MASTER THESIS

Gender relations in Post-Earthquake Kathmandu, Nepal

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Abstract

The earthquake that stoke Nepal in 2015 had a considerable impact on the population as 8,790 people died and more than 22,300 people were injured. Numerous reports and articles address the effect of the earthquake. However, a lack of gendered impact of the earthquake's assessment and evaluation is observed. This thesis examines how women, and grassroots organizations in Kathmandu, cope with the gendered impact of the earthquake that took place in April 2015 in Nepal. To understand the gendered lived experience of the catastrophe two significant concepts are used throughout the whole research: actor-oriented approach and gendered impact of the earthquake. They allow a bottom-up understanding of the lived experience of women and Nepalese NGOs, as well as their coping strategies on health and safety impacts of the earthquake. This qualitative research is conducted with the help of semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, informal conversations, and photography. It is argued that by using an actor-oriented approach, the thesis shows elements and dynamics of gendered impacts of the earthquake and coping strategies from women and Nepalese NGOs that would not be visible otherwise. The case of the 2015 earthquake shows that the gendered impact of the disaster is multilayered and dynamic and that women were are at a greater risk of health problems and insecurity. Moreover, it indicates that women should not be seen as helpless victims but as actors with agency who can partly resist and alter the gendered impact of a disaster.

Keywords: Gender, Earthquake, Actor-oriented approach, Gendered impact of a disaster

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To my life-coach – Isabelle Mahou – I owe it all to you.

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List of Acronyms

CA	Constituent Assembly
CPN-Maoist Center	Communist Party of Nepal- Maoist Center
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FSFN	Federal Socialist Forum Nepal
GAD	Gender and Development
GoN	Government of Nepal
HDI	Human Development Index
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRA	National Reconstruction Authority
PDRF	Post-Disaster Recovery Framework
RJP	Rastriya Janata Party
RPP	Rastriya Prajantra Party Nepal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
SWC	Social Welfare Council
WAD	Women and Development
VAW(G)	Violence Against Women (and Girls)
WID	Women in Development
WOFOWON	Women Forum for Women in Nepal (Nepali NGO)
WOREC	Women Rehabilitation Centre (Nepali NGO)

1. Introduction

Rasila is a 48 years old Nepalese women and mother of two. She remembers the earthquake as it was yesterday: “That one-minute earthquake felt like the longest minute I have ever experienced. All the walls of the compound were on the floor. I prayed God to keep my children safe. I tried to call them but they were unreachable”.

About three years after the 2015 earthquake, numerous studies and reports have addressed the impact of the natural disaster on women (Amnesty International, 2015; Government of Nepal, 2016; WOREC, 2016; UN Women , 2017). For instance, UN Women stated that the “Earthquakes which struck Nepal in April and May 2015 shed a renewed light on the challenges faced by women in disasters” (2017, p. 5). Efforts and progress have been made in Nepal in terms of gender equality, however, the challenge of facing disaster response efforts to prevent VAWG and protect women remains. The discourse on the gendered impact of a disaster has grown since the 1990s, as previously violence against women and girls (VAWG) linked to natural disaster was not prioritized (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016). However, contemporary literature mainly addresses gendered inequality and vulnerability in a natural disaster or the increasing vulnerability after a natural disaster (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2007; Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016). As Standing, Parker and Bista state: “women and girls are stereotypically positioned as victims and vulnerable in times of crisis, there has been less focus on women’s and girls’ agency and accomplishments in the face of disasters, and the crucial role women play as first responders in natural disasters” (2016, p. 189). This raise questions about the role of women in coping with gendered effect of the earthquake for instance in health and safety.

Therefore, this research will examine Women and Nepalese NGOs’ coping strategies to address the gendered impact of the earthquake. I will focus on two gendered-specific challenges in a natural disaster: health and security. Indeed, health problems such as sanitation or emotional and psychological stress from disasters are gendered as well as violence against women arising in catastrophe time (Sultana F. , 2010). Many gendered issues are “the top of the list” during and after a disaster. However, health and security are highly intertwined as indicated by Sultana: “security and well-being are compounded by emotional factors of stress, fear and frustration” (2010, p. 48). Therefore, this research aims to understand these gendered impacts of the earthquake and how women and NGOs cope with them.

This research is an opportunity for women to empowerment and aims to give a voice to the ones marginalized and fighting after such a disaster. Besides, in order to be part on women’s empowerment process, this study is following a participatory bottom-up approach.

The aim of this research is to contribute to a better understanding of NGOs and women’s coping strategies on the gendered impact after the Nepali earthquake of 2015. I will focus on the gendered effect of a natural disaster in terms of health and security for women. The first goal is to explore and investigate the little understood phenomena of local NGOs and women coping strategies to reduce health problems and insecurity that harms certain women after a disaster. A

second goal is descriptive as I am striving to "document and describe this phenomenon of interest" (Marschall & Rossman, 1999, p. 33). It is important in this research not to generalize results but to conduct a context specific study that can contribute to a better understanding of the important role of Nepalese NGOs and women is such a difficult context.

Scientifically, this study can add its contribution to the existing knowledge on the gendered impact of a disaster linked to health and security. It can also help to understand how an actor-oriented approach can benefit to the comprehension on women and NGO and their coping strategies in a situation of crisis. This study will complement the existing literature to understand the gendered effect of a disaster. However, as stated previously, literature tends to stereotype or classify women as weaker actors, when contrary, women are autonomous actors that cope with gendered impact during a disaster. Therefore, it is important to shed light on women's individual and collective action, to understand their experiences, networks, coping strategies and gaps in response and recovery mechanisms from women's perspective.

One could ask if a quantitative method should have been realized to better suit this study setting. However, the need for detailed and personal inputs in women's everyday life since the earthquake, has given a qualitative analysis on cases study as evident. In other words, this is what Alasuutari calls the qualitative inquiry's "practical relevance" (Alasuutari, 2009, p. 11).

This study not only contribute in theoretical terms, but can be relevant in a social level, to understand women and NGO's perceptions and actions on the gendered effect of the 2015. I hope this research can be significant for social issues and actions and can be valuable for people committed to gendered issues in a disaster situation. Finally this research can have the potential to document "the lived experience of interest by providing rich description and to foster taking action" (Marschall & Rossman, 1999, p. 37). The ideal would be for this study to give insights for an eventual upcoming disaster and lead to further actions from government and NGOs as well as a better inclusion of women before, during and after a disaster. The following section will present the main research question and the sub-questions.

To address the purpose of this study, the following research question was formulated:

How do women, and grassroots organizations in Kathmandu, cope with the gendered impact of the earthquake that took place in April 2015 in Nepal?

In order to respond to the main research question, four themes are addressed. The first theme focuses on understanding the gendered relations and roles in Nepal, perceived by women themselves, Nepalese organizations and political actors. Therefore, I looked at gender relations' perceptions, constructions and practices. The second theme focuses on the memories than women, NGO's and political actors have of the earthquake. This theme also looks at to what extend did women's gendered relations and role changed after the earthquake. The third theme

looked at the consequences of the earthquake in regard to health. It focused of the health impact on women, their coping strategies in front of health issues as well as NGOs actions to help women to cope with these health effects. The last theme looked at the consequences of the earthquake in regard to safety. It focused of the safety impact on women, their coping strategies in front of safety issues as well as NGOs actions to help women to cope with these safety effects.

The structure of the thesis is the following. First, I will first present the theoretical framework (Chapter 2). This part serves as a guide to analyze the problematic of the thesis. The two theories: gendered impact of disaster and actor oriented approach, give the research a structure. The main point of this chapter is that to comprehend the gendered impact of the disaster, an actor-oriented approach is needed to understand diversity of women experiences as well as their coping strategies from their own point of view. Then, the research methodology (Chapter 3) is given which includes: research setting, fieldwork, data collection, analysis, ethics, and fieldwork reflection. The contextual information (Chapter 4) includes a historical political background of Nepal, as the country is one of the most recent democracies. Secondly, the caste system, ethnicities, religions and social economic context are explained, as it will allow the comprehension on how can they shape inequalities in an earthquake setting. Contextual information on gender history and settings will also be approached, as it is indispensable to understand gendered relations in Nepal to evaluate the gendered impact of the earthquake. Then, a sub chapter on social economic tendencies in Nepal will help to understand the different areas in the country. Finally, a brief earthquake history of the country will be done, followed the 2015 earthquake, the responses to it, as the gendered issues and inequalities raised by literature. The results (Chapter 5) are exposed into four subchapters to answer the research question.

Firstly, the gendered relations and roles in Nepal are explained from women, NGOs and political actor's perceptions. It is argued that caste discrimination and women and men inequalities still strongly exist in Nepal. Therefore, a woman of this caste, this geographical background, this age and this religion will experience her live through these multiple identities. Secondly, the gendered impact of the 2015 earthquake is explained, going through: memories of the earthquake, health and safety of women and distribution of relief. This part shows that the gendered impact of the earthquake is intersectional. Indeed the place one lives in, the caste and the gender shaped one's experience of the earthquake. I also showed that the earthquake was not only a negative experience. It gave the opportunity to women and youngsters to involve themselves. Thirdly, the thesis argues that to cope with the health and safety impacts of the disaster, women and NGOs implemented actions and strategies and were vigorously involved in the short and long term after the earthquake, developing strong community solidarity. Lastly, solidarity between women, NGO campaigns, trainings centers, home among women, and secret hostels, women, with the help of NGOs, helped women in coping with the increasing insecurity from the earthquake. The last section (Chapter 6) will present the conclusion and recommendation.

2. Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this thesis is to find out how women and Nepalese NGOs are coping with the gendered effect of the earthquake that took place in April 2015 in Nepal. As a frame for the analysis, the gendered effects of the earthquake, the coping strategies of women and NGOs and the importance of an actor-oriented approach will be investigated to allow us to better understand these issues. Therefore, this chapter presents the theoretical framework, which serves as a guide to structure this thesis. In addition, the two theories used: gendered impact of disaster and actor oriented approach, give the research a structure. The following sections will outline the general discussions around the notions of gendered impact of disaster and actor-oriented approach. The gendered impact of disaster refers to the way people are not equally affected by natural disaster and how it disadvantages certain groups of people because of their gender (Neumayer & Plümper, 2007, p. 552). Here, I will address the distinct vulnerability of women after the earthquake of April 2015. The concept actor oriented approach, encourages researchers to consider that development has different realities than the top-down approach from the 1970s and the importance to focus on a bottom-up approach. In this sense, I will focus on women themselves as well as NGOs to understand their coping strategies and conception of gendered impact of disaster. It is argued that to understand the gendered impact of a disaster, actor oriented approach allows to make sense of, and understand diversity as one can look at the coping strategies of women incorporating their unevenly distributed abilities.

2.1 Gendered impact of disaster

The concept of gender will be presented in this part, its apparition, evolution and link with disaster in literature.

2.1.1 Gender

The concept gender appeared in the 20th century and first aimed to separate sex and gender. Simone de Beauvoir is considered as a precursor of the concept with her book *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949), standing for a difference between the biological sex and the social sex. According to her, a woman becomes a woman through social learning: “we are exhorted to be women, remain women, become women” (De Beauvoir, 2004). In the 1960th, Rob J. Stoller in the book Sex and Gender define the concept gender as a “psychological sex”. It is only in the 1970th that feminism and gender are linked together as women become a subject of academic research. The concept then serves the critique of an un-egalitarian and a man-dominant society. In fact, in 1972, Anne Oakley tries to break cultural inequalities by showing that whereas biological sex differences exist, gender is a socio-cultural construction of sex differences, consequently it is contingent (Hearn & Husu, 2011, p. 108). This idea relates to study gender in development as it points out that gender constructs inequalities. During the late 1980s, we can observe the conceptualization of “female and male roles as socially constructed through gendered meaning and practices” (K.C., Ven den Haar, & Hilhorst, 2017, p. 117). As nowadays the concept of gender seems more

and more integrated in the mainstream discourse, it remains outside central debates (Bradshaw & Frodham, WOMEN, GIRLS AND DISASTERS A review for DFID, 2013). Therefore, it is relevant to study the gendered impact of disasters as gender can allow us to understand the consequences of the earthquake.

Gender linked to development has many different analytical dimensions throughout history. According to the author Bradshaw, the subordination of women was first considered from their exclusion from the market. Therefore, in order to maximize their access to modernity, Women in Development (WID) – emerging in the 1970s – followed the modernization theory to incorporate further women into the market (Bradshaw, 2015, p. s57). A theoretical shift then occurred from Women in Development to Women and Development (WAD), much closer to the Marxist theory as "women struggle was then located in the structure of capitalism" then privileged over patriarchy (Bradshaw, 2015, p. s57). A second shift in analyzing gender in development went through WAD to GAD (Gender and Development) which focuses on not just adding women to existing processes of development but problematize those processes themselves as then, the unequal power relations between man and woman is the problem. However, nowadays: "researchers are moving toward a more nuanced, international, and comparative approach that examines gender relations in the context of other categories of social difference and power such as race, ethnicity, nationality, and social class" (Enarson, Fothergill & Peek, 2007 p.130). Context is therefore essential to understand one's social settings liked to gender relations. Consequently, this research focuses on gender as a social construction; something men and women learn through life, that is not biological and shape social interaction.

Further, the gendered lived experience refers to "how people, situations, objects, schemas can be given meaning, both empirically and analytically through gender and gender relations" (Hearn & Husu, 2011, p. 108). Therefore, in the context of Nepal, it is important to understand and incorporate intersectionality in order to demarginalize the interaction of someone's identities (Crenshaw, 1989). These identities can be multiple such as: caste, age, social background and religion, which call for "multi-layered analysis of the category of gender itself" (K.C, Van Der Haar &Hilhorst, 2017, p.117). Indeed, as pointed by Sultana (2011), women are not a homogeneous group and taking into account intersectionality such as: caste, age, social background and religion, is important in order to understand their lived experience. To this end, researchers are moving toward this more nuanced understanding of gendered relations and practically: "researchers seek to bring to the art and science of disaster risk reduction a richer appreciation of inequalities and differences based on sex and gender" (Enarson, Fothergill & Peek p 130). Therefore, in this research gender is understood in the context of the patriarchal society of Nepal. As stated by Sultana (2010), the very "relational nature of gender constructions and the power relations are embodied through norms, practices and beliefs" (p.44). Understanding these relations in a particular setting – men dominant society and caste system for Nepal – is important because it construct the gendered identities and experiences.

Women and men are not equal in front of a disaster. However, women between themselves are not equal either. This claim was first stated by the Black Feminism movement (1970s), "black women" then claimed there were undergoing two exclusion: first of all because they were women, and secondly because they were black. This multiple experience of exclusion is explained by the concept of intersectionality. This concept has been developed by Kimberly Griffin, and she gives the following definition: "the confluence of one's multiple marginalized and privilege identities is an interaction that creates a unique experience, distinctive from those with whom they may share some identities but not others" (Griffin & Museus, 2011, p. 8). This means that everyone has its' own experience, which is shaped by his multiples identities.

2.1.2 Disaster

The definition of disaster has evolved and changed in time. For the author Quarantelli, disaster has been firstly used in 1917 to study the Halifax explosion (1998). However, disaster entered the academic studies only after the Second World War (Quarantelli, 1998). As defined by Krimgold: "a disaster is a crisis situation that outstrips the capacity of a society to cope with it" (Anderson, 2000), which means that if no population are impacted by a natural catastrophe, society does not need to cope with it – the crisis wont be framed as a disaster.

As Bradshaw notes, a disaster is "usually understood as one occurs when an individual or group is vulnerable to the impact of a natural or human-made hazard, i.e. they are unable to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from an event" (Bradshaw, 2015 p.55). This suggests that groups of people may not be affected equally in front of a disaster and that anticipation, human decision and interaction is important when studying a disaster. Understanding disaster, as part of human decisions, actions and interactions is central, as pointed by Anderson: it firstly helps to identify the causes of a disaster and secondly helps to understand how the disaster could have been avoided or minimized through prevention and preparedness (Anderson, 2000). For the author, not everyone suffers equally in front of a disaster; therefore, it is essential to understand who has different vulnerability, why, and what are the capacities of disaster victims to elaborate their needs. Therefore, the social interactions, behaviors, and inequalities in front of a disaster will be analyzed in order to understand the gendered impact of the 2015 earthquake.

2.1.3 Gendered impact of disaster

The concept of gendered impact of disaster is used in this thesis as framed by the academic world. However, as I use a bottom-up approach to understand women's lived experiences, the quantitative aspects of an impact cannot be measured. I am using the concept: gendered impact of disaster to make sense of the theoretical discussion. However, as this research is qualitative, I propose an approach referring to the lived experiences of women during the earthquake.

Therefore, we get a better understanding of their own qualitative gendered experiences and coping strategies after the earthquake.

In resent literature, there is a growing interest in understanding the gendered impact of a disaster, which also involves challenging the growing and persisting stereotypes about women's experiences in time of disaster (Standing, Parker & Bista, 2016). Still, Bradshaw (2015) observed a lack of commitment in gendered integration in post disaster responses. According to her: "gender remains a marginalized issue in the current international negotiations around disaster risk reduction and gender considerations have been hardly applied as a fundamental principle in policy and framework development" (Bradshaw, 2015 p. 55). It is then crucial that research aim to understand and focus on women's experience in the aftermaths of a disaster. It can bring inequalities to the forth and make political action and better development framework possible.

The idea developed by Seager (2006), is that a disaster amplifies gender disadvantages. According to her, even if we talk about a natural disaster such as an earthquake, we have to remember that "disasters however natural, are profoundly discriminatory as pre-existing structures and social conditions determine that some members of the community will be less affected while others will pay a higher price" (Seager, 2006, p. 3). The very concept of gendered impact of disaster can underpin which members of a community experience multiple marginalization. It is therefore central to notice, understand and address gendered impacts of disaster.

After a disaster, women are at a greater risk of violence and abuses, for instance women are more vulnerable to harassment, sexual abuses in many forms as well as exploitations (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006). However, literature also stresses the importance of not stereotyping women as only victims as they are central and important actors to understand and cope with gendered effect of disaster. Standing, Parker and Bista point out the "crucial role women play as first responders in natural disasters" (2016, p. 189). Indeed, "women's groups are often actively involved in a crisis period, delivering food and other supplies" (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006, p. 137). Therefore, this research focuses to understand what are the gendered effects of the earthquake but also how do women and NGOs cope with these effects. The thesis will focus on the idea that "while it is important that we understand the ways in which women and girls may be vulnerable in disasters, it is just as critical that we understand their capacities and strengths in disaster situations" (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006, p. 137). The aim through this research is therefore, to understand the gendered impact of the earthquake, thus to go beyond them and understand the crucial coping strategies of women and NGOs.

In a study on Nepal that took place right after the 2015 earthquake, the authors state that after a few weeks, "incidents of VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) were being reported, and longer-term impacts of the earthquake on the vulnerability of women and girls were becoming evident" (Standing, Parker & Bista, 2016, p. 189). International and Nepalese NGOs also

reported the increasing risk of gender-based violence (Amnesty International, 2015; WOREC, 2016). Domestic violence for instance increased dramatically and when women were displaced, insecurity raises from the new environment (Sultana, 2011). In addition, in time of disaster, being a women often leads to added responsibilities, as stated: "mothering becomes more difficult and complicated as conditions become unsafe and as surviving children need more attention during and after the crisis" (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006, p. 136). The gendered effects of disasters are also linked to health problems as mothers in Nepal have to keep their role, they culturally eat at last and when food or proper water are not available, they are the first ones to be deprived (Standing, Parker & Bista, 2016).

It is important to include the gendered impact of disaster linked with the social context to understand which inequalities are already present and which ones are eventually reproducing. For the author Sultana (2011), it is important to understand well gender and class, as they are important factors, susceptible to shape greater inequalities after a disaster. In Nepal VAWG are already present in certain communities for example: sexual violence, women traffic and harassment. These forms of VAWG already present in society have greater chances to increase as a result of the earthquake (Standing, Parker & Bista, 2016). It is argued that natural disasters might have gendered negative effects. However, it also offers a "window of opportunity to change gender power relations and inequalities" (Sultana, 2011, p. 51), for instance when looking at coping strategies of women and NGOs. We can discuss whether a « window of opportunity » can be a window of imposition as structural changes of power-relations in a culturally different context by the international community, necessarily aligned with the human rights framework. Such an understanding, however, may be detrimental to how women actually think in Nepal. The point here is not to say that unequal power relations between men and women are legitimate but to understand on how aid efforts may be perceived as an imposition of western values, especially by men. Therefore, the social context is central to understand the gendered impact of a disaster and the understanding of Nepalese organizations – that are culturally grounded – can point out the local needed changes.

The literature emphasizes that women and NGOs are best placed to respond to or assist women undergoing gendered impact of a disaster. As a result, they should be the ones focused on. As argued by Bradshaw women present better "efficiency rather than vulnerability, then, may be at the heart of gendered reconstruction projects, and not only individual women should be targeted. Recent large-scale disasters have highlighted the important role played by women's networks and women's groups in the organized response" (Bradshaw, 2015 p. 69). At the grassroots level, women organize themselves and present a great efficiency, which is challenging gender stereotypes. Indeed, women and women's group understand faster the practical need for the short and long-term after a disaster, as follows argued: "post-disaster women's projects is moving from immediate and very practical emergency needs to the long-term strategic interests of women in political participation, decision-making, self-confidence, and technical knowledge" (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006, p. 139). Women's first-hand knowledge must be understood because

they are aware of which group is stigmatized and who suffers from the gendered impact of disaster. Furthermore, women and NGOs are the ones who know the needed strategies to cope against gendered-specific effect of the disaster.

In order to understand the grassroots knowledge of women and NGOs about the gendered impact of the earthquake and the strategies to cope with these effects, actor oriented approach is used throughout the whole research.

2.2 Actor oriented approach

In order to better understand the gendered impact of the earthquake, it is necessary to incorporate the women's agency (Standing, Parker & Bista, 2016). Although a disaster interrupts people's social lives and potentially strengthen patriarchal structures, women retain capacities to deal with limitations. That is to say, women are theoretically conceived as actors that are characterized by the ability to cope with the gendered impact of a disaster.

