

Nepal: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: Avenues and Insights

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Introduction

The fifth goal of the 2030 United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) is gender equality. Nepal has signed on and committed to the SDGs, and has developed several policy commitments in support of gender equality. The approach to women's empowerment and gender equality in Nepal is unique and specific to the region, as it uses the language of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). The constitution of Nepal (2015) articulates Nepal as an inclusive State and guarantees the right to equality for all citizens. The government is legally committed to gender equality and social inclusion. The GESI policies and guidelines are adopted in seven sectors and provide two key elements which are vital to reconstructing the country into an inclusive State. The two elements are the demonstration of government commitment to GESI, and practical guidance to industries on how to support GESI. The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Working Group (2017) explain GESI as "... a method of targeting, but it is much more than that. GESI is a mindset, a process, and a set of desired outcomes - a way of doing development with a focus on ensuring that no one is left out of development programs and government services, that are intended to be universal" (p. 3). The constitution most notably includes the rights of women, right to equality, right to social justice and positive provisions which include affirmative action to address historical disadvantage and a ban on sex/caste/ethnicity-based discrimination.

The language and impact of gender equality and social inclusion occur both theoretically and in practice in Nepal. GESI practices influence the international development volunteer (IDV) experience internally and externally when IDV's travel overseas to work with local organizations. The findings presented in this Master's Research Paper are based on research conducted in Nepal

from July to September 2019. Interviews with fifteen organizations were carried out to comprehend how gender equality and feminism are perceived, interpreted and practiced in Nepal. Specifically, the research focused on development practitioners who work with transnational actors – international volunteers placed by Canadian volunteer cooperation organizations. The main questions guiding this research were: 1) How do development practitioners in Nepal make sense of gender equality and feminism? And 2) What role and impact, if any, do transnational actors (international volunteers from Canada) play in shaping ideas, attitudes and behaviors of Nepali development practitioners? The findings reinforce the significance of transnational actors in shaping attitudes and the importance of local interpretations of gender equality that are culturally relevant. The emphasis on GESI was significant in Nepal, demonstrating social cohesion, peace and solidarity within the country. Several strengths and weaknesses of this approach are highlighted in the analysis section of this MRP.

During my time as a researcher in Nepal, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to collaborate with the international non-government organization (INGO), CECI, and its volunteer program in partnership with WUSC, Uniterria. CECI Nepal's local organization partners, which focus on gender equality and social inclusion in volunteer mandates, are the focus of this research. My contacts at CECI Nepal allowed me to conduct semi-structured interviews to explore the distinctive contributions to GESI mandates made by international development volunteers, specifically with organizations focused on women's empowerment. I visited fifteen projects and interviewed many people about their experiences hosting and working with the IDV's. In this report, I investigate the main findings from the research, including compelling quotes and a case study. Overall, host organizations provided a positive impression of international volunteers and their contribution to GESI through their partnership with CECI Nepal.

Uniterria volunteer experiences last for as short as three weeks and as long as two years. Some volunteers are young, non-experts seeking knowledge and intercultural experiences before

beginning their careers. Other volunteers are development professionals, coming back to the field to further their understanding and expertise and make a contribution. Most volunteers participating in the Uniterra program at CECI Nepal are women, with over 80% identifying as female. The three categories of volunteers are short-term, long-term and leave-for-change. During my period in Nepal, short-term volunteers were typically university students either taking a semester off or engaging in development work over their summer break. Long-term volunteers in Nepal fit into one of two categories: international development undergraduate students completing a program requirement, and development professionals returning to the field to gain new knowledge and insights. Leave-for-change volunteers leave their permanent job in Canada for a period of three weeks with a specific mandate relating to their area of expertise.

Many volunteers assisted with communication, marketing, database organization and digital creation within the partner organizations. The primary challenges faced by volunteers and their partner organizations included the duration of the volunteer's work-term, language barriers, mandate confusion, lack of support, cultural differences and daily commutes. Women's empowerment exists through volunteer activities such as counterpart relationships, micro-financing, and knowledge sharing. Partner organizations expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their partnership with CECI and for the volunteer support to their organizations.

A feminist research approach has been employed and streamlined through the beginning to the end of this research. According to Hesse-Biber (2014), research is widely regarded as feminist when grounded in theoretical traditions that honour women's issues, voices and lived experiences. Using a transnational feminist lens, this research investigates Nepal's approach to gender equality issues as it intersects with international volunteers work on women's empowerment projects. Through the lens of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion structure, this paper examines the goals and limits of gender equality in Nepal and the challenges that organizations who work on GESI issues confront.

Methodology

This research project is conducted as part of a more extensive study undertaken by Rebecca Tiessen at the University of Ottawa and in partnership with the Uniterra program. This research is a part of and extends on a larger research project in collaboration with Dr. Benjamin Lough on “The Distinctive Contributions of International Volunteers to Gender Equality Programming: Perspectives from Partner Organizations in the Global South”. In their research proposal (2018), Tiessen and Lough make note that volunteer receiving organizations complete mid and end-term reports and evaluations; however, those documents are internal and remain private. As a result, there is not a large body of public knowledge on the roles and impacts of IDV’s and their distinctive contributions to the delivery of programs of interest to the Government of Canada (GOC), including programs which focus on the promotion of gender equality. The goal of their project, and in part this research, is to better understand the distinctive contributions of IDV’s to gender equality programming through the GOC’s Volunteer Cooperation Program.

This study took place over the summer (July - September) of 2019 in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Fifteen participants were intentionally selected having met the inclusion criteria that their organization: 1) engage with and host Uniterra international volunteers and 2) have programs and projects working towards, or at least promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. CECI Nepal is one of the largest and most influential INGO’s in Nepal, with over 700 volunteers to date, making it easy to find partners to contact and interview. Partners were eager to participate in the research and be interviewed on their experiences working with the Uniterra program. It was encouraged that an organization leader/primary contact, as well as another staff member more directly involved with volunteers, be present to interview. Interviewees received the consent form before the meeting, and information about the study was explained to participants in English and the native Nepali language when necessary. Informed oral consent was obtained from participants who voluntarily consented to take part in the research. Interviews were conducted mostly in English,

with a six being completed by an assistant translator in Nepali and translated. Most interviews were recorded at participants' workplaces; these conversations were digitally recorded using a cell phone as well as a recorder and lasted 1 to 2 hours. The majority of participants were eager to share positive experiences and were more hesitant to share undesirable impacts. The ending of the Uniterra program (March 2020) may have influenced this. Voice data was transferred onto a password protected computer, transcribed, and analyzed into pre-existing study themes.

