents married off their daughter early (child-marriage) in order to save them from being abducted or indoctrinated by the Maoist. However, there were not many cases. Married women also joined the Maoist out of conviction. Many times parents thought that if they could marry their daughter to a migrant worker in India or near destination, their daughter would be safe from the Maoist. Maoist attracted the youth through their political education following international practices and also following the practices in other countries of the world. In many villages Maoist showed that they were against child marriages and wherever they heard cases of child marriages

they tried to stop them. Maoist were successful in preventing child marriages. Maoist did their best to prevent child marriages for girls below 18 years of age and they were disseminating information against child marriages.

7. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's participation in agricultural labor?

The conflict really had an impact on the agricultural life of people. In fact, the entire economy of the country was affected by the conflict. In the absence of men in rural areas, who left the villages from fear of being targeting by both the warring sides, more women were involved in agricultural work. Only women were left in some rural areas and when Maoist started recruiting young women then the agricultural activities in those areas came to standstill. Some families left their farmland and escaped to some other place in search of safety. Very few who were left there in the villages were not in a position to go to the field. Even if they went to the field they couldn't work for longer hours and they had to curtain their work because of fear. The agricultural sector was affected enormously. Farm owners were forced to leave their villages because of fear of extortion by the Maoist. Mostly people who were engaged with the movement were landless agricultural laborers. The movement led to inflation of food products and other essential commodities.

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

Women were capable of taking decisions as conflict has brought some positive changes in decision making power of women. In the absence of men, women were able to take decisions. In some families, women had to take decision even when their men were in the house due to disability inflicted on them by the conflict. Before the Maoist movement women were not allowed to take decisions because of many reasons. Maoist movement led to acceptance of women an integral and important part of family and the society at large due to increased awareness of women. Decision making power of women

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improved and bettered during the conflict period.

Changes in society takes place slowly. Changes that is brought about in society spontaneously is different from changes brought about due to policy changes. Maoist movement definitely increased decision making power of women. They brought about changes that was foreseen for four years in just one year. The access of women to resources is limited due to our society being patriarchal. There is no correlation between Maoist movement and women's access to resources. Instead, Maoist movement brought about positive changes in society. Patriarchy is the main reason why women have been deprived of resources in our society and this has been in place historically. Maoist movement helped in changing such discrimination against women.

11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house?(community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

Women are capable of putting their concerns and voices confidently now. In the past, when there was a meeting in rural areas there used to be very few people but now we can see large number of people participating in such event. Women are also present in such forum in large numbers and are capable of putting their voice and concerns. When following the media aftermath the killer earthquake in April 2015, we can see that large number are there to take the support and rescue materials. Though men were involved in carrying the loads, women were there standing in the queue. Awareness level and capacity of women to talk in public sphere increased because of the conflict.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

Though access of women has increased, the decision making power of spending money rests with men in our society because of deeply ingrained patriarchy. Women have become vocal and have come forward, and there has been some changes in their lives. Spending power of the family still rests with the women because of patriarchy. Compare

to past the decision making power of women relating to family related spending have increased, but it is still nominal. Still the decisions taken by men becomes applicable and is implemented. There has been some improvements in the lives of women. Those women who were dependent on agriculture for their livelihood or are engaged in small scale enterprises, their awareness level has increaser are women are able to convince men to make decisions that are favorable to their interest. Women if they give logical justification that are reasonable and good, men are bound to listen to them. Men cannot go against that and men are sensible. Women if can give sensible and convincing reasons men will have to listen to them. In some cases common decisions are made by both men and women and benefit or loss will be borne equally by both men and women in the family. Women are now able to influence men in final decisions and the family decisions are taken by consensus.

To ensure that every citizen have right to food, education and housing is the responsibility of the state. How much state can promote all these has to be observed in the days to come. During Maoist war women became aware and were given opportunity to participate in equally in every sphere of life. Maoist also talked about equal distribution of resources. The overall economy of the country came down during the conflict period due to closure of factories and the mills. Food, housing, and education were negatively impacted by the conflict. However, after the end of the conflict, Nepal is till is in the transitional phase and the Constitution is not yet ready. One improvement I have seen is that the education level of people have changed. In the past, people had the perception that girls should not be sent to school. There has been a change in this old thinking and there is a growing equality in education sector and this changed in attitude occurred after the the Maoist movement. Many people migrated during the conflict period and those who came back there was no land distribution to landless families and therefor they became frustrated. The life and status of displace people who came back after the end of conflict has not changed at all. People who had shelter to live before the conflict period lost their house due to destruction wrought by the conflict. Many people were displaced by the conflict and there were no resettlement programs for displaced

families. Also, some families who migrated during the conflict period did not return back and are now resettled in a new location. The movement didn't bring any substantive changes in housing and food security of people.

15. Do you think women's economic vulnerability often increases significantly during armed conflict, especially in the case of female-headed households?

In joint families, men have economic upper hand. In case of single women when there are no other hands to support them, women are compelled to take decisions for the family. In the the context of joint family, the income made by women is used in supporting the family and their children. When women lead a family she has no luxury to spent her income in other types of her personal expenses rather she is supposed to use it for the welfare of the family.

17. What are the types of destruction to social network (…........) that occurred during the armed conflict, and how they affected women?

Before the conflict, there were many social groups such as mother's group and other clubs. There were some disturbances in the functioning of such groups. Also, some other completely collapsed during the conflict. After the end of the conflict, some of those organizations were able to revive and people started organizing themselves through such organizations. However, their networks have been disturbed to some extent, and their efficiency decreased. We cannot say that all the networks completely collapsed but the activities of those networks were disturbed and they have not been able to come to previous status as yet.

18. To what extent have women been able to participate in national decision making process and in civil society during the armed conflict? What have been the main obstacles to their political participation and influence?

