Marginalized People's Perceptions, Feelings and Views on ParticipatoryAcceptability of Development Projects in Nepal: Critical Themes and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceptions and experiences of marginalized communities in Nepal—particularly Dalits and women—regarding their participation in development projects. Despite efforts to foster inclusive growth, these groups continue to face systemic exclusion and limited access to opportunities. The research utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess how development providers implement participatory policies and whether these measures genuinely empower marginalized populations. Meaningful participation is seen as essential for ensuring equity, self-determination, and sustainable livelihoods. However, the findings suggest that these communities' voices are often overlooked in decision-making processes, and their involvement remains superficial. The study highlights an urgent need to enhance inclusive practices to strengthen ownership, legitimacy, and long-term effectiveness of development initiatives. It underscores the ongoing deprivation faced by disadvantaged groups and calls for their active and meaningful engagement at all levels. These insights are relevant for policymakers, development agencies, government bodies, planners, and academic.

Keywords: marginalized people, participation, development projects, participatory economic development, decision making

Introduction

Marginalized sections of society, including groups such as women, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and the economically disadvantaged, have historically been excluded from decision-making processes in various aspects of economic development. It is believed that the term has used to refer to most neglected, vulnerable and deprived individuals and groups of people who are economically dislocated due to deprived social milieu (Geiser, 2014). The process of marginalization is typically based on social factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, social class, and other attributes, which diverge from thedominant culture and its norms (Giddens, 2006). Marginalization often stems from power structures established by dominant groups, which inherently serve to benefit those groups. These dynamics are reinforced by socio-economic systems that uphold and deepen social inequalities (Smith, 2010). Furthermore, societal norms and deep-seated prejudices—such as racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination—continue to drive marginalization (Omi & Winant, 2014). True development involves uplifting marginalized communities, helping them break the cycle of poverty, and ensuring they have the opportunity to lead dignified and fulfilling lives..

Development means making a better life for everyone. The concept of economic development in recent years, has gained much prominence regarding as an insurance of better-quality life to all people more inclusively. Development, obviously, involves a multidimensional effort in explaining the process of economic transformations and social change empowering people at large. More importantly, economic development, instead of being a growth of few sectors, is a broader process of social evolution encompassing all aspects of peoples' livelihood. This implies to draw attention to the process of transformations, which is purposive and positive to foresee happiness and prosperity of both people and their society over time in fast paces. Prosperity and high quality of life are universal goals of democratic governments (Ray, 1998).Meaningful participation ensures effective utilization of resources. People work together towards achieving their objectives.

Participation means the sharing of power, fair distribution of resource, job security, and fulfillment of "basic needs" in particular, and raise in the quality of life, alleviation of poverty through the process "inclusion" not "exclusion (Bhattachan, 1980). Participation encompasses individuals' active engagement in decision-making, the implementation of programs, the sharing of benefits from development initiatives, and involvement in evaluating their outcomes. As Long (2001) notes, participation gains its full meaning through its expression in real-life contexts. It enhances the likelihood of sustainable development by fostering community capacity and empowerment. In this context, empowerment refers to equipping marginalized, vulnerable, and excluded groups with the ability to be self-reliant and effectively manage their own resources. By strengthening the capacity of individuals, communities, and projects to sustain themselves, participation contributes not only to the longevity of development initiatives but also to the broader vision of sustainable national development (Cohen & Uphoff, 1980)

Development projects play a vital role in advancing the socio-economic well-being of communities. They represent time-bound investment packages that mobilize resources to achieve specific economic and social goals. The overarching aim of these initiatives is to enhance people's quality of life through skills development, livelihood support, and capacity-building programs (ODA, 1995). Development organizations are responsible for designing and implementing such projects, focusing on strengthening local institutions and fostering community self-reliance through sustainable strategies (Nelson & Wright, 1995). These projects are particularly geared toward delivering services that directly benefit the most vulnerable, marginalized, and target populations.

A participatory approach to development is inherently empowering. It enables individuals to grow not only professionally and physically, but also in their comprehension of the dynamics at play and how to effectively navigate them. This approach strengthens people's ability to critically analyze issues, make informed decisions, manage time efficiently, and coordinate activities that benefit their community. By fostering a sense of ownership and capacity-building, participation contributes to greater project efficiency and long-term sustainability. Recognizing the importance of inclusive and participatory development, Nepal has been working to promote the meaningful participation of these groups in decision-making related to economic policies and development initiatives.