The interviews were conducted using an in-person and semi-structured approach. The questions were determined and streamlined before departure, and they were the same for all countries included in this research project. The interviews had me as a researcher and a Nepali local CECI employee to advise on cultural norms and to translate when language was a prominent issue. The questions asked were generally open-ended and meaningful to the participants interviewed. The semi-structured interview approach allowed participants to take part in directing the conversation (Farvid 233). Burbank and Parker (1993) write about how feminists have demonstrated that qualitative methods involving a series of informal and semi-structured interviews can reflect inconsistencies and contradictions of peoples' accounts as an interesting focus of analysis.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this MRP includes grey literature (reports, web sources, etc.) and scholarly works (journal articles, books, etc.) Several themes were considered essential to this study, including concepts such as GESI and feminism. The scholarship reviewed cover four main themes in the literature: 1. Conceptual approaches to international development 2. Policy commitments to GESI in Nepal 3. Feminist theory that documents the range of feminist scholarship and 4. The role of international volunteers in promoting gender equality.

Feminist theory

The principles of thought that guide much of this work on gender equality in the global South are ideas of the “Third World” woman, transnational feminism and global feminism. The term “Third World women” is most commonly used in a way that refers to the majority of the world’s women as those who are considered outside of the “modern” Western world¹. The term assumes a diverse group of women whose lives vary based on class, nation, culture and sexuality as closely related. Furthermore, the name “Third World” insinuates a ranking between First and Third Worlds through the by-product of imperialism and colonialism. The name “Third World woman” is an essentializing category often used to suggest a group of people who are considered “helpless” and need of saving. The popular conversation around the “Third World Women” entered into Anglo-American scholarship in the 20th century through anthropologists in their ethnographic work, and through sociologists and economists who discussed women and/in development (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 2013, p. 71). The research in this paper works to avoid the generalized grouping of women and focuses on international development volunteers and the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion policy commitments in Nepal.

¹ Kolmar and Bartkowski (2013), explain that by using quotation marks attention is drawn to the ways that this term is problematic.

From 1975 to 1985, the U.N. Decade on Women had meetings in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi where they attempted to develop a global feminism. Charlotte Bunch (1987) describes global feminism as, “recognizing that the oppression of women in one part of the world is often affected by what happens in another, and that no woman is free until the conditions of oppression of women are eliminated everywhere.” Global feminism promotes making the global-local and the local-global as a means to understand the various experiences and identities of women internationally (Kolmar and Bartkowski, p. 71). Most notable is promoting women working with other women without imposing their precomposed notions of what it means to live as a woman in the Global South.

Transnational feminist scholars such as Rey Chow and Trinh T. Minh ha have made pivotal methodological and epistemological contributions to feminism in the global North. They continue to challenge North American feminism as Eurocentric, and demand for a “plural consciousness”, which “requires understanding multiple, often opposing, ideas and knowledges, and negotiating these knowledges” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 36).

Chandra Mohanty’s work on transnational feminism gained international recognition following her article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1986). The essay provided a criticism of the discursive production of the category the “Third World Woman” as a singular monolithic subject created by Western feminism (p. 65-88). She expresses that Western feminist theorists have discarded the different experiences of women in the global South, detailing that the experience of oppression is extremely diverse and is due to many factors (i.e., geography, history, culture) (Mohanty, 2003) (Alcoff, 2013). Mohanty argues that often Western feminist theorists “colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/representing a composite, singular ‘third-world woman’ – an image which appears arbitrarily constructed but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse” (Alcoff, p. 51). It is in the assumed ‘third-

world difference' that feminist theorists often minimize the vast complexities of women existing in countries in the global South. Of particular importance to international development volunteering, is Mohanty's critique of Western people seeing themselves as paternalistic to women in the global South who need saving. Third world women as a group are understood as religious (not progressive), family-oriented ('traditional'), legal minors (not aware of their rights), illiterate (ignorant), domestic (backward), and sometimes revolutionary (by necessity through war) (p. 68). Though written over 35 years ago, these automatic assumptions are how Mohanty believes the 'third-world difference' is produced and projected in academia.

Mohanty produced a follow-up essay in 2003 to her 1986 paper, titled "Under Western Eyes Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles" where she addresses criticisms of the essay and her growth as a transnational feminist theorist. Of importance, is her clarification of "Western" and "Third World" as not necessarily so oppositional to negate the opportunity for solidarity between Western and Third World feminists (p. 502). In another article "Transnationalist Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique" (2013), Mohanty refers to the appropriation of feminism in the expansion of the neoliberal project and says that the connected processes of privatization, consumption, and commodification of theory result in a politics of representation or a politics of presence that disconnects from the power and political economy of rule (p. 972). Donna F. Murdock (2003) states that the neoliberal state relies on feminist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for a theory of gender without a feminist critique of power relations. In Mohanty's article, she cites Murdock who argues that "neoliberal states use gender-and-development discourse to underwrite a retrenchment from radical feminist politics – delegitimizing and domesticating such politics. The state is thus made 'postfeminist' before feminist achieve gender justice!" (Mohanty p. 972).

Conceptual approaches

The primary conceptual approaches to international development considered in this research are women's agency and women's empowerment in the Global South.

The personal agency of women is essential. Women's agency is building the capacity for women to use their voices to demand change and achieve their empowerment and inclusive development (IVCO, 2018, p.4). In CESO's paper on Women's Economic Empowerment, when a woman has greater productive resources and agency, she transforms her prospects in all areas of her life, including employment, education, health, housing, social and political participation, and physical security. Empowered women are better able to break out of the cycle of poverty and exercise a more significant voice in political, economic and cultural spheres (CESO, p. 6).

Canada's primary approach to international development is mindful of women's agency and empowerment in the Global South through Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). Government of Canada (2017) outlines a "targeted approach to gender equality that allows a focus on the initiatives that fight poverty and inequality by supporting gender equality and defending the rights of women and girls, particularly their sexual health and reproductive rights." FIAP principles guide the VCP, and the Uniterra program (a combined development program of CECI and the World University Service of Canada that delivers development programming in the global South) operates under this approach accordingly. Rao and Tiessen (2019) and Zeurcher (2018) argue that FIAP's success relies on re-centering feminism as transnational and using feminist processes for policy application. It is the absence of a coherent definition of feminism in the policy that many point to as a downfall of the FIAP. Though the policy is clearly expressed as feminist, the approach to what is defined as feminist is not explicitly stated. Of particular significance is the critique that the policy focuses on female empowerment, as opposed to outlining responses to address the systemic barriers and complexity of gender inequality (Rao and Tiessen, 2019).

