

ALiGN

**Advancing Learning and
Innovation on Gender Norms**



BRIEFING NOTE

Women and gender norms in Nepal's parliament

By YUWA, Nepal

June, 2021

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Cover image: Illustration of the House of Representatives’ Building, Nepal

About YUWA, Nepal

Established in 2009, YUWA is a registered not-for-profit, purely youth-run and youth-led organization that works to promote youth participation through empowerment and advocacy. YUWA emerged from a group of committed youth, working unofficially in the youth sector since 2005. The initial focus was to develop leadership skills of the youth involved, to train them as youth activists, and to advocate for change, aiming to generate a wide and diverse range of knowledge, skills and experience in the sector. This confirmed the seriousness of youth issues and the need to act, which resulted in the creation of YUWA.

The word YUWA has its root in the Nepali language, and translates as 'youth'. In line with the meaning of this word, YUWA's executive body of decision-makers includes young people aged 16 to 29.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, YUWA would like to thank the Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALiGN) platform for the opportunity as a part of their research and knowledge translation projects aimed at advancing knowledge and innovation on gender norms and norm change.

We would like to thank research lead Samin Rijal along with researcher Anuj Bhandari and the team (Jenisha Mainali, Riju Dhakal, Manoj Kumar Panthi, and Urja Humagain) at YUWA for their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm to complete this research. We would also like to thank Satish Karn for all his administrative support and assistance. A special thanks to Rachel George and her team at Overseas Development Institute (ODI) for their constant support, feedback and comments on earlier drafts which have significantly improved the final report.

Most importantly, we would express our deep and sincere gratitude to all the respondents who kindly agreed for the interviews; without them, this research would not have been possible.

Key findings

- Women representatives in Nepal's Parliament report high levels of emotional and verbal gender-based violence (GBV).
- While a strict code of conduct has helped to prevent physical violence in parliament, respondents report that misogynist remarks and 'character assassinations' aimed at women are commonplace.
- The views of male parliamentarians on key social and political matters are prioritised by the media, while the views of female parliamentarians on these issues are rarely sought.
- Proportional representation has enhanced parliamentary diversity, but members who have been elected as a result of proportional representation (including most female members) are often looked down on, while members who have been directly elected tend to control parliamentary resources.
- Every parliamentarian can in theory, raise concerns, at a specific time during the parliamentary session. Most female parliamentarians, however, are sceptical that their complaints have any impact. Male members of parliament in executive positions and their parties rarely take women's viewpoints into account.
- Nepal's parliament has no reporting mechanism for cases of GBV or defamation. A formal mechanism could direct the management of future cases and ensure greater sensitisation. At present, if a female member of parliament (MP) experiences GBV, she has to turn to the country's legal system for redress.

Background

Every society, culture, and community has gender-role expectations – the informal, deeply embedded and commonly held beliefs about gender roles, power dynamics, and standards that govern human behaviours and practices. These are the ‘rules and regulations’ about how men, women, or people of diverse gender identities should be, act or feel. Gender norms have established a hierarchy of power and privileges that tends to put men in a superior position to women, whether at home or in more public spheres. The impact of this hierarchy can be seen, for example, in parliaments around the world, including in the parliament of Nepal.

The findings from a 2016 study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) confirm that sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians is very real and widespread (IPU, 2016). In South Asia, as in most other regions worldwide, women have historically been excluded from the political sphere by a combination of lack of opportunity, discriminatory norms and even open hostility. This marginalisation continues in the Indian sub-continent, particularly for women who do not come from a dominant political family (Center for Social Research, 2014).

In Nepal, the traditional social structure is grounded in the belief that men have pre-eminence over women. This belief is reflected in social institutions, including the family, education, economy, and in politics. Nepal’s parliament is no exception to this prevailing belief, and its inequitable climate was shown very clearly after the dissolution of the House of Representatives (HoR) on December 20, 2020. Women leaders – and the President in particular – were verbally abused by people who attacked their character and sexuality. The President, for example, was accused of having an affair with the Prime Minister.

Existing evidence suggests that power imbalances and violence of different forms and magnitude against women persist in Nepal. This is despite their active role in the country’s Civil War (1996 to 2006) when they stood alongside men to fight against Nepal’s feudalism, inequality and caste-based injustices. Reports show that women’s participation in the war stood at 40% – a significant proportion at a time when they accounted for less than 5% of parliamentarians in the legislative body (Financial Times, 2009). Women were also active in the protests related to women rights and the rights of other marginalised groups that led to the introduction of a quota of 33% compulsory representation for women in parliament. (Parliamentary Chamber: Pratinidhi Sabha, 1999).

Women still account for only one-third of parliamentarians, however: of the 271 seats in the HoR, male parliamentarians hold 66.79%, compared to just 33.21% for their female counterparts. Of the 33% of female members, only 2.58% are directly elected while the remainder hold seats that have been determined by proportional representation (30.62%). And their inclusion in parliament remains limited to their representation, without their meaningful involvement in major decision-making processes (HoR, n.d.).

A 2018 study found that 53% of the elected female representatives who were surveyed stated that they had faced difficulties in their workplaces (DFAT and TAF, 2018). Such difficulties can include examples of casual sexism and subtle manifestations of discrimination that are shaped by gender norms (such as placing women’s seats behind those of the male leaders in parliament) that may go unnoticed by the public. The 2016 IPU study notes, however, that more severe violence against women is a universally accepted feature in politics that is deeply entrenched and that goes unexcavated under existing patriarchal structures (IPU, 2016). Research rationale and objectives

Research by the YUWA youth-led organisation aimed to identify common differences between the roles of male and female parliamentarians in the House of Representatives (HoR) based on gender norms, and determine how these differences are shaped by violence. The study also gathered and explored personal stories of inequalities, suppression, and verbal or emotional abuse.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- to understand parliamentarians' perception of gender roles and their significance
- to explore the roles of male and female parliamentarians in the decision-making process
- to identify whether parliamentarians have experienced any form of violence during their work and, if so, how these experiences are shaped by gender norms
- to understand the level of knowledge among parliamentarians on legal aspects of gender-based violence (GBV).