According to Norman Long, theories of development from the 1970s followed the top-down implementation as a one-way process without consulting local actors. He rejects such a vision of social change and shows how to reduce centralized control enforced by powerful actors in development theory (Long, 1984). Long's theory starts with the principle that reality is plural and the view that the world is a mosaic (1984). Which means that there is not only one right way to assess development and states that each part of the world or community can have his own right way to draft with development. For social science, this means that different truths exists, it also means that the context matters and we cannot generalize scientific knowledge to each case of development like a model to follow.

To analyze the connections of local, internal and external actors, Long proposes to adopt a dynamic approach which allows to understand social changes with a "recognition interplay and mutual determination of external and internal factors and relationships" (1984, p. 171). In his approach, the outside forces still remain important. However, he attempts to neglect the external determination and the top-down implementation of development. The importance in this sense is the human agency. Long explains that human agency recognizes that everyone – no matter what he/she does, what his/her background is – has an important point of view about development and "the changing world" that surrounds them (1984, p. 171). In this sense, every human being has a point of view, according to his/her own perception; those perceptions socially navigate through external structures (Long, 1984, p. 177). This perspective is, according to Nyamu-Musembi (2005), at the "core of a right-based approach" as to understand one's experience, there is a need to "be informed by the concrete experiences of the particular actors involved in and who stand to gain" (Nyamu-Musembi, 2005, p. 41). This point of view is central in this research: actors

obviously know their own culture, needs and challenges. It is therefore crucial to adopt an actor-oriented approach.

The consequence for social science is then an emancipation from a top-down approach to development. This emancipation can be done through individual experience and collective learning (Long, 1984). According to Nyamu-Musembi, individual experience is important but needs to be addressed in a contextual setting (Nyamu-Musembi, 2005). The idea is that we want to learn from women and NGOs themselves in the context of the earthquake. Indeed, according to an actor-oriented approach, they are in the best position to understand the gendered impact of the disaster and the strategies to be adopted in order to overcome them.

2.3 Gendered impact of disaster linked to actor oriented approach

In this part, the final conceptual framework, which serves as a guide to structure this thesis is explained. It links the concept of actor-oriented approach as a way to understand - from the bottom – the gendered impact of a disaster. From these impacts, the thesis looks at both health and safety impacts on women and their ways to cope with these impacts with the help of Nepalese NGOs.

As we can see in Figure 1, the actor-oriented approach is a mean to understand the lived experience of women after a disaster. Their own point of view is looked at in order to comprehend and involve the concrete experience of women and Nepalese NGOs in this particular setting (Nyamu-Musembi, 2005). As pointed earlier, literature, NGOs and reports reported the increasing risk of gender-based violence and insecurity after the earthquake (Amnesty International, 2015; WOREC, 2016; Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006). Additionally, gendered effect of the earthquake are linked to health problems as mothers in Nepal have to keep their role, they culturally eat at last and when food or proper water are not available, they are the first ones to be deprived (Standing, Parker & Bista, 2016). Therefore, the two possible gendered impact of disaster looked at in this research are health and safety.

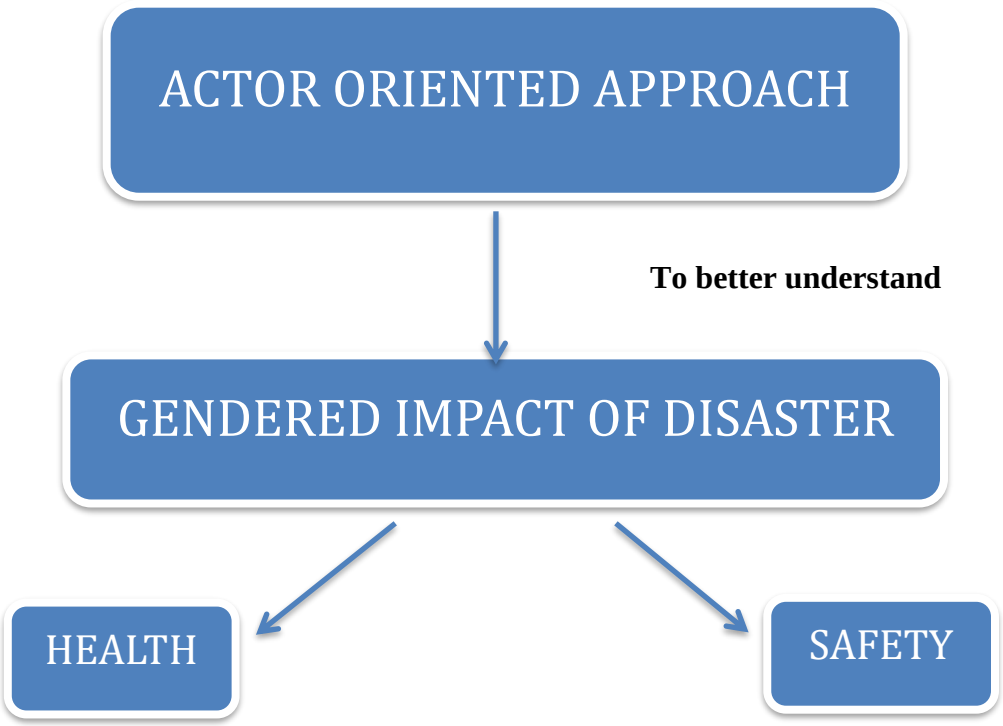


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Disasters do not merely intrude on the social life of women but should always be understood as an interplay between external forces and internal responses. In other words, it is mediated and transformed by internal structures that give a particular shape to women's agency. According to Bradshaw: "If disasters are to learn from development, the key lesson is not that gender matters, but that how gender is addressed matters" (Bradshaw, 2015 p.70). To understand the gendered impact of the disaster, the actor-oriented approach allows to make sense of, and appreciate diversity as one can look at the coping strategies of women incorporating their unevenly distributed capacities.

Doing so brings two advantages. Firstly, it de-victimizes women by incorporating their own actions into the analysis as they are the best placed to address their needs. If we looked at women as only victims of the catastrophe, we would miss out on significant aspects that are relevant to them. Secondly, it gives women and NGOs a voice for us to understand their essential role and strategies in the aftermath of a disaster.

To conclude with, this chapter argues that to comprehend the gendered impact of the disaster, an actor-oriented approach is needed to understand the diversity of women's lived experience in health and safety, as well as their coping strategies and help from Nepalese NGOs. Their point of view if looked at to learn from women and NGOs themselves in the context of the earthquake.

3. Methodology

The following chapter will outline the methods applied throughout the thesis to achieve its aim. It will go through the research setting, fieldwork, data collection, analysis, ethics and fieldwork reflection. However, I first want to explain shortly how I gained access to the field as I think it is something that can hardly be done following a methodology. Researchers picture ahead of the fieldwork how the access would be. From my part, getting access to the field was smoother, though more stressful than imagined. I was lucky to have few contacts from a previous internship I did in Nepal in 2015. Thanks to friends and acquaintances a little network of NGOs and women who suffered from the earthquake were willing to talk to me and share their stories. It was crucial that they understand my goal was not to disseminate their personal stories without protecting their identity and deeply aiming to understand their lived experience.

3.1 Research setting

The fieldwork took place between the 21st of August 2017 and 10th of February 2018 in Kathmandu Valley. When thinking of where I should focus my research on – to understand the gendered impact of the earthquake in Nepal – Kathmandu Valley became quite fast logic to me. Through literature, articles, and my previous experience in Nepal, I got to know that the significant majority of NGOs in Nepal are located nearby the capital. Out of 47 165 NGOs registered in 2018 in Nepal, around 45% are located in Kathmandu Valley as stated by the Deputy Director of the SWC (Social Welfare Council) during an informal interview. The easy accessibility to national, regional and local NGOs was crucial. Furthermore, as the research focuses on understanding how women coped with the gendered impact of the earthquake, it was essential to have access to women from different backgrounds. Kathmandu Valley offered me the possibility to meet and understand "the big picture" of Nepalese women – that are from or moved to Katmandu during their lives.

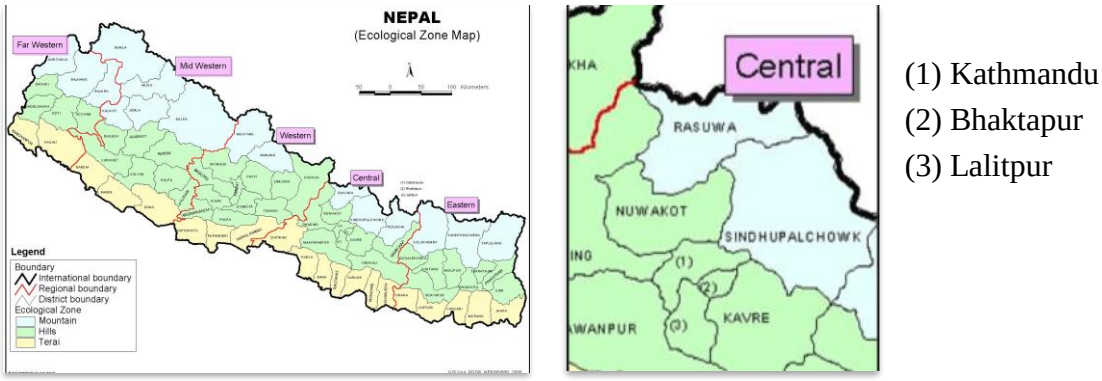


Figure 2: Nepal Ecological Zone Map (United Nations, 2000).

Kathmandu Valley is located in the center of Nepal and in the hill region (see Figure 2). Three districts are part of Kathmandu Valley: Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur, which together cover an area of 899 square kilometers and comprise around 2.5 million people – about 10% of the population of Nepal (GoN, 2012). In 2011, the Government of Nepal reported 230,050 female

living in Lalitpur, 141,767 female living in Bhaktapur and 831,239 female residing in Kathmandu (see Table 1) (GoN, 2012, pp. 88, 89).

Table 1: Population Lalitpur/Bhaktapur/Kathmandu in 2011 (GoN, 2012)

District	Total Population	Female	Male
Lalitpur	438,132	230,050	238,082
Bhaktapur	304,651	141,767	144,884
Kathmandu	1,744,240	831,239	913,001
Population Nepal	*26,494,504*	*13,546,463*	*12,849,041*

Together, the 1.203,056 female living in those three districts represent 4.5% of the Nepalese population. The big population and women living in Kathmandu Valley – one of the areas affected by the earthquake – presented a significant advantage for the research setting. The next section focuses on the fieldwork itself.

3.2 The fieldwork

Throughout a six months fieldwork, I adopted an ethnographic approach – "a narrative that describes a culture or part of a culture" (Bernard, 2011, p. 20) – using qualitative research methods to answer my research question. The purpose of ethnographic research is to understand as closely as possible how people experience everyday life. I aim to understand how women experienced and coped with the gendered impact of the earthquake, and how NGOs implemented strategies to help women with the gendered effect of the earthquake. I choose to combine different methods to have the opportunity to produce the best results. To this end, I subsequently gathered information through informal conversations, semi-structured interviews with women, NGOs and politics, and participatory observation. Following, I will elaborate on all data collection methods used during my fieldwork.

The interview part of the fieldwork was divided into two phases. Firstly, I worked as a pair with Neera Ghising Tamang (25 years old). Neera is a Nepalese woman who was in transition between her bachelor and her masters. With her, I discussed the interview guidelines, and she helped me to adapt them to the Nepalese culture. Neera was translating the interviews, and transcribing them word by word in a short amount of time. Thanks to her social links, she gave me many contacts during the whole fieldwork. Neera was a crucial key informant for my thesis, a great translator and a support throughout the entire research. During the two and a half first months of my stay in Nepal, Neera and I conducted 24 interviews – using purposive or judgment sampling – of women that suffered from the earthquake, and eight interviews of women and men working for an NGO or social activists. Later on, I will reflect on Neera's role and how she contributed to shape this thesis.

After the interview and information collection phase, I choose to follow the NGO Shanti Foundations, a local NGO, which was founded after the earthquake to help women affected and

infected by HIV and women trafficked or at risk of being trafficked. In the last month, I interviewed three politicians to understand their vision of the earthquake and its gendered impact. Despite these two phases, the whole fieldwork went along with ethnographic research such as informal conversations and observations. The next section will outline and explain each data collection method.

3.3 Data collection

First of all, I want to give my condolences to Roshika's loved ones – a woman I had the chance to talk to – as she died at 58 years old after I left Nepal. I had one interview and one informal visit with this incredible woman who was fighting against a disease. Thanks to Neera's caring family, she ended her life surrounded with loving people helping her.

The data collection was done using the following methods: semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, informal conversations, and photography. These methods generated recordings, field notes, pictures and I also got access to some NGO documents while following them. All these methods complement each other as they allowed me to have a view in many different aspects of the situation. It permitted to cross the findings using different supports. Each method will now be explained further.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

In order to choose the interviewee, I followed a non-probability sampling method, which aims to understand a cultural process. In fact, Russell Bernard points out that cultural data requires non-probability sampling (2011, p. 113), as it is appropriate for in-depth studies of a few cases. To sample, I used the method of purposive or judgment sampling. Russell Bernard provides following definition: "In purposive sampling, you decide the purpose you want informants (or communities) to serve, and you go out to find some. This is somewhat like quota sampling, except that no overall sampling design tells you how many of each type of informant you need for a study. You take what you can get." (2011, p. 145). The aim is to understand life stories of women as well as case studies on few Nepalese NGOs working to help women to cope with the gendered impact of the earthquake.

The interviews were recorded with the informed consent of the interviewee. Afterward, Neera translated them and wrote the transcripts to allow me to code them and prepare the analysis. Three groups of interviews were conducted and will be now outlined: Firstly the women participants are presented as well as few relevant details about their lives. Secondly, the "informants" will be presented. They are women and men working with NGOs linked with gender. Lastly, the politicians as they were the last interviews I conducted. It is important to specify here that every single name is changed to preserve the respondents and ensure the

confidentiality of the interviewees. However, the NGOs' names and the political parties remain the same, which is done having the informed consent of the respondents.

Women interviewed were aged between 16 and 73 years old. They are from different geographical background, castes, and types of family. I interviewed them about their experience during and after the earthquake. 24 women have been interviewed throughout the fieldwork. These participants were selected using purposive sampling. The main criteria were, being a woman, who suffered from the earthquake concerning health or security, living in Kathmandu before or since the quake. Thanks to Informants from NGOs and contacts from my translator, findings participants corresponding to the research criterion was quite straightforward. In Table 2: few details on the participants. Here, the categories; age, ethnicity/caste, occupation and marital status are shown as they are important contextual and social differences that can help to understand further one's social settings liked to gender relations. In Appendix A, a more detailed Table can be found.

Table 2: Interview Participants/Subjects

Code	Age	Ethnicity/Caste	Occupation	Marital status
Shirisha	19	Chettri	Waiter-trainee	Single
Bandhana	23	-	Waiter-trainee	Single
Anisha	19	Janajaati	Waiter-trainee	Single
Ansu	26	Tamang	Cook-trainee	Separated
Bianca	18	Dalit	Cook-trainee	Single
Amita	25	Danuwar	Tailoring-trainee	Single
Ramila	16	Dalit	Tailoring-trainee	Single
Srijana	27	Dalit	Tailoring-trainee	Separated
Susmita	16	Dalit	Tailoring-trainee	Single
Asmita	19	Dalit	Tailoring-trainee	Single
Sarita	27	Tharu	Spa therapist	Single
Rashmi	28	Tamang	Boutique owner	Single
Sangita	25	Tamang	Dance teacher + night job	Single
Ashmita	32	Tamang	Waitress	Separated
Swastika	23	Dalit	Singer in a restaurant	Single
Muscan	31	Brahmin	Waitress	Single
Sajan	35	Tamang	Housewife	Married
Roshika	58	Brahmin	Retired	Widow
Rasila	48	Tamang	Housewife + Housemother	Married
Chandani	73	Tamang	Housewife	Married
Eyrum	35	Chettri	Part-time job	Married
Birsha	30	Tamang	Tailoring teacher	Married
Nisu	25	Chettri	Receptionist in an NGO	Single
Saura	45	Gurung	Housewife + Translator	Married

In the second group, eight informants have been interviewed. As mentioned earlier, they were selected using purposive sampling. The main criteria of selection were their involvement in post-earthquake relief, expertise on Nepali society and fight for women's right, especially on safety and health. In Table 3, the position of each informant is showed.

Table 3: Informants

Bishal	Male	Program Officer
Maya	Female	Social Activist
Bibek	Male	Volunteer
Roshika	Female	Social Worker/Supervisor
Kukee	Female	Volunteer/Senior public health nurse
Liv	Male and Female	All staff members
Nisu	Female	Communication
Samyukta	Female	Chair Woman

Lastly, two politicians and one political journalist have been interviewed. It was important to have politicians' point of view, as they were also very much involved in help after the earthquake. However, these three politicians are all male, which was also interesting in having man points of view on gendered impact of the earthquake. Talking with politicians about sensitive issues is hard in Nepal, but thanks to Informants from NGOs, a contact from my translator, and friends, I managed to have those three interviews. In Table 4, you can find a few details on the participants.

Table 4: Politicians

Code	Gender	Profession	Political Party/Organization
Sandeep	Male	Chairperson/ President of the political party	BibekShell Satha Party
Sajit	Male	Journalist	District secretary of federation of Nepalese journalists
Saroj	Male	Central Member	Maoist Party

Interview guides for semi-structured interviews were built at the beginning of the fieldwork with the help of literature, my proposal, Neera's inputs and informal conversations. I had two interview guides: one for the informants and one for women participants. After testing the interview guides, 24 interviews with women were conducted which all lasted between 1 and 1,5 hours, depending on each person. The interview guide for women participants has the following themes:

- Interview information/Introduction
- Theme 1: Gender relations and roles in Nepal

- Theme 2: April 25, 2015, The Earthquake
- Theme 3: Consequences of the Earthquake
- Theme 4: NGOs'/ INGOs/ Government actions

From the second interview guide, eight individual interviews were conducted with informants which all lasted between 1,5 and 2 hours. The interview guide for informants has the following themes:

- Interview information/Introduction
- Theme 1: Gender relations and roles in Nepal
- Theme 2: The Earthquake
- Theme 3: Consequences of the Earthquake
- Theme 4: NGOs' actions
- Theme 5: Government / INGOs' actions

3.3.2 Participatory observation

Participant observation is according to Bernard both a "humanistic and scientific" observation (2011, p. 256), meaning that it produces the king of knowledge - and therefore data - that are both personal and scientific. "Knowledge that lets you talk convincingly, from the gut" (Bernard, 2011, p. 256), as the researcher participates to what/with the people he is observing. To the end, I followed the work of an NGO into their everyday work and some programs that I will explain in a later stage. It allowed me to understand better their work, values and issues. From this interesting experience, I gathered many notes, pictures and memories.

During the first weeks of my fieldwork, I got closer to one particular NGO that I had access to as I knew them from my bachelor internship that I did in Nepal in 2015. Our interests seemed to merged and I got slightly too excited or impatient. Before my departure to Nepal, I read Russell Bernard's book about research methods. In his book, he particularly warns future researchers to take their time, and not to choose ethnographic informants too quickly: "Allow yourself to go awash in data for a while and play the field. When you have several prospects, check on their roles and statuses in the community. Be sure that the key informants you select don't prevent you from gaining access to other important informants" (Bernard, 2011, p. 152). What I experienced with this NGO is not a drama at all but was a little deception from my side. After a little time, I felt my research was being steered in a way that did not fit my original goals. The NGO wanted to adapt my research following their own perspectives, which is understandable but not doable in my case. This experience can be depicted as the *Pessimist Perspective* in an Academic-NGO collaboration as the idea that "collaborative relationship entails mutual dependency with a desired motive by each partner to control and influence the behavior and *modus operandi* of the other" (Charles Aniekwe, Hayman, Mdee, Akuni, Lall, & Stevens, 2012, p. 5). However, I do not claim that collaboration between a researcher and an NGO is inevitably negative and I actually

experienced the opposite at a later stage of my research, which I will describe later.

For Bernard, "Participant observation involves immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualize what you've seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly" (Bernard, 2011, p. 258). However, I feel the way I experienced the participatory observation only partly reflects how Russell Bernard describes it. For him it "involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives" (Bernard, 2011, p. 256). I think after some time in the field, and time-sharing with key informants, the relation with them is more complex. I cannot define the friendship relation we built, Nepalese friends and me, as an academic purpose only. As a learning ethnographer, one has to keep in mind that personal relationships can influence the ability to remain totally objective towards one's object of knowledge. Well this is where I agree with Russell Bernard, it is not possible to be totally objective as a human being. However, we are capable of awareness and self-critiques about our opinions, experiences and values (Bernard, 2011). My goal through this participatory observation was to transcend my bias by constantly reflecting on my own presuppositions. In this sense, one can agree that objectivity is an ideal than a researcher should not seek, thus use it as a methodological method warning against sloppiness (Zahar, 2009). Therefore, I was always reflecting on my personal goals and the ones of people I was following.

After three months I got access to the NGO Shanti Foundations through Neera, we got a meeting where we agreed that I could help them with their everyday work and follow them in order to collect life histories, be involved with an NGO and understand women's perception. I conceived myself as an "outsider who participate in some aspects of life around them and record what they can" (Bernard, 2011, p. 258). Spending time with Shanti Foundations, getting evolved in their activities such as health camps and everyday office work was crucial for understanding their vision and work. By spending time with the NGO and particularly one women working there, I have been able to build a relation of trust. Contrasting with my first experience of collaboration with an NGO. I can link this collaboration with the *Optimist Perspective* described as a "positive and altruistic view of collaboration, thus seeing stakeholders as altruistic people with less interest in the immediate but more in the ultimate" (Charles Aniekwe, Hayman, Mdee, Akuni, Lall, & Stevens, 2012, p. 5). In effect, our combine ultimate interests of understanding and helping Nepalese women allowed a positive collaboration.

Moreover, I spent much time with a family that is hosting five under aged women that are at risk of being trafficked since the earthquake. After some weeks, I felt involved and close to this family. I have the feeling that those relations are beyond researcher-informants relations because I feel attached to those persons who became real friends. It definitely influenced my perception as a researcher as I felt personally involved with this family and the girls living there.