Policy commitments to GESI in Nepal

Nepal has committed to a number of policies that aim to promote social equality and the empowerment of women in the country. Most notable is the enforcement of GESI, as well as a required 33% female members on boards of directors and participating in municipal politics. The caste system remains prominent in Nepal. Widely discussed in this research's interviews is the 2015 Constitution of Nepal, Article 38(4) which gives women the right to proportional representation in all levels of governance. Braithwaite (2015), explains:

The new Constitution of 2015 also guarantees a minimum of 33 per cent women in the national and provincial parliaments and for at least 40 per cent of those elected women at the ward level to local village governance to be women. Likewise, reservations for Dalits across these spheres has achieved significant progress (50 Dalits in the 2008 Constituent Assembly), while falling far short of proportional representation of Dalits. Both educational opportunities and informal discrimination against Dalits have improved according to interviews with Dalit activists. The 2015 Constitution has a number of provisions on proportional representation of Dalits among elected officials and within the executive government (Braithwaite, 2015, 8).

Despite women being more than half the population, 51.5% (2011), women maintain their position, lagging behind men in terms of meaningful participation and representation in political, social, economic and educational fields. Women are overrepresented at the lowest levels of government in deputy positions and continue to be underrepresented in high lever roles such as mayor and chair positions, which are 2% women held (Paswan, 2018). Paswan's study of a local election indicates that women are able to hold a number of positions due to the government mandates quotas; however, they rarely hold positions of power and influence. Though government required gender quotas are influential, men continue to dominate both in terms of numbers and executive positions, while women remain to be denied power.

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion framework for analyzing gender issues is an approach that is unique to Nepal. According to The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Working

Group (2017), emerging in the 1970's GESI came into existence as a response to the concern of women's equal access to development benefits. Following Nepal's first People's Movement (Jana Andolan) in 1990, which reintroduced multiparty democracy, Nepal's diverse and intersecting groups of people (caste, religion and the LGBTI community) began to make a push for equality (p. 3). These numerous social groups include the caste system, which remains highly prevalent in Nepal today. Interviews with the leaders of gender equality-focused organizations indicate that they better understand and prefer the discourse of GESI and women's economic empowerment over the language of feminism and women's equality. Respondents viewed the promotion of women through a (Western) liberal feminist lens and understands women's economic empowerment as the primary means of reaching gender parity.

Nepal has a long history of exclusion which continues to influence and limit people's lived experiences in the region today. The most populous demographic groups of the caste system are the Adibasi/Janajatis, Dalits, Madhesis, Muslims and members of other minority religious groups. The most disadvantaged group is the Dalits, who are also known as "untouchables" (Braithwaite p. 2). Braithwaite (2015), identifies that it is women, Dalit's and members of the LGBTI community who lack political representation and have lesser influence in decision making and access to equality in Nepal. Dalit is a caste-based term which indicates mutual oppression, solidarity and subaltern agency (Cameron, 2007; Nightingale et al., 2009). The language of GESI prevails in Nepal as the marginalization of women and other groups due to the caste system are dominant sources of inequality. Braithwaite (2015), explains that Nepal is a rural economy where not owning land property is a dominant driver of poverty. The two demographic groups with the highest rates of landlessness are women and Dalits (Nepali, 2008, p. 9).

Gender equality and social inclusion direct the discourse on social and economic inequality in Nepal. GESI has many varying definitions; however, at its core, it is the recognition of formal and informal institutions and the power relations embedded in those institutions which disempower

women, the poor, the vulnerable and the excluded. GESI discourse emphasizes delivering equal rights, opportunities and mainstream services to all citizens, in contrast to welfare for the poor (GESI Working Group, p. 7). The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Working Group (2017) writes,

In one sense GESI can be seen as a method of targeting, but it is much more than that. GESI is a mindset, a process, and a set of desired outcomes - a way of doing development with a focus on ensuring that no one is left out of development programs and government services, that are intended to be universal (3).

The role of international volunteers in promoting gender equality

International volunteers who participate in projects that focus on gender equality are important for women's empowerment and capacity building in international development. Gender equality is a crucial aspect of sustainable and inclusive international development (IVCO Concept Note, 2018, p. 2). Notably, the advancement of women's economic empowerment and gender equality is a key strategy in growing thriving societies and economic growth (IVCO Concept Note, 2018, p. 3). As explained by Tiessen et al. (2020), building the capacity of women to empower themselves, use their voices to demand change, and to work toward inclusive development is central to the agency-related realities required to achieve sustainable and equitable development. A diverse set of strategies is therefore necessary to build partnerships, collaborations and networks. Volunteering for development is one viable option for achieving these goals.

International volunteer projects on gender equality and women's empowerment support a high number of development initiatives globally. According to the UNV Gender Report, volunteering for development is one of the greatest contributions to gender equality in the global programme (UNV Gender Report, 2017). Volunteering for development offers a way of empowering women volunteers and the women with whom volunteers are partnering through a mutual exchange of capacity building. Capacity building through gender equality projects allows

women to share what they are capable of while acquiring new skills and competency. Tiessen et al. (2020), remind that volunteer programs designed to promote gender equality and inclusive government can fall short of their intended outcomes and substantial obstacles must be taken into consideration. Volunteer must be educated, well trained and mindful when conducting work in new areas. IDV's should be aware of the consequences of their actions and how the experiences of local women are created and different than their own. Tiessen et al. explain that there are many aspects of volunteering for development that contribute to capacity building, empowerment and participatory development. Yet, systemic changes, addressing structural inequality and discriminatory practices remain critical barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Findings

The primary findings emerging out of the interviews, which were semi-structured and in-person with Uniterra volunteer partners' prominent organization leaders are significant and became evident through listening to interviewees responses. First, is the significance of government-mandated gender quotas and the influence that the government possesses over its population in how they consider organization structures as they pertain to gender and minority imbalances. Second, is how the relationship between an international volunteer and local organization employee manifests, and how this relationship is arguably one of the most pertinent for capacity building under the Uniterra program as both parties grow and share their knowledge of gender equality and social inclusion. The third finding is Nepali peoples' focal point and emphasis on women's economic growth in particular as a means to women's empowerment. The fourth finding is individuals understanding of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion is often placed in opposition to, and/or above feminism. Feminism and GESI are understood very differently, and many people seem to prefer the less 'threatening' language of GESI in Nepal. The final finding is the differences that residents in the city of Kathmandu think of the opinion and experience between those living in urban Nepal (Kathmandu) and rural Nepal (Terai region/everywhere else). Those individuals who are living in Kathmandu tend to be much more aware of GESI mandates and ideas surrounding gender, in comparison to those living in the Terai, who have different ideas about gender.