Nepal has adopted constitutional provisions aimed at ensuring the participation of diverse ethnic, caste, and gender groups. Despite these commitments, the Dalit community continues to face systemic discrimination and marginalization across political, social, economic, religious, cultural, and historical dimensions. Despite national and international provisions legislating against caste-based discrimination, they are facing many forms of discriminations. Similarly, women have to face problems of discriminations and structural exclusions in their daily lives. The government implemented some social inclusion policies, but the impacts of these policies have remained ineffective for mainstreaming them into nation development practices. As a result, *Dalit* and women are most marginalized, poor and vulnerable groups in Nepal. Exclusion can perpetuate inequalities and hinder sustainable development. Nepal's development activities have guided by the principles of inclusion assessing gender equality and social inclusion in achieving the sustainable development goal of 'leaving no one behind' by 2030.

In this context, the overall purpose of the study is to analyze the participatory acceptability of development projects in Nepal and examine the perceptions, feelings and views of marginalized sections, particularly Dalit and women on participatory development practices of Nepal. The study also explore situation and way out of marginalized people's meaningful participation in participatory economic development processes for assessing their decisive role to make economic development practices rapid, inclusive and sustainable.

Methodology

This study has employed 'explanatory sequential research design' under mixed method research approach. Based on this method, both quantitative and qualitative methods have used in this study. Taplejung and Terhathum districts from Koshi Province and Siraha district from Madhesh Province of Nepal have specified purposively as the study area. The study has used purposive sampling technique to select its sample district. Similarly, eighteen development projects six from each districtwere selected for the study applying purposive sampling technique. Therefore, development project is 'Unit of Study' for this study. To gather information 360 respondents, 20 respondents involving *Brahmin/Chhetri, Janajati* and *Dalits* males and females from each project werechoosen. Stratified sample technique was applied to select respondents. In order to explore the development project's participatory acceptability and service delivery system, key informants survey was conductedwith 18 project chairperson or secretary.

This study has used both quantitative and qualitative primary data. To gather quantitative primary data field survey method has adopted and questionnaire was administered to the 360 respondents and 18 key informants. The field study was undertaken primarily for Ph.D. purposes during the period from 2017 to 2018.Qualitative technique of data collection was used to conduct focus group discussion with selected focus groups in the study area. Since the study has used *Brahmins* and *Janajatis* as control variable and women and Dalits as treatment variable, focus group discussion was conducted with 6-10 participants of homogeneous nature like *Dalits*, non-*Dalits*, women, very poor etc. Qualitative data were used to complement quantitative information. Quantitative data had processed and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. Descriptive techniques were followed to analyze the qualitative information. Findings and conclusionshave drawn based on data analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

PARTICIPATORY ACCEPTABILITY OF PROJECTS AND PROJECT ORGANIZATIONS

SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM OF THE PROJECTS

In general, the service delivery system of the projects to the beneficiaries is different from project to project. However, in the study 56.6 percent projects identified that theydelivered their services through user group, 33.3 percentthrough group level only and 11.1 percent projects through individually.

Table 1

Service Delivery System of the Projects

	Frequency	Percent
user Group Level	10	55.60
Group Level	6	33.30
Individual Level	2	11.10
Total	**18**	**100.00**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018 . The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

Based on the data presented in Table 2, about 83.3 percent of key informants pointed they have followed criteria of group based, 11.1 percent pointed individual based and 5.6 percent pointed other criteria.

Table 2

Criteria to Participate in the Projects

Criteria	Frequency	Percent
Individual Based	2	11.1
Group Based	15	83.3
Others	1	5.6
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018 . The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

As shown in Table 3, 66.7 percent of key informants opined that they are pursuing bottom up approach, 22.2 percent need based approach and 5.6 percent top-down and integrated approach each.