3.3.3 Informal conversations

As a very important part of my research, Informal conversations took place during the whole fieldwork. Russell Bernard describes informal interviewing as, "the method of choice at the beginning of participant observation fieldwork when you're settling in. It is also used throughout ethnographic fieldwork to build greater rapport and to uncover new topics of interest that might have been overlooked." (2011, p. 156). At the beginning of the fieldwork, those conversations were significant to get to know NGO staff and other informants. I think informal talks were also crucial in order to understand the situation of Nepalese from the field. In the first phase of my fieldwork, conversations helped me to reflect and build better questionnaires for the interviews.

After this first phase, informal conversations were more appropriate when talking with informants about sensitive subjects. For instance, one informant working for an NGO gave me important insights about her deception regarding the work of NGOs. Indeed, she was observing in her everyday work that too often, clientelism and politics were part of NGO's work, even at a grassroots level. Besides, informal conversations were also useful when meeting women participants a second time. I had the chance to meet a few interviewees again to go more in-depth on specific subjects, and yet the informal interview seemed more appropriate.

3.3.4 Photography

Photographers use their cameras as tools of exploration, passports to inner sanctums, instruments for change. Their images are proof that photography matters—now more than ever.
Robert Draper (2013)

Robert Draper's quote points out how photography is interlinked with research; it can be used as a new lens, a tool that allows the researcher to have a different gaze on the subject of study. Already during the fieldwork preparation, it was clear to me that I wanted to incorporate photography as a methodological tool.

Inspired by the approach of auto-photography: "letting participants choose what represents them best" Noland (2006), I have let my camera to take a research role at the end of each interview. Indeed, I was asking women – if they were feeling comfortable – taking a picture of their hands in a position that, according to them, was representing them best. I asked their hands as I think a lot can be expressed through them. Some women took an object like a pen, which represented them; some were doing a movement or a sign. It is interesting as the decision taken by the subject of what to show with their hands is very personal, while at the same time preserving their anonymity. One major benefit of including photography during an interview is that the respondent can partially detach from the process of interviewing (Noland, 2006). Indeed, an interview can be perceived as a "top-down" relation where the respondent has less power of

choosing how to present him/herself. However, a static image that participants themselves choose as something that best represents them is, in my point of view, an advantage to the thesis.

Even if we can consider that photography during an interview can give "space" for self-expression to the interviewee, one problem exposed by Noland is that pictures also significantly reduced anonymity. To cope with the importance of preserving secret the identity of women I was interviewing, I asked them at the end of each interview if I could take a picture of their hands in a way or a position that represents them best. I think with the hands a lot can be said and showed with still preserving the anonymity of the person photographed.

I feel these moments of photography I shared with every woman I interviewed broke the interviewer/interviewee relation that was built during the one-hour discussion beforehand. Photography does matter, and each woman who gave her time for this research helped me in different ways: by talking about the painful memories of the earthquake, by showing a little bit of themselves, by allowing me to take a picture of their hands. At the beginning of each chapter of this thesis, I am using one of those hands pictures.

3.4 Analysis

By using the above-mentioned data collection methods, I collected field notes, audio recordings of interviews, pictures and, literature. The audio recordings have been translated and transcribed by Neera during my time in Nepal. To keep track of these different materials, I was typing field notes and field reflections to my computer and storing notes, transcripts, picture and literature by dates and themes. In a second time, I coded the materials through Atlas.ti, which helped for a smoother analysis afterward.

To analyze the qualitative data, I apply the Narrative Analysis approach defined by Russell Bernard as "the search for regularities in how people, within and across cultures, tell stories" (2011, p. 416). It is especially useful to understand how people lived a particular event, for instance, an earthquake. In the context of this thesis, an earthquake is a meaningful event for women and Nepalese NGOs. The Narrative approach requires analysis and an interpretation of those narratives, as respondent are making sense of their own experience instead of analyzing it. By using different methods that complement each other, I gathered a diverse view of the various aspects of the situation of women and NGOs in Nepal. It permitted to cross the findings using different supports and make sense of the sense-making.

3.5 Ethics

Before entering the field, ethical questions were prevalent in my mind. Am I going to be able to put my own interests aside? Forget my possible personal assumptions? Deal with tensions or dilemmas? I never denied the importance of ethics; contrariwise it was one of my most significant concerns. Therefore, I stayed in harmony with the academic code of conduct provided by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands, which stresses, among others, the importance of the honesty and the scrupulousness of the researcher (VSNU, 2014). However, those qualities may seem a little general and blurry in practices. Hens, I decided to apply in addition three established ethical principles described and explained by Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden (2000, p. 95), namely: Autonomy, Beneficence, and Justice, that I will now develop.

The ethical principle of Autonomy is defined by the authors as "the recognition of participants' rights, including the right to be informed about the study, the right to freely decide whether to participate in a study, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty" (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000, p. 95). To respond to this first premise, I wrote a presentation explaining my research that was read to the participants before each interview. Rights of each participant have been ensured as they were told beforehand that they could stop the interview whenever they felt like, choose not to respond to a matter or ask as many questions as needed. Additionally, Neera and I insured the oral informed consent of the participants before starting the interview and record.

The ethical principle of Beneficence pertains to do well for others and prevent harm, but with respecting autonomy and freedom of choice of the respondent (ibid). Accordingly, the confidentiality and anonymity of each respondent have been ensured as every detail that could reveal personal identity is absent from transcriptions and thesis.

Orb, Eisenhauer define the ethical principle of Justice, & Wynaden as "equal share and fairness […] justice in qualitative research studies is demonstrated by recognizing the vulnerability of the participants and their contributions to the study " (2000, p. 96). Therefore, for the purpose of listening to different voices – including minorities and disadvantaged groups – I conducted interviews with women from many different castes and ethnic groups, ages, backgrounds, and religions. By applying those ethical principles: the imperative of protecting the participants of this study has been reached.

Finally, ethics is also taking care of the respondents, preserving their identities and relate one's story as tightly as it was explained. One example comes then into the forth. A young woman had endured trafficking and did not feel like explaining it to us during the interview. With Neera, we could not push her to tell this painful story, as our primary concern was to preserve this woman. We chose not to force her to remember that difficult time of her life despite our interest to know

how she was saved from being trafficked. Apart from this situation where we chose to put aside the research goal, I did not encounter ethic issues during the research.

3.6 Fieldwork reflection

This part aims to reflect on the fieldwork and how my own identity as well as Neera's shaped this research. First of all, I will reflect on my position in the field then, I will reflect on Neera's, as she was a central person during my fieldwork.

As a 23 years old French feminist woman who studies in the Netherlands, I want to reflect on how my identity and background shaped and helped - or not - these 6 months fieldwork in Nepal. In 2015 I was already in Nepal for 3 months, following an NGO for my bachelor's internship. This experience helped me a lot as I already knew many sides of the Nepalese culture, the city of Kathmandu few regions in Nepal, and some NGOs. For this research - before the fieldwork - I wrote some NGOs and friends, which helped me to feel secure and more confident about the beginning of the fieldwork.

The day of the earthquake, 25th April 2015, was also the very last day of my bachelor's internship in Nepal. Being present in Kathmandu during the disaster had many impacts on my perceptions during the research. I saw houses on the floor, people jumping from windows to save themselves from being buried, others searching under rubbles to save lives. I felt helpless and so wrong to take my flight on April 26th, when the humanitarian help had a hard time to arrive at the airport due to aftershocks. However, I knew I wanted to come back to this country that changed my life. I already had the idea to give a voice to women who suffered from this catastrophe. Therefore I think I can conclude that I am a little biased doing this research, as the earthquake is a very emotional time in my life. Thus, during my research I did put aside my own experience to only concentrate on the women and NGOs I was focusing on through the research. Finally, this previous experience in Nepal and being there during the earthquake allowed me to be close to Nepalese people as we were talking about something that we all lived.

I believe being a woman had a good influenced on my access to the field and helped me to have a better relation with the respondents. Indeed, it allowed me to talk about personal and sensitive issues with other women. I think it would not have been that easy if I were a man. For the analysis being a woman could also influence my perception, as I am very sensitive to gendered issues: sexual violence for example. I tried to approach these issues by keeping an emotional distance between women and me. However, it is important to say that inequalities between women and men touch me at the heart.

From my master studies in the Netherlands I had assumptions and hopes before the fieldwork, for example: from what I learned about development in theory. The reality is very different in the

field, everything takes a very long time and no one is waiting for us there. I learned that the researcher has to fight to establish her/himself. To conclude, I want to say how much I grew up and learned from myself during this experience. This research is the greatest academic project I had the chance to conduct! I am glad I chose this country, this subject and I am so thankful for this experience.

I will now reflect on Neera's role. Neera Ghising Tamang is a young Nepalese woman with whom I worked in pair with during the first half of my fieldwork. More than a translator, she became a friend and her opinion was more than important to me. Therefore, many decisions were taken after discussing them with Neera. First of all, we discussed the interview guidelines and she helped me to adapt them to the Nepalese culture. Her role as a Nepalese woman who travelled was more than needed, as she knows her country and the Nepalese culture very well.

Neera is very involved in her community, NGOs and church, thanks to her contacts and personal involvement she helped me a lot in having many respondents and contacts to conduct interviews. In a way, she did steer my research as we talked to many people from her community. However, I never felt one second that she was taking the lead to influence my fieldwork in a way that did not suit me. Neera wanted to help me the best she could, we were discussing many issues linked to her culture that I could not understand, and even after she officially stopped working with me, she kept seeing and helping me.

Lastly Neera made my fieldwork a lot easier, she speaks Nepali so was translating live during the interviews – which allowed me to react in direct – and translated word by word after the interviews. Thanks to her, the language barrier – even if existing – was less of a problem. When talking about sensitive issues with respondents, Neera showed how a good listener and open-minded person she is. I could tell that people trusted her and appreciated her way to interact. My research would not be the same without Neera.

4. Nepalese Context

In an ethnographic research, contextual information is indispensable to understand the social embeddedness of the study. The current situation in Nepal is marked by political, societal and cultural changes, followed by a difficult recovery from the 2015 earthquake. The Nepalese context described in this chapter will enable the reader to understand in what historical and societal context the research has taken place. Information relevant to the thesis will be given, including: the political context, the caste system, gender issues and the 2015 earthquake. My goal is to be concise without neglecting key information. The contextual information chapter is important it will be linked and will help to understand the finding on the research. First of all, a historical political background of Nepal will be tackled, as the country is one of the most recent democracies. Secondly, the caste system, ethnicities, religions and social economic context will be explained, as it will allow the comprehension on how can they shape inequalities in an earthquake setting. Contextual information on gender history and settings will also be approached, as it is indispensable to understand gendered relations in Nepal to evaluate the gendered impact of the earthquake. A sub chapter on social economic tendencies in Nepal will help to understand the different areas in the country. Then, a quick earthquake history of the country will be done, followed the 2015 earthquake, the responses to it, as the gendered issues and inequalities raised by literature. This chapter will give important background information to understand the thesis settings and findings.

4.1 Historical background – Democracy In Nepal & 2015 Constitution

Nepal's modern political history is scarred by a ten-year conflict to finally reach the democratic era of today. The Maoist insurgency, or "People's War" (Feller, 2008, p. 31), was launched in 1996 and lasted until 2006. Some of the important political messages of the rebels were the lack of democratic institutions under the kingship, the caste system and the subordination of women (Whelpton, 2005, p. 206). The conflict took place between the Maoists and the Royal Nepal Army, with violence and abuse from both sides. In 2001, the civil war took on a major turn when – according to the official inquiry – Dipendra, the king's son, slaughtered the royal family before committing suicide. However, the majority of Nepalese believe that Dipendra was not the murderer and that this mysterious massacre stems from the political conflict (Whelpton, 2005, p. 215). Many rumors remain. On the basis of wide-stretched tensions, further outbreaks have regularly occurred between the government and the rebels before a peace declaration can be formulated. In November 2005, the two sides reached an agreement, signing the "end of the autocratic monarchy", followed in April 2006 by a "massive People's Movement", asking for a complete democracy (Jha, 2014, p. 65). With the declaration and the cease-fire, the ten-year conflict and 240-years-old monarchy have come to an end. According to the UN, the uprising killed thirteen thousand people (Feller, 2008, p. 35).

After a seven-year debate, two Constituent Assemblies (CA), a new Nepalese Constitution was indispensable as political tensions and strikes were prevalent. In September 2015, Nepal's parliament approved the National Constitution, replacing the 2007 Interim Constitution (Suresh, 2015). The text was adopted by 507 members of the CA with 25 votes against and 66 abstentions, out of 598 members of the CA (Domínguez, 2015). The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal is now divided into seven federal states and has three main levels of structure: Federal, Provincial and Local (Constituent Assembly Secretariat, 2015, p. 26).

Women's human rights are emphasized in the constitution. For instance, it is stated, "Every woman shall have equal rights to lineage without any gender discriminations" (Constituent Assembly Secretariat, 2015, p. 12). However, many women's groups and organizations criticized the text because it "fails to adequately protect women and marginalized communities" (International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 2016, p. 1). Inequality has also been mentioned in scientific articles, as denounced by K.C, Van Der Haar and Hilhorst: "Women's expectations to gain full citizenship rights in the 2015 Constitution remain unfulfilled" (2017, p. 178). For example, Article 11.5 provides: "A person born to a Nepali citizen mother and having his/her domicile in Nepal but whose father is not traced, shall be conferred the Nepali citizenship by descent" (2015, p. 3), which does not apply to a person born to a Nepalese citizen father. This article – which is unfortunately only one example among others – places children born outside Nepal of a mother in transit, in union with a foreigner or trafficked, in a marginalized position. Many newspaper articles denounce the Constitution to qualify Nepalese women as "second-class citizens" because they can give birth both to national and foreign children "but cannot give them identity" (Limbu Thebe, 2015).

In November and December 2017, Nepalese citizens voted for the election of the Federal Parliament, which will decentralize the power from Kathmandu to the provinces and local units. Two votes took were cast, parliamentary elections and representatives for seven provincial assemblies, a first for the country (Khalid & Chughtai, 2017). The result of the election of the Federal Parliament shows a vast majority for the left alliance composed of the CPN-UML (Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist) and the CPN-Maoist Center (Communist Party of Nepal- Maoist Center), who together won 46,91% of the Federal Parliament representation (see Figure 3). The three first and main political parties are three old and quite traditionally patriarchal parties. For instance, none of those three major parties have more than 3% women candidate for mayor (The Record, 2017). The question raised is whether these elections will be decisive for Nepal's political process engendering. The number of women representative increased after those recent elections. However as pointed by the newspaper Record Nepal, "the most powerful executive positions in local government are still reserved for male" (The Record, 2017). The real decisional power given to women in Nepal stays quite discouraging.

Proportional Representation Result / Federal Parliament

CPN-UML	Congress	Maoist Center	RJP	FSFN	Bibeksheel Sajha	RPP	Other
							
33.25%	32.77%	13.66%	4.95%	4.93%	2.23%	2.06%	6.15%

Figure 3: Results Election Federal Parliament: Nepal 2017 (My Republica, 2017).

4.2 Social structures: Castes, Ethnicities and Religions

The caste system in Nepal comes from the Hindu social organization; which has traditionally established five main hierarchical groups – Brahmins, Chhetris, Vaisyas, Sudras and untouchable (Feller, 2008, p. 59). This "social hierarchy" used to guide the access to resources, opportunities and the political voice (Barber, 2016, p. 3). The purpose of the caste system (see Figure 4) was to classify people into different functional and professional categories, for instance: castes wearing the sacred thread, alcohol drinking castes and untouchable castes (Subedi, 2010). The following concepts historically shape the social organization of castes: "Segmental division of the society, hierarchy, restriction on social intercourse" (Subedi, 2010, p. 137). Therefore, the caste system shapes great inequalities among social groups.

The Nepalese caste system: the *Varna System* seems quite difficult to redraw from its origin. Subedi, Professor in Tribhuvan University, Nepal, traces the caste system in Nepal from 1854 under King Jayasthiti Malla's reign (2010, p. 152). The king classified the population under 64 different groups according to their occupation. This hierarchy classification used to be connected by law as lower caste members could be punished in a different way for example: if one has intercourse with higher cast person. In 1963, a new legal code replaced this highly discriminatory one. However, the "legacy of caste shifted from the public to the private domain" (Subedi, 2010, p. 154). The caste system was already rooted into Nepalese private sphere.

The caste system used to constrain "lower castes" people to accept their inferior positions, working conditions which was often embedded with everyday oppression and exploitation (Subedi, 2010). Since 1962, caste-based discrimination has been illegal in Nepal and punished by law. The 2015 Constitution emphasizes the equality of all Nepali citizens and castigates caste-based discrimination as outlined in the following articles:

> Article 24.1: "No person shall be treated with any kind of untouchability or discrimination in any private or public place on the grounds of caste, ethnicity, origin, community, occupation, or physical condition" (Constituent Assembly Secretariat , 2015, p. 9).
>
> Article 24.5: "All forms of untouchability or discrimination contrary to this provision shall be punishable by law as a serious social crime, and the victim of such an act shall have the right to compensation as provided for by law" (ibid).

Nepal's law against untouchability was indispensable and a step towards equality from the Nepali Government. However, the caste system seems to be deeply rooted in the practices of the country as denounced by the UN: "individuals considered of lower caste continue to be excluded from certain jobs and services, and Dalits (untouchable) earn considerably less than non-Dalits" (2016, p. 78).

Nowadays, the government of Nepal (GoN) recognizes 125 castes and ethnic groups, 123 languages spoken as mother tongue – including 44.6% of the population who has Nepali as the tongue, the official language of the country (GoN, 2012, p. 4). The first religion practiced in Nepal is Hinduism as followed by 81.3% of the population, followed by Buddhism (9.0%), Islam (4.4%), Kirat (3.1%), Christianity (1.4%) and five others which represent less than 1% of the population (ibid). Castes, ethnic groups, and religions seemed to live together peacefully. However, the greatest inequalities persist in Nepal as shown by UNDP in the 2016 human development report: group-based disadvantages still exist in Nepal. For instance, the two "higher castes" have the highest HDI value (0.538) compared to the "lower" caste (0,40), which represents a significant difference (UNDP, 2016, p. 59).

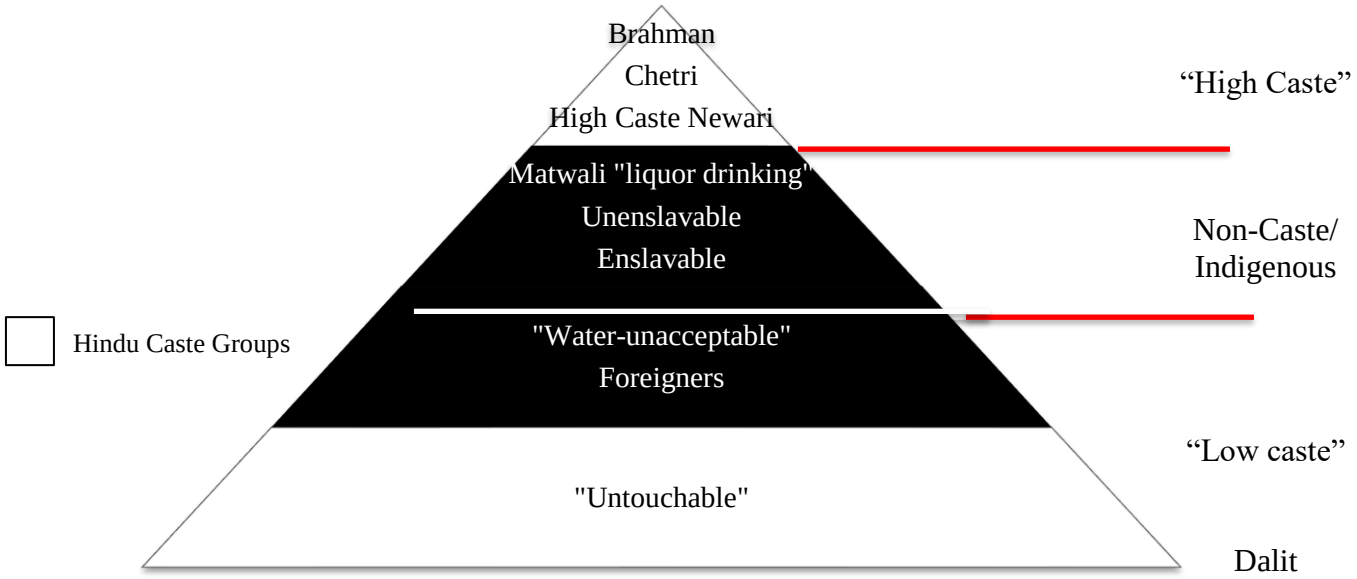


Figure 4: Nepal Caste Pyramid (Barber, 2016, p. 3)

4.3 Social economic context

Nepal is a landlocked country and has its frontiers with India and China (Tibet). This geographical situation makes overseas exportations quite difficult (Banskota, 1981). From the literature, the country is described as having its major economy from agriculture. In effect: "the vast majority of Nepalese are living from subsistence agriculture" (Dhungana, n.d., p. 5). However, strong inequalities are observed between rural and urban areas as rural areas are seen as "distinct from urban spaces due to their relative lack of development" (Hangen, 2010, p. 11). Figure 5 shows the land use and economic activity of Nepal.