The 33% quota system for political candidates and organization board members introduced in the constitution of Nepal is received well and expressed as a positive measure throughout the interviews. All of the Uniterra partner organizations who were interviewed made a note of the government's influence over gender issues. In response to interview question 4.3, "Can you tell me a bit about the discussions people have about the word "feminism" and what people in your organizations/communities think that it means?" Most organizations responded by citing the gender quota as a site of encouragement for the status of women in Nepal, or at least as a location to begin

from. The first partner explained the gender quota system as a global movement and references the U.N. 2030 sustainability goals:

... recently government established GESI unit and now federal level government and even local level government and very, very serious gender and social inclusion uh uhm social inclusive gender. So, they have prioritized it. Like there is a quota system, this is also the moment for empowerment. And there is a research for the women, a quota system even for men. And a government seat for women. And at least 33% women in any community, even in parliament. It is not from only the side of (said organization), it is a global movement. But we are very positive with women empowerment and all these things. If you go to sustainable development goal for 2030, if you go gender is there, there is several (or 7) indicators, we are working on 4 indicators. We are working on gender equality (Partner 1, 2019).

Other partners were very optimistic in terms of how the 33% gender quota supports women in public jobs and gaining power through their work and as equals:

It was very difficult back then but now the situation is not like that. Women are also progressing in many sectors. Government has also provided 33% reservation to women which is a positive sign. The situation has improved a lot these days (Partner 2, 2019).

Yes, people talk about women and feminism more often. We have quotas in Nepal for women and men's equality. For being a woman we have quotas to get into civil services. For jobs requirements, there are specific women quotas. People discuss that. As a woman, we should not get such reservations to not be in the job (Partner 3, 2019).

In Nepal, most of the communities are male-dominated. But now people are understanding that men and women are equal. Nepal is a country where the law has also provided 33% reservation for women. So, seeing the progress we can say that these are positive signs for the future development works with equal participation of men and women. And all other

organizations should also give equal opportunities to both men and women (Partner 4, 2019).

The introduction of government-mandated gender quotas and guaranteed rights for women is monumental. However, it is expressed that continued improvement is necessary. Through continued improvement, the need for women's considerations and participation at the policy-making level is necessary. Speaking with one of the few feminist-based organizations and asked as a follow-up question to question 4.3, I asked how they would define feminism:

This organization has been lobbying with the government for the policy making like – the women should be there; the women should have equal power to men for the decision-making. In this organization, all board members are women, only the women members not the gents. And we believe that women should be independent and do something on their own (Partner 5, 2019).

The organization's which are feminist specific indicate that they are advocating and lobbying for women involved in the policy-making process. Another feminist-based partner explains the need for women to be involved in the policy-making process at all levels:

Women should have access over the policy making level. Nepal Government has also given 33% reservation to women but such laws and policies are implemented only at the local level and not in the federal and provincial level. If we see the population of Nepal then almost 51% are female and it's not that they are not capable enough to lead the nation instead they have not got enough space. They don't have access over policy making level. So, to ensure that the women have access over the policy making level, we can generate awareness and train the women from grassroots level to enhance their leadership skill and capacity. We have also been lobbying in the national level regarding these issues (Partner 6, 2019).

There is an overall awareness that people should not be unhireable on the basis of their gender. Yet, there is a common agreement that the status of women in education and employment remains precarious and that they do not occupy the highest positions of power. In response to interview question 4.4, “What do the people in your organization/communities think this will mean for the future of development work? What challenges are imagined? What opportunities are possible?” A partner explains this paradox to me, saying:

In Nepalese context, our constitution has guaranteed the rights for women. It has given special rights to women. Although the laws these days are women friendly but still the tradition of male domination is still there which is one of the hindrances in implementing those laws (Partner 7, 2019).

The language of feminism in Nepal is not thoroughly instilled, and often it is avoided. In response to question 4.3, a partner explains that there is much to be done with regards to the government’s GESI mandate and how it must continue to progress to have a gender equal society:

Feminism is still Nepalese society. If we talk about all of society, not only certain settings, it forces a negative message still. If we look to our policies and provisions made by the constitution, the issue and education and employment status of females it is still you know, a questionable thing. The level of engagement is still not as much as expected, you know, satisfied. But I think this is a good time, or good work to force this issue in the front. It will be in the dialogue. But it takes some time to socialize feminism in our society (Partner 8, 2019).

The quota system and direction of the government is sound, and progress is occurring but needs to continue to improve as women are missing in decision-making processes and quotas are not perpetually followed.

Women as role models and the relationship between the international volunteers and the local organization's staff member whom they are paired allows for a mutually beneficial capacity building relationship. Almost all organizations mentioned that they have only received female volunteers. Explaining that, "There are more women volunteers, and yes they make a positive impact to the female employees working here, as well as to the female partners and managers working in our field. They influence us to be more empowered" (Partner 3, 2019). The most significant comment on the IDV's is that their mere presence has a large and positive impact on staff bodies, and the local community in which they work. Multiple partners interviewed discuss this at length:

We had been assigning the female counterpart to most of the volunteers who came to our organization and with the support of volunteers the skills in preparing the documents have improved for sure. Most of our staffs are women and also, we have involvement of women in the board and also in the management committee. So, volunteers who came here worked with the women and I think there was two-way learning between them. All of us got an opportunity to learn from the volunteers and we believe volunteers also learnt something from us... But what we can also infer is the staffs who were working here previously got the better job opportunity somewhere else and went there so we can say that they must have learnt some skills or knowledge here from the volunteers and from us (Partner 9, 2019).

For example, a volunteer is running through the organizations, she is busy with two today, when she goes there and takes the lead of the work, being a young graduate also, that inspires people she comes across with. That is a lot of social impact I would say. She is engaging herself with producers and the staffs, then maybe that inspires/instils some sort of change in attitude or change in thoughts in perceptions that you have with other generations and also the people around you. Maybe towards women, especially in the context of fair trade, especially with those who are not privileged enough. So, you know there is a lot of

deep some kind of inspiration and change, a wave of change throughout the process (Partner 10, 2019).

The presence of female IDV's is influential in providing organization's women with the motivation for and awareness that they are also capable women who can work towards being independent. It is mentioned that women travelling to the Global South from overseas have little family bindings and are therefore more independent and professional, which is largely impactful for women working in Nepal. Two female leaders at an organization that was interviewed speak of the cultural differences and experience in detail, explaining how female IDV's not only support their work but also how they are inspired and educated on different family structures. In response to question 2.2 "Have international volunteers contributed to women's economic empowerment activities within the communities where you work (such as income generating activities)?" and followed up by the question of how IDV's may have indirectly impacted gender equality, they explain:

Yes, there are differences in the cultures, specifically if we talk about women in our country and the volunteers that come. There are vast differences. They are more independent, we are not. We have lots of family bindings, we live in a family binding, it is not the same case with the volunteers coming. So yes, that creates an impact on us... It makes us more empowered that we as a woman can work in more independent ways. They are free, have come all over from Canada. They work 15 days, 3 months, they are so free and independent, they encourage us to be like them, be more independent, not more binding to our families. More professional. We have to think a lot to move to some other countries for 15 days or 3 months leaving all our family bindings. They make us think, they empower us to think we could as a woman do like that. That is an impact they have (Partner 3, 2019).