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research method based on key informant interviews (KIIs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) (see Annex 1 for the survey questionnaire). The research team began the study with an extensive desk review of several research journals, and articles related to gender norms and their impact on women in the workplace and elsewhere, to gain an understanding of the context. In addition, the team reviewed national laws and policies. The information gathered was then used to develop the tools for primary data collection.

The research included a pilot interview with a former parliamentarian to ensure the clarity and consistency of the questionnaire and its ability to generate the information required. The team also held a one-day session to explore the aims and objectives of the research, the key topics to be investigated, the research methods, ethical considerations and data recording and analysis.

The pilot interview was followed by a series of KIIs with female parliamentarians. Thirteen were conducted in person, while the remaining three were conducted virtually as a result of the ongoing COVID-related lockdown in Kathmandu valley. The KIIs aimed to understand the first-hand experience, perspective, knowledge and effects of gender norms among the respondents. The IDIs aimed to explore diverse perspectives about the issue and to triangulate the information received through KIIs (Table 1).

Table 1. Data collection methods and respondents for the YUWA study

Data collection method	Respondent	Total number of respondents
Key informant interviews (KIIs)	Female members of the House of Representatives (HoR) Ethnic representation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight Brahmin/Chhetri • Four Dalit • Two Muslim • One Madhesi 	15

	<p>Geographic representation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One: Province 1 • Three: Province 2 • Four: Bagmati Province • Four: Lumbini Province • One: Karnali Province • Two: Sudurpaschim Province 	
In-depth interviews (IDIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two male members of the HoR • One former male parliamentarian • One aspiring politician who identifies as a transwoman • One young female politician • One female political enthusiast • One sociologist who has conducted several research studies into gender-based violence (GBV) • One senior advocate working for women's rights • One male journalist • Two representatives of a service-based non-governmental organisation working for women's rights, and against GBV 	11

Findings

1. The participants

1.1 Characteristics

The 15 key informant interviewees came from diverse social, religious, educational, and ethnic backgrounds, but they shared one common characteristic: they had all been involved in politics for more than two decades, and their involvement had started at a young age.

Most of the key informants acknowledged that they had benefited from the opportunity to get an education, despite an institutionally patriarchal system that hampers access to education for women and girls. One parliamentarian, for example, was asked to finish her schooling during fifth grade after the death of her father and said that she rebelled, broke the gender norms and went on with her studies. Likewise, most key informants recalled that they had to overcome many contextual constraints to obtain their education, and that this had helped them to understand different ideologies and principles throughout their life. This, in turn, helped them get to where they are today.

1.2 Motivation

Motivation drives people to excel and thrive. The respondents to the KIs had strong motivations that led them into politics and drove them onwards in their political journey. As one explained, *'The Civil War that started in 1996 gave both men and women equal opportunities to demonstrate our capabilities and leadership. We all had the same motivation—to bring about a change. Even though we came from different backgrounds, that feeling circulated among each and every one.'*

Two of the respondents, both from ethnic minorities, talked about the motivation they gained when their parties' leaders praised their work particularly as they came from traditionally marginalised backgrounds.

2. Gender norms

2.1 Introduction

Some respondents were not familiar with the term 'gender norm', partly because it has no direct translation in Nepali. Instead, a close Nepali translation synonymous with gendered practises was used to collect information. Even so, the respondents acknowledged the barriers that existed because of one's gender. One respondent said, '

'The society we have been brought up in has given all decision-making and economic rights to men. Even in households, women were never given the right to decide. The parliament is built with people from this society so the belief and understanding there is a reflection of the society.'

Female MP

Some respondents noted that all women parliamentarians faced the same kinds of behavioural discrimination, regardless of whether they had been elected directly or through proportional representation. One key informant also talked about various groups and organisations prioritising the participation of male parliamentarians in any national and local programmes like inauguration events before any female MPs were invited to take part.

Talking about her involvement in a student political union, one young politician said, *'The relationships of other female candidates would often be a topic of discussion. Comments like 'She is beautiful. She has long beautiful hair. Thus, she will surely win.' made me question my body image and if I needed to do the same to win. Also, for most of my life, people have mistaken me for a transgender person or a lesbian because of my short hair and getup.'*

Many other female MPs could relate to being judged on the basis of their appearance rather than their abilities. One female MP who had been widowed said that she was criticised by her opposition during an election campaign for wearing western formal clothing instead of the white sari that is traditionally worn by widows. She noted that while men were seldom, if ever, expected to present themselves in a certain way, traditional norms still dictate how a widowed woman should dress.

2.2 Power and influence

The decision-making process of the HoR consists of 12 different committees that table ordinances for discussion by the members. They tend to provide their feedback in line with the views of their parties. The ordinances then go back to the committees and are finalised after some reflection on the feedback.

'There is no trust over a woman's voice in decision making. If we look at the decision-making levels or policy-related discussions between parties and within parties, woman's presence is not a priority and is only there for fulfilling quota.'

Female MP

Women members, however, are doubtful about the extent to which many of their views are actually considered during the decision-making process. As noted, most respondents to our study said that there was no discrimination in terms of the space provided in the parliament for women, but that other factors hinder their participation in decision-making. All of the items tabled for the parliamentary agenda, for example, have already been discussed by their respective political parties. Even if women take part in these discussions, their participation is often perceived as tokenised and intended only to fulfil the quota requirement. Their participation is, therefore, barely seen as having any meaning. This perception among the male leaders can prevent female parliamentarians from sharing their views and expertise on important political issues. As one parliamentarian noted, *'There is no trust over a woman's voice in decision making'*.

'Female representation, including various [aspects of] inclusivity and diversity, is visible in terms of their numbers. However, if we look at their meaningful participation within this representation, the situation is rather gruesome.'

At the decision-making levels and policy development levels of political parties, there is hardly any woman representative. How many female ministers, party presidents, whips, or chief ministers are women? Hardly any.'

Journalist

In addition, parties have few women leaders in their decision-making positions, signalling that those entities are male dominated, that they are occupying women's spaces and blocking women's voices in the parliament. In short, even the supreme body of the nation remains male dominated. It shows that the male members and male executives have firm control of powerful political gears.