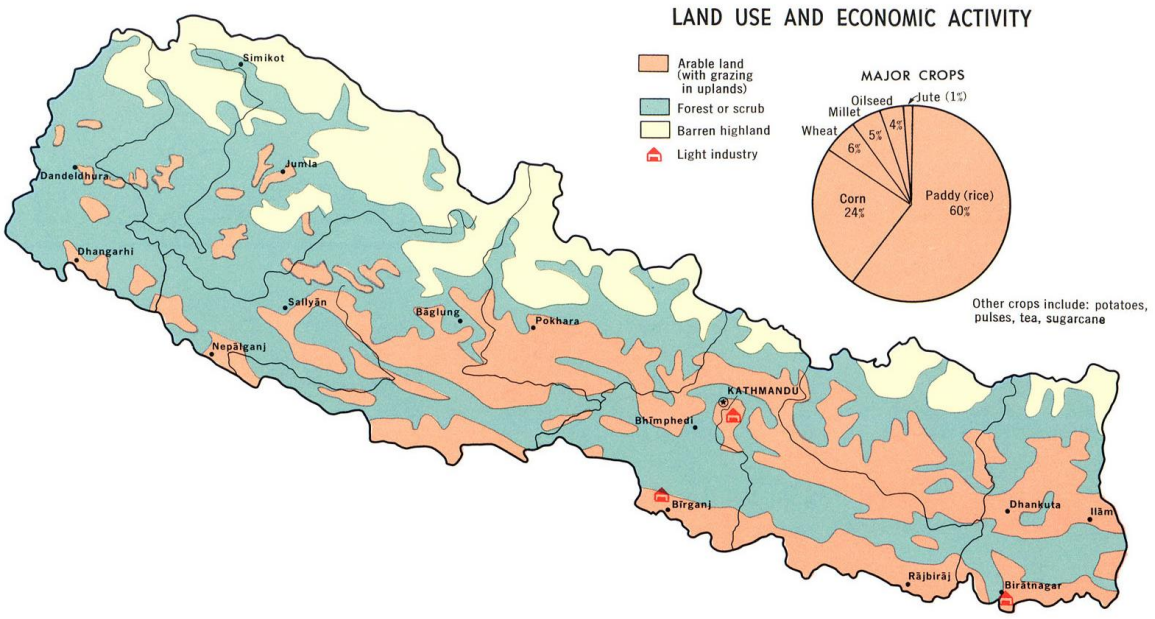


Figure 5: Detailed land use and economic activity map of Nepal – 1968 (Mapsland, 1968)

Even if Nepal's economy has proliferated the past two decades, strong inequalities exacerbate "which threatens the social compact and thus the political basis for economic growth and social development" (Dhungana, n.d., p. 5). Big cities such as Kathmandu are growing very rapidly with the help of tourism, Tribhuvan International Airport (the only international airport of the country) and the Nepalese Government. The Nepal hilly region (where Kathmandu is) is experiencing a huge internal migration and therefore, a population pressure (Banskota, 1981). However, due to the recent elections in the country that aim to decentralize the political power, "now federal model also will support to grow regional identities, and it will be the main factor to make an identity between rural-urban regions" (Dhungana, n.d., p. 8). In the future decades, it

will be interesting to see how this new political setting of the country is influencing the social and economical situation of Nepal.

4.4 Gender issues

Before addressing the earthquake and the gendered impacts of the disaster, it is essential to understand that gender inequality and VAWG are not a new problem for the country. In 2015 and 2016, Nepal was ranked 144th out of 188 on the Human Development Indices of UNDP (2016, p. 200). There is substantial evidence that the ten-year insurgency and political conflict have increased violence and inequality against women. Standing, Parker and Bista pointed out: "contemporary reports indicate that women were targeted by both Maoists and state officials for rape and sexual violence" (2016, p. 190). Indeed, on November 6, 2017 - during my fieldwork - the NGO WOREC organized a National Program with 80 women survivors of sexual violence during the civil war. These women had no support at all for what had happened, and many issues remain today. For instance, a woman became pregnant after being raped by a soldier during the conflict, her son today asks for his father because he wants his citizenship card. Some women are still harmless from the conflict and lack voices to find justice.

The literature points out a difference between rural and urban areas regarding gender equality. For instance, rural areas are less literate, have more discriminatory practices towards women and, women and girls are more vulnerable to trafficking (Kaufman & Crawford, 2011). However, it is undeniable that the Nepali Government has engaged legal reforms to reduce VAWG and guarantee women's rights. Progress has been made in recent years, for instance: the country has achieved gender parity in primary education, and the maternal mortality ratio has declined from 539 to 170 between 1996 and 2013 (OXFAM, Women for Human Rights, 2016). However, laws, policies, and practices seem very slow to evolve. In 2016, OXFAM reported that 41% of women still marry before the age of 18, despite a legal marriage age of 20 (2016, p. 2). In addition, the culture of silence remains very strong in Nepal, and data on trafficking in women and VAWG are far from accurate. In their article, Standing, Parker and Bista report that "police records show that, on average, between 2007 and 2013 only 234 cases of rape and 114 cases of sex trafficking were reported" (2016, p. 191), which is very low compared to the estimate of local NGOs and international organizations. For example, in 2012, the UN has suggested that between 10,000 and 15,000 girls a year are trafficked from Nepal (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016, p. 191).

Some discriminatory cultural practices still exist in Nepal, even when they are illegal. This seems to be the case of Chhaupadi, a tradition of seclusion of women during menstruation, practiced mainly in western Nepal. Women forced to do Chhaupadi are restricted to consume milk products are restricted to access public water sources, are not allowed to touch men, children, cattle, living plants, and have to live outside from their house (in a shed or a tent) (Chhabi, Chun-Bae, Eun Hee, Anu, Myung Bae, & Young Ah, 2015, p. 2). After scandals around this practice and an obvious threat to women's health, this dangerous practice was declared illegal and banned by the

Supreme Court of Nepal in 2005. However, in mid and far-west Nepal some families still practice Chhaupadi (Chhabi, Chun-Bae, Eun Hee, Anu, Myung Bae, & Young Ah, 2015). Indeed, women, I interviewed also have to practice it when they return to their village.

4.5 2015 Nepal Earthquake

Nepal is situated in one of the highest seismically active region of the world and through history experienced many major earthquakes. For example, in the twentieth century, two huge earthquakes took place in 1905 and 1934, measuring more than 8 on the Richter scale. Studies on geophysical research on the Himalayan region were warning about a possible "great or giant earthquakes was likely to occur" (Bollinger, et al., 2014, p. 7161) at the beginning on the twenty-first century.

On April 25, 2015 at 11:56 am local time, a 7.8 (Richter scale) magnitude earthquake stroke Nepal. The hypocenter was located in the Gorkha region (about 80 km north–west of Kathmandu), but strong shakings were experienced in 39 (out of 75) districts of the country. This colossal earthquake is the largest since the 8.1 magnitude *Bihar–Nepal earthquake* that occurred in 1934 (Goda, et al., 2015, p. 1). Hundreds of aftershocks followed April 25, including a 7.3 magnitude shock, which occurred on May 12 and produced additional loss of life and property (Government of Nepal, 2016). As explained above, the earthquake affected 39 out of 75 districts in the Western and Central Regions of the country. Among them, the Government of Nepal reported that 14 districts suffered highest impacts (UNDAC, 2015).

As a terrible result of the earthquake, 8,790 people died and more than 22,300 people were injured, a large number of private homes (498,852) and government buildings (2,656) were destroyed in urban and rural areas and 19,000 classrooms were demolished and 11,000 damaged (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 1). Following the shocks, a very large number of landslide and rock falls occurred, which is very dangerous for people, blocking roads and limiting access to remote areas for emergency response. As a result, rural, remote and vulnerable areas have been disproportionately affected by the earthquake (Kanti Paul, Acharya, & Kabita, 2017, p. 1170).

4.6 Earthquake response

On April 25th, the Government of Nepal declared a state of emergency in the areas affected by the earthquake and requested international assistance through the UN Resident Coordinator Office in Nepal (UNDAC, 2015). The GoN with the help of the UN, INGOs, local NGOs, more than 60 individual countries, thousands of volunteer and over 450 humanitarian agencies promptly assumed his leadership and responded to distribute food, water, shelters and critical life-saving aid to the most affected communities. According to the UN: "On 29 April, the Humanitarian Country Team launched the Nepal Earthquake Flash Appeal to provide protection and relief to 2.8 million people. Under the Flash Appeal, from April to September 2015, humanitarian

assistance reached 3.7 million people" (Ovesen & UN, 2016).

To organize the distribution of aid, the GoN has introduced a ''one-door policy''. This policy signifies that all relief materials had to go through the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund before being distributed. This controversial policy has been heavily criticized by national and international donors, many of whom questioned the effectiveness and transparency in such an emergency situation (Kanti Paul, Acharya, & Kabita, 2017, p. 1185). According to the Nepalese Government's recovery vision: there was a place in the earthquake response for "political parties, national NGOs, community organizations, professional institutions, social institutions, the international community and international NGOs (INGOs)" (2016, p. 5). In the Post Disaster Recovery Framework, the GoN states, "By aligning their actions with government policy, all partners will help to build the social harmony that is the basis of resilience"(ibid). However, many critics remain on the coordination organized by the government. Reports on the earthquake and NGOs recovery criticize the government for failing to sufficiently recognize the potential of Nepalese NGOs in the response. It seems that one of the biggest problems has been the lack of preparation and coordination for such a disaster; for example, relief distribution began only three days after the first shock. In conclusion of a study on emergency relief materials received in Nepal, the "lack of effective governance, political infighting, and failure of coordination among NGOs and government agencies were noted in several reports. These problems caused a delay in the beginning of the relief work. However, once it started, the relief efforts ultimately gained momentum and helped hundreds of thousands of earthquake survivors" (Kanti Paul, Acharya, & Kabita, 2017, p. 1184). Political issues are also pointed by articles and (I)NGO reports. A ward representative in Bhaktapur reported that during the distribution relief there was a "tendency to make political power influence the distribution process" (Barber, 2016, p. 7), which could result in an unfair distribution of needs.

Another criticism that is often formulated concerns some funds raised for the victims of the earthquake that have not been claimed or spend. It appears that nearly 4.1 billion dollars has been raised but thousands of people are still living in temporary shelters and some aid has not reached the victims because of organization problems, the complicated process to claim this money and corruption (Panthi, 2016). One of the reasons given by the government was the geographical location, road conditions, landslides, and rubble from buildings destroyed by the earthquake, which sometimes made it impossible to access isolated areas. Indeed, Amnesty International pointed out the difficulty to reach many places affected by the earthquake, to transport relief, personnel and goods because of landslides (Amnesty International, 2015, p. 6). However, critics blame the delay in distributing emergency aid, and money rose on behalf of the victims of the earthquake. Indeed, the GoN was supposed to give an equal amount of money to earthquake survivors who lost their houses but the actual application of it is quite vague (Kanti Paul, Acharya, & Kabita, 2017, p. 1170).

In 2016, the GoN published the Post-Disaster Recovery Framework (PDRF), developed by the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). However, the NRA (body in charge of organizing and spending international donations) took about eight months after the first shock to be created, due to political quarrels (Caprara, 2016). The aim of the PDRF is to provide a "systematic, structured and prioritized framework for implementing recovery and reconstruction. It is a common framework meant to serve all of government, as well as national and international partners and other recovery stakeholders, including the affected population" (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 2). The 102-page document lays out strategic recovery objectives and summarizes policy decisions, financial management strategies, and the recovery and reconstruction plan to 2020 (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 2). One explanation for this delay is the effort put by the government in finalizing the new National Constitution in 2015.

4.7 Gender issues and inequalities in post-earthquake Nepal

International and Local NGOs reported many gender-related issues and inequalities, which increased after the earthquake. Amnesty International has argued that discrimination on the basis of sex and caste hampered the distribution of aid to those most in need. The report recognizes that "unequal access to relief is partly related to remoteness and inaccessibility of some communities" (Amnesty International, 2015, p. 11). In addition, the report states that communities and individuals have been discriminated against because they are sometimes excluded from decision-making bodies, which can lead to uneven access to relief. In some affected districts, an unequal distribution of aid was observed, for instance, excluding women heads of household, members of lower caste known as Dalit or ''untouchable'', and people with disabilities because aid was sometimes manipulated politically (Kanti Paul, Acharya, & Kabita, 2017, p. 1185). This issue is also highlighted by the INGO Save the children:

> "In Nepal, the exclusion of these groups from local decision-making bodies – together with the fact that these bodies were not elected through formal democratic processes and were thus relatively unaccountable to the affected population, yet were vested with almost complete responsibility for the allocation and distribution of relief – had significant implications for the impartiality and inclusivity of the earthquake response" (Barber, 2016, p. 8)

Research on the gendered effect of the earthquake denounced an intersectional gendered effect of the catastrophe, as women are not a homogeneous group and taking into account intersectionality such as: like caste, age, social background, and religion, is important to understand the lived experience (Sultana F. , 2010). For instance, one can experience further discrimination because of being a woman and from a "lower" caste.

Another issue was raised after the earthquake, which concerns women's health and the increase of gender-based violence. Literature has shown that disasters can lead to gender inequalities because in a critical situation women become more vulnerable to gender-based violence and are even more vulnerable to abuses, aggression, and exploitations (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2007, p. 132). After the 2015 earthquake, media, INGOs, and NGOs raised concerns about risks

to the health and safety of women (displaced women, living in camps, lack of safe access to washing facilities, etc.) (Amnesty International Ltd, 2015). The Nepalese women's rights organization WOREC conducted a study between June 2015 and July 2016 on VAW in Nepal. They found 1,775 cases in the country and among them, 820 cases were reported from earthquake-affected districts (WOREC, 2016, p. 70). It is important to mention that in the PDRF, the Nepalese Government stressed that the "NRA will undertake several measures to address the needs of women and other vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities, to ensure social inclusion" (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 38). Indeed the GoN is not passive concerning disaster impact on women, as in November 2016, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare in cooperation with UN women Nepal, have co-hosted the *South-Asia Peer Learning Regional Consultation Disaster Preparedness for an Effective Response for Gender Equality and Women's empowerment.* This event was organized "in order to include gender analysis and consideration in all Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)" (UN Women , 2017, p. 6).

5. Gender Relations as Perceived by Women

5.1 Introduction

In Nepal, gender relations and roles are complex and intersect with cultural practices and many other factors, which are essential to consider when analyzing gender situations. In other words, the lived experience of a Nepalese woman is embodied with "hierarchies of identities like caste, class, and region, which call for multi-layered analysis of the category of gender itself" (K.C, Van Der Haar, & Hilhorst, 2017, p. 117). Therefore, this chapter aims to investigate on the perceptions and experience of women, Nepalese NGOs and political actors about gendered relations and roles in Nepal, as intersected with poverty, caste and religion. The purpose is to explore and better understand general perceptions and experience of gender relations and gender roles in Nepal, possible conflicting opinions, and general intersectional lived experiences of Nepalese women from different backgrounds.

Despite the new Nepalese constitution drafted in 2015, which addresses many issues of inequality, it appears that gendered relations and roles in Nepal are evolving relatively slowly in practice. Being this gender, this caste, this age, this religion or from this geographical background, still dramatically shapes your relationships, and roles in Nepal. Moreover, what the community thinks about one's behavior has a strong power of influence. However, the subject is highly controversial and the perception of gender inequality differs from a person to another. Therefore, in this chapter the opinions and lived experiences of women, NGOs, and politicians, as well as the observations, are connected and confronted with one another. First of all, the caste relations will be explained as it greatly shapes gender relations. Even if illegal, discrimination based on caste still exists in Nepal. Then, based on the main topics brought by women, NGOs and politicians interviews, women and men's relations will be explained. The topics are role division at home, marriage, periods and safety as they shape important inequalities according to the respondents.

5.2 Caste relations

In this section, examples of caste relations given by women, NGO workers and politicians are depicted. In order to understand inequalities in Nepal, it is important to link them to gender and castes relationships as gender is constructed through a relational power (Sultana F. , 2011, p. 45). In other words, gender relations are embodied through rooted cultural practices, caste system and religions that are important to consider in understanding how women in Nepal experience gender. Therefore, women, NGOs and politics perceptions of castes relations will be explained and contrasted with each other. It is argued that even if caste discriminations are prohibited in Nepal, it still exists, especially in rural areas.

In Nepal, the law prohibits castes-based discrimination. However, a woman from a particular caste may suffer more than another one. This is why, as Sultana is stressing, it is important to

consider women as a non-homogeneous group. Intersectionality matters when we talk about inequalities. A class, caste, religion, age, etc. can influence the inequalities that a person will go through (Sultana F. , 2011, p. 44). Maya, social activist explains the caste system in Nepal as following:

> "In terms of castes equalities, the paperwork is amazing. There is no caste discrimination by law and the government has granted so many rights to lower castes and the minority groups. But there is no implementation, so it is not applied. The caste system is strongly and deeply rooted within our society because if you say your last name, everyone got to know which caste you belong to. Caste discrimination is gradually eliminating but it is slow and it still exists strongly".

This point is very important. In Nepal surnames correspond to different castes. Therefore, when one says hers or his family name, one automatically know from which caste she or he is. For instance, the surname: Dalit corresponds to the "lower" caste, "untouchable". The surname: Thakuri corresponds to "superior" caste. This does not mean that all Dalits are poor and all Thakuris are rich. However, when people apply the caste system, they would invite Thakuris home and stay away from Dalits.

When we talk about caste discrimination in Nepal, an important difference in perception can be observed whether the person is from a "higher" or "lower" caste. Anisha, a woman from a relatively high-caste explained to me that the practice of caste discrimination was not as bad as it used to be: "In my village, we invite Dalits to celebrations, but they do not come inside my house, they clean their dishes themselves. But it's not as bad as before when we could not touch them. Today, the law does not allow caste discrimination but in the inside behavior it still exists". In her perception, caste discrimination is not that bad and as shameful as before, even if "untouchable" people are not allowed to enter her house.

A woman gave me a strong example of caste discrimination from her childhood. Her name is Asmita, and she is Dalit (untouchable):

> "When I was a little girl, I used to go to the tap to bring water back home with friends. I remember they are from the caste: Gurung. One day, when coming back to our respective home, my friends' parents threw away the water because it was brought with me. They thought I touched that water. They scolded their daughter saying, why did you let her touch the water? So they spread gold water on their daughters to purify them. Gold water is usually used for God, but high cast also use it to purify what untouchable have touched".

Asmita is traumatized because she was excluded during her childhood due to her caste. Her parents did not allow her to go and play with high caste children. This is a powerful illustration to understand that sometimes "untouchable" do not fight against these discriminations. Ashmita also told me that since she lives in Kathmandu, she has never experienced caste discrimination.

For a vast majority of Nepalese, caste discrimination no longer exists in cities but only in villages or remote areas. Sajit is a journalist; he explains this difference like this:

> "There are still big inequalities and especially in the countryside. In big cities like Kathmandu you cannot discriminate, there are many police, tourists, etc. Things are changing and mentalities are evolving, but castes discrimination still happens. In the village, sometimes you have a job according to your caste and higher caste will not share food with you. Last week, I was at the opening event of a school in a remote area. The villagers came and the ones playing music were Dalit. Everyone was standing in a line to get food and a group of people said: now we cannot eat that food because they (lower caste) have already touched it. They left without eating. It was surprising to see caste discrimination in this kind of social event. The discrimination is not at the extreme level like before but it definitely still exists".

In little villages, caste and communities tend to live among themselves, not to marry between castes and not to mix too much as explained by Sajit. For instance, I visited a village in Sindhupalchowk district. It was quite remote and little. In these ten houses, only one same caste lived. The majority of Nepalese with whom I spoke agree that in large cities, caste discrimination no longer exists. However, Saura from a middle caste explained to me an interesting situation:

> "At home I have a helper, she is Dalit. But, she never told me herself. I know that from a friend who knows her well. She did not tell me because in many families she would be fired because they won't want her to enter the kitchen. But I don't care about those things. However, I have to lie to my mother in law because she would never accept a Dalit person to enter our house".

The case given by Saura shows a strong generational difference existing in Nepal. Mentalities are evolving towards equality, but older generations still practice what they call: traditions. This part showed that even if caste discriminations are prohibited in Nepal, it still exists, especially in rural areas or traditional families.

5.3 Women & men relations

This part will depict women and men relations on the topics of role division at home, marriage, periods and safety, which are based on the main subjects brought from women, NGOs and politicians interviews. It is argued that gender roles are still based on the patriarchal Nepalese system, which marginalizes women.

5.3.1 Role division at home

First of all, this section brings examples of the roles divisions existing in Nepalese families and shows that in many cases women have no choice to do everything at home – even when having a job outside.

"Nepal is a patriarchal country"

This statement was given to me by the vast majority of people I spoke with during my time in Nepal. The country follows a traditional patriarchal system, which means that: women and men have their own distinct roles (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016). Sajit, a journalist, explains women's roles nowadays in Nepal as following: "Women wake up, clean the house, make the food, prepare children to go to school and work at home, and men go to work outside, it is like that, people have no choices". This division of roles is here presented as a fatality, something that people sometimes question but follow because "it is like that". However, a man gives this explanation. I have no examples of a woman describing her traditional role as inevitable.

Maya, a feminist social activist, is very shocked by the division of roles in Nepal. She described women's role at home as following:

> "In a basic Nepali family, the man eats before the woman. Culturally, the woman has to please the man by giving him good food, children, herself and so on. Sometimes I feel like women are working machines and at night they have to please their husband. No matter whether the husband is drunk or never bathing, the woman has one responsibility left: to please her husband in bed whether she likes it or not. She does not culturally have the right to say I am tired; I just want to take a rest, no right. If she says so, something will happen to her".

Maya is solidly against the Nepalese patriarchal system, which, according to her, comes from the fundamental social laws of Nepal based on Hinduism. Maya's goal is to educate and create awareness for women to know their rights and step up. Indeed, women often do not complain about their roles as the patriarchal system is rooted in the Nepalese culture. This is the case of Bianca, 18 years old and from a modest family. She had to stop going to school at 16 years old because her parents could not afford to pay both for her and her brother. Bianca accepts it; it is because she is a woman that she had to let her brother go to school instead of her. Therefore, she does not complain.

It is important to understand that despite these negative stories, Nepal has evolved considerably in the past decades. Nepalese people question more and more the patriarchal system; girls have better opportunities, go to schools, work, etc. Indeed, many women I could talk to were working. However, I have also seen many conflicting stories. For example, Samyukta, a young Nepalese woman working for an NGO fighting against gender inequality, is one of them. Working at the NGO from 9 am to 5 pm, Samyukta had to travel 1h30 to get to the office. At that time, she was

married for a year and every morning she had to get up at 5 am to help her mother in law. She had to clean and cook as she was "learning to become a wife". This educated women with strong convictions repeat the pattern of a traditional family that she even criticizes. However, she must act this way because she is a woman and now part of a new traditional family: her husband's. Which brings us to the importance of the marriage in Nepal.

5.3.2 Marriage

Another important element of the patriarchal system in Nepal is the marriage. This section shows examples of how it can shape women and men inequalities.