... The visits that are done by our women volunteers have positive impacts on the women working out in the field. In that way, it creates more empowerment to the women working in the cooperatives and the farmers in the field. Women volunteers coming from all over

abroad, when they are asked a question and have their input about what could be done to improve their living standards. So yes, that could create a positive impact (Partner 3, 2019).

More generally, having IDV's work with the staff of Nepali organizations can enhance perspectives for already knowledgeable female staff members. The same as in any working relationship, the ability to have outside views with differing life experiences working together creates a mutually beneficial learning environment. Partner 10 recounts her experience with a Uniterra IDV and the relationship that was created with a co-worker:

I would start with my program officer, she is fresh around 25, this is her first job. In order to empower my teammates, she is the first line of response, rather than me to the volunteer. She is owning that work the volunteer is doing. My young colleague is working and guiding her, and the volunteer is doing the same to her. So, these two young people are working together and building the capacity, leadership, also how to take assignments and being as much analytical in their work. They are driving that, this is what we are talking about. They are given space, even 'person X', you do what you want and you are free. She should learn as much on her part too, it is not just us but back when you go you need to see yourself grooming or growing, it is a win-win situation (Partner 10, 2019).

Furthermore, it teaches adaptation, encourages more female hiring, presents an English language skill-building opportunity, allows for an exchange of cultures and increases understanding in the standard of international work. Responding to question 2.3 "Have international volunteers worked with other local women staff and/or local women volunteers to promote gender equality or women's empowerment? (A) Have you seen examples of women in your organization/communities empowered by the presence of international volunteers? Please share stories or examples." A partner explains to me how their English and writing improves through the presence of volunteers:

When volunteers come here they work with us. I cannot speak proper English but when

volunteers are here, I am responsible to communicate with them so while communicating with them my English-speaking capacity had improved. Also, they taught me how to write proper emails with proper sentence structure and when we received emails from other organization, we did not know how to respond so volunteers taught that too. This way they helped me in developing my writing and speaking skill which I feel has empowered me (Partner 6, 2019).

The partnerships arranged between local employees and an international volunteer, who are most often female, are influential and promote the mutual exchange of ideas and knowledge for both people.

Emerging from the interviews is a liberal feminist discourse which favours women's economic empowerment as the means to eradicate gender inequalities and provide women with power in Nepal. Economic power is equated to women's freedom. Giddens (2001) defines liberal theory as a "feminist theory that believes gender inequality is created by lowering access for women and girls to civil rights and allocation of social resources such as education and employment" (Enyew et al., p. 60). In interviewing the leaders of NGO's in Nepal, it is clear that there is a firm cultural belief that if women become economically independent and have easy access to resources, the patriarchal structure of society will alter and women's issues will be eradicated. Answering question 4.4, "What do the people in your organization/communities think this (feminism) will mean for the future of development work? What challenges are imagined? What opportunities are possible?" Two of the partners respond using the language of economic empowerment and explaining the context by which it should occur:

... our organization believes that if women become economically independent and have access to resources, then the traditional male dominated society can be changed. So, our vision is to make entrepreneur out of every woman and we are working on that through our

member cooperatives and also individual woman member (Partner 7, 2019).

Actually, you know, in our organization our role is to promote the women's economic empowerment. That gives them more freedom, if they are the earning person in the family they get more rights, they get more love from the family. This way they can get more, more honours in their family also that we think. I have some example also - I think we have to empower them and they'll get all the rights (Partner 11, 2019).

One of the feminist-focused organizations, specifically names leadership as a necessary prerequisite to gaining power and equality for women. They justify the need for feminist organizations in Nepalese communities:

People ask us why it has to be only women's organization but in our society, there is still a huge gap between men and women. Men are at a higher level compared to women. So, to maintain the balance between them we need to start from women in grassroots level. Unless there is an access to leadership for women there will not be any difference for women. For example, let's talk about the natural resources. It is the woman who does all the works in the forest or anywhere that is close to the nature but at the end the man gets ownership over the resources and he has the access to the income generated by the hard work of woman. He takes the leadership. So, what we believe is if the woman is doing all the hard work then she should have access over the resources too and she should be the leader. Only if the man and woman are in equal platform then we can talk about the overall development rather than only gender equality. Women are capable enough to take the leadership but they don't get the opportunity so our organization is working in that area too where we can enhance the skills and capacity of the woman (Partner 6, 2019).

In many sectors, such as dairy farming, women are the primary workers; however, they lack

ownership and therefore income and recognition. Several partners interviewed were specific to the dairy industry in varying capacities. Responding to Question 2.5, “Can you think of any examples where the presence of international volunteers has improved the situation for women or improved gender relations in your organization/communities?” Two partners express the significance of women’s ownership in farming:

Especially in the dairy cooperative sector, most of the works (almost 80%) were done by women but they were not involved in decision making. But now the women are also directly involved in making the decisions. And we were able to create this kind of awareness among the people with the help of the GESI volunteers from CECI (Partner 4, 2019).

... this is why I say gender issues is a case of economic status, not of gender. Our program here, with ‘X’, and our BOD and members is economic empowerment of women. Not only simple women and girl’s mandates. First thing is economic empowerment. The work they do should be paid, or whatever they’re doing should be invested by people. In the dairy sector, if you look all the work is done by females. Like filling in for practices, milking, everything... And at the time of payment male counterparts used to have their names on the paper. So, we are going to change this. We are practicing this in our different training programs as well. We want to give them some rights, we are positively discriminating male as well because if we give extra possibilities and rights to female, one day there will be a political situation and we won’t promote their issue, they can fight themselves for their issues (Partner 12, 2019).

