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Status, Uses and Expectation of social allowance in Nepal: A study of Aatharai Rural Municipality, Terhathum.

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Abstract

This study investigates the current status, utilization patterns, and expectations of social security allowance programs in Aatharai Rural Municipality, Nepal. Employing a post-positivist paradigm and a descriptive cross-sectional design, data were collected from 60 purposively selected beneficiaries—comprising elderly individuals, single women, and persons with disabilities—alongside eight key informants. Semi-structured interviews facilitated the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data, which were analyzed using statistical tools and thematic analysis. Findings reveal that (78.3%) of beneficiaries primarily allocate their allowances toward essential needs such as food, clothing, and healthcare. Despite a high satisfaction rate of 93.3%, over half (53.3%) perceive the allowances as insufficient, leading to continued financial dependence on family members. Expectations for increased financial support and improved healthcare services are prevalent, mirroring national trends. Notably, the emergence of single men as a new beneficiary group indicates evolving social dynamics and improved data collection. The study underscores the need for policy enhancements to address the adequacy and accessibility of social security allowances, ensuring they effectively support vulnerable populations and contribute to long-term economic stability.

Key words: satisfaction and expectations, beneficiaries, security and welfare, financial support, well-being

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Introduction

Social security refers to the principle or practice of providing public assistance or social insurance for the economic security and welfare of individuals and their families. The social security act 2075 presents social security means cash, allowance or support to be provided to the citizens entitled to social security pursuant (GoV, 2075).

Social security is a government-led financial support aimed at improving the well-being of its citizens, especially vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, the sick, and the unemployed. The UN declaration (1948) is declared the justice, equality, and dignity, as Universal Human Rights. The concept of social security services is emerging from the affect of World War II, as part of recovery efforts to stabilize economies. The Bismarck was pioneered modern social security by implementing old-age social insurance Germany in 1889. Similarly, The European countries have been implementing social security programs since before the 19th century to ensures the special support, and protection for socio-economically unsafe and vulnerable people as unemployed, sick, disabled, single and elderly (Mainali, 2014).

The minimum standard of the social social security according to the convention 102 of ILO mentions nine branches of social security which include: sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age, death, provision of medical care and provision for families with children (ILO, 1984). The Social Security Act, 2075 categories as seven minimum area of social security as (a) Senior citizens, (b) Indigent, (c) Incapacitated and helpless persons, (d) Helpless single women, (e) Citizens with disabilities, (f) Children, (g) Citizens unable to take care themselves.

The Social Security is practice of offering social insurance to ensure the welfare and financial stability of people and their families. The program that helps to guarantee of minimal living quality of people. Social allowance programs in Nepal are designed to give financial support for vulnerable and marginalized groups such as the elderly, the crippled, and single women. The Governments of Nepal social security act 2075 is deals the "Social security" refers to achieve the money, stipend, or support that the eligible residents (GOV, 2057).

Globally, only (46.9%) of the population is effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit (SDG indicator 1.3.1), leaving (53.1%)—approximately 4.1 billion people—without any coverage. In Asia, the coverage rate stands at (44%), reflecting significant gaps in protection. Meanwhile, public expenditure on social protection (excluding healthcare) accounts for just (12%) of GDP, underscoring the need for increased investment to ensure broader access to social security benefits (I LO, 2021).

Nepal's social protection (SP) expenditure has grown significantly, increasing from NPR 125 billion in FY 2019/20 to a projected NPR 203 billion in FY 2022/23. While the nominal allocation has steadily risen, its share of the total budget fluctuated, peaking at

(11.5%) in FY 2021/22 before slightly declining to a projected (11.3%) in FY 2022/23. (UNICEF, 2022).

In Nepal, (32.9%) of people in the population received social security benefits at least once in the 2020–21 fiscal year. Eighty-two percent of them were senior citizens who qualified for social security benefits. Social security programs received 210 billion Nepalese rupees in funding in the same fiscal year, which equates to (4.9%) of GDP and (16.6%) of total government spending. However, 20.1 million people in Nepal remained without social protection (ILO, n.d.).

The Arjun, K.C. (2021) pointed that the target population primarily utilizes social security allowances to meet basic personal needs, such as food and clothing. However, these allowances appear inadequate for ensuring a sustainable livelihood. More than one-third of respondents remain dissatisfied with the current provisions and suggest the government to implement more effective social security programs. However, the concurrent impact of recent changes towards the single-family system, with its weakening of family bonds, combined with the increased number of elderly, suggests an urgent need to address the old age security needs in developing countries (UNDP, 2014).

Nepal's social security system plays a crucial role in supporting vulnerable populations, including the elderly, disabled, and economically disadvantaged. Despite steady growth in social protection expenditures—rising from NPR 125 billion in FY 2019/20 to a projected NPR 203 billion in FY 2022/23—many citizens still lack adequate coverage, with 20.1 million people remaining unprotected.