Marriage is an important institution in Nepal. Society does not well accept it if a woman is not married in her thirties. For the vast majority, families arrange weddings and "love marriage", as called in Nepal, is somewhat rare. A woman of marriageable age will have proposals from neighbors or family to marry a man. The majority of Nepalese prefer this system as they think it induces stable marriages. Saura 45 years old is married to a man from an arranged marriage, she explained to me:

> "I got married very late, I was 32. I am very lucky that my husband and I were arranged together because men do not want old women. I prefer arranged marriage because love is not something that comes and goes like in western countries. In Nepal you do not love your husband at first, but the love that will appear and strengthen after the years will never go".

The example of Saura shows that it was a big concern for her not to be married in her thirties. Indeed, society judges a single woman and the older the woman gets, the harder it is to get married. She also shows the Nepalese perception of love, as something that comes with time and stays forever.

A marriage that does not work and which leads to separation is very badly seen in Nepal. In many people's mind, "love marriages" are not stable because you love the person for the wrong reasons. You should love your husband because he is your husband. Saura has a son and a daughter, they are still young, but she will try to organize their marriages in a few years. However, she is aware that young generations in Nepal are now using phones, social media and are less interested in following traditions.

When two persons marry in Nepal, it is crucial that it happens between two people of the same caste. Unions between people from different castes occur rather seldom, it is called: inter-caste marriage. Ashmita, 32 years old, was married to a man from a "higher" caste than hers. It was a love marriage and the man's family was against it. Due to the pressure from his family, Ashmita's husband filed for divorce. She is now single. It will be very hard for her to find someone else, as it is rare in Nepal that someone marries a divorced woman – which is not the

case for men. Her story is significant and helps to understand how strong family and societal influences are in Nepal. Indeed society believes that inter-caste marriages are wrong and a couple from different caste will be judged by their community. The power of society is robust in Nepal, and if you are judged, your whole family is. If one's family and community think that the marriage is wrong, there are huge chances that it won't work. It can be for many reasons, for example, inter-caste marriage, remarried woman or if the woman is not able of having children.

It is also the opinion of Roshika: a marriage works if the caste and religion are the same and if the community supports this union. Roshika, 58 years old, lost her husband a long time ago, she is certain that she had a happy union because her caste and religion were the same as those of her husband. For her: "Marriage in Nepal is not only between man and woman. It is also between two families. So the caste and religion play a significant role in the successful and harmonious relationship between husband and wife. I was happily married because our caste and religion were the same". These stories show that getting married to someone of your own caste is very important. Family and society's opinion has a significant influence. This is also true for divorces. When a couple divorces, mainly the woman will be blamed because it is her responsibility to make the marriage work. Some women prefer not to divorce and accept difficult situations rather than being judged or rejected by the family and the society. This point is shown by the following example.

The woman I was living within Nepal once told me she was very sad for a friend of her. The woman was married and had a little girl. However, she could not have babies anymore. Which means no boys. However, having a son is very important in Nepal. Her husband then decided to follow polygamy, and he married another woman, who gave him a son. Nowadays, the "first wife" is living on the first floor of the home and the husband is on the second floor with the "second wife". She could not leave him because she would be alone with a daughter, no work and with the shame of being a single mother. Therefore, she accepts the situation. Polygamy is no longer legal in Nepal. However, it does not mean it is not happening anymore. I was told that if the woman does not complain, then no one would interfere in the situation. However, not every woman accepts polygamy, as demonstrated by Ansu, 26 years old:

> "I left my husband when I found out he was married to another woman. He betrayed me by doing polygamy, so I didn't want to stay with him. He was living abroad for his work. Since I found out about his other marriage he stopped sending money to our son and I. I did not get any support from my parents-in-law they were supporting their son. However, my parents were always supporting me and I am very lucky for that".

Ansu's story shows that, even though a woman will be judged by society to quit her husband, some women stand up for their rights. Even if not accepted by society, divorce is legal in Nepal and occurs more and more. Sandeep, a politician from a new "progressive" Nepali political party, criticizes the practice of divorce:

> "From the Western world, we copy good and bad practices. Divorces for example, it is going to develop a lot in Nepal. I will not judge it because it's someone's right, but from extended family we will have broken family within one generation. Both extremes are bad; the extended family was bad for women's rights, highly patriarchal. But then the broken family is also bad for isolation, loneliness. This is a problem in the western world".

Sandeep's critique of extended families is accurate. Extended families in Nepal – when the newly married woman has to go to live in the house of the husband with her parents-in-law – is very patriarchal as the father of the house takes every decisions and woman have to do the housework. When a woman marries, she must obey her parents in law and accept the rules of her new family. She does not have a say. However, it is interesting that this politician who wants the Nepalese to defend their rights is still against the practice of divorce. For him, it is better not to complain and make your marriage work rather than separation.

This part showed the importance of marriage in Nepal and how it can shape inequalities between women and men as much pressure and responsibilities are put on women to make the marriage work.

5.3.3 Period

This part will explain how having periods can be experienced in Nepal. It is an important subject as it creates marginalization in women through certain social practices.

Periods are a taboo subject in Nepal. In Hinduism, a woman having her period is considered impure and suffers from many restrictions, for example, she cannot enter the kitchen, touch male members of the family or sleep in her bed. NGOs talk more and more about menstruation and focus on educating women about periods. However, once again, the family has a strong power of influence. Saura, 45 years old, has to constrain herself with those period rules only when her mother in law is visiting. For her, it is not feasible not to enter the kitchen for a few days every month, as she has to cook for her family. Nevertheless, when her mother in law is at home, she has to tell her when she is menstruated. This is very important for her husband's family, so she has to obey. This story shows that practices are evolving. The family and older generations have an extreme influencing power.

The custom of Chhaupadi – explained in the contextual chapter – is a tradition of isolating women during their menstruation, as they are considered impure. Therefore, from their first menstruation, very young women are forced to stay in a shed for the days of her periods, making food their own, lighting fires to warm the shed, and being isolated from society. Scandals around Chhaupadi emerged as young girls died practicing it. In 2016 a girl died while making a fire to warm herself, and in 2017 a young woman died from snakebite inside the shed (Le Monde, AFP,

2017). This practice is illegal but still existing in far west Nepal. Women from villages living in Kathmandu do not practice this dangerous tradition in the city but sometimes do so when visiting their family back in the village. Bianca 18 years old, hates this practice but still has to follow it when she visits her family in her village.

> "Back in my village, when you have your period you have to live outside the house for 7 days. We follow *Chhaupadi*. If I don't follow the tradition at home, it creates physical problem to my family. For example: the neck of some people would turns automatically. I do not like this system. If I have a daughter I will never isolated her outside during her period. Even since the law, which prohibits this practice, people still follow it in my village".

Bianca does not follow Chhaupadi in Kathmandu, but she does so when she visits her parents. She explains that if she refuses to isolate herself during her periods her family will be punished by religion and have physical problems. However, she will never force her daughter to follow this practice because she knows how dangerous it is. With Bianca and many women, I could have quite open discussions about menstruations. The education they are receiving through NGOs, for example, is playing an essential role in "free speech". Even if these practices and impurity stereotypes are deeply rooted in Nepalese culture, the younger generations are slowly breaking these taboos.

5.3.4 Safety

Lastly, the theme of safety is crucial, as insecurity feelings are predominant in Nepalese women. It can be linked to the patriarchal system as culturally; women are considered weaker, barely go outside alone and are sometimes the ones blamed when being harassed. I argue that many women feel unsafe in Nepal and to protect themselves they have different strategies.

Nepalese women undergo many forms of violence in their everyday lives. The NGO WOREC publishes every year since 2005, a book called ANBESHI reality revealed which is a report documenting violence against women in Nepal. They gave me the one from 2016. Domestic violence is the main VAW in the book, as 73% of the cases recorded by the NGO being of this type (WOREC, 2016, p. 5). The second one is social violence (11,3%): "due to social constructions like caste hierarchy and can include acid spraying, labor exploitation, allegations of witchcraft and subsequent punishments, threats, and character assassinations" (ibid). Rape is the third most common VAW (6%), and mainly affects women aged between 16 and 25 (WOREC, 2016, p. 6). Other cases of the year include sexual violence, murder, trafficking, and suicide. Being a victim of violence "is a fact of life for legions of girls and women and must be investigated as a factor reducing individual, household, and community resilience" (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006, p. 141). Indeed, the consequences of violence for these women have serious repercussions on their lives. As WOREC pointed out, violence against a woman will "damaged the relationships with her family and community and can result of a loss of income due to the stigmatization" (WOREC, 2016, p. 21). However, when speaking with politics, they

seemed not to point out women's safety as a significant problem. For example, Sandeep, a politician, was very positive about women rights nowadays in Nepal:

> "Over the last two decades, NGOs have been working on rights, rights, and rights. I think the last remaining inequality is because of generation. Elder generations still have the impression that women and men are not equal. So they have to die. It is going to happen in a decade. Nepal love changes".

It is quite significant to see how women and men have such different perceptions of rights and safety of Nepalese women. In practice, the significant majority of women I have talked to, feel safe by not going alone in the street. It is the case of Amita, 25 years old: "Usually we don't walk alone, we walk with a group of friends. This is why I don't have any problems. Now I am living at the training center, and we are not allowed to go outside alone anyway. So I am safe". For Shirisha, 19 years old, it is the same, she prefers not to be alone outside especially at night: "Sometimes I feel unsafe walking down the street at night. If someone does something like kidnapping, or sexually abusing to me then what will I do? So I try not to be outside at night. I leave the cafe at 4 pm and reach the hostel at 5:30 pm". As for Shirisha, most of the women I talked to do not go outside after sunset. Sharita, 27 years old, used to feel safe and free to go outside whenever she wanted. However, she does not do it anymore because she lived aggression: "One night, I was going back home, it was late and dark. A man from nowhere grabbed me. I shouted at him. He was trying to pull me and take me to the bush and do something terrible to me. I defended myself; he could not do anything to me. I was screaming so he ran away. From that day, I don't walk alone at night anymore". To cope with the feeling of insecurity that Sharita has since this incident, she does not go outside alone anymore.

There is a cultural consensus in Nepal that assigns responsibility to women for their safety. In the perception of many women, it is their own duty to stay safe even in front of violence or drunkenness. I was told that a woman should dress accordingly, choose her friends, not walk alone especially when it is dark outside, not talk to men, to stay safe. Eyrum, 34 years old explained to me why:

> "If girls live a disciplined life, they will be safe. It depends on you. In Nepalese culture, we have to be careful about how we dress because it can affect men's emotions. In most rape cases the reason is partly that of the clothes the girl was wearing. Coming home before it gets dark can save girls from possible harassments. Even at the bus stops when you are waiting for your bus, the boys come to talk to you, that is very annoying. Women are never safe, and they should be cautious on their own. In Nepal, men cannot see the parts of the body such as legs, chest or too much skin of women. If they see those parts then mentally, they can imagine things, and when they cannot control themselves, they will take actions. It can be sexual or verbal harassment of the woman, it can even lead to rape cases".

As Eyrum explains, to be safe women must be careful and not "provoke" men – it is their own responsibility. However, these patriarchal beliefs are slowly disappearing. I have also heard

encouraging stories from women and men, especially those of the younger generations who are ready to make change happen and talk about inequalities. Many women and girls make their voices heard about inequalities, sexuality, periods, sexual harassments, rape and change the patriarchal society. Yet women, NGOs, and activists do not remain inactive. Indeed, they are fighting for changes to occur and many evolutions have taken place in recent decades.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter shows the different experiences of gendered relations and integrate them into "social differences and power such as castes and sex" (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006, p. 130). This part intended to highlight some of the strong inequalities that prevailed in the talks I had in Nepal. As a result, I showed the different and subjective perceptions of women, NGOs and politicians about gendered relations and roles in Nepal. In conclusion, the concept of intersectionality: "the confluence of one's multiple marginalized and privilege identities is an interaction that creates a unique experience, distinctive from those with whom they may share some identities but not others" (Griffin & Museus, 2011). For example, a woman from a certain caste and religion will experience different inequalities than another person because of her personal multiple identities. As argued in this chapter, caste discrimination and women and men inequalities still strongly exist in Nepal. Therefore, a woman of this caste, this geographical background, this age and this religion will experience her live through these multiple identities. These ways of perceiving and experiencing gender shapes women's different lived experience of the disaster, and as we will see in the next chapters, how women cope with these impacts.

6. The 2015 Earthquake

6.1 Introduction

On April 25, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake strikes Nepal, followed by a second one on the May 12 and more than 450 aftershocks (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016). One of the first impacts of the Earthquake is the loss (humans, houses, animals, etc.). From the interviews conducted, I understood that the memory of the Earthquake is for the vast majority a horrible mixture of fear, trauma, difficulties, and inequalities. Many families remained broken, and about 55% of the victims were identified as women (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016) (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016). In addition to the adversity of losing a relative, it is estimated that more than 850,000 houses have been destroyed or damaged (OXFAM, Women for Human Rights, 2016). Citizens, NGOs, and political actors immediately took actions to help their community.

This chapter aims to understand what are the memories of the earthquake and what are the gendered impact of the disaster regarding health and safety. Gendered effects of disasters are linked to health problems, as women in Nepal have to keep their role, as mother or wife. For example, they culturally eat at last, and when food or proper water is not available, they are the first ones to be deprived (Standing, Parker & Bista, 2016). Literature also points out that after a disaster, women are at a higher risk of violence against women and girls (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006), which will be addressed here. It is crucial that research aims to understand and focus on women's experience in the aftermaths of a disaster. It can bring inequalities to the forth and make political action and better development framework possible.

Therefore, this second empirical chapter focuses on the memories that women, NGOs, and political actors have of the 2015 earthquake. Three main topics will be covered. First of all, the memory of the earthquake to understand the lived experience and memories women, NGOs and political actors have. Secondly, changes in health and safety for women as literature brings to the forth the importance of addressing these issues in the aftermath of the earthquake. Finally, the relief distribution as this topic was brought by women, NGOs, and political actors as a factor to shape inequalities.

6.2 Memory of the 2015 Earthquake

This section focuses on the memories women have from the earthquake. It is argued that three years after the catastrophe, people are still very traumatized by it.

The first memories of the earthquake are mainly about losses, sleeping outside for weeks, the lack of food, water, and the trauma or insecurity felt after the disaster. The majority of people had to sleep outside their home after the first shocks for weeks or months. The reasons are because houses were destroyed or because it was too dangerous to sleep inside at that time as no one

knew if a larger earthquake would occur or not. Therefore, people had to sleep outside, under tents or temporary shelters, sometimes with many strangers. Memories are different and complex as each person lived the earthquake very differently. Nisu, 25 years old, remembers it as a nightmare:

> "I remember that day as a nightmare because my sister died, it's hard to remember that. Her son, my nephew, was only 9 years old at that time. It was terrible. But it was not only us, millions of people in Kathmandu and all over Nepal people lost their loved ones and property and everybody was suffering".

As explained by Nisu, Nepalese suffered a lot from the catastrophe for example by losing loved ones, home or by being traumatized by the earthquake itself. Rasila, 48 years old, describes the earthquake as following: "That one-minute earthquake felt like the longest minute I have ever had. All the walls of the compound were on the floor. I prayed to God to keep my children safe. I tried to call them, but they were unreachable. For five days I lived with 40 people. I had mental stress and pressure because the environment was very chaotic". As Rasila explains, the earthquake is often described as an endless moment when people were shocked and sometimes panicking. Maya, a social activist, reports that people were so traumatized and stressed that for days they had no ideas what to do or where to go.

This was the cast of Birsha, 30 years old, they lost their house during the earthquake and her place of work, everything she owned with her husband and their two sons. Losing your home completely changes your life in the short and long term. For weeks, they had no idea where to go. Finally, they decided to move to Kathmandu, hoping for a better life:

> "Our house collapsed, it was also my working place. We lose everything. We did not have any food, clothes, utensils, etc. There was nothing left. We stayed in a shelter with my sons and husband for a few weeks. But in July it rains a lot because of the rainy season, the mud was coming inside our shelter. We needed to start a new life… from scratch. For three months we lived in a very difficult situation in the village, and then we arrived in Kathmandu. Since then, our life is very difficult".

The situation of Birsha and her family is sadly the case of many Nepalese. Many families were displaced after the earthquake in the short and/or long term. Indeed, "police estimated around 100,000 people who had to move into temporary camps" (Standing, 2016 p.192). Living in a shelter (tents or tarpaulin) is perilous as people had to face: living among strangers, the lack of food and water, the rainy season, and an endless list of difficulties. Sajan, 35 years old, is a housewife who's husbands lives abroad. She describes the earthquake as following:

> "I can never forget that fear. I remember this moment as the worse and most unforgettable of my life. After the earthquake, the tent where we were living in was huge, and many people were sleeping inside. So we were sleeping parallel for everyone to have room. At night while sleeping, we could not move our legs. All these people together, it smelt so bad. My husband works in

> Qatar, so it was only my two daughters and I. I felt very unsafe and alone. I have never faced that kind of misery".

Sajan's story shows how people were living all together to protect themselves but sometimes also felt in danger because of this proximity. As a woman alone, this seems to be very complicated. This part showed the very first memories of the earthquake and argues that people are still very traumatized and recovering from this difficult time. The following part will focus on the changes in health and safety it induced for women.

6.3 Health and safety of women

This section focuses on the gendered impacts of the earthquake in health and safety from issues reported by women and NGOs. Firstly, it is argued that women had higher mental health problems from their role and added responsibilities as women; they experienced much stress and trauma. Then, I argue that the physical health was also an important issue for women from the lack of sanitation when having their periods, the lack of privacy, the living conditions and the lack of care on pregnant women. Lastly, it is argued that the decreasing safety is also a gendered impact of the earthquake, from the growing alcohol consumption, living in shelters among strangers and the increasing trafficking of women. This part shows how women experienced the gendered impact of the catastrophe.

For Maya, a social activist, the fact that many men work outside of Nepal (about seventy-five hundred thousand according to her), women alone had to suffer significant difficulties because they had to look after children, the elderly, animals, and all the burden from the earthquake. Maya emphasized that, apparently, both women and men suffered, however, she thinks that women had more difficulties, because of the added responsibilities they experienced after the earthquake. To have her husband abroad is the case of Sajan who has two daughters. At that moment, she felt in danger because she was alone to cope with everything. However, for Sajan and her two daughters, the most difficult was health wise:

> "At that time my eldest daughter was menstruating for the first time, and the younger daughter was small and weak. I did not feel very well myself, I was taking medication and helped my daughters as best I could. And I felt that the fear of the earthquake further increased my illness. I was having a hard time".

Sajan was alone because her husband works in Qatar. Therefore, she had to take care of everything on her own with her two young daughters. From this hard time, she was feeling her illness increased. The earthquake had health impacts both physically and mentally. Rasila, 48 years old, felt mental stress: "After the earthquake, we helped a family, they lived in our house for a moment, I was working, and we were living ten peoples in two rooms, it was not easy. I had

mental stress and pressure because the environment was very chaotic". Living with many people stressed Rasila a lot because, as a Nepalese woman, she has to take care of everything, for example, food, children, and cleaning.

Eyrum was pregnant at the time of the earthquake, the stress and fear of this uncertain moment, as well as her responsibility as a pregnant woman, had significant implications for her mental health. She fell into a depression:

> "I was pregnant at that time and, after the earthquake, because of anxiety, I felt into depression. I could not sleep, my body was shaking all the time, I thought I was dying. I had to fight alone because nobody would trust me, they would think I am crazy. I had to leave my job because I could not handle it. When my son was born, I struggled both physically and mentally. I could recover alone by praying and fasting. Three years after, I am still in the process of healing".

The case of Eyrum shows how pregnant women can face such mental isolation and difficulties. For the Nepalese point of view, a pregnant woman has to be strong and take care of the baby. Furthermore, depression is not yet accepted in the public opinion. Eyrum felt alone facing everything, which was translated by a depression. Liv, an NGO worker, also pointed out this gendered effect: "Pregnant and postpartum women did not receive good care, good food to eat and they had to go through a lot of tensions". Lack of care of pregnant women as well as pressure to fulfill their role is an important gendered impact of the earthquake.

Another issue is physical health. In many places, there was a lack of water and food caused by the earthquake and following landslides that sometimes-broke water arrivals. People in need ate and drank whatever they could find. As for Susmita and her family:

> "We all suffered from severe diarrhea. The tap of our village was broken, and we had to walk and take water from the river. The water was dirty because frequent landslides were happening after the earthquake. During our periods it was difficult because we didn't have proper toilets and the lack of water made it worse. It was tough to clean ourselves and take a shower. We used to create a group of women and go to the river early in the morning before anyone was awake to take a shower".

Susmita's example shows how the earthquake had impacts health wise. Indeed, drinking safe water and having proper sanitation was difficult because people had nowhere to go or only a few bathrooms were available for a large number of people. This was even more difficult for women as culturally; a woman in Nepal is not supposed to show much skin. Furthermore, having their period at that time was very difficult because of the lack of sanitation and privacy.

The living conditions after the earthquake also had health impacts. People were living for days, weeks or even months into temporary shelters because they lost their house or were too afraid

another big earthquake would occur. The temporary shelters are tents or made out of zinc sheets. The living conditions in temporary shelters are quite hard as it was humid during the rainy season, sweltering and freezing during winter. Eyrum is living with her family in a temporary shelter, for now, three years: “I was getting sick because our temporary shelter is made of zinc sheet. During the winter that zinc sheet gets wet with the dew and my children are getting sick because of the cold and during the summer that zinc sheet gets unbearably hot”. As a Nepali mother, Eyrum has to clean, cook, do the housework inside and take care of the kids if they are sick. Therefore, it was harder for her as she has to stay a lot inside the zinc house even when it is cold or extremely hot.

Another gendered impact of the earthquake is the safety. In the camps and tents where people were staying to protect themselves from possible other earthquakes, the level of privacy was very low. Women had to cope as they could with a lack of privacy, which can lead to harassment or sexual abuses. This is a gendered effect as the woman body is taboo in Nepal and lacking intimacy can encourage violence against women. Standing also stresses this gendered impact of the earthquake: “Life in temporary camps can be hazardous, as women and girls face risks in everyday survival, using unsegregated or otherwise unsuitable toilet and washing facilities […] they are at greater risk of forms of violence” (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016, p. 192). Many of the interviewees felt terribly uncomfortable living in temporary shelters, especially when having their periods. Safety for women was a big problem as the level dropped severely after the earthquake.