Commenting on this situation, the journalist interviewed for this study noted, *'... if we look at their [women's] meaningful participation within this representation, the situation is gruesome'*.

2.3 Voicing concerns

As part of the supreme body of the country, the members of the HoR are constantly raising their concerns about matters that are important for the nation. They use the Zero Hour (a time before the start of a parliamentary session when parliamentarians can speak on any issue) and the *bishes samaya* (special time) to voice their concerns and can, in some cases, tap their table and demand additional speaking time.

The respondents to our study reported that most of their colleagues are supportive and encourage each other to voice their concerns. However, the biggest question is how often their concerns are translated into action. Most of the respondents mentioned that they have adequate speaking time but feel that their views are not considered when decisions are made. *'Only when it's women-related issues, our voices are heard,'* a few responded.

'When the meeting ends, all media personnel direct their cameras and mics towards men parliamentarians. Female leaders are bluntly ignored. Even when we have something important to say, even when we talk as a representative of certain backgrounds or people, our effort is not mainstreamed by the media.'
Female MP

At the same time, women may feel reluctant to speak up as a result of language barriers. Parliamentarians are expected to speak fluent Nepali during parliamentary meetings and this can be a deterrent for those from ethnic minorities who cannot communicate confidently in a second language or in a language with which they are less familiar. One of the respondents said, *'Sometimes it may be due to lack of confidence and information, and at other times, representatives of certain marginalised communities cannot voice their concerns because there exists a fear of being mocked due to the language barrier.'*

One veteran parliamentarian, however, had a more optimistic outlook. She claimed that her own research had found that women voice their concerns for 40% of the total time allocated for Zero Hour. According to her research, 33% of women share their views during the special speaking time allocated in parliamentary meetings. *'Women do not hold back when voicing their opinions and ideas in the parliament,'* she said.

One issue all of the female respondents have faced, however, is the lack of media coverage. Whenever women parliamentarians speak on major social, political, and national issues – unless it is an issue related exclusively to women – they tend to be ignored in terms of media coverage. As one female representative said, *'When the meeting ends, all media personnel direct their cameras and mics towards men parliamentarians.'*

The journalist maintained that women parliamentarians do not receive as much coverage in the media as senior male leaders because the media have only limited time available in their bulletins and cannot cover everybody. However, he did not deny that this was also the result of reporters' bias based on gender, their assumption that women are less informed and that male parliamentarians will provide better quality information on the issue. He also argued that reporters simply feel more comfortable interviewing people of the same gender who they already know and with whom they have a good working relationship.

In essence, men have the freedom to share their views as they wish while the views of women parliamentarians are seen as less important, which reduces their reach to the public. And while women raise their issues and concerns in the parliament, they are often overshadowed by male parliamentarians.

2.4 Work experience

The HoR has a total of 271 members, comprised of 181 men and 90 women (with four members currently suspended). Parliamentarians do come together and work together in the parliament itself, in parliamentary committees and in political parties. However, even when men and women hold equal responsibilities in the parliament, our respondents reported disparities.

The most common issue raised was the vast imbalance in power between those members who had been directly elected and those who had been elected through proportional representation. Female proportional representatives are particularly tokenised and seen as people who are there merely to fulfil the quota.

There is an institutional discrimination against proportionally elected representatives because unlike directly elected representatives, they do not have an allocated budget at their disposal. This, in turn, has a negative impact on the engagement of proportionally elected members with their respective constituencies, as they believe there isn't much they can do without a budget at their disposal.

Asked why there is a difference in power between the representatives, the aspiring politician gave three reasons: patriarchal thinking, lack of trust in women, and the inability of women members to win the confidence of their constituencies, given that women do not have the strong hold on society enjoyed by men and are not entrusted with finances. *'When they do not have the funding to work with, they can't win over their community,'* she concluded.

3. Gender norms that hamper women's political journey

'As a whole in this patriarchal society, all women obviously face greater challenges in comparison to men'
Former male MP

Exploring the challenges women faced during their journey as politicians and ultimately as parliamentarians, respondents stressed the role of society and its gendered expectations. All of them believed that the patriarchal social context of Nepal was challenging and that they had to defy social expectations to get into politics. The way

women's roles are viewed in society and the obligations they are expected to fulfil as a daughter, a daughter-in-law or a mother were cited as major challenges by every respondent.

The interviewees also revealed that, unlike men, women face more challenges in politics because no matter how passionate or committed they are, they cannot run away from their household responsibilities. One respondent talked about women's 'triple shift' roles, saying, *'In a patriarchal society like ours, the society's expectations of women in household chores, maternal responsibilities assigned to women, the family structure and attitude towards women are definitely challenging their career.'*

One former male parliamentarian who agreed with this view also cited other challenges, *'The challenges for women to enter into politics are different for women from different backgrounds. Well-educated women living in city areas may not face as many challenges as women in rural communities. Another factor that plays a big role is ethnic background.'*

The young transwoman also described the unwelcoming environment she encountered when getting into politics, because of the way people of the LGBTIQ++ community are perceived and treated.

Some of the respondents claimed that even though they were making or trying to make an impact in their society from a young age, someone around them had always complained about this and had discouraged them, citing their 'loss of character' since they got into politics.

A young politician shared a particular challenge in her political journey. As she started to become more involved in a student union, she was exposed to the mindset that women must only work on issues related to women. She was also excluded from the campus' student union. When asked why, she was told, *'Men use vulgar words. You are a girl, and girls are always soft. You would not be able to bear hearing such words or aggressions.'*

A considerable number of parliamentarians mentioned that they were also discouraged from the moment they stepped into the political landscape. One said that her own family had tried to stop her developing an attachment to politics, even though the family itself had a political background. Most respondents, however, credited their families for their support and for helping them through thick and thin in their journey. The interviews revealed that female parliamentarians who had a political family background had a comparatively easier route in politics. However, their parties had no confidence in their leadership as a result of age-old patriarchy.