Even during the conflict period, the decision making and CSOs were mostly dominated by men. After the end of conflict, the access of women, particularly

participation has increased but the decision making power still rests with men. Maximum number of women CA members came to the Parliament from the Maoist party, which shows that their participation has increased. However, the government was formed and the portfolios were distributed women were not included. Women were not given space to come to decision making positions. It was mostly men who were in the decision making position and position of authority. However, we have to take this positively as women have been given space to come to a platform where they are able to raise their voice. Also, the representation of women have increased. The main reasons for marginalization of women from decision making positions is due to patriarchal thinking. Still people believe that only decisions that have to be taken are correct. Participation of women have increased so this might bring changes in the decision making power of women. Women who got opportunity to come to policy making level got at least an opportunity to participate. At the national level also there were some positive changes. Even CSOs have progressed now. In the past only in the absence of men women could participate. In the present context, women to to attend meetings even though a male figure is there in the family if she is aware. In the past, women went to participate in meetings at the public sphere only when men were weak physically and lacked knowledge. Now we can large number of women have come forward in CSOs and they are making great contributions. Participation of women have substantially increased though ultimate decisions made by taken by men.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

Women were excluded from all the negotiations. Take example of all the agreements that were made from 12 point, comprehensive Peace Agreement there were no women. Only in the backdrop, women were there. Women were sidelined because of patriarchy and lack of trust. It is not that there were no capable women, indeed there were many capable women. In Maoist they had women who even rose to the level of Brigadier in their command within their military structure in the army. I will share with you the

interactions that I had with former Maoist combatants whom I met in transit on my way to Nepal from Sudan. I met two women who claimed that they were in the Maoist military in the Brigadier position. In my interactions with them they expressed their sadness in not being able to bring the desired changes. Those two women were returning from Malaysia where they were working after two years. They told me that for the sake of their family and particularly their children they had to go for overseas jobs. Though women are capable, the mentality of people makes it hard for them to mainstream in society many times.

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

In true sense, women were the only people who were left in the villages during the conflict period. Women were able to contribute enormously. Even after the end of the conflict, women are able to contribute in transitional justice mechanisms and other development initiatives taking place. Many women have stories to share about regarding their experience of conflict. I had done a study for ICTJ, in that study we found that were greatly contributing for reconciliation. Those women talked about rehabilitation, compensation and justice. Those women talked about TJ (Truth, justice and reparation) and they were vocally demanding their rights.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Both men and women should collaboratively work for development of sustainable peace in Nepal. Both men and women should support the constitution writing process and after promulgation of the Constitution. Nepal is transitioning from conflict to peace and from political instability to political stability. Nepal has achieved peace from the end of conflict but is yet to achieve political stability and political conflict is still ongoing. Only after the promulgation of the Constitution political change is possible. In CA large number of women come because people trusted them. Women fought bravely during the conflict. It is the women who build the house, so women can play very central role in creating the house of our country. Women can also come forward and pressurize leaders

of political parties to reach to a consensus on debatable or contentious issues so that they are able to write the Constitution without further delay. 33% women are present in some level of governance so they can pressurize from all the sides for timely Constitution. Furthermore, women from all political parties should actively pressurize their respective party so as to make the Constitution in stipulated time. Such kind of pressure will help leaders of political parties to come to an agreement/consensus.

8. Interviewee 8

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

When you see from class wise, women from lower economic class mostly participated. Geographically it is mostly from rural areas. I am talking about all people not only women. Education wise they are mostly under SLC (high school). It is easy to show high dreams to group of people are are educated and youths and manipulate them. People who are under suppression can be brought into aggression easily. Young possess the psychology of day dreaming in the hope of their bright future. More uneducated women participated in the conflict. When we look at the trend, women who didn't have access to roads mostly participated in the conflict. They not only lacked access to roads but also access to health, education and all basic life survival facilities. Such areas which didn't have access to any kind of facilities came under the grip of the Maoist.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

If you look back into the history of Nepal, there has been several political movements in Nepal, including in 2007 BS, 2017 BS, 2028 BS. In 2036 BS there was a referendum in 2046 BS. In 2046 BS there was another movement. Overall, in Nepal, people from oppressed communities particularly women never got an opportunity to breathe in peace. The political movement that I mentioned above not successful in liberating women. There is a desire for every individual to free themselves form

oppression and suppression. If you leave a buffalo that has been tethered for several years, it also feels happy about its freedom and starts jumping. Everyone has that desire for freedom. Women had that desire in them, and Maoist were able to trigger the desire that was inside those suppressed women. Women saw an opportunity or path to come out of that suppression in Maoist women, which had promised emancipation of women, therefore, they decided to join the movement. Maoist were able to capitalize on the desire of women.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

Nepal created a kind of record in the history of wars in the world. Many women worked as a combatants. Once the Maoist started recruiting women, Nepal police and Nepal army also started recruiting women in the combat position, which was not there before. Women directly participated in the battlefield wielding their guns in their hands. When I read the history of People's war, I found out that when the fierce battle was going on there was no hierarchy within the Maoist military structure. Women were allowed to reach to the highest level of Maoist military ranks, including commander, VC, and various other important ranks. There were several women serving in the higher position in the combat forces. However, after the end of conflict when Maoist came to join the mainstream national politics women were marginalized in terms of their representation. When you look at the leadership tier, we find that very few women are there. However, during the conflict period the representation of women was very high almost 50%.

4. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

Women joined the Maoist movement for three main reasons. I got an opportunity to be a part of a research team and that research is still going on. Women we interacted with women ex-combatants they basically pointed out three main reasons to join the Maoist party. First, those girls/women who couldn't study, those who were discriminated

and humiliated by everyone in the society decided to join the movement. Second, some women develop the feeling that they need to extend their support ot the movement in order to bring about radical social transformation in Nepalese society. Those women joined voluntarily and out of conscious decision. Some women decided to join after being motivated by peers. When their close friend decided to join the movement, they felt lonely in their absence so that also followed the suit of their friends.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

       Two things are there. Once the daughter of a family decides to leave her natal home and joins the rebel then it shows that the family might be empowered internally. However, it was really frightening situation for other family members of that where the daughter went to join the war to survive and protect themselves from the atrocities of the security forces. There was always fear that security forces could come to their houses any time and use force such as harassment, torture, life threats, to find out the whereabouts of their daughter. Also, in those families where men got killed or disappeared while fighting for the rebels their situation is pathetic and continues to be like that even aftermath. The entire family structure and harmony of such families have been destroyed. Those women who lost their husband in the war were labeled as families of martyr during the conflict period may be out of fear or out of respect for the family. The social environment during the conflict period was such that war widows could walk proudly in society as a widow of a martyr. However, after the end of conflict these widows are grouped together with other widows in the society; and they are no longer treated as widows of martyr. Family of martyr from Maoist rebel groups are treated like any other people in the society. Because of this many such families have been displaced from their homes and have resettled in some other areas. Therefore, family structure was really disturbed by the armed conflict.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

When the war was ongoing there was enormous empowerment of women. There is no way we can express to what extent the movement contributed to the empowerment of women. Not only women but people from all marginalized social groups were empowered by the Maoist movement. People were scared of the Maoist, and when there was a case of VAW and the women would say I will report to the Maoist then the abusive individual will not to do that again. Maoist movement helped women to survive from cases of domestic violence. However, in the post war period such achievements couldn't be sustained and that is our bad luck. It clearly shows that VAW was mitigated due to fear and terror of Maoist. When the Maoist came to open and competitive politics, the society again reverted back to traditional society that existed during 1990s.

