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FOREWORD

The Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) is pleased to publish this book, a compilation of articles exploring Nepal's hydroelectricity potentials, disaster management, and the Nepali diaspora. As a Think Tank for international relations, foreign affairs and diplomacy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Nepal, IFA encourages young scholars to put in their scholastic endeavours in the interdisciplinary world for which academics and aspirants are needed to come together for success.

Compiled and arranged within this book is a tapestry of voices, perspectives, and experiences that capture the essence of Nepal's hydroelectricity potentials, disaster management, and the desire of the Nepali diaspora. Each article is a brushstroke, meticulously woven together to form a comprehensive narrative of a nation striving for progress while cherishing its precious heritage.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the authors and contributors who have shared their expertise, insights, and passions in crafting these articles. Their dedication to shedding light on Nepal's achievements, challenges, and aspirations is commendable. I also extend my appreciation to the readers, for it is your curiosity and open-mindedness that breathe life into these pages and give meaning to the words within.

IFA extends sincere gratitude to the Honorable Foreign Minister N. P. Saud and the responsible officials within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of Nepal in facilitating researches on the matters of Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy in the present perspective. I specially thank Mr Matrika Poudyal, the resource

person cum spokesperson of IFA, for supervising the young scholars from the country (Ushnata Thapa and Abhinav Shakya Pradhan) and abroad (Cody W. Pyle and Avantika RL Singh from the USA) who undertook their sincere research oriented works. The contributions of Mr Madhavji Shrestha (senior resource person), Mr Sanu Raja Puri (information officer), Mr Mahendra Prasad Joshi, Mr Dron Prasad Lamichhane, Ms Renuka Khadka and all the IFA staffs are worth mentioning in this regard.

Rajendra Pandey

Officiating Executive Director

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Nepali Youths' Knowledge of Nepal and Social, Political, and Cultural Values

• **Avantika R.L. Singh**

INTRODUCTION

As someone who is Nepali by way of ethnicity, was born and raised in the United States, and spends my summers with my extended family in Nepal, I am constantly aware of the metaphorical distance between myself and my homeland. Unlike many of my friends who are also a part of the Nepali diaspora, I have a Nepali name, understand and speak Nepali to a certain extent, and am decently immersed in Nepali culture. Despite this, I never feel like a “true Nepali”, especially compared to my relatives and family friends who were born and raised in Nepal. This feeling is most prominent when I compare my knowledge of Nepal and my social, political, and cultural values to that of my aforementioned relatives and family friends. Although this doesn't negatively affect my relationships with them at all, it did make me wonder if this phenomenon is limited to just me.

My curiosity led me to ask some of my Nepali-American friends if they ever felt that their knowledge and values were vastly different from the knowledge and values of their Nepali relatives and family friends who grew up in Nepal. Most of them said that they felt that way to a certain extent, but they differed in how different they considered their knowledge and values compared to, say, their cousins in Nepal. Some of them also said that they felt their values aligned more with people they knew

who grew up in Nepal but went to college in the United States than people they knew who grew up and studied in Nepal, while their knowledge of Nepal was vastly inferior compared to both of those groups.

After collecting a lot of anecdotal evidence, I decided it would be interesting to conduct some research on the differences in knowledge of Nepal and social, political, and cultural values between ethnically Nepali youth with different degrees of exposure to Nepal. I couldn't find any existing literature or studies on the subject, so I decided to create my own survey and interview format.

This study was conducted under the guidance of Mr Matrika Poudyal of the Institute of Foreign Affairs, a think-tank under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am incredibly grateful for all his help and feedback. Thank you to Sunil Mama, Mama, and Bua for all their love and support. This project would not exist without them. And finally, I'd like to thank all the wonderful people who were kind enough to give their time to me, fill out surveys, and participate in interviews. They are all the best.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses surveys and interviews to analyze Nepali youths from different backgrounds' knowledge of Nepal and social, political, and cultural values. The participants are ethnically Nepali and between the ages of 18 and 30. They have been divided into three categories: raised and went to school abroad, raised in Nepal and went to school abroad, and raised in and went to school in Nepal. For the purposes of this paper, "school" is defined as post-secondary education aka college/university and "abroad" is defined as outside Nepal and India.

The goal of this study is to determine if there are differences between the three groups' knowledge of Nepal and social, political, and cultural values through the use of surveys and if so, to determine why those differences exist through the use of one-on-one interviews. Three surveys were made on Google Forms and sent out via email, Instagram DMs, and WhatsApp. Interviews were conducted in person and over Zoom, voice-recorded, and later transcribed. Throughout the paper, interviewees will be referenced by pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

A total of 93 people participated in this study, 30 in category 1 (raised and went to school abroad), 24 in category 2 (raised in Nepal and went to school abroad), and 39 in category 3 (raised in and went to school in Nepal).

This study is limited by the sample size and the timeframe in which it was conducted. Thus, it is not meant to be representative of any universal experience or taken as a definitive answer to any question. Rather, it is an exploration of a subject in which little research has been conducted so far and further research should be conducted in the future.

CONTEXT

Nepal is a landlocked country of around 31 million located along the Himalayan mountain range in South Asia and between China and India. The official language is Nepali and the capital is Kathmandu, a valley city of 1.5 million.¹ The majority of the population identifies as Hindu (81.3% as of the 2011 census).² Nepal was governed by hereditary prime ministers until a 1950

1 Nationsonline.org, Klaus Kästle -. "Nepal - A Country Profile - Nations Online Project." *A Country Profile - Destination Nepal - Nations Online Project*, <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/nepal.htm>.

2 "Nepal Profile." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal MOFA*, <https://mofa.gov.np/about-nepal/nepal-profile/>.

palace revolt restored authority to the royal family. The crown created a multiparty parliamentary system in 1991, but after a Maoist insurgency and a decade of chaos and instability, the monarchy was dissolved in 2008 and Nepal became a democratic republic with a bicameral parliament, a prime minister, and a president.³

Country/Region	Est. Pop. of Permanent Nepali Diaspora Members (2022)	Remarks
North America (US and Canada)	250,000	A rapidly increasing population fueled by student arrivals, diversity visa (DV) lottery recipients, family-related chain immigration, and other groups (see breakdown in Table 2)
Oceania (Mainly Australia, New Zealand, Fiji)	150,000	Another Rapidly growing group which mainly starts as students while most end up settling permanently
Europe including the UK	250,000	A group consisting mainly of ex-Gurkhas, professionals, and other emigrants
East Asia (mainly Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore)	150,000	Mainly consisting of individuals who began through work visa, as former British Gurkha members, and students who entered the job market and then settled.
Total (2022)	800,000	The total number is approximate, and speculative

The permanent Nepali diaspora accounts for 250,000 people in North America (the United States and Canada), 150,000 in

3 Karan, Pradyumna P. , Proud, Richard Riseley , Zuberi, Matinuzzaman and Rose, Leo E.. "Nepal". Encyclopedia Britannica, 29 Jul. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nepal>. Accessed 1 August 2022.

Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji), and 250,000 in Europe (including the United Kingdom).⁴

Those raised in Nepal study abroad in large numbers, with the most prominent Nepali student populations existing in Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, and the United Kingdom and other European countries. According to the Australian government, 59,676 Nepali students were in Australia in 2019, making up the third-largest group of international students in the country. According to the US Embassy in Nepal, there were 13,229 Nepali students in the US, making up the twelfth-largest group of international students in the country. Some of these students return to Nepal after they complete their studies, but many settle permanently, as well.⁵

Because of the dire state of Nepal's higher education, many university-age Nepalis choose to study abroad rather than in their home country. Nepal's universities are plagued with scandals, such as "gross violations of the selection procedure by the influential procedures while appointing university staffers" found in Tribhuvan University and political meddling leaving Purnanand University without its key executives and academic council for a year. Studying abroad is often thought to be associated with better job prospects, higher future salaries, and overall improved futures. Because of this, enrollment in Nepali universities is low⁶:

4 Adhikari, Ambika P. "A Review of Nepali Diaspora, Their Role in Nepal's Development, and Lessons for Developing Countries." 2022, <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/kj64z>. Accessed 1 August 2022.

5 Adhikari, Ambika P. "A Review of Nepali Diaspora, Their Role in Nepal's Development, and Lessons for Developing Countries." 2022, <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/kj64z>. Accessed 1 August 2022.

6 Wagle, Achyut. "Opinion: The Collapse of Nepal's Higher Education System." *The Kathmandu Post*, 23 July 2019, <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2019/07/23/the-collapse-of-nepal-s-higher-education-system>. Accessed 1 August 2022.

According to the Education Ministry's data for 2017, the total number of students enrolled in higher education in that particular year is 361,077 of which 88.27 percent are in bachelors and only 11.25 percent are in master's level. A negligible number of people seem to be opting for research degrees such as MPhil and PhD. If we compare it with an average 250,000 students completing Grade 12 against enrollment in bachelors and masters level combined (that represents at least six years of Grade 12 graduates), it is safe to argue that only 20-25 percent school graduates enroll for higher education.⁷

Nepalis who were raised and went to school abroad, raised in Nepal and went to school abroad, and raised in and went to school in Nepal all have levels of exposure to Nepal. Because of this, it is possible that people in the three groups will have different social, political, and cultural values and different amounts of knowledge of Nepal, which this study tests.

In terms of references, much literature has been written on diaspora and identity (^{8 9 10 11 12 13}) but little quantitative research

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- 7 Wagle, Achyut. "Opinion: The Collapse of Nepal's Higher Education System." *The Kathmandu Post*, 23 July 2019, <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2019/07/23/the-collapse-of-nepal-s-higher-education-system>. Accessed 1 August 2022.
 - 8 Bhandari, Nagendra Bahadur. "Diaspora and Cultural Identity: A Conceptual Review." *Journal of Political Science*, vol. 21, 2021, pp. 100–108., <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v21i0.35268>.
 - 9 Chiang, Chih-Yun. "Diasporic Theorizing Paradigm on Cultural Identity." *Semantic Scholar*, 1 Jan. 1970, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Diasporic-Theorizing-Paradigm-on-Cultural-Identity-Chiang/8527990ffdd177f5ca550850b5e9ab22e3c69399>.
 - 10 Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Undoing Place?*, 2020, pp. 231–242., <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003058885-22>.
 - 11 Collins, Neil, and Kristina Bekenova. "European Cultural Diplomacy: Diaspora Relations with Kazakhstan." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 23, no. 6, 2017, pp. 732–750., <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2017.1343309>.
 - 12 Prinz, Aloys. "Migration, Cultural Identity and Diasporas an Identity Economics Approach." *IZA Journal of Development and Migration*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2478/izajodm-2019-0001>.
 - 13 Bulmer, Martin, and John Solomos. *Diasporas, Cultures and Identities*. Routledge, 2014.

