

Final Report

National Dalit Strategy Report

Part I

Situational Analysis of Dalits in Nepal

Submitted by

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Submitted to

Action-Aid Nepal
CARE Nepal and
Save the Children US

Prepared for

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National Dalit Strategy Report

Part I: Situational Analysis of Dalits in Nepal

Part II: Long-term Strategies for Dalit Upliftment in Nepal

Part III A Five Year Action Plan for Dalit Upliftment in Nepal

Prepared for

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Executive Summary

Background

Historically, Nepali society holds deep roots in the Hindu caste system, with hierarchy of different groups of people within the system. Dalits or untouchables are one of the groups of people within this Hindu caste system whose social, economic, health status and political conditions are lowest compared to other groups in Nepal. The overall goal of the report is to formulate a national strategy to support the Dalit upliftment and empowerment in the forthcoming Tenth National Plan. Three sequential reports are prepared for the purpose. The first report is the “Situational Analysis of Dalits”. This report describes the existing social, economic, educational status and political conditions of Dalits in Nepal based on available secondary data. This part also reviews the effectiveness and weaknesses of policies and programmes and activities conducted so far by the governmental and non-governmental organisations in the name of Dalits. The second report deals with problems, policies, and strategies of the Dalit empowerment within the framework of social discrimination and exclusion. The goal here is to develop the long-term strategy for Dalit upliftment and empowerment. The third report is the plan of action for five years for Dalit upliftment and empowerment.

Methodology

The findings of these reports are largely based on the secondary sources. Nevertheless, interviews with the concerned persons of the selected Dalit – based NGOs, NGOs/INGOs working for Dalits and government line agencies were conducted to supplement the secondary data. In addition, two-day seminar-cum-workshop was conducted with the nation-wide Dalit participants, stakeholders, and intellectuals working in the area of Dalit empowerment to identify the real issues, problems and solutions.

Major Findings

REPORT I: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF DALITS IN NEPAL

1. Context of Dalits in Nepal

There is a serious problem in understanding the context of Dalits in Nepal for two reasons: i) The term Dalit itself is a politically coined word, meaning “ the poor and oppressed persons”. This meaning is less sensitive than the term “Harijan” or “Achhoot” or so called untouchables, and ii) The term Dalit, is understood as untouchables or Achhoot or the term connotes in the sense of Old Legal code of 1854, “Pani nacalne choit chito halnu parne jat”(caste from whom water is not accepted and whose touch requires sprinkling of holy water). It seems that the first term is used by Dalits for their convenience whereas, in practice, the meaning is loaded with the second in addressing the problems of Dalits in Nepali society.

This problem of definition has created two major issues. i) There is an inclusion and exclusion in the list of Dalits. In 1997, Dalit Vikas Samity identified 23 various cultural groups as Dalits and Dalit Ayog (formed in March 2002) forwarded the Bill to the government identifying 28 cultural groups as Dalits in Nepal, and ii) As the list of Dalit fluctuates, so is the size of population of Dalits, ranging 2 million to 4.5 million in various sources.

Dalits per se is not a homogenous group. Like the other ethnic/caste groups in Nepal, their population is equally divided and their heterogeneity extends to language, religion and culture. More specifically, their heterogeneity and hierarchy can be better explained in three broad regional groups: Dalits in the Hill community, b) Dalits in the Newari community, and iii) Dalits in the Tarai community.

There is little record as such from which the authenticity of the origin of the caste system in Nepal can be traced. There has been regular attempt by scholars to link Dalits of Nepal with the old legendary sources such as the Vedas, Mahabharata, Puranas and Manusmriti. There is little archaeological record or historical evidence to corroborate the timing of these literatures and linking the present Dalit population of Nepal based on these literatures.

The genesis of the caste system in Nepal can be traced more accurately from the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla (1380-1394) in the context of Kathmandu Valley and with the introduction of the Old Legal Code of 1854 in the context of Nepal as a whole. Jayasthiti Malla classified the population of the Kathmandu valley into 64 castes, each with different functional and occupational categories. There was little change in this traditional caste structure until 1854 when the Old Legal Code of Nepal (Purano Mulki Ain) was introduced in the reign of King Surendra Bikram Shah. This Code gave precise definition to the grounds of hierarchy and dictated the norms and behaviour of various caste groups in Nepal. This Code organized Nepali caste/ethnic groups into the following four broad categories: i) Tagadhari, ii) Matwali, iii) Pani nacalne choit chito halnu napanne, and iv) Pani nacalne choi chito halnu parne. The category four as mentioned here is the real Dalits or untouchables in the context of present Nepali society.

2. Social condition of Dalits

Four sets of data are presented to reflect the social conditions of Dalits in Nepal: a) Demography, b) Literacy and educational attainment, c) caste-based social discrimination and d) Gender.

a) Demography

The real population size of Dalits is not available. The total population of ten Dalit groups as enumerated in the 1991 census was 2,201,781 (11.9%) of the total population of Nepal. But the census has not provided figures of many Dalit groups in the Newari community and the Tarai community. If

all these Dalit populations are counted in the 2001 census, their number could go as high as 2.6 million.

According to the 1991 census, the females outnumbered males by little more than 0.6 per cent. The young population (below 15 years) accounted 44 per cent of the total population. Kami ranks the highest in number among all Dalits groups. In the Tarai, the Chamars have the highest number. The lowest number or the minority group (less than 5,00 in number) is Gaine.

b) Education

The overall literacy rate of Dalit was only 22.8 per cent in the 1991 census compared to the national average of 39.6 per cent. The male literacy was 33.9 per cent compared to only 12.0 per cent of the female literacy rate. The literacy rate of Hill Dalit is much higher, 27.0 per cent compared to only 11 per cent of the Tarai Dalits. The male literacy rate (40.2%) of the Hill Dalit is above the national average. The lowest literacy rate is that of the Musahar (4.2%) and the highest is that of the Gaine (31.1%).

c) Caste-based discrimination

The caste- based discrimination is very much alive even today, though the caste discrimination is more flexible in the eastern region compared to the western and the far-western regions. The caste- based discrimination to Dalits is found not only from the high caste Hindus and the Indigenous Nationalities but this kind of discrimination is also equally observed within the Dalit groups even today. The caste-based discrimination is noted in the every day life of people and this is equally noted in the government offices, corporations and NGOs.

d) Gender

Women are more sufferers than men within the Dalit society. As the Dalit society is systematically integrated in the patriarchal model of the Hindu caste structure, their social and economic status is much lower to that of males. Likewise, the health and nutritional status of Dalit women is pathetic. The political participation of Dalit women at the village, district and the national level is much lower to that of the Dalit males.