Another challenge discussed by some respondents was the constraints to sponsorship, noting that donors are not interested in funding women's campaign. Networking is often closely related to finance and to the institutional corruption that remains prevalent in Nepal. Women often lack such strong networks, which means that men have more involvement in the important social events where such networks are built and, therefore, greater opportunities to gain the support of powerful people.

Speaking about the challenges she faced during her tenure in the Constitution Assembly, a parliamentarian said, *'After I was elected, a male parliamentarian came up to me and talked about how he was there because of his capacity and how I was present only to fulfil the 33% quota.'*

While parliamentarians did not label such aggression as a form of violence, they raised it during the interviews and admitted to being perceived as inadequate or inferior simply because their presence had come about through the quota system. This is a clear example of the existing gender norms that expand their discrimination against women to impede their power, influence and opportunities.

4. Gender-based violence

The journalist interviewed for this study raised an issue that was not raised by any of the parliamentarians and politicians: the ongoing problem in parliament of gender-based violence (GBV).

Giving an example of the institutionalised discrimination that can be considered a form of violence, he noted that the parliament's Deputy Speaker post has now been vacant for more than two years because, under the Constitution, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker must be of different genders and must represent two political parties. *'When we say there is no violence in the HoR, there may not have been any forms of direct acts of violence in terms of physical or sexual abuse,'* he said. *'However, can we ignore the fact that a deserving woman, whoever it may be, has been deprived of an opportunity this big, an opportunity rightfully guaranteed to her by the Constitution? The state has ignored the issue and not considered this a priority worth discussing in more than two years. That is the kind of gender-based violence seen in the parliament.'*

While there have been no reported cases of GBV in the parliament of Nepal, gender-based violence is very prevalent, particularly emotional violence and verbal abuse that causes reputational damage.

One male member said that he had no knowledge of any actual violence: *'Parliament is comparatively a safe space, but it is definitely a reflection of our society.'*

'Parliament is comparatively a safe space, but it is definitely a reflection on our society. We cannot say there is zero prevalence of these conditions. It may have been prevalent in some form. However, as far as my knowledge, I have not seen instances.'

Male MP

Nepalese society, however, has nurtured several gender norms that are closely linked to systems and institutions and that have grave implications for the status of women and girls, often leading to gender

discrimination and a wider spectrum of GBV. As noted, women have little meaningful and inclusive participation in decision-making and leadership, and the repercussions include emotional, verbal abuse and harassment in the country's parliament.

4.1 Emotional violence

Although all the respondents denied the occurrence of any sort of violence, they lamented the commonplace misogynist comments and jokes. The character assassination of women parliamentarians is persistent in the parliament, and the perpetrators are not only men, but also women who have the same patriarchal mindset.

Merely speaking to a male colleague can create an unnecessary buzz and raise questions about a woman's character. Other respondents said that they had never witnessed any instance where questions were raised about a man's character if he was friends with a female parliamentarian. But all eyebrows are raised when a woman is friends with a man. In addition, respondents talked of the reputational damage caused when women make choices about their own clothes, lifestyle and self-presentation that are not seen as appropriate.

Some interviewees also noted that women parliamentarians are often only known as someone's wife or daughter. The aspiring politician gave an example of a parliamentarian who was a young politician and who had a more successful political journey than her husband during her involvement with a student union. She was also a good teacher and was, therefore, well-educated and capable. However, she got her election ticket only after her husband died. Now she struggles to make herself heard in parliament and is often dismissed as someone who is only there because of her husband. A number of women have had to go through this, and are seen as merely following a man's legacy. As a result, they become parliamentarians with no identity of their own.

One respondent talked about something she has often noticed: *'When men gather around in the parliament's canteen, they talk about politics, society, et cetera. If their female counterpart comes to sit with them, they drop that topic and start asking personal things like "what is this haircut?"'*. This shows how male parliamentarians, while sharing similar responsibilities, think little of their female counterparts, and do not consider them to be worthy of meaningful conversations. Another key informant reported that limiting opportunities and leadership for women has become the political weapon of violence against them.

Another issue raised by respondents related to everyday discrimination based on their gender. One respondent noted that men, no matter how shabbily dressed, did not have to show an ID card to the guards at the HoR gates to prove that they were parliamentarians. Women, however, were mostly required to show their ID cards to get into parliament – a subtle form of harassment that makes women feel uneasy. Similarly, some female MPs said that they feel HoR staff are more courteous to their male counterparts. One said, *'A male parliamentarian need not introduce himself (at*

Singhadurbar). Looking at the logo only, the officials will start treating them with respect. But if a female is there, the conversation starts with “who are you here for?” “What is the purpose?” This is a form of violence to us.’

These instances show that most of the reported examples of discrimination have been forms of emotional violence.

5. Reporting cases of gender-based violence

There is no mechanism or entity within the parliament where cases of GBV or defamation can be reported. If anything happens, the person affected has no other option but to follow the legal procedures of Nepal, and while strong laws and policies against violence against women are in place, their implementation is feeble, and justice is seldom served. Cases of violence or defamation usually happen when no one is around to witness them, and the person affected often struggles to gather evidence to reinforce their complaint. In addition, parliamentarians are not considered to be part of the workforce of the nation, which means they are not covered by any laws that protect that workforce.

In theory, if any form of violence happens during a parliamentary session, parliamentarians can raise a hand or tap the table, obstruct the proceedings, and put their concerns directly to the speaker or their party's whip. To date, however, no one has voiced any such complaint.

One female parliamentarian even said, *‘A while back, we believed there must be a document in place for reporting cases. However, we decided that it was not necessary as there have been no such issues.’* When it comes to developing a mechanism for reporting any form of workplace violence, one basic rule is that this should never wait until a case arises, as this will hinder victims' chances of getting justice. Equally, when some of the parliamentarians talked about mental violence, they did not seem to consider such violence when it came to reporting cases.

Sharing the workings of her institution, the representative from the non-governmental organisation discussed workplace violence. She said they have not received many cases of such gender-based violence. *‘There were cases of gender-based violence from reputable and well-known organisations and companies as well but it was difficult to undergo legal processes,’* she explained.