Mainly there are two reasons for failure of the society to retain the gains made during the conflict period. First, there is lack of political commitment on the part of leadership. The lack of political accountability on the part of political leaders is one of the reasons for non-implementation of commitments and retention of gains. Even the political parties like UML, NC and MAALE came to power through armed struggle. Before taking up arms they make big promises and bring up radical agenda but once they come to competitive and peaceful politics they tend to brush off all the old commitments. They tend to forget the roots from where they came to power and again tries to get connected with the elite people. Elites tries to dominate the politics stepping on those political leaders. This is how the elites dominate the politics. As a whole in our society, women are suppressed group and men are elites. Men are in the leadership positions and the resources of the society rests with them. Also, political parties tend to forget commitments made to women as a result of this the society reverts back to status quo and there is no changes in the lives of women. Globally, it can be seen that armed conflict results in greater violence against women. We could see that in Nepal as well. Government security forces physically assaulted women in the name of interrogation or alleged involvement of women in rebel forces. There were many cases of rape.

On the other hand, Maoist harassed family members of army and police personnel. Women and civilians were caught between the Maoist and the security forces.

In recent years, in comparison to the past, move VAW cases are reported to the police due to the fact that more women are interested in seeking justice. During the conflict period, people were scared to report cases of VAW because of fear of reprisal. Also, there were no state mechanisms present at the local level during the conflict period. Areas that were under the control of the Maoist and areas under the control of the government was completely disconnected during that time. When Maoist committed crime, it was not possible to seek justice from government, and vice versa. Due to underreporting the data may be skewed.

7. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's participation in agricultural labor?

There are two things. When large number of youths joined the Maoist movement it negatively impacted the agricultural production. Also, when the conflict became intense, particularly in the Mid-west and Far-west region (Rukum, Rolpa) very few youths who were left behind in the villages also escaped to other places to avoid being forcefully conscripted by the Maoist. Overall, agricultural production was significantly reduced during the conflict period, and still some of the arable land remain uncultivated because those who were displaced during the conflict are yet to return back. Those youths who escaped to cities or urban centers during conflict period have now gone to Gulf countries in search for better livelihood opportunities. The outmigration to Gulf countries rapidly increased during the conflict period and now more than five million Nepali youths are in Gulf Countries. Therefore, there has been rapid plunge in agricultural production. The role of women has substantially increased in agricultural production of the family in the absence of men. Since men are not there in the rural areas, and women cannot see the farmland uncultivated so they have started to plow the land, which is culturally prohibited to women. It is kind of unacceptable to see a woman plowing a field. If you travel to rural areas you can see women plowing the field.

If you look at the economic relations between men and women, economic power has not come in the hands of women. Though there might be negligible cases, there has

not been transfer of economic power to women. The decisions related to economic production and income lies with the men. Women continue to face challenges, including land entitlement and access to income generating activities. In income generating activities women's participation is very low, and therefore, in decision making processes the decisive power of women is not adequate. Recently, there has been some improvement in access of women to land and property. If you look at the statistics of land registration ledger, we can see women are slowly beginning to gain access to land because of the new land transfer policy introduced by the government, which states that when a land is registered in the name of women, land registration fees will be reduced or waived. Many families not out of will but to save tax money are transferring land in the name of women. However, the statistics is not very high as yet. In the absence of men the decision making power of the family entirely rests with women.

In case of extended families, where there are other male figures in the female (father-in-law, brother-in-law) then automatically the decision making power of the rests with them and women are suppressed in such families. Not only in the case of conflict victims but in all types of families when there is presence of men, the decision making power of women inside the house is minimal. This is true to all women and not only conflict victims or survivors. In case of families, where husband was disappeared women are yet to get access to land and property since it is owned by husband. It is very hard for women to transfer that land and property in their names since they do not have death certificate. In case of families, where the men got killed, the land and property is usually transferred in the name of women. In case of women whose husbands are disappeared, they have the decision making power but without resources.

10. Does increased participation of women in household agricultural roles lead to women's empowerment?

When the men left home to take part in the war or got killed or disappeared, the entire responsibility of handling the economic responsibility came to the shoulder of women and women have been managing that. In those families where women joined the

combatants she was the one who gave back up to the family despite she being away from the family. Conflict increased the economic involvement of women. Sad thing is that after 2062 -63 BS, the gains achieved during the conflict period got reverted to old situation.

The conflict contributed to economic empowerment of women. Also, women became capable to demand their stake in various aspects of social lives. They became capable to demand their rights. The remnant of that war time empowerment can still be seen. Similarly, the conflict gave impetus to women's rights movement and many women organizations came to the forefront in public image after the conflict. I personally feel that there is connection between conflict and women's empowerment. Women have been empowered by the conflict but the benefit from that is not sufficiently visible.

11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house? (community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

During the conflict period women exercised greater decision making power at public space. I do not want to get confined to the conflict period only. The benefits from decision making space achieved by women is visible now. We can see that the agenda of inclusion is vociferously brought forward not and it has been recognized to some extent legally as well. I will say that the participation of women in decision making have increased. But if we see qualitatively whether women have been realistically given opportunity to take decisions, we find that it has not happened. Participation of women has increased but decision making power of women have not increased in proportion to participation level.

I personally feel, women were more empowered during the conflict period than today. Women were the only one left in the village, where most men left the village to join the rebel while others left to safe places in order to avoid being forcefully recruited by the Maoist. In such situation, women were able to work together or solve problems or make decisions related to communal issues. The unity amongst women were strengthened during the conflict period. Men were either in Maoist or displaced due to fear. In order to

solve the problem men could not come from the hideout, it was women who had to take all the decisions anyhow. Women organizations became strong in rural areas and women also became organized.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

There has not been much changes in the means of livelihood for women. Most families are dependent on agriculture. However, with the death of husband the production of farmland is reduced and the source of income becomes reduced. When women single-handedly farm the land the production level will automatically be reduced, and therefore, total family income was reduced due to reduction in human resources. When we talk about livelihood, it was also becoming challenging for women because agriculture production diminished. The livelihood situation of already impoverished families where food production was not sufficient for three months after toiling for the whole year, therefore it was really hard for families to survive on lowly produced food-grains in the absence of men. There was lack of food security during the conflict period.