Table 3

The Best Approach to Popular and Full Participation

	Frequency	Percent
Top down apporach	1	5.6
Bottom up approach	12	66.7
Integrated approach	1	5.6
Need Based approach	4	22.2
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018 . The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

The extent and effectiveness of meaningful participation around development projects depends in part on the notion and capability. The low level of provision on service delivery to *Dalits* suggests that collective participation, if not creating immediate benefits, could not easily take place among poor and marginalizedcommunities that struggle for survival, which made using and moving through them more difficult than before.

POLICY FOR THE INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION TO DALIT

To identify policies and programs in relation to *Dalits* adapted by the development projects in Nepal, a question was forwardedwith the key informants. As shown in Table 4, the majority of key informants, over than sixty-one 61.1 percent had pointed out that they are neutral about this issue. About 27.8 percent replied that they are *Dalit* friendly and only 11 (11.1) percent claimed their projects are *Dalit* focused.

Table 4

Policies and Programs of the Projects to Dalits

	Frequency	Percent
Dalit Focused	2	11.1
Dalit Friendly	5	27.8
Neutral	11	61.1
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018 . The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

A large number of key informants about 66.7 percenttold that the development projects have not any special policy for the inclusion and participation to *Dalits*. About 33.3 percent agreed that they have special policy for the inclusion and participation to *Dalits* in the project (Table 5) and their special policies were identified.

Table 5

Policy for Inclusion and Participation for Dalits

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	6	33 .3
No	12	66 .7
Total	**18**	**100 .0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018 . The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

Asdata presented in Table 6 about 16.7 percent claimed that they have included each *Dalit* household.Similarly, 16.7 percent opined that they have provided grant by identifying

poor *Dalit* and 11.1 percent claimed they have participated *Dalit* in the project by motivating them.They claimed that there is separate training programme to *Dalit*, and they participate in the project by selecting very poor *Dalit*.

Table 6

Special Policies to Dalit Participation

Policies	Frequency	Percent
Include each *Dalit* Households	3	16.7
Grant by identifying poor women	3	16.7
By motivating	2	11.1
Total	8	44.4
Missing System	10	55.6
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

However, 88.9 percent key informants accepted that they have not any special provision in service delivery to *Dalit*.Table 7 shows only 11.1 percent key informants agreed that they have made special provision on service delivery to *Dalit* .

Table 7

Special Provision on Service Delivery to Dalit

	Frequency	Percent
yes	2	11.1
No	16	88.9
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: *Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018 . The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.*

As indicated by the Table 8. Only 5.6 percent of key informants reported that they have provided skill development training to *Dali*. The low level of provision on service delivery to Dalit communities, often preoccupied with day-to-day survival, find collective participation challenging when it fails to deliver immediate benefits. This has made engagement more difficult than before. Moreover, development professionals appeared reluctant to involve Dalit individuals or acknowledge their lived experiences and knowledge.

Table 8

Special Provisions Made by the Projects for Dalit

	Frequency	Percent
Provision of Training	1	5.6
Selecting Very poor *Dalit*	1	5.6
Total	2	11.1
Missing System	16	88.9
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

During field survey, the key informants who were chairperson and secretary of the projects requested to mention their priorities given to *Dalit's* agenda in decision-making meetings. Most, over than (77.8 percent) of them answered that they have not given priority to the agenda of *Dalits* during the meeting decision-making.

Table 9

Priority to the Agenda of Dalits During Meetings

	Frequency	Percent
yes	4	22.2
No	14	77.8
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

This scenario suggests a comprehensive inclusive model need to be implemented at grass root level to address the *Dalit* issues and agenda, and ensure their participation at decision making in development projects. Similarly, 22.2 percent of them opined that they have given priority to the agenda of *Dalits* during the meeting/decision making (Table 9). They claimed that they have made discussion on *Dalit* problems during the meeting/decision making, however they have not mentioned any solution strategies to overcome the problems.

From the above observations implies that the inclusion and participation of *Dalit* is highly underscored in the development plans and policies of the government and the implications of those policies have not considered in practice.it is also inferred that development policy has neither linked to the economic role of *Dalti* with the national policy of the country nor formulated plans/polices and launched programs to maintain, promote and modernize their professions so that they can participate in decision making level.

Policy for the Inclusion and Participation to Women

When the question asked to the key informant as whether women's participation is essential for the success of the development project or not, a majority of the key informants (77.6 percent) agreed that women's participation is essential for the success of development projects, and 22.2 percent opposed to it (Table 10). This result has confirmed that women's participation is essential for the success of development projects.