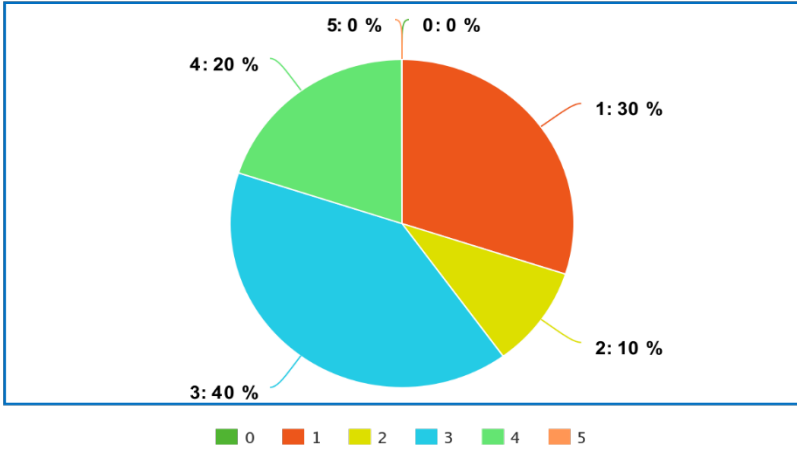
on knowledge of home countries and social, political, and cultural values has been conducted, especially in comparison to non-diaspora and in relation to Nepal. Therefore, despite my best efforts, there is little data from which to draw hypothesis from and all conclusions have been taken from data I have collected.

KNOWLEDGE OF NEPAL

To test survey participants' knowledge of Nepal, I did two things: (a) ask them to self-report things (i.e. their knowledge of the Nepali language on a scale of 0 to 5) and (b) asked them trivia-like questions about Nepal (i.e. who the current Prime Minister is). In general, participants in group 3 (grew up in and went to school in Nepal) outperformed group 2 (grew up in Nepal and went to school abroad) and group 1 (grew up and went to school abroad). Group 3's knowledge of Nepal was far greater than group 1 and mildly greater than groups 1 and 2's.

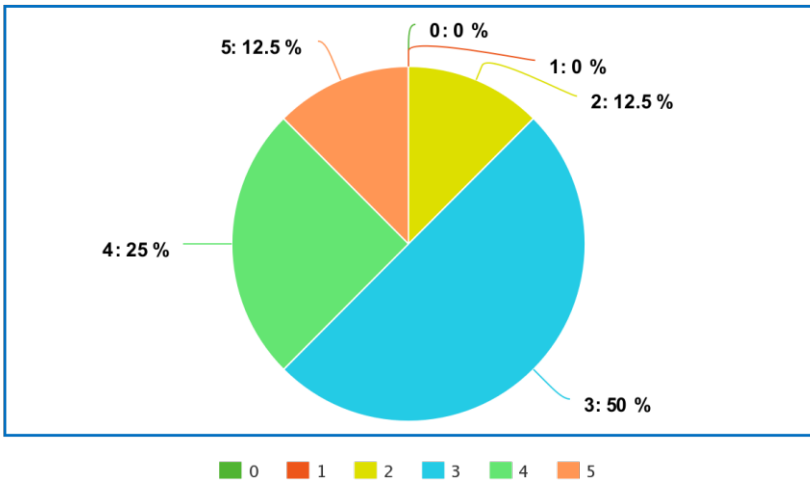
When asked about their proficiency in the Nepali language on a scale from 0 (cannot understand, speak, read, and write at all) to 5 (can understand, speak, read, and write fluently), group 3's responses were higher than the other two groups' responses. Group 3 averaged a 3.8 proficiency on the 0 to 5 scale, group 2 a 3.3, and group 1 a 2.5.

Group 1



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Group 2

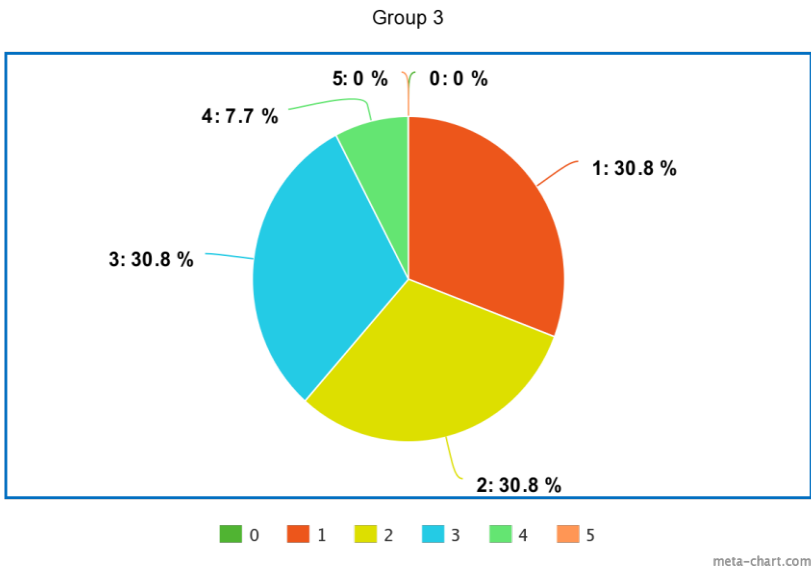


meta-chart.com

Roy, a group 1 respondent who resides in the United States and has a proficiency of 2, said that although Nepali was his first language, he's no longer nearly as fluent as he used to be because he's surrounded by English speakers. His parents speak Nepali at home, but he usually responds in English and is completely

unable to read and write Nepali. When asked if he wishes he was proficient, he says that “sometimes it’s embarrassing not to be able to speak Nepali fluently when I [he] visit[s] Nepal” but he doesn’t “really need to know Nepali in America”.

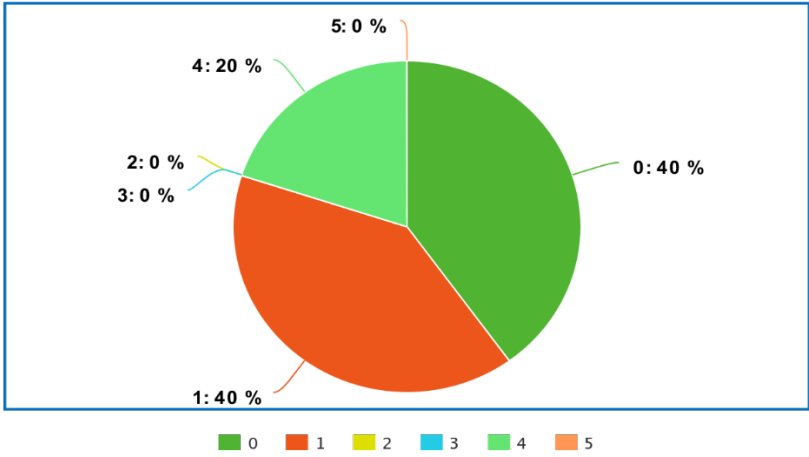
When asked to identify the current Prime Minister of Nepal, 50% of group 1 correctly named Sher Bahadur Deuba, compared to 87.5% of group 2 and 92.3% of group 3. When asked to identify the current President of Nepal, 50% of group 1 correctly named Bidya Devi Bhandari, compared to 87.5% of group 2 and 92.3% of group 3.



Tanvi, a group 1 respondent who resides in the United States and was unable to correctly identify both the Prime Minister and the President, said that her parents, who immigrated from Nepal in their 20s, “don’t watch Nepali news or talk about Nepali politics” with her. She admitted to not having much of an interest in Nepali politics due to growing up in the US and said that if she had been raised in Nepal, she probably would have been able to identify key political figures.

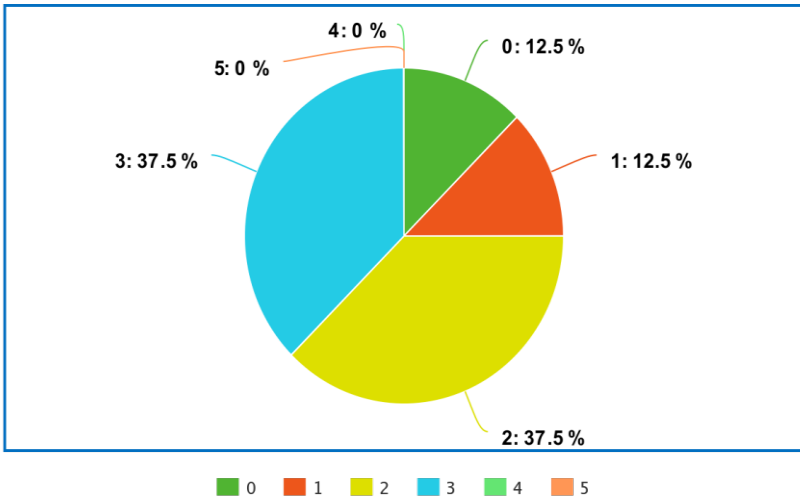
When asked to identify the level of their knowledge of Nepali current affairs on a 0 to 5 scale, group 1 responded with an average of 1.2, group 2 responded with an average of 2, and group 3 responded with an average of 2.2.

Group 1



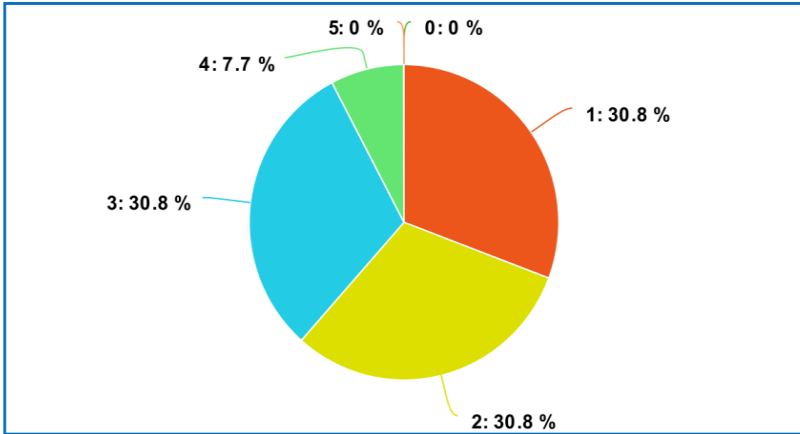
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Group 2



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Group 3



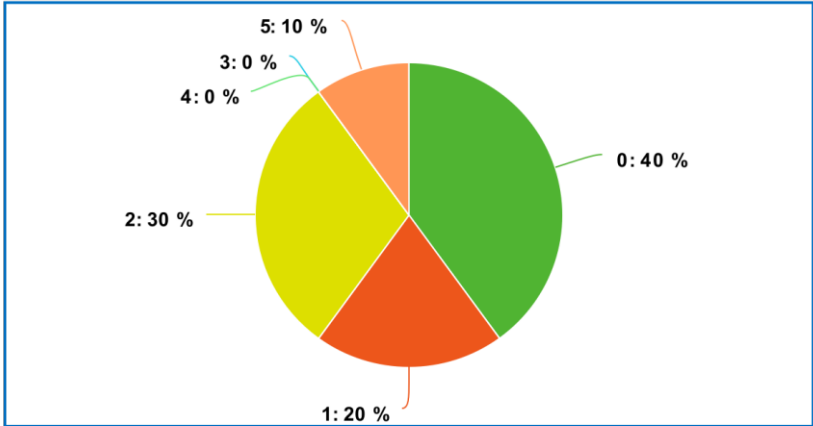
meta-chart.com

Group 1 had the highest percentage of people with no knowledge of Nepali current affairs (40%), followed by group 2 (12.5%), and group 3 (0%).