14. How did the armed conflict affect women's access to education (school, college, informal education, and training)?

When we talk about the formal education, it was kind of destroyed during the conflict period. There was a rapid informal education that was empowering to women. Formal education or education to earn degrees or certificates were destroyed in the villages because the Maoist boycotted the formal education labeling it as "bourgeoisie education". Maoist had adopted different strategy to train people so that they will be able to claim their rights. Maoist were really able to raise capacity of people, which helped those people to come forward and claim their rights. Can we call that education or not? Health of women was affected during the conflict period because the government institutions were completely absent in the rural areas, including government health facilities. Primary health care posts were shut down, and women had nowhere to go in

case of health related emergencies.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

There was change in gender roles but such changes did not come after the entire society willfully embraced such changes. Instead it came out of compulsion. I will gave you an example of women plowing the land; it was not the society that said to women that whatever practices we had in the past was not correct and we should dismantle those faulty social roles constructed by the society so that men and women are free to do whatever they like within their ability. Out of compulsion women were forced to plow the land. Overall, women were assigned the responsibility of managing the household responsibility not out of will but out of compulsion. In contemporary Nepalese society many more women have been assigned the role of managing household responsibility due to large scale out-migration of men to Gulf countries and other destinations of the world.

18. To what extent have women been able to participate in national decision making process and in civil society during the armed conflict? What have been the main obstacles to their political participation and influence?

When you reflect back into the history of Nepal, you can see that the Maoist people war gave women the greatest opportunity to politically participate and get politically empowered. Also, the agenda of inclusion was really fostered by the Maoist. Before that women were just randomly picked up and endowed political positions of responsibilities by some men out of their will. For example, the king had the power to select any woman and made them representative of National Assembly. Women were assigned political positions as a favor or as a gift by male politicians who were in power. If you look back into Nepal's history, we can see that the Maoist movement gave ample opportunities to women to be strong and economically empowered. Women politically participated in people's war. In Nepal's history there is no other period where women were so much empowered.

In parallel, so called CSOs as they have wider space, the participation of women has substantially increased right from the time of Maoist war. When you look at the number of NGOs working for the rights of women, you can find the evidence how women are coming forward in NGOs. We can find out more about those NGOs when we navigate the website of Social Welfare Council. The space of women as well as lay man in politics have increased after Maoists war. The result of the first CA elections was the outcome of the Maoist movement. The women who were empowered during the conflict were strongly raising their voices so it was the positive outcome of that. However, during the second CA elections those strong voices of women became feeble and male domination increased once again. Therefore, the representation of women in second CA was low. Not only women but the representation of all excluded groups decreased during the second CA elections.

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment and disempowerment.

The ability of women to claim their rights from the state has been unprecedentedly increased. Such was never seen in the history of Nepal earlier. Before the Maoist war, whatever patriarchal society decided women were compelled to accept that as their fate and followed that. Women became aware and able to understand that social values and norms constructed by society may not be correct always. Maoist war contributed enormously in increasing awareness level of women.

Maoist war, however, failed to give/train women with life skills. While at war and at cantonment, many women cadres had got married and given birth. Those women with small children were discharged from the cantonment stating them as disqualified. They were out of cantonment. When they came outside world everything was dark to them. Since Maoist war taught them only one thing that is to use gun. Though those women were given 5 lacs rupees to help them reintegrate in the society. They are left with no skills now. The Maoist war taught them only war skill and provided them with ability to claim their rights. Those women combatants are now going through psychological

distress and their life become really challenging.

Coping strategy is a kind of empowerment. When you throw someone in swimming pool without swimming skills he/she will try to learn to swim or learns swimming in order to save their life it is a kind of empowerment. To identify coping strategies in difficult hours is also a kind of empowerment. It is not only out of compulsion women are doing work but they have developed the motivations to do things that they had not done before. There has been great increase in awareness level of women. Only for survival women have done things, in my opinion is not correct.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

Men were the key players in negotiations and very few or negligible number of women were there. However, to include the issue of women in the peace negotiations there was overwhelming pressure from outside. In all the negotiations after the CPA, the agenda of women have not been excluded. One reason is that the Maoist were haunted by the commitments they made to people in the past so they wanted to focus on the issue of women. Another thing is that civil society was empowered during the conflict period and after the end of peace agreement. Civil society pressure was acknowledged in all the negotiations though all the signatories and participants of all those peace negotiations were men. Nearly 100% of them were men.

Though large number of women were involved as fighters in the Maoist forces. Once the peace process started and negotiation started there was penetration of patriarchy in every aspect of politics and patriarchy politics dominated the peace process. Women were only used as witnesses and they were not given any decision making power. Instead, women were manipulated or false convinced by leaders that they would include the agenda of women on behalf of women, and whatever decisions they would take it would be favorable to women and women were said to accept those decisions taken by men. It was like arrange marriage of girls in our society, where the parents will say we have seen the boy and our choice will be right choice for you, so you have to accept this proposal.

Such patronizing attitude dominated the mindset of male politicians.

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

Most effective groups at the community level were Mother's group and they are equally active even now. Those women are actively involved in mitigating gambling, alcoholism, and VAW. When you look at the civil society from grassroots levels, including Mother's Group to national level big CSOs, there is representation of women from all background and status.

Will the women in Kathmandu put the issue of rural women? I think it depends on the fact that how much those women are connected to the grassroots. There are few women activists who are living in Kathmandu and making presumption about the situation of women in the rural areas and work that way without touching their base with rural women. While there are other women activists who are well connected with rural women. Those women activists who are well connected to rural women can help to bring forth the issues of grassroots level at the national level. They should be able to address the concerns of grassroots.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Women have potential but adequate mechanisms have not been developed by the society to use that potential. Our society has not been able to do that because who still hold some gender stereotypes such as naturally men are more aggressive and more violent than women. Women being kind naturally can contribute to the peace process enormously. The entire problem lies in our mentality and our state policies. First of all, we still have negative peace in Nepal. Even in the Constitution the debate on citizenship of child in the name of mother is ongoing. It depends on what kind of peace we are seeking for. When King Gyanendra was ruling there was a kind of peace. If we are seeking equitable peace then first we have to fight for our rights. In this line women are playing active role. First, we have to claim our rights and then decision making rights. We are still in the phase of right claiming. That is why if you see from long term

perspective establishment of equitable peace and establishment of rights means establishment of sustainable peace. Women are playing crucial role and personally I feel they will be able to play this role continuously.