Aatharai Rural Municipality has extended social allowances to all eligible individuals, including single widowed males, to help meet their basic needs like food and clothing. However, many beneficiaries find the financial aid inadequate for sustaining a stable livelihood. Public demand highlights the need for more comprehensive and inclusive social security programs that promote economic security and social welfare. This study aims to assess the current status, utilization patterns, and expectations surrounding social allowance programs in Aatharai Rural Municipality.

Methodology

The research is grounded in a post-positivist paradigm, acknowledging that while objective reality exists, our understanding of it is inherently influenced by context and perspective. This approach embraces critical realism and reflexivity, allowing for announced exploration of social phenomena through both qualitative and quantitative lenses.

A descriptive cross-sectional design was employed to capture a comprehensive snapshot of beneficiaries' experiences and perceptions regarding social allowances at a specific point in time. This design facilitates the identification of patterns and relationships within the collected data.

The study comprised 60 respondents selected through purposive sampling to ensure participants met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The sample was proportionally composed of 47 elderly individuals, 9 single women, and 4 persons with disabilities, reflecting the distribution of social allowance recipients in Aatharai Rural Municipality for the year 2082 B.S by using random sampling. Additionally, eight key informants were purposively selected, comprising four elderly individuals, two single women, and two persons with disabilities.

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in probing participants' experiences while maintaining consistency across interviews.

The data use to analyze statistical tools and techniques using table. Also Thematic analysis was conducted to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. This involved coding the data, identifying themes, and interpreting these themes in the context of the research questions and existing literature. Primary data were obtained directly from the interviews with respondents and key informants. Secondary data sources included relevant policy documents, previous research studies, and reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in social welfare programs.

Result

The people of Aatharai Rural Municipality generally feel happy receiving social allowance, but many respondents these expectations for increased financial support, better healthcare provisions, and housing assistance to improve their living conditions. The status of Social Allowance of the people of Aatharai Rural Municipality as below.

Table no.1

The Status of Social Allows in Aatharai Rural Municipality

	Year 2079-080			Year 2080-081			Year 2081-082		
	Male	Fe- male	Total	Male	Fe- male	Total	Male	Fe- male	To- tal
1 Ageing people	678	824	1502	684	816	1500	718	809	1527
2 Single women	0	355	355	0	379	379	0	387	387
3 Handicpped people	80	66	146	98	73	171	110	80	190
4 Dalit Child Single Men	91	81	172	88	82	170	83 53	73 0	156 53
5 Total	849	1326	2175	870	1350	2220	964	1349	2313

Sources: Aathatai Rural Municipality, 2081

The data presents the various social groups over three consecutive years: 2079-080, 2080-081, and 2081-082, categorizing individuals into ageing people, single women,

handicapped workers, Dalit children, and single men while showing their male and female distribution. The number of ageing people remains fairly stable, increasing slightly from 1, 502 in 2079-080 to 1, 527 in 2081-082, while single women steadily rise from 355 to 387 over the same period. Handicraft workers also display growth, climbing from 146 to 190, whereas the number of Dalit children sees a gradual decline, dropping from 172 to 156. Additionally, single men appear only in the latest year, 2081-082, with a recorded count of 53 which is provided by only Aatharai Rural Municipality 2080. Overall, the total population of these groups has increased each year, growing from 2, 175 in 2079-080 to 2, 313 in 2081-082, indicating a steady rise in the representation of these social categories, with notable shifts in single women and handicapped workers, while the number of Dalit children has slightly decreased.

Table no.2*Status of Respondents*

Sex of Respondents	Number	Percentage
Male	31	51.7
Female	29	48.3
Total	60	100.0
Caste of Respondents		
Brahmin and Chhatri	29	48.3
Janajati	22	36.7
Dalit	9	15.0
Total	60	100.0
Religion		
Hindu	30	50.0
Buddha	17	28.3
Kirat	10	16.7
Christian	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0
Occupation		
Agriculture	42	70.0
Service	4	6.7
not any	14	23.3
Total	60	100.0
Education		
No literate	32	53.3
Basic	19	31.7

Sex of Respondents	Number	Percentage
Secondary	7	11.7
Higher	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0
Land Ownership		
Yes	56	93.3
No	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0