3. Economic Condition of Dalits

Dalit as a whole is the poorest community in the Nepalese society. According to the survey conducted by TEAM Consult (1998), the average land-owning per household among the Dalit group was 2.46 ropani of khet and 4.5 ropani of pakho land. Landlessness is acute among the various Dalit groups and this is more so among the Tarai Dalits. About 50 per cent of the Dalit households surveyed had the food deficiency. Sharma et al. (1994) found that 21 per cent of Dalit households produced food grains for less than three months, 19.5 per cent for 4-6 months, 15.4 per cent for one year and 5.1 per cent produced surplus food grains. According to TEAM

Consult (1998), 37.7 per cent of Dalit households owned the thatched roof houses, followed by brick/stone wall and thatched roof (24.8%) and brick/stone wall and tin/slate roof (22.0%). Only 1.8 per cent of them owned the concrete house.

The mean annual income of Dalits is lowest compared to Matwali and high caste groups. Likewise, the expenditure on items such as clothing, education and medicine are found to be lowest among Dalit groups. More than 54 per cent of the population do agriculture followed by service (15.7%), non-farm wage earning (14.2%) and farm wage earning (6.1%) and others. Sharma et al. (1994), however, noted that main economic activity of majority of Dalits is wage labour. In addition, caste-based traditional work (such as black-smithy, leatherwork, tailoring etc) is also the important economic activity for Dalits for their survival. Even today, many Dalit groups living in the rural areas of Nepal maintain their traditional “Bali” or “Khan” system with their clients for survival.

4. Health Condition of Dalits

Data reflecting the health conditions of Dalits is virtually non-existent. The life expectancy of Dalit is much lower (50.8 years) than the national average (57 years). Infant mortality is much higher (116.5 per 1000 live births) compared to the national average of only 79. Nutritional status of both the male and female is poor and many women are suffering from a number of diseases, including the sexually transmitted diseases. The Human Development Index of Dalit populations as whole is lowest (0.239) compared to the national average of 0.325.

5. Political Condition of Dalits

The Dalit population as a whole is least aware of the New Legal Code of 1963, the Constitution of 1990 and the international laws protecting the rights and empowerment of downtrodden and oppressed people. The political participation of Dalit population as a whole is low. Their representation at the Village, District and the National level government is rather insignificant compared to their population size.

6. Review of the Effectiveness of the Policies and Programmes of the Governmental and Non-governmental Organisations.

Reviews of effectiveness of policy and programmes of government are extracted largely from the New Legal Code of Nepal of 1963, Constitution of 1990, the Eight and Nine Plan documents and activities of Dalit Vikas Samity. In addition this section also reviews the activities of non-Governmental organisations for Dalit upliftment and empowerment.

Despite the government's policies and programmes for the Dalit upliftment over the years (such as the introduction of the New Legal Code of 1963, the Constitution of 1990, specific policies in the Eight and Nine Five year Plans, and establishment of Dalit Vikas Samity in 1997) and proliferation of many NGOs and INGOs in enhancing the quality of life of Dalits (the

social, economic, health and political conditions) the fate of Dalits has not improved much over the years. Up to today, the Governments policies and programmes fall short and NGOs and INGOs are not very effective in improving the quality of life Dalits in Nepal.

REPORT II: LONG-TERM STRATEGIES FOR DALIT UPLIFTMENT IN NEPAL

This is the long –term strategy report, which outlines problems, policies, and strategies to bring Dalits into the mainstream of national development processes. The problems, policies and strategies are designed within the broader core theme of “social discrimination and exclusion”. The first chapter deals with problems Dalits face in Nepali society. These problems are discussed in ten different areas: cultural and religious, social, demographic, gender, health, economy, administrative and legal, political and research. The second part relates policies concerned with Dalits empowerment based on identified problems. On the basis of problems and policies, the last part of the report outlines strategies in each policy issue with the step of implementation and responsible institutions to carry out the programmes.

REPORT III: FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR DALIT UPLIFTMENT IN NEPAL

This part of the report outlines the plan of action for five years for the Dalit upliftment and empowerment. It discusses the plan of activities in each year, implementing body and estimated budget for each activity.

ACRONYMS

AAN	Action-aid Nepal
CARE	CARE Nepal
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CBR	Crude Birth rate
CDO	Chief District Officer
CMR	Child Mortality Rate
CPR	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
DDC	District Development Committee
DDO	Dalits Development Officer
FM	Frequency Modulation Radio Transmission
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
INGO	International Non-government Organisation
LDO	Local Development Officer
LE	Life Expectancy at Birth
MLD	Ministry of Local Development
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOH	Ministry of Home
MU	Municipality, Metropolitan City, Sub-metropolitan City
NDC	National Dalit Commission
NDUC	National Dalits Upliftment Council
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission
SCUS	Save the Children United States
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TFR	Total fertility Rate
TV	Television
UUDUVS	Upekshit Utpidit Ra Dalitbarga Vikas Samity
VDC	Village Development Committee
DAWAG	Dalit Watch Group

PART I

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF DALITS IN NEPAL

PROLOGUE: WHY AND HOW THIS REPORT IS PREPARED?

This report is prepared for the National Planning Commission and the Upekshit, Utpeedit Ra Dalitbarga Utthan Vikas Samity (hereafter Dalit Vikas Samity), with an objective to formulate a national strategy to support the Dalit Empowerment in the forthcoming Tenth National Plan. The objectives designed by the Steering Committee (SC) and the Sub-Committee (SuC) for the preparation of this report are as follows:

1. A situation analysis report of the current situation of Dalits which:
 - Identifies the constraints and areas for potential to develop for Dalit empowerment reviewing existing data on economic, social, health, education status and political participation;
 - Reviews the effectiveness and weaknesses of policy programmes and activities conducted so far by government and non-government organisations;
 - Includes a review of all major existing documentation on Dalit issues, problems and constraints.
2. *Long-term strategies* for the Dalit upliftment; and
3. *Five-year action plan* for operationalising the strategy including the indicative costs per year.

While preparing the report, the available secondary data on Dalits in Nepal were used heavily wherever necessary. In addition, interviews with selected Dalit-based NGOs, NGOs/INGOs working for Dalits and government line agencies were conducted to supplement the secondary data (see Annex I for the list of NGOs and concerned persons interviewed). Finally, two seminar-cum-workshop were conducted to listen to the voice and opinions of selected Dalits, stakeholders, and intellectuals (see Annex III for the major concerns raised on seminar-cum-workshop conducted on May 19, 2002) so that their suggestions could be properly integrated in the final report.