9. Interviewee 9

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

When you talk about armed conflict and its impact on women from different geographical location, it is women from Mountainous region or mid-Hills who participated in the war mostly. Those women were mostly from rural areas; when we talk about educational background, women who were less educated with low economic status joined the movement. It was easy for the Maoist to promise them to address their concerns of economic and social disparity. Due to lack of education, it was easy for the Maoist to attract them to Maoist ideology and principles.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

There are mainly 2-4 reasons why women from certain social groups joined the Maoist in large numbers. Basically, if you look at the current social practices as well as old cultural traditions and practices, we find that the society is highly patriarchal. Because of patriarchal society women are deprived of their rights, freedom voice and agency. Women are not able to put their concerns within their own households. The Maoist were able to attract marginalized women convincing them once they will come to power they will be able to address the concerns and grievances of those women. Such assertion from then have become an attraction for many women.

Second, in many context, women were motivated to join the Maoist because other members in their family also joined the group and therefore they followed their suit. Women were to make to believe that if they join the Maoist movement there will be social, economic, political and cultural benefits for them because Maoist would be able to

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build a society that was different from present kind. Maoist will help them to come out of poverty and other kinds of problems.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

Women were able to take part in several roles. Women supported the war not only as combatants but they performed various roles, including cooking food for the combatants, courier and spies, as well as political cadres for the Maoist. Indirectly, many women were victimized by the society and till date they are going through the trauma. Many women joined the Maoist out of conviction, while many others joined out of coercion. Also, many women decided to join the Maoist out of dilemma situation created by the war, where they didn't know what to do, where to go etc. Women joined voluntarily thinking that the Maoist will be able to fulfill their dreams and they will be able to enjoy the benefits of the growth of the nation equally like others. Some other women were forced to work at the gunpoint. Many others were motivated by seeing others joining the war. When they saw large number of people joining the war they also became motivated and followed the majority path. Knowingly and unknowingly many people joined the war. However, some quitted the war during the conflict period.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability) Family structure was affected. When a man or a woman leaves his/her house it will automatically impact family's income Family income will be reduced and there will be difficulty in meeting the daily needs of the family. When daughter or wife or daughter-in-law of a family leaves her house to join the rebel definitely it will have negative impact on the family.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

When men are away there will be no VAW because in most cases it is men who

perpetrate VAW. Another reason for reduction in VAW during the conflict period may be overall focus of everyone was war and no other issues. Most act of domestic violence (almost 95%) are committed by men against women. When men are not there in the rural areas then there is less likelihood of domestic violence. VAW in the form of rape increased during the conflict period. Domestic violence results from alcohol abuses, unemployment among men who come to their houses under the substance influence and abuse their wives physically. In the war men got killed, disappeared or displaced so there was reduction in cases of domestic violence.

7. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's participation in agricultural labor?

　　　　The productivity of the land definitely decreased in the absence of men. Only weak and old people were left behind and the labor offered by them negatively impacted the productivity of the land.

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

　　　　Decision making power of women in the absence of men depends on the family background. Educated and women who have some awareness will be able to take decisions. Women who were completely dependent on her husband to take decisions for the family, after the demise of their husband they will not be able to take family decisions and will be in a vulnerable situation. Society and family perception towards such women will be changes and this will impact her decision making power. Also, women's work role and burden and responsibilities will be doubled. Women have to play multiple roles including household responsibilities and the management of family farmland which was earlier looked after by men. Women become stigmatized and insecure.
Life needs to go on for women and our society is mixed type where some people share things with each other at the local level, particularly in rural areas. In the absence of men, many women managed their house using labor sharing strategy. While some women who

were unable to manage or take responsibility of the family or farmland, left them and migrated or got displaced to other areas leaving their farmland uncultivated.

10. Does increased participation of women in household agricultural roles lead to women's empowerment?

Not only women but all people in Nepal seems to be empowered by the conflict. Rural women also got an opportunity to be empowered during the conflict because of conflict they learned to manage their households. Those who went to join the rebels they saw the changes brought about by the war. They started to dream about their better future. Struggles encountered by women made them strong and empowered. To some extent, I personally feel, women were empowered. What can be called empowerment varies from individual to individual. Some women learned some skills due to struggle they had to undergo during the conflict period. Some people consider struggle as empowerment. While some other people consider changes in political capacity, including ability to speak as empowerment. It depends on how we interpret the concept of empowerment. Overall, the conflict led to death of more than 10.000 people. Those women who were not directly involved in conflict also got some opportunity to be empowered.

11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house? (community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

Decision making power of women in the community level will be impacted by several factors and it depends on nature of the social group. It also depends on the policies and laws of the country. I personally feel there was not drastic change during the conflict period. After the war, the policies that were in place defined the decision making power of women. There has been some changes brought about in the policy regime for women, and some of the new policies ensures the rights of women. That is why there has been some changes in the lives of women after the end of conflict. Some of those changes have brought about empowerment in the lives of women. During the conflict period such

situation was not there. In the CFUG, some women were there in the Executive Committee, however, they were given space out of tokenism. Out of 11 member committee only one space was given to women and other ten were taken by men. There was no meaningful participation of women and she has no say in decision making processes. Women's role was to agree on what others had decided and to say yes to everything decided by men. They didn't have any influence in the decision making. It did not have any positive influent in the evils of women and they didn't get anything from this.

In the absence of men, some women's groups, including Mother's group played central roles. They had to take decisions to run their families and the community. It again depends on the education level of women and her social skills. In the absence of men, women were compelled to take decisions of the households. Women should develop self-realization that their sphere is not only private domain but also public domain. At the community level, due to enormous reponsibilities of the households which overburden them in the absence of men, women were discouraged in participating in public sphere. Also, due to lack of education, cultural practices and traditions, women who were without husband couldn't join the public sphere. However, this was not true in all families.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

In rural areas, people might have managed the basic food needs of the family. If not all the needs of the family but basic need of the family might have been fulfilled during that time. Education and income level of the family was negatively impacted by the conflict. People in the rural areas might have been able to fill their stomach with the support of other community members. How community level people helps each other during difficult hours, we really got to see this during the recent earthquake in Nepal. People were able to sustain on their own aftermath the earthquake. Even in the absence of shelter people in the rural areas were able to manage the food and we saw this in many rural villages. Even during the Maoist conflict people might have been able to manage

those basic needs of life. In the absence of men, the education of the family will be really negatively impacted. In our patriarchal society, where 90 % women are dependent on male figure so it must have impacted women.