Table 10

Essentiality of women in development project

Essentiality	Count	Percent
Yes	14	77.7
No	4	22.2
Total	**18**	**100**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

However, as shown in Table 11, 55.6 percent of key informants agreed that there is less participation of women in decision-making level of development projects and 44.4 percent opposed to it.

Table 11

Less Participation of Women in Decision Making

	Frequency	Percent
yes	10	55.6
No	8	44.4
Total	18	100.0

Source:*Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018 . The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.*

Of the total 18 key informants, 27.8 percent agreed that the development projects have been facing constraints to participate women in decision-making (Table 12).

Table 12

Constrains to Participate Women

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	5	27.8
No	13	72.2
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

Table 13 shows that 40.0 percent of key informants opined that kitchen work of women is a constraint to participate women in development project at decision-making level. Similarly, 20 percent agreed that low level of education of women is a constraint and 27.8 percent did not answer.

Table 13

Major Constraints

	Frequency	**Percent**
Patriarchal thinking	2	11.1
Kitchen Work	2	11.1
Low Education	1	5.6
Total	5	27.8
Missing System	13	72.2
Total	**18**	**100.0**

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

In the case of women empowerment programs adopted by development projects, only 38.9 percent of key informants agreed that they have designed women empowerment programs and the majority about 61.1 percent opined that they were not adopted any women empowerment programs during project implementation period (Table 14). Thus, data have proved that unique action to empower women by development projects has seen too less.

Table 14

Need of Women Empowerment Programs

	Frequency	**Percent**
yes	7	38.9
No	11	61.1
Total	18	100.0

Source: Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

With regard to empowerment programs to women launched by the projects, 57.1 percent of key informants claimed that they have provided capacity building training to women, 28.6 percent claimed they have provided education and awareness program to empower them and 14.3 percent argued they have provided cash by making women group

to empower them.

Table 15

Programs for Empowerment

Programs	Frequency	Percent
Capacity Building training	4	22.2
Education and awareness	2	11.1
Provided Cash by making Group	1	5.6
Total	7	38.9
Missing System	11	61.1
Total	**18**	**100.0**

*Source:*Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

To make women's participation effective in development project, 44.4 percent of key informants were in favor of providing educational training to women and 11.1 percent believed that 'separate development program to women' was an effective measure to make women's full and popular participation in the development projects (Table 16). Similarly, 16.7 percent responded awareness training was an effective measure and 16.7 percent were in favor of meaningful representation of women in decision-making level. 11.1 percent key informants pointed out enhancing in capacity of women would be an effective measure to make women's full and popular participation in development project.

Table 16

Effective Measures to Participate Women in the project

	Frequency	Percent
Awareness Training	3	16.7
Educational Training	8	44.4
Increase in Capacity of women	2	11.1
Meaningful participation in decision-making.	3	16.7
SeparateProgram to women	2	11.1
Total	**18**	**100.0**

*Source:*Key Informants Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019

The study explored the actions to widen opportunities for gender balance with decisive role in the development activities have often ignored by development agencies

and project organizations. The above observations that development the development projects have not followed inclusion rules to involve women in development activities.

3.2 Marginalized People's Perceptions, Feelings and Views: Critical Themes and Challenges

Perceptions Belonging to Dalit for Participating in Decision Making

Participation in decision-making is a cornerstone of sustainable development. Thoughtfully designed participatory processes are especially critical for policies addressing sustainability, given the diverse and complex goals involved (OECD, 2012). Ensuring the active involvement of marginalized communities at every stage of development projects is essential to combating chronic poverty and advancing equity. Table 17 shows that 73.3 percent of respondents were in favor of full participation of marginalized people at all stages of a development project to alleviate chromic poverty and only 5.6 percent opposed to it. 21.1 percent of them reported that they had ignored on this issue. The majority, that is 67 percent of *Dalit* respondents urged to be fully participated in all stages of a development project to alleviate chromic poverty. However, 31.2 percent of *Dalit* respondents were unaware on this issue. From these data, it has revealed that the more persons of *Dalit* community are still suffering from deprivation and are appealing for effective participation in development activities of Nepal.