100% of group 1 was able to correctly identify Nepal on a map of the world, as was 100% of group 2 and 100% of group 3. However, only 70% of group 1 was able to correctly identify Kathmandu on a map of Nepal, compared to 100% of group 2 and 100% of group 3.

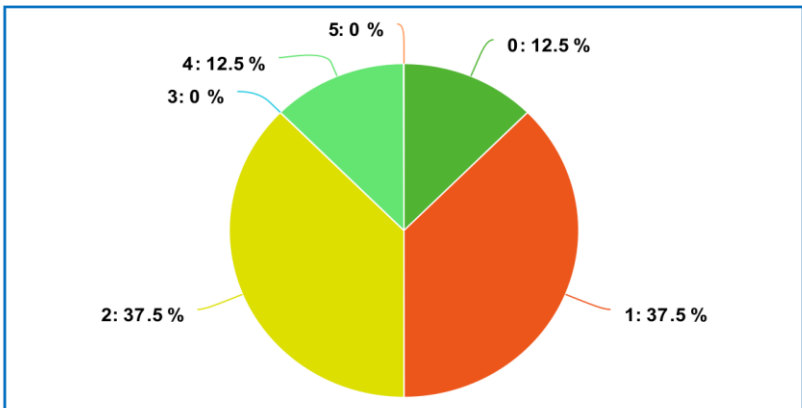
When asked how often they consumed Nepali media (movies, music, etc) on a scale from 0 to 5, group 1 responded with an average of 1.1, group 2 responded with an average of 1.6, and group 3 responded with an average of 2.8.

Group 1

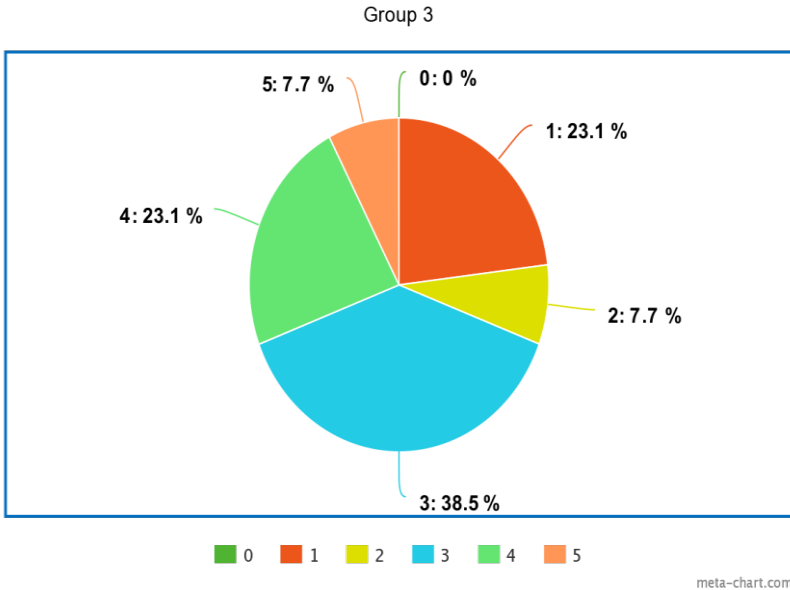


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Group 2



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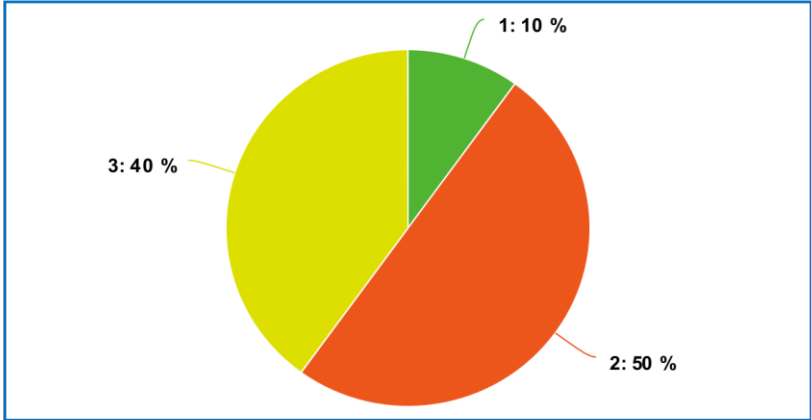


Almost half (40%) of group 1 respondents never consume Nepali media, compared to 12.5% of group 2 respondents and 0% of group 3 respondents.

Aagya, a group 3 respondent whose response was a 4, said that “it’s hard not to consume Nepali media when you’ve grown up and lived in Nepal because you’re so surrounded by it”. She thinks her answer would’ve been lower if she’d grown up or gone to school abroad because she “would see the media of that country”.

When asked how many languages they are somewhat fluent in, 10% of group 1 respondents said 1, 50% said 2, and 40% said 3. 12.5% of group 2 said 1 and 87.5% said 2. 15.4% of group 3 said 2, 69.2% said 3, and 15.4% said 4.

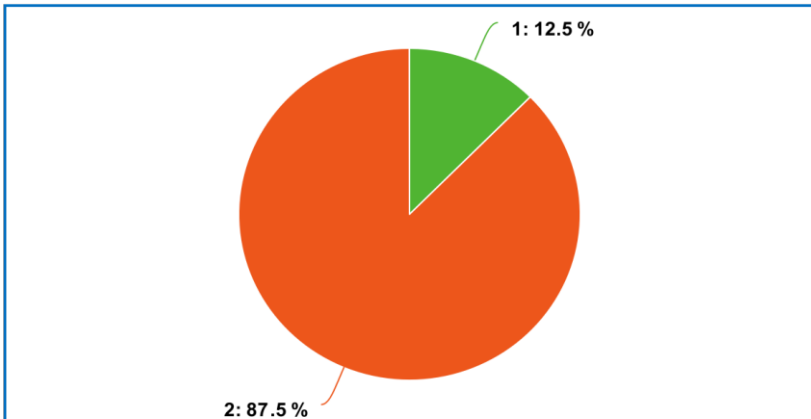
Group 1



1 2 3

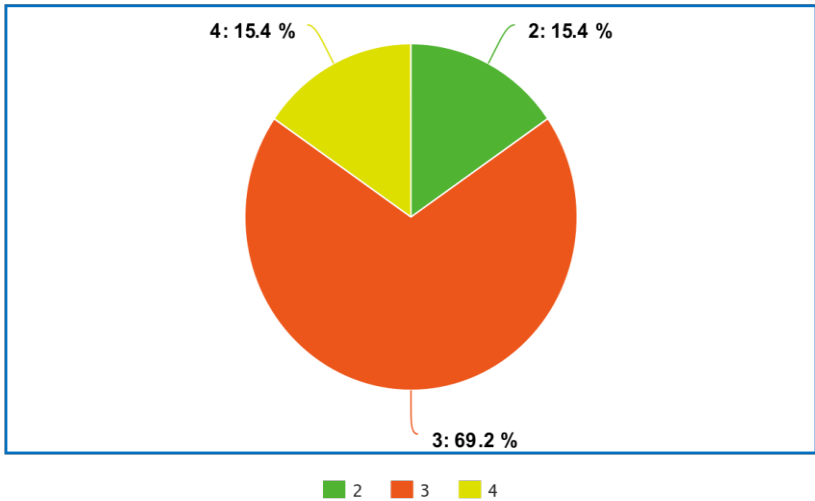
meta-chart.com

Group 2



1 2

Group 3



When asked to identify how patriotic they feel about Nepal on a scale from 0 to 5, group 1 responded with an average of 3.6, group 2 responded with an average of 2.6, and group 3 responded with an average of 3.8.

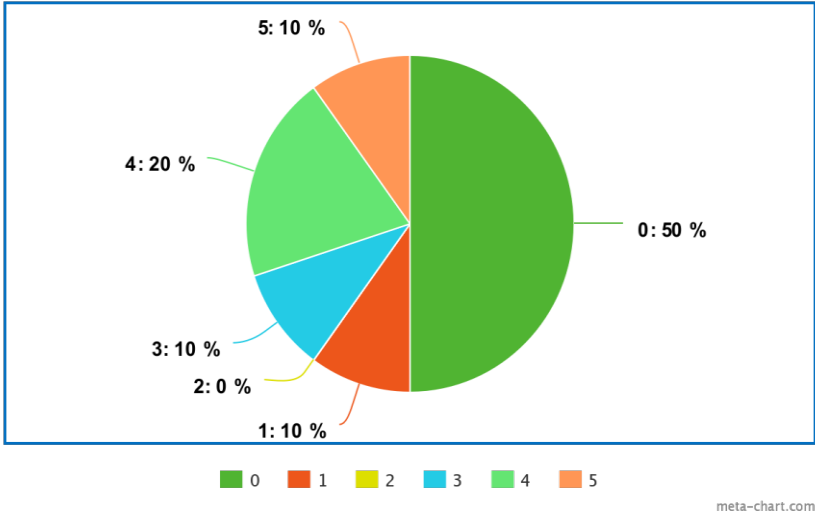
Avi, a group 1 respondent who chose 3, said that she feels much more patriotic about Nepal than she does about the United States, the country she was born and raised in. This is because she is proud of her “heritage and culture” and wants “to carry it on”. She thinks her answer would’ve been lower if she had been raised in Nepal because she would’ve seen its deficiencies all the time and would have been turned off by them, just like the deficiencies of the United States have turned her off of being patriotic about it.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL VALUES

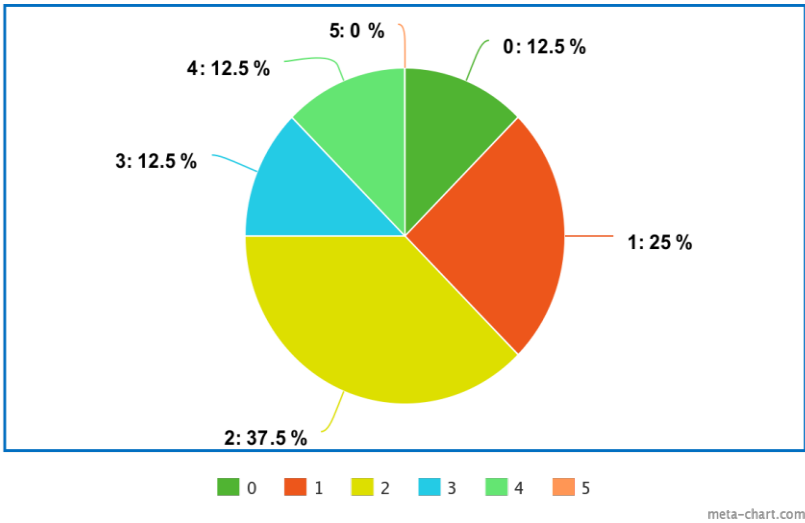
When asked to identify how religious they are on a scale from 0 to 5 (0 being atheist and 5 being devout), group 1 responded

with an average of 1.3, group 2 responded with an average of 1.6, and group 3 responded with an average of 3.

