



**‘Life Without a Husband: Enforced Disappearance and Female Livelihoods
in Western Nepal’**

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the livelihoods of women, whose husbands disappeared during the civil war (1996-2006) in Nepal. It is about the strategies adopted by the women for daily basic needs in absence of their husbands.

Being uneducated and rural dwellers, the informants are mostly living on agriculture and other rural activities. Assets especially land, plays a significant role in rural livelihoods. But, access to and control of assets and productive rural resources are mediated by local cultures and gender ideologies. Men were previously the 'main breadwinners' in family households and women mere dependents. However in absence of men/husbands, women/wives assumed additional responsibilities such as cultivating and maintaining farms, and obtaining loans-to ensure the viability of their households. The study shows that women are now the exclusive 'bread-winners' and 'decision-makers' in the new female-headed households in the Bardia district of Western Nepal.

Moreover, the findings show how adversity had mobilised women consciously or unconsciously to challenge cultural values, thereby re-ordering a gender roles. Women have been shown to raise their voices in the public arena to demand information about the whereabouts of their husbands-whose absence had undermined the socio-economic security of family households.

ACRONYMS

CA: Constituent Assembly

CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement

CPN-Maoist: Communist Party of Nepal Maoist

DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

DFID: Department of International Development

GHI: Global Hunger Index

ICC: The Statute of International Criminal Court

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

IDMC: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

ILO: International Labour Organization

INGOs: International Non-Governmental Organisation

INSEC: Informal Sector Service Centre

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

NPR: Nepalese Rupees

NPRC: National Peace and Rehabilitation Commission

OHCHR: Office for High Commissioner for Human Rights

PLA: People's Liberation Army

SPA: Seven Party Alliance

SRL: Sustainable Rural Livelihood

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund

UNMIN: The United Mission in Nepal

UNRIP: The Inter-agency Rehabilitation Programme

UNRIP: The Inter-agency Rehabilitation Programme

VDC: Village Development Committee

WCED: World Commission on Environment and Development

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CHAPTER ONE

SECTION A

1.1 General introduction

According to Collier and Sambanis (2005), the world has faced more than seventy civil wars which have resulted in approximately twenty million deaths and more than sixty-seven million people displaced since 1945. According to Activity Report (2010) by IDMC¹, almost 27.5 million people are internally displaced, a worldwide, including 4.6 million—highest data recorded of internally displaced people since 1994.

Most of the civil wars that reached the climax during their early 1990s have declined since then; in contrast, the yearly battle deaths decreased from 160,000 in the 1980s to less than 50,000 in the 2000s (World Development Report, 2011). Though these figures have declined since then, the direct and indirect multiple effects on the civilian population are still evident. Young males, who often constitute the majority of fighting forces, become the first to have direct casualties of civil wars. Women and children are likely to suffer disproportionately from direct and indirect effects also, such as the deaths and disappearances of husbands and fathers (World Development Report, 2011: 60).

Civil wars have severe and multidimensional effects. During the mid-1990s, in Liberia most of the major infrastructures, including most of the electricity generating capacity of Liberian Electricity Corporation, were damaged and looted during the civil war (Collier et al, 2003:15). Similarly, the sixteen years of Civil war in Mozambique led to the destruction of almost forty per cent of its immobile capital in agriculture, communications and administrative sectors. Export oriented agriculture also suffered highly due to the break down of the infrastructure (Brauer and Hartley, 2000:193). In the 1970s, too, the civil war in Cambodia led to poverty, pain, and brutal violence (Kumar, 2001). Thousands of women suffered severely under the violent war—including suffering from death of family members, disappearance of husbands, forced migration and sexual abuse.

Civil wars owes to devastation to the affected countries and civilians. They cause devastating loss of human life and socio-economic infrastructure. It has been stated that civil and

¹ See the report of IDMC (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center) online on <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/global-overview-2011.pdf>

international wars kill people, destroy infrastructure, weaken the institutions that lead to the conditions of risky diseases, crimes, political instabilities, and ultimately help escalate further conflict (Chen et al., 2007:2). Furthermore, civil war in its aftermath is more difficult and has distressing effects; though, the end of war gives the signal of the beginning of lasting peace, recovering and improvements (ibid. p.13). It leads a country to economic crash which affects the livelihood of the citizen directly, i.e., unstable economic situation, high rate of unemployment, social disorder, and mistrust among the people and so on. Destruction of the infrastructures like bridges, telephone, road, water supply pipe line, etc., makes the life of the citizen more difficult. Likewise, during the war-time and its aftermath the country lacks enough government policies and intervention programmes, subsidies and services in most of the sectors like agriculture, business, industries, etc. It hampers the production of the goods as per demand which dramatically increases the market prices of the produced goods. Ultimately, it affects the life of the civilians economically. The purchasing capacity of the civilians becomes very low and living standard turns down. On one hand, civil war brings adverse effects to overall development of the country; on the other hand, civilians face severe economic and social challenges for earning a living.

Physical torture, pain, killings, kidnappings and disappearance of people during civil war period are the most common that people undergo. All these bring psychological disturbances; they result in long-term pain which ultimately leads people to post-traumatic stress disorder. Mostly, the poor families face several problems: death toll, enforced disappearance and torture, displacements, sexual exploitation; and all these bring psychological disturbances, social unrest and increase social and economic insecurity (ICRC², 2009:11). Families and relatives of people who have died and wounded in the civil war can recover in time; but, families of the disappeared people are always in pain and agony. They live in dilemma and cannot start a new life and forget all the past. Yet, the issue of the disappearance has been given less attention in comparison to other issues of civil war or armed conflict. Families of missing people face severe economic difficulties including fulfilling their basic needs in terms of food, health, housing and education for children. Most of the disappeared people are adult men so ‘many families have lost their main bread winner’ and ‘women have become heads of the household’ which have limited options for sustenance.

² See the report of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) online on <http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/2011/families-of-missing-persons-nepal-report.pdf>

In Nepal, too, civil war resulted in the death toll of more than thirteen thousand. Many were forcefully disappeared and displaced. Multiple effects of civil war are evident in every sector—especially the socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural and other sectors of the country. Nepalese people from the last decade long civil war have faced severe livelihood insecurity; largely because of adverse impacts of the armed conflict on important sectors like health, education, agriculture and transportation (Uprety and Muller-Boker, 2010:9). The armed conflict has worsened food security situation in Nepal (Adhikari, 2010:73). Five decades of planned development in Nepal did not improve living conditions; as a result, policies were proved to be poorly formulated and poorly implemented (Uprety Muller-Boker, 2010:19; Adhikari, 2010). This political turmoil has led to livelihood insecurity and economic imbalances and political instability. In spite of all these challenges, study focuses on the present livelihood situation of the wives of the disappeared men which is further problematized below.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The civil war in Nepal between Government forces and Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (CPN-Maoist) rebels from 1996 to 2006 resulted in the death of more than 13,000 people and the displacement of 100,000 people (Do and Iyer 2010; Shrestha and Niroula, 2005). Enforced disappearances³ too were common. In Bardiya⁴ district, for example, the kidnapping of civilians by government forces was intense from December 2001 to January 2003. Information of two hundred cases of enforced disappearance was received where one hundred fifty-six of the cases were investigated by OHCHR⁵ (2008:5) in Bardiya district.

Most of the victims of enforced disappearances or abductions are men. In Bardiya district, these abducted men are mostly farmers and members of the Tharu⁶ indigenous group. In the context of Nepal, the whole family often depend on male members for livelihood, and the dependency is even higher in rural households. The rural women, whose husbands have

³ Here the term Enforced disappearance refers to the missing people during maoist insurgency from 1996-2006, either by state authority or the revolutionary force CPN-M taken for investigation and never returned back (here most of them were by state authority).

⁴ Geographically Nepal is divided into 14 zones and 75 districts, and Bardiya district is the study focus because it has the highest number of the disappearance people.

⁵ Office for High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); see OHCHR Report on disappearances: http://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Countries/Nepal/OHCHR_ConflictRelated_Disappearances.pdf

⁶ Tharu people are one of the indigenous communities of Nepal who live mostly in the plain area.

disappeared, often assume socio-economic responsibility for their households. They have to provide food, clothing, shelter and other life necessities for themselves and their children. So, this study focuses on the livelihood⁷ strategies of the women that have been adopted to meet welfare and livelihood needs after the disappearance of their husbands. In the absence of male members (breadwinners), the women are bound to perform new tasks to ensure their household viability. The question, then, is: ‘what are the women’s livelihood and coping strategies?’

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions have been formulated to highlight the women’s livelihood options and coping strategies further help.

1. What sort of resources do they mobilize to meet their welfare needs?
2. What are their sources of income?
3. Are they farmers as other rural dwellers? If so, how do they get access to farm land and other productive resources?
4. How do they clear and cultivate their farmland?
5. What skills and strategies do they depend on for their survival?
6. Do they get any welfare-oriented support from their relatives, government or any organizations?
7. Are there traces of creativity and agency in the women’s livelihood forms?
8. What are the implications of the women’s livelihood strategies for local gender roles and ideologies?

1.4 Assumption

The present study assumes as following:

The wives of the disappeared men have adopted some creative strategies to survive, maintain wellbeing and to ensure the viability of their households.

1.5 Research Relevance

This study encompasses the livelihood of the Tharu women who have been severely affected by the civil war in Nepal. Though many people including children, men, women and aged have been victim of the civil war, the issue of the disappeared people and its impact on the

⁷Here the term livelihood is used in terms of managing daily expenses on minimum basic needs like food, clothes, shelter, education for children etc.

livelihood of their wives and other dependents is still hard, too. The study, therefore, seeks to vocalize women and other householders, whose ‘bread-winners’ have simply disappeared. It also shows how women, in the face of adversity, adopt coping strategies to maintain their well-being and, in certain cases, challenge gender structures in local communities.

Section B

1.4. Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodological issues especially the study area, size and selection of informants and data collection techniques. It also addresses field challenges, reflections and other reflections.

1.5 Study Area

Manau and Badalpur Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Bardiya District are located in the remote area of Mid Western Development Region. Tharu indigenous community make up 52% of population in Bardiya district and most of the disappearances were from this community and all of them were never back again, (OHCHR, 2008).

Figure 1. Map of Nepal



1.7 Size and Selection of Informants

I selected only nine women from a pool of women whose husbands had disappeared during the civil war. This selection was made considering time limitation and sensitivity of the research topic. The topic is sensitive in the sense that the study concerned about someone's personal life. So, talking about someone's private life was not an easy task as it involves maintaining boundaries between the respondent the researcher, and building rapport in a limited time period. The selection of the informants was made using the 'snowball sampling' technique. The detailed sample selection and methods of data collection are further described below.

1.8 Applied Methodological steps

'There are no right or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and model with which you are working' (Silverman, 2010:124). So, the choices of appropriate methodology do make difference in accessing reliable and valid data. I have used a multiple of suitable methods, suitable in my research for informant selection and data collection.

1.9 Sampling Procedure: Snow Ball Sampling

Bryman (2008:184) says that 'this approach to sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others'. Similarly, Babbie (2009: 208) notes that Snowball sampling refers to the process of collecting the subjects in reference to other subjects as this procedure also suggests in finding other questionable representativeness, which may be used primarily for exploratory purposes too.

My research field was a bit unfamiliar to me, as I had never been there before. So, I did not know which part of Bardiya District the families of the disappeared people reside. From the VDC Secretary, I got to know that these families were spread over many places. But, there was a woman, a potential informant living close by the VDC office. Assuming that one target women could be the more reliable source of information of another who has been suffering from the same incident, I used this technique. This first woman, whom I met, happened to be the chain to finding other respondents in the surrounding areas. The snow-ball sampling was as an appropriate technique because the initial informant easily facilitated the identification and selection of the remaining research participants in other part of the Bardia district.