The report consists of three parts. The first part is the Situation Analysis of Dalits, which highlights the existing social, economic, health and political conditions of Dalits in Nepal as of today. Both the available micro and macro- level data are extensively used to reflect the existing conditions of Dalits in Nepal. The second part of the report describes the pros and cons for preparing the “A long-term Strategy for Dalit Upliftment and Empowerment” based on the existing situations. Finally, the third part of the report “A Five Year action Plan for Operationalising the Strategy for Dalits in Nepal” details where and how the operational plan for Dalits upliftment can be launched in Nepal.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 DALITS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF NEPALI SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Historically, Nepal is the home of a number of ethnic/caste groups with different languages, religions and cultural traditions. An ethnic-cultural diversity and complexity in Nepali society can be noticed easily by simply reading the very well cited government's Old Legal Code of 1854 AD (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1. Ethnic/caste Groups with Their Hierarchical Structure, Legal Code of Nepal, 1854

Caste/ethnic groups	Ethnic affiliation
I. Tagadhari (wearers of sacred thread)	
Upadhaya Brahmin (Bahun)	P
Thakuri (the royal caste)	P
Chhetri (Ksatriya)	P
Rajopadhyaya Brahmin (Deva Bhaju)	N
Indian Brahman	Other
Sanyasi (ascetics)	P
Lower Jaisi Brahmin	P
Certain high Shresta groups (e.g Joshi)	P
II. Matwali (liquor Consuming Castes)	
II.1 Na Masine Matwali (non-enslavable alcohol drinkers)	
Non-thread wearing Srestha	N
Vajracarya/Sakya/Uray-Tuladhar et al	N
Maharjan	N
Various Newar service Castes	N
Hill Tribes (e.g. Magar, Gurung)	Other
II.2 Masine Matwali (Enslavable alcohol drinkers)	
Tibetans (including Tamangs) ; some Hill tribes; Tharu	Other
III. Pani Nacalne choi chito halnu napanne (Impure but touchable castes)	
Khadgi (Butchers, milk sellers)	N
Kapali (Death specialists, musicians)	N
Rajaka (washermen)	N
Carmakar (drum-makers)	N
Muslims (Bangle sellers)	Other
Westerners (mlech)	Other
IV Pani nacalne choi chito halnu parne (Untouchable castes)	
Various Parbatiya castes (Kami, Sark, Damai, others)	P
Dyahla	N
Cyamkhalah	N

Source: Hofer (1979); p.45 & 137.

Note: P=Parbatiya or Hill Group; N=Newar.

No doubt, the above ethnic/caste structure oversimplifies the picture of Nepali society but this is the only Legal Code, which highlights a distinct hierarchical ethnic/caste structure after the unification of Nepal.

Today, one of the components of the broader framework of Nepali social structure is the combination of cultures of five major distinct cultural groups of people: i) Hindu origin caste groups; ii) Newars; iii) Ethnic/Tribal groups; iv) Muslim; and v) Others (Sikh, Bengali, Marwadi and others) (Dahal, 1995). Below, a brief overview of the ethnic/caste structure in Nepali society is presented to assess the position of “Dalits” or so called “untouchables” in the overall Nepali social structure.

1.1.1 Hindu Origin Caste Groups

The 1991 Census of Nepal reported 86.51 per cent of the total population as Hindus, followed by Buddhists (7.8%), Islam (3.5%) and others (KC, 1995:311). Similarly, Migration, Employment, Birth Death and Contraception Survey (MEBDC) 1996 reported exactly the same kind of percentage of population in Nepal: 86.1 per cent Hindus, 8.8 per cent Buddhists, and 3.3 per cent Islam (KC and Acharya, 1998:7). Thus, within the five distinct cultural groups of people, the Hindu origin caste groups are the largest group numerically in Nepal where the position of so called untouchables or Dalits is situated. The Hindu origin caste groups comprise both the Hill and Tarai groups as well as the Newars of the Kathmandu valley and elsewhere. Even the many Indian merchant groups are Hindu in origin. Bhattachan et al. (2002) listed 205 existing caste-based discrimination to Dalits in the Hindu dominated Nepali society even today.

a. Hill Caste Hindus

The social structure of the Hill caste Hindus is simple, representing few groups in the overall Hindu hierarchical model. All of these groups speak Nepali as their mother tongue and look physically similar to each other. They can be broadly grouped as high, middle and lower caste Hindus. Brahmin and Thakuri, Chhetri are in higher stratum whereas Sanyasi falls within middle and Kami, Sarki, Damai, Badi and Gaine belong to traditionally lower caste ethnic groups (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Hill Caste Hindus

Caste Hierarchy	Ethnic Groups
High caste Hindus	Bahun Thakuri and Chhetri
Middle caste Hindus	Sanyasi
“Low caste” Hindus or untouchables	Kami, Sarki, Damai Badi and Gaine

b. Tarai Caste Hindus

In the Tarai origin Hindu caste groups, there are more than 30 distinct cultural groups (though many of them share a common language) and present a more complicated social structure than the Hill caste Hindus. The *Four Varna System* of the Hindu model (Brahman, Kshetriya, Vaishya and Shoodra) is observed within them. These various Hindu groups of the Tarai are also physically similar to each other. They can also be broadly grouped as high, middle and low caste groups (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Tarai Caste Hindus

Caste Hierarchy	Ethnic Groups
High caste Hindus	Maithi Brahmin, Bhumihar Rajput, Kayastha and Yadav
Middle caste Hindus	Baniya, Kurmi, Rauniyar Hazam, Lohar, Badahi Kewat, Mallaha and Sudi, Teli and others*
Low Caste Hindus or untouchables.	Tatma, Khatwe, Chamar Dushad, Mushahar, Batar Dhobi, Dom and Halkhor

Note: * Over the last 15-20 years, the groups, namely Sudi, Kalwar and Teli have socially upgraded their status from the untouchable to the water acceptable community within the Tarai origin Hindu caste groups.

1.1.2 The Newars

Among the Hill caste groups, the case of Newars is exceptional which is already shown in Table 1.1. This group not only presents the most complicated social structure among all caste groups in Nepal, truly reflecting the model of four categories of the *Varna* system (starting with the Brahmin Newar at the top and the untouchable Newar at the bottom) but also is clearly divided into two distinct religious and racial groups: the Hindus and the Buddhists and the Caucasoid and the Mongoloid. Though King Jayasthiti Malla (1380-1394) classified the population of the Kathmandu valley (primarily Newars) into 64 castes with different functional and occupational categories, there are more than 40 distinct cultural groups of Newars even today, sharing a common language Newari. There is a clear hierarchical structure not only within Hindu Newars but also Buddhist Newars and untouchable groups are found in both religious groups even today (see Chapter II). Though no reliable figure of Hindu and Buddhist populations is available within the Newari community, some Newar scholar¹ estimate more than 50 per cent of the Newar populations as Hindus.

1.1.3 Ethnic/Tribal Groups

There are about 35 distinct *Indigenous Nationalities* (popularly known as *Adibasi Janajati* and after 1990, the *Janajati* Federation has identified 61 separate cultural groups within them) in Nepal, each group having their own language and culture with no hierarchy within the group. Like the caste Hindu groups, they are also spread in the Hills and the Tarai. They can be labelled as the Hill *Indigenous Nationalities* (such as Magar, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa and others) and the Tarai *Indigenous Nationalities* (Tharu, Dhimal, Gangain, Satar and others). Though *Indigenous Nationalities* claim that they are outside of the Hindu *Varna* model system (see Janajati bulletin, 1996), many *Indigenous Nationalities* strictly adhere the Hindu values and do not accept cooked food and water from the Hindu untouchables (see Bhattachan et al., 2001; Onta et al., 2001).