15. Do you think women's economic vulnerability often increases significantly during armed conflict, especially in the case of female-headed households?

Lack of security, lack of education makes women vulnerable. In the aftermath of earthquake also we saw that women became vulnerable to trafficking. Many women living in the tent felt vulnerable from others due to lack of security. Earthquake resistance homes are going to be constructed for the survivors of earthquake, however, discussions are ongoing on how many rooms should be there in such houses; and why to construct such houses. Women were more vulnerable during the conflict period.

18. To what extent have women been able to participate in national decision making process and in civil society during the armed conflict? What have been the main obstacles to their political participation and influence?

The People's Movement of 2005, and the whim brought about by this resulted in greater participation of women in two CAs. When the issue of social inclusion came, they promoted the rights of not only women but also many other excluded social groups. Women constitute more than 50 % population in Nepal. The need of the hour was to bring women to the political arena. To make their demands legitimate the Maoist rebels co-opted the agenda of women and more and more women were given space in two CAs. However, participation of women is still not satisfactory in comparison to their population ration. Women are still not in leadership positions of state. However, there has been some changes which are positive to what existed in the past.

Women who are in the CA are not able to present women's agenda. It takes time to change the society. Women in Nepalese society, who were confined to four walls of their houses, dedicating their lives to their husband and children came from such background and orientation. Also, women who were less educated were given space in

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the CA and they are still in the learning process so they are not able to achieve the desired outcome for women. They lack adequate knowledge, skills and other abilities to represent the voice of women unanimously in CA. Also, those women are guided by different political ideology and they are unable to be united. That is why their issues are not taken seriously in the Parliament. Lack of education and awareness and political guiding affects those women. Those women do what their party dictates them to do. They follow their party's agenda rather than women's agenda. Women CA members are not united and they fail to push forward women's agenda in the Parliament.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

Mostly male participated in the negotiations that were held at the national level. During the war time, men were lading the war so women were excluded from negotiation process. Even women who actively participated in the war couldn't come to forward the negotiation tables. There was no realization of the fact that women should be included in various negotiations process or platform. Such mentality was not developed. Women have been objectified in our society.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Women can do well in many aspect of social lives from private to public sphere. It can only be possible when perception of people are changed. Without change in perception, it becomes difficult for women to achieve their goal. Men should also be sensitive on the issues of women. Women can play important roles in many parts of society.

10. Interviewee 10

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

Women from mid-hills. It started from mid-west and extended to far-west then to eastern region. The Maoist were able to attract indigenous people with their ideology.

Also, they were able to attract, Dalits who have been facing discrimination since historically. Maoist capitalized on the issue of caste based discrimination, social exclusion and other issues that were harmful to certain social groups. Maoist were trying to bring the voice of indigenous people. Also, the Maoist were trying to provoke the indigenous people, Dalits, and other people from other caste groups participated in the conflict including Chettris, Brahmins. Comparative Dalits and indigenous people joined in large numbers.

Leaders were mostly matured and adult people. While combatants were from all types of age groups. Youths as well as children were mobilized by the Maoist in large numbers. Also, mostly poor women, very less educated joined the movement. Most illiterate people or people who had rudimentary education or school going students participated in the conflict. Mostly women from rural areas, including Rolpa, Ramechhap, and eastern region some districts. Mostly districts that were far away from Kathmandu. Poor and lower-middle class women.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

The Maoist were able to raise the issue of discriminatory social structure that restricted the rights of certain social groups. Many women decided to join the Maoist group without understanding anything; some just joined for fun. While some other joined the movement based on their knowledge on Maoist ideology. Women from all types of background participated in the movement.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

There were both types of women. Some women who have been discriminated by the state, were convinced by the Maoist to join the movement. Many women who faced violence in the family also decided to join the movement. Some women joined the movement following their friends and for fun.

4. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

There were few women in leadership positions. More women were engaged in propaganda including motivating and disseminating information about Maoist ideology. Also, some women also fought as combatants. Women also worked as political parties cadres. Mostly Maoists party cadres were engaged in dissemination of information and door-to-door motivation program. Women were mobilized in making the movement more organized.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

First, some women joined the movement after their family member gave them permission to join the movement. While many were forced to join the movement. Maoist abducted the students from schools so families were really affected by this. Some decided to join the movement out of will to end structural violence against them. Those who were compelled to join the Maoist out of coercion they were psychologically affected. Some women thought that the existing social structure was discriminatory against them so they decided to revolt against the state. In some cases, where women were forced to join the Maoist they were victimized by the society. Many people did not approve those women in the society and they were ostracized by the society.

In some cases, I saw this in Ramechhap when I was based there for my field work; men were forcing their wives to eat in the same plate the food after they had finished eating his food. Maoist came to such houses and reprimanded men who did that and ask them to stop that culture and abolish such tradition. Some women felt relieved from some old social customs and traditions that were discriminatory against them. While some women felt threatened by the conflict. The Maoist were engaged in different types of activities, and in some cases they abducted the family member and killed them in front of them. This affected many women and many families got displaced because of that. Some accepted the Maoist ideology and joined them while some others were forced to join them and their family suffered a lot.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

Many women felt liberated by the Maoist movement from oppression and exploitation. Many women, particularly women from so-called lower caste and socially discriminated groups felt relieved during the conflict period. Before the conflict, they faced violations of their rights to free speech, freedom and were deprived from even going out of their houses. Women felt that at least we have somebody to speak on our behalf now. It was empowering for some women. On the other hand, many women faced violence when their husbands were taken by the members of the warring sides and were killed. Some women also accepted the movement thinking it was bringing positive changes, therefore, they decided to join. Some parents even sent their daughters to join the Maoists and they also joined the movement following them.

Both the sides perpetrated violence against women belonging to the other side. Many times Maoist cadres threatened women whose husband were in the state army and they were intimidated. Similarly, the army personnel intimidated women whose husband were there in the Maoist. Women were forced by both the Maoist and government forced to convince their husband to leave the group they were involved. As a result of such unbearable pressure many families even got displaced. War violence also increased during the conflict period.

7. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's participation in agricultural labor?

When men got killed or displaced during the conflict, the decision making power of the family automatically came to women. In some cases, some women were able to cope up such situation, while in some other cases women so were not able to do that. Some women found their new roles as a burden but they were forced to do so. Those women who accepted their new changed roles, it was easy for them to manage their households, while those who were forced to do so faced difficulty in doing so. Some women got opportunities to take decisions. In families where there were no men

women had to take decisions out of compulsion. Our society is such that right from birth women are dependent on men; father, father-in-law, husband, son, and son-in-law. Women are directly or indirectly dependent on men in our society. In the absence of men, they were forced to do things on their own.

In the absence of men, women took all the responsibilities of agriculture. Out of compulsion women took all those responsibilities. Even now in many families where men are not there women are taking all the responsibilities of the households. Our social structure is different and it varies from one social group to another. Take example of indigenous people, women took active role in decision making of the household. Though we cannot generalize this statement to be true for all indigenous people. Some indigenous women took active role in decision making inside the house, and during the conflict period those women got more opportunities to be engaged in household decision making processes.

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

Many families in the rural areas are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. In the absence of husband, all the responsibilities of the households, including farmland production, and feeding the family came to the shoulder of women. Even in families where men were there they were unable to go to the farmland because of fear of Maoist. In many houses, in the absence of men, many women started plowing the land. Because of lack of knowledge and skills the productivity of the land decreased in families where agricultural responsibilities were headed by women. Women were leading life full of fear and anxiety which impacted their entire well-being and their productivity.

11. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house? (community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

In the absence of men, women were compelled to take the decisions even outside

the house at the community level. Women were forced to participate in community level activities in the absence of men. However, the access of women increased during the conflict period. Women who had never attended a meeting earlier started going to a meeting though they were not able to participate effectively in the beginning.

13. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

Though we say women became empowered by conflict, they were economically lagging behind. Women faced difficulty in becoming a multi-tasker at a time. Conflict affected the education of family negatively and many were forced to drop from schools. Food security of the families were also threatened due to conflict.

18. To what extent have women been able to participate in national decision making process and in civil society during the armed conflict? What have been the main obstacles to their political participation and influence?

Women also played important role in establishing peace through their engagement with CSOs. Within the Maoist some women like Hisila Yami and Pampha Bhusal also played important roles.

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment and disempowerment.

In one way women were empowered by the conflict. Before the conflict, though women were actively engaged in household responsibilities together with men, they had very limited power in decision making, including what to plant; where to plant; how to plant; and so on. When men were there they were dependent on them. In the absence of men, women took all those decisions of how; where, what, when; who etc. Women's capacity to take decisions increased.

The conflict affected women in many ways. They were able to come forward in different forums. However, not all women were able to cope up with that situation out of

fear and anxiety. Women were burdened by the conflict.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

Indirectly, women were given opportunity but they were not given direct opportunity. It is our societal structure is such that it discourages women from participating in the peace negotiations. People question capability or capacity of women when the stake in negotiation gets high. People have not become honestly and truly sensitive on the issues of women, and it is clearly demonstrated by the outcome of the second CA elections where women were given less opportunities for participation. Women at the community level have greater identity and have come forward but it may not be qualitative. When we see at the district and national levels the participations of women is negligible.

21. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the community level?

At the local level, the local body elections couldn't be hold due to conflict and also whatever structure existed become non-existent during the conflict period.

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

In the first CA elections nearly 33% women were elected, which shows that women came forward and contributed to the establishment of peace. Men also provided women support to come to the mainstream. In the absence of men, women played crucial role in maintaining the integrity of the family. This is also contribution of omen in the peace-building of family and the society. If men would have been given the responsibility of managing the house, it would have been really difficult for them to do so. It is not an easy job to manage the house.

23. Women from which ethnic group, caste group, age group, economic status, occupation, educational background participated in the establishment of peace?

Middle income or lower middle class women were given opportunity to come

forward in first and second CA elections. If you talk about class, it is mostly, women from rich families who got opportunities to come forward. Women from grassroots face many challenges in coming to the national level politics. Very few women who came at the national level through first CA elections couldn't do much as they were still in the phase of learning and exploring themselves. When they became knowledgeable to do something, they were not given opportunity in second CA. Women from rich families cannot represent the true voices of women from grassroots levels and this we have seen in case of Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Though Sri Lanka had a female President, she was not able to include the issue of women effectively. Few women who came to national level politics lacked political knowledge and skills to do well. These women are mostly engaged in social and cultural issues.

In Nepal, people still have perception that politics is the domain of men and women should not be engaged in politics. For example, I myself was interested to go out to participate in politics in 2047-2048 BS and attended few meetings. When my father came to know about this he stopped me from going there. Being a girl I was obliged to obey my father and stopped participating in political activities. Had it would have been my brother, I think he would have not listen to my father. That is why even today I cannot go to political parties' assembly and other political activities in our village. It is really difficult for women, including educated women or women who had exposure to come forward and do something in politics. Think of those women who didn't get any opportunity to go to school at all. When we are ordered not to go by male figure we will not be able to go.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Without active participation of women, in my opinion, we cannot have peace in Nepal. Women should come forward and take leadership positions and roles. In the past we have seen men taking the leadership of the country and know what they have done to our country. May be women have some hidden capacity or talent to lead the nation successfully. Even Dor Bdr. Bista said if people in politics are free from self-interest then

they will be able to do well. I feel women can develop that feeling. Nepali society cannot develop economically, socially, politically, and culturally when half of its population; women are excluded from the peace process.

<u>11. Interviewee 11</u>

1. Women from which caste, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, education, geographic location (rural, urban, roadhead, remote) participated in the armed conflict?

Yes, many women participated in the armed conflict. Many of them worked as fighters. Most of the women who joined the Maoists movement were from Ingenious and Dalit social groups, who were poor, economically backward. I am from Mid-western region of Nepal and I know many of those women were from mid and far western region of the country. Women from other caste group also jointed but their number was less as compared to indigenous and Dalit women.

2. Why do you think large number of women from certain caste/ethnic groups decided to join the Maoist rebel group?

Women joined the movement to free themselves from poverty and social exclusion that was prevalent in Nepali society. When we look at the poverty rates in Nepal, we can see people from Dalit and indigenous community are poorer than people from other social groups. Many women joined the movement because they did not have anything so they thought if they join the movement they will be pulled out of poverty. I heard many landless people joined the movement since they were poor and the income earned by them as agricultural laborers were not sufficient to support their family. The agenda of creating 'New Nepal' attracted people to join their movement.