1.10 Data Collection Techniques

- In-depth Interview
- Field observation
- Focus Group Discussion
- Documents

1.10.1 In-depth Interview

According to Bryman (2008:436), ‘interview is the most commonly used method in qualitative research and what makes interview more attractive is the flexibility of the interview’. This flexibility in an interview allows the interviewer to probe deeper into the subject matter and get the necessary information. But, equally important aspect is making the objective of interview clear to the respondents. So, understanding the objective of the interview helps the respondent to feel free and ease to open up (Chiron et al, 2002:4). In-depth interview is conducted not only for getting responses to a specific question, but also to get rich and valuable information about existing and lived experiences. It is the most common tool to get information, not only accessing data for ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions but of variety of questions just like, ‘how’, ‘why’, etc. My study was concerned about personal and sensitive issues, which people do not easily discuss with strangers.

Assessing data on sensitive and emotional issue is not an easy task. As my research topic included sensitive and emotional issues I had lots of topics to be taken into considerations. Interviewing a women about her disappeared husband, sources of income and general housekeeping is difficult topic, and it demands a certain level of familiarity and trust. That is, the interviewer and interviewee have to feel comfortable in each other’s presence to enable the conversation. Richard says (2002:4) ‘Rapport is central to the evaluation interview, so that the individual does not feel you are judging him or her. Researcher’s goal should be to respond to the interviewee with unconditional positiveness and encourage the interviewee to tell everything about himself or herself without prejudging whether it is good or bad. By utilizing this psychological principle we are able to get a better and truer picture of the person. Similarly, I had to spend a lot of time on visits to the women for us to know each other, build rapport and maintain good relations in order to get insight into the women’s everyday lives.

Being female made it easier to have talks with the female informants. It was also helpful for both researcher and informants that both could speak Nepali language reducing language barriers and unfamiliarity to research context.

I got to know about cases of the rape attempts by their own family members, verbal and physical abuse by their family members in front of the children and so on. These kinds of bitter experiences and events would not have been expressed in mass. I could imagine how severe the situation they faced was by observing their expressions. This was possible due to the emotional trust that encouraged them to open up more. My commitment and friendly behaviour could assist them to express openly in the subject matter. I promised them that the interviews are private and protective and assured to preserve their confidentiality. Further this face to face in-depth interview helped me not only to learn their situation, living condition and all; but also to understand their facial psychology, body language and their expression, too. By making sense of their touching and affecting behaviour I am more sensitive towards my research.

1.10.2 Field Observation

Cargan (2007:142) states:

‘Advantage of observation technique is its directness: it allows the recording of behaviour as it occurs. It is not necessary to ask people about their attitudes, feelings, or views; you watch what they do and hear what they say. Thus observation is an ideal means for noting behaviours that people may be unaware of, such as the non-verbal behaviours of gestures, postures, or even seating arrangements. Therefore, observation is a valuable complement to information obtained by many other data-gathering techniques. For example, responses from interviews and questionnaires are often discrepant from what people say they did or will do from what they actually do’.

My field observation started from the moment I reached the study area. I met with the VDC Office (local electoral committee office) secretary as he was the main source of information about the targeted women. He introduced me to the first women, whom I visited at home and talked with her, and casually observed her living conditions. All subsequent interview sessions came to involve the home visits and observation of the immediate surrounding of the informants. For example, farmers were visited for a better understanding of how some informants earned a living marginally as crop farmers. I got the chance to experience close observation of their socio economic status.

Economically poor, socially marginalized, with small children and for additional responsibilities after the disappearance of the main breadwinners has made everyday life a real challenge for the female informants. Their coping strategies became most evident when observed their homes, activities and dependents. When I talked to an informant about her socio-economic life, she supplemented with the following: ‘What do you want to know about my economic condition? It is better if you could see with your own eyes in my kitchen and bed room. While visiting door to door, I got more information about seven out of nine female informants. For example, I realised that the houses of seven respondents had never been repaired since their husband’s disappearance. As a result, during the rainy season they had no place to lay their heads due to the leaking roofs of their houses. The clothes they were using were torn; the food which they were eating was basically carbohydrates. I simply could not have gained this supplementary and visual information through in-depth interviewing.

1.10.3 Combining In-depth Interview with Field Observation

In-depth interview as a main method helped me to gather most of the essential information in my study but supplementing with observations gave me something more than what I had expected. Combining two methods during research is common and useful tool because it is hard for any single method to provide all the required information. Gubrium and Holstein (2002:188) approvingly state that ‘sometimes observation sets background for the interviews, which are the initial stage of data collection and in some cases observation becomes the main methodology and interviews are the complement and some studies represent both the methodology equally or combine them as additional method like use of surveys, diaries, recorded observation’.

When I completed my entire job of research I found that field observation gave me not only additional information, it was more than expected. I realised that without field observation my research would be almost incomplete. I was able to grasp some of the missing facts and information during in-depth interview and generated added insight whenever I visited. Therefore, visiting and observing the physical and geographical settings of informants’ everyday life enriched the data collection and the entire research.

1.10.4 Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are small group of individuals with similar characteristics or shared experiences who sit down with a moderator to discuss a topic. This method supplements other qualitative

methods but also it can be basic data collection strategy (Hatch, 2002:25). This is why, Edmunds (1999:3) argues that focus group discussion is a qualitative form of research where we do not attain result or finding in percentage, statistical testing or tables; rather it is less structured than other qualitative research and is more exploratory.

The main advantage of this technique of data collection is that it brings people together to talk about the same issues, and perhaps help corroborate earlier responses. Three focus group discussions were held: one in Badalpur VDC, and the other two in Manau VDC. Every discussion consisted of seven-eight people. There was also a discussion with the elites of the community. The focus of the all these discussions was not personal lives of the informants—something which had already been covered during in-depth interviews; rather, it was to get information about certain general issues like: when and how the men were taken, what efforts were being made to find the disappeared, and how they supported each other in the local community. Discussions with the elite group were about the general perceptions and arguments of upper class society towards Tharu people. We also discussed about political affiliation of the Tharu people and I came to know that these people did not have any strong political affiliations in any parties. This was to know that if the kidnappings were made by government force, or were based on party affiliations.

1.10.5 Review of the Documents

‘Whatever your branch of social science, collecting secondary data will be a must. You will inevitably need to ascertain what the background to your research question/ problem is, and also get an idea of current theories and ideas. No type of project is done in a vacuum, not even a pure work of art’ (Walliman, 2006:83). Therefore, secondary data has a key role to play in research projects, as it saves time and money for other sources of information (Adams and Brace, 2006:31). Library, journals, official data from the relevant government agencies, published materials from different I/NGOs are the main secondary sources of information in my study. Such secondary materials always play vital role in building up and writing up some known facts. So, these sources are the best foundation for new facts and findings.

1.11 Insider-Outsider Role

Dwyer (2006:36) describes the insider-outsider role of a research as such! ‘Since a foreign researcher and a native speaker from a distant community may both be considered “outsiders” from the community under investigation, a local researcher often assumes multiple insider\outsider roles: it is often the case that a researcher is part of the ethno linguistic group,

but not or no longer from the particular community. In this situation, the researcher is both an insider and an outsider’.

Being of the same nationality as the informants, I was both as an insider and outsider in the field. As a researcher from the same nationality, I found myself an insider; but, in the study area, I was an outsider because I came from another part of Nepal and had another life experience. To know the culture, religion and daily activities of the informants, I spent time and stayed with them as a member of their community. Developing these close ties was necessary to win the trust of the informants and get the relevant information, making me more or less an insider. Similarly, during interview with those respondents, talking in very sensitive cases led them to break in tears. I felt like giving up my job of research several times. This was due to some kind of emotional attachment towards them, and feeling of belongingness, this perhaps gives the sense of an insider. But, being a researcher, it was necessary to complete my research anyhow. So, meanwhile paying less attention on their sensitivity, and encouraging them to provide more information, obviously I became an outsider. Also, when I write my research paper, I use the words like ‘they’ and ‘them’ to address people in my research, this gives me the feeling of outsider. Likewise, they used their native language several times during the interview which was difficult for me to understand. Upon request, they translated into the Nepali language, which I speak, giving the feeling of an outsider.

Shifting between the role of an insider and outsider several times during the research helped me to gain information on several aspects. My experience being insider emotionally attached with them. I got an opportunity to get access to information on many severe issues like: rape attempts by their own family members, seizing of their land after their husbands have been disappeared, the multiple jobs adopted by them for surviving etc. I also got a chance to gain knowledge about their life style, cultures, traditions etc.

1.12 Methodological Issues

Most of all the social researches are sensitive but the degree of the sensitivity differs in relation to the kind and subject matter of research topic. As my research was related to the family of war affected people, obviously, data collection was tough job which mostly dealt with sensitive and emotional issues. I was conscious about all these kind of issues that I was going to face. But still I had to answer many challenging questions to the respondents. ‘Why do I give you the information? What are you going to do with it? You people always come

and disturb us mentally asking about our past that again brings the memories of the war time in our eyes’—normally respondents pose. These questions were very relevant to ask from their perspective. These kinds of questions really shocked me and I felt like stopping my research. However, after spending some days with those people I succeeded making them open up and talk about their past wartime life. But still I felt many times uneasy in uncovering their past which made them disappointed again after long time.

Visiting the field in summer when the temperature was almost 40 degree was really hard. Meanwhile, the local strike made my journey more difficult and we always had the fear of losing documents. Due to this strike we were compelled to walk for long distance. Beside this, I had some problems to understand when they used some typical word spoken in their own language.

1.13 Sensitive Topic

A research becomes sensitive when it is an emotionally difficult subject and deeply personal issues or when research potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved (Lee, 1993). The other idea about the sensitivity of the research is that it is closely related to vulnerable and marginalised people (Liamputtong, 2007:5). Tharu people are one of the poor and vulnerable communities in Nepal having limited access to productive and social resources. My research focuses on the families of the disappeared men in this community. The families of these men are psychologically disturbed and in dilemma about whether their loved ones are returning back or not. In such a situation, I conducted my research to know about the personal experience of past life. Entering into other people’s private arena and knowing about their lived experiences during the civil war was really a challenging job.

As my study was about finding the livelihood situation of those families, it was necessary to know completely personal matters such as sources of income (and its sufficiency for life sustenance), nutrition level of the food they eat every day, social challenges they faced in absence of their husbands (insecurity), etc. These all are sensitive and emotional issues which were not only hard to answer but also it made them recall their terrible situation when their husbands were taken in mid-night and never returned. Uncovering, in this way, the private part of their lives was sensitive.

‘Trust research invariably asks questions about sensitive issues, highlighting the need to build rapport and trust between researcher and participant’ (Saunders 2012:110). Belonging to same nationality and sex, and having long conversation I had good rapport with my respondents; they agreed to give me the detailed information about what I needed. I even assured them of preserving their confidentiality. The other major aspect was about the culture of male domination and gender sensitivity. I realized from the situation that my respondents were disturbed due to the presence of my male colleague. So, to make the conversation easy and open up the female responds, I, as a female researcher was more comfortable for them; for instance, they would not share about the verbal and physical abuse they suffer in presence of males.

It is a challenging job to conduct research in a culture loaded community. In my experience, if the researcher is unaware of the diverse cultural values, norms and traditions of people or community, he/she hampers achieving the objective of research and; as a result, researcher may contain less valuable findings and one can deviate from the desired outputs.

1.14 Summary

This chapter has reflected the methodological issues, including the overview of geographical setting of the study area, size and selection of the informants and data collection techniques.

As this study concerned about the sensitive issues, there was no other best alternatives than in-depth interview; therefore, most of the research data were collected by using in-depth interview in my research. Other techniques like: field observation, focus group discussion, and relevant documents as secondary source are also deployed. It has also reflected some field challenges of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

CIVIL WAR IN NEPAL (1996-2006)

This chapter focuses on the general introduction of Nepal, especially historical background, causes of the civil war and efforts at peace building. It also looks at the issues of enforced disappearance.

2.1 Glimpse of Nepal

Nepal, a ‘federal democratic republic’ is a small landlocked south Asian country. It is bordered by People’s Republic of China in the northern part, and the rest by India. It is located between latitudes 26°22’ and 30°27’ N and longitudes 80°40’ and 88°12’E. The altitude varies from 67m above the sea level to 8848m, the highest peak of the world, called ‘Mt. Everest’. Due to the unique geographic position it reflects diverse variation in altitude and climate (Bhujy et al, 2007). It is geographically divided into three parts; high mountains, rolling hills and flat lands of Terai⁸ belt. Mountains and hills accounts for about 83% and Tarai accounts for 17% flat land (Satyal, 2001:1). It is the land of eternal beauty. Nepal characterizes diversities in climate and topography from plain areas to hilly areas and ends in mountainous region with lots of natural resources and biodiversity. Nepal comprises only 0.1% of land mass on the global scale but possesses a disproportionately rich diversity of flora and fauna. It is in 25th and 11th position on biodiversity in world and Asia respectively; and it is 2nd world largest in water resources (Sherpa, 2005).