¹ Personal communication with Nirmal Tuladhar, Dy. Executive Director, CNAS, TU, Kathmandu, Nepal

1.1.4 Muslims and the Others

Finally, the other Indian migrant Hindu merchant groups such as Marwadi, Bengali, and others follow the Hindu *Varna* model and do not accept cooked food and water from untouchables. On the other hand, the Muslims as a whole are treated as “impure but from whom sprinkling of water for purification is not required” cultural group even in the Old Code of 1854. That is why the Hindus in general, including the high caste Hindus, accept water and food (particularly sweets and meat) from the Muslims. Situating Dalits in the existing Nepali social structure, the following discussion briefly highlights the genesis of untouchability in Nepal.

1.2 THE GENESIS OF UNTOUCHABILITY IN NEPAL

There is no record as such from which the authenticity of the origin of the caste system in Nepal can be traced. The difficulty arises because of two interrelated factors: i) the history of Nepal itself, and ii) the heavy reliance on fragmentary and legendary sources to trace the origin and to define the present legacy of the caste system in Nepal. The argument here is that the influence of specific beliefs and contemporary caste behaviour in Nepal cannot be simply assessed from those sources of the *Vedic* and the *Mahabharata* periods.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the classic Hindu-tradition-based literature such as the *Vedas*, *Mahabharata*, *Puranas* and *Manusmriti*. It is frequently cited in the texts such as the *Rigveda*, *Mahabharata* and the *Manusmriti* that there were untouchable groups in those days of different occupational categories such as “Chamar” (cobbler), Chandal (who cremated the dead body), “Rajaka” (washer-man) and others (see Human Rights Year Book, 1993). Up to today, there is little archaeological or historical evidence to corroborate the timing of those literature, and linking those untouchable groups in the context of the present Nepali Dalit or untouchable population.

The sentiments expressed in Hindu fundamentalism in the context of Nepali society start relatively recent in the history of Nepal, i.e., the genesis of caste system can be traced more accurately from the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla in the context of Kathmandu Valley and with the introduction of the Old Legal Code of 1854 in the context of Nepal as a whole. The other related question in this context is how certain groups of people are treated as Dalits or untouchables in Nepal. If the present Nepali Hindu system belongs to the larger pan-Hindu model of Great Tradition of India, then the so-called Dalits of today must be the group of people of that broad Hindu category. In other words, the Nepali Dalit model in itself is an offshoot of larger Hindu Indian model who came to Nepal along with other caste Hindus with their traditional caste occupation. At the same time, some high caste Hindu groups also became Dalits over the years because of the caste expulsion model practised in the Hindu system until 1963. They were the discarded Hindus from the illegitimate sexual relations between high caste groups and Dalits. In those days sexual relation between the members of high caste group and Dalit was strictly prohibited (whether this sexual relationship was between the high Hindu male or female with the Dalit female or male or vice versa). In other words, the present Dalit population of Nepal could be the mixture of two distinct groups of people; i) A group of people who originally came to Nepal from India along with other Hindu caste members, and ii) The “made” Dalit group from the illegitimate sexual relations. In brief, Dalit or untouchability is a more complex topic than has been discussed in the literature and thus demands more serious thinking and research in the future.

Before the conquest of Kathmandu Valley by King Prithivinarayan Shah in 1768, the history of Nepal was the history of small kingdoms and principalities ruled by different kings and chiefs. In the east, there were three major kingdoms - Bijaypur, Chaudandi and Makwanpur - ruled by the Sen Rajas with the help of local tribal chiefs such as the Limbu and the Rai. To the west of Kathmandu, there were the *Chaubise* (twenty-four) kingdoms and in the far west across the Karnali river, there were the *Baise* (twenty-two) kingdoms ruled by petty Rajas and chiefs such as Gurung, Magar and others. And, of course, the Kathmandu Valley was divided into three kingdoms - Kirtipur, Bhaktapur and Patan and ruled by the Newar Rajas (some Newar intellectual today claim that they are not Hindus by tradition). In other words, the history of untouchability in Nepal is rather blurred and it can be justified more accurately with the unified modern history of Nepal, particularly with the introduction of the Old Legal Code of 1854.

In the history of Nepal, the concept of caste became distinct and prominent during the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla (1380-1394). He classified the population of the Kathmandu Valley into 64 caste groups, each with different functional and occupational categories. There was little change in this traditional caste structure until 1854 when the Old Legal Code of Nepal (*Purano Mulki Ain*) was introduced in the reign of King Surendra Bikram Shah. This Code gave precise definition to the grounds of hierarchy and dictated the norms and behaviours of caste groups in Nepal (see Table 1.1 and 1.2). According to Sharma (1977:99), this Code might be described as the first proclamation of state authority on all matters concerning the social and religious rights of individuals. This Code organised Nepali caste and ethnic groups into the following categories:

- i. *Tagadhari* (castes wearing sacred thread);
- ii. *Matwali* (Liquor consuming castes);
- iii. *Pani nacalne choi chitto halnu naparne* (castes polluting water only); and
- iv. *Pani nacalne choi chitto halnu parne* (castes from whom water is not accepted and whose touch requires sprinkling of holy water; or untouchable castes).

This Code embodied certain distinct features: commonality, supremacy of Hindu values and religious orthodoxy, and caste as the social mobility. A member, irrespective of his cultural background, breaching of these features of Code, was either severely punished, excommunicated or had to accept demotion within the caste hierarchy (Sharma, 1977:96).

Along with the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950 (the hereditary Rana rulers ruled Nepal for 104 years, from 1846 to 1950), Nepal opened her door to the outside world encouraging the process of democratisation and modernisation. No doubt, there were some serious efforts made both by some Dalits and non-Dalit groups to integrate both groups and to enhance the quality of life of Dalits in Nepal (Kisan, 2000). But Nepal could not develop a new model of ethnic pluralism, encouraging Dalits in this changing new political structure. With the introduction of Panchayat Government in Nepal in 1962, the political and social structures of Nepal became more rigid and orthodox. One of the significant aspects of the Panchayat system was its ban on political parties and there was no place for organised political activity and opposition within the system. But even within this given rigid political structure, one of the most radical dramatic changes that took place was the introduction of the New Legal Code (*Naya Mulki Ain*) in 1963. According to this Code, nobody could claim inferiority or superiority on the basis of race, caste and creed; everybody was equal before the law (see Dahal, 1996).

After a long struggle, Nepal was able to form a democratic government in April 1990. The new democratic government along with the New Constitution of 1990 (see the

Constitution of Nepal BS 2047) also introduced a number of social and economic measures to uplift the conditions of *Indigenous Nationalities* and Dalits. So far the New Legal Code and the New Constitution of Nepal have not been effective in changing the socio-economic status of the untouchables, and they have the lowest social, economic and political status compared to other groups in Nepal. There are a number of reasons for keeping Dalits in such a low status, which are discussed in various chapters of this report.