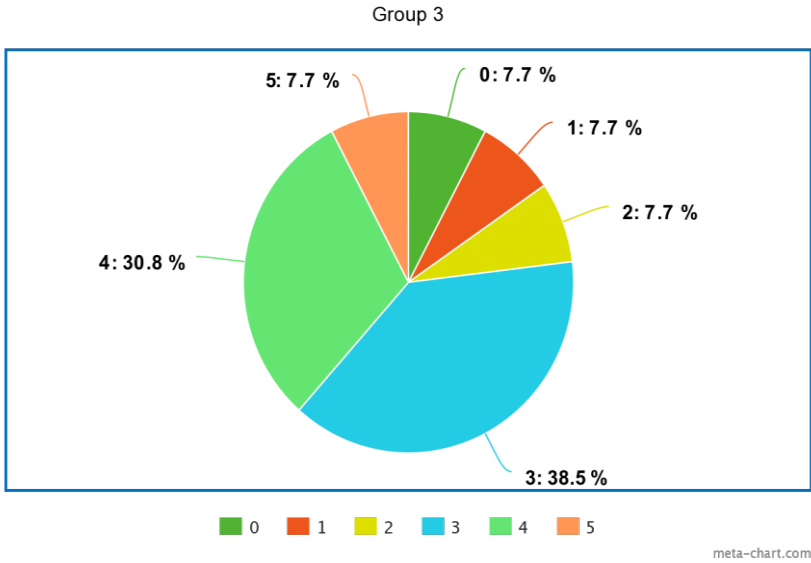
Group 1



Group 2



Group 1 had the highest percentage of atheists (50%), followed by group 2 (12.5%), and group 3 (0%). Groups 1 and 3 had responses for every number on the spectrum, while no one in group 2 chose “5”.



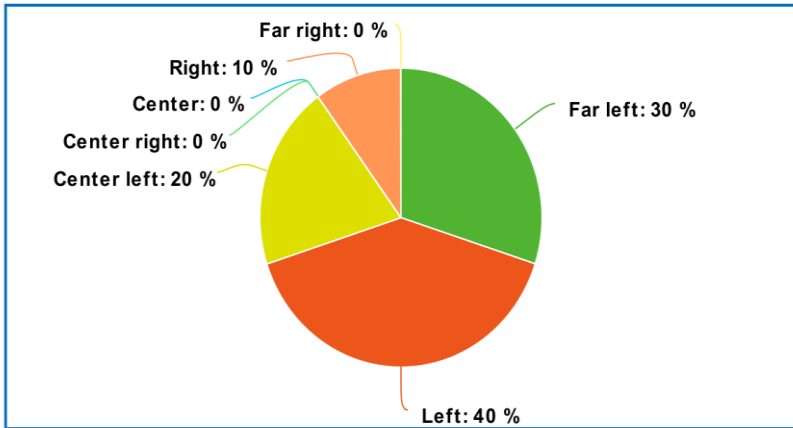
50% of group 1 respondents would live and work in Nepal, compared to 87.5% of group 2 respondents and 92.3% of group 3 respondents. 40% of group respondents were not sure if they would ever live and work in Nepal, compared to 12.5% of group 2 respondents and 0% of group 3 respondents, as well.

When the 3 groups were asked where they stood politically on a spectrum from far left to far right, answers were varied:

On average, group 1 respondents stood on the Left, group 2 respondents stood on the Left, and group 3 respondents stood in the Center. Group 3 respondents were more politically diverse than group 1 and group 2 respondents. Group 2 had the highest percentage of respondents picking one choice (Left). Group 1 responses ranged from Far Left to Right, group 2 responses

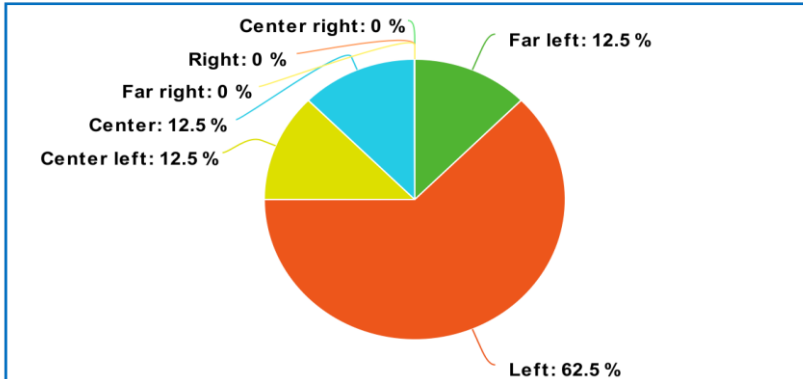
ranged from Far Left to Center, and group 3 responses ranged from Far Left to Center Right.

Group 1



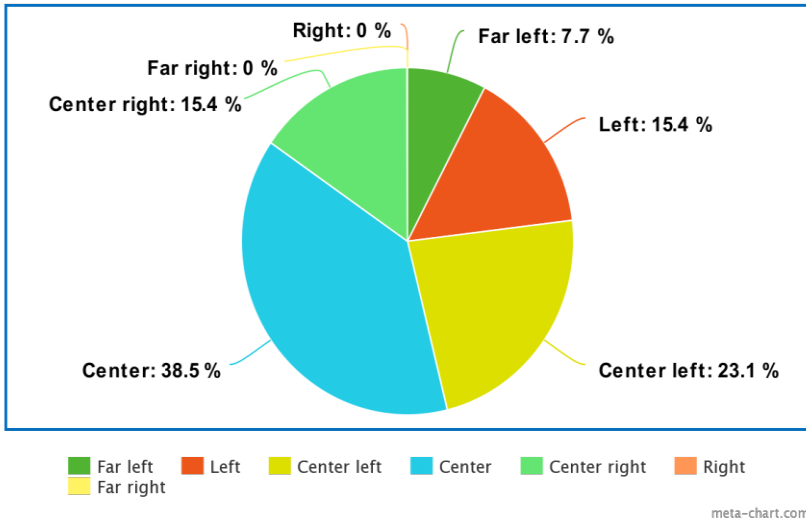
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Group 2



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Group 3



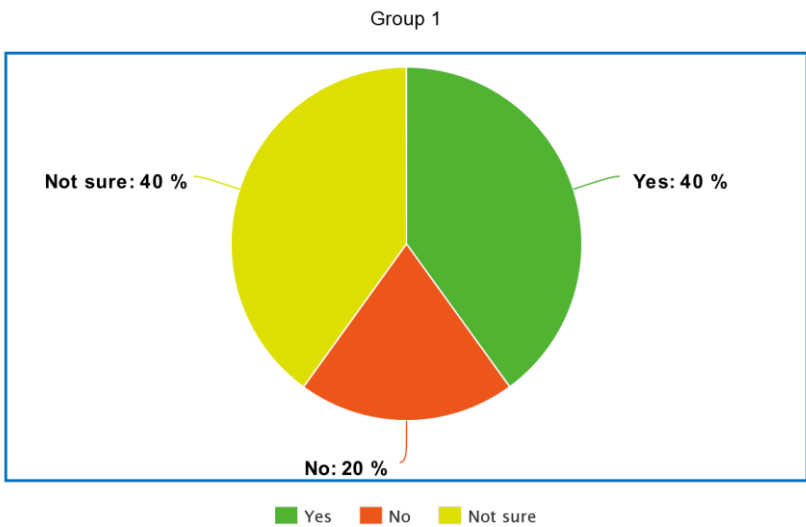
80% of group 1 respondents would not get an arranged marriage, compared to 50% of group 2 respondents and 23.1% of group 3 respondents. 20% of group 1 respondents were not sure if they would ever get an arranged marriage, compared to 37.5% of group 2 respondents and 38.5% percent of group 3 respondents. 12.5 of group 2 respondents and 38.5% of group 3 respondents would get an arranged marriage.

100% of group 1 respondents considered themselves allies to the LGBTQ+ community, compared to 100% of group 2 respondents and 76.9% of group 3 respondents. 100% of group 1 respondents considered themselves feminists, compared to 75% of group 2 respondents and 69.2% of group 3 respondents.

90% of group 1 respondents were not sure if they would prefer to marry a Nepali, while 62.5% of group 2 respondents and 76.9% of group 3 respondents would prefer to marry a Nepali. 70% of group 1 respondents would teach their children the Nepali

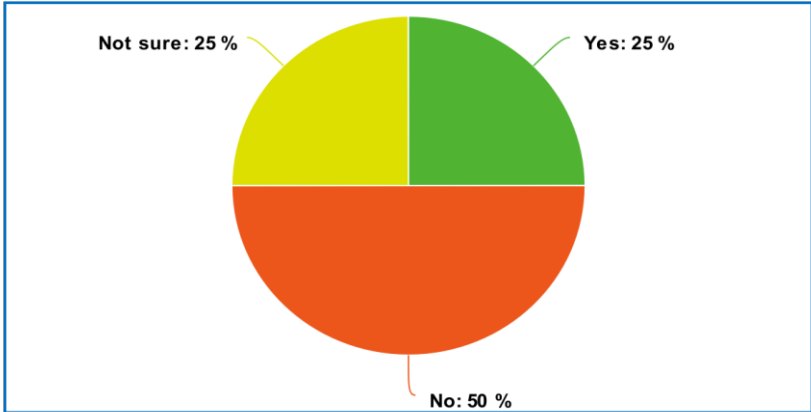
language, compared to 100% of group 2 respondents and 100% of group 3 respondents. 50% of group 1 respondents would prefer to give their children Nepali names, compared to 75% of group 2 respondents and 76.9% of group 3 respondents.

40% of group 1 respondents would marry someone without their parents' approval, as well as 25% of group 2 respondents and 30.8% of group 3 respondents. On the other hand, 20% of group 1 respondents, 50% of group 2 respondents, and 46.2% of group 3 respondents would not marry someone without their parents' approval.



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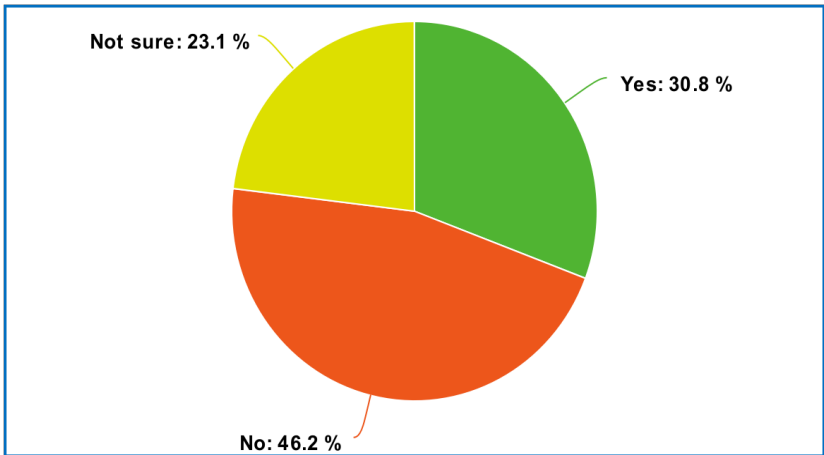
Group 2



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

meta-chart.com

Group 3



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite the diversity in knowledge of Nepal and social, political, and cultural values within each of the 3 groups, there are clear trends. In general, the results of this study

show clear differences in the knowledge of Nepal and social, political, and cultural values between the three groups.