3. What types of role women (rebel, informer, political cadre, people's government, logistic and moral support, cultural activists, and awareness raiser) played during the armed conflict?

As I said before women fought in the armed conflict as combatants. Both the warring parties mobilized women during the war in different roles. The Maoist mobilized

women in carrying out their cultural activities in rural areas. They also used women for carrying out other types of work such as cooking food for them in the military camps run by them.

4. Do you think women joined the Maoist forces out of will or out of coercion?

      Not all of them joined the movement out of will. Some of them joined because they liked the Maoist ideology, which talked about equality between everyone. While some others were forced into joining the movement. I think the situation in rural areas was such that that people had no choice but to join the Maoist or flee from their homes. I know many people were displaced from Mid-west and far-west region during the conflict period because they wanted to escape the conflict. Most of those displaced families went to cities which were safer. Many families went to India and worked as laborers there.

5. What was the impact of armed conflict on family structure? (loss of family member, forced migration (temporary and permanent), displacement, disappearance, disability)

      War has negative impact on lives of people. The family structure was completely disrupted during the conflict time. Many families lost their means of livelihood. Due to fear and insecurity they could not work in their farmland properly. Many families lost their husband, sons, who were the earning member of the family.

6. What was the impact of armed conflict on situation of VAW?

      During the conflict period the Maoist introduced some strict laws that helped in reducing VAW. Mid-western region is culturally orthodox region, where there are many cultural practices that are discriminatory to women, and other social groups. Maoist banned all cultural practices that were discriminatory towards women such as chhaupadi, jari, child marriage, caste discrimination. The strict punishment given by the Maoists made people scared from perpetrating violence against women.

8. To what extent does the male absence during armed conflict affected women's role in agricultural decision-making?

The conflict disrupted the economy of the country. Women were more affected by it. Since men left the village to escape conflict, women had to do everything for the survival of her children and family. She started doing all the work that was done by her husband before. In families, where women were living in extended families they got help from other male members. However, overall responsibility of the households came to the shoulder of women. Women had to take decisions which was taken earlier by their husbands. They management their farmland and took all the decisions regarding management of their farmland.

9. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women inside the house?

When the head of the households is either killed or displaced the decision making power of women change. Out of necessity women are compelled to lead the family. They cannot leave their children and elderly parents starving so they had to start taking all the responsibility of the households to feed their family. Women had to made decisions regarding education of their children and protection of their children from the government security forces and the Maoists in their villages.

10. What was the impact of armed conflict in decision making power of women outside the house? (community forestry, community irrigation, saving and credit cooperatives, civil society, social network, political parties)

Conflict in Nepal brought some unexpected changes in the lives of women. Women who were mostly confined to their homes during the peacetime started going outside the house. There are many women actively engaged in community level networks such as women human rights defenders network and network of community forest user groups. Some of the women are also engaged in those networks as management committee members. Women made decisions not only at their households' levels but also at the community level to sustain their family and community during the conflict time.

12. What was the impact of armed conflict on food security and livelihoods (food, housing, household welfare) of women?

Mid-western region is backward in many ways. The productivity of the land is low. The food produced by the farmers is not sufficient to meet the needs of the family for the whole year. It is sufficient for 4-6 months. Many families in this region have been identified as food insecure families by the World Food Program. During the conflict period there was food shortages in some families because women were not able to manage the family farmland alone in the absence of their husband. The agricultural production declined in families, where women took the responsibility of managing the farmland. The supply of food by the government agencies and the World Food Program was also disrupted during the conflict period due to insecurity.

13. How did the armed conflict affect women's access to education (school, college, informal education, and training)?

Children were most affected by the armed conflict. Poverty induced by armed conflict forced many parents from sending their children to schools. Also, in case of displaced families the education of their children was negatively impacted. There were many schools in rural areas without teachers during the conflict people because teachers were frightened to enter the villages because of the fear of the Maoists. Many teachers went to the district headquarters to save their lives.

16. How does the armed conflict change the roles that women take on within their household and communities?

The lives of women during the armed conflict period changed because of the absence of their husbands, and changes in their households and their communities. Despite being victims of armed conflict women are compelled to take the responsibility of the households to save their families. Women are forced to be active in social, political and economic activities during conflict period.

19. Are women empowered or disempowered by conflict? Examples of empowerment and disempowerment.

The armed conflict brought some positive changes in the lives of women. Many women got an opportunity to be engaged in community based organizations and non-government organizations. Many women were elected in the first and second Constituent Assembly elections. Even women from highly marginalized communities got an opportunity to be part of Constituent Assembly.

Negative impact of the armed conflict was greater. Many women became widows, homeless and destitute.

20. Who were the key players in peace negotiations in Nepal? What level of peace negotiation have women participated?

Though women played important role in peacemaking and peacebuilding at the community level, they were not given adequate space and their work was not recognized in the high level peace talks that took place at the national level. Even senior female leaders like Pampha Bhusal and Hisila Yammi from the Maoist party were not included in the high level peace talks. Due to patriarchy in our society, women's role is still not recognized.

22. What was the role of women for establishing peace at the national level?

Many women engaged in non-government organizations actively participated in the 'People's movement'. Women organizations organized rallies in Kathmandu and other parts of the country to pressurize warring parties in forging peaceful solution to the armed conflict.

23. Women from which ethnic group, caste group, age group, economic status, occupation, educational background participated in the establishment of peace?

One of the positive outcome of armed conflict in Nepal is that people from excluded social groups, including women got an opportunity to come forward and take part in political life. Many women from highly marginalized social groups (e.g., Dalits,

Indigenous community) were elected in the Constituent Assembly elections. The agenda of social inclusion is started to be taken seriously in Nepal now.

24. What do you think women can do to make the peace process sustainable?

Without inclusion of women, the peacebuilding process in Nepal cannot be sustainable. Women make up nearly 50 percent of the population, so their voices should be included in every development efforts and other state structuring processes so as to make them sustainable. Patriarchy should not act as an obstacle for inclusion of voice of women in decision-making. Though government of Nepal has taken some steps by forming Women Development Office, Ministry of Women Child and Social Welfare, and gender focal points in each Ministries much needs to be done in mainstream gender agenda in every aspect of political and economic lives of women.