1.3 HOW THE TERM DALIT IS UNDERSTOOD IN NEPAL?

In India, the term Dalit is a common usage in Marathi, Hindi and many other Indian languages, meaning the poor and oppressed persons (Shah, 2001:195). In Nepal, however, the definition of Dalit differs from one source to another. According to Koirala (1996) "Dalit" refers to "a group of people who are religiously, culturally, socially and economically oppressed, who could belong to different language and ethnic groups". He believes that Dalit is not a caste group per se but a politically coined word used to refer to a socially backward caste community in Nepal. In this definition, we could even include many *Indigenous Nationalities* such as Chepang, Raute, Majhi, Kumhal, Bote and others who are equally backward in terms of social and economic indicators. Rijal (2001) in the similar format notes "The word Dalit is used in Nepal to identify a vulnerable and poor group of people, who are discriminated against on the basis of their caste." On the other hand, Bishwakarma (2001) prefers to use the term Dalit exclusively only for the so-called "untouchables" of Nepal. He notes that the term Dalit is in use in Nepal over the last 33 years, it is less derogatory than the term "Harijan" as used in India since the 60's and the term is synonym to untouchable caste as defined in the Hindu *Varna* model and in the Old Legal Code of Nepal of 1854.

But some members within the Dalit group show their strong resentment for the term Dalit as it connotes derogatory in the meaning (see Kapali, 2001). It is because of this Gurung (1998) prefers to use the term "Occupational Caste" to indicate all the so-called "Dalit" or untouchables in Nepal. Similarly, Sharma et al study (1994) virtually find little differences between so called "Dalits" or "untouchables" and some of the ethnic/tribal communities of Nepal (such as Dhimal, Chepang, darai, Urau (Jhanger), Raji, Meche, Bote, Tharu and Kisan) in terms of social and economic indicators and thus they lumped the data together in many analysis.

The Dalit Vikas Samity (B.S. 2054) has included 23 ethnic/cultural groups as the Dalits of Nepal: Lohar, Sunar, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Badi, Gaine, Kasai, Kusule, Kuche, Chyame, Pode, Chamar, Dhobi, Paswan (Dushad), Tatma, Dom, Batar, Khatwe, Musahar, Santhal, Satar, and Halkhor.

This list is little confusing for two reasons: i) some groups are simply included in the list of Dalits though they are not untouchables as a group and some groups are not included in the list of Dalits though they are untouchables, and ii) it looks that some groups are included in the list of Dalits without their approval. For example, Lohar is noted only in the Tarai, who are treated under the *Vaisya* category and from whom all caste members of the Tarai accept water. In the Hill Lohar is known as Kami or Bishwakarma. Similarly, the group Sunar (gold or silver-smith) is not a separate cultural group but the group within the Kami category, but differs in terms of specialisation of smithy profession. Likewise, Satar or Santhal is one cultural group, living in the Eastern Tarai, particularly Jhapa and Morang districts. Though this particular cultural group came from Santhal Pargana of India little more than a century ago, they are popularly known as Satars in the Eastern Nepal Tarai

(nevertheless, they prefer to call themselves as Santhals showing their place of origin). In the Eastern Tarai, particularly Jhapa district, Satar/Santhal is not treated as an untouchable group (Dahal, 1996). The Newar Dalit groups such as the Kusule, Kasai (Khadgi) and Pode do not like to address themselves as Dalits (see Kapali, 2001) and recently the vice-Secretary of “Naya Samaj Nepal” strongly protested that they do not like to be included in the list of Dalits. If one of the objectives of Dalit Vikas Samity were to enter into the Hindu temples, these four Newar Dalit groups are the ‘*pujaris*’ or the temple priests in many temples of the Kathmandu Valley (Nepal Samacharpatra, February 10, 2002). Not only that the Old Legal Code of 1854 categorised Khadgi (or Kasai) and Kapali (Kusule) as “impure but touchable castes” (Table 1.1).

The recent government bill in the parliament (March 19, 2002) has identified 28 caste groups as Dalits, which are as follows: Lohar, Sunar, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Gaine, Kuche, Chyame, Pode, Chamar, Paswan, Dussadh, Tatma, Dom, Batar, Khatway, Musahar, Halkhor, Badi, Badimar, Kasai, Kusle, Kadara, Chunara, Parki, Gothi, Dhaier and Jhangar. This listing of Dalits again has created some problems of duplication and unidentified origin. It is still little known about the groups such as Badimar(should be Chidimar, an untouchable caste group of the Tarai or Bhad group of the western Hills), Kadara, Gothi, and Dahier. Likewise, the groups such as Kuche(it should be Koche, a water acceptable group of Jhapa district and listed in *Indigenous Nationalities*) and Jhangar (or Oraon, and this group does not accept water from untouchables and listed in the *Indigenous Nationalities*).

Some scholars also like to treat cultural groups such as the Sudi, Kalwar and Teli as untouchables but they have been treated the “water acceptable community” in the Tarai these days (Gaige, 1975). Likewise, Dhanuk and Kanu are not the untouchables groups in the Tarai (see Gaige 1975; Dahal and Mishra, 1993).

The census of 1991 identified and enumerated only 10 groups, who are included as untouchables in the list of Dalit Vikas Samity: 5 groups from the Hills (Kami, Damai, Sarki, Badi and Gaine) and 5 groups from the Tarai (Chamar, Dhobi, Mushahar, Dushad, and Khatwe). But the untouchable groups such as Tatma, Batar, Dom and Halkhor have not been segregated as a separate cultural group for the census purposes but they are included in the list of Dalit Vikas Samity. The census might have included them in the 'Others' category. Similarly, the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) treated Newar as the homogeneous cultural group and included the Newar Dalits (such as Kasai, Kusule, Pode and Chyame) within the broader category of the Newar while enumerating their population size.

In brief, two types of definitions are used while defining Dalits in Nepal: i) the national level definition of Dalit as defined by the Dalit Vikas Samity or Dalit Ayog, and ii) the local definition of Dalits in the sense of untouchables. Following Hira Bishwakarma (2001) and the Old Legal Code of Nepal of 1854, the term Dalit is used here in a narrow sense or the local definition is used in this strategy report. The term Dalit refers only to “*Pani Nachalne*” and “*Chhoi Chito Halnu Parne*” groups or castes from whom water is not accepted and whose touch requires sprinkling of holy water. In other words, they are “untouchable castes” in Nepal. In the overall Nepali ethnic/caste framework of today, Dalits still represent the lowest in social structure in Nepali society, whether this social structural model is the Hindu, the typical Newar or the ethnic/tribal one (see section 1.1).

