



Gender Diversity and Public Policy

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Abstract: *This article endeavors to respond to the objectives articulated in the call for papers, surpassing mere representation concerning gender, diversity, and public policy: specifically, the incorporation of women's perspectives in policy development. Through a comprehensive examination of existing policies and programs, several indispensable elements are proposed to foster the inclusion of women's voices in the formulation of public policy. These elements encompass, among others, the promotion of inclusion, adoption of a data- and evidence-based approach, recognition of intersectionality, advocacy for gender-responsive budgeting, capacity building, and the implementation of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Recognizing the profound impact that public policies can wield on the pursuit of gender equality and equitable access to opportunities, resources, and rights for women, men, and individuals with diverse gender identities, this paper contributes to the existing body of research by offering crucial insights, recommendations, best practices, and methodologies.*

Building upon prior scholarship on the gender implications of public policies, the study not only furnishes key findings but also expounds upon recommendations, exemplary approaches, and methodological frameworks. It provides a succinct overview of vital gender-sensitive policy frameworks, mainstreaming initiatives, and tools such as gender-responsive budgeting, policy evaluation methodologies, and gender impact assessments. Emphasizing the imperative to transcend mere representation in gender, diversity, and public policy discourse, the article concludes by underscoring the importance of a holistic approach. This approach, advocating for policies that genuinely reflect the experiences and perspectives of women and marginalized groups, stands poised to advance greater gender equality and diversity within the realm of public policy. This essay critically examines both successes and areas requiring enhancement in the integration of women's voices in public policy formulation. The study relies primarily on document reviews and the reflective insights of the authors as its methodological foundations. In concluding, the paper proffers significant recommendations for rectifying issues and deficiencies within the selected policies and strategies.

Keywords: Public policies, gender diversity, equality, and intersectionality.

Introduction

The historical underrepresentation of women's voices in the development of public policy has resulted in substantial gaps concerning gender equality and diversity within policy frameworks. This deficiency has given rise to policies that inadequately capture the nuanced experiences, needs, and perspectives of women. Gender diversity, defined as the fair and equitable representation of individuals across various genders, extends beyond the binary framework, incorporating individuals of non-binary genders. While often emphasizing an equitable distribution between men and women, gender diversity encompasses a broader spectrum of gender identities that express themselves outside the traditional binary framework. These identities, exemplifying diverse forms of gender expression, contribute to the overall concept of gender diversity.

In scholarly discourse, public policy is commonly defined as a governmental course of action or inaction formulated in response

to specific public, or societal, challenges. Public policy manifests through various instruments, including laws, regulations, governmental decisions, strategies, programs, and other policy documents. These instruments, conceived through political processes, aim to achieve particular societal goals or address prevailing societal issues. Consequently, public policy is the outcome of a complex political process that involves decision-making and strategic planning to shape societal outcomes.

The engagement of women in decision-making processes is imperative for societal development. When women actively contribute to decision-making, whether in private or public domains, their choices often consider the needs of families and communities. To advance gender diversity and public policy, five pivotal steps include empowering small-scale female entrepreneurs, investing in care, fostering female leadership, funding women's organizations, and safeguarding women's health. Due to the intricate interplay of institutions and often imperceptible social norms that underpin gender inequality,

achieving global gender equality remains an unattained goal. Over nearly four decades, discussions on women's rights and political participation have evolved, culminating in milestones like the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Conferences, declarations, and action plans have established consensus on the equal participation of women in politics, the efficacy of temporary special measures like quotas, and the insufficiency of quota legislation alone for ensuring women's full and equal participation in politics.

Women can assume diverse roles in politics, encompassing voters, political party members, candidates, and civil society members. While some nations still impose restrictions on women's voting and candidacy, the global trend has been toward increased inclusivity. The post-World War II era has witnessed a gradual reduction in the voting participation gap between men and women in numerous countries. Notably, the representation of women in parliaments globally reached 20.3% in 2012, with regional variations ranging from 13.8% in Arab states to 42.0% in Nordic nations. However, women's local-level participation, especially in mayoral positions, remains comparatively low. Quotas, categorized as candidate quotas, quotas for institutions across government levels, and governing board and candidate quotas within political parties, have been instrumental in promoting gender representation in political spheres globally. In Nepal, significant political and social transformations over the past 25 years have impacted women's access to literacy, education, and healthcare services. Despite positive reforms, challenges persist, leading this paper to explore successes and shortcomings in gender reform policies, drawing insights from constitutional and international frameworks, women's participation, peace and security, sexual and reproductive health rights, gender-responsive budgets, and citizenship laws.

Objective:

Ensuring the pivotal role of women's voices in formulating and implementing public policies stands as the central objective of this policy paper. The aim transcends mere representation in the realms of gender, diversity, and public policy.