One of the organization leaders tells a story about how women can gain power in the household through their income earning. Responding to question 4.4, this partner makes clear how this can come to fruition by providing an example from their organization:

Women are suppressed by men and have no voice. Of course, we are trying to empower them economically. For example, we had a difficult time making them understand the value of this skill. Like baskets and all, they do these for utility values for their households and sometimes ceremonial thing and then whatever the functions they go through they use these crafts for those things. What happened was, in 2002 we started this basket and CECI supported, women from different districts were brought in and the training was conducted. When baskets are modified at the 'X' centre started marketing their products and supported them to build their own enterprise and then we started constantly giving them training and marketing their products. Women started earning you know. We started sending them some money. Our chair she kept telling us the stories that women share. For example, there's one woman who used to take care of children and work for nothing. One day she wanted to have meat. Like ask money from her husband to eat meat. Once she started earning she was happily telling our chair, mam now I can buy meat and feed to my children and give to my children. That kind of change is coming but still..... men are there. Even if we go and start communicating with them, ok you have to work to earn and all, men will be like, you know – you have to do this you come back, why are you spending time there, you have to cook and clean. That is what we experienced in some of the communities. That means women should be economically empowered. If they start earning then they will start having a voice (Partner 3, 2019).

In conducting the interviews, it became evident that a proportion of respondents take a liberal feminist view distinctly literally, and view economic empowerment as the absolute sole barrier to achieving gender equality in Nepal. Through research findings, women's economic empowerment was dominantly expressed as property/land ownership, labour recognition, entrepreneurship and financial security. The assumption that it is a lack of women's economic empowerment which limits their equality and lived experiences is unsubstantiated. The UN (2001) defines women's

empowerment in terms of five components:

Women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally (Kabeer, p. 8).

Economic empowerment should not be the singular objective of gender parity; however, it is increasingly being discussed in international policy discourse through recent years. In response to question 4.4, and additionally answering their opinion on if there are criticisms of feminism in Nepal, Partner 12 explains:

Uh in dialogues and conversations people are very positive and very proactive about the feminism and GESI issues like social inclusions as well. But I already told you in my previous initial sentences this issue is not only a GESI issue. It is the issue of economic status and economic domination. So, if we cannot make the persons who are excluded by rights have the resources, if we cannot provide them access to resources and information, then this situation cannot be changed by only lobbying and advocacy, only working on GESI and these things. We should find the root cause and the root cause is resource ownership. If you want resources and you have access to resources, nobody can dominate you. Whether you are female or socially excluded (racism, caste, gender), because resources are the root cause. Ownership is the key.

... There is much more things but the root cause of the discrimination between male and female are not the gender issues. They are the special issues like there could be alcoholic issues, rational issues, the culture of working outside by male and in-house work for female. If you go to the families of where male and female both are educated, all these things would

not be seen because they respect each other too. In every society if you look the person who earns dominates the person who does not earn (Partner 12, 2019).

These understandings of gender equality and access to resources for women rely on the assumption that gender parity has not been achieved due to a lack of financial validation given to women and ignores the dominant patriarchal structures which serve capitalism. The importance of women's economic empowerment is that women's labour needs to be recognized and paid, and that as an income earner, you influence decision-making.

In Nepal, there is a consensus that the discourse of gender equality and social inclusion is preferred over feminism which is a result of it being a less established and widely publicized framework in the area.

Mostly feminism is addressing only women's issues, it is neglecting male's issues. Most people want to use the term GESI - gender equality and social inclusion (Partner 10, 2019).

Two partners interpret how they believe the general population interprets feminism in Nepal:

I think if you talk about feminism in a term itself, for example if you talk about feminism those who are working and advocating this word we are very clear in the sense anyone can be feminist it doesn't have to be women. But people not well acquainted with this word thinks it has to be women, has to be female and that confusion is still there. And also in terms of how does it see... I think not feminist but gender is preferred because often we have very informal discussion I think we should move beyond feminism because there are much gender sexual minorities so we need to consider that also at the same time (Partner 10, 2019).

In our community, feminism is seen negatively. We live in a patriarch community and they see feminism as just opposite of patriarch which is not true. As per my understanding,

feminism has come into existence for gender equality (Partner 13, 2019).

Interviewees indicate that GESI is preferred over the language of feminism for a number of reasons. There are three reasons most cited for the preference of GESI over the language of feminism. First is the issue of other marginalized and vulnerable social groups in Nepal, in particular the caste system and Dalit people who are seen as untouchable and widely avoided. These interview respondents highlight how Nepal is unique through their marginalized groups:

The women are more valuable in Nepal. The castes you know. We have the caste system, beginning we conscious how to invite all the caste participation, maybe positive discrimination. So, we talk with the volunteer also in that way, and they are also conscious so we have no problem. But they make us more conscious on that issue. That is a good thing. And we have to show that we are going that way.

... My one counterpart, my colleague and the volunteer, they went to two three districts and they'd several trainings for dairy cooperatives and other cooperatives. They talk about equality, and they talk about the, you know, the social inclusion. Issue of the touchable and untouchable caste. That is a major issue. Probably still the big issue in rural parts of the city, not in the urban city. The untouchables are bringing milk and people are not touching that milk, that is a big issue. But through that training they said that I will, I will bring acceptance to collect the milk from the untouchable community also. So, these are the contributions I think (Partner 14, 2019).

... In Nepal's case, we have three different types of demographic. One is the Pani Na Chaina, one we call jamijatee, third one is called Dalits. Dalits and Pani Na Chaina they are specially not too much sensitive about women. But jamijatee there is more concern for the women, at one community there is limited right for women. But they are still gradually

changing their idea of the women. I have seen during my visit of micro-finance they are also coming under the front line, bringing their female members from outside the house. This is the time and education to support them and bring out. The practices also support them to bring out, we have to gradually inject those new ideas. To see the result, we have to wait for some years, but it is changing” (Partner 14, 2019).

When we talk about GESI, it not only talks about gender equality but also socially marginalized or socially excluded group. And we have different groups of people from different communities residing together and there are communities which are regarded as Dalits/untouchables. Farmers of such communities are also involved in the milk production however their milk were not consumed by other communities so they didn't have opportunity to sell it in the market as well because they were considered as untouchables. Therefore, we decided to buy milk from such communities too and as a result people from such communities also started animal farming whereby they bought and raised cattle like buffaloes, cows etc. In this way, such communities that were socially excluded also got an opportunity to be involved in income generating activities. And all these were realized and implemented after the action plan was made” (Partner 4, 2019).

Second is the need to include men in conversations surrounding women's issues, men need to be part of the process so that men in households can support the women in their lives and feel positively included. A partner explains the need to include all members of the family in this process:

We have to educate all the family member, like the male member of the family also, they have to know about this rights thing. If we train women and they go back home and ask for right there is a conflict, we have some cases like that. Whole family has to realize that. I work in Jumla, one of the remote parts of the country. When I was working in Jumla at that

time the ladies during the menstruation period they need to go outside the house, they need to stay there. Right now, in that village that is not happening, they accept the change. Gradually we have to adopt the good things in the society, that is sustainable. If we impose that is not sustain for long time. We have to realize them, we have to train them. If they realize we can accept. my idea, this is my personal idea, you know, equality is the good things (Partner 12, 2019).