According to interviews, I realized that alcohol consumption increased after the catastrophe. Respondents identified a link between alcohol consumption and the higher level of harassment, fights, and rapes. The father of Ashmita, 19 years old, started drinking too much: “Nowadays my father has started to drink alcohol. It’s challenging because since the earthquake we have depts. Until and unless he is drunk, he is very kind, and he takes care of everyone. But after he is drunk, he gets very violent”. Because of the earthquake impacts, the father of Ashmita started to drink too much, she now feels unsafe around him as his daughter.

Roshika, is a social worker in an NGO, she explains the rise of violence as following:

“The violence against women has increased rapidly because the earthquake has become an excuse for men to create violence based on the frustrations they had regarding employment and many other things like poverty, economic status, etc. Additionally, because most houses were destroyed, women had to live outside, and it was not safe in camps and tents”. According to Roshika, the earthquake had an impact on the rise of violence, and therefore, on violence against women and girls. Sajan, 35 years old, is a housewife, she also felt the increasing unsafely in temporary shelter after the earthquake: “When living in the tent, I could not walk outside alone, neither my daughters. No one used to leave his children alone. We used to always walk in a

group for our own protection. You never know what can happen". She could not walk alone outside because she felt unsafe.

The insecurity raised is also observed by the increase of women trafficking in the country, as reported by many national and international NGOs (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016). Traffic in Nepal already existed but increased dramatically after the catastrophe as vulnerable women were targeted and promised jobs outside of Nepal. Maya, a social activist, explains that the number of violence, rape, and traffic increased significantly and that the first victims were women: "In remote areas, young girls are being sold or fall into pimp's trap. The traffic in women increased a lot because people were in misery, in some villages, you cannot find young women anymore". According to Maya, after the earthquake the number of women trafficked increased drastically, some were being sold from families in misery, other felled into pimp's trap promising great jobs outside of Nepal. However, once they leave their country, many women are being lost.

Two women I interviewed had a trafficking problem. One could not talk about it. She did not want to remember this period of her life. The other one, Bianca (18 years old), told Neera and me what happened:

> "After the earthquake, the situation of my family was not good at all. I wanted to help them. A woman and a man tricked me. I knew the woman from before, and I trusted her. She said that she helps people to go abroad to work, she told me: If you need a job I can help you, you don't need to pay for anything now. When you'll start working you will pay me back. At first, I did not want to follow her; my parent would have been very mad if they knew I wanted to leave the country. But my goal was to help my family, so I agreed and went to Kathmandu with her. I lied to my parents saying I went to my uncle's".

Hopefully, the government saved Bianca and two other women at that time from being trafficked before they left Nepal, which is quite rare as it is hard to follow trafficking networks in and outside Nepal. Bianca is now living is a secret placed hostel with other women victim of trafficking.

This part focused on changes in safety and health for women. The objective was to show the major problems faced by women after the catastrophe to understand the gendered impact of the disaster. However, in order to understand the general intersectional lived experiences of Nepalese women, it is important to look at other components then differences between women and men.

6.4 Relief Distribution

This section focuses on the gendered and caste impacts of the earthquake from the relief distribution. I will put to the forth issues reported by women, NGOs and political actors. It is argued that geographical location, caste discrimination and corruption could shape gendered and caste inequalities after the earthquake.

Memories that women, NGOs and politics have of the relief distribution are very relevant to understand difficulties and inequalities because of accessibility problems as well as discrimination on the basis of caste differences. Some remote areas were not accessible after the earthquake because roads were sometimes destroyed and some villages are reachable only after hours of walking. As a result, geographical locations of living could shape inequalities. For instance, Birsha and her family received no help for days because their village was hard to reach:

> "For a week no one came to my village to help us, it was not reachable because of the landslides damages. After a while, a helicopter came and dropped packets of relief in my village. However, we did not get anything because they did not land, they dropped things. We were not next to the reliefs when they arrived so we did not get anything".

Because of her remote place of living, Bisha's village did not get relief directly after the earthquake. When they did as a helicopter dropped packets, the relief was not shared and the firsts coming were the first served.

This is also the case of Bianca, 18 years old: "Our whole village did not get any relief. No organization or government people came to help us. It was a miserable time. The transportation system is terrible in my village, and it requires a lot of walking to reach it". As Bianca's village was quite remote, the relief did not reach it, which shows that the geographical setting could shape inequalities. Roshika, a social worker, sees these situations in a very critical way. According to her, if remote places have not received help, it is the fault of the government: "The government have never arrived in very rural and remote places that had no any access to transportation, it did not bother to go there because it was too complicated". I did not find any concrete evidence to support what Roshika told me. However, Sandeep, a political actor from a new party criticized the organization of the government at the time of the earthquake:

> "We did not wait for the government to do anything. The Prime Minister of Nepal responded to his citizens only after 72 hours…! Three days of silence, it was total chaos. The problem with our leaders is that they were not prepared, so whatever policy they adopted needed to be implemented effectively and it did not. It responded too late, it made policies it could not follow. For example the airport was not able to control the influx of foreign aid. There was too many, and the airport is too small. Help could not come in. I think our politicians are highly irresponsible, especially the old ones (not only by age but by old thoughts)".

The late response from the government explained by Sandeep, shows the lack of organization at that time, which can be linked to remote areas not having access to reliefs. Indeed, going to these villages requires much organization. The disorganization of the government has also been associated with suspicions of corruption in many talks I had. Roshika, a social worker, explains it as following:

> "Corruption had become a very big problem because all funds have been corrupted from the government level to the local level. The ones who were the real victims of the earthquake were

> deprived of all those funds. There are still so many real earthquake victims who have no access to the funds and who are still living under colossal poverty, waiting for the relief programs that are never going to arrive".

Many Nepalese believe that corruption has become even worse after the earthquake. When I asked Sajit, a journalist, about the corruption, he did not deny that it was a big problem in relief distribution and compensation of earthquake victims. However, he also made it clear the need to understand that the process to get indemnity for a destroyed house is very complicated. For him, it may be possible that victims of the earthquake do not take the money to reconstruct their homes because it implies going to Kathmandu many times and go through a very complicated and discouraging process:

> "One year after the earthquake, the reconstruction campaign started at the same time in all the affected districts. The earthquake happened on April 25, 2015, and the reconstruction began in April 2016. The government has appointed a technical group in each village. They were inspecting every house. The process to obtain the government subsidy is lengthy. To get the grant, people who lose their homes during the earthquake have to go first to the Village Development Committee. After the engineers have approved the problem people have to go to the District Coordination Committee, then they are sent to KOLENIKA (government financial agency). However, before that, they are sent to the reconstruction office. Then KOLENIKA again sends back to the District Coordination Committee. After this process, they can get the money in their bank account (if they have one). After completing these seven stages, the victim can get the money. However, if for instance, the name spelling is wrong: they will have to go through all those seven stages again even though they have already gone through them. If all these offices were in the same building and not in different places, then this process would be done in one day. The big problem is that everything takes for ages in Nepal and everything is very complicated. Many families cannot afford such a process".

In addition to this complicated process, many complaints were formulated because the amount of money was not enough to rebuild a house. Families reconstructing their homes are receiving 300,000 Nepali Rupees (around 2,800 USD) divided into three transfers. The government donates 50,000 Nepali Rupees (about 470 USD) for the first installment. Each household then has to prove they constructed it to get the rest of the money. Many families needed money for other things than their house, for instance: food, water, and medicines. However, if they did not use the money to rebuild their home, they then have to give the money back to the government. This is the case of Amita and her family: "The government gave us 50,000 Nepali Rupees but it is not enough to build a house, we used this money to eat. However, if you don't build, you have to give the money back, this situation has been very difficult". The story of Amita's family shows that one's financial situation can be another factor that shapes people's reality differently. A person with financial poverty would suffer in a different way when they lose their home than a person without an economic problem.

Another critical issue occurred during the relief distribution in some villages, caste discrimination. However, this problem is highly controversial; some Nepalese I talked to could

not believe it would happen. The first women who told me her experience with caste discrimination during relief distribution are Maya, a social activist, here is what she told me:

> "We arrived in a village with some relief. To make sure every household would have the same amount, the community leader (chief of the village) asked all the people to stand in a queue. They had a list with the names of people who could get relief from us. At one point, the community leader was talking in Tamang language to a group of people, telling them to go away, they were Dalit families. They thought we could not understand their language, but we understood everything. The community leader was shouting at them to go away, he did not want the Dalit people to have relief from us. My vision is to provide relief and humanitarian support to any people in need, especially for women, older people and children. We felt very bad seeing this scene. We asked the community leader: Why don't you put their name on your list? He responded: No, they don't need. We said why, why don't they need? They also belong to your village and they are also suffering! What we decided was: if they did not put the Dalit people in the list and not allow them to stand in the queue, we would return without giving any relief to anyone. Finally, they agreed".

When having some informal talks about my research. I sometimes brought this issue in the conversation. In two situations, I faced men who were strongly disagreeing with what I was saying. Both told me that people were lying to me and were slightly angry at me for believing it and talking about it: "you should not be naïve like that!". However, literature already pointed out these issues. Paul, Acharya, and Ghimire, wrote a scientific article in Natural Hazard. In there, they are pointing corruption issues in Nepal post-earthquake: "The distribution also suffered from widespread corruption; large-scale irregularities; rampant manipulation by bureaucrats, politicians, and members of elite groups; lack of coordination, timeliness, transparency, and accountability; and poor governance" (2017, p. 1172). Furthermore, not only one respondent told me about the issue of discrimination in relief.

Ramila is from the caste Dalit. Before the earthquake, she was living with her single mother in a village in Dhaging district. She experienced discrimination in relief: "When the relief for earthquake victims arrived in our village, those who had a connection or link with the positioned people in the village received help. But with my mother, we did not have anyone to speak in our favor, so we did not get help. In the village, they did not write our name in the relief beneficiary list. I don't know why". The story of Ramila is very strong, her mother and she could not speak out for their rights. It shows how being from a "lower" caste, not having political connections and being a women head of a family can shape gendered inequalities.

Talking about the earthquake brings many bad memories and cases of the gendered impact of the disaster. However, the earthquake has also brought cases of solidarity among communities, generations, and genders. Roshika, explained her experience of living in a camp as follows:

> "After the earthquake, we lived in a camp. Women were involved in cooking, cleaning the dishes, cleaning the camp, cleaning the beds, and men were involved in making the tents stronger,

> buying and carrying drinking water, digging deep holes to make temporary toilets, digging dams to make a way to rainwater so that our beds in the camp don't get wet, etc. Everybody was helping."

Sarita, 27 years old, involved herself with an NGO to help others: "After the earthquake, I lived with the NGO and I got involved in the relief distribution. We were taking care of children, women, cleaning the debris, building schools, etc. I felt relieved to help, people were happy to see us, it was a good time". Being evolved for other helped Sarita to undergo the earthquake period better.

The earthquake also brought a wave of youngsters' implication as Samyukta, working in an NGO explains:

> "The earthquake gave the opportunity for the young girls to get involved in their society. Sometimes looking at my age and nowadays, it's far different. Now they are talking about the sexuality, rape, sexual harassments and also they are raising the voice saying "no! We need equality, No! We need to change these". The feminist movement is also growing gradually and it is needed to break the culture, to break the system and to break the norms and values of the Nepali society, which is almost led by the patriarchal attitude. This earthquake also gave an opportunity for the youth people to raise their voices, to take care of their own people, to think about their own country."

This part focused on the gendered and caste impacts of the earthquake from the relief distribution. It showed that geographical location, caste discrimination and corruption shaped some gendered inequalities in some areas. However, it also brought great implication from youth and women.

6.5 Conclusion

This part aimed to show the gendered impact of the 2015 earthquake. Three main themes cover the main points raised by women, NGOs, and politics during the interviews: memories of the earthquake, health and safety of women and distribution of relief. This chapter intended to highlight some of the sharp inequalities that that took place during the earthquake. It shows that the gendered impact of the quake is intersectional. Indeed the area one lives in, the caste and the gender shaped one's experience of the earthquake. I also showed that the earthquake was not only a negative experience. It gave the opportunity to women and youngsters to involve themselves.

In the two next result chapters, the coping strategies of women and Nepalese NGO will be explained divided into two themes: health and safety.

7. Coping with Health Gendered Effect of the Earthquake

7.1 Introduction

Women are not passive actors in post-disaster circumstances. Therefore, it is essential to bring to the fore gender dimensions of post-disaster actions. Sultana (2011), stresses the importance of focusing on women's strategies. According to her: "While women are often the victims, they are also resourceful agents who cope with disasters and play important roles in rebuilding, rehabilitation, caregiving and mitigation" (Sultana F. , 2011, p. 46). Throughout earthquake-affected areas in Nepal, women coped widely with the gendered effect of the disaster. Indeed, research notes, "one of the most notable factors was the nature and size of the local level, civil society response to the earthquakes" (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016, p. 192). Immediately after the first chock, women and Nepalese NGOs mobilized and helped each other to cope with the health gendered effect of the earthquake and respond to both short and long terms need of women victims of the earthquake. This part will practically highlight women's coping strategies but also how social network and community building are essential based on women's solidarity to cope with the gendered effect of the earthquake. Based on the central themes raised by women and NGOs interviews, the coping strategies will be depicted. The topics are first needs, mental health, and women's solidarity. It is argued that community solidarity among women helped them to cope with the health-gendered effect of the catastrophe as they are the best placed to know and assess their needs.

7.2 Firsts needs

A first problem occurred right after the chock; immediate needs were the priority. Lack of proper water, food and shelter were the first problems for every Nepalese. However, this part argues that these effects are gendered as women had added responsibilities due to the social structures in Nepal. Based on literature and themes given by respondents, the first needs are here addressed regarding access to water and food, having a shelter right after the earthquake, having access to basic medicine, and proper sanitation when menstruated (Sultana F. , 2011; Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016).

A first problem was the limited access to water as the earthquake and subsequent landslides broke water sources. Amita was still living in her village at that time and had to walk a long time to reach a water source: "The water tap of our village was broken, we had to go very far to get water. I had to walk more than an hour to reach the tap from my house; we did it for two years. Fortunately, last April our village tap has been repaired". Getting water back home in Nepal is a women duty. Therefore, lacking water added responsibilities to women as there were the ones that had to go and search for it. Despite the long walk Amita had to do, she made the journey almost every day to bring water home. There, she had to wait a long time in line with other

women to access the tap, but she had no other choice. Amita and her family were really concerned about their water consumption. Therefore, they had to ration it. Rashmi also had an inadequate access to water after the catastrophe. However, she had access to water from a river. With her family, they drank and used water from this river, despite diarrheas they caught and the risk of diseases. Different water problem rose from the earthquake, having enough water or having quality water. This problem is gendered, as having water is part of women's role in Nepal. Therefore it was their responsibility.

Another problem is the access to food. In a household, the woman has to prepare the food for everyone. When food was missing, women had to face as best they could to have found and cooked food. Nisu explains how she coped - with the help of an NGO - with food preparation and consumption at that time: "For food, I hopefully got a kit from an INGO there was beaten (dry) rice, so I used to buy noodles and mix it with the beaten rice and eat that uncooked. For one month we were eating dry food, we didn't eat any cooked rice. We didn't have any utensils and stove so we could not cook anything". Nepalese usually eat rice and vegetables two to three times a day. Therefore, the great changing routine in food consumption sometimes caused stomach problems. Rasila tells how dry food changed her health: "I got gastric during the earthquake, it was so difficult because we were not eating properly, I vomited so much". To cope with these health problems from the earthquake, most women were just patient for it to go. For Nepalese, going to the doctor is very expensive; people are used to deal with their pain instead of going to medical institutions. Therefore, women were often dealing with their pain after the earthquake.

Another gendered effect occurred when people lost their house and went to a shelter outside or in a camp; everyone often had to deal with sanitation problems, because toilets or showers were rare. However, it was even more difficult for women who because the level of privacy was very low and women could feel unsafe. Susmita is a young girl from the caste Dalit, at the time of the earthquake she was still living with her parents in a village and moved afterward to Kathmandu. She explains how she and the women were coping with the low level of sanitation: "It was difficult because we didn't have proper toilets and we were lacking water, which made it worse. It was very hard to clean and, and everyone could see you. So we used to make a group of women and go to the river early in the morning before anyone was awkward to take showers". Women were coping with the lack of water and privacy by helping each other. This situation was also the case for Srijana:

> "After the earthquake, it was easier for boys because they could take a shower in the river anytime in front of anyone. But for women, it was very difficult because people are staring at you. Even though we used to wrap ourselves with clothes to clean, when you enter inside the river to bath, everything goes out. During my period it was even more complicated. As women, we did not know where to go and where to wash yourself, when to go to the river and take a shower, etc. It was very stressful, but we were helping each other with other women".

As stated by Bibek, working in an NGO: "our first priority was food because we had experienced from flood victims relief material distribution, then we also distributed tents". The prioritized actions of Nepalese NGOs were directly linked to health, such as the distribution of food, water, basic medicines, shelter and hygienic kits. According to Liv, working in the grassroots NGO WOFOWON, focusing on women's rights working in the entertainment sector: even though they did not have many things to distribute, they went to a camp and helped victims as they could:

> "In the beginning, we nearly had nothing to distribute. But we had some basic medicines, masks, jeevan jal (oral rehydration salt, ORS), etc. We took all these and went to Chabahil camp (Kathmandu) on April 26th. We were doing counseling, distributing medicines for headache and stomachache, distributing masks, giving ORS and checking blood pressure. That was our first work. After that, the staff sat together for discussing further plans."

Being in contact with people and distributing basic need help was the very first action of Nepalese NGOs. Roshika, working for the NGO Sister's Café, explains her organization's actions just after the earthquake as follows: "The organization spent more time on relief. We provided certain type of resources like money, food or any kind of relief materials depending on the situation. That was one of the first steps taken by our organization". Roshica's organization is usually working to give training to women, which are at risk of being trafficked or survivors of traffic. However, right after the earthquake they adapter their action to focus on primary health needs.

As explained by Roshika and Liv, after the earthquake their main reaction was going to "the field", reach people and distribute help such as food, water, basic medicines, shelter and hygienic kits in remote places. In order to be more efficient, most organizations were coordinating with other NGOs and INGOs. Two Nepali NGOs were coordinating together to do, along with physic health help, psychosocial counseling. Besides, a big part of the strategies was also to recruit women, members, and friends to help with the relief distribution, go to villages and distribute needed goods. Maya, is a social activist, she explains how she made these choices as follows: "We were trying to reach areas which were indicated by the government and where we also had a local connection because local connection plays a big role". For NGOs, it was easier to go to places where they had local connections as it helps to know which help was needed, what was the conditions of the roads to reach remote areas, and so forth.

Another first need gendered effect of the earthquake occurred when women got their periods right after the earthquake or a few weeks after. Indeed, when having their periods after the earthquake, pads were not available anymore as many shops were closed. Women had to find other solutions. Nisu (25 years old) explains her coping strategy as follows: "When menstruations were happening, the pads were not available in the shop, so it was difficult because all the shops were closed. At that time, even though you had money no one could buy pads. So I used clothes at that time, I adapted". Sajan is a mother of two daughters, and her oldest daughter was having

her periods for the first time when the earthquake happened. A priority for her was to make sure her daughter could feel clean: "My daughter had her first menstruation. Every shop was closed, and nothing was available. I took care of the inner wears like panties. I used to make both of my daughters change their panties every day to make sure they were clean". As Nisu and Sajan explain, the coping strategy was to adapt with what was available, as for the times being menstruated. After the earthquake, Maya (social activist), focused on sanitation:

> "During the earthquake we got so many eco-friendly sanitary pads for girls. First, we did a community mapping, in order to reach areas, which were not reached by the government and where we had a local connection because local connection plays a big role. It had pads, panty, shampoo, and soap. We reached more than 8000 young girls and women to teach them about the menstruation hygiene and personal hygiene; why it's important to take care of their own body during the menstrual time and especially after an earthquake when water is missing".

To cope with the gendered effect of lacking sanitation because of their periods, women were sometimes helped by NGOs – distributing sanitary pads – otherwise, they were coping by their own with clean clothes.

This part focused on the first gendered health problem experienced by Nepalese women. It is argued that access to water and food, having a shelter right after the earthquake, having access to basic medicine, is gendered as part of women's role in Nepal. Therefore women had added responsibilities due to the social structures in Nepal. Furthermore, having periods after the earthquake would decrease women's sanitation. In the long run, these added responsibilities and stress, impacted women mental health, as demonstrated in the next part.

7.3 Mental health

Another health effect of the earthquake reported by women is mental health such as stress, trauma, and even depression. It is gendered as many women had additional responsibilities, taking care of the children, elder people, cooking in difficult situations, be a good wife as it is imperative in the Nepali culture. As pointed out by Bankoff, Frerks, and Hilhorst (2004), vulnerabilities are dynamic, and it is essential to emphasize the importance of social relations and community roles to understand one's different vulnerability. Therefore, the actor-oriented approach in understanding these gendered health issues will allow us to put to the forth how community roles of Nepalese women result in experiencing more pressure.

Sarita (27 years old), is separated from her ex-husband. After the earthquake, she felt alone and stressed, it was very hard to be a woman alone. To cope with these feelings, she became involved in a local NGO, with other women to help victims of the earthquake and distribute relief supplies. Bandhana (23 years old), was helping her mother, traumatized from the earthquake: "Before the earthquake my mother was quite strong, but from the earthquake she never feels well, she is

stressed and traumatized. She had to deal with everything alone. So now I am working to support her financially". Bandhana's mother felt the gendered effect of the earthquake, as she was alone to deal with everything. Bandhana is now supporting her mother to cope with the stress and trauma. Again, getting involved within one's community or helping the family is a coping strategy from women to combat the stress and trauma of the disaster.

Eyrum felt in a depression after the earthquake and was also pregnant at that time. Being pregnant in such difficult times generated this depression, as Eyrum did not want her baby to arrive in such a challenging world. She felt left alone with her illness because the judgments she received from her community about her condition. Depression is not well accepted in Nepal and Eyrum was judged, as she needed to be responsible for their family, be a good wife and a good mother. Although her mother and her husband gave her support, she had to quit her job, stay at home, pray and fast, hoping to get better. These are the coping strategies Eyrum used. Today, she is gradually feeling better but is still struggling on her own to get rid of her stress and fear from the earthquake. Eyrum explains her healing process as following: "To feel better I stopped watching and reading bad news, which I still don't do. I got victory over that depression through prayer and fasting. I am still in the process of healing".