Importance of gender diversity and public policy

The notable advancements in Nepal's governance systems, underscored by constitutional guarantees, present multifaceted opportunities to fulfill both national and international commitments. These commitments, aligning with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, emphasize the guiding principle of leaving no one behind. Nepal's commitment extends to various international instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) articulate a vision of building "peaceful, just, and inclusive societies" (SDG 16). This vision is rooted in universal human rights, effective rule of law, access to justice, good governance, and transparent, effective, and accountable institutions at all levels. Recognizing gender equality

as a fundamental human right, the SDGs prioritize achieving gender equality and women's empowerment as a distinct goal (Goal 5). Moreover, gender equality is intricately woven into all other SDGs, particularly in Goal 16, which seeks to mainstream gender equality for inclusive and equitable governance systems.

International agreements and conventions ratified by Nepal, including Goals 9 and 10 of the SDGs, emphasize the imperative to reduce inequality both within and between nations. Goal 10 specifically calls for eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices while empowering and promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all individuals. These objectives underscore Nepal's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable society.

Despite commendable progress in various domains, Nepal acknowledges the need for continued investment and targeted programs, particularly for women and marginalized groups, to address existing gaps in several development indicators. The journey toward comprehensive societal transformation continues, guided by the principles embedded in these international agreements and conventions.

Literature Review

Duflo and Topalova (2004) conducted a seminal study years ago, delving into the impact of reserving seats for women in local government in India. Their extensive research demonstrated a groundbreaking outcome – the reservation of seats for women resulted in a marked improvement in community-level infrastructure, a phenomenon unprecedented anywhere in the world. This intervention also led to an increase in public spending on goods that benefited both men and women. Notably, the study revealed that women were more inclined to invest in public goods that directly benefitted other women and their families. Additionally, it shed light on the distinct expectations that men and women harbor from their governments.

Since this pioneering study, India has made notable strides in fostering opportunities for women to exert influence. As of 2004, over 1.3 million elected women were serving as representatives in panchayats, significantly contributing to the overall welfare of the community.

Recognizing the pivotal role of women's voice, agency, and participation in advancing gender equality, the World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development (WDR 2012) by the World Bank underscores these aspects as crucial policy priorities. The WDR 2012 defines agency as the capacity to leverage resources to seize opportunities and pursue goals. It emphasizes five key expressions of agency, including women's control over resources, freedom of movement, freedom from the threat of violence, control over family formation, and having a voice in society and influencing policy. Women's participation in politics is considered a vital manifestation of their agency.

Despite progress, the paper notes that political representation at the national level in India remains uneven, with 78 women out of 543 total members of the Lok Sabha and 11 female ministers in the Cabinet. While this represents a historical high, India has not yet achieved the critical mass of 30% female representation in parliament, a threshold believed to accelerate the impact of women's influence. The 2019 elections showcased a modest but noteworthy outcome, with women constituting only 1% of all

candidates but achieving an impressive 73% strike rate, surpassing their male counterparts' 66%. The paper concludes by examining the challenges, both direct and indirect, faced by women in politics and proposing strategies to overcome them, emphasizing the need for future research to align with the five expressions of agency outlined in the WDR 2012.

In a noteworthy shift, the 2019 elections marked a historic moment where, for the first time, women surpassed men in voter turnout. The gender gap, representing the difference between female and male voter turnout, not only closed but reversed, reaching a 17% difference. This suggests a growing assertion of women's citizenship rights, potentially influencing political party priorities to better address the needs of female voters.

Recent legislative efforts by the Government of India and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) mandated the inclusion of at least one woman on boards of directors in the private sector, resulting in 777 women currently serving on these boards. Furthermore, women are progressively entering non-traditional fields in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), contributing to a more diverse workforce.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's declaration of "Women Led Development" acknowledges the catalytic role women play in shaping and leading development decisions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, India implemented social protection policies, including a significant relief package, aiming to act as a safety net for both men and women, keeping millions out of poverty. Recognizing the intersecting social and political identities that limit women's rights, including gender, class, caste, race, ethnicity, and religion, reducing poverty and inequality is considered fundamental to empowering women.

The government's initiative to include women's unpaid domestic work in time use surveys revealed that women spend 7.2 hours per day on caregiving, compared to men's 2.8 hours. Efforts have been made to alleviate household work burdens, such as providing extended paid maternity leave and introducing programs to enhance childcare support. "Women Led Development" is positioned as a catalyst for progress, and increased paternity leave is considered a step toward a more equitable distribution of domestic care duties.

Despite commendable strides, challenges persist in achieving equal employment opportunities for women and addressing the volume of unpaid caregiving. The government's commitment to passing the Women's Reservation Bill is emphasized as a crucial step to increase women's representation in Parliament.