Table 17

Full Participation of Marginalized People at all Stages of Development Projects

Full participa-tion	Caste/Ethnicity			Total
	Brahmin/Chhetri	Janajati	Dalit	
Yes	50	90	75	264
	51.5%	59.6%	67%	73.3%
No	28	39	2	20
	28.8%	25.8%	1.8%	5.6%
Don't know	19	22	35	76
	19.6%	14.6%	31.2%	21.1%
Total	**97**	**151**	**112**	**360**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

*Source:*Field Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

Table 1.18 provides *Dalits'* feelings with respect to participation at decision making in development projects. Out of 112 *Dalit,* respondents 19.0 percent responded that there was negative concept of non-*Dalit* towards *Dalis* to participate in decision-making. It implies that the inner motive of non-*Dalit* towards *Dalits*'s participation in development projects at decision level is not good. Similarly, 18.3 percent pointed out that cast-based

discrimination is the most obstacles to participate in decision-making. In the same way, 18.3 percent *Dalits* have realized less empowerment of *Dalits*, 16.4 percent responded *Dalit's* participation enhances only in *Dalit* centered projects. 16.2percent*Dalit* claimed that not hearing *Dalit's* voice while making decisions and 11.4 percent *Dalit* said that they had not informed by the project while making executive and user committee.

Table 1.18

Feelings of Dalit to Participate in Decision Making

Participation in decision making	Responses		Percent of cases
	Count	**Percent**	
Dalits participation enhances only in *Dalit* centered projects	69	16.4	63.3
Information gap	48	11.4	44.0
Not hearing *Dalit*'s voice while making decision	68	16.2	62.4
Less empowerment of *Dalits*	77	18.3	70.6
Caste based discrimination	77	18.3	70.6
Negative concept towards *Dalit*	80	19.0	73.3
Total	**421**	**100**	**386.2**

*Source:*Field Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

It can be identified that caste-based discrimination, negative concept of non-*Dailts* towards *Dalits* and less empowerment of *Dalits* are highly experienced by *Dalits* not to participate at decision level in the development project. In a focus group discussion, a *Dalit* male states that:

We, all *Dalits* are hopeless because of seeing corruption and apathy of development providers towards *Dalits*. They always lie us. There is vast difference between their saying and acting. Their inner motives and behaviors are not good towards us. They never follow inclusion rules. In the name of *Dalit,* they are cheating us (FGD, 11 August 2017: Dalit Females Focused Group, Pragati Service Community Organization, Income Generation Project, Siraha).

Lack of opportunity and existing discrimination has reduced inclusion and participation within development projects arena. Through a focus group discussion, a young *Dalit* male expressed his view:

There is high discrimination in our society based on caste and ethnicity until now. We (*Dalits*) are politically, socially, economically, historically oppressed, excluded and are treated as untouchables. Our social and economic status have not changed and deteriorating day by day. Now situation has changed but the attitudes and behaviors of development providers have not changed. There is not any provision of inclusion and participation in the project.

The elite sections too have designed their policy to protect, maintain and strengthen their own stakes. Because of this, they too adhere to the unequal, unfair and discriminatory policy, thereby never allowing the gap between rich and poor to be bridged (FGD, 2 July 2017: *Dalit* Male Group: Sayapatri Community Organization Income Generation Project, Taplejung).

There are basic or fundamental barriers usually found almost all over the nation. Development projects can be more successful if those barriers are reduced. Therefore, the development providers have to consider them seriously while implementing the programmes. Decision making power of marginalized people was often ignored by development agencies in Nepal. Table 6.20 Shows that out of 360 respondents 72.2 percent felt that there was low participation of marginalized people's participation in the project, in which 83.9 percent were *Dalit*, 69.1 percent were *Brahmin/Chhetry* and 65.5 percent were *Janajati*. On the other hand, only 17.5 percent disagreed it and 10.3 percent of respondents simply answered 'don't know'.