There is a great variation in cultures, castes, language, religion and belief systems, too. 2001 census identified 102 caste and ethnic groups, 92 languages and dialects (Sherpa 2005). The Government of Nepal legally recognized 59 indigenous nationalities (Adivasi-Janajati) consisting of 39.9% of the total population basing on distinct language, religion, customs, folklore, culture, knowledge, ancient territory (residing throughout mountains, hills and lowland regions) (Roy and Henriksen, 2010)⁹.

2.2 Historical Background

Nepal’s modern history begins from the time of Prithivi Narayan Shah (reigned 1743-1775). He was a brave and dynamic ruler of Gorkha, a small state in western Nepal. He succeeded in

⁸ Southern flat/plain area of Nepal, a narrow strip along Indian boarder

⁹ See: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/publication/wcms_123847.pdf

unifying Nepal in 1769 which was before divided into 22 and 24 municipalities (Parajulee, 2000:25). The descendents of Prithivi Narayan Shah were unable to maintain firm political control over Nepal. This internal instability reached the climax during war between Nepal and British East India Company which ended with the forceful signing of the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816. This treaty succeeded to cede approximately a third of Nepal's territory to India (Chaturvedy and Malone, 2012:291). Nepal was able to maintain its national independence during the colonial era.

In 1846, Rana dynasty came to power and reduced the monarch to 'figurehead' and ruled until 1951. Jung Bahadur Kunwar was from Chhetri family who later came to be known as Jung Bahadur Rana, one of the controversial figures in Nepali history. He rose to power by slaughtering many of his opponents and became the first prime minister from Rana. This bloody massacre in Kathmandu Durbar in 1846 is known as 'Kot Massacre'. The remaining potential opponents who survived during the time were killed or exiled after he came to power (Brown, 1996:4). Rana regime was a highly centralized autocracy with power limited to very few members of the Rana Family. There were no formalised rules and constitution, rather the necessary rules and decisions of the state was made by handful of Ranas. After a visit to Europe the then Prime Minister adopted the first codified law in 1854, 'Muluki Ain', patterned after the Napoleonic Code, which was based on the Nepali customary rules, religion and practices. This autocratic hereditary Rana rule lasted in 1951 (Asia Watch Committee, 1989:14)

The post-World War II was a constructive period that somewhat enabled democratic changes in Nepal. Various internal and external forces played important role and contributed to the political changes in 1951. When India became independent in 1947, Ranas lost their ally, British. As an external force, India played a crucial role as a mediator between the three political forces of Nepal namely: Ranas, the King and the Nepali Congress. The compromise meant peaceful transfer of power from Ranas to the King (Parajulee, 2000:12). They did not want Ranas autocratic continuation in Nepal as Ranas were in collaboration with imperial Britain in India.

The fall of Rana rule in 1950 encouraged steady accumulation of power and authority to the King, who was a figurehead during the rule of Rana. Nepal enjoyed democracy for some years but soon it was abruptly ended by King Mahendra. This led to the introduction of

Panchayat System in 1960 with two characteristics: active monarchy and non-party system, this lasted for 30 years (Hachhethu, 2009). In 1990 Nepali Congress and Communist groups together with huge mass movement protested and restored democracy with multiparty system.

2.3 Causes of the Civil War

A memorandum to the Government of Nepal was published shortly by Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai in February 1996, raising issues with ‘Nationalism, Democracy and Livelihood’ in ‘40 Points Demands’¹⁰. This document outlined the causes of the civil war that was shaped by Maoist ideology. The argument was that the Panchayat System as well as the Constitutional Monarchical Multiparty Parliamentary System of 1990 did not address the issues of nationality, democracy and livelihood and did not lead to significant changes in the political and socio-economic conditions of people in Nepal. The consequent armed struggle sought to end what the Maoist termed as ‘238-year-old feudal system’ into a more democratic and inclusive system.

CPN-Maoist in Nepal struggled to establish a new people’s democracy (*Naulo Janabad*), a concept of ‘New Communist Democracy’ which was inspired by the thoughts of Mao Zedong, (Uprety, 2010) that, in turn, draws upon the views of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin (International Crisis Group, 2005). The insurgency officially started in February 1996 with an attack on the police post in western region of Nepal, Rolpa District and spread over other core districts like Rukum, Salyan, Jajarkot, Gorkha and Sindhuli. Major objectives of the CPN-Maoist was to establish a Republic State and set up a new constitution assembly for drafting a new constitution.

Reasons for the civil war are varied and different. Though the five decades of development plans started since 1950s and sole objectives focused on poverty reduction; however, most of these developments were interrupted and unfulfilled due to political upheavals (Devkota, 2008). According to Sharma (2006:1238), development failures in these different plan periods resulted in unemployment, poverty, inequality and so on that eventually created fertile ground for emergence of civil war. Many of these social and political issues have been emerged due to political conflicts which have led to under-development, poor governance, and political instability. Acharya (2009) too argues that it is inadequate to explain the civil war in Nepal in

¹⁰ See: Copy of memorandum of 40 points demand Published in South Asia Terrorism Portal <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/document/papers/40points.htm>

relation to local grievances such as, marginalized population, ethnic tensions, poverty because these count only as contributing factors. Rather, it is more due to political animosity between the ultra-left and the right—be they occupying the seats of power in at centre, the royalists, the Nepali Congress, or the CPN (United Marxist-Leninists).

In view of Harka Gurung (2005:1), social exclusion became a major factor in the Maoist Insurgency. ‘Who are the socially excluded?’, ‘how should they be prioritized in the development processes?’ were unclear in the plan periods of (1997-2002) and (2002-2007). While ADB recognized the *Dalit*, *Janajati*, *Sukumbasi* and *Kamaiya* disadvantaged groups, UNDP included women, *Dalits*, indigenous people, disable people, children and senior citizens under disadvantaged group that falls in the category of marginalised groups. These categorizations are misleading as they differ both on the basis of socio-economic deprivation and fail to address such problems to avoid political upheavals.

In Nepal, poverty appears to be both a cause and consequences of conflict (Polzer and Kievelitz, 2002: 26). The population below the poverty line in 2011 was 30.9%, dropping from 42% in 1995¹¹. These figures are worrying if ‘poverty and livelihood insecurity’ are the root causes of the conflict (Upreti, 2010). It is, thus, not surprising that the armed struggle started in Mid-Western districts where poverty is among the highest in the country (Joras, 2008:19). Shakya (2009:24) argues differently that the conflict was not due to poverty and unemployment but these categories of people did not have the time and resources. Conflict was rather started by a group of educated, politically conscious and economically well off people. In the present context when we do not see the expected development outcomes from any of the ruling parties; rise of People’s War was only for some elite groups who did this for political motive and power by escalating the socio-economic issues of the poor.

Various cumulative effects of structural factors, changing international security dimensions, and failure of leadership accounted for the conflict. It was again not the sole product of failure of multiparty democracy. Rather, it was outcome of the centuries-old, exclusionary, centralist, autocratic and feudal political and social system which manifested in social and political exclusion, discrimination, poverty and subordination, that resulted in the civil war (Upreti, 2010:10) All these cumulative issues are summarised by Upreti (2010) as shown below.

¹¹ See the data on: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Broad overview of sources of insecurity and conflict:

Structural Sources	External Sources	Triggers and Catalysts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Political sources ● Socio-economic sources (e.g., caste, class and religion based discrimination and inequality; poverty and unemployment; social exclusion, etc.) ● Geographical isolation Constitutional and legal sources ● Ideological sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Changes in international security paradigm ● Interests of powerful nations (political, economic, e.g., in natural resources such as gas, oil, water and forests; historical legacy of autocracy; religious; strategic and military) ● Information technology, global advancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vested interests ● Unforeseen events (e.g., the Royal massacre in Nepal on 1 June 2001) ● Failure of political leadership ● Failure of development ● Psychological factors (e.g., revenge and relation) ● Irresponsibility factor and culture of denial

Source: Upreti (2010) http://www.dsgz.geo.uzh.ch/pdfs/Upreti_Livelihoods.pdf

2.4 Consequences of the Civil War

One of the main reasons why the Maoist guerrillas picked up weapons was the exclusion and underdevelopment of the remote areas that has been already discussed. So, what consequences and impacts are brought by the civil war shall be discussed below.

2.4.1 Deaths, Disappearances and Displacement

Ten years of civil war have resulted in the death of more than 13000 people, and enforced disappearance of 933 people and displacement of around 100,000 people (INSEC¹², 2011; Do and Iyer 2010; Shrestha and Niroula, 2005). According to INSEC document¹³, out of the total 13,344 deaths, 10,297 were men, 1,013 were women and 2,034 were unidentified. The number of enforced disappearance was 933 people from all the five development regions leaving Mid-Western Region mostly affected.

¹² INSEC (Informal Sector Service Centre)

¹³ See online on <http://www.inseconline.org/index.php?type=opinionforums&id=25&lang=en>

2.4.2 Destruction of Socio-Economic Life and its Cost

Apart from the massive loss of human lives, the civil war had adverse impact on national economy. Nation had to face lots of loss and damage on physical infrastructures. Maoist insurgents targeted and destroyed governmental institutions, private businesses and large land ownerships. Multinational and large national corporations such as Unilever Nepal, Surya Tobacco Company, Colgate Palmolive, Coca Cola, and several distilleries were branded as exploiters and enemies of the working class and other poor class people. These companies were thus undermined and attacked by the insurgents (Joras 2008:27).

2.4.3 Impact on Educational Sector

It had negative impact on the educational sector too. Schools and government offices were bombarded to create fear and insecurity in local communities. From January 2002 to December 2006, 13 district education offices, 79 schools and one university were destroyed by the insurgents (Pherali, 2010:137). The Maoist insurgents killed 60 teachers and 66 students; caused the disappearance of 151 teachers; and abducted 516 students and 62 teachers, too. Government forces also killed 44 teachers and 172 students, detained 158 teachers and 115 students, and caused the disappearance of 14 teachers (Upreti, 2010).

2.4.4 Cost of Civil War in Different Sectors

The table below shows the tentative cost for damage on infrastructure and estimation for reconstruction. The damage to physical infrastructure in various sectors was estimated at about 5 billion rupees (Upreti 2010:28).

Damage on Physical Infrastructure during the Armed Conflict in Nepal:

S.N ¹⁴	Ministries and Constitutional Commission	Damage (in NPR ¹⁵)	Cost of Reconstruction (NRs)
1	Ministry of Local Development	596446000/-	161722000/-
2	Ministry of Water Resources	342703000/-	297243000/-
3	Ministry of Health and Population	417000/-	130130000/-
4	Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation	354461000/-	377123000/-
5	Ministry of Education and Sports	20960000/-	44984000/-
6	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives	260755000/-	00/-
7	Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies	18123000/-	15064000/-
8	Ministry of Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology	3209000/-	00/-
9	Ministry of Informationa and Communication	741555000/-	145166000/-
10	Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation	134747000/-	26550000/-
11	Ministry of Pysical Planning and Works	25174000/-	19746000/-
12	Ministry of Land Reform and Management	12187000/-	00/-
13	Ministry of Defence	24799000/-	00/-
14	Ministry of Finance	4666000/-	2270000/-
15	Home Ministry	2428646000/-	2428203000/-
16	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare	230000/-	00/-
17	Supreme Court	27489000/-	165555000/-
18	Election Commission	2946000/-	00/-
19	Office of Attorney General	201000/-	00/-
20	Public Service Commission	4780000/-	00/-
21	Total	5004494000/-	3813756000/-

Source: Upreti 2010:28)5. *The Conflict Trap*:

2.4.5 Inequality in Land Distribution and Hunger

As provided by official figures of 2010/11, 1.6 million Nepalese face hunger. The country is the 56th on Global Hunger Index (GHI). 41% of the total population is malnourished (INSEC, 2011).