Household relationships play a pivotal role in women's influence, with policy changes, legislative reforms, and improved basic services impacting family dynamics. Data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) shows positive trends, with an increase in women participating in household decisions about their healthcare and purchases. However, gender roles remain consistent globally, with men predominantly associated with outside-the-home economic activity and public decision-making, while women are primarily linked to domestic caregiving and nurturing duties. Despite these persisting norms, the agency and voice of women in India's decentralized local government have demonstrated transformative effects on decision-making processes.

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) serves as a financial strategy aligned with the goal of gender equity, urging governments to allocate budgets that are sensitive to gender differences. It operates as a governance mechanism promoting gender-friendly plans, projects, and programs through adequate budget allocation, aiming to reduce gender disparities in society. The overarching objective of GRB is to enhance gender responsive engagement, fiscal planning, accountability, and transparency throughout the budgeting and implementation process, advancing the gender equity agenda.

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, GRB has gained prominence as part of the gender-sensitive public finance approach to achieving gender equality and empowering women. Nations committed to integrating a gender perspective into policies, strategies, and public financial management systems, ensuring sufficient funding for programs targeting gender equality, as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the conference's final document.

Various techniques are employed in GRB to track the flow of government budgets and their outcomes for men, women, boys, and girls, aiming to eliminate spending and revenue disparities among different gender groups. Notably, GRB has played a significant role in advancing equitable and sustainable development, with explicit acknowledgment in the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda further emphasizes the importance of transparency, equal participation in the budgeting process, and encouragement of gender responsive budgeting and tracking for inclusive and lasting growth. Estimates from the United Nations indicate that gender disparities could cost the economy between 5 and 30 percent of GDP, reinforcing the significance of gender equality for inclusive development. SDG 5 under Agenda 2030 explicitly targets empowering all women and girls and achieving gender equality.

Despite socioeconomic advancements, women in the EU still face persistent pay discrimination and gender inequality. The employment rate difference between men and women aged 20 to 64 was 11.5% in 2019, with the gender pay gap at 14.1%. Factors contributing to this gap include the concentration of women in underpaid occupations, variations in work-life balance preferences, the existence of the "glass ceiling," and workplace discrimination.

While public policies such as maternity leave and childcare regulations have proven effective in reducing employment and pay gaps, the formulation and execution of gender-related policy measures are complex and influenced by socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, political context, and ideologies. These intricate interactions shape the policies ultimately implemented to address gender equality.

The integration of gender perspectives into public policymaking raises several critical questions that need careful consideration. Firstly, how can gender perspectives be effectively incorporated into public policymaking? The process requires a comprehensive framework that challenges existing concepts and relationships, making it easier to identify and analyze gender-related biases. This necessitates a systematic approach that takes into account gender-

specific experiences, perceptions, and concerns throughout the entire cycle of public policy.

Secondly, how can those involved in the policymaking process be educated to understand and implement policies with a gender perspective? This involves providing training in gender equality, equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills to employ methodological strategies that facilitate the integration of a gender perspective into policymaking. Training programs should focus on raising awareness about the importance of gender equality, debunking stereotypes, and fostering a deep understanding of how gender dynamics influence policy outcomes.

In summary, addressing these questions requires a dual approach: developing a robust framework that institutionalizes the consideration of gender perspectives in policymaking and providing targeted training to empower individuals involved in the process. This combination is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable approach to public policy that reflects the diverse needs and experiences of all genders.

Methodology

This article underscores both the achievements and shortcomings in integrating women's voices into the formulation of public policy. The methodology employed for this study relies primarily on document reviews and the authors' personal reflections as the main sources of data. By critically examining existing documents and drawing insights from the authors' reflections, the research seeks to shed light on the current state of women's participation in policy formulation.

The utilization of document reviews allows for a comprehensive analysis of existing policies, strategies, and relevant literature, providing a foundation for understanding the contextual landscape. Additionally, the incorporation of the authors' reflections brings a subjective yet insightful dimension to the study, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities surrounding women's involvement in policy processes.

As the paper concludes, it not only summarizes the findings but also puts forth valuable suggestions for addressing identified problems and improving upon the chosen policies and strategies. These recommendations serve as a guide for policymakers, stakeholders, and advocates interested in enhancing the inclusivity and effectiveness of public policies by amplifying women's voices. The combination of thorough document analysis, personal reflections, and actionable recommendations contributes to a well-rounded exploration of the complexities surrounding women's participation in shaping public policies.

Data and Evidence-based Approach: Prioritizing a data and evidence-based approach is imperative in policymaking, particularly when aiming to comprehend the perspectives and experiences of women and other marginalized groups. By placing emphasis on this approach, policymakers can harness the power of empirical evidence to inform and guide policy decisions, ensuring a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the challenges and needs faced by these demographic segments.