Table 20

*Feeling of Low Participation of Marginalized People in Decision Making by*Caste/Ethnicity

Feeling of low participation	Caste/Ethnicity			Total
	Brahmin/Chhetri	Janajati	Dalit	
Yes	67	99	94	260
	69.1%	65.6%	83.9%	72.2%
No	21	31	11	63
	21.6%	20.5%	9.8%	17.5%
Don't know	9	21	7	37
	9.3%	13.9%	6.2%	10.3%
Total	**97**	**151**	**112**	**360**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

PERCEPTIONS BELONGING TO WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION MAKING

With regard to the behavior and positive attitude of project officials towards women for resource mobilization, as presented data in Table 21, about 43.6 percent agreed that the behavior and attitude of project officials towards women for resource mobilzation was positive and 38.3 percent denied it. Interestingly, about 18.1 percent were unaware on this issue and simply answered 'don't know'. Only 40.3 percent of female respondents agreed that the attitude and behavior of project officials for resource mobilization was positive towards marginalized people.

Table 21

The Behavior and Attitude of Officials and Sex of Respondents Cross Tabulation

positive Behavior and attitude towards women in mobilizing resources	Sex of respondent		
	Male	Female	Total
Yes	76	81	157
	47.8%	40.3%	43.6%
No	56	82	138
	35.2%	40.7%	38.3%
Don't know	27	38	65
	17%	18.9%	18.1%
Total	**159**	**201**	**360**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

Projects are usually undertaken for the improvement of livelihood of local people, marginalized people's needs and demands. Access in decision-making enhances gender balance and economic benefits to women. Table 6.17 has revealed that within sex, 44.4 percent of female respondents expressed that they have some access, 25.4 percent no excess, 24.2 percent poor access and only 3.1 percent viewed full access in decision-making. These data indicate that women's participation in development projects at decision-making is low.

Table 22

Access in Decision Making and Sex of Respondents Cross Tabulation

Access	Sex of respondents		
	Male	**Female**	**Total**
Full access	36	5	41
	18.2%	3.1%	11.5%
Some access	49	88	137
	30.8%	44.4%	38.4%
Poor access	30	48	78
	18.9%	24.2%	21.7%
No access	39	51	90
	24.5%	25.4%	25%
Don't know	5	9	14
	3.1%	4.5%	3.9%
Total	**159**	**201**	**360**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2017/2018 . The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019 .

This result is also justified with the focus group discussion. By discussing the female youths, they explained:

The lack of women's access in the decision-making level hinders the women agenda in the decision-making of the development projects. We claimed we are efficient. The main cause of low participation of women in decision-making is male domination. Gender-based discrimination has continued in the society and 70 percent inclusion and participation has hindered by the cause of gender-based discrimination. Almost 65 percent women are unaware about their constitutional right. We are rarely called in decision-making meetings and we did not use to attend meetings. Another notable cause not to be attended in the meetings is the load of household work, which only women can bear. There is adequacy of law however there is high gap to its execution (FGD, 19 September 2017: Non-*Dalit* Female Group, Mahalaxmi Saving and Credit Cooperative Income Generation Project, Siraha).

A woman in a focus group discussion expressed her view:

An integration woman into development has received more attention in Nepal from government as well as non-government development agencies. New policies have approved and more women have been involved through government and non-government organization. However, this trend is seen to make quorum only without any decisive role (FGD, 11 March, 2018: Non-*Dalit* Females Focus Group, Sagarmatha Women Income Generation Project, Terhathum).

In terms of capacity building this study reveals that 36.1 percent (n=130) of respondents accepted that they have received capacity building and empowerment service by project officials and 55.0 percent denied to it. Around 9 percent (8.9 percent) of total 360 samples did not give either view (Table 23).

Table 23

Capacity Building and Empowerment Actions by Project Officials

Opinions	Sex of respondents		
	Male	**Female**	Total
Yes	52	78	130
	32.7%	38.8%	36.1%
No	93	105	198
	58.5%	52.2%	55%
Don't know	14	18	32
	8.8%	9%	8.9%
Total	**159**	**201**	**360**
	44.2%	**55.8%**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

With regard to the types of capacity building and empowerment action provided by the development projects to marginalized peoples, 23.3 percent of respondents pointed that they have received skill development training, 12.5 percent have received awareness service. 30.3 percent mentioned they have received only advice and suggestion. Similarly, 4.7 percent mentioned that they have received technical assistance, 2.2 percent received right based education and 2.5 pointed that they have received women empowerment training (Table 24).