Group 3 respondents' social, political, and cultural values tended to be more traditional and conservative, whereas group 2 and group 1 respondents' social, political, and cultural values tended to be more modern and progressive. Group 3 and group 2 had fairly similar levels of knowledge of Nepal (those levels being very high), whereas group 1 had very little knowledge of Nepal.

There were a few outliers. For example, when asked about how they identified politically, despite group 1 being further to the left on average, group 1 had a higher percentage of respondents who chose Right than group 3. When asked whether or not they would marry someone without their parents' approval, a higher percentage of group 3 respondents answered Yes than group 2 respondents. These outliers were the minority, however, and in general, the study results followed the previously stated trends.

Once again, this study is not meant to be representative of all the people in each of the 3 groups and is limited by its sample size and scope. Rather, I hope this study will lead to further research being conducted in this field.

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Theoretical Viability and Profitability of Foreign Direct Investment into Nepali Hydropower

A focus on international investments from the United States, China, and India and how these investments will serve as a boon to the Nepali economy and an avenue by which Nepal can bolster its position on the world stage

• C W Pyle, Florida

Nepal has often been described as a yam between two boulders or a buffer between the two most powerful states within South-East Asia. Nepal, while ostensibly an independent and sovereign state, has historically been defined by interference and machinations of external powers, especially her neighbors India and China. The economic and political promises of her neighbors and others have often been either rolled back or blatantly ignored in favor of an external agenda. Unlike the United States, China, or India, Nepal does not possess the hard power means to defend herself and her people from overt external meddling in her internal affairs. Soft power rooted in diplomacy is Nepal's only option to secure her agenda; however, without significant leverage to bolster these negotiations, foreign states have no incentive to uphold their promises.

Historic relations between Nepal and India are defined by such broken promises and overt disregard for international agreements and treaties. Sino-Nepali relations, while not as antagonistic, are equally defined by over-promising and under-delivering at the expense of the Nepali people. Moreover, Nepal is often viewed by China and India as a piece on a game board

and defined by the relationship between these two massive South Asian powers. Nepal's relationship with the United States, while improving, is also defined by how Nepal can serve the US agenda in South Asia as opposed to what is best for the Nepali people.

Going forward, Nepal must seek options which increase her leverage within the South Asian economy and force her neighbors and the United States to recognize her as an equal participant with much to offer beyond a buffer between superpowers. The most expedient option, in relative terms, to achieve such a goal is investment in the expansion of hydropower infrastructure and the creation of an electricity export market. The benefits of hydropower expansion range from economic, social, and industrial. All levels of the Nepali economy will benefit from the expansion of hydropower infrastructure and Nepal's standing within the South Asian community will undoubtedly be raised.

Relations Between Nepal and India

The bedrock of the contemporary formal relationship between Nepal and India is the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship which outlines ten articles defining the relationship expectations to be upheld by the signatory states. Chief among these articles regarding the sovereignty and neutrality of Nepal is Article 1 which states, in part; "The two Governments agree mutually to acknowledge and respect the complete sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of each other (MEA)." Despite this promise, and others laid out within the 1950 Indo-Nepali Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the document is largely frowned upon by the people of Nepal as unequal and harmful to their country. This treaty is widely regarded within Nepal as humiliating and "harmful to Nepal's sovereignty, independence, security, national integrity, and well-being" (Bhatta and Menge). Modern skeptics of the treaty attribute the unfair terms to be a

result of the then Nepali Prime Minister, Mohan Shumsher, being more concerned with securing Indian support for his regime than with committing himself to a broader, more balanced policy for the betterment of Nepal (Bhatta and Menge).

The perceived inequality and one-sided nature of the treaty is further supported by recent economic exchanges between India and Nepal. Between 2010 and 2019, India promised to disburse the equivalent of 1.5 billion USD in foreign aid into Nepal; however, the actual aid delivered was under 30% of this promised amount. Between these years, India provided just over 452 million USD in foreign aid, averaging 50 million USD per year (Bhatta and Menge). Most of these funds were spent on Nepal's transportation infrastructure, mainly roadways and highway projects (Bhatta and Menge).

While such aid was desperately needed to upkeep and update Nepal's transportation infrastructure, the data clearly indicates India's intense proclivity to over-promise and under-deliver economic aid to her Northern neighbor. Within the same decade, Nepal's trade deficit with India has increased over 300% from -1.8 billion USD to over -6 billion USD. This incredible deficit is intrinsically linked with Nepal's supply-side constraints and lack of internal support for increased export trade (Bhatta and Menge). Beyond broken economic promises, India has demonstrated a propensity for employing heavy handed and strong-arm tactics to exert influence over internal Nepali affairs. Chief among these incidents being India's unofficial 2015 blockade of Nepal in response to India's displeasure regarding the then newly ratified Nepali constitution (Ojha). This five-month blockade led to severe shortages of medicine, medical supplies, fuel for vehicles, and gas for cooking (Shrestha, BBC Nepal Blockade).

This blockade occurred five months after an earthquake devastated the South Asian country and severely hindered the

ongoing reconstruction process by limiting or eliminating access to construction materials and raw materials necessary to the operation of many local businesses (BBC Nepal Blockade). Despite denial from New Delhi of any involvement in the blockade, it is hard to imagine such a massive event to be an organic occurrence and Nepali officials vehemently believe the blockade to be India's retaliation for Nepal refusing to bend her knee to the larger South Asian power (Ojha).

India's blockade of Nepal is a clear and deliberate violation of Article 1 of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship and the most high-profile example of the actions taken by India to retain control of Nepal and keep the Himalayan state squarely within India's orbit of influence. This incident also exemplifies the severe disadvantage faced by Nepal as it has little ability to project hard power and must rely practically exclusively on soft power methods of diplomacy and negotiation (Bhattarai and Pulami).

Due to her heavy dependence on and accompanying trade deficit with India, Nepal lacks international leverage and credibility it desperately needs to negotiate better economic terms and diplomatic relations with her Southern neighbor. Cultivating robust and credible leverage must be a major priority of the Nepali government if it wishes to uplift the people and economy of Nepal into a position of equality on the South Asian stage.

Relations Between Nepal and China

Contemporary Sino-Nepali relations trace their origin to the 1960 Sino-Nepalese Treaty of Peace and Friendship. This treaty is composed of five articles outlining the formal expectations and promises of the future relationship between the two countries. Article I and IV of this treaty are directly related to the preservation and protection of Nepali sovereignty and

independence in her dealings with China. Article I reads “The Contracting Parties recognize and respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other” followed later by Article IV which reads “Any difference or dispute arising out of the interpretation or application of the present Treaty shall be settled by negotiation through normal diplomatic channel (sino-nepal-treaties-1960).”

Relations between Nepal and China today are flourishing with the primary goals of Nepal being the continued achievement of economic development and the raising of living standards for its citizenry; goals valued by China as well. For China, an economically self-sustained and politically stable Nepal is a more favorable trading partner. The loosening of Nepal’s dependence on India and a reduction of Indian influence in Nepal is also a promising catalyst for increased favorable Sino-Nepali trade and bi-lateral relations (Bhatta and Menge).

The 2015 unofficial Indian blockade of Nepal was an opportunity for China to demonstrate its ability to supplement or replace Indian trade. While China could not fully replace the lost trade created by the blockade, Nepal’s Northern neighbor opened her borders to increased international transit and trade; however, China was less-than-forthcoming in providing supplies of daily consumables to Nepal (Bhatta and Menge).

Nepalese scholars and government officials remain cautious when engaged in dealings with China. Many within Nepali government and academic circles understand building relations with India, not Nepal, is the primary goal of China’s strategy on the South Asian mainland. Another massive Chinese led investment enterprise within Nepal is the Belt and Road Initiative which promises to, among other goals, build a robust railway system throughout Nepal connecting China to lucrative, and

under-tapped, Indian markets. While such investments and infrastructure would no doubt be of benefit to Nepal, this is merely a positive side-effect of China's primary goal of increasing economic relations and exchanges with India (Bhatta and Menge).

Evidence of this back-burner diplomacy can be found by examining the promised vs actual foreign aid from China to Nepal between 2010 and 2019. Over the course of the decade, China promised Nepal the equivalent of 1.2 billion USD in foreign investment but delivered a mere 414 million USD; only 35%. Much like the funds received from India, this aid was mostly spent on transportation infrastructure. While the Nepal's trade deficit with China is not nearly as immense as with India, export trade with China is hampered by the same supply-side hurdles as well as the increased difficulty of trade created by the Himalayan Mountain range running the length of Nepal's Northern border. Between 2010 and 2019, Nepal's trade deficit with China increased from -0.42 billion USD to -1.52 billion USD (Bhatta and Menge).

The goal of Nepal going forward, regarding increasing trade and positive relations with China, is to maneuver itself into a position of higher importance within the larger South Asian agenda of her Northern neighbor. Nepal must evolve into more than a stepping stone to increased positive Sino-Indo relations. While such relations are no doubt beneficial to Nepal, the Himalayan cannot continue to be a backseat observer of a Sino-Indo dance.

Relations Between Nepal and the United States

Contemporary relations between the United States and Nepal date back to 1947 when diplomatic relations were officially established. In 1958, Nepal established its embassy in Washington, DC and the United States followed suit in 1959 with the establishment of its embassy in Kathmandu (Nepal-US). The United States and Nepal do not have any formal treaties or legal agreements to respect and uphold each other's sovereignty and independence; however, they do share a series of international agreements.

Diplomatic and economic relations between the United States and Nepal, while overall positive, have had to overcome obstacles and these countries modern bi-lateral relationship has overcome significant disagreements. Pre-1990, the United States was an advocate for the continuation of the Nepali monarchy as a mechanism to secure political and social stability despite the regime's record of human rights abuses and refusal to address international complaints regarding them. This official position shifted in 1990 when a significant democratic parliamentary movement developed and protested the Nepali monarchy. The United States, under then President George H. W. Bush, supported this movement and called for free and fair elections to be held within the country (Sigdel).

During the Nepali Civil War waged between the Royal Nepal Army and Communist Party of Nepal, the United States increased military cooperation with the Royal Nepal Army as a part of the larger Iron Curtain policy. At the end of the conflict, the United States heavily opposed any deal between the Communist Party of Nepal and the democratic parties of Nepal; however, such opposition was laid to rest in 2008 when the Communist Party of Nepal garnered the majority vote and became the preeminent political party in the Nepalese Constituent Assembly (Sigdel).

Following these tumultuous few decades, the United States began adjusting its approach to Nepal and moving away from its habit of viewing Nepal through India's eyes (Sigdel). As a part of this revitalized international understanding between Nepal and the United States, the US began increasing foreign direct investment into Nepal. The largest and most visible international agreement between the two countries is the Millennium Challenge Corporation, proposed by the US in 2017 and ratified by the Nepali Federal Parliament in early 2022, which promises the injection of the equivalent of 630 million USD into Nepali infrastructure over the course of five years (Nepal-US). The specific mandate of the MCC is the construction of 300 kilometers of electric transmission lines and the maintenance and upkeep of 300 kilometers of roadways throughout Nepal (Nepal-US). Given the relatively young age of contemporary economic aid and foreign direct investment from the United States to Nepal, it is difficult to project the reliability of US promises; however, the stated agenda of the MCC, if achieved, will be an incredible asset and building block for Nepal's fight for expanded sovereignty in South Asia (Sigdel).