¹⁴ Serial Number to denote different sectors.

¹⁵ NPR= Nepalese Rupees

The number of landless people, too, has been increased by the conflict although it has been claimed that the conflict was caused by the need to address the inequalities associated with the distribution of farm land. The Maoist war was meant to end up the class struggle; it was easy to encourage the landless peasants to rise up against the feudal system of state. As a result, many of the large land owners lost their land as the Maoist seized and distributed among the landless. There is no exact data found on the land seized.

Land Holdings

S.N.	Category of People	% of Total Population
1	Landless	24.44
2	Semi-landless (owning less than 0.20 acres or 0.8 hectares)	9.98
3	Marginal cultivators (owning 0.21 to 1 acres or 0.084 to 0.4046 hectares)	27.59
4	Small cultivators (1.01 to 2 acres or 0.4087 to 0.809 hectares)	20.15
5	Semi-medium (2.01 to 4 acres or 0.809 to 1.618 hectares)	13.42
6	Medium Cultivators (4 to 10 acres or 1.659 to 4.05 hectares)	6.25
7	Large cultivators (more than 10.01 acre or 4.06 hectares)	1.17

Source: UNDP (2004:176)

This table clearly shows that more than 34% of the total population are completely landless and semi-landless, explaining the problem of food insecurity in many rural communities. There is a dispute now over legality of the seized and redistributed land and the property during civil war (Basnet and Upreti, 2008).

2.4.6 Remittances and Poverty

Despite many negative impacts in national economy; human livelihood data reveals that it has positive result in combating poverty where incidence of poverty fell drastically from 42% in 1995/96 to 31 per cent in 2003/4. The assumption on the only key factor that could hold country’s economy was from the massive remittance accumulated from three per cent to about twelve per cent in 2003/4. Remittance has been increased dramatically as more than one million Nepalese had been working in abroad only in 2003-04 including India and other

Persian Gulf or East Asia (World Bank et. al, 2006). Due to insecurity the rate of migration was also high during the conflict period. Still, the political instability in Nepal is encouraging migrations of many skilled people to other parts of the world. So, Nepal is facing the problem of brain-drain, a huge loss of country's property, loss of human resources and intellectual property of the country, too.

2.5 Peace Building Efforts

The efforts of peace-talk, between Maoists and the then Government, were made in 2001. The assassination of Royal family on 1st of June, 2001 gave a new mode and set up a ground for new shape of conflict. After the Royal coup King Gyanendra ascended the throne. Declaring ceasefire for the first time on 27 July, 2001, CPN-M and Government initiated preliminary negotiation on 3rd of August 2001. But, soon on the 23rd of November peace talks collapsed and Maoist again entered the same way of conflict simultaneously attacking government offices, police stations and army posts. Against Maoist activities, for the first time a nationwide state of emergency was declared on 26th of November deploying the Army (as stated in webpage of Peace Support¹⁶).

The next peace talk and ceasefire took effect in 2003. To give the peace talk a common focus, the government and Maoist agreed on a 22-point "code of conduct". This involved the need 'to stop violent and coercive activities, halt kidnappings and extortion, allow free movement, instruct government media to provide information impartially, and gradually release detainees' (International Crisis Group, 2003). But during these peace talks the army killed 19 Maoist cadres and civilians in Doramba, Ramechhap district that forced the Maoist to withdraw from negotiations (as stated in webpage of Peace Support¹⁷). Once again, peace talks were disrupted. Meanwhile, in this transitional period, King Gyanendra captured state's power through a coup in 2005, and made numerous arrests, and declared a state of emergency. Since the Maoists always wanted an end to the monarchy, the king's enhanced political role galvanised the Maoists to work with the Seven Party Alliance (SPA)¹⁸ to end autocratic rule of the monarchy.

¹⁶ See: The role of insider mediators http://www.berghof-peacesupport.org/publications/MED_Insider_Mediators_Nepal.pdf

¹⁷ See for details on http://www.berghof-peacesupport.org/publications/MED_Insider_Mediators_Nepal.pdf

¹⁸ Seven-Party Alliance refer to: the NC, The UML, Nepal Sadhavana Party (Anandi Devi), the Nepal Congress (Democratic) party, Janamorcha Nepal, Nepal Workers and Peasants party, and United Left Front.

2.6 Comprehensive Peace Accord 2006

With the common aims of ending monarchy, introducing new constitution, and re-structuring the country in federal states, Maoist and SPA decided to work together. So, Maoist declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire to facilitate the work with other opposition parties. In November 2005, Maoist and SPA committed to work together signing twelve-point agreement in New Delhi regarding the above issues. They also had several meetings and agreements in 2006 for the Eight-point Agreement that concluded firm implementation of the Twelve-point understanding made in 2005 and the Code of Conduct on ceasefire between Government-Maoist talk terms on May 26, 2006. As they agreed to come on common point agreement in peace process on 4 July 2006, United Nations was also invited from both the parties to get support in monitoring of peace process and management of arms and armies. Finally, on 21 November, 2006 historic peace agreement was signed by the then Prime Minister Koirala on the behalf of SPA government, and Prachanda on the behalf of the Maoist, that ended a decade long civil war (see webpage of Peace Support¹⁹).

2.7 Eventual Achievements and Failures

The major issues like the election of Constituent Assembly (CA), abolition of monarchy, establishment of republication state and federalism were to be resolved, that were the main motives of the civil war. In April 2008, after two postponements, the election for the Constituent Assembly (CA) was conducted. This was the monumental step in the peace process. Among the total 601 Constituent Assembly members, 575 were elected and 26 were appointed by the cabinet. A major achievement of this new parliament was the abolishment of the Monarchy and introduction of secular, federal democratic republic in 2008. Similarly, the idea of ‘Inclusive Government’, and ‘Inclusive House of Assembly’ a frequently raised issue was addressed in the election of CA by giving proportional place for women, ethnic groups and minorities, indigenous group, *Dalits* (oppressed class), *Madhesis* (people from Terai region/low plain land) and people from the remote region, too (Upreti, 2010).

The major task of making new constitution and implementing the provision of CPA is still pending. The issue of state-restructuring is ongoing despite many disputes. The interim constitution has already defined Nepal as federal democratic republic. Though the country has decided to implement the concept of federalism, there is still a disagreement on the basis of re-structuring the country. Political leaders from different political parties have different

¹⁹ See details on http://www.berghof-peacesupport.org/publications/MED_Insider_Mediators_Nepal.pdf

views—some demand the federal structure on the basis of ethnic identity and some on the basis of geographical regions (The Himalayan Times²⁰). That is why Upreti, 2012²¹ notes that ‘defining the state governing system, implementing the federal structures (boundaries, names, levels, and so on), providing inclusive mechanisms and electoral systems, as well as maintaining judicial autonomy, are not agreed in the CA’ yet.

Although CPA has clear provisions regarding establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Enforced Disappearance Commission, National Peace and Rehabilitation Commission (NPRC) to deal with transitional justice, they have not been structured yet, even after 6 years of CPA agreement. Despite all these problems, the CPA laid the framework for the integration of the Maoist People’s Liberation Army (PLA) into the National Army (Kathmandu Post 2012²²).

2.8 Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)

The general aim of DDR is ‘the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms by demobilizing; formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces and groups; and finally reintegration by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and sustainable employment and income’ (See UN webpage²³). The United Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) initiated its DDR work with the assistance of UNDP, UNICEF and Interim Task Force from January 2007 for an initial period of one year. This political mission deployed 200 international civilians, 337 local civilians, 72 military observers and volunteers. This mission was not completed in the first year time and was extended. Even after six extensions, UNMIN could not complete its mission as a result task of UNMIN was transferred to the Government’s Special Committee for Supervision (See the webpage²⁴ of Bishnu Pathak).

Some 3,475 weapons from both the armies were stored in iron containers and put beyond use. The Inter-agency Rehabilitation Programme (UNRIP) in a joint endeavour with UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and ILO was working to rehabilitate 4,008 (verified minors and late recruits) discharged Maoist Fighters.

²⁰ News posted on national paper Himalayan Times

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=+%26quot%3BState+restructuring+should+be+base+d+on+identity%26quot%3B&NewsID=311456>

²¹ Follow the link to access online on <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10402659.2012.651040>

²² See news in National Paper ‘The Kathmandu Post’ for details: <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2012/04/10/top-story/army-takes-charge-of-pla-fighters-weapons/233649.html>

²³ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/ddr.shtml>

²⁴ See the article by Bishnu Pathak online on <http://www.author-me.com/nonfiction/womenandddr.html>

In terms of socio economic support, the program initiated four different packages namely Educational Support, Micro-enterprises Training, Vocational Skills Training, and Health Service Training. A total of 2,225 discharged ex-combatants had accessed the packages. 399 (267 males and 132 females) completed various trainings and 105 graduates (62 males and 43 females) have gotten support to start their own business (See the webpage²⁵ of Bishnu pathak).

2.9 Enforced Disappearances

The Statute of International Criminal Court (ICC)²⁶ defines the act of enforced disappearance as follows:

‘Enforced disappearance of persons’ means the arrest, detention or abduction by persons, by or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of a state or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for prolonged period of time’.

This universal definition indicates the issue of enforced disappearance in Nepal. In between 1996-2006, 933 people disappeared from the different five development regions by the government and Maoist forces. Among the five Development Regions, Mid-Western Region was mostly affected than other regions. Bardiya district in Mid-Western Region, too, was the worst affected. Chisapani Barrack was responsible for most of the disappearances. Of two hundred twenty disappearances, two hundred seven were by the state forces and remaining thirteen were form CPN-Maoist. And the severity was more in Tharu community (See INSEC²⁷).

²⁵ See the article by Bishnu Pathak online on <http://www.author-me.com/nonfiction/womenandddr.html>

²⁶ Follow the link for the definition by ICC <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/WebART/585-07?OpenDocument>

²⁷ See INSEC full report Uniharu Kaha Chhan ? on <http://www.inseconline.org/index.php?type=reports&lang=en&id=2>

Number of Enforced Disappearance by Region (1996-2006)

Eastern Development Region		Mid Development Region		Western Development Region		Mid-Western Development Region		Far-Western Development Region		Total
State	Maoist	State	Maoist	State	Maoist	State	Maoist	State	Maoist	
78	18	164	21	113	15	426	45	43	10	933
96		185		128		471		53		933

Source: INSEC (2011)

None of the governments after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) have given serious attention to investigations into past human right violations. Though CPA contains the provision that within 60 days of signing, cases of enforced disappearance had to be public, nothing has been done yet. The draft bills to establish Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Disappearance Commission have been tabled in parliament and they are also in debate by Statute Committee even after five years (INSEC, 2011 and World Report 2011²⁸). The issue of disappearance has been escalated in each and every agreement including seven-point agreement and interim constitution but still it has not achieved any results. Recently, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai expressed commitment to withdraw two separate bills on Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Enforced Disappearance (pending since last 2 years) to introduce a new integrated bill to solve civil war crimes (See Kathmandu Post²⁹). This has also led to great disputes and dilemmas as it does not ensure the ending of impunity. Also, combining these two bills may result in overshadowing the issue of disappearance which is a serious matter of human rights violation.

2.10 Summary

This chapter has briefly focused on the history of Nepal, especially from the unification of small territories to a United Nepal. Further, it has also discussed the causes and consequences of the civil war and the efforts of peace, including DDR and handling the issue of enforced disappearance. The causes of the civil war revolved around cumulative factors such as unbearable two hundred and thirty-eight years of old feudal system, poverty, marginalization and social inequalities.

²⁸ See Human Right Watch World Report 2011 online on: <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/wr2011.pdf>

²⁹ See: <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/ktpost/epaperhome.aspx?issue=2042012> for detail news in National Paper Kathmandu Post.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a conceptual approach to the discussion of the livelihoods of women whose husbands disappeared during the civil war in Nepal. It discusses the livelihood framework developed by the Department of International Development (DFID) that is used as the main conceptual approach. The concept of human agency is also briefly discussed.