6. Legal aspects

As Nepal's lawmakers, the respondents were well-versed with the Constitution and all legislation. They talked about legislation related to sexual harassment, domestic violence and articles in the Constitution itself that help the judicial system register violence against women under the *dandaatmak nyaya pranali* (punishable justice system).

According to the senior advocate, *‘The constitution is the key legal document of the country, and it has all the legal aspects we need to know.’* She spoke about Article 38 on the Rights of Women, which states that a woman has the right to generational wealth, reproductive health and representative participation. She also spoke about Article 21, the Rights of Victims of Crime, which gives rights to those who have been victims of crimes such as domestic violence. The same article ensures that

the victim has the right to information about their case. However, she mentioned that women do not know about or understand these laws, which makes the provision of justice a real challenge.

The representative of the non-governmental organisation talked of showing solidarity with the victims of GBV and of using common guidelines to deal with such cases. She said that they had never received any reported cases from parliamentarians but mentioned cases of GBV related to Deputy Mayors and other local leaders, with the organisation providing legal support in two or three cases. A female Deputy Mayor even stayed in the organisation's shelter for a long time during her legal battle.

Conclusions

Gender-based violence is a grave issue in Nepal and is rooted in the country's gender norms. The research by YUWA aimed to discover whether female members of the House of Representatives were also the victims of GBV and identify any effective solutions in place.

As a result of the patriarchy that prevails at each level of the country, female parliamentarians face constant challenges in navigating their tasks and responsibilities. It is this patriarchy that presents obstacles to young and aspiring female politicians as they make their way up through the ranks of political parties and take their place in parliament.

The study also highlights the often tokenistic involvement of women in decision-making processes and reveals the impact of the partisan, male-dominated power that drives these important processes. Despite the formalities and mechanisms that are in place, there are evident gaps in ensuring the meaningful participation of women in actionable decision-making positions and structures.

While no direct cases of physical or sexual violence were reported by respondents, this study identified mental and emotional violence, with parliamentarians sharing examples of character assassination and discrimination based on gender. There were also examples of their male counterparts displaying gender-inequitable attitudes and behaviour when it came to working alongside women.

While the respondents assured the researchers that no victim would be barred from justice if any form of GBV occurred in the parliament, there was an obvious lack of any reporting mechanism or laws to protect them while going about their parliamentary duties.

Recommendations

Even the leading body of the nation, Nepal's House of Representatives (HoR), has seen various cases of gender-based violence that relate to gender norms. Based on these findings, the prevention and control of such cases requires the following steps for the HoR at a national level and internally, for political parties and for all relevant stakeholders.

- For the HoR (at a national level)
 - The laws of the country related to GBV should explicitly recognise emotional and verbal violence, harassment and abuse, as well as physical violence, and ensure a zero-tolerance policy that covers all cases experienced by anyone, with any gender identity.
- For the HoR (internally)
 - Parliamentarians should develop an internal reporting mechanism to ensure that no case goes unnoticed or unreported.
 - The HoR must develop a committee of women from all political parties and from the government to speak up for, and work with, female parliamentarians. This committee should provide orientation and trainings to recognise and deal with any forms of violence.
 - The male members of the HoR must be sensitised on issues related to gender norms and the violence it generates.
- For the political parties
 - Political parties must provide their women leaders with more opportunities and seats in their executive positions.
 - Parties must enable women to share their ideas and position on issues other than those related directly and solely to women.
- For relevant stakeholders
 - Orientations and trainings must be provided to journalists and media professionals to encourage them to relay women's voices to the public.
 - Relevant stakeholders should conduct more research on gender norms and the resulting violence against women parliamentarians.

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Annex 1. Survey questionnaire

‘नेपालको संसदमा महिला र लैंगिक मान्यता’ परियोजना अन्तर्गत अन्तर्वार्ताको लागि जानकारी सहितको सहमति पत्र

क. जानकारी

हामी Overseas Development Institute नामक वैदेशिक संस्थाको आर्थिक सहयोगमा काठमाडौंको महाराजगंज स्थित ‘युवा’ नामक संस्था द्वारा संचालित अनुसन्धानमुलक परियोजना अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्वार्ताको वारेमा माननीयसँग छलफल गर्न चाहन्छौं।

‘Women and Gender Norms Parliament in Nepal’ (नेपालको संसदमा महिला र लैंगिक मान्यता) नामक यस परियोजनामा संसदमा, विशेष गरी प्रतिनिधि सभामा कार्यरत महिला सांसदहरूको लैङ्गीक हिंसाका विभिन्न पक्षवारे जानकारी, अनुभव र धारणा बुझ्नुका साथै यस प्रकारको हिंसालाई लिएर संसदमा विद्यमान नीति तथा कानुनी कामकारवाही वारे जान्ने उद्देश्य रहेको छ। यस विषयमा प्रत्यक्ष रूपमा माननीय संलग्न हुनुभएको र महिला सांसदको रूपमा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुभएकोले माननीयको अनुभव र धारणाले यस अध्ययनमा निकै महत्व राख्छ भन्ने आशाका साथ माननीयलाई यहाँ आमन्त्रित गरिएको हो।

माननीयको सहभागिता ऐच्छिक हो र सहभागिता जनाउन नचाहेमा कुनै दण्ड वा जरिवाना हुने छैन। अन्तर्वार्तामा संलग्न कुनै पनि प्रश्नको उत्तर दिन नचाहेमा उक्त प्रश्न छोड्न सक्नुहुनेछ र कुनै पनि बेला अन्तर्वार्तामा सहभागी हुनबाट अस्वीकार गर्न सकिनेछ।

माननीयबाट प्राप्त जानकारीको गोपनीयतालाई पूर्ण रूपमा कायम गर्ने र माननीयको नाम तथा व्यक्तिगत जानकारी कतै नखुलाउने कुरामा विश्वस्त गराउछौं। यस अध्ययनबाट प्राप्त निष्कर्ष तथा रिपोर्ट प्रकाशित गर्ने क्रममा पनि माननीयबाट प्राप्त कुनै पनि जानकारी वा भनाइहरू संलग्न हुँदा व्यक्तिगत जानकारी सार्वजनिक गरिने छैन। अन्तर्वार्तामा प्राप्त सबै विचार र जानकारीलाई समावेश गराउन अन्तर्वार्तालाई रेकर्ड गर्न चाहन्छौं। उक्त रेकर्डिङ अध्ययनको आवश्यकता बाहेक प्रयोग गरिने छैन र ट्रान्स्क्राइब र विश्लेषण गर्नासाथ विनाश गरिनेछ।