Utilizing data allows policymakers to move beyond assumptions and stereotypes, providing a clear and objective picture of the issues at hand. This data-driven perspective is essential for identifying disparities, understanding the impact of existing

policies, and developing targeted interventions that address the specific needs of women and marginalized communities.

Furthermore, an evidence-based approach adds credibility to policy initiatives, fostering accountability and transparency in the decision-making process. Policymakers can draw on a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data to build a robust foundation for their proposals, making a compelling case for the adoption of measures that advance gender equality and social inclusion.

In summary, prioritizing a data and evidence-based approach in policymaking not only enhances the accuracy and effectiveness of interventions but also promotes a more inclusive and equitable decision-making process. This approach serves as a cornerstone for policies that genuinely reflect and respond to the diverse experiences and challenges faced by women and marginalized groups.

Expanding participation

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action established a universally recognized objective for achieving gender parity in political participation and power distribution within decision-making processes. Despite the fact that gender parity remains elusive in many countries, significant progress has been facilitated over time through the implementation of gender quotas. Nations with such legislation exhibit a five percentage point higher representation of women in parliaments and local governments, compared to those without, with an even more notable seven percentage point difference.

A growing body of robust evidence underscores the positive impact of having more women in leadership positions within political decision-making processes. For instance, research on panchayats (local councils) in India revealed that areas led by women councils had 62% more drinking water projects than those led by their male counterparts. In Norway, a causal relationship was identified between the availability of childcare and the presence of women in municipal councils.

Moreover, women in leadership roles demonstrate political efficacy by championing issues of gender equality, including the elimination of gender-based violence, advocating for parental leave and childcare, pushing for equitable pension schemes, supporting gender-equality laws, and endorsing electoral reform. Their commitment to these causes is evident in their ability to collaborate across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses, even in politically divisive environments. This evidence reinforces the notion that increasing the representation of women in decision-making positions positively influences the outcomes of political processes and contributes to a more inclusive and equitable governance structure.

The 2015 Nepali Constitution is a significant milestone in promoting gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), explicitly aiming to make Nepal an inclusive society. It upholds the right to social justice, equality, and freedom from discrimination for everyone, including women, the underprivileged, people with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities, and members of other vulnerable or excluded groups. The Constitution emphasizes the elimination of discrimination based on class, caste, region, language, religion, and gender, striving to create an egalitarian society through proportional inclusion and participation.

Key elements of the comprehensive framework for ensuring GESI include:

1. **Constitutional Commissions and Institutions:** The Constitution establishes national commissions and institutions for human rights, such as the National Women Commission, National Dalit Commission, National Inclusion Commission, National Madhesi Commission, National Muslim Commission, National Indigenous Commission, and National Human Rights Commissions.
2. **Fundamental Rights:** The Constitution enshrines fundamental rights addressing gender inequality and women's empowerment. These include the rights to equality, the rights of women, prohibition of positive discrimination against women, and special protections for women in social security, employment, healthcare, and education.
3. **Prohibitions and Affirmative Action:** The Constitution prohibits sex, caste, or ethnicity-based discrimination and includes affirmative action programs to address historical disadvantages. Article 38(3) specifically guarantees protection for women from exploitation, violence, and discrimination based on various grounds.
4. **Explicit Recognition of Marginalized Groups:** Specific marginalized groups entitled to equal participation in governmental functions and access to public services are identified. This includes socially or culturally backward women, Dalits, indigenous people, indigenous nationalities, Madhesi, Tharu, Muslims, oppressed classes, Pichhada classes, minorities, marginalized groups, farmers, laborers, youth, children, senior citizens, gender and sexual minorities, people with disabilities, and pregnant women.

To implement these constitutional provisions, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has undertaken various actions and initiatives:

- The Civil Service Amendment Act of 2014 establishes quotas for 45% of all civil service positions, with specific percentages for women, Adivasi Janajatis, Madhesis, Dalits, disabled people, and other excluded groups.
- The Local Government Operation Act mandates the inclusion of women and excluded groups in the planning and execution of development programs.
- The 15th Plan reinforces the GoN's commitment to implementing the Constitution's provisions and advancing GESI.

The 2017 elections marked a significant turning point in GESI promotion, with increased political representation for women and marginalized groups. Quotas ensure 40% of all elected representatives at the local level are women, with additional quotas for Dalit women. Similar quotas exist at the federal and provincial levels.

However, challenges persist, including gender-based violence, discrimination, and barriers to meaningful participation. The Gender Equality Policy (2077) emphasizes women's economic empowerment, participation, and addressing harmful practices and gender-based violence. The Social Inclusion Policy is under consideration, and the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Prevention Act of 2017 contributes to a secure work environment.