3.2 Sustainable Livelihood Framework

The concept of sustainable livelihood dates back to the committee working on agriculture and food for Brundtland Commission Report (WCED) in 1987. Since then, various organizations; like, UNDP, OXFAM, CARE and DFID have adopted the concept of SRL as a flexible tool, to understand the mix of assets, resources and activities that people depend on for their well-being and livelihood (Moser and Norton, 2001).

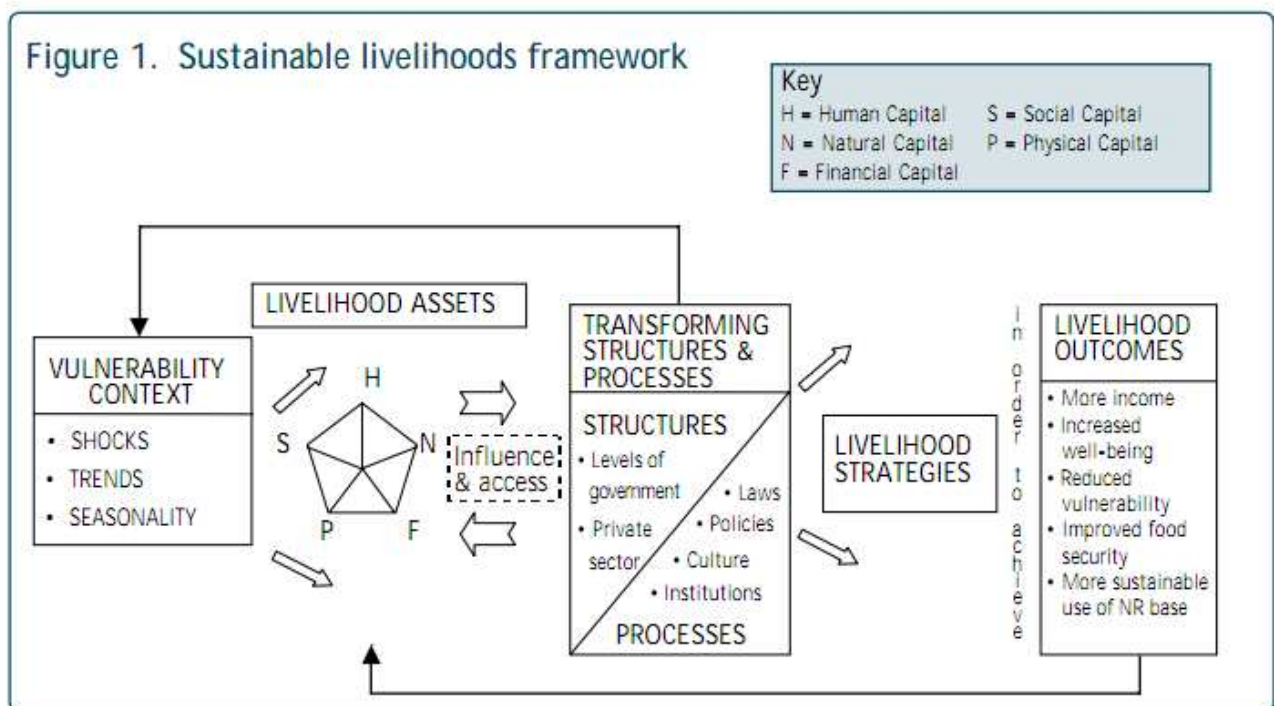
Sustainable livelihood is about the capabilities and assets (stores, resources, claims and access) that people mobilise to recover from stress and shocks and to meet welfare needs (Chambers and Conway, 1992). According to Hussein and Nelson (1998) livelihood is sustainable when it is able to adjust to recover from stress and shocks, ensuring and enhancing the resources to maintain both at present and future without deteriorating natural resource base.

Similarly, Eade and Williams (1998:490-493) defines the notion of livelihood in terms of a series of people's, activities, capacities and resources that make up the way of living accounting the relation of how these elements are related to each other. The following three basic aspects are considered in relation to livelihood systems and economic interventions: 'who owns what?', 'Who does what?' and 'Who gets what?'. Here the first question deals with the accessibilities to assets, the second question deals with strategies adopted to make a living and the third question with the share of income one gets from engagement in economic activities. So, sustainable livelihood can be said to focus on various welfare-enhancing issues, such as long-term poverty reduction, food security, good health care, and good job.

3.3 Understanding the Framework

The diagram below describes and helps in understanding how people meet livelihoods. The various components include: vulnerability context, livelihood assets, livelihood strategies, transforming structures and processes and livelihood outcomes. A change in any one of the components makes a difference or affects the households or well-being of individuals, households and communities (DFID, 1999).

Figure 2. Sustainable Livelihood Framework



Source: DFID guidance sheet, 1999.

3.3.1 Vulnerability Context

‘The vulnerability context frames the external environment in which people exist’ (DFID, 1999). According to the framework, three main components (trends, shocks and seasonality) are taken into account in vulnerability context. While the trends refer to the population, resource, and technological trends; shock signals to human, natural, and economic shocks that affects livelihoods. Seasonality, too, refers to seasonal shifts in prices, employment opportunities, and food availability that may have adverse or positive impact on the welfare of the people.

Sustainable livelihoods are those that can avoid or resist stresses and shocks and survive with minimum risk of threat to the future livelihood (Chambers and Conway, 1992:11). Though

vulnerability ‘lies furthest outside people’s control’ (DFID, 1999), it can be reduced through two ways—public action or intervention programs and individual effort or private action (Chambers and Conway, 1992:11).

Various types of conflicts can have intense effects on the livelihoods of the poor people. For example, in the areas of civil conflict, people suffer from lawlessness and physical damage. In case of marginalized populations, it is more disastrous as they already fall in poor groups. Similarly, the importance of resources and having accessibility on it automatically rises during such period. And if such problems remain without addressed, these vulnerable groups of people who are already poor may further be marginalised (DFID 1999). Thus, shocks (ten year of conflict) have affected the women (whose husbands have been disappeared) adversely and prevented them from many opportunities. As the issues have not been addressed, this has further led to worst situation.

‘Vulnerability and resilience are often viewed as opposite poles’ (Kaplan, 2002:19). ‘Resilience is the process of developing survival capacities to adversities’ (Simmons et. al, 2005:4). It is ‘how people prepare for, respond to and cope with natural, technological or mass violence to bounce back from major disaster’ and this is what is directly linked with long-term prevention by communal or individual effort (Ronan and Johnston, 2005:2). These women on their communal basis have made what Miller et. al (2010:11) calls it ‘necessary adaptation’ to solve different, social and economic problems by establishing community-based organisations to facilitate and cope up with the diverse socio-economic consequences of a civil conflict.

3.3.2 Livelihood Assets

Assets are the fundamental and they can be divided into five key core categories: human capital, social capital, physical capital, financial capital and natural capital (DFID, 1999 & Ellis, 1999). Other subsequent adaptations have added the category of political capital-power and capacity to influence decisions (Haidar, 2009:6). Assets also have been defined in other ways as tangible (resource and stores) and intangible (claims and access) assets which provide material and social means of making a living (Chambers and Conway, 1992:5; Scoones, 1998:7).

According to DFID (1999) framework, five core assets show the type of resources people mobilise to meet a certain living standard. Here, human capital represents skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives. Social capitals refer to the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives. These are developed through networks, membership of more formalised groups and finally relationship of trust. Similarly, natural capitals are the natural resource stocks from which resource flows, and useful services for livelihood are derived (DFID 1999).

Physical capital comprises the basic infrastructure and production of goods needed to support livelihoods that ranges from affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation, clean and affordable energy, and access to information or communication. Financial capital is the financial resources that people use to gain their livelihood objectives. There are mainly two sources of financial capital: available stocks and regular inflow of money (DFID, 1999).

It is these assets and resources that support people to make a living. All these range of assets have their own value; no single asset is sufficient in isolation to ensure better livelihood outcomes. The combination of resources results in better livelihood outcomes but largely it depends upon people's accesses to these resources.

3.3.3 Livelihood Strategies

Having access to assets is important for better livelihood, but it is not enough. It is rather the way of controlling and using the resources for higher outputs. DFID (1999) states livelihood strategy is something that 'denotes the range and combination of activities and choices that people make/undertake in order to achieve their livelihood goals (including productive activities, investment strategies, reproductive choices etc)' and Scoones (1998) identifies three broad clusters of livelihood strategies: agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification and migration.

The main idea is about identifying what resources (or combinations of capitals) are applicable and required for adopting different livelihood strategy (Scoones, 1998). It also depends on the number of choices and flexibilities in their livelihood strategies. More choices and flexibilities lead to greater ability to endure shocks and stresses of the vulnerability context (DFID, 1999).

In the course of creating livelihood, people use different best available options to cope up with the shocks and stresses using all economic, societal, political, natural tools to overcome the challenges they face and meet the objective of their livelihood goals. In my study, women before their husband's disappearance were living as dependents. But, suddenly the roles and responsibilities have been transferred to them. They are trying to find the ways of living, creating more livelihood options and adopting better livelihood strategies for livelihood.

3.3.4 Transforming Structures and Processes

These involve the institutions, organisations, policies and legislation that shape livelihood (DFID, 1999). Understanding the contextual institutional processes allows the identification of restrictions and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, as it mediates access to livelihood resources and also affects the composition of portfolios of livelihood strategies. Hence, understanding of institutions and organizations is a key to designing interventions which improve sustainable livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 1998).

First, the necessity is to understand the vulnerability context in which assets exists—the trends, shocks and local cultural practices which affects livelihood; and second, to understand the structures, government to private sectors; and the process—policies, laws, rules of the game and incentives; that defines people's livelihood options (Carney, 1998:8). Institutional process, thus matters in shaping every individual's standard of living, and makes of coping up with changing personal circumstances or fortunes.

3.3.5 Livelihood Outcomes

The framework defines livelihood outcomes as the achievements or outputs of livelihood strategies after the use of appropriate resources. Havnevik et al. (2006) argues that 'the outcomes of livelihoods are defined in normative economic development terms such as more income, enhanced well-being, improved food security, reduced vulnerability and environmental sustainability'. So, we can say, livelihood outcome is the result of careful use of resources, or using appropriate coping strategies to maintain, secure and improve a certain standard of living.

Even though the SRL approach is a well-known tool to understand poor people's livelihood and used by most of the organizations, it has some drawbacks. Prowse (2008) indicates that it

has an optimistic assumption that individuals and households are able to strategise as opposed to cope; which has limited understanding of vulnerability context and also the term ‘sustainable’ is too ambiguous and should be divided into livelihood security and livelihood sustainability. Prowse has also compared the SRL of DFID and Ellis’s framework³⁰, despite the apparent similarities. Ellis differentiation can be marked in terms of ‘livelihood activities’ and ‘outcomes’, where livelihood activities are natural-resource-based activities and non-natural-resource-based activities, and outcomes are divided into livelihood security and environmental sustainability. Also, Ellis (2000) emphasises social dimensions like: ‘gender, class, age and ethnicity which the SRL marginalizes’. Gender ideas and practices, as further discussed below, inform resource access, control and use by extension for standards of living.

3.4 Gender and Livelihood Assets (Resource Accessibility)

DFID livelihood framework overlooks the locally specific conditions that influence men’s and women’s differential access to and control of resources. It does not look at the gender dimension of livelihood. Ellis (1999) writes that:

‘Gender is an integral and inseparable part of rural livelihoods. Men and women have different assets, access to resources, and opportunities. Women rarely won land, may have lower education due to discriminatory access as children, and their access to productive resources as well as decision-making tend to occur through the mediation of men. Women typically confront a narrower range of labour markets than men, and lower wage rates. In general, therefore, diversification is more of an option for rural men than for women. In this sense, diversification can improve household livelihood security while at the same time trapping women in customary roles’.

Having male members in a family does make a huge difference in resources accesses. Ownership of property and other productive resource is mostly reserved for men though resource provide fair living standard for average people in Nepal. Women heavily rely on their males counterparts for accessing resources; for example, accessing land (Khadka: 2010). Farmers who do not have their own land, lease land for crop cultivation and life subsistence. The women in my study who lived in extended family before their husbands’ disappearance, had accesses to the resources such as: land, financial, natural, that somewhat were easy for their living. They survived either from their own farm products or products from leased land. After the disappearance of their husbands, these women faced difficulty in accessibility of resources.