ख. सहमति

मलाई युवा नामक संस्थाद्वारा संचालित ‘Women and Gender Norms in Parliament in Nepal’ (नेपालको संसदमा महिला र लैंगिक मान्यता) नामक परियोजना अन्तर्गत गरिएको अध्ययनमा संसदमा विद्यमान लैङ्गीक हिंसाका विभिन्न पक्षका वारे जानकारी दिन अन्तर्वार्तामा सहभागी हुन आमन्त्रित गरिएको छ। माथि उल्लेखित जानकारी मैले पढेको छु वा मलाई पढेर सुनाइएको छ।

मलाई सहभागी हुनु पूर्व यस अध्ययनका बारे प्रश्न गर्ने अवसर दिइएको थियो र प्राप्त उत्तर प्रति म सन्तुष्ट छु।

म स्वैच्छिक रूपले यस अध्ययनको सहभागी हुन सहमत छु।

छु छैन

म यस अन्तर्वार्तालाई अनुसन्धानको प्रयोजनको लागि रेकर्ड गर्न सहमत छु।

छु छैन

म यस अध्ययनको प्रयोजनका लागि आफ्नो नाम खुलाउन सहमत छु।

छु छैन

उत्तरदाताको परिचय

Profile of the respondents

नाम (Name):

उमेर (Age):

लिङ्ग (Gender):

शिक्षा(Education):

A. पृष्ठभूमि

A. Background

1. माननीय कति समयदेखि राजनीतिमा सक्रिय हुनुहुन्छ? माननीय राजनीतिमा सक्रिय हुन कसरी प्रेरित हुनुभयो?
How long have you been active in politics? What motivated you to pursue politics?
2. सांसदको रूपमा माननीयको राजनैतिक यात्राको वारेमा छोटकरीमा भन्नुहोस्? (Probe: चुनौतीहरू, सहयोग र प्रोत्साहन, प्रेरणा)
Could you briefly share your journey into becoming a parliamentarian? (Probe: Challenges, support, motivation)
3. राजनीतिमा पुरुषको तुलनामा महिलाको प्रतिनिधित्व धेरै कम छ, महिलाको रूपमा के माननीयको लागि केही विशेष चुनौतीहरू छन्?
Compared to men, women's representation in politics is significantly less. So, as a woman, did you have to face any specific challenges that you would not have faced otherwise?
4. सांसदको रूपमा माननीयको सामान्य दिनचर्या कस्तो रहन्छ?
As a parliamentarian, how does your typical day look like?
5. सांसद हुनुको सकारात्मक पक्षहरू के कस्ता छन्?
What are the positive aspects of being a parliamentarian?
6. सांसद हुँनु सधैं सहज र सुखद पक्कै छैन। माननीयका जिम्मेवारीसँग सम्बन्धित केही चुनौती र समस्या वारे बताउन सक्नुहुन्छ?
We understand that being a parliamentarian is not always glorious and rosy. So, could you please share some of the challenges/problems associated to your role?

B. लैङ्गिक मान्यता/ मापदण्ड/ नियम

B. Gender Norms

1. लैङ्गीक मान्यता भन्नाले माननिय के बुझ्नुहुन्छ? के माननिय समाजमा विद्यमान केही लैङ्गीक मान्यताका उदाहरणहरु बताउन सक्नुहुन्छ ?

What do you understand by gender norms? Could you share some of the examples of gender norms in your daily life?

2. के माननियको विचारमा यी मान्यताहरुले कार्यस्थलमा व्यक्तिको भूमिकालाई असर गर्छ ? किन ? छोटकरीमा आफ्नो विचार राखिदिनुहोस्।

Do you think gender norms affect a person's role in their workplace? Could you briefly describe why you think so?

3. के माननियले कहिल्यै महिलाहरु भएको कारणले संसदमा काम गर्दा कुनै चुनौतीको सामना गर्नु भएको छ? यदि छ भने, के माननिय उक्त घटनावारे विस्तार गर्न सक्नुहुन्छ?

Have you ever faced any challenges while working in the parliament just because you are a woman? If yes, could you please share the incident?

4. के माननियलाई विभिन्न सामाजिक पृष्ठभूमि (जाति, भूगोल, धर्म लगायत अन्य) का महिलाहरुलाई संसदमा विशेष प्रकारका चुनौतिहरुको सामना गर्नुपर्छ भन्ने लाग्छ? Do you think women from specific social background (*probe: caste, ethnicity, geography, religion among others*) face particular kind of challenges in the parliament?

4.1. यदि लाग्छ भने, ती चुनौतीहरु के के होलान्, विस्तार गर्नुहोस्।

If yes, can you explain about the specific challenges?

4.2 विशेष सामाजिक पृष्ठभूमि का महिला सांसदहरुले यस्ता प्रकारका चुनौतिहरु भोग्नुपर्ने कारणहरु के होलान्?

Why do you think some women from specific social background face such challenges?

5. यदि हामीले संसदमा महिलाको प्रतिनिधित्व हेर्ने हो भने सात जना मात्र प्रत्यक्ष निर्वाचित छन् भने बाँकी समानुपातिक बाट निर्वाचित भएका छन्। यसबारे माननियको विचार के छ ?

If we see the representation of women in the parliament, only seven are directly elected while the remaining are proportionally elected as if to fulfill the quota of 33%. So, what do you think about it?

