STATE OF INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE IN NEPAL
A Study on Participation and Representation after Federalization in Nepal
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Central Department of Anthropology
Tribhuvan University

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A STUDY ON THE STATE OF SOCIAL INCLUSION IN NEPAL (SOSIN) TEAM

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XXXXXXXXXXXXX
Since 1961, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has partnered with the people and Government of Nepal. Our partnership has contributed to some of Nepal’s most dramatic and remarkable development successes including laying Nepal’s first roads; installing its first telephone exchange; supporting the elimination of malaria from the Terai region; enabling agriculture to flourish across the country; increasing literacy rates; drastically reducing child mortality; and facilitating peace and democracy in the later decades. Today, USAID is building on these successes and continues to support Nepal’s efforts to become more prosperous, democratic, and healthier.

Nepal’s constitution envisions a nation that is inclusive without any forms of inequality and discrimination. Inclusive development is also at the core of everything that USAID does and it is a hallmark of our development work in Nepal. We believe in a future where all people, irrespective of caste, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, area of origin, language, and disabilities, can exercise full and meaningful participation in social, economic, cultural, and political lives; enjoy the benefits and opportunities of development; and contribute to their society. Our activities in Nepal are thus guided by the principles of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and achieving the sustainable development goal of Leaving no one behind.

USAID, therefore, partnered with the Central Department of Anthropology of Tribhuvan University to generate comprehensive knowledge and evidence on the social inclusion status of 88 caste and ethnic groups. The information was disaggregated by sex in various dimensions of social, economic, cultural, and political lives, including electoral processes and civil service. The State of Social Inclusion in Nepal (SOSIN) study has consequently produced a wealth of empirical data and analysis on the current state of social inclusion in Nepal that can be used to measure progress in ending gender inequality and caste and ethnicity-based exclusion, as well as the remaining challenges. The data is also useful for designing new policies and interventions that help to achieve sustainable GESI outcomes, and to track progress in Nepal’s graduation from least developed country to middle income country status.

We hope that the research will help everyone understand the extent to which inequalities remain pervasive and deep-rooted in Nepali society and identifies practical ways and strategies to Reach the furthest behind first. It is USAID’s goal that the study drives evidence-based monitoring of social inclusion, and that this in turn promotes not only understanding of social inclusion, but also advances equity and opportunity for Nepalis who have been excluded for far too long.

Sepideh Keyvanshad
Mission Director
USAID/Nepal
Over the last decade, Nepal has witnessed a major political transformation. The country moved from a centralized monarchical system to a federal republic. The new constitution promulgated in 2015 envisions equality and social inclusion as one of the major goals for creating a democratic and just society. The pervasive nature of deeply-rooted age-old social, economic, and political inequalities based on gender, caste and ethnicity remains a major challenge that needs to be better understood and addressed.

With this background, the Central Department of Anthropology (CDA) at Tribhuvan University undertook this study on the “State of Social Inclusion in Nepal (SOSIN).” The study is aimed at bringing nuanced understanding of the situation and dynamics of social inclusion and gender equality. Using both quantitative surveys and qualitative assessments, this research generates empirical data for ascertaining the current state and tracking progress on equality and social inclusion in Nepal. This research is a sequel to the research project “Social Inclusion Atlas and Ethnographic Profile (SIA-EP) implemented by then joint Department of Sociology/Anthropology at TU in 2012-2014 with support from the Norwegian Embassy in Nepal. The SIA-EP established a comprehensive national database disaggregated by gender, caste and ethnicity, built a Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index through re-analysis of major national surveys, and produced profiles of 42 highly marginalized caste/ethnic groups to understand the micro dynamics of exclusion.

This study on the “State of Social Inclusion in Nepal (SOSIN),” carried out in 2018-2019 builds on the previous work and engages in emerging issues related to the theme. The SOSIN research has four major components and related outcomes. The first is the results of the Nepal Social Inclusion Survey (NSIS); the second, is an analysis of who is left behind in relation to relevant indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nepal that uses the NSIS data. The third outcome is an analysis of the state of inclusive governance in Nepal, as the country recently went through the process of federalization and elections to all the three tiers of government. The fourth part of the outcome is a study on understanding community disaster resilience, carried out in the context of rupture created by the 2105 earthquakes. The lens of social inclusion is what weaves all four studies in a common thread. This report presents results of one of the components of the SOSIN research.