Finally, feminism is often understood as more radical than GESI by Nepali peoples. People interpret feminism through a radical lens which dismisses men's issues and neglects gender minorities. The Nepali people interviewed are aware that they have more than one marginalized group and hope that there is a discourse which can account for this. An interviewee explains this well to me, saying that:

Beyond women there are so many people who are not able to express their identity. So, the worst thing is when you are not able to say what you are. What type of life the person leads. Beyond women I think there would be backlash with organization accepting this type of volunteer I know that. If you said some sort of sexual minorities for volunteers, they will not be accepted, they will not be selected by many organizations. We need to work on this, we need to incorporate these minorities (Partner 10, 2019).

Feminism seems to be increasing in popularity and acceptance by organizations and people who understand feminist discourse as the equality of men and women, and who see it as a topic of conversation that can be brought into organization culture and the family home. Nepali willingness to learn more about feminism, and implement it in their practice is apparent in their varying responses to what feminism means to them:

Here in Nepal by social movements they come to the one that feminism is the advocacy and rights of the female, it is led by the women and in some cases also supported by men as well.

They have been deprived of rights and access to information and other issues years by years. To make them equal, we may counterparts in every aspect of economic and other social issues as well then, we believe as a feminist” (Partner 12, 2019).

Uh in some years back if we say in this organization it was not a much serious issue, we were not thinking about this thing. We thought that people would come up with the rights and we should not discuss about the gender issues. Now it has recently changed. There is also legal boundary as well. They set some of inclusion policy, also organization policy. Now participation of the female is a must. We are working on this too. Now we believe their contributions should be rewarded, now our perception has changed. The issue was an issue of non-government only and a social movement, not of the whole community. Especially not the issue of male. But now... I think the organization with the male, they are also talking about these issues. Now they are aware of this fact and have decided working with and working for the female” (Partner 12, 2019).

I don't think this is a topic that is discussed enough in the family's because whatever it is that is practiced from our social background that is followed. Feminism is not a topic that is not an open topic in the family. That is the culture we follow. When a woman is married she has to go to her husband's home. It does not matter if she is a working woman or someone who does not work, she has to do all the home activities, she has all responsibility. All the responsibilities at home and at work. She has to equalize all the activities, that is something that is already there. Somehow, we have brought change but this is a regular practice. We have to come to office and do the home also. It is not that we are not educated. If she is a woman than she has to do everything. We do not get any compensation. In office because of the changing prospects of people about feminism, yes, we get more priority in our work culture because of being a woman. We don't have to stay for longer hours in the office

because we are women. There are some benefits (Partner 3, 2019).

In our Nepalese culture the feminism was understood in a different way back then. But after the 1990's revolution in Nepal people started embracing feminism. Before that our organization was also not much aware about these things. Even today there are weakness in terms of giving opportunity to the women in the leadership level. Even our cooperatives were not able to include women in its decision-making level. However, we started working towards it later. And today after that revolution and also after developing the GESI policy of the organization, much improvements are made in this sector” (Partner 4, 2019).

Feminism has a positive side. We have to end all forms of discrimination including the gender discrimination. Everyone should have equal right. And to guarantee the equal right for women if we take the soft way then it might take us long time but if we follow the feminist perspective and go through it then it will be easier and faster for us to achieve that goal. But the challenge is society won't accept it easily... If we want to develop our society and nation then equal participation of men and women is very important. And for this the concept of feminism must be strongly implemented and it is very important for the future” (Partner 10, 2019).

GESI is understood to be inclusive of all social groups and more positively interpreted and embraced by men than feminism; however, feminist language and discourse are gaining popularity and becoming more widespread.

Analysis

International development volunteers are a useful tool in contributing to local non-government organizations in Nepal and their particular goals through mandate projects/partnerships. The partnership that Uniterra has with local CECI NGO's is productive in pairing IDV's with various projects and the specific job that they are tasked. Regardless of IDV's originally agreed-upon role, partner leaders say that IDV's are directly supportive in digital communication, presentation preparation and organization. IDV's are indirectly helpful to the goals of FIAP and GESI. The IDV's most often support the organizations' GESI efforts indirectly by supporting office tasks and projects, and taking on whatever needs to be done.

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) and its aim of acknowledging gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a critical aspect of poverty and inequality is supported through the efforts of IDV's working with CECI partners in Nepal. For the successful implementation and practice of FIAP globally, The Canada Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH, 2017) recommends the promotion of empowerment and social norm changes, supporting the strengthening of gender equitable healthy systems through the approach to and promotion of gender-based analysis and gender budgeting with a focus on intersecting issues, and providing clarity on how gender equality targets for Government of Canada funded initiatives (IDV's and NGO's) will be measured to support evidence-based decision making (p. 2). The support by IDV's for FIAP in their positions with CECI partner NGO's occurs through a focus on empowerment and social norm changes in their tasks. The scholarship on the work of IDV's and Canada's FIAP is extremely limited, and this gap in documented knowledge creates difficulty in being absolute on their contributions. Based on the interviews conducted with CECI partners and their leaders, volunteers most significant contribution is through their flexible support in small tasks that promote the gender equality agenda.

The primary challenges faced by volunteers, and that were consistently identified by the leaders of organizations are the duration of the volunteer's work-term, language barriers, mandate

confusion, lack of support, cultural differences and daily commutes. These challenges which were consistently brought up pose a challenge for bringing IDV's into the more rural communities, and out of Kathmandu. As a geographically diverse and landlocked country, the epicenter of Nepal is in Kathmandu, which is where INGO's primary offices/development efforts and economy stimulating activities are located. The geography in Nepal is divided into three main categories: the terai region, the hill region and the mountain region. The three regions are incredibly diverse in terms of their geographic features, human settlement patterns, population and land distribution, availability of productive resources and levels of economic, human and infrastructure development (Chhetry, p. 293). The majority of local organizations who brought international volunteers into the terai region on field projects indicate that it is a positive and empowering experience for local community members as it challenges gender stereotypes and assumptions that it is men who do the work. It was repeatedly indicated that there are many areas outside of Kathmandu's reach which are becoming an increasing focus of the governments and organizations development undertakings. Some interviewees said that programs should work to extend into having IDV's go to rural areas, as opposed to having individuals from the rural areas come to the village for workshops run by IDV's. More volunteers are encouraged to work in the field and gain experience in Nepal's rural regions. It is believed that this will increase the contributions of IDV's. INGO's working with IDV's face a challenging task to consider the current challenges of IDV's in the city center (language, support, daily commutes) which may be emphasized in the terai, but work to consider how to effectively send more IDV's to rural regions in the country.