6. के माननियको विचारमा प्रत्यक्ष रूपमा निर्वाचित र समानुपातिक निर्वाचित अधिकारीहरुविच संसदका सहकर्मीहरुले फरक व्यवहार गर्नुहुन्छ? (प्रोब: सरोकारका विषयमा बोल्ने, आफ्ना विचार राख्ने क्रममा, अन्य)

Do you think directly elected and proportionally elected officials are treated differently by your colleagues? (*probe: when they raise concerns, share their opinions, so on*)

C. निर्णय लिने प्रक्रिया

C. Decision Making

1. संसदमा निर्णय लिने प्रक्रिया कस्तो हुन्छ बताउन सक्नुहुन्छ?
Could you please explain the decision-making process in the parliament?
2. निर्णय लिने प्रक्रियामा माननियको कस्तो भूमिका छ भन्ने बारे जानकारी दिनुहोस्। के माननियका पुरुष सहकर्मीभन्दा आफ्नो भूमिका भिन्न रहेको महसुस गर्नुहुन्छ? यदि छ भने, यसको कारण के होला?
Could you share your role in the decision-making process? Is it any different than your fellow male parliamentarians' role? If yes, why do you think so?
3. के माननियको विचारमा दुवै पुरुष र महिला सांसदहरुको निर्णय लिने प्रक्रियामा उक्तिकै भूमिका रहेको छ ? छ वा छैन भने यसका कारण के हुन सक्छन्?
Do you think both male and female parliamentarians have equal say in the decisions made in the HoR? If Yes/No, could you briefly explain your reasons?

D. सरोकारका विषयमा आवाज

D. Voicing their Concerns

1. निर्णय लिने प्रक्रियामा वा सरोकारका विषयमा माननिय आफ्ना विचार/ आवाज कतिको उठाउनुहुन्छ?
How often do you table and voice your opinions /concerns during the decision-making process?
2. के माननियको विचारमा आफ्नो आवाज/ विचार प्रस्तुत गर्ने क्रममा कुनै किसिमका चुनौती/वाधा/ संकोचहरु अवस्थित छन्? यदि छन् भने कस्ता चुनौतीहरु छन्? जसमा माननिय वा माननियका महिला सहकर्मीहरुले यस किसिमको चुनौती भोग्नुपरेको कुनै यस्तो उदाहरण छ? Do you think there exists any challenges/barriers/limitations/ fears while voicing your concerns/opinions? If yes, what sort of challenges do you face? Could you share an instance where you or your fellow female MP have faced such challenge/s?

E. कार्य अनुभव

E. Work Experience

1. माननियले आफ्नो विचारहरु राख्दा माननियको सहकर्मीहरुले कस्तो प्रतिक्रिया जनाउनुहुन्छ? (Probe: कुनै किसिमको मौखिक वा सांकेतिक रूपमा कुनै प्रतिक्रिया वा भिन्नता)
How do your colleagues respond when you put forward your opinion/ concerns? (Probe: if they show any disparity in forms of verbal and facial cues)
2. आफ्ना सहकर्मीहरूसँग माननियको सम्बन्ध कस्तो छ? के माननिय उनीहरूसँग काम गर्न सजिलो महसुस गर्नुहुन्छ? के यो सहज वातावरण महिला र पुरुष सहकर्मीमा भिन्न / फरक पाउनुहुन्छ?
What kind of relationship do you share with your colleagues? Are you comfortable working with them? Is it any different with your male and female colleagues?
3. प्रतिनिधि सभामा काम गर्ने महिला सांसदको रूपमा माननिय आफूलाई कतिको सुरक्षित (प्रोब: शारीरिक र मानसिक रूपमा) महसुस गर्नुहुन्छ? के माननियलाई माननियको सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित गर्नका निम्ति विद्यमान प्रणालीमा केही परिवर्तनहरु हुनु आवश्यक छ भन्ने लाग्छ?

How safe (*probe: physical and psychological*) do you feel as a woman working in the house of representatives? Do you think there needs to be some changes in the system to ensure your safety?

F. लैङ्गिक हिंसा

F. Gender Based Violence

1. माननियको विचारमा लैङ्गिक हिंसा भनेको के हो? माननियको विचारमा लैङ्गिक हिंसा कहाँ प्रचलित छ?
How do you define gender-based violence? Where do you think GBV is prevalent?
2. के माननियको विचारमा लैङ्गिक हिंसा कार्यस्थलमा पनि प्रचलित छ?
Do you think GBV exists in workplace as well?
 - यदि छ भने, कुन किसिमको लैङ्गिक हिंसा कार्यस्थलमा अवस्थित छ?
If yes, what forms of GBV exists in workplace?
 - माननियको विचारमा कार्यस्थलमा हुने लैङ्गिक हिंसाका प्रमुख कारणहरू के हुन्?
What do you think are the major factors that cause gender-based violence in the workplace?
 - यदि छैन भने, किन?
If no, why do you think so?
3. के यस्तो हिंसा माननियको कार्यस्थलमा अवस्थित छ?
Does such violence exist in your workplace?
 - यदि छ भने, कुनै घटना वा उदाहरण दिन सक्नुहुन्छ?
If yes, can you share any incidence?
4. माननियको विचारमा यो हिंसा निम्त्याउने कारणहरू के के हुन्?
What do you are the reasons that lead to this particular violence?
5. यस हिंसाबाट पीडित (हरू) ले कस्तो परिणाम भोग्नुपर्यो?
What consequences did this violence have on the victim(s)?
6. यस हिंसाप्रति पिडित (हरू)/ पिडित पक्षको प्रतिक्रिया कस्तो थियो?
How did the victim(s) respond to this violence?
 - यदि छैन भने, माननियलाई किन संसदमा लैङ्गीक हिंसा प्रचलित छैन भन्ने लाग्छ?
If no, why do you think GBV doesn't exist in the parliament?