Despite progress, disparities based on geography, caste, and ethnicity remain. Discriminatory practices and norms, including Chhaupadi, child marriage, and gender-based violence, persist. The

paper calls for continued efforts to eliminate discrimination and empower marginalized groups, emphasizing the importance of considering multiple forms of discrimination within the justice system. It acknowledges the need for further support to ensure social inclusion for men from excluded groups experiencing multiple forms of discrimination.

While Nepal has made strides in GESI, the paper highlights ongoing challenges, emphasizing the need for continued efforts, policy implementation, and social transformation to achieve a more equitable and inclusive society.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and discrimination, particularly affecting those already marginalized. Limited access to healthcare and heightened socioeconomic impacts have increased hardships for vulnerable populations. In this context, the paper emphasizes the need to reevaluate structural causes of inequality, refocus efforts on inclusive governance and service delivery, and ensure that no one is left behind in the development process.

The Provincial and Local Governance Support Program (PLGSP) in Nepal plays a crucial role in advancing gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). Key outputs of the program directly related to GESI include modernized governance systems that mainstream GESI, GESI mainstreaming in local governments' service delivery, and systems enabling inclusive participation and citizen engagement. Strengthening capabilities and accountability of Provincial and Local Governance Programs (PLGs) toward GESI is integral to achieving fully functional, sustainable, inclusive, and accountable governance.

In the context of Nepal, the paper distinguishes between gender equality (GE) and social inclusion (SI). While both are essential, GE aims for equal access to opportunities, rights, and decision-making power for men and women. SI involves intentional inclusion of historically marginalized groups, addressing ingrained obstacles in institutions, policies, systems, mindsets, and values. The broader approach of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion encompasses strategies to promote both GE and SI.

Nepal has ratified numerous international human rights instruments, including seven fundamental human rights treaties, optional protocols, and ILO Conventions, highlighting its commitment to gender equality. The country has implemented the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) since 1997, involving a multi-stakeholder partnership approach. Nepal is also a party to regional instruments like the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the Palermo Protocol.

Despite legal guarantees and international commitments, challenges persist, including a pervasive patriarchal mindset, lack of knowledge about implemented laws and policies, and the need for effective application of current laws. Gender equality policies abound, but effective implementation remains a significant challenge.

A notable achievement in gender equality is the political participation of women in all three tiers of government, facilitated by quota clauses. The 2015 Constitution guarantees women's right to fair participation in state bodies, with 33% representation in central and federal parliament and 40% in local government. However, challenges include the dominance of males from high

castes in political parties and bureaucracy, limited representation of women in positions of authority, and the patriarchal mindset affecting female politicians' experiences and recognition.

In conclusion, the paper emphasizes the importance of addressing these challenges, implementing policies effectively, and fostering an inclusive governance and service delivery approach to ensure equitable and sustainable development, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The passage discusses the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in Nepal, particularly in the context of the aftermath of the armed conflict from 1996 to 2006 and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA). Nepal took significant steps by launching the National Action Plan (NAP) in 2011 to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), making it the first South Asian nation to do so.

While the first phase of the NAP demonstrated progress, the second phase, which addresses sexual violence related to armed conflict, has faced challenges in adoption due to cost issues and uncertainties on handling sexual violence. The second NAP emphasizes ensuring the participation of conflict-affected women in relief and recovery programs, proportional participation of women at all levels, and addressing the unique needs of women and girls.

The passage then shifts to sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) in Nepal. It acknowledges Nepal's progress in enacting laws related to safe motherhood and reproductive health, chhaupadi (2017), and child marriage (2016). The Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act allows free abortion services, permitting abortion up to 28 weeks in cases of rape, incest, HIV positivity, incurable illness, or fetal malformation.

Despite these legal measures, Nepal has faced challenges in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, with social expectations preventing women and girls from accessing services. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated health issues for women and girls, necessitating increased resources for protection.

The passage also addresses gender-based violence in Nepal, noting various forms of violence against women, girls, and minority gender/sexual groups. Laws and acts, such as the National Civil Code Act of 2017, National Penal Code Act of 2017, Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention) Act of 2014, Domestic Violence (Offense and Punishment) Act of 2009, and others, aim to prevent and control gender-based violence and discrimination. The National Penal Code is highlighted as a significant development, criminalizing acts such as rape, sex-selective and forced abortions, trafficking in women, and sexual harassment.

The passage concludes by addressing gender-based discrimination in citizenship laws. While the Constitution upholds equality of rights and forbids gender-based discrimination, Article 11.5 grants different citizenship rights to Nepali men and women concerning their children. The Citizenship Bill of 2020, introduced during the COVID-19 lockdown, has drawn concerns for maintaining discriminatory provisions. This discrimination violates both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Article 38(1) of the Constitution, which establishes equal lineage rights for women.