Hydroelectricity: The Future of Nepali Sovereignty

The projection of hard power in South Asia by Nepal is incredibly difficult at best and impossible at worst as its two neighbors exist within the pantheon of rising world superpowers. The continued sovereignty and neutrality of Nepal is dependent upon the Himalayan country's ability to generate leverage it can use to negotiate more favorable terms with the titans on her borders. One of the most optimum paths forward in service of this goal is the expansion of hydropower production in service of energy independence and the creation of an energy exportation market (Singh et al.).

Within Nepal, over 6,000 rivers collectively offer an estimated 83,000 megawatts of annual hydroelectricity production (Singh et al.). Of this maximum potential, only around 50,000 megawatts of annual production are feasibly attainable in the long term with 20%, or 16,000 megawatts, being realistically attainable by 2030. Similar projects in neighboring South Asian states such as Bhutan have proven such rapid development of hydroelectric infrastructure is feasible (Gunatilake et al.).

Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the theoretical market value of 16,000 and 50,000 megawatts of annual production respectively. These projections are based on the average 2021 cost of electrical energy for residential and commercial consumers throughout China, India, and Nepal. The metrics used are based on the average unit price of one kilowatt per hour in USD which are demonstrated in Figure 1.

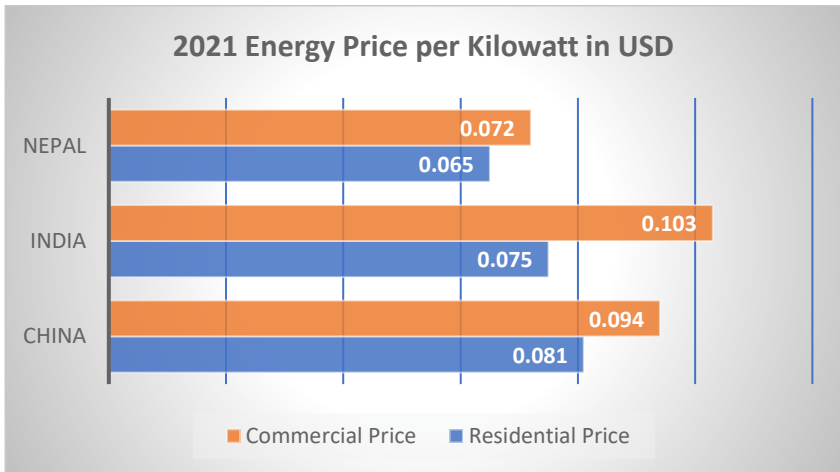


Figure 1: Data sourced from *GlobaPetrolPrices.com* (Electricity)

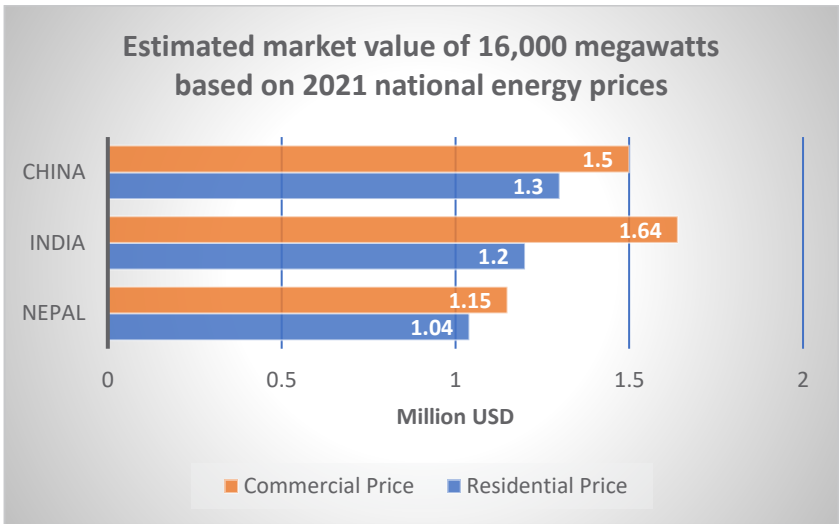


Figure 2: Data Sourced from GlobalPetrolPrices.com and Asian Development Bank (Electricity, Gunatilake et al.)

[1,000 kilowatts per 1 megawatt]

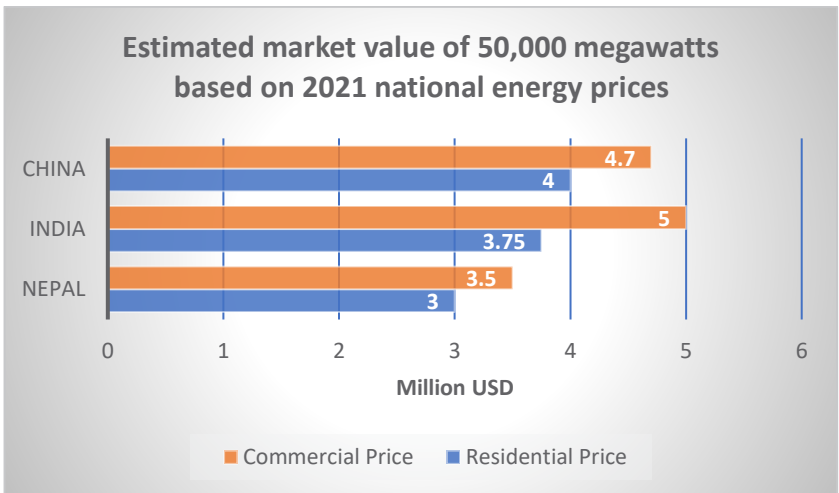


Figure 3: Data Sourced from GlobalPetrolPrices.com and Asian Development Bank (Electricity, Gunatilake et al.)

Despite this feasibility, Nepal has yet to attain energy independence and continues to suffer from a distinct disparity between energy demand and energy supply. This gap in energy production and energy consumption is partially filled by energy imports from India; however, energy distribution to rural areas of Nepal continues to be difficult or non-existent (Singh et al.).

While 93% national energy coverage is impressive considering the 50% coverage seen before 2012, the continued expenditures on energy imports could be eliminated if Nepal tapped into the massive hydroelectric potential lying dormant within her rivers. Not only could the country enter an age of energy independence, once Nepal's hydroelectric potential has been realized, the Himalayan country could begin exporting excess energy and become a more powerful player in the inter-state economy of South Asia (Singh et al.).

The socio-economic benefits of investing into a massive expansion of hydroelectric power within Nepal are remarkable. These investments have the potential to act as an engine for massive economic stimulation and growth through the mass creation of jobs, the expansion of affordable and accessible energy to all of Nepal, and the eventual creation of an energy exportation market (Singh et al.). The attainment of 20% of Nepal's hydroelectric capacity is estimated to lead to an 87% increase above projected baseline economic growth by 2030 and a significant increase in imports between 2025 and 2030 as the purchasing power of citizens is increased. Beyond the socio-economic benefits of increased hydropower production, hydropower dams allow greater flood control during rainy seasons and augmented water flows during dry seasons and droughts (Gunatilake et al.).

Additional Information to Consider

While not as powerful a player within the South and far East Asian region as China and India, Japan is a growing power in the region. Following the Japanese defeat in the Second World War, the state began a long and arduous reconstruction of their culture, government, infrastructure, and economy (Woodside, 1). As a part of this reconstruction process, Japan ratified the 1952 Treaty of Taipei which formally recognized the end of aggression between Japan and China. Also in 1952, Japan ratified the Treaty of Peace Between Japan and India which restored relations between the two states following the tumult of the Second World War (Woodside, 8). In 1956, Japan and Nepal formalized diplomatic relations with Nepal establishing an embassy in Tokyo in 1965 with Japan establishing an embassy in Kathmandu in 1967 (Nepal-Japan).

In January of 2022, Japan extended a 10 billion yen, or Rs 10.39 billion, loan to Nepal with the objectives to support Nepali reforms of economic, financial, industrial, and social policies and institutions (Government and JICA). These reforms are to take effect over the next 6 years with a repayment schedule of 40 years with a 0.01 interest rate taking effect following a 10-year payment grace period (Government and JICA). While this investment does not specifically focus on hydropower infrastructure, such an injection of funds will ease the burden of various sectors of the Nepali economy and allow additional funds to be reinvested into hydropower without fear of crippling these sectors of the economy.

Going forward, while Japan will not be the largest or most powerful state actor within the South-East Asia region, their continued political and economic cooperation with Nepal will be an invaluable resource to the continued improvement and modernization of Nepali infrastructure and economy.

Conclusion

The largest hurdle Nepal must overcome in the pursuit of an expansive, comprehensive, and robust hydroelectric infrastructure policy is securing the necessary funding. A World Bank study estimates Nepal will need between 13 and 18 billion USD over the next decade to sustain the current rate of economic growth (Poudyal B). A nationwide project operating on a timescale of decades will not produce immediate returns on investments and will require an understanding from foreign investors that this immense undertaking is a long-game investment. Further, the direct monetary returns on investment are limited compared to the incredible increase in opportunities to generate increased GDP in Nepal and open the door for multiple streams of profit generation within the economy of South Asia (Singh et al.).

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is the best example of a foreign direct investment program which aligns with Nepal's goals of increasing hydroelectric power generation and transmission. The MCC's roadmap includes the creation or modernization of several power sub-stations across Nepal as well as the construction of 300km of additional transmission lines to facilitate greater electricity dispersion. Along with these internal networks of transmission lines, another MCC goal is the construction of inter-state transmission lines between Nepal and India to facilitate a Nepalese electricity export economy (Nepal compact).

Overall, a commitment by Nepal to the construction of vast, interconnected hydropower generation network should be a priority. The international community has already pledged to assist Nepal in this endeavor; however, a concerted and disciplined effort by the Nepali government in service of this goal is the only method by which these milestones will be

accomplished. Modernization of Nepal is possible; however, such an effort must be maintained and supported in the long term and allowed to progress despite the lack of immediate results or returns on investments (Poudyal R).

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Focus of International Development Organizations on Women's Psychosocial support Post-Disaster in Melamchi Flood 2021

- **Ushnata Thapa**
- **Abhinav Shakya Pradhan**

Background

The consequences of climate change have drawn global leaders' attention. The 2015 Global Paris agreement itself suggests the urgency the world feels regarding climate change and its adverse impacts. One of such impacts of climate change is natural calamities. Natural calamities acknowledge no borders and have been affecting us all in one way or another. Natural calamities can be defined as catastrophic events with atmospheric, geological, and hydrological origins (e.g., droughts, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, landslides) that can cause fatalities, property damage, and social environmental disruption (Jiuping X. et al., 2016). Temperatures and sea levels around the globe are rising. A finding shows that the frequency of natural disasters has increased by up to 10 times in the past 7 decades ("ECOLOGICAL THREAT REGISTER 2020", 2020). People affected by Natural Disaster have reported that they are affected psychologically, and around 15-20% of the people are diagnosed with a mild form of mental illness and around 3-4% are diagnosed with severe mental illness (Serchan S., et al.,2017).