³⁰For the framework, see Ellis, F (2000) Rural Livelihoods And Diversity In Developing Countries. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. (P 30) .

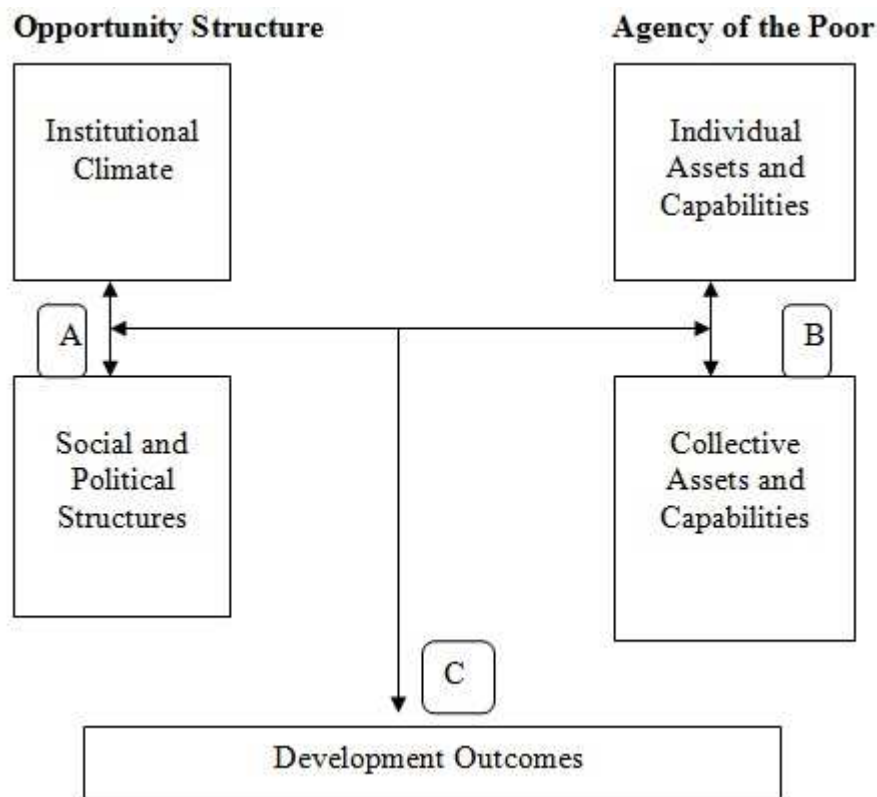
3.5 Human Agency

It focuses on how people use different forms of powers to overcome difficult scenarios, and turn 'bad' into 'less bad' circumstances. Internal, external or both of these factors may have influence in shaping one's life situation. Sometimes, important structural changes may result from outside forces; such as, encroachment by market, state or international bodies. Though the life-worlds of the individual or groups can be affected and transformed by these actors or structures of external forces; like, policies, intervention, institutions. Besides these, internal forces like human action, reaction and consciousness may have central and crucial role in shaping individual or group's activity and their life-worlds (Long, 2001:13). It is because peoples' choices and demands are guided by their necessities and interest in the social arena.

Bourdieu discusses 'social space', 'agent's dispositions' and 'social positions' are indispensable elements and agent's positions shape their dispositions too. Social elements create social relation and contribute to form human agency which is the product of social element. So, here individuals are the agents who can work out with their agency to reconstitute structure, rules and norms (Maiga, 2010:60). Hence, the individual is social actor of the agency which comes from the social process to combat with uncertainties and vulnerabilities for their own wellbeing.

In many cases, though sustainable approaches of development theories are being used to achieve the aim of poverty reduction through inclusive people-centred development but 'in the worst cases these approaches have been used (selectively) to substantiate existing development activities, rather than working with poor people to identify their strengths as part of a process' (Carney, 2002:28). It is people's knowledge and awareness at basic level to be able to utilize in all the factors that affect their lives. 'It is important to recognize that local people may not have full knowledge or experience of level that represent constraints on their livelihood development' (Havnevik et. al 2006). Concept of 'capabilities of individual' of Prowse (2008) and 'empowerment' of Narayan (2002) plays significant role in poor people's life. Here, Narayan (2002:14) discusses the expansion of assets and capabilities of the poor largely depend on the 'empowerment' that assist poor to participate in, negotiate with, influence on, control over and hold accountable intuitions that affect their lives.

Figure 3. An overview of the Theoretical Framework.



Here, the first block A has opportunity structure which shows how people (social actors) use formal and informal social and political institutions to pursue their self-defined goals or interests. The second block B is agency loaded with capacity of actors to take a meaningful action including both individual and collective assets and capabilities of these women. Together with social institutions, political structure—that includes government agencies and local organizations that are working with these women and their participation and inclusion—and assets—individual and collective assets and capabilities—influence each other to have effects in development outcomes (Narayan, 2005:6). One of the major and critical aspects of empowerment approach as defined by Narayan-Parker (2002) and relevant to my study is about the role of formal and informal intuitions to reducing inequalities by extension of different universal services: education and healthcare, improving distribution of tangible assets such as: land, access to capital and other resources which are the basic necessity.

3.6 Summary

The sustainable livelihood framework has integrated concept in addressing the poor's necessity by putting them in the centre of development and identifying their risk and vulnerabilities to cope up in a sustainable manner. This tool has been used in the subsequent part to highlight the livelihood situation of wives/female partners of disappeared men in the civil war in Nepal. The concept of human agency is also briefly discussed to understand the women's strength and weaknesses in coping vulnerability as well as identify their need.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the field data. It is divided into two sections: first part focuses on the background of the respondents and the second part is on income generating activities and their impact on gender roles. It also highlights expressions of agency in the livelihood options of the female informants.

SECTION A

4.2 Background of Respondents:

This section focuses on the background of the respondents, especially regarding age, level of education and household size³¹.

Table. 1. Age of Respondents

Age	Absolute	Percentage
25-30	3	33
31-35	4	45
36 and above	2	22
Total	9	100

Source: Fieldwork 2011

Table 1 shows the age of the respondents. It is clear from the table that 7 of the total respondents fall in the age category of 25-35. Only two respondents from total of 9 represent 22% of the total interviewed women who fall in the category of 36 and above age group. The data in the table shows that 78% of the women fall in the young age group. This means most of them are in reproductive period, having children to support socio-economically alongside themselves. This shows the increased workload for them.

4.3 Level of Education

Education plays a crucial role in obtaining skilled jobs with many choices in today's diversified market. So, getting a skilled job is directly related to the education of a person. In Nepal Adult literacy³² rate is only 56.6 % where 71.6% are male and 44.5 % are female. Similarly, 67% are female out of 7.6 million adult illiterates. This is the overall scenario in

³¹ Household size represents the number of total family members.

³² The data here is accessed from UNESCO online: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/kathmandu/about-this-office/single-view/news/unesco_celebrates_international_literacy_day_in_nepal/

Nepal. But, in case of disadvantaged and marginalized population, the percentage of illiteracy is relatively higher.

Table. 2. Level of Education of Respondents

Level of Education	Absolute Figure	Percentage %
Literate	1	11
Illiterate	8	89
Total	9	100

Source: Fieldwork 2011

Table 2 above reveals the literacy rate of the respondents with formal education and no education at all. We can see that there is a relatively high level of illiteracy. Of the 9 respondents only 1 is literate (passed class 8), that is 11 percent of the total respondents. She got a skilled job in a school as a teacher. Rest of them, 89%, fall in the category of illiterate, which is 8 out of 9 informants. These women have no options for jobs in public or formal sectors due to illiteracy. So, most of my dependents being rural dwellers are compelled to survive from farming and other rural activities.

Table. 3. Household Size

ID ³³ of Informants	Age	Number of Children	Other Dependents ³⁴	Total
1	30	3		4
2	33	3		4
3	43	2		3
4	27	2		3
5	27	1		2
6	35	3	2	6
7	37	1		2
8	40	3	2	6
9	35	3		4

Source: Fieldwork 2011

Table 3 above shows the household size of the respondents. According to my field notes almost 80% of the households are living in nuclear family (i.e. 7 out of 9) and the rest (only 2) in joint family. Household number in every family is shown above in the table that illustrates

³³ ID means identity number of respondents. This has been done to protect their privacy.

³⁴ This category refers to grand parents and other relatives living with and supported by the informants.

the economic responsibility that the respondent has to bear. Before the disappearance of their husbands they used to live in the extended family which included parents, grandparents, children, spouses etc. Living in extended family is still prevalent in the normal families (not affected by war) of this community but the situation for the women whose husbands are disappeared is different now. After the disappearance of their husbands in the family, they missed socio-economic support, which they used to get from extended family previously. The families which used to be run in the mutual support from each individual before are now ruined and losing living arrangements in absence of their husbands. Now, most of these women are excluded from her husbands' family and are forced to move out of the house.

Living in extended family has both good and bad aspects. If all members in a family are dependent on single member for the daily bread, they are more vulnerable economically. But if every member contributes in the family with at least some support and help in daily homely activities then it brings wellbeing in whole family. Among all these respondents, respondent number 6 and 8 comparatively have better-off situation economically as they are living in an extended family in a mutual support.

The main reason these families living in extended families according to respondent 6 is that:

My in-laws have a larger farmland. The main reason I was not driven out from the house was because they needed manpower to work on the farmland and also because my husband was the only son of his parent. So, I think they needed our support in their old ages. And it is good for me and my children, as my kids are getting sufficient food as well as love and care from their grandparents.

Most of them (7 out of 9) were homeless and went through hard time in making new settlements. Settlement in new place, struggling against the adversities was challenging for them. It increased socio-economic insecurity of these women and their children. They faced the socio-economic burden all alone at a time, including establishing new female-headed households, caring and rearing of dependents, searching for new jobs to survive etc. To secure and protect their livelihoods in extreme poverty was hard to cope up. This shows the increased responsibility of these women.

This is how respondent 1 expressed about her new settlement:

Actually, I did not want to live in surroundings of my in-laws' family because they treated me bad after the disappearance of my husband. But, I had no option as I got

small piece of land nearby for making new house. I did not get any monetary and material support from them. But I got a room for living in my in-laws' house during the construction of new house. From the compensation I received from the government, I was able to build new house, but it is not good enough as I could not spend much for it.

Similarly, Respondent 3 expressed her circumstances in these terms:

I had no space in my husband's house after his disappearance. I was compelled to move out of the house. I had some land but was swept by the flood. Now, I am landless. There was no one to support me. I got small piece of land from Maoist for settlement and I hardly managed to build a small house by my little saving from the farmland (that I collected before the land was swept by the flood) and monetary support from some organisations.

SECTION B

4.4 Introduction

This section discusses livelihood strategy adopted by respondents for income generations and their impact on gender roles. It also focuses on the expression of agency in the livelihood strategies and adaptations of the female informants.

4.5 Livelihood Strategies

Table. 4. Income Generating Activities:

ID of Informants	Crop Farming	Animal husbandry	Working as Farm-hands	Petty Traders	Teaching	Total
1	X	X	X	X		4
2	X	X	X			3
3	X	X	X	X		4
4	X	X	X			3
5		X			X	2
6	X	X				2
7	X	X	X	X		4
8	X	X				2
9	X	X	X			3

Source: Fieldwork 2011

Table 4 above shows the jobs done by the wives of the disappeared men for survival. Among the 9 respondents 3 (respondents 5, 6 and 8) had little good economic condition. From the table we can see that they adopted only two sources of income. Respondents 6 and 8 had large farmland area and also had some cattle which support them the whole year for livelihood. Also, they said that they neither have to look for additional income sources nor depend on others for subsistence. And respondent 5, 'literate woman', had a job as a teacher in a nearby school and also had extra income from the cattle.

Respondent 5 further explained her condition in these terms:

Although I have not been given place to live in my husband's house, I could manage my livelihood on my own. This became possible because of the 'selection committee' to select the teacher in the school as they gave priority to the poor and helpless like me. I feel proud being educated and this credit goes to my parents.