CHAPTER II DALITS IN REGIONAL, LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF NEPAL

2.1 BACKGROUND

At the outset, it must be noted that the Nepali Dalit as a whole is not a homogenous group. Like other ethnic/caste groups in Nepal, their population is equally divided and their heterogeneity extends to language, religion and culture.

The Dalits as considered untouchables in orthodox Hindu-Buddhist social-cultural model is a sad story on the one hand, and sad story within the Dalit themselves as there is a clear hierarchy in their social structure on the other hand. Within Dalits one group claims superior to another in terms of life-cycle rituals and many aspects of their day-to-day life. More specifically, their heterogeneity and hierarchy can be better explained in the following three broad regional groups.

- Dalits in the Hill Community
- Dalits in the Newari Community, and
- Dalits in the Tarai Community.

Below, a brief cultural description of various Dalit groups in each category is presented with their demography and traditional occupation.

2.2 DALITS IN THE HILL COMMUNITY

There are only three major Hill Dalit groups in the Eastern and Central Regions: Kami (Blacksmith or Ironworkers), Sarki (Cobblers or leather workers) and Damai (Tailors and Musicians). In the Western, Mid-western and Far-Western Development Regions, there are many groups within them such as Gaine (singers and musicians), Badi (dancers) and many subgroups within the broad cultural groups of Kami, Damai and Sarki. Linguistically, the mother tongue of this Dalit community is the Nepali language. They claim themselves as Hindus but employ their own priest (each cultural group has their own priest) to perform various rituals. The low caste Hindu groups or untouchables recorded in the Far-Western Hill region (Dahal et al., 1991) are as follows:

- Koli (oil pressure),
- Lohar (blacksmith),
- Mahar (blacksmith),
- Pouri (blacksmith),
- Chunara (blacksmith but the one who makes utensils from wood),
- Sonar (goldsmith),
- Tamata (coppersmith),
- Parki (reed worker),
- Sarki or Bhool (cobbler),
- Darji or Damai (Tailor),
- Hudke (Plays musical instruments), and
- Badi (musicians and dancers)

This is the largest Dalit community in Nepal in terms of population size (1,619,434 in number or 73.6 per cent of total population within Dalit group, see Table 2.1). The three major Hill Dalit groups – Kami, Damai and Sarki are scattered in almost all 75 districts of

Nepal. The Hill Dalit groups with the population size of more than 25,000 are observed in 28 districts, and Jajarkot, Surkhet, Acham and Dailekh districts have the highest percentage of Hill Dalits living among these districts (Table 2.2; Map 1).

Table 2.1: Population size of Various Hill and Tarai Dalit caste groups, according to the 1991

Different Hill Castes	Population	% within Dalit	% in Total (Nepal)
Hill Dalits			
1. Kami	963,655	43.8	5.2
2. Damai	367,989	16.7	2.0
3. Sarki	276,224	12.5	1.5
4. Badi	7,082	0.3	0.0
5. Gaine	4,484	0.2	0.0
Sub-total	1,619,434	73.6	8.8
Tarai Dalits			
1. Chamar (Ram)	203,919	9.3	1.1
3. Mushahar	141,980	6.4	0.8
4. Dushad (Paswan)	93,242	4.2	0.5
2. Dhobi (Baitha)	76,594	3.5	0.4
5. Khatway (Mandal)	66,612	3.0	0.4
Sub-total	582,347	26.4	3.1
Total Dalits	2,201,781	100.0	11.9
Nepal	18,491,097		100.0

Source: CBS (1991).

Table 2.2: Hill Dalits More Than 25,000 by Districts, Nepal 1991

SN	District	Dalits Popn	% of Total Popn /District	SN	District	Dalits Popn	% of Total Popn /District
1	Surkhet	59,064	26.2	15	Baitadi	32,896	16.4
2	Kailali	55,515	13.3	16	Jhapa	32,368	5.5
3	Achham	53,077	26.8	17	Jajarkot	31,908	28.0
4	Baglung	48,876	21.0	18	Rukum	31,761	20.4
5	Dailekh	46,841	25.0	19	Arghakhanchi	31,114	17.2
6	Gulmi	45,661	17.3	20	Chitawan	31,085	8.8
7	Kaski	45,258	15.5	21	Nawalparasi	31,025	7.1
8	Dang	42,127	15.8	22	Salyan	30,499	16.8
9	Kanchanpur	39,960	15.5	23	Rolpa	30,447	17.0
10	Tanahu	38,102	14.2	24	Dhading	28,299	10.2
11	Syangja	37,663	12.8	25	Palpa	27,607	11.7
12	Doti	34,011	20.4	26	Parbat	26,429	18.4
13	Pyuthan	33,776	19.3	27	Morang	26,299	3.9
14	Gorkha	33,318	13.2	28	Rupandehi	25,696	4.9

Source: CBS (1991).

2.2.1 The Kamis

This is the largest Dalit group in Nepal in terms of population size. According to the 1991 census, the population size of Kami was 963,655 or 5.2 per cent of the total population but within Dalit group, their percentage is 43.8 per cent (Table 2.1). They are distributed

throughout the kingdom but their concentration is heavy (population size with more than 10,000) in 39 districts (Map 2; Table 2.2 & 2.4). Jajarkot, Achham and Dailekh districts have the highest percentage of Kami within these districts. In terms of ranking the population size of various ethnic/caste groups within the district, they rank second in six districts and third in another ten districts in population size (Table 2.3; Map 3).

Table 2.3: Districts with Higher Ranks of Kami Population, Nepal, 1991

SN	Regions/Districts	2 nd Rank		3 rd Rank	
		Total Population	%	Total Population	%
I.	Western Mountain			59,145.	10.
1.	Bajura	11,810	12.8		
2.	Darchula			7,508	7.4
3.	Bajhang			11,645	8.4
4.	Mugu			4,090	11.2
5.	Jumla			5,486	7.2
6.	Mustang			741	5.2
II.	Western Hill			233,216	14.0
1.	Accham	38,002	19.2		
2.	Dailekh	32,044	17.1		
3.	Jajarkot	24,994	21.9		
4.	Doti	18,928	11.3		
5.	Rukum			23,116	14.9
7.	Baitadi			25,003	12.5
8.	Rolpa			21,889	12.2
9.	Salyan			20,619	11.3
10.	Dadeldhura			6,995	6.7

Source: Gurung (1994).

Kamis are blacksmiths, who are along with their traditional caste occupation of making and repairing iron tools, also practice agriculture. Within the Kami group there is more professional group called Sunar (gold or silver-smith) who makes and repairs gold or silver ornaments. Historically, they were economically dependent on their clients for livelihood and used to provide their services to their clients through the traditional Indian *Jajamani* system such as *Bali* or *Khan*. This system also exists in many parts of Nepal even today. These days, some Kami males and females are relatively better educated than other Dalit groups and work as professors, engineers, doctors or employed in various Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) and corporations such as banks, etc.