This part focused on mental health problems. They are gendered effect, as women in Nepal have to take care of their families and be good mothers and wives. After the earthquake women got many added responsibilities that could lead to stress and depression. To cope with this gendered effect, women were helping each other, involving themselves to help their community and working on themselves – usually alone – to feel better. The next part will focus on women solidarity and campaigns from NGOs as a support for women to cope with these health gendered effects.

7.4 Solidarity

Women and NGOs were solidary to women to help them to cope with these health-gendered effects of the earthquake. It is central to understand the point of view of local NGOs and women supporting one another, as to understand one's experience, there is a need to "be informed by the concrete experiences of the particular actors involved in and who stand to gain" (Nyamu-Musembi, 2005, p. 41). To understand the strong solidarity between women and NGOs, this part will first focus on women's solidarity and then the actions of few NGOs. It is argued that women helping each other by doing community building, involving themselves and creating NGOs are best placed to help women in coping with health-gendered impacts of the earthquake as they are in the best position to understand the gendered impact of the disaster and the strategies to be adopted in order to overcome them. Moreover, NGOs, especially local ones also had a central role in helping women to cope with the health gendered effect of the earthquake because they are locally implemented.

Firstly, a coping strategy from women to help each other fighting the gendered effect of the earthquake was community building. Indeed, the social relations of solidarity are an essential way of coping for women. A significant example is women making groups in camps to find sanitation and intimacy. Susmita (16 years old), found the lack of sanitation very hard after the earthquake, especially when having her period, as it is impure and taboo when a woman in Nepal has her periods. To cope with this gendered effect, Susmita and other women were helping each other: "During my period, it was difficult because we didn't have a good toilet and lack of water made it worse. It was tough to clean and take a shower. We used to make a group and go to the river early in the morning before anyone was awake". As Susmita explains, to cope with personal hygiene difficulties, women made groups to go and wash together, sometimes very early in the morning to find intimacy.

Women were also organizing themselves to cook and provide food to the community even when it was very hard to cook after the earthquake. As the woman is the one that has to provide food for the family, helping each other in the community was a strong coping strategy. Rasila is a wife and a mother of two, she explains how the women organized themselves in the camp her family was staying in: "With all the sisters (Nepali way to call other women) collected money between all people living in the camp and did grocery shopping. Then we were cooking food for all and the male members". The gendered difficulty of cooking after a catastrophe when food and water are hard to get was coped by women by community building which allowed them to fulfill the role of mother and wife Nepali women have.

The solidarity also implies the involvement of women and youth with NGOs, which has increased considerably during the relief distribution. This is the case of Sarita, 27 years old, who needed and wanted to help her community: "Right after the earthquake, I got involved in many activities with the NGO. It helped me to forget about the fear and stress from earthquake. We went to camps and we distributed food and medicines. We took care of children, woman and other groups of people". As Sarita says, helping her community was also helping herself.

Another example of strategies comes from a woman who decided to help other women by creating a local NGO itself. Indeed, Samyukta is a woman who has been trafficked twenty years ago. She survived, came back to Nepal, managed to re-integrate herself in her country and involved as an activist to help women. After the earthquake, she felt the Government, INGOs, and NGOs were not helping women adequately in need. Therefore, Samyukta created a grassroots NGO, Shanti Foundation: "At first women were victims of the earthquake. Now it became larger because they never got a voice". Shanti Foundation is now working in Kathmandu helping a community of women affected and infected by HIV. Additionally, her team of four women organizes health camps in earthquake-affected areas. According to Samyukta, focusing on women who do not have reasonable access to health services provides a space for them to talk

about taboo gendered issues such as AIDS, HIV, and sex. Women trust the NGO Shanti Foundation as a woman that suffered through her life created it to help her community.

Women helping each other by doing community building, involving themselves and creating NGOs are best placed to help women in coping with health-gendered impacts of the earthquake as they are in the best position to understand the gendered impact of the disaster and the strategies to be adopted in order to overcome them.

NGOs, especially local ones also had a central role in helping women to cope with the health gendered effect of the earthquake because they are locally implemented. The NGO Women Forum for Women in Nepal (WOFOWON) is generally focusing on the rights of women working in the entertainment sector (bars, massage cabin, and clubs). Liv is working with WOFFOWON. She describes the organization as following: "the NGO was established by women working in the entertainment sector and is continuously working to ensure the rights of women working in the informal and entertainment sectors in Nepal". However, after the earthquake, they engaged in a campaign to cope with mental stress. The NGO WOFOWON believes that through dance and music women can express themselves and release tensions that occur because they are women. She explains how through music and dance, they helped many women to feel better:

> "With the smile campaign, with the help of music and dance, we helped women with reducing mental stress and trauma. We did that in many camps. Our members who were living here in a safe shelter were also volunteering in the smile campaign. That smile campaign did different kinds of works: It helped to reduce the tension of women, helped to prevent depression and other kinds of diseases".

According to Liv women can become mentally stronger through dance and music, as she explains: "if you are mentally strong then you will also be physically strong". Therefore the smiling campaign targeting women took place in many camps after the earthquake. The campaign is gendered as it focused on women and aimed to empower and release tensions they had from the earthquake because they are women.

Another NGO: Shanti Foundation is coping with long terms traumas via workshops such as art therapy, which are focusing on women. I followed a two-day art therapy workshop. Around twenty women attended the workshop with a positive attitude, which was decupled after the two days. It seemed to have a positive impact on these women's mind. Picture 1 following, shows the drawing-in-music activity women followed during the workshop. We can see two women attending the art therapy workshop. They are drawing something that is supposed to make them feel happy. After the drawing session, they were talking in groups of two to explain their drawing. Many of them were smiling and laughing a lot. According to the NGO Shanti foundation, this exercise helps women releasing stress and think positively. Additionally, taking moment for oneself is rare for women in Nepal. As a wife women have to work at home and

barely have time to have personal activities. This gendered activity helps women to take a moment for their own.

Picture 1: Art therapy workshop NGO Nepal – Elorry Mahou

Another long-term strategy from NGO linked to health problems is the organization of health camps in remote places where women do not have access to good health service. In Nepal, hospitals are mainly in cities. Therefore villages and remote areas have access to small health posts. However, health posts are only equipped with basic tools and minimal capacities to help people. Most of the time one health post covers a big area, and people have to walk for hours to reach them. Additionally, the earthquake destroyed many of these health posts, depriving people of basic health help. On the 10th December 2018, I followed the NGO Shanti Foundation in a remote village: Ichowk in Sindhupalchowk district, one of the most affected by the earthquake. The health post was still standing. However, many women had to walk six hours or more to reach us, as the area is lacking health help. Around 80 women came to the camp to be tested for HIV, cervical cancer, STD and have a general checkup from a doctor. The NGO started these health camps after the earthquake as they realized the need for people living in remote areas to have better health services. Directly after the earthquake and until now (3 years after), NGOs are conducting health camps to take care of women that have been affected by the earthquake and live in remote areas. Health camps aim to counsel about health, menstruation, personal hygiene, having general checks and an access to basic medication. They also give women an opportunity

to talk in private about personal problems, health and taboo subjects. Picture 2 following, shows the health camp in Ichowk. We can see women waiting to register and enter the health post. The first table is the registration table, one member of Shanti Foundation and one volunteer were asking basic questions to women in order to keep up with who attended to the health camp and be able to find them back if any problem was found by the doctor. Some women could not write or read the volunteer therefore helped them. In the second and third table at the left of the picture, women had general check-ups such as blood pressure and primarily HIV test through blood collection on their finger. Is something was found in their blood women would be called and would have to go to Kathmandu for a complete HIV test. The next step in the health camps was going in a room with two nurses where women could find privacy to talk about possible sensitive issues and have a general check-up. The health camp was very helpful, as women from this area do not have access to such health care often. Some of them had to walk for more than five hours to reach it. In this sense, the NGO managed to bring help for women to cope with gendered health problems.

Picture 2: Health camp Ichowk – Elorry Mahou

The strategies Nepalese NGOs sat up to help women to cope with the health-gendered effect of the earthquake aimed for the significant majority to respond to the firsts needs that rose after the quake. To this end, NGOs received the precious help of women and youth. For the longer-term

strategy, NGOs organized campaigns, workshops and health camps to help women to cope with mental and physical health problems.

This part showed that women helping each other by doing community building, involving themselves and creating NGOs are best placed to help women in coping with health-gendered impacts of the earthquake as they are in the best position to understand the gendered implications of the disaster and the strategies to be adopted to overcome them. Additionally, NGOs also had a central role in helping women to cope with the health gendered effect of the earthquake because they are locally implemented and know the health needs of women.

7.5 Conclusion

The coping strategies from women and the strategies from Nepalese NGOs established linked to health reflects the current academic discussion. Firstly, These health effects are gendered as women had added responsibilities due to the social structures in Nepal. Enarson argues that in post-disaster, NGOs and women themselves are vigorously involved right after the crisis occurs (Enarson p.137). Indeed, the very first action taken by local NGOs and women volunteering to help was distributing basic medicine, food, water, shelters and hygienic kits. Another health effect of the earthquake reported by women is mental health such as stress, trauma, and even depression. It is gendered as many women had additional responsibilities, taking care of the children, elder people, cooking in difficult situations, be a good wife as it is essential in the Nepali culture. As pointed out by Bankoff, Frerks, and Hilhorst (2004), vulnerabilities are dynamic, and it is essential to emphasize the importance of social relations and community roles to understand one's different vulnerability. From adopting an actor-oriented approach is understood that women themselves developed important community solidarity that allowed them to fulfill their role as Nepalese women as well as dealing with gendered health issues such as lack of sanitation, periods and mental stress. Finally, this part showed that women are helping each other by doing community building, involving themselves and creating NGOs, are best placed to help women in coping with health-gendered impacts as they are in the best position to understand the gendered impact of the disaster and the strategies to be adopted in order to overcome them. Additionally, NGOs also had a central role in helping women to cope with the health gendered effect of the earthquake because they are locally implemented and know the health needs of women.

8. Coping with Safety Gendered Effect of the Earthquake

8.1 Introduction

Nepal is characterized by persistent inequalities among women, men, and castes. As we saw in the chapter: Gender relations and roles in Nepal, being this gender, this caste, this age, this religion, from this geographical background, still dramatically shapes your relationships and your roles in Nepal. As demonstrated by Standing, Parker, and Bista, the earthquake resulted in increasing insecurity and violence against women and girls (2016). Indeed two crucial issues after the earthquake were: the raise violence against women and girls (VAWG) and the risk of being trafficked (Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016, p. 194). The NGO WOREC reported that VAWG and trafficking against women increased after the earthquake (2016). To cope with these gendered safety effects of the earthquake, women and NGOs were implementing strategies. Therefore, this chapter puts to the fore strategies implemented by NGOs as well as by women to cope themselves. To understand these strategies an actor-oriented approach is essential as it allows individual experience and collective learning (Long, 1984) through women experiences and testimony.

The following subject will be depicted: solidarity and creating safe living spaces. It is argued that women have strong abilities to cope against insecurity through solidarity. Additionally, NGOs were undeniable support for women undergoing insecurity.

8.2 Solidarity

Firstly, a primary coping strategy by women to bring feelings of safety that are created through solidarity. As defined by the author Rozakou, solidarity here is considered as help guided by egalitarian essence but also as an incorporation of people in need in "culturally significant forms of social interaction" (Rozakou, 2016, p. 186). Therefore, solidarity comes from people, NGOs and whoever initiatives to include and support someone in need through social interaction. This part shows how from an actor-oriented approach we understand how women organized each other, NGOs were coming in camps to help women feeling safer, the importance of awareness campaigns – on violence against women and girls – as well as training centers to create safety feeling.

Right after the earthquake, the significant majority of people were living in earthquake camps. There, Nepalese were living in big tents, among strangers. For weeks, they were living in these camps when losing their houses, but not only, as it was uncertain if another earthquake would occur, the big majority of Nepalese were living in post-earthquake camps to protect themselves from falling houses. However, in camps the level of insecurity was sometimes very high. To cope with insecurity issues, women were helping each other, supporting family, neighbor, and friends.

For instance, to protect herself, Amita (19 years old) explains that she was always walking in a group of women, which gave her protection and a feeling of security among strangers.

Other strategies were in place in post-earthquake camps, for example: coordinating the work between everyone in a bottom-up way so that recipients of relief also acted as providers of help. These ways of organizing work relate to safety as it gives community solidarity and a security feeling. Rasila (48 years old) explains the camp organization as follows: "We were living in a camp with many other families. The work was distributed. Women were cooking food for everyone, and the men were making a toilet, maintain the tent, making dams so that the rainwater could come inside. There were good coordination and distribution of work in our camp". Rasila felt safe in her camp as everyone was helping each other. The bottom-up organization provided cohesion inside the community; women were staying between themselves, working. Therefore, Rasila felt safe.

To help women in coping with safety gendered effect, NGOs were visiting post-earthquake camps to talk to women and try to understand the level of insecurity. The NGO WOREC is working for women's empowerment and well-being. While providing relief to women in camps, one of their purposes was to make sure women felt safe. Nisu works for the NGO, she explains their first action as follow: "As an organization working for women's empowerment and their well-being, WOREC was clear from the very first day that psychosocial support is one of the key elements to consider even while distributing relief materials to women. For us, it was imperative to make women feel that they are not alone". Talking and counseling women helped women to cope with insecurity and fear, as they felt less alone.

In the more extended run, women implemented lasting strategies to help one another. It is the case of Rasila who lost her job after the catastrophe. However, she got the opportunity to help girls from earthquake-affected areas, she retrained and is now working as a "house mother" for the safety of young girls:

> "Before the earthquake, I was working for a British family as a nanny, but they could not stay in Nepal, it was too dangerous. So I lost my job. I was first distributing relief and helping my community. After my boss left Nepal, an American friend of him called me; he wanted to do something for Nepal and children who lose their family. So I started to become a host mother for girls that are from earthquake-affected areas. They were at risk of human trafficking and all other possible violence. Now we are hosting five girls from 7 years old to 18 years old. They go to school, and my job is to take care of these children, do counseling, teach discipline and manners, and help them with any kind of help they need. Today they are like my own daughter".

Rasila is actively involved in her community and is now working as a host mother to protect these girls. The father of the younger girl (7 years old) tried to sell her; she had to endure many atrocities. However, she is now is a safe environment for women and a loving family, working

for women's safety. Thanks to Rasila and her family, these young women can cope against insecurity, violence and sometimes traffic by staying in a safe place.

Solidarity to reach safety also took place among families. Nisu, 25 years old, lost her sister during the earthquake. She is now looking after her nephew who was abandoned by his father:

> "My sister died during the earthquake; she was inside a house that felt. From that day, I am taking responsibility for my nephew. He was nine years old when he lost his mother. His father doesn't care about him: he is contactless. I have a tiny salary, and I am disabled, but I want to help him as much as I can. I expect that he will soon be able to stand by himself, be independent. But for now, I am taking care of him".

For the safety of her nephew, Nisu is taking care of him despite her own difficulties. Sanja (35 years old) has two young daughters. She feels unsafe for her two daughters as violence and traffic against women rose after the earthquake. She explains it as following:

> "After the earthquake I quit my job, to only be a housewife and take care of my daughters because my husband is working in Qatar. I feel insecure or unsafe because we are girls and I am also a mother of two daughters. In Nepal, the rape cases are increasing a lot. Nowadays I cannot trust anyone as before. I do not work anymore so I can be more with my daughters and protect them, even if it's harder financially".

For Sajan, the earthquake brought more insecurity and violence. Therefore, to cope with this insecurity, she chose to quit her job and look after her daughters.

To help women to cope with insecurity, one of the strategies from NGOs was to organize campaigns to sensitize people about the increasing violence against women from the earthquake. Therefore, since the earthquake, even more campaigns against violence to women and girls are taking place in Nepal. In November 2018 the NGO WOREC had a program to talk about the rise of violence taking place against women in Nepal, the aims were described by Nisu as the follows:

> "This national consultation on justice is focusing on dialoging on the issue of violence against women and girls and the justice mechanism of the state. We want to strengthen the engagement of newly elected political leaders, concerned stakeholders to establish a better justice mechanism for victims of violence. We also want to build a better understanding of the concerned stakeholders on the gaps, challenges and difficulties being faced by women and girls in accessing justice from the ground realities. Finally, we want to create a platform for women and girls to take collective action demanding justice and their rights".

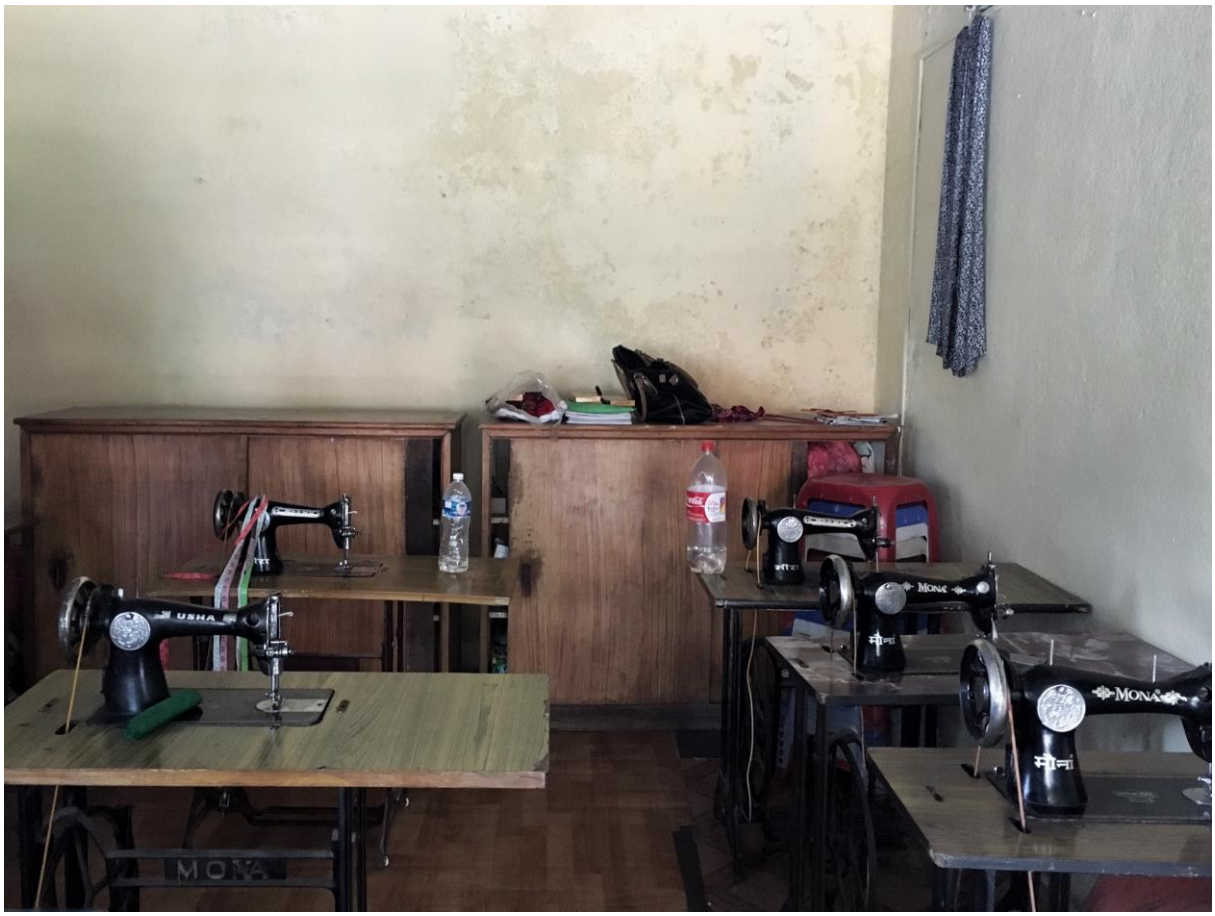
This campaign took place in November and was a success according to the NGO. However, they also admit that it is long and complicated to influence political actions. These campaigns were taking place even before the earthquake. Yet, NGOs are doing a lot more from the quake, as according to them, there is a need for awareness and sensitization about insecurity.

Another way to increase the safety of women through solidarity is to give them training to defend themselves, know their rights or learn a profession. This is the aim of Sister's cafe & Beauty, which exclusively focuses on giving women who had or could have trafficking problems, the opportunity to find a job. Therefore, Sister's cafe & Beauty gives six months sewing, cooking, waitress and beautician trainings to women and helps them to find a job afterward. Women can then cope better with insecurity, as they are independent and consequently less at risk of being trafficked. Roshika works at Sister's cafe & Beauty as a social worker:

> "Our organization is mostly focused on anti-human trafficking. After the earthquake, the trafficking and foreign employment trafficking increased a lot. Most of the women here were either victims or survivors of human trafficking. After the earthquake, our organization had played an important role because those kinds of women come in our place to take training. We give them six months training so they can be independent and be aware of not being trafficked again".

Shirisha (19 years old) is taking waitress training at Sister's café & Beauty she accepted to receive training in this place as it helps her to cope against insecurity, as well, Sister's café & Beauty does not sell alcohol which according to Shirisha prevents inappropriate behaviors. She has endured trafficking problems after the earthquake, and she has a tough time trusting anyone. However, she feels safe with Sister's café & Beauty. "I feel it is safe at work because we are all women training here. The other thing is that there is no alcohol, so costumers cannot drink. So if I work here until 8 or 9 at night, it will not make any difference compared to work early. It's dangerous when people start drinking alcohol". To cope with insecurity Shirisha choose Sister's café & Beauty making sure that customers cannot have access to alcohol; she is also learning a profession to be independent.

Birsha (30 years old) lost her house and everything she owned with her husband and their two sons. They moved to Kathmandu after the earthquake to begin a new life. She is now giving tailoring training to women to allow them to have the opportunity to find a job and therefore be independent and safer. Birsha coped with insecurity by moving to Kathmandu, and she is also helping other women to cope themselves by learning new skills. Picture 3 following, is the room where women are taking the tailoring training.