Table 24

Special Programs Needed to Marginalized Peoples

Special programs	Count	Per-cent	Valid percent	Cumu-lative percent
Awareness program	78	21.7	21.7	21.7
Skill building training	75	20.8	20.8	42.5
Cash grant to the marginalized people	67	18.6	18.6	61.1
Marginalized people focused program to sustainability	43	11.9	11.9	73.0
Increase in the provision of inclusion	47	13.1	13.1	86.1
Change in policy and institutional management	50	13.8	13.8	100
Total	**360**	**100**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2017/2018. The Results Obtained Using SPSS Analysis, 2019.

However, during a focus group discussion, a female participant reflected her view:

We need conditional assistance from development providers including employment creation and empowerment. Due to lethargic mentality, they do not hear our voice. Traditional mechanisms and corruption in development projects are the main obstacles to participate in development activities. They undermine the gender issues which have hindered economic development too (FGD- 21 July 2018: Non- *Dalit* Female Group, KoyakholaAmalebensi Micro-Hydro Project, Terhathum).

As compared to non- Dalit women, *Dalit* women have very often faced the problem of participation at decision making in development projects. *Dalit* woman have to face social isolation also. In a focused group discussion, Dalit women expressed her feelings that:

Most of those women who hold either senior posts, project officials or project executive committees have failed to present good models. They are either arrogant or aggressive and never care about *Dalit* women's issues. *Dalit* women are suffering because of illiteracy, lack of awareness, discrimination and lack of participatory services for

empowering us. Development organizations, especially local NGOs who always talk about *Dalit* women issues and rural *Dalit* women never go there and make real contribution to change that situation. (FGD, 16 November 2017: *Dalit* Females Focused Group, *DalitUthanKrishakSamuha* Drinking Water Project, Taplejung).

Findings and Inferences

Most of the development projects in Nepal are pursuing bottom-up approach. However still, some projects are pursuing top-down and integrated approach. In terms of service delivery, more than sixty-one percent of development projects are neutral. They are neither *Dalit* friendly nor *Dalit* focused. Over than 88 (88.9) percent of development projects have not made any special provision to service delivery for *Dalit*. No doubt, that development projects can make positive impacts on economic and social status of lagged behind sections, however, in Nepal *Dalit*have not benefited sufficiently by the launched projects and programs. Almost 67 percent of *Dalit* have been urging to be fully participated in all stages of the development projects in Nepal. Participation of *Dalit* at decision-making process of development projects found unsatisfactory. *Dalit* have realized less empowerment of them. It indicated that more persons of *Dalit* community are still suffering from deprivation and they are appealing for effective and meaningful participation at decision-making level of development activities in Nepal.

A majority of development projects (77.6 percent) have accepted that women participation is essential for the success of development projects. However, 55.6 percent of key informants agreed that there is less participation of women. Lack of initiation action of project officials and field staffs and domestic violence are high cause for less participation of women in decision making in the development projects. The main constraints to participate women in decision-making are patriarchal thinking and low education and empowerment of women. However, only 38.9 percent of key informants agreed that they have designed women empowerment programs. In Nepal, women have faced face inequality and exclusion in many facets. They have been facing domestic violence and development projects in Nepal have not provided major posts to women and have not ready to hear women voice.

CONCLUSION

The role of participation has long been recognized in economic development. As discussed in previous results, economic development largely depends on how effective and meaningful participation is designed and implemented. On the participatory economic development front, policies of development projects have considered significant that opens up economic opportunities for hitherto excluded groups. The poor implementation of programs, politicization, interference of vested interests, corruption, and prevalence of social rigidities are the main hurdles of social economic mobility of marginalized people's participation but empowerment, awareness, capacity building and opportunity aspects

has remained unsolved which are seen as secondary priorities of development providers in Nepal. Overcoming these constraints and unsolved aspects, development projects should pay attention to institutionalize more effective and better-targeted programs for marginalized and excluded groups that ensures social safety nets. It is also essential to provide more access to awareness education, empowerment and skill development training, and more access to employment opportunities to marginalized people. For development to be effective and sustainable, plans must be rooted in the needs and priorities of marginalized groups. Authorities should institutionalize inclusive practices and empower local governance to ensure active participation, ownership, and self-reliance in all project phases

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