In the Eastern and Central Hill regions, Kamis are a homogenous group whereas in the Western and Far-Western Hill regions, they are divided into sub groups with different occupational categories such as Koli, Lohar, Mahar, Pouri, Chunara and others . Among the Dalits groups, Kamis are treated highest in social rank and they never accept cooked food and water from the Dalit groups lower than them. They marry within their own groups.

Table 2.4: Kami Population More Than 10,000 by Districts, Nepal 1991

SN	District	Kami Population	% of Total District Population	SN	District	Dalits	% of Total District Population
1	Surkhet	42166	18.7	21	Rupandehi	17476	3.3
2	Kailali	38286	9.2	22	Arghakhanchi	17469	9.7
3	Achham	38002	19.2	23	Jhapa	16938	2.9
4	Dailekh	32044	17.1	24	Sarlahi	16630	3.4
5	Baglung	29301	12.6	25	Palpa	15630	6.6
6	Kanchanpur	26993	10.5	26	Bardiya	15561	5.4
7	Gulmi	26303	10.0	27	Morang	14365	2.1
8	Baitadi	25003	12.5	28	Kalikot	13826	15.6
9	Jajarkot	24994	21.9	29	Banke	13340	4.7
10	Kaski	23226	7.9	30	Myagdi	12669	12.6
11	Rukum	23116	14.9	31	Bajura	11810	12.8
12	Dang	22949	8.0	32	Bajhang	11645	8.4
13	Rolpa	21889	12.2	33	Gorkha	11491	4.6
14	Pyuthan	21626	12.3	34	Lamjung	10868	7.1
15	Salyan	20619	11.3	35	Parbat	10839	7.6
16	Nawalparasi	19404	4.4	36	Dhading	10290	3.7
17	Syangja	19389	6.6	37	Mahottari	10204	2.3
18	Doti	18928	11.3	38	Rautahat	10135	2.4
19	Tanahu	18294	6.8	39	Udayapur	10034	4.5
20	Chitawan	17659	5.0				

Note: Kami population more than 9,000 are found in Makawanpur, Sindhupalchowk, Sindhuli, Khotang and Bhojpur districts.

Source: CBS (1991), Appendix Table 25.

2.2.2 The Damais

This is the second largest Dalit group in population size (number 367,989 according to the 1991 census) with 2 per cent in the total population and 16.7 per cent within the Dalit group as a whole (Table 2.1). Like the Kamis, they are also distributed throughout the kingdom but their heavy concentration (more than 10,000 population) is noted in six districts (Map 4; Table 2.5).

The Damais or tailors practice their traditional caste occupation of tailoring along with agriculture. But they are less engaged in agriculture because of their saleable profession such as tailoring in the market. In addition, they play musical instruments in various social and ritual occasions of their clients. Like the Kami, they also provide their services to clients in the traditional *Jajamani* or *Balighare*² system on an annual contract.

The literacy rate of Damai is one of the highest within the Dalit group (28.2%) but only few of them have jobs in government offices, university and corporations. In the Hill Dalit community they are treated lower in hierarchical structure than Kami and Sarki but above the Gaine and Badi. With the Damai group, Hudke is treated lower than the other Damai

² It's a kind of contract in which traditionally occupational caste group of people render their services to *Bistas* (Hindu high caste people and *Indigenous Nationalities*) mostly in kinds paid in cereals such as paddy and maize. In the Hill this kind of **Jajamani** system is known as Bali and it is known as **Khan** in the Tarai.

group and this particular Damai group does not accept cooked food from the Hudke. They marry within their own group.

Table 2.5: Damai and Sarki Population More than 10,000 by Districts

SN	District	Damai	% of District Population	SN	District	Sarki	% of District Population
1	Achham	12,386	6.2	1	Gorkha	14,281	5.7
2	Kailali	12,340	3.0	2	Dhading	11,022	4.0
3	Jhapa	11,699	2.0	3	Baglung	10,317	4.4
4	Kaski	11,595	4.0	4	Kaski	10,027	3.4
5	Surkhet	10,506	4.7				
6	Dang	10,316	3.6				

Source: CBS, 1991.

2.2.3 The Sarkis

This is the third largest Dalit group (population size 276,224 according to the 1991 census) in Nepal, with 1.5 per cent of the total population and 12.5 per cent within the Dalits. On the other hand, Sarkis are concentrated heavily (more than 10,000 population) only in four Hill districts, west of Kathmandu (Map 5, Table 2.5).

Traditionally, Sarkis are cobblers whose occupation is the leatherwork, such as hiding the skin of dead animals and making the leather goods such as shoes, bags, etc. Along with their traditional occupation of leatherwork, they also practice agriculture. A number of Sarki families are also engaged in the Haliya system where the male member of the family becomes *hali* (plough-man) and other members support agricultural activities of the family of high caste people, including the *Indigenous Nationalities*.

2.2.4 The Gains

In the Hill untouchable groups, the number of Gains is lowest, only 4,484, according to the 1991 census. In fact, the population size of Gaine is lowest among all Dalit groups, including the Tarai Dalits. Thus Gaine is not only the minority group within the Dalit group but also in Nepal as a whole. The population of Gaine with more than 200 in number is observed only in seven districts (see Table 2.6; Map 6). One of the fascinating data of Gaine is their literacy rate, which is highest (31.3%) for both male and female Dalits in Nepal (Table 3.6).

Gaines are from Kaski district originally but these days they are scattered in many districts of Nepal such as Dailekh, Surkhet, Jajarkot, Salyan and others. They play musical instrument known as *Sarangi* (a violin like instrument) and sing songs of kings and bravery of many heroes of Nepal. This particular tradition of Gaine is gradually disappearing because of changing values in music and songs and thus this particular group needs serious attention if the Nepali culture has to be preserved as a whole (see Chhetri, 1989).

2.1.5 The Badis

In the Hill caste Hindu groups as a whole, the social position of the Badi is the lowest. Compared to the Gaine the number of Badi is better, 7,082 according to the 1991 census.

They are scattered in many of the Mid-Western, Far-Western Hills and Tarai districts mostly in Surkhet, followed by Salyan, Rolpa, Rukum, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Dang-Deokhuri, Banke, Bardiya and Kailali districts (Cox 1993; also see Table 2.6; Map 7). The traditional occupation of the Badi men is to make drums and pipes whereas women used to sing and dance to their patrons and clients. These days, however, some Badi women (both young girls and adults) practice prostitution in towns, market centres and high ways, mostly in the Western Tarai towns (such as Nepalgunj, Rajapur, Tulsipur and Ghorahi) to support their families. Their literacy rate is lowest among (21.5%) among Hill Dalit groups.

Table 2.6: Badi Population more than 400 and Gaine Population more than 200 by Districts, Nepal 1991

SN	District	Badi Population	SN	District	Gaine Population
1	Surkhet	1,025	1	Dang	496
2	Bardiya	676	2	Kaski	376
3	Dang	666	3	Chitawan	295
4	Jajarkot	587	4	Pyuthan	275
5	Kailali	545	5	Gulmi	242
6	Banke	472	6	Surkhet	230
7	Rukum	455	7	Tanahu	209
8	Salyan	415			

Source: CBS (1991).