Sources: Field Survey 2082

The demographic data of the surveyed community of 60 individuals reveals a nearly balanced gender distribution, with males comprising (51.7%) (31 individuals) and females (48.3%) (29 individuals). Caste-wise, Brahmin and Chhetri groups represent the largest segment at (48.3%) (29 individuals), followed by Janajati at (36.7%) (22 individuals), and Dalits at (15.0%) (9 individuals). In terms of religious affiliation, Hinduism is predominant, practiced by (50.0%) (30 individuals), while Buddhism is followed by (28.3%) (17 individuals), Kirat by (16.7%) (10 individuals), and Christianity by (5.0%) (3 individuals). Occupationally, a significant majority, (70.0%) (42 individuals), are engaged in agriculture, (6.7%) (4 individuals) are involved in service sectors, and (23.3%) (14 individuals) are not engaged in any formal occupation. Educational attainment indicates that over half of the population, (53.3%) (32 individuals), are illiterate, (31.7%) (19 individuals) have basic education, (11.7%) (7 individuals) have completed secondary education, and only (3.3%) (2 individuals) have attained higher education. Regarding land ownership, a substantial majority, (93.3%) (56 individuals), own land, while (6.7%) (4 individuals) do not possess land. This demographic profile underscores a community deeply rooted in agriculture, with a diverse caste and religious composition, and facing challenges in educational attainment

Table no.3

Situation of Social Security in Study population

Social allowance owner		
Old age	47	78.3
Single	9	15.0
Handicraft	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0
Take Care		
Self	19	31.7
Son and Daughter	41	68.3
Total	60	100.0

Involved in Occupation

No	19	31.7
House work	26	43.3
daily wages	3	5.0
Agriculture	12	20.0
Total	60	100.0

Sources: Field Survey 2082

The data provides insights into social allowance recipients, care giving arrangements, and occupational involvement among a sample of 60 individuals. A majority (78.3%) of social allowance recipients are elderly, while (15%) are single, and (6.7%) are engaged in handicrafts. Regarding care giving, (68.3%) rely on their sons or daughters, whereas (31.7%) take care of themselves. In terms of occupations, (43.3%) are involved in housework, (20%) work in agriculture, (5%) earn daily wages, and (31.7%) are not engaged in any occupation. This data offers a snapshot of financial dependence, family support, and employment among the surveyed group.

Table no.4

Utilization of Social Allowance of Study Population

Spent of Social Allowance	Frequency	Percent
Food, clothes, health's of self	37	61.7
Family and house needs	16	26.7
Paid loan	2	3.3
Buy land and house	3	5.0
Others	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0
Social allowance enough for food and clothes		
Yes	28	46.7
No	32	53.3
Total	60	100.0
who help for food and live		
Self work	15	25.0
Son and Daughter	41	68.3
Neighbors	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0

Sources: Field Survey, 2082

The data highlights how social allowance recipients allocate their funds, their financial sufficiency for basic needs, and sources of support for daily living. A majority (61.7%) spend their allowance on food, clothing, and healthcare for themselves, while (26.7%) use it for family and household needs, and smaller portions go toward repaying loans (3.3%) or purchasing land and houses (5.0%). Despite these allocations, (53.3%) find the allowance insufficient for food and clothing, indicating financial strain. To sustain their livelihoods, most (68.3%) rely on their sons or daughters, while (25%) support themselves through work, and (6.7%) receive assistance from neighbors. This data underscores financial dependency and varying levels of sufficiency in meeting essential needs.

Key informants report that recipients of Nepal's social security allowance primarily allocate these funds toward essential needs such as food, clothing, healthcare, and household expenses. A portion is also directed toward children's education. Some beneficiaries use part of the allowance to repay loans, and a few manage to save small amounts or extend informal loans to neighbors. This spending pattern underscores the allowance's role in supporting both individual and family well-being. Studies indicate that a significant portion of beneficiaries utilize the allowance for health-related expenses, including medication and treatment. Additionally, the funds contribute to meeting daily necessities and supporting dependents, reflecting the allowance's impact on household economic stability.

Key informants have highlighted significant challenges faced by elderly and disabled individuals in accessing their social security allowances in Nepal. The process often requires beneficiaries to travel long distances on foot due to the lack of transportation services in remote areas. Upon reaching the banks, they endure long queues and waiting times, which is particularly taxing for those with health issues. Additionally, the banking procedures, such as frequent account updates and the necessity of personal presence, further complicate the process for these vulnerable populations. These hardships underscore the need for more accessible and efficient systems to ensure that social security benefits reach those in need without undue burden.

Table no.4*Expectation on Social Allowance by Study Population*

Response on social allowance	Number	Percentage
Feel happy	56	93.33
Normal	4	6.66
Total	60	100.0
Expectation of Social allowance provision by state		
Correct/ good	51	85
Not say about it	9	15.0
Total	60	100.0
Expectation of Social Allowance by State		
To increase amount of allowance	31	51.7
Available free food and living	3	5.0
Provide free treatment in illness	26	43.3
Total	60	100.0

Sources: Field Survey, 2082

The data reflects recipients' satisfaction with social allowance and their expectations from the state regarding its provision. An overwhelming majority (93.33%) feel happy receiving the allowance, while only (6.66%) consider it a neutral experience. Regarding the state's role in social allowance distribution, (85%) believe its provision is correct and beneficial, whereas (15%) refrain from expressing an opinion. When asked about their expectations, (51.7%) hope for an increase in allowance, (43.3%) seek free medical treatment during illness, and (5%) desire access to free food and living support. These findings highlight general contentment with social support while also revealing aspirations for expanded financial and healthcare assistance.