Picture 3: Tailoring training room, Nepal – Elorry Mahou

This part pointed out the important coping strategy of solidarity from women and NGOs to bring feelings of safety. From an actor-oriented approach we understood how women organized each other, NGOs were coming in camps to help women, the importance of awareness campaigns – on violence against women and girls – as well as training centers to create safety feeling. The next part shows how another important strategy from women and NGO was creating safe living spaces for women.

8.3 Creating safe living spaces

Another way for women to cope with the insecurity is to create safe living spaces, sometimes with the help of NGOs. This part shows three different safe living spaces: zinc shelters, secure centers, and secret hostels. Through an actor-oriented approach, we can understand the importance of safe living places to cope with insecurity.

Eyrum chooses to stay in a temporary shelter with her whole family instead of going back to a "real house" as they feel safer if another earthquake occurs. This house is supposed to be "earthquake friendly house" as it is made of zinc sheets, lighter than a house if they fall.

However, living conditions are very hard in these houses. They can get very cold or extremely warm and humid depending on the season. For Eyrum and her family, the living conditions are very hard. However, there are gender effects for Eyrum because as a Nepalese woman, she is the one who has to take care of the house and the young children she has in such hard living conditions. She describes it as following:

> "We lost the house we were renting so we had nowhere to go. To construct something it was very hard as everything became so expensive after the earthquake. So we made a temporary shelter with zinc sheets. It has been nearly three years since we are living inside it. However, we want to stay here. I feel safer in a zinc shelter than in a house because we will be safe if another earthquake happens".

Eyrum explained how the living conditions are hard in this zinc shelter: and how she copes with it anyway. Indeed, she prefers to be sick and feel safe with her family in front of another possible earthquake. Picture 4 following, is the zinc house of Eyrum, with Neera – my translator – we were warmly invited to spend a few hours with her.

Picture 4: Earthquake friendly house made of zinc sheets, Nepal – Elorry Mahou

Another type of safe space is the safe center. The NGO WOFOWON realized after distributing first needs to women, the importance of creating a safe house for women. Therefore, they created a women safe shelter. Liv is working with WOFOWON and explains it as following:

> "We realized the importance of having our own safe shelter because we felt that when natural disasters occur many women have no safe place to stay at. After the end of the smile campaign, we started a "smile center", which is a safe center only for women. That was one of the things that were changed in our strategy. In our safe center, women can live with freedom".

In safe centers, women can cope better with being safe as it also creates a solidarity environment where they can feel secure and helped. Srijana is from the caste Dalit, she is living in a safe center with only women and describes it as following: "This place is very safe; it's very peaceful. Now that I am living here, I can be friends with people from every caste, as no one is allowed to talk about castes and do caste discrimination". The insecurity of being discriminated because of one's caste is also eliminated in women's house. Ashmita (19 years old) was experiencing insecurity at her own home. Indeed, her father started to drink alcohol after the earthquake and became violent. Ashmita couldn't stay living with her own father and went to an NGO to help her find a safe home where she could live among women. She explains it as follows: "Nowadays my father has started to drink alcohol. It's very difficult because since the earthquake we have debts. Until and unless he is drunk, he is very kind, and he takes care of everyone. But after he is drunk he gets very violent, so now I live in a women's house with an NGO, to be safe and get training to be able to work later". For Ashmita, the solution was to leave her home and live among women in a safe place. Indeed, a strategy to cope with insecurity is to create a safe environment for instance by staying among women.

The last safe space to help women to cope with insecurity is the creation of a secret hostel for women at risk of being trafficked. Two women I talked to are now living in a secret hostel for victims and survivors of human trafficking. They are not allowed to say where this hostel is, not even to their parents as sometimes women are trafficked by their own parents. The phones are neither permitted in the hostel, and everything is thought to ensure the safety of these women. They go to this secret hostel when being saved from trafficking. The government, in cooperation with NGOs, provides these safe secret places for women that have been trafficked. They can then go to a training center such as Sister's cafe and Beauty and learn skills to further find a work and be empowered, safe and independent. Bianca, 18 years old, was saved from being trafficked; she now lives in this secret hostel:

> "I am not allowed to tell where the house is or to have my phone with me because it can be a tool for pimps to reach women. Miss and sir will have our phones and give them to us once a month to talk to our family. Even our parents cannot know where the house is. It is for security reasons. Because all the girls in the house have been trafficked, it needs to stay a secret place".

To separate women at risk of being trafficked from their community for their safety is a coping strategy that women can find difficult as they are separated from their families. However, the one I talked to understand the process, as it is the safest for them. In these houses they are among women, can speak and attend awareness training. Everything is done to protect them and reinsert these women in society little by little with a work opportunity and understanding of their rights.

8.4 Conclusion

To cope with the gendered safety effect of the earthquake women and NGOs raised a feeling of safety through solidarity. According to Standing, Parker, and Bista, women groups and NGOs are the best placed to identify women and girls' needs quickly when not being met (2016, p.193). Therefore, the actor-oriented approach was central to understand the needs of women and the coping strategies implemented at the grassroots level. This chapter argues that the feeling of security arises from solidarity, community building and living in safe spaces. With an actor-oriented approach we understood how women organized each other, NGOs were coming in camps to help women, the importance of awareness campaigns – on violence against women and girls – as well as training centers to create safety feeling. Additionally, this chapter shows three different safe living spaces: zinc shelters, safe centers and secret hostels as crucial safe living places to cope with insecurity.

9. Conclusion & Recommendation

With this research, I aim to contribute to a better understanding of NGOs and women's strategies to cope with the gendered impact of the 2015 earthquake. To this end, I used the two concepts of gendered impact of a disaster, and actor-oriented approach, which allowed me to look at women and NGOs' perception, and coping strategies link to the gendered impact of the catastrophe. This thesis shows that the processes described of gendered impacts of the disaster are rooted in gender in the very specific context of Nepal and therefore requires a better understanding of women's experiences and actions to cope with the gendered impact. Therefore, an actor-oriented approach is necessary because it allows a bottom-up understanding from women themselves.

9.1 Conclusion

This section presents the findings of this research on the gendered impact of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. The aim is to answer the research questions about the gender relations in Nepal, the gendered effect of the earthquake regarding health and safety and the coping strategies of women and NGOs. The central themes are the following: Gender relations and roles in Nepal, The 2015 earthquake, coping with the health gendered effect of the quake and coping with the safety gendered effect of the earthquake.

This thesis has demonstrated the different experiences of the rooted gendered relations in Nepal and explains them in connection with social ties. It shows the diverse and subjective perceptions of women, NGOs and politicians about gendered relations and roles in Nepal, and argues that one's multiple identities – intersectionality – shape a unique experience embodied into social relations. The case study brings to the fore that being this gender, this caste, this age, this religion, from this geographical background (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2007), dramatically shapes your relations and your roles in Nepal, as the context is highly significant (K.C, Van Der Haar &Hilhorst, 2017). Depending on one's caste, age, and geographical background, a woman can undergo substantial inequalities and marginalization. Mentalities are evolving towards equality, but older generations still practice what they call: traditions. These traditions are rooted and can undermine one's equality. For example, even if caste discriminations are prohibited in Nepal, it still exists, especially in rural areas or traditional families. As stated by Sultana, the natures of gender relations are embodied through norms, practices, and beliefs (Sultana F. , 2010). Therefore, understanding these relations in a particular setting – men dominant society and caste system for Nepal – is important because it constructs the gendered identities and experiences.

Secondly, it is argued from the case study that the 2015 earthquake that stroke Nepal had a gendered impact regarding health and safety. I focused on the memories that women, NGOs, and political actors have of the catastrophe. It showed that the existing gendered inequalities in Nepal could increase in the aftermath of the earthquake, for example, violence against women and girls,

the lack of privacy, lack of sanitation when having periods and the increasing women trafficking. These results reflect the literature that indicates that after a disaster, women are more vulnerable to harassment, sexual abuses in many forms as well as exploitations (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006). To understand one's lived experience, it is important to take into account the intersectional setting of these rooted gendered impacts. Indeed the place one lives in, the caste, the gender, the structure of the family shapes the gendered experience. However, literature also stresses the importance of not stereotyping women as only victims because they are central and important actors to understand and cope with the gendered effect of a disaster. Indeed the "crucial role women play as first responders in natural disasters" (Standing, Parker & Bista 2016, p. 189) needs to be addressed. Therefore, this study shows that the earthquake was not only a negative experience as great community solidarity raised from this difficult time and gave the opportunity to women and youth to get involved. In the meantime, it indicates the reality of the health gendered impact of a disaster.

To cope with these health and safety impacts of the disaster, women and NGOs implemented actions and strategies and were vigorously involved in the short and long term after the earthquake. The very first action taken by local NGOs and women volunteering was linked to health and first needs. NGOs were distributing basic medicine, food, water, shelters and hygienic kits, which is in line with the literature (Sultana F, 2011; Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016). Additionally, women developed strong community solidarity (Bankoff, Frerks, & Hilhorst, 2004), that allowed them to fulfill their role as Nepalese women as well as dealing with gendered health issues such as lack of sanitation, periods and mental stress. The actor-oriented approach allows an understanding on how women, and Nepalese NGOs coped with the health-gendered effect of the earthquake by putting it as a priority and developing strong solidarity.

Through solidarity between women, NGO campaigns, training centers, home among women and secret hostels, women, with the help of NGOs, cope with the increasing insecurity from the earthquake. NGOs have organized campaigns, job training, and safe houses as essential needs to give women knowledge, confidence, and independency. Once again, women and NGOs developed solidary and supportive communities to help one another, raise awareness and become independent. Therefore, it is argued that women and NGOs' actions, knowledge and skills are essential to cope with the gendered effect of the earthquake. Additionally, to understand one's experience, there is a need to know the concrete experiences of the particular actors involved (Nyamu-Musembi, 2005). Therefore, an actor-oriented approach presents an added value to understand women's coping strategies, as women and local NGOs are the best placed to know their needs and actions to be taken.

This research has highlighted the importance of women and NGOs' strategies in coping with the gendered impact of the earthquake regarding health and safety and shows their remarkable individual and collective actions. This had been achieved by adopting an actor-oriented approach, as women and NGOs are in the best position to understand the gendered impact of the disaster

and the strategies to be adopted to overcome them. In doing so, the research breaks the persistent stereotypes of victimization of women's experiences in the time of disaster (Standing, Parker & Bista, 2016). Indeed, the gendered impact of disaster also displays that women are strong actors, helping one another and bringing inequalities to the forth. Therefore, this research is an opportunity for a better understanding and a positive evolution of gender relations in Nepal.

By using an actor-oriented approach, the thesis shows elements and dynamics that would not be visible otherwise. Indeed, it allows us to understand the rooted gendered processes, the impacts of the disaster on processes, the needs women have, and the coping strategies implemented at the grassroots level. The case of the 2015 earthquake tells us that the gendered impact of the disaster is rooted, multilayered and dynamic. Indeed, in the aftermath of a disaster, women are at a higher risk of health problems and insecurity (Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek, 2006). However, we saw the importance of not stereotyping women as only victims as they are central and important actors to understand and cope with gendered effects of a disaster.

9.2 Recommendation

First, I will focus on recommendations for future research and finally for policymakers.

9.2.1 Future Research

This research highlights the importance of adopting an actor-oriented approach to understand the gendered impact of a disaster and the coping strategies of women and NGOs on health and safety. Further research could focus on other gendered impacts such as displacement or socio-economical impacts on women. Indeed, the focus on health and safety can be discussed, as gendered impacts of the earthquake are complex and broad because many other issues could be addressed.

Nepal had recently undergone significant political changes. Indeed, in November and December 2017, Nepalese citizens voted for the election of the Federal Parliament, which decentralized the power from Kathmandu to the provinces and local units. It would be very interesting to investigate how does this political decentralization impacts gender relations in the country. One could ask if, with this new political setting, gendered impacts of the earthquake would be different.

Finally, it would be interesting to further take into account men's voices in order to have the complete picture of the earthquake experiences and perhaps combine and compare the perceptions of both women and men.

9.2.2 Policy makers

At the decision-making level, policymakers should give voice to women and local NGOs, encourage women to lead in politics and give them more decisional power. As we have shown throughout this research, women are not only victims after a catastrophe and have undeniable abilities, which should be put to the forth. While using the actor-oriented approach, the research showed the competencies women and NGOs have, for instance, in talking about inequalities and impacts of the disaster. Giving them further political power is central because it would encourage a further equal women-men decision power as well as provide the voice to the actors lacking in politics that are the ones aware of the problems they faced by women.

Women should be subject of more studies and policies on their essential knowledge and skills. It is important to recognize their capacities as the first step of further integration in politics, and in all spheres of the society.

Lastly, the lack of recognition of women in Nepal can be diminished if the government would work more in cooperation with local NGOs and women's groups to build programs, reach women in need and raise awareness about gender inequalities. This would lead to more effective political and social interventions.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Detailed Table of Interview Participants

Name	Age	Ethnicity/Caste	Geographical Background	Occupation	Marital status	Children	Household head
Shirisha	19	Chettri	Hetauda	Waiter-trainee	Single	0	Mother (Parents separated)
Bandhana	23	-	Khotang	Waiter-trainee	Single	0	Mother (Parents separated)
Anisha	19	Janajaati	Lamjung	Waiter-trainee	Single	0	Father (Parents separated)
Ansu	26	Tamang	Makwanpur	Cook-trainee	Separated	1	Herself
Bianca	18	Dalit	Dailekh	Cook-trainee	Single	0	Father (Parents together)
Amita	25	Danuwar	Sindhupalchok	Tailoring-trainee	Single	0	Brother (Parents died)
Ramila	16	Dalit	Syanja	Tailoring-trainee	Single	0	Father (Parents separated)
Srijana	27	Dalit	Gorkha	Tailoring-trainee	Separated	0	Father (Parents together)
Susmita	16	Dalit	Dhading	Tailoring-trainee	Single	0	Father (Parents together)
Asmita	19	Dalit	Gorkha	Tailoring-trainee	Single	0	Mother (Father died)
Sarita	27	Tharu	Kanchapur	Spa therapy	Single	0	Herself
Rashmi	28	Tamang	Nuwakot	Boutique owner	Single	0	Herself
Sangita	25	Tamang	Nuwakot	Dance teacher + night job	Single	0	Mother (Father died)
Ashmita	32	Tamang	Dhading	Waitress	Separated	2	Herself
Swastika	23	Dalit	Rolpa	Singer in a restaurant	Single	0	Mother (Parents together)
Muscan	31	Brahmin	Biratnagar	Waitress	Single	0	Father (Parents together)
Sajan	35	Tamang	Dolakha	Housewife	Married	2	Herself (Husband working in Qatar)
Roshika	58	Brahmin	Kavre	Retired	Widow	1	Herself (Husband died)
Rasila	48	Tamang	Sindhupalchok	Housewife + Housemother	Married	2	Husband
Chandani	73	Tamang	Sindhupalchok	Housewife	Married	6	Husband
Eyrum	35	Chettri	Morang/Lalitpur	Part-time job	Married	2	Husband
Birsha	30	Tamang	Dhading	Tailoring teacher	Married	2	Her and her husband
Nisu	25	Chettri	Ramechaap	Receptionist in an NGO	Single	0	Herself
Saura	45	Gurung	Pokhara	Housewife	Married	2	Her and her husband

Appendix B: Interview Guide Women

Interview information

- Location:
- Date:
- Interview number:

Introduction

We are two university students conducting a research to better understand the gendered impact on women of the earthquake that took place in 2015 in Nepal. We are not doing this research linked with an organization, however your answer will be collected in a report, which can be useful for other parties (organisations, university, government, etc.) in understanding and working close to you with the aim of improving women's condition.
This interview is anonymous and the information provided by you would be treated confidentially.
The interview will last approximately one hour.
We would like to record the conversation, are you ok with this? (If yes, start recording)
You should feel free to ask any question or add any comment during the interview.
We want to be sure that you agree on doing this interview without being forced and that you give us your informed consent.
Do you have any question?

Respondent information

- Name:
- Age:
- Profession:
- Marital status:
- Type of family:
- Household head:
- How many children:
- Caste/Ethnic group:
- Geographical background:

Theme 1: Gender relations and roles in Nepal

a. How would you describe a typical family in Nepal?
b. How is your household organized? What is the task of every member of your family in the household?
c. Who is responsible for taking care of children? Who is responsible for taking care of financial decisions? Who is responsible for taking care of the major decisions related to household?
d. How would you describe relations between men and women today? How do you think relations between men and women are evolving? Why?

e. Do you have any friends or relations with other castes (when? where)? What is the majority of caste in your friend's circle?
f. Is the relation between you and your husband specific to (guided by) your caste or religion? Why? Why not? How? What are men and women's relations in other castes?
g. How would you describe relations between castes today? Do you think the high caste/low caste system still exist in Nepal? If yes: What are the privileges and/or restrictions that your caste plays in your life?

Theme 2: April 25, 2015 The Earthquake

a. What were you doing on the day of the earthquake? What happened? How do you remember it? Where were your family?
b. Did you have to go through any permanent damages like loss of family members, loss of property?
c. How did you manage with those losses (financially, emotionally…)?
d. Where were you living just after the earthquake? With how many people? For how long? How were the tasks divided between the people you were living with?
e. Since the earthquake, what are your new roles (if any)/ what do you have to do at home? Is it because you are a woman?
f. Since the earthquake, what are your new roles inside your community (if any)? Is it because you are a woman?
g. Since the earthquake, what are your new roles at work (if any)? Is it because you are a woman?

Theme 3: Consequences of the Earthquake

a. From after the earthquake, who is bringing money at home? Did your economic situation changed after the earthquake? Why/Why not?
b. What is your activity or job today? Since when? How do you like it?
c. What changed in your job after the earthquake? Have you ever lost your job (Why)?
d. Do you get any facilities from your work for example when you are sick? Do you get a minimum salary? Does it permit you to sustain your basic needs?
e. What do your family think about you working and about your job? And what the society thinks?
f. Do you feel secure at your job? Why? Why not?
g. Do you feel secure at the end of your job when you have to go back home? Why? Why not?
h. Do you walk on the street alone during the day? At evening? If not, with whom are you leaving your house?
i. Did you experience a situation when you felt unsafe in your life? If yes, do you agree to talk about it?
j. In your workplace, what is affecting your security badly (if any)?
k. In your workplace, what is affecting your health badly (if any)?
l. Do you have any health issues (mental, physical)? Why? From when? Did anything changed in your health after the earthquake compared to before?
m. After the earthquake did you had good access to water? Food? Sanitation? Menstruation clean pad?

n. Are you more stress after the earthquake? Why? If yes, what is the manifestation of this stress?

Theme 4: NGOs'/ INGOs/ Government actions

a. Who approached you 1st to help you after the earthquake?
b. After how many days did you received help?
c. What kind of help did you received? From who?
d. Do you feel there was an equal distribution and help?
e. If you have a problem today to whom do you go to first? (If we need to steer the interview: if you have a problem to which organisation will you go to (governmental as police, NGO, grassroots org, INGO?)).

Appendix C: Interview Guide NGOs

Interview information

- Location:
- Date:
- Interview number:

Introduction

We are two university students conducting a research to better understand the gendered impact of the earthquake that took place in 2015 in Nepal. We are not doing this research linked with an organization, however your answer will be collected in a report, which can be useful for other parties (organisations, university, government, etc.) in understanding and working close to you with the aim of improving women's condition.

This interview is anonymous and the information provided by you would be treated confidentially.
The interview will last approximately one hour.
We would like to record the conversation, are you ok with this? (If yes, start recording)
You should feel free to ask any question or add any comment during the interview.
We want to be sure that you agree on doing this interview without being forced and that you give us your informed consent.
Do you have any question?

Respondent information

- Name:
- Gender:
- Organization working for:
- Position within the organization:

Theme 1: Gender relations and roles in Nepal

a. How would you describe a typical family in Nepal?
b. For you, how do men and women's roles differ inside the family and in everyday life?
c. How do you think the relation between men and women is evolving from before to now?
d. What do you think are the factors changing the relation between men and women (e.g. education, job, living standards, etc.)? Why?
e. How would you describe relations between (higher and lower) castes today?
f. How do you think relations between castes are evolving (e.g. good relation, bad relation, discrimination)?

Theme 2: The Earthquake

a. How would you describe the first impact of the Earthquake on women?
b. How would you describe the first impact of the Earthquake on men?
c. How would you describe the first impact of the Earthquake on women?
d. Do you think the impact of the earthquake differed for people from different castes on men and on women? Why? Why not?
e. What was the first (the prioritized) action of your organisation after the earthquake? Who were the distributors?

Theme 3: Consequences of the Earthquake

a. How would you describe the main problems regarding health for women before the earthquake and after the earthquake?
b. What were the strategies of your NGO regarding health before the earthquake and after the earthquake?
c. How would you describe the main problems regarding safety for women before the earthquake and after the earthquake?
d. What were the strategies of your NGO regarding safety before the earthquake and after the earthquake?
e. How would you describe the main problems regarding women's economic empowerment before the earthquake and after the earthquake?
f. What were the strategies of your NGO regarding women's economic empowerment before the earthquake and after the earthquake?

Theme 4: NGOs' actions

a. How do you reach/select women and girls that your organization helps (partnering, directly visiting, women come to you)?
b. How would you describe the activities and strategies that your organization do to prevent violence against women and girls and insecurity?
c. How would you describe the activities and strategies that your organization does to help women with their health problems (physical and psychological)?
d. How would you describe the activities and strategies that your organization does regarding women economic empowerment?
e. Are INGOs helping you? How? How would you describe the relations of your organization with international organizations?
f. Is the Nepali government helping you? How? How would you describe the relations of your organization with the Nepali government?
g. In your opinion, how are grassroots organizations best placed to help women in Nepal? Why?

Theme 5: Government / INGOs' actions

a. In your point of view, what was the role of INGOs after the earthquake?
b. In your point of view, what was the role of grassroots organizations after the earthquake?

c. In your point of view, what was the role of the government after the earthquake?
d. Do you feel that the government hears your organization as you are working close to the population?
e. What do you think of the new constitution (2015)?
f. What do you think of the new policies about women? (If needed: do you remember any?). What do you think of their implementation?
g. What do you think should be done to prevent violence against women and girls and ensure their safety?
h. What do you think should be done to prevent women's health problems?
i. What do you think should be done to empower women economically?

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