Key Components:

Inclusiveness: Encouraging equal participation of women in the formulation of public policy at all levels, including local, regional, and national, is a crucial aspect of promoting gender equality and ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes. Achieving this goal involves implementing various measures and creating an enabling environment. Here are some ways to encourage women's participation in policy formulation:

1. Promoting Gender-Inclusive Policies:

- Implement policies that explicitly promote gender equality and women's participation in decision-making roles.
- Ensure that gender considerations are integrated into policy frameworks, addressing the specific needs and concerns of women.

2. Legislative Measures:

- Introduce legal provisions, such as quotas or affirmative action, to ensure a minimum representation of women in legislative bodies and decision-making positions.
- Review and amend existing laws that may hinder women's participation in policy formulation.

3. Capacity Building and Training:

- Provide training programs and capacity-building initiatives to enhance the skills and knowledge of women in areas relevant to public policy.
- Develop leadership training programs to empower women to take on decision-making roles.

4. Creating Inclusive Spaces:

- Establish platforms for women to engage in policy discussions and share their perspectives.
- Encourage the creation of women's caucuses or groups within legislative bodies to address specific gender-related issues.

5. Fostering a Gender-Inclusive Culture:

- Promote a culture that values and respects diversity, ensuring that women's contributions are acknowledged and appreciated.
- Challenge gender stereotypes and biases that may hinder women's participation in policy formulation.

6. Consultation and Participation:

- Actively seek the input of women in the policymaking process through consultations, surveys, and public forums.
- Create mechanisms for ongoing dialogue between policymakers and women's groups to address their concerns.

7. Networking and Mentorship:

- Facilitate networking opportunities for women in policy-related fields, allowing them to connect with mentors and peers.
- Establish mentorship programs to support women in advancing their careers in public policy.

8. Transparent and Inclusive Decision-Making Processes:

- Ensure that decision-making processes are transparent, inclusive, and free from discrimination.

- Encourage diverse representation in committees and task forces involved in policy formulation.

9. Public Awareness Campaigns:

- Conduct awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of women's participation in policymaking.
- Showcase successful examples of women who have made significant contributions to public policy.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Implement mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the gender responsiveness of policies and the level of women's participation.
- Use feedback and evaluation results to continually improve and adjust strategies for promoting women's involvement in policy formulation.

By adopting these measures, policymakers and stakeholders can contribute to creating an environment that empowers women to actively participate in shaping public policies at all levels.

Intersectionality: **Intersectionality** is a crucial concept for understanding and addressing the complex and interconnected ways in which various forms of discrimination intersect and impact individuals, particularly women. Recognizing how gender interacts with other factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and disability is essential for developing inclusive and effective policies. Here's how an intersectional approach can be applied to three specific policy areas: labor, education, and climate.

1. Labor Policy: - An intersectional approach to labor policy would recognize that women from different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds may face unique challenges in the workplace.

- Policies should address not only gender-based discrimination but also consider how factors like race and class intersect to create specific barriers.

- Affirmative action measures can be implemented to ensure that women from marginalized groups have equal opportunities for employment and advancement.

2. Education Policy:

- Intersectionality in education policy acknowledges that the experiences of women in education are shaped by various intersecting factors.

- Policies should address not only gender disparities but also consider the impact of socio-economic status, ethnicity, and disability on educational access and achievement.

- Scholarship programs and mentorship initiatives can be designed to support women from diverse backgrounds in pursuing higher education.

3. Climate Policy:

- Applying an intersectional lens to climate policy involves recognizing that the impacts of climate change disproportionately affect marginalized communities, including women.

- Policies should consider the unique vulnerabilities of women based on factors such as socio-economic status, geography, and indigenous identity.

- Climate adaptation and mitigation strategies should involve the active participation of diverse groups of women in decision-making processes.

In each of these policy areas, an intersectional approach requires a nuanced understanding of how different forms of discrimination intersect and compound. This approach not only highlights the diverse challenges faced by women but also ensures that policies are tailored to address the specific needs of individuals with multiple marginalized identities.

Regarding the link between gender equality and economic growth, it's essential to recognize that achieving gender equality is not only an outcome of economic development but also a driver of it. While there is evidence supporting the positive relationship between gender equality, employment, and education, it's crucial to go beyond mere economic indicators.

As mentioned, formal and informal institutions can perpetuate gender inequality despite economic advancement. Therefore, policies should not only focus on economic development but also on transforming institutional structures, dismantling discriminatory norms, and ensuring that women have equal access to resources and opportunities.

In summary, an intersectional approach to policy-making recognizes the complexity of individuals' experiences and challenges, ensuring that policies are not one-size-fits-all but address the specific needs of diverse populations, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and effective societal development.