(महिलाहरूले कार्यस्थलमा आफ्ना सहकर्मीहरूबाट उनको लैङ्गिकतामा आधारित टिप्पणीहरू प्राप्त गरेकाे परिकल्पना गरी उदाहरण दिनुहोस्)

(Give hypothesis of a workplace where women have received comments based on her gender from her coworkers)

7. के माननियले कहिल्यै आफ्ना सहकर्मीहरूबाट यस्तो टिप्पणी प्राप्त गर्नुभएको छ? यदि छ भने, के माननिय यसवारे जानकारी दिन सक्नुहुन्छ? (प्रोब: सहकर्मीहरूले उनको व्यक्तिगत जीवन, निर्णयहरू, आफ्नो अभिव्यक्ति, प्रस्तुती, गर्भावस्था, लगायत अन्यमा टिप्पणीहरू)

Have you ever received such comments from your coworkers? If yes, will you please share?
(probe: coworkers making comments on her personal life, choices, appearances, pregnancy and so on)

8. के माननियले कहिल्यै एक महिला भएको कारण आफूबाट कुनै खास तरिकाको व्यवहार/ आचरणको अपेक्षा गरिएको महसुस गर्नुभएको छ/ थियो?

Have you ever felt that you were expected to conduct yourself in a certain way just because you are a woman?

9. माननीयको विचारमा के पुरुष सांसदहरू महिला सांसदहरूले लैङ्गीक हिंसाका यस्ता चुनौतीहरू भोग्नुपरेको कुरावारे अवगत हुनुहुन्छ (यस किसिमको समस्या संसदमा विद्यमान भए मात्र सोध्ने)

Do you think that men in parliament are aware of the experiences of women in parliament, including issues around violence? (Ask only if such issue persists in the parliament)

G. मुद्दाहरू रिपोर्ट गर्ने प्रक्रिया

G. Reporting the case

हिंसा / भेदभावको सामना गरेका उत्तरदाताहरूका लागि

For respondents who have faced the violence/discrimination

1. के माननियले आफूमाथि भएको दुर्व्यवहार विरुद्ध कुनै गुनासो पेश गर्नुभयो?

Did you file any complaint against the misconduct?

गर्नुभएको खण्डमा सोधिने प्रश्न,

If yes,

○ माननियले कहाँ र कसरी गुनासो पेश गर्नुभयो?

Where and how did you file the complaint?

○ आचरण रिपोर्ट गरेपछि के कस्ता गतिविधि प्रतिक्रिया भए? पिडकलाई के कारबाही गरियो?

What happened after reporting the conduct? What actions were taken against the perpetrator?

○ के माननियले दुर्व्यवहार रिपोर्ट गर्दा कुनै किसिमको चुनौतीको सामना गर्नुभयो?

Did you face any challenge while reporting the misconduct?

○ के कसैले माननियलाई दुर्व्यवहार फाइल गर्न प्रोत्साहित गर्नुभयो?

Did anybody encourage you to file the misconduct?

○ के कसैले माननियलाई दुर्व्यवहार फाइल गर्न निरुत्साहित गरे?

Did anybody discourage you to file the misconduct?

गुनासो पेश नभएको खण्डमा सोधिने प्रश्नहरु,

If no,

○ माननियले किन दुर्व्यवहार विरुद्ध कुनै रिपोर्ट फाइल/उजुरी दायर गर्नुभएन? के माननिय कारण बताउन सक्नुहुन्छ?

Why did you not file the conduct? Can you explain you reason?

H. कुनै पनि दुर्व्यवहारको सामना नगरेका उत्तरदाताको लागि

H. For respondents who have not faced any misconduct

1. यदि माननियले भविष्यमा कुनै किसिमको दुर्व्यवहार/ हिंसाको सामना गर्नुभयो भने, के माननिय यसको विरुद्ध उजुरी गर्नुहुनेछ ?

If you face any situation of violence in the future, will you file a complaint against it?

2. यदि गर्नुहुन्छ भने, कहाँ जानुहुन्छ र किन?

If yes, where would you file the complaint and why?

3. यदि गर्नुहुन्न भने किन?

If no, why will you not file any complaint?

I. सबै उत्तरदाताहरूको लागि

I. For all the respondents

यदि माननियले माननियका कुनै साथी. सहकर्मीमाथि कुनै प्रकारको हिंसा/ दुर्व्यवहार भयो भने माननिय के गर्नुहुन्छ?

If you find out one of your colleagues has faced a form of violence, what would you do?

J. कानूनी पक्ष

J. Legal Aspects

1. के संसदमा लैङ्गिक हिंसाको मुद्दा सम्बन्धी कुनै समिति छ?

Is there any committee to deal with the cases of gender-based violence in the parliament?

2. के संसदमा पीडितहरूको रक्षा र पीडकहरूलाई कारवाही सम्बन्धी कुनै नीतिको व्यवस्था छ?

Are there any policies that safeguard the victims and penalize the perpetrators?

3. के माननिय लैङ्गीक हिंसा सम्बन्धित कानूनहरू बारे जानकार हुनुहुन्छ? हुनुहुन्छ भने, यसका बारे केही बताउन सक्नुहुन्छ?

Are you aware about the laws related to GBV? If yes, can you share about it?

4. के माननियलाई हाम्रो कानुनी प्रणालीमा लैङ्गीक हिंसाको मुद्दाहरू विरुद्ध गुनासो पेश गर्ने कानुनी प्रक्रिया बारे थाहा छ? हुनुहुन्छ भने, यसका बारे केही बताउन सक्नुहुन्छ?

Do you know about the legal process to file a complaint against the cases of GBV in our legal system? Can you describe the process?

K. सुझावहरू

K. Recommendations

संसदमा लैङ्गीक हिंसाको घटनाप्रति शून्य सहनशीलता सुनिश्चित गर्न संसदलाई केहि सुझाव दिन चाहनुहुन्छ?

Do you have any suggestion for the parliament to ensure zero tolerance towards the cases of gender-based violence in the parliament?

About ALIGN

ALIGN is a digital platform and programme of work that is creating a global community of researchers and thought leaders, all committed to gender justice and equality. It provides new research, insights from practice, and grants for initiatives that increase our understanding of – and work to change – discriminatory gender norms.

Through its vibrant and growing digital platform, and its events and activities, ALIGN aims to ensure that the best of available knowledge and resources have a growing impact on harmful gender norms.

About this research

This piece of research was funded by the Ford Foundation and is licensed to the public subject to the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence.

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ALIGN is funded by Global Affairs Canada and the Ford Foundation, and is led by the Overseas Development Institute.