I do most of my household work in the morning and evening time; like, making food, cleaning house, raring of the cattle, etc. In the day time, I go to school and come home for lunch in lunch hour; meanwhile, I feed my cattle, too. As the school is nearby my house, I can save some of my time.

Similarly, respondent 6 states in this way about her economic condition:

I live with my parent-in-laws. We have large farmland and some cattle, too. I do my household works most of the time; and rest of the time, I also help in farmland. We have our own farming equipment, ploughing tractor, which reduces the physical workload. It also helps us to finish our farm activities in time which provides us high return than other farmers who are based on labour intensive technique for farming. The crop we produce is sufficient for us for the whole year.

It shows that these families are less vulnerable compared to other respondents. Choosing only two sources of income these families have maintained economic security to survive. They do not have to worry to find other jobs for survival as they have their own farmland and secured job.

But, the rest 6 respondents, the majority of the respondents, did not have stable sources of income and they were compelled to find other alternatives to sustain. Although they had 3-4 sources of income, still they were suffering from food insecurity. Due to the small farmland

size or landlessness these women had adopted wide range of other economic activities like working as farm-hands for daily wages, petty traders, and cattle rearing and so on. Besides this, occasionally they also worked for rich families engaging themselves in small household activities such as cleaning house and utensils, washing clothes where they don't get money but get food (grains, vegetables etc) and also sometimes they get old clothes as wage.

Respondent 7 further noted that:

I work everywhere, from households to farmland. I work for wages in others' houses and farms, run small shop in the morning and evening when I am at home but still I face financial difficulties. Hardly, I have managed to feed myself and my children; but still, I lack to fulfil many daily needs of my children. They ask for school materials (books, copy, pencils, etc.) and sometimes I cannot provide in time and they refuse to go to school. These are the basic needs, and I feel it has made big difference in our everyday lives.

Previously, these families mostly relied on multiple sources to sustain themselves and their dependents. As a source of income, their husbands played major roles in everyday life. They used to involve in most of the physically tough farm tasks such as ploughing, irrigating the crops, harvesting and all. Besides, women used to perform all other small household tasks, including working on the farmlands. Though these people had poor economic background, it was somehow possible to maintain daily expenses as everybody supported with at least some economic support. Food security for whole year used to be maintained by the male members in the family, either by *adhya*³⁵ or seasonal migration, labour and etc. Unfortunately, the loss of their husband brought catastrophic consequences in their daily livelihood pattern. They lost every kind of mutual, emotional support, which they used to get from the joint families before.

4.5.1 Land and Well-being

Rural poverty in Asia is due to landlessness or semi-landlessness (Ellis, 1998). Having land is the easiest way for surviving for poor people, as it is the source of producing food. In poor rural households, the availability of food is directly related to the access to the productive land. One should have his or her own land or should have easy access in order to cultivate

³⁵ In Adhya system the small landholders or landless people lease land from the large landowners and pay half the production from the farm to the landowners.

crops for domestic consumption and for sale. Land accessibility is thus linked to food security and secure livelihood.

Land is still the major productive resource for majority of the population for livelihood in Nepal. This is because people cultivate their own land or lease land for a share of the cultivated crop. The situation of ownership in land between men and women is very wide. Men own 90% and women own 10% of the private land (Khadka: 2010) in Nepal. People who have lands can grow crops and can at least sustain themselves from the farming and production. But the landless and people with small pieces of land often face food shortages and economic insecurity in rural communities. As the information that I got during my field, women in this place largely depend on men for the accessibility of land. In the absence of man, women face the problem of land accessibility, which has direct impact on the availability of food and livelihood security. It is because family without a man is supposed to be economically insecure and weak in this community. The trend of taking land on lease has been unpopular by these families from the landowners. It is because the landowners could not trust that those women can conduct the agricultural activities all alone. Now, most of these families have small pieces of land or are landless.

Before the disappearance of the husbands of the present informants, the lands they held in the joint families were somewhat enough to sustain them economically. But after the disappearance of their husbands, most of them were thrown out of their husbands' house by their in-laws and they were refused to access and control household properties including land. Even where they got, it was only a small piece of land which was inadequate for viable farming. This is what has mostly made them landless and undermined their livelihoods. More than 80% of the respondents are landless or semi-landless now. From the production of their own land they hardly survive for 2-5 months in a year. This further explains why most of the informants had to resort to supplementary income sources to ensure a certain living standard.

Respondent 1, who had problems in accessing land from her in-laws of her family, said the following:

His family gave me only 5 kattha³⁶ of land which was far less than what I suppose to get. Rest of the land was taken by my brother-in-law as my parents-in-laws live with him. If I had got the right amount of property, I would not have been starving now.

Respondents 6 and 8 now have 4 bighas and 2 bighas 6 katthas of land respectively for farming and subsistence. Similarly, though respondent 5 doesn't own land, she manages to survive the whole year being a teacher. The remaining respondents, apart from these 3 respondents, have less than half bigha of land and cannot produce enough food for subsistence.

Respondent 3 seems more vulnerable among all. This is how she presents her situation.

Our household economy was good. We had a farmland that was more than enough to meet our subsistence needs. My husband mainly used to work on the land and I used to help him. But now, I have lost everything: my husband, my farmland. Losing a man/husband means losing land (source of livelihood) in this area.

4.5.2 Livelihood Diversification

Ellis (1998) defines livelihood diversification as a process in which rural and poor families create diverse portfolios of income generating activities, as well as social support capabilities for survival and improved standards of living.

According to Chapman and Tripp (2004), livelihood diversification refers to efforts by people to find new ways to generate incomes and reduce risk; and it vary sharply by the degree of freedom of choice (to diversify or not), and the reversibility of the outcome. In rural households, agriculture is not only a path out of poverty. People engage in multiple jobs to produce additional income apart from the main household and agricultural activities. Diversification of jobs includes on- and off-farm activities, agricultural and non-agricultural goods and services, selling of wage labour, self employment etc (Hussen and Nelson, 1998). Ellis (1999) says that diversification contributes positively to livelihood sustainability because it reduces proneness to stress and shocks. Hence, these livelihood diversification strategies are the survival strategies that poor people adopt in order to gain better living.

³⁶ Kattha is the unit of measurement of land area (20 kattha =1 bigha=1.67 acre approx.) according to online conversion from [http://www.convertunits.com/from/acre/to/kattha+\[Nepal\]](http://www.convertunits.com/from/acre/to/kattha+[Nepal])

These women, to reduce the burden of economic needs, are seen in various jobs to ensure sustainability of their livelihood. For example, those respondents who had already somewhat stable economic condition, after receiving economic support from government and institutions, could enhance their livelihood much better with less diversified ways of living as they were able to stand on what they had/have. In case of vulnerable women's family there was no alternate than engaging in multiple ways of living. Having few options (due to illiteracy and lack of technical skills), mostly these women are engaging in farming and partly on non-farm work which has assisted them in coping the adversities in making livelihood. Poor women, those who lack farmland in absence of their males, mostly work on wages, sometimes work for food (not given money) what adds some extra to their better livelihood. In case more members (not the dependents) in the family also help to diversify themselves with many income options but these families lack the workable manpower (almost all of them have dependents). So, only the woman seems to be engaged on various income options. After these women lost their husbands, they had are surviving on farming and other income activities like: animal husbandry, working in wages, creating small funds by collecting some amount of money monthly and circulating among them in need and so on. The ways of earning a living from diversified sources and strategies to cope up with the vulnerabilities, which were adopted by the women of disappeared men has been further discussed below.

4.5.3 Rotating Credit

The idea of Rotating Saving and Credit Association (ROSCAs) are prevalent in different countries mostly in the people of grass-roots level. These are the informal groups, with the self-selected individuals. The members themselves decide to contribute the fixed amount of money every week or month as decided by the members. They can use the fund in emergencies in mutual agreement; they primarily focus on the needy members in common understanding of the group (Ledgerwood, 1999:70).

The concept of 'rotating saving credit union' came when they were organized in 'Tharu Women's Group' after the disappearance of their husband. The main reason for running such union was to combat against the emergency and economic insecurities. Besides, it also helps women to encourage in saving and this fund can be used in crisis. Collecting a very small amount of 'rupees 30 every month' from each member, these women started generating funds in their organization. This collected money is usually utilized in emergencies among the group members. The members also switch turns in case someone is in urgent need of the

money. The one who uses this money will return it back to the organization's fund after the certain period of time (can be used for some months according to the decision of the group and necessity of the user). They initiated this kind of fund making strategies because the local loan lenders stopped providing loans for them in absence of their husbands. This question of trust was raised from the moneylenders whether these families will be able to pay back the loan alone.

Respondent 3 stated how she was benefited by the fund she got:

Though I am landless, I earn from the casual jobs that come my way: leasing land, sometimes working as labour, rearing animals, working in private housing and so on. With savings from this income, we have collected a small fund so that we can use it in case of emergencies. Last time, I used Rs. 2 thousand from the fund for buying rice as I got in low price in the market. I paid it back after 3 months collecting from my salary. This at least reduces the economic burden for few months for us.

4.5.4 Support from NGOs and Government

It is supposedly the state's primary responsibility to address the problem of these women who have been affected socio-economically by the civil war. Though one's life cannot be weighted in material or monetary terms, the support they receive definitely have some relief in such crisis. As written on my field notes, not all of the families of disappeared men have been compensated by the state as all the cases have not been fully investigated. In my study, all the women had received the compensation since the cases had been investigated and verified. The families of the disappeared did get some support from I/NGOs and government for economic relief. As a compensation and relief, the government provided NRs. 100,000 to the families of the disappeared.

Respondent 5 explains how she was treated by her family after receiving compensation as such:

At least some fund for relief has been given to the families of the disappeared. But I have a question, 'does that go to the right person in the family?' No, Never. I have evidence in this case. As a guardian, my father-in-law received the money from the government. I did not get any penny from it; rather, I was sexually abused in the midnight from my so called father-in-law. Hitting him badly, I managed to escape

from that house in midnight and now I have been living in my parent's house. I have never gone back again to that house.

In some cases, however, the compensation has led to improvement in livelihoods. For example, respondents 6 and 8 had 3 and 1.6 bighas of land respectively before the disappearance of their husbands but when they received government support they added 1 more bigha of land each. This is because these families were economically well-off and they were able to invest the money in productive ways. And the remaining families, some of the wives of the disappeared men did not receive the compensation. Those who received also could not invest in something productive as they spend all in daily basic needs. It seems the support provided was insufficient and unsustainable.

Respondent 6 and 8 have different experiences; the compensation has been helpful for them. Respondent 6 explains that:

Before the disappearance of my husband, we had 3 bighas of land and it was sufficient for us. I still live with my parents-in-laws, and have access to the 3 bigha of land. From the compensation, I received from government; I bought 1 more bigha of land in my name. Now, I have access to 4 bigha of land which is more than sufficient for my survival needs.

Similarly, a number of local NGOs provided significant support programmes to help improve their livelihoods. As I noted on field notes, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) particularly played a crucial role in launching intervention programmes in this community. Through the Micro Economic Initiative Programme, it provided some monetary and material supports. It gave Rupees 10,000 to each as instant economic relief fund, and some material support like cooking utensils, bed and clothes. To start up the business of animal husbandry, ICRC also provided animals like pigs and goats. These relief programmes by some NGOs definitely made some impacts in improving the livelihoods of these women and their dependents.

Respondent 1 had the following to say about the support program:

Why don't they ask about our needs? They gave me some clothes, beds, kitchen utensils (pots, plates etc.) etc. which I already had in my house. Instead, if they had

given me with rice and pulses, I would have lived for some months or if they had given me money I would have bought some necessities.

Many relief programmes launched in the name of these families did not reflect the needs of these people. So, some families were not satisfied with what they have received. Many people raised their voices in anger as the limited and irrelevant support appeared disappointing. They are asking for long-term sustainable support that state should escalate their issues and guarantee their future.