Gender-responsive Budgeting:

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a critical strategy for promoting gender equality and ensuring that fiscal policies and budgetary decisions take into account the diverse needs and experiences of women and men. Here are key points on the importance and implementation of gender-responsive budgeting:

1. Equitable Distribution of Resources:

- GRB ensures an equitable distribution of resources, recognizing the different needs and priorities of women, men, and children.
- It aims to eliminate gender-based disparities in access to services, opportunities, and benefits.

2. Gender Justice and Fiscal Justice:

- Both gender justice and fiscal justice depend on gender-responsive budgeting.
- GRB aligns budgetary decisions with the principles of fairness, equality, and justice for all members of society.

3. Mainstreaming Gender into Macroeconomic Policy:

- GRB helps mainstream gender into macroeconomic policy and the national budgeting system.
- It assists in fulfilling national commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

4. Increasing Importance on the Government Agenda:

- Gender-responsive budgeting has gained importance on the government agenda as a crucial component of public finance for promoting gender equality.

5. Direct and Indirect Gender-Responsive Budgeting:

- Direct gender-responsive budgeting has increased significantly over the years, reflecting a commitment to addressing gender-specific needs.

- Indirect gender-responsive budgeting, accounting for a substantial portion of the overall budget, ensures a comprehensive approach.

6. Challenges in Implementation:

- Local and district-level gender-responsive budget committees may face challenges such as inactivity and uncertainty about their roles.

- Effective implementation at the local level is hindered by knowledge gaps among policymakers and decision-makers.

7. Diversity Among Women:

- GRB should recognize the diversity among women based on factors such as caste, class, religion, sexual orientation, and others.

- It should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach but consider the unique challenges faced by different groups of women.

8. Addressing Inequities:

- GRB must address equity issues manifested in discrimination against women, including early marriage, gender-based violence, and unequal access to infrastructure and livelihood opportunities.

9. Knowledge Gap and Ineffective Implementation:

- The knowledge gap among policymakers and decision-makers is a significant hurdle to effective implementation at the local level.

- Efforts should be made to enhance awareness and understanding of GRB principles and practices.

In conclusion, gender-responsive budgeting is a powerful tool for advancing gender equality, promoting social justice, and creating a more inclusive and equitable society. Addressing challenges in implementation and ensuring a nuanced understanding of diversity among women are essential for the success of GRB initiatives.

Capacity Building: The policy should promote the development of women's capacity to actively engage in the processes of developing public policy and ensure that their voices are heard and taken into consideration.

Monitoring and Evaluation: The policy should include mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at promoting women's voices in public policy development.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a crucial legal framework for promoting gender equality and addressing discrimination against women and girls. Nepal's engagement with the CEDAW reporting mechanisms plays a vital role in shaping its gender equality agenda. Here are key points related to Nepal's interaction with CEDAW:

1. Guiding Principles from CEDAW:

- The CEDAW principles and concluding observations from the CEDAW Committee serve as primary sources of guidance for Nepal's Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens.

2. Recommendations and Implementation Status:

- Nepal received recommendations from the CEDAW Committee's concluding observations on its sixth periodic report.

- The National Women Commission has made progress on less than five out of 84 recommendations, actively working on 60, while the remaining 20 are yet to be implemented.

3. Areas of Focus in Implementation:

- Recommendations being implemented focus on creating non-discriminatory laws, amending discriminatory laws, ratifying international treaties, and addressing gender issues through programs.

- Efforts include capacity-building, awareness-raising, establishing institutional arrangements, and allocating funding to address discrimination faced by women with intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination.

4. Pending Recommendations:

- Some of the 20 recommendations not yet implemented include:

- Amend the Constitution to eliminate nationality-based discrimination against women and girls.

- Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation addressing direct and indirect forms of discrimination, providing effective redress for survivors.

- Repeal remaining laws discriminating against women, especially those related to property division in divorce and eligibility for working abroad.

- Ensure equal employment opportunities for all women, both within and outside the country.

- Reinstate targeted budgets at the local level for women's leadership and strengthen local government mandates for women's rights and gender equality.

5. Challenges and Reforms:

- Implementing certain recommendations involves constitutional amendments and legal reforms to address discriminatory practices.

- The Women's Guidelines Revision Process is cited as a crucial step in accelerating equal employment opportunities for women.

6. Overall Impact:

- CEDAW recommendations, when fully implemented, are expected to contribute significantly to dismantling discriminatory structures and fostering gender equality in various aspects of Nepalese society.

In conclusion, the CEDAW reporting mechanisms and recommendations provide a roadmap for Nepal to advance its gender equality agenda, and the ongoing efforts demonstrate a commitment to addressing discrimination against women and girls through legal reforms, policy changes, and program implementation.