In a global comparison, Nepal ranks 4th in terms of climate risk according to the Global Climate Risk Index 2017 which assesses the impacts of meteorological events in relation to economic losses and human fatalities (Eckstein et al., 2018). Furthermore,, the country ranks 11th in terms of global risk for earthquake occurrence and impact (Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal, Status Report (July 2019) - Nepal, 2019). The country is in the top 20 of all the multi-hazard countries in the world. More than 80% of the population is exposed to the risk of natural hazards (MoHA, 2017), which include earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides, extreme temperatures, and glacier lake outburst floods (GLOFs).

On 15 June, the Melamchi Bazaar was hit by a heavy flash flood from two tributaries – the Melamchi and Indrawati rivers(International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, 2021). The destruction by the flood affected different population groups differently, with many families displaced from their houses. Countless people died and many are still missing because of the flash flood. Subsistence farming-based families have incurred a permanent loss of highly valuable agriculture and farmland, which has impacted their livelihoods and subsequent well-being (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, 2021). Subsequently, the lives of downstream communities were saved by early warning using informal risk communication.

Out of the many consequences of a disaster, it has been recognized that disasters have a great impact on mental health. There definitely is a heavy social and economic impact on the affected areas. The impact of disasters is mostly measured on the basis of destroyed infrastructure and loss of human lives. If we were to consider the emotional suffering of the survivors, it could

give us a clearer picture of the depth of impact caused by the disaster. International Development Organization and government primarily works on relief distribution post-disaster. The disasters that are introduced by climate change have a direct link with anxiety-related issues and furthermore, flooding is found to have an association with elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Additionally, the loss of family members, home, or job also can contribute to depression and anxiety (Joshua C. M., 2019). But there is less efforts being made on providing mental health support to disaster survivors. Nepal, a country that already has higher rates of women issues, with many International Development Organizations, INGOs, and NGOs working towards making Nepal a country where women lived a dignified life, focusing on psychosocial aspects of the violence survivors is a must.

It has been found that women and girls are affected by disasters in different ways than they affect men. Furthermore, studies suggest that women's psychological well-being is more at risk (Shooshtari S., et al., 2018). More cases regarding women's violence are registered post-disaster (Bista S., et al., 2022). After the 2015 earthquake, there was a significant increase in reporting of VAWG, by women and girls in camps and temporary shelters (Bista B. S., et al., 2022). Women face violence, sexual abuse, diseases, and psychological trauma (Shooshtari S., et al., 2018). With women being the primary caregivers after a disaster it becomes of utmost importance that their psychological well-being is brought into consideration (Neupane T, 2020). Nepal has not been able to prioritize mental health. Therefore, International Development Organizations which have a history of working in this sector for a long time, need to include mental health elements during implementing their projects post-disaster.

The international Red Cross is an humanitarian organization works to provide assistance and support to people affected by disasters and conflicts around the world. During the time of disaster red cross plays a pivotal role in providing immediate relief to the people affected by disaster. They also provide food, water, shelter, and medical assistance to people who have been displaced or injured as a result of a disaster. Furthermore, their work extends to reconnecting families who have been separated by a disaster, and provide emotional support to people who are struggling to cope with the aftermath of a traumatic event. Additionally the Red Cross also works in disaster preparedness where they educate community about disaster and help people develop plans to prepare for and respond to emergencies. In this study we have sought assistance from the Red Cross, given their status as the primary responders in times of disaster.

Method

Qualitative literatures was used to understand the linkages between disaster and its impact on the psychosocial condition of women. In this study, the writer aimed to establish urgency in tackling issues from a psychosocial perspective while providing support to the victim during post-disaster intervention programs. It also tried to evaluate the current approaches used by organizations and government to tackle psychosocial issues among the disaster survivors. The qualitative study was conducted by using content analysis method to understand the primary data collected through semi-structured interviews of the participants who were survivors of the 2021 Melamchi Flood. Additionally, local disaster responders were also interviewed to verify and cross analyzed the data collected from the participants.

Sampling

Non-probability snowball sampling method was used to determine 5 women participants. To ensure diverse perspective, women from different age groups, working women, house caregivers, dalit women, widow women, and women with disability were interviewed. Five women between the ages of 30 to 65 who resides in Helambu Rural Municipality, ward-2 were interviewed. All participants were victims of the Melamchi flood of 2021. We also carried out interviews with two Red Cross local disaster responders who were active during the post disaster projects during the 2021 Melamchi flood.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Helambu rural municipality ward number-2 which lies in Sindhupalchowk district of Bagmati Province. Bagmati Province is one of the seven provinces of Nepal, located in the central part of the country. The province is named after the Bagmati River, which flows through the capital city of Kathmandu.

Sindhupalchowk district is one of the 13 districts in Bagmati Province. It is located in the north-central part of the province and borders Tibet to the north. The district covers an area of 2,395 square kilometers and has a population of around 300,000 people. Sindhupalchowk district was hit the hardest during the earthquake of April 25, 2015, with a magnitude of 7.8 Richter Scale. The district has been vulnerable to natural disasters (Sindhupalchok Continues to Get Battered by Natural Disasters, 2020)

Helambu is a rural region situated in the northern part of the district, established for its beautiful mountain landscape and

trekking routes. Helambu ward no. 2 is a small administrative region inside Sindhupalchowk district. Wards are the smallest administrative units in Nepal and are responsible for local governance and development. As for geography, Helambu ward no. 2 is depicted by its difficult landscapes and high altitude. The economy is dominantly centered on agriculture and tourism. The region is inhabited mainly by the Tamang and Sherpa ethnic groups, and their dominant language is Tamang and Sherpa respectively. The main obstacle for Helambu ward no 2 is concerning lack of infrastructure and services, as well as the susceptibility to natural disasters.

Helambu was hit the hardest during the Melamchi Flood that occurred in June 15, 2021, following heavy rainfall in the area. The flood was caused by the overflowing of the Melamchi River and because of multiple anthropogenic and climatic factors and processes that occurred at various locations along the Melamchi River. (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, 2021) The melamchi river is a major river in the area and a source of drinking water for the Kathmandu Valley.

The flood damaged businesses, homes and infrastructure in Sindhupalchowk district. According to reports, at least 18 people were killed and dozens were injured, while many others were reported missing (“Melamchi Flood Disaster in Nepal: Damage and Risk Quantification With Drone Survey, Satellite-Based Land Displacement Analysis, and 2D Flood Modeling | GFDRR”, n.d). Additionally, the flood also damaged several hydropower projects and disrupted transportation and communication in the district.

Significance of Study

The first significance of the study empathizes on providing psychological support to women in post-disaster initiatives. Natural disaster causes esteemed impact on the mental health of an individual. Women particularly are vulnerable because of their social and cultural roles. This research will provide new perspectives while responding to post-disaster relief through the inclusion of psychosocial and gender lenses.

The second significance will be for the government officials and disaster response authority of the country. As we all know Nepal is acclaimed to face several natural disasters because of its critical geographic locations and lack of infrastructure. Nepal has endured multiple natural disasters in recent years which include earthquakes, floods, landslides, and lightning. This research will provide an in-depth understanding for government officials to effectively support and prioritize women's mental health in post-disaster circumstances. This research will also act as a wake-up call for the government and IDO that after emergency relief distribution the work isn't completed but rather begun. As, most mental health crisis for victims of disaster occurs post-disaster, and addressing such problem is mandatory and crucial.

The third significance is regarding providing emphasis on women's need in the post disaster response efforts by IDO. Women often fall victims of gender-based violence post-disaster. Along with that they have a hard time accessing the resources. IDO should focus on providing psychosocial support that can help address these challenges faced by women to ensure that no women are left behind in the recovery process. This study spreads awareness in the community on recognizing VAWG as an alarming issue post-disaster. Through this research, IDO, INGO,

and NGOs can understand the need for a psychosocial support system in their post-disaster response programs.

Findings and Discussions

Women with disabilities and disasters

Women with a disability face critical challenges during disasters. They have special and specific needs that are essential to function in their day-to-day life. But during a disaster, their needs increase which was found to be unaddressed properly, therefore, making it more challenging in various aspects such as a handicapped person may require a wheelchair while evacuating. Furthermore, during disaster mobility becomes an issue for people with disability. They cannot evaluate quickly leaving them behind in dangerous situations. Additionally, if the transport system is broken down they have to rely on other people to help them leaving them feeling helpless. Shanti Tamang informed us that during the flood she had to carry her fully disable niece in her back. Her niece would cry, yell if she was hungry or felt threatened. This put her family in a vulnerable position where other community members who were going through the same problem found it difficult to adjust to her niece's tantrums.

The next challenge is obtaining information. People with disabilities can have problems with understanding or simply being aware of the emergency alerts or information being passed down due to a lack of communication methods. Especially, women with disabilities are in a vulnerable position during and post-disaster. Due to elements of isolation, dependence on other people, and lack of safe shelters they might face neglect during

and post-disaster. Women with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by disasters and are the least able to access institutional support across the preparedness, response, and recovery phases of disaster events(Gartrell et al. 2020).

Government and IDO don't pay much attention to women with disabilities during and post-disaster because it requires more resources and means to help them which can come up as expensive and time-consuming. Furthermore, women with disabilities aren't considered in the decision-making process which could be the reason why their problems aren't adequately addressed. Social support is a very important tool post-disaster which helps victims of disasters restart their life. But unfortunately, women with disability have little to no social support making them excluded from the community and putting them in minority.

Gendered impacts of Natural Disasters

We can see that our society is discriminatory against women. As a result, although disasters do not discriminate, the consequences of disasters have been found to be discriminatory against women. A typical need of a female can be different as opposed to a male's need. Apart from the general survival needs such as food, shelter, and clothes, a woman's need can extend from requiring a more secure space. In case she is going through menstruation, pregnancy, or has recently given birth to a child, there can be special needs and attention required to be addressed. There were limited supplies of female hygiene products which were perceived as helpful by few participants. All 4 out of 5 participants expressed the difficulties they faced due to the lack of privacy whilst their stay in a temporary shelter.

The gender inequalities that exist in our communities assist in increasing vulnerability. In Nepalese society, it is mostly the case that, the role of caregiver and responsibilities of other domestic chores bestows upon the females of the house. Therefore, women have less access to resources and support in the aftermath of a disaster, particularly in societies like ours where gender inequality prevails. Education opportunities, on the other hand, have far remained a male privilege. Leaving most women in their homes without any professional skills. Rita Dhital Bhandari shared how the loss of her husband who was also the breadwinner of the family, sustaining her family has become difficult. The limited resources and support she received from different organizations and the Nepalese government have not been adequate. Additionally, she lost a 2 stories concrete house along with her land to the Melamchi flood in 2021 which closed her doors to agriculture. Kamala Nepali expressed her desire to earn and support her family but unfortunately has no professional skills. These experiences made it difficult for them to cope with the effects of the disaster and to seek help when needed.