2.5.5 Occupational Combination

Absence of husbands undermined the economic security and livelihood of the female informants. Due to will or necessity, the practice of occupational combination has been a common practice among these women. Holding several jobs ensured economic security of their families. Holding only one job; for example, working in their own farmland could not fulfil their economic needs, as they do not have sufficient farmland. So, getting engaged in diverse rural jobs these women were able to get supported by themselves to some extent. One or two jobs could not guarantee their economic needs so they had other jobs in addition to farming. The other jobs they engaged in were: working as farm-hand, rearing cattle, leasing the farmland etc. The income from any source appeared helpful and translated into livelihood security.

Respondents 1, 3 and 7 were more economically vulnerable so they had more job than the other respondents to secure their livelihoods. Respondent 3 says as following about doing multiple jobs at the same time:

Only one or two sources of income are not sufficient for livelihood of my whole family. My children go to school, so they cannot support me economically. They help me in small things such as: cooking food, bringing water from the tap and cleaning house etc.; but, for other outdoor works, I am alone responsible to manage. I look after my cattle, work in other people's farmland, and sometimes clean others' houses. Whatever comes in my hand, I do that job. From these work I earn my daily bread and fulfil the necessity of my children.

4.5.6 New Husband/Remarrying

Women often acquire consumption rights to land in agrarian societies for livelihood security (Moore, 1996). In many cases of Nepal, marriage is also the basis for accessing resources as

most of productive resources belong to men. To have access to farmland a woman needs a man in her life. As a result, many of the women, whose husbands have disappeared, have either married or plan to marry to enable access to land for crop cultivation for subsistence, as well as to find solution to existing socio-economic problems.

A respondent got married in order to get access to land and other material support. Remarrying, in a way, was her solution to economic and social problems. Respondent 4 got married, and did provide the following additional information:

I never thought about my second marriage in my life; but, the economic situation became unbearable. The foremost reason for re-marriage was the survival problems. Having small kid on my lap, it was difficult to meet daily needs. My present husband works as a driver and supports us financially. I do household activities and spend the rest of my time caring for and rearing the children. I am lucky enough because my present husband equally cares for my sons (one son from my previous husband and one from present husband). Now, I feel like I have got everything; a new husband and a father for my elder son.

Further, informant 4 noted:

I remarried not because I did not love my first husband rather it was my socio-economic necessity. If my first husband comes back, I will kill myself, and leave children to their fathers. I have two sons from each of both husbands.

Similarly, other respondents plan to remarry merely for socio-economic purposes. Respondent 5 particularly said the following about her plans:

I was only 17 years old when my husband disappeared. Though I have always felt the need for a man in my life, I have not remarried due to various socio-cultural reasons. But since my socio-economic conditions are worsening, I am ready for a new life with a new husband.

4.6 New Responsibilities and New Gender Roles

‘Conflict distorts gender roles creating tensions between the different demands placed on women’(El-Bushra and Mukarubuga, 1995:16). Married women, who got socio-economic

support from their husbands when they were with husbands, had a difficult everyday life when their husbands disappeared. Women lived in the households where men provided socio-economic necessities as a part of their gendered role. In the new female headed households, the women had to learn what the disappeared husbands did for them. Their situation changed from mere 'dependents' to 'independent' house heads by discharging multiple responsibilities and performing hitherto male tasks. Having no man in the household further increased the women's workload; new roles were forced on the women. For example, besides performing domestic tasks such as cooking food cleaning and caring for children, they had to do outdoor tasks; such as, herding cattle, preparing and maintaining farmlands and, obtaining loans in their own names.

Respondent 9 said the following about how she manages the farm alone:

I perform all the roles in the family now including what was previously done by my husband. I do most of the tough work on the farm in the absence of my husband because I have no other alternatives. I do all the farm tasks including making the land ready for crop cultivation spreading fertilizer and labelling the soil.

Similarly, respondent 5, bearing multiple roles in the family, expresses her feeling like this:

My child was only 1 year old when my husband disappeared. I had to perform my household tasks along with the outdoor tasks. There was no one to support me so I used to carry him on my back and do most of my work. Now, he is almost 10 years old. I discharge all the responsibilities to keep the household functioning. In fact, I have been both the father and mother to my child.

The civil war in Nepal appeared re-ordering society as women who were traditionally excluded from major decision-making were now included (Onubogu and Etchart, 2005). The male members used to be involved in almost every kind of household decision-making; such as, organising feasts and festivals, solving disputes and performing marriage and death ceremonies. Only Tharu men used to attend meetings and take part in discussions but the women and children used to be the audience. But, in the absence of the men, the women participate in discussion and decision makings in all levels of society. All these suggest structural social changes, where women have learnt to cope in absence of men (Manchanda, 2001).

4.7 Changing Cultural Values

‘Cultures are not fixed or monolithic but fluid, and complex and changing’ (Francis, 2000)³⁷. Adopting new ways of life is a challenge to existing cultures. In Nepalese society, remarrying was a social taboo but now-a-days remarrying seems normal (Pandey, 2005). The absence of men has resulted in a break with cultural tradition. One of my respondents lost hope of the return of her disappeared husband. It was hard for her to face all socio-economic challenges alone. Thus, she remarried which was quite unusual and posed a direct challenge to existing cultural values.

Because of a male dominated society in Nepal, property is mostly owned by and registered in the name of men. Such is the situation in Tharu Community (according to field notes). However, in the absence of men/husbands in certain family, assets have been transferred to women/wives and thereby diluting the traditional system of resource control and ownership.

4.8 Sign of Human Agency

The notion of agency according to Long (1992:23) refers to the individual actor, who possess the capacity to process social experience and find ways to cope with challenges and adversities.

From the above discussions about the female informants, there is evidence of determination to cope with challenges of their lives. Mobilising all available resources, the women appear to be trying to manage everyday life or lessen bad situation. As a part of the coping strategies, they assumed hitherto male roles, and engaged in multiple occupations and re-marriage by violating cultural roles.

Similarly, these women are sole decision makers in the families. It is introduction of a new ‘female-headed-household’ by transferring of the ownership of the property etc. and by enhancing their ability to express. The cultural values and beliefs that placed women in subordinate position before the disappearance of their husbands have now been changed. Now, knowingly/unknowingly or due to necessity, the cultural and gender roles are re-defined. These women initiated adopting new culture which may not be socially desirable but that was demanded by the situation. The challenges they faced (the entire period from the

³⁷ Accessed online on May5, 2012 on http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/francis_handbook.pdf

disappearance till now) resulted in forming women's identity that has promoted household welfare which shows the sign of agency.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter, I presented and discussed the research findings. It focused on the survival strategies adopted by the female informants. In managing socio-economic vulnerability, the women's struggle bearing multiple roles from indoor household works to outdoor farm activities has been discussed widely. The implications of the coping strategies on cultural values and gender ideologies were addressed along with manifestations of human agency.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts a summary of the thesis and makes some concluding remarks. These conclusions mainly focus on how adversity mobilises women and leads to challenges to cultural values as well as changes in gender roles. It also discusses on how such challenges to cultural values and gender perceptions manifest human agency creative strategies to overcome adversity.

5.2 Summary

The purpose of the research was to study the livelihood situation of the women whose husbands were disappeared during civil war (1996-2006) in Nepal. What kinds of coping mechanism and livelihood strategy are these women adopting at present for survival in absence of their male counterparts, was the main concern of the study.

The social values before the disappearance of the husbands were patriarchal. Males were the heads of the family by taking all the socio-economic responsibilities where women were mere dependents. Women/wives mostly performed the household tasks and became helpers in the farm whereas men/husbands used to be the main bread winner of the family. Sustaining in presence of their counterparts was somehow easier as women played only the supplementary role.

Soon after the disappearance of their husbands, women faced severe socio-economic problems. Being mistreated and thrown out of their in-laws' houses after getting their husbands lost, these women went through various life challenges for surviving. As they were uneducated and lived in rural areas, they had no options for jobs in official sectors. So, for livelihood resources; for example, land, finance is the must which was hard to access in absence of their counterparts. All the roles and responsibilities—from household activities such as caring and rearing of children and other dependents to outdoor activities of farming and managing loans in necessities—transferred to them. By adopting various livelihood strategies and by combining multiple sources of income, these women are seen as new heads of the households. However, now these women have learned to live their life being independent women.

5.2.1 Cultural Values and Gender Roles

Gender roles and socio-cultural values are intensely affected by the civil war in the Tharu families. Men and women performed different roles and responsibilities as defined to them by their culture, religion and their society. But, the roles and the responsibilities assigned culturally for men and women have been changed dramatically after the disappearance of their husbands. What men used to do previously, have all been shifted to their wives. Disappearances of the husbands brought direct and indirect impacts on the lives of these Tharu women. It has changed the socio-economic pattern of the families, replacing the roles and responsibilities of men by their wives.

Being merely a dependent, these women used to perform household activities and help their husbands in other works. The socio-economic situation of their households before the disappearance of their husbands was somewhat stable. It was a patriarchal society where most of the responsibilities were limited to the male members of the family. Most of the physically tough tasks used to be performed by men. The major household arrangement (including all economic arrangements) in the family was in the hands of male members. Likewise, resources' accessibilities were mainly centred to men. Living in an extended family was the trend for supporting every member in the family. Men used to be the main breadwinner in the family. But now, the livelihood pattern of these families has been disrupted in absence of male members. As all the respondents are from agrarian rural families, they survive from the farm and rural activities. Most of them, being illiterate, could not get access to public or formal sectors for job. So, the challenges and adversities forced them to mobilize themselves in various other rural activities to meet the basic needs. Women are demanded in all fields from household activities to outdoor activities for life sustenance. The new roles and responsibilities they have taken are performing both the roles of male and female those have made them socio-economically independent. Despite these all challenges and constraints, these Tharu women have made remarkable contribution to their resettlement.

It seemed a great opportunity to re-order the society for Tharu women. The stereotyped gender roles and responsibilities assigned to males and females have been challenged by changing gender roles. Now, 'men-less' households have no options other than women for the representation of family in society. Therefore, women are seen in most of the positions held in the community. 'Male-headed households', now in absence of males, have turned to 'female-headed households' introducing women as 'new bread-winners' of the family.

5.2.2 Expression of Agency and Women Empowerment

As discussed by Narayan (2005), agency is the ability of individual's or group's making of purposeful choices whereas 'empowerment' comes from the people's freedom of choices to shape their own lives. The expansion of choices made by them for livelihood has led them to expansion of empowerment.

The female informants, through individual and collective effort, are making best choices for surviving. This shows the women's capacity to cope with adversity. Mostly mobilising resources or their private assets, the women try their best to secure their livelihoods. They also employ traditional 'knowledge and capability', as defined by Long (2001), in the struggle against the unfavourable circumstances. This shows their ability to cope and contend with challenges. The findings showed that they have challenged the societal structure, culture and as per their need which signals the expression of agency. In an individual effort or with some support from some organizations they are finding best alternatives and solution to cope with the socio-economic problem; this shows power of agency to meet welfare needs.

The ability of expressions of agency came from the freedom, as they became the sole decision maker in the family now. They decided the need of their family according to the situation. The challenges they faced (the entire period from the disappearance till now) resulted in re-defining cultural rules and values. These women have initiated adopting new cultures which were socially undesirable but that were demanded by the circumstances. Challenging the existing culture and traditions; for example, case of remarrying shows the woman's capacity to tackle with the adverse socio-economic situation by introducing new-culture demanded by time. Likewise, women's ability to raise their voices to demand information about their husbands from the government represented a challenge to officialdom and a role performance in the public arena which was all reserved for men.

The war left only women and children in the family. So, having no man in the family means the transfer of all the economic property and power to a woman. This also includes the economic management in the family. Whatever man used to do as income earner in the family, is now done by women. They are involving in various fields such as: tough farm tasks, wage labourers, herding of cattle and so on to meet survival needs. They are also involving in rotating-credit-union. This explains about their initiation in economic activity,

which they were not used to. Even though it is a tough job to handle the situation, they have shown that women can do everything a man can do. The endeavour by these women to stabilise and even improve domestic economy shows manifest empowerment.

The women have gone through various challenges in meeting everyday needs; they have created the identity as independent social actors. They are somewhat empowered socio-economically in domestic affairs and gained a voice in the public sphere. The adversity they faced during the civil war mobilised the women to challenge the societal values.

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