Findings

Women in executive government positions

- As of January 1, 2023, there will be 34 women serving as heads of state or governments in 31 different countries. At the

current pace, it will take another 130 years to achieve gender equality in the highest levels of authority.

- There are only 17 nations with female heads of state, and 19 nations with female heads of government.
- As of January 1, 2023, women make up 22.8% of Cabinet members who are ministers or are in charge of a major policy area, according to newly compiled data by UN Women. There are only 13 nations where women make up 50% or more of cabinet ministers overseeing major policy areas.
- Women and gender equality, family and children affairs, social inclusion and development, social protection and social security, and indigenous and minority affairs are the five portfolios that women Cabinet Ministers hold the most frequently.

Women in national parliaments

- Women make up only 26.5% of lawmakers in single or lower houses, up from 11% in 1995.
- Only six nations—Rwanda (61%), Cuba (53%), Nicaragua (52%), Mexico (50%) New Zealand (50%) and the United Arab Emirates (50%)—have at least 50% of women serving in single or lower houses of parliament.
- Another 23 nations—13 in Europe, six in Africa, three in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one in Asia—have attained or surpassed the 40% mark.
- Women make up less than 10% of parliamentarians in single or lower houses in 22 States worldwide, with one lower chamber having no women at all. Gender parity in national legislative bodies won't be achieved until 2063 at the current rate of development.
- In Europe and North America, women hold 32% of parliamentary seats, while they hold 36% of seats in Latin America and the Caribbean. The highest percentage of female legislators is found in Sub-Saharan Africa (26%), followed by Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (22%), Oceania (20%), Central and Southern Asia (19%), Northern Africa and Western Asia (18%), and Oceania (2%).

Women in local government

- According to data from 136 nations, women make up nearly 3 million (34%) of the elected members of local deliberative bodies. Twenty more countries have more than 40% of women in local government, but only two have reached the 50% mark.

- As of January 2022, there were regional differences in women's representation in local deliberative bodies, including: Central and Southern Asia (41%); Europe and Northern America (36%); Oceania (32%); Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (28%); Latin America and the Caribbean (25%); Sub-Saharan Africa (25%); Western Asia and Northern Africa (18%).

Conclusion:

This policy paper emphasizes the importance of elevating women's perspectives in the formulation of public policy, going beyond mere representation for gender and diversity. The key points include:

1. Objectives of the Panel:

- The panel aims to explore and highlight where women can be found, heard, succeed, and lead in policy development.
- Objectives include raising awareness about the role of public policy in achieving equitable goals, fostering networking among women in policy leadership roles, and initiating a shared research framework on intersectional equality in leadership.

2. Gender-Neutral Policies and Gender Mainstreaming:

- Acknowledges that public policies, even if seemingly gender-neutral, can significantly impact gender equality.
- Advocates for gender mainstreaming as a strategy to reduce gender inequality, emphasizing the need for thorough integration of the gender perspective into policies.

3. Progress and Challenges in Nepal:

- Recognizes progress in Nepal through legal provisions promoting gender equality in areas such as politics, health, and inheritance.
- Highlights the challenge of inefficient implementation and monitoring mechanisms, posing a threat to equality despite constitutional provisions for equal rights.

4. Thorough Strategy for Women's Perspectives:

- Proposes a comprehensive strategy for elevating women's perspectives in policy formulation.
- Aims to ensure that policies better reflect the experiences and perspectives of women and other marginalized groups, fostering gender equality and diversity in public policy.

5. Factors Influencing Gender Mainstreaming:

- Acknowledges that the successful and enduring integration of the gender perspective into public policies depends on various factors.

The overarching goal is to increase women's participation in the development of public policy by leveraging their agency across diverse contexts. The paper recognizes the nuanced impact of seemingly neutral policies on gender and advocates for a deeper, more inclusive approach to policy formulation. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of effective implementation and

monitoring mechanisms to translate legal provisions into tangible progress in gender equality.

This review paper makes the following suggestions based on an analysis of the genderrelated policies currently in place and various studies that were done to assess the state of gender equality:

- Through institutionalized monitoring mechanisms, ensure that current laws on women's rights and gender equality are implemented effectively.
- Give priority to implementing the CEDAW Committee's suggestions for changing laws that discriminate against women and creating nondiscriminatory legislation.
- Ensure that women participate in a proportionate and meaningful way at all levels, taking into account their diversity and the needs of the underrepresented community.
- Raise women's awareness of their rights and empower them to take action
- Provide enough funding to address gender-based violence
- Strengthen the ability of provincial and local governments to create and implement a budget that takes gender equality into account, with an established system to gauge how the budget will affect the lives of women and girls.
- Ensure that all women and girls have improved access to services and information that safeguard and advance their reproductive rights.
- Enable women to enjoy full and equal citizenship rights, including the ability to grant their children and spouses citizenship who are foreigners.

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