We find the responsibility to prepare food on women's plates in the majority of households. Having gone through such a difficult situation and not getting a break from preparing food with limited utensils and food materials was another challenge and emotionally draining. The supplies were simply not enough for the participants to sustain their families as per the participants.

Psychosocial intervention as a priority

Awareness among the community is important. All the female participants shared their traumatic experiences.

Participants share their tendencies to isolate themselves time and again, feeling numb, and crying abruptly which they experienced in high frequencies up to 3 to 6 months after the disaster and occasionally even after a year since the incident. Some experience heavy breathing from time to time. The member of Helambu Municipality (one of the people's representatives) even claimed that although the numbers of such incidents were high where women appeared to be in grave emotional distress, there were men going through mental trauma as well. However, the participants claimed to know very little about the mental impact of the disaster as they simply felt helpless most of the time. The responsibilities of holding the family together as a caregiver increased their stress and emotional burden.

The participants also expressed although the community was supportive in terms of helping them with fulfilling their basic needs like shelter, food and clothing their emotional vulnerability was often mocked. The community would frequently remind them of their losses and laugh at them because of jealousy (the participants whose house was swept by the flood were living in concrete houses whose land value was high). The community members indifferent behaviour put a higher strain in their mental health.

Inadequate Psychosocial Intervention

Studies suggest that women are susceptible to getting affected by psychological trauma in a disaster (Shahin S. et al., 2018). Only a very few participants received psychosocial counseling intervention post-disaster although all of them expressed their distressed experiences. And those who did receive psychosocial counseling were dissatisfied with the kind of service they received. Regarding the psychosocial counseling support

received by the survivors, she stated, “few women did come to talk to us. But they just came to talk and waste time and were not helpful at all. They told us not to be worried, or think about our experiences and that our brain doesn’t function well at times like these. I felt angry at her suggestions because I just went through such a tough experience where I lost my belongings. How could I not be afraid or worried after having gone through such a horrific situation?” She added, “Help arrived after about 20-30 days because the bridge that connected our village with Melamchi was swept away by the flood. Many people representing different organizations came in to talk but most of the people came to click pictures and post them in media. I later began telling them to not approach if they were not there with the purpose of helping them.”

The disaster responder, Mr. Bharat Prasad Koirala, expressed that Initial Rapid Assessment helped them recognize the immediate needs of the survivors who lost their family members, money, and other belongings. After relaying the collected information to the headquarter, it was decided that apart from basic relief materials which include, food, tarpaulins, and other necessary kits, there could be a potential need for psychosocial counseling. A local Red Cross volunteer was onboarded onto the team to deliver PFA services keeping in mind, the language and financial barriers that could have occurred if someone from the center was appointed. Apart from a PFA provider, a few volunteers were onboarded to work on areas such as WASH, Shelter, and awareness. Local volunteers were mobilized to identify individuals who might need psychosocial counseling and two days were dedicated to supporting survivors through psychosocial counseling. He added, “We should have continued this for at least 7 days. However, we had to complete it in 2 days. We used a basic questionnaire to help the survivors. We worked

in many areas, including relief distribution, evacuation work, building temporary shelters, etc. Therefore, focusing on psychosocial counseling couldn't get as much priority." Additionally, due to more focus being given to immediate physical aid, psychosocial support and its aspects were overlooked. The limited mental health service that was made available was delivered by Volunteers who received MHPSS ToT of 1-3 days as per Mr. Bharat. It concludes that these supporters in fact had not received appropriate training nor had the experience to work with women who have experienced trauma. On a similar note, another local Red Cross volunteer, Mr. Ram Hari Lamichanne, said that only a very limited number of individuals in the community know about the psychological aspects of life. The psychiatrists who were mobilized after the event diagnosed sleep disorders, anxiety, and depression issues in many survivors. He added, "The whole district was recovering from the impacts of the 2015 earthquake. Then came COVID and this flood which in a way swept away people's remaining hope. These constant disasters have harmed not only physical infrastructures and taken human lives but also the emotional wellbeing of those who survived." He emphasized the need of prioritizing mental health services and the need for space such as counseling centers which are gender-sensitive and recognizes the cultural aspects of the people living in affected areas.

Unprepared Government, Policy conundrum and disconnected collaboration

After the declaration of Nepal as a federal state and the formation of the National Disaster Response Framework, the one-door policy was adopted for relief distribution. Therefore, all the NGOs, INGOs, and other parties involved in relief distribution were channelized through Governmental authorities to ensure

transparency of relief distribution and restrict duplication in aid distribution. The leadership during the 2021 Melamchi Flood Disaster Management in Helambu Rural Municipality was taken by the Helambu rural Municipality Member, Mr. Tshiring Lama (Hyolmo). He acknowledged various organizations such as Red Cross, Oxfam, Caritas International, Tuki Association Sunkoshi, etc., which responded to the disaster even before the GoN. The majority focus of all the assistance was on rescue - response, building temporary shelters, and distributing relief materials.

However, one of the reasons that really stressed our population was a result of our policy. Relief and other governmental and non-governmental compensations were distributed mostly by categorizing the flood survivors into two groups. In the first category were the families who lost their houses to flood (completely destroyed houses or swept away) and the rest were in the second category. The relief was distributed accordingly. Only the families of the first category were eligible for maximum relief and compensation while others received very limited compensation. The problem arose when there was difficulty categorizing the survivors. There were plenty of houses which were in the middle of the Melamchi river after the flood. A number of houses stood upright, however, the width of the river expanded as an aftermath. Since the guidelines precisely specified that only the owners of completely destroyed houses were eligible for the maximum financial compensation, therefore, the rest didn't fall under first priority which led to a kind of discrimination while distributing relief materials to the survivors. The local government tried to convey the reality to related authorities and referred the victims to the District office but was of no use because of the guideline. "This factor gave rise to stress among many people in the community.", said Mr. Lama.

According to all the participants including locals and municipality members, there was a significant delay in receiving relief materials. The disaster responders (volunteers) and Mr. Lama, it was due to the negligence of the media and lack of proper information flow, the majority of the relief materials landed in Melamchi Bazaar. Since the name of this flood remained Melamchi Flood, it was natural for agencies to focus on melamchi Bazaar more. On the other hand, due to the destruction of the Bridge in Chanaute connecting Helambu with Melamchi Bazar, in the initial phases, relief materials were reached late. Later helicopter services were chartered to transport the relief materials from the Melamchi base camp to Helambu.

Disaster Response: Only a short-term immediate support scheme

Essentially there are four phases to disaster management, Preparedness, Response, Rehabilitation, and mitigation. The local government holds maximum authority during and post disaster. The one door policy for relief distribution has helped the support reach to every household. However, when it comes to rehabilitation phase of disaster management the government doesn't have any plan whatsoever. IDO which has more than decades of experience working in disaster has already created guidelines for disaster management. But unfortunately our government isn't prepared or even aware about the important responsibilities post-disaster. This creates a huge gap between IDO and our government structure.

The municipality member with displeasure accepted that all the levels of government were unprepared for the disaster response and management during the 2021 Melamchi Flood. Likewise, the Red Cross volunteer, participants Mr. Bharat and

Mr. Ram also admitted that many organizations focus on short-term relief activities during post-disaster projects. They added that despite the passage of over a year since the disaster, numerous families are still forced to live in dangerous and hazardous conditions such as temporary shelters & unstable buildings, which pose significant risks to their safety and well-being.

Rita Dhital Bhandari, to this date, lives in a temporary tin shelter with her in-laws and her child built on rented land with financial and material support from an international organization. Kamala Nepali lives in a temporary tent with her family as 50% of her house levitates about 30 meters above the Melamchi river post-flood. Nani Maiya Nepali lives in a house adjacent to Kamala's house with her family. Shanti Tamang, whose house was swept by the flood lives in a rented house which is located in a location prone to landslides. However, nothing has been done to cater to assist them in a sustainable way.

Way Forward

Deploying trained mental health personnel to determine the psychosocial needs of the survivors should be one of the top priorities in post-disaster intervention programs related to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Studies have shown the tendency to get affected mentally after experiencing disaster so much so that symptoms of mental health disorders are seen among the survivors. Therefore, there is a necessity for a long-term plan when it comes to supporting survivors post-disaster. As per the Red Cross guidelines, the mental health support framework can be categorized into 4 sections, i.e., basic psychosocial support, focused psychosocial support, psychological support, and specialized mental health care based

on the level of formal training and supervision, skills, and competencies. However, it is difficult to even claim that we have focused on the basic psychosocial support category. With the experiences shared by the participants, we are able to determine a few similar behaviors that hint adverse psychosocial impact of the disaster on the survivors.

There is a lack of awareness among the villagers about mental health issues. One of the participants, Ms. Lamichhane shared how she along with a number of survivors is being prescribed different psychiatric medications to tackle their sleep issues, anxiety, depression issues, etc. there is a need for interventions to properly support and mitigate this issue. There is a need for awareness programs to sensitize the community about mental health and well-being. This can not only help in the early recognition of mental health issues, therefore, can be intervened before the issue becomes acute.

There is an additional need of identifying people with disability and people of the elderly population as part of the post-disaster intervention program (MHPSS). One of the participants who was a caretaker of a family with two disabled family members and an elderly expressed her experience with the 2021 flood and the difficulties she faced to not just get to safety but seek additional support to get her family members to safety.

A women's needs are different from that of a man essentially due to the differences in reproductive aspects. One of the participants expressed that there was no proper washroom facility. While it was true that women and girl children received sanitary pads as part of relief support but there was a lack of proper washrooms, water facilities, soap, etc., and a proper

disposable area making the support received less impactful. Reproductive health is an important and sensitive aspect of female life. Hygiene, therefore, becomes equally important. Hence, there is a need for separate, safe, and clean/ sterile washrooms.

Conclusion

This article examined two major realities that occurred post disaster after the devastating flood of 2021 in Sindhupalchowk, one, the psychosocial impact of the flood on women survivors and second, the actions carried out to support them by international organizations. We began by contextualizing the impact of climate change in Nepal and its potential impacts on the mental wellbeing of the survivors. This led to the realization of Nepal's inability to recognize it as an important aspect or rather lack of awareness therefore, neglected during planning the post disaster intervention programs. Hence, the paper deals about international organisation such as the Red Cross which has not only recognized mental health as one of the primary focus during the post disaster intervention program but has a intervention framework to carry out the project. We have also tried to incorporate feedbacks of the psychosocial interventions carried out during the 2021 Melamchi floods from stakeholders from three levels, i.e., the women victims of the flood, local red cross disaster responder and the member of local government of the affected area.

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The Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), a government think-tank, was established in 1998, and reconstituted as a semi-autonomous body in 2012. It conducts research on matters of national interest, particularly Nepal's external relations and conduct with foreign countries and provides policy inputs and recommendations to the government of Nepal on foreign policy, international relations, and strategic affairs. The IFA also caters to the professional training needs of Nepali officials serving in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The IFA collaborates with partner organizations, at home and abroad on foreign policy issues and in the course of its interactions in their political, economic, social, and cultural aspects through seminars, workshops, meetings, dialogues and conferences, including publications as a repository of information on Nepal's foreign policy issues.



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