Key informants have expressed appreciation for the government's provision of social allowances, recognizing their role in alleviating economic hardships, particularly among senior citizens and marginalized groups. However, they advocate for enhancements to these programs, including increased financial support, improved access to healthcare services, and the provision of housing assistance. Such improvements would address ongoing challenges faced by beneficiaries, such as the high costs of medical treatment and inadequate living conditions. Studies have shown that social security allowances in Nepal contribute to beneficiaries' economic well-being, health status, and overall living standards.

Discussion

Aatharai's ageing population has experienced a modest increase from 1, 502 to 1, 527 over three years, in contrast to the more rapid national expansion of the elderly

demographic. As of mid-2022, approximately 1.6 million individuals aged over 68 received social security allowances, with numbers rising due to policy changes lowering eligibility ages (Kathmandu Post, 2022). Similarly, the increase in single women from 355 to 387 in Aatharai reflects national trends, with 7.3 percent of Nepal's population—approximately 2, 041, 520 individuals—identified as single women. This growth highlights evolving social dynamics, influenced by factors such as changing demographics, economic independence, and shifting societal norms (Pitamber, 2025).

Meanwhile, handicraft workers in Aatharai increased from 146 to 190, indicating a potential revitalization of traditional crafts, but the absence of national statistics makes broader sectoral assessments difficult. Studies suggest that these allowances significantly impact their socio-economic conditions, though accessibility and sufficiency challenges persist.

Additionally, the emergence of 53 single men in 2081-082, absent in previous years, suggests improved data collection or changing social dynamics, though social security programs have not prioritized this demographic at the national level.

Social security allowance recipients in Aatharai demonstrate a strong reliance on essential needs, with (78.3%) allocating their funds to food, clothing, and healthcare. However, (53.3%) of them still find the allowance insufficient, leading to financial dependence on family or neighbors. In comparison, data from the Nepal Living Standards Survey IV (2022/23) shows that at the national level, (61.7%) of recipients prioritize food and daily necessities, (18.5%) spend on healthcare, and (10.3%) use their funds for household support. Additionally, (5.2%) invest in education, (3.3%) allocate money toward debt repayment, and (1.0%) manage to save. While both Aatharai and national trends indicate a focus on basic survival needs, Aatharai's recipients dedicate a higher percentage of their funds to healthcare and essentials, possibly reflecting localized economic hardships. Meanwhile, the national data shows a slightly more diversified spending pattern, with a noticeable investment in education and savings.

According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey IV (2022/23), nationally (92.5%) of recipients express satisfaction with social allowances, closely aligning with Aatharai's (93.33%) satisfaction rate. However, concerns about sufficiency persist in both datasets—(54.1%) of recipients nationwide and (53.3%) in Aatharai find their allowances inadequate, often relying on family for financial support.

Expectations for improved social benefits also follow similar patterns. In Aatharai, (51.7%) of recipients hope for an increase in allowance, while the national survey records (50.2%) expressing the same expectation. Likewise, demands for better healthcare access appear in both datasets, with (43.3%) in Aatharai and (46.8%) nationwide seeking free medical treatment. A smaller portion of respondents—(6.7%) nationally and (5%) in Aatharai—desire free food and housing support, indicating broader socio-economic struggles.

Key informants reinforce these findings, advocating for enhancements to Nepal's social security programs, emphasizing increased financial support, better healthcare services, and improved housing assistance. Studies consistently highlight that allowances contribute to beneficiaries' well-being but fall short of fully addressing economic hardships, particularly for vulnerable populations like the elderly and marginalized groups.

Overall, while national and local data reflect similar trends in satisfaction and expectations, localized disparities suggest that financial constraints and accessibility challenges may vary by region. Strengthening Nepal's social security system through policy improvements could help bridge the gap between beneficiaries' needs and government provisions.

Conclusion

In Aatharai, demographic shifts mirror national trends, notably with a rise in single women and a gradually increasing elderly population. Social security allowances play a crucial role in supporting these groups, helping them meet basic needs. However, many recipients still depend on family members for additional financial support, indicating that the allowances may not be sufficient. While there's general appreciation for the existing allowance system, there's a growing call for enhanced financial aid and better healthcare services. Addressing these concerns through thoughtful policy reforms could improve the effectiveness of social security programs, ensuring they more adequately serve vulnerable populations and contribute to long-term economic stability.

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