The Uniterra volunteers pre-departure training, as well as the selection process of who is selected as an IDV, both contribute to IDV's on gender empowerment projects in Nepal who, as Mohanty says, demand for a plural consciousness. The leaders who were interviewed, as well as the CECI staff seemed aware of and believed that the IDV's consider the many intersections of ideas and knowledge when partnering with local organizations. Based on the interviews IDV roles, the IDV's do not take on paternalistic roles in their effort to reduce gender inequality. Positions are

much more commonly things such as marketing, communications, accounting, presentation creation, and more. As a result of specific jobs that reflect typical office activities, IDV's work in Nepal appears not to take on a 'savior' role. Furthermore, the integration of IDV's into the office and partnership with a staff member creates an understanding of Nepalese women and their concerns. By doing this, Uniterra avoids projecting and supporting the notion of the Third world woman. I believe that this is a significant contribution which volunteers can gain deeper insight into. In creating partnerships and placing IDV's in 'in-office' roles, third world women as a group are not limited to unsubstantiated biases such as religious (not progressive), family-oriented ('traditional'), legal minors (not aware of their rights), illiterate (ignorant), domestic (backward), and sometimes revolutionary (by necessity through war) (Mohanty, p. 68). As a result of countering these assumptions, the discourse of a 'third-world-difference' is hopefully being reduced as a Western presumption on the Global South.

The language of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Nepal seems to both fill in for, and encourage the promotion of feminism in the country. The GESI discourse has created an overall awareness of women's empowerment and gender equality in Nepal and has put into place legal measures such as the gender quotas which regulate women's involvement in decision making. GESI's greatest hindrance in working towards gender equality in Nepal is the lack of enforcement, practice and policy growth. Many interviewees make a note of the shortcomings of gender equality that still exists in Nepal:

In the Nepalese context, our constitution has guaranteed the rights for women. It has given special rights to women. Although the laws these days are women friendly but still the tradition of male domination is still there which is one of the hindrances in implementing those laws. And our organization believes that if women become economically independent and if they have access to resources then the traditional male dominated society can be changed. So, our vision is to make entrepreneur out of every woman and we are working on

that through our member cooperatives and also individual woman member. Many awareness programs and campaigns are run by NGOs and INGOs these days. People seem more aware regarding this but many women are still financially dependent on the men. Those men who are educated and qualified support these activists and their movement but the men with traditional belief and who are not well qualified are against the movement. The laws are progressive but there is a lack in implementation part (Partner 4, 2019).

But I think in terms of women these things are more popular in our country and I think we can see that you know because it is something that is about culture, something we know but cannot break. We advocate for that, we fight for that. Back in our homes we still continue to practice that, it is an irony. People are having mensuration, advocating for that and asking people not to have the separate shed for menstruating women in the country but the irony is that they are practicing it at home. You know break down those houses/sheds for menstruation, it is a very small house. Those activists who work on that they break down, they realize after certain times they build those sheds. It is about engrained culture, having said that we have moved very long compared to where we were (Partner 11, 2019).

So, our strategy is empowering them and minimizing their disabilities and improving their abilities. Whether the case of powerful women, we just want them to raise their voice by themselves, not any other people. We want also all of society and their male counterpart in these issues too. Our purpose now is training on these issues to the both (male and female) and if we sit both counterparts at the same table and see it and have a discussion on these issues, then there can be found common issues and we can solve them. But if we exclude them, like if we just train females on their rights and exclude males, and if they go to their home and do the conversation, then I don't think it will result very good. If we make them sit together and discuss their issues by themselves and only facilitate them on by some legal

ideas, global practices, what they are doing wrong and what they should do... then it will result very positive (Partner 13, 2019).

Actually, there are many challenges like women still don't have access to resources or properties. It's always men who have the ownership over the resources and also the properties. Even today to acquire a citizenship from a mother is very difficult. The situation is quite difficult today. However, the women are getting educated and they are more aware about their rights so we are hopeful that the future will be better. It needs more time but we are sure it will improve (Partner 2, 2019).

Yes, somehow, I think if two people are entering organization one is male and one female, it is obvious male will go up and quicker than the female because the female has to fulfil her responsibility at home. They assume. There are examples in our organization also. Decision making power it is always a male. Female are working at the grass level. At the top, most level of hierarchy it is male. Example here, it is male. In the context of our nation the president is female, but she has no such power. In our country, we have a parliament form of government, and the Prime Minister is powerful, he has the power and president does not. Women are bounded to men because of the responsibility they have. Even in the local election it is male and the deputy mayor is female, decision making power is held by the male only. We have certain setbacks because of the responsibility, in your country I heard you get one year maternity leave but here we get two months only. It is very hard to be in the office. Because of that it is little bit in a backward position than male, it is obvious (Partner 8, 2019).

These comments reflect the need for GESI to be not only theoretical, but also practical. Women's empowerment cannot be expressed simply through unregulated policies. Harmful cultural practices

should be openly discussed and eliminated, women's ownership must increase and both men and women need to be included in conversations and education in gender equality.

Agriculture in Nepal is a primary income-generating industry, and numerous nationwide surveys have repeatedly shown agriculture as the main economic activity of over 80 percent of the nation's labour force. Furthermore, surveys frequently indicate that over 60 percent of total household income originates from agriculture (Chhetry, p. 294). Resource and land ownership are one of the main issues people identify as hindering gender parity. If people have equal access to land ownership and resources, it is believed that nobody can then hold power over you. As it stands, women do the majority of labour in agriculture, however, the male owners of the land hold control over the income generated by their labour. The majority of individuals interviewed maintain that women need to be empowered through economic opportunities and demand for their paid labour so that they are equipped with the tools necessary to mobilize their voices.

Conclusion

GESI practices influence the international development volunteer (IDV) experience internally and externally when IDV's travel overseas to work with local organizations. This research reinforces the significance of transnational actors in shaping attitudes and the importance of local interpretations of gender equality. The emphasis on GESI was significant in Nepal, demonstrating social cohesion, peace and solidarity within the country. Gender equality and feminism in the country continues to expand both privately through public opinion and publically by way of government projects. The contributions of international development volunteers who are partnered with local NGO's to perform various tasks and projects are highly practical and encourage pre-existing women's empowerment projects. The partnership of IDV's with other NGO office staff is beneficial through mutual capacity building and knowledge sharing. There needs to be continued research into the impact that IDV's have on gender equality in Nepal to expand the current gap in knowledge and scholarship which exists.

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