The “Nepal Social Inclusion Survey (NSIS) 2018” report contains data and analysis based on a national sample survey. The analysis covers a wide range of topics related to social inclusion, including household assets, health and social security, work and livelihood, language and education, social, cultural and gender relations, inclusive governance, and women’s empowerment and reproductive health. This study is unique in the sense that its results are disaggregated by sex, eleven main social groups, and by 88 distinct caste/ethnic groups. The findings also provide evidence on changes in a number of key indicators between 2012 and 2018.

The report “Who Are Left Behind? Tracking Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in Nepal” presents sex, caste and ethnicity disaggregated data from the NSIS 2018 on selected SDG indicators. Data for a total of 40 indicators are presented - 36 indicators based on the SDG framework of the National
Planning Commission, and four additional indicators proposed based on their relevance to rights and social justice. This will be valuable for institutionalizing planning, targeting and disaggregated analysis of the achievements of the SDGs across gender and social groups, in line with the spirit of “leaving no one behind.”

The research report on “State of Inclusive Governance in Nepal” examines the current state of inclusive governance policies and how they are translated into practice. Based on the NSIS 2018 survey data, ethnographic fieldwork and secondary data, this report presents the current representation of people of different caste, ethnic groups, and sex in the bureaucracy, elected local bodies, and various committees related to governance of education and health services, as well as community-level development works. It presents the perceptions, awareness, and practices of inclusive governance, within the framework of the rule of law, participation, representation, transparency and accountability, and analyzes disparities between different caste, ethnic, religious, and minority groups, as well as gender differences across these groups, and examines possible hindrances to inclusion.

The report on “Community Resilience Capacity,” a study on Nepal’s 2015 earthquakes and its aftermath, aims at enhancing understanding on disaster resilience. The report provides empirical data on disaster effects, recovery, and resilience in the 14 most affected districts. It pays particular attention to the disproportionate impact, differential resilience capacity, and social inclusion. In the environment increasingly prone to multiple disasters, the results of this study can be useful for better understanding resilience capacity, for improving on-going recovery tasks, and for strengthening disaster risk reduction and management planning.

The exclusion of people to participate meaningfully in the social, political, and economic life of the society is the key reason for inequality and instability. Exclusion is too costly and is an impediment to economic growth. Exclusion further perpetuates poverty and powerlessness among the marginalized/disadvantaged people. Compounded with disaster, disparities in the welfare outcomes based on gender and social identity have persisted or even widened to a considerable extent. The study is expected to help plan for promoting and monitoring the progress on social inclusion as both a desired outcome and a required strategy for sustainable growth and inclusive democracy in the country. As an academic enquiry, this will be helpful for researchers, teachers, and students for teaching, learning, and further research on the interface between theoretical contemplations and practical applications for the betterment of human conditions.

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With a commitment to the idea of integrating social research with teaching, and combining academic analysis with policy application, the Central Department of Anthropology (CDA), at Tribhuvan University has been involved in systematic research on pertinent themes on Nepali society over the last 15 years. Social inclusion is one of the central themes that has anchored its various research projects. A set of studies under the title “The State of Social Inclusion in Nepal (SOSIN),” which have just been completed are a recent addition to the series and constitute a flagship of the CDAs research program.

The successful completion of SOSIN research was possible with the generous support of various institutions and the efforts of around 200 individuals. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all for their valuable contributions.

More than 38,000 men and women from across the country, coming from different social backgrounds shared their information, experiences and insights for this research. We express our deep gratitude to the respondents throughout the country for their time and contributions in building the foundation for this research and analysis.

We express our special thanks to Prof. Sudha Tripathi, then Rector of Tribhuvan University, for giving permission to undertake this research project. Mr. Dilli Ram Upreti, then Registrar, Prof. Dr. Shiva Lal Bhusal, Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Prof. Neelam Kumar Sharma, then Executive Director of the Center of Research, Tribhuvan University deserve special thanks for their continuous support through conception to completion of the research. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Prof. Umesh Mandal, current Executive Director, Center of Research, for his passion and support to the research.

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We would like to extend our thanks to the Nepal Health Research Council, Ethical Review Board for review and approval of SOSIN research.

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