2.3 DALITS IN THE NEWARI COMMUNITY

Historically, Newars are the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. The complexity within the Newar social structure is already highlighted in the Old Legal Code of 1854 (see Table 1.1). Though there are debates who should be included as Dalits from the Newari community, the Dalit Vikas Samity, without understanding the complexity of the Newari social structure, identified the following Newar groups as Dalits.

- Kusule,
- Khadgi (Kasai),
- Pode,
- Chyame or Chyamkhala, and
- Halahalu.

These so called the Newar Dalit groups speak Newari as their mother tongue. They considered themselves as Hindus and some members within them are also the temple priests in the Kathmandu valley. Their distribution is mostly confined in the Kathmandu valley.

Traditionally, Khadgis or Kasai are butchers and milk sellers and come under the “Nay” caste category of Newars. Water and cooked food are still not accepted whereas milk is accepted from them since long time. The Old Legal Code of 1854 identified them as “impure but touchable castes”. They are found throughout the valley. Roser (1966) found 1050 households of Khadgi or Kasai only in Patan and Kathmandu in 1957.

Similarly, Kusule are considered as death specialists, musicians and tailors. Their duty was also to clean temple premises and play musical instruments. In the temple, they are known by many names such as Kapali, Darshan, Dhari and Jogi. Though they have been put under the Dalit category by the Dalit organisation, some Kapalis do not like to use the

term Dalit in their names (see Kapali 2001). Like the Khadgi, they are also treated as “impure but touchable castes” in the Old Legal code of 1854. Roser (1966) found 550 households of Kusule group in Kathmandu and Patan in 1957.

Some groups, such as Poda, Chyame and Halahulu work as public sweepers throughout the Kathmandu Valley. Podes or Pores are also known by surnames such as Deola or Dyahla. In some places, some Podes also work as the temple priest. Chyame or Chyamkhala also work as scavengers. Because of their monopoly in their business as “sweepers”, their economy is relatively better off than many other groups living in the valley. Roser (1966) found 550,250 and 50 households of Poda, Chyame and Halahulu, respectively in Kathmandu and Patan in 1957.

2.4 DALITS IN THE TARAI COMMUNITY

Traditionally, the Dalits or untouchable groups in the Tarai are as follows:

- Tatma,
- Khatwe (Mandal),
- Paswan (Dushad),
- Mushahar,
- Batar,
- Dhobi (Baitha),
- Chamar (Ram, Mochi),
- Dom, and
- Halkhor.

The Tarai Dalit community as a whole can be grouped into three broad linguistic groups: the Maithili, Bhojpuri and Awadhi. The Dalit of the Eastern and Central regions speak Maithili as their mother tongue whereas the Dalits part of the Central and Western regions speak Bhojpuri and the Dalits of the Western and Far-Western regions speak Awadhi as their mother tongue. By tradition, they are Hindus and employ their own priest to perform rituals. .

The total population size of Tarai Dalits was 582,347 according to the 1991 census, which is 3.1 per cent of the total population of Nepal and 26.4 per cent within the Tarai Dalit population (Table 2.1). But the census had not given figures of various Dalit groups of the Tarai such as Batar, Tatma, Dom and Halkhor . Among the Tarai Dalits, the population of Chamar is highest (9.3%), followed by Mushahar (6.4%) and Dushad (4.2%). The Chamar population with more than 10,000 is noted in 10 districts of the Tarai, whereas Musahar population is observed only in 6 districts (Table 2.8). The Tarai Dalits with more than 20,000 population is noted in 13 districts (Table 2.7; Map 8). The highest of percentage of Tarai Dalits among the Tarai districts are: Saptari, Siraha, Parsa, Bara and Mahottari.

Table 2.7: Tarai Dalits More than 20,000 by District, Nepal 1991

SN	District	Dalits Population	Per cent of District Population
1	Saptari	84,429	18.1
2	Siraha	82,334	17.9
3	Dhanusa	76,419	14.1
4	Mahottari	71,808	16.3
5	Bara	68,105	16.4
6	Parsa	62,180	16.7
7	Sarlahi	61,101	12.4
8	Rautahat	56,913	13.7
9	Morang	29,542	4.4
10	Rupandehi	28,612	5.5
11	Sunsari	27,877	6.0
12	Nawalparasi	22,202	5.1
13	Kapilbastu	20,115	5.4

Source: CBS (1991); Table 25.

2.4.1 The Tatmas

No population figure is available for the Tatmas. They are distributed mostly in the Eastern Tarai districts such as Siraha and Saptari. Traditionally, Tatmas or Tantis are weavers and thus weaving cloth in the handlooms is considered their occupation. Though the Tatmas these days do agriculture as their main occupation, many of them are landless in the Eastern Tarai (Dahal and Mishra, 1993). Their social status is considered highest among the Tarai Dalit population and the group does not accept cooked food and water from Musahar, Batar, Chamar, Dom and Halkhor. They are Hindus and have their own caste priest to perform rituals. Tantis marry within their own group. Most adults are illiterate and very few children attend schools even today because of poverty.

2.4.2 The Khatwes (Mandal)

According to the 1991 census, the population of Khatwe was 66,612 or 2.9 per cent of the total Dalit population of Nepal. Though Khatwes are untouchables, they regard themselves superior to groups such as Chamar, Dushad, Dom and Halkhor, and do not accept cooked food and water from these groups. The Khatwes are also known by their clan names such as Khang and Mandal and prefer to be called Mandal.

The Khatwes do not have their traditional caste occupation. Nevertheless, they do the soil cutting or earth-work as their caste occupation. Many of them are landless and work as tenant farmers and agricultural labourers in the house of landlords. They are Hindus and celebrate Hindu festivals. They have their own priest to perform everyday rituals. As they are very poor locally, the adult literacy is very low.

2.4.3 The Batars

The 1991 census has not provided figure for the Batars but they are quite numerous and according to one estimate their population size could go more than 50,000 in the Eastern Tarai districts (Dahal and Mishra, 1993). In the Eastern Tarai, Batars are also popularly known as Sardar or Sirdar. They have no traditional occupations as such. As means of livelihood, the Batars are farmers, tenant farmers as well as agricultural labourers. Batars

are Hindus and they have their own priest to perform rituals. The Batars also claim not to accept water and food from the Chamar, Dushad, Dom and Halkhor.

2.4.4 The Chamars (Ram, Mochi)

Chamars are the largest group among the Tarai Dalit population. In the 1991 census, they numbered 203,919 or the 9 per cent of the total Dalit population of Nepal. Socially, the Chamars are one of the lowest untouchable groups of the Tarai. Except the Dom and Halkhor, no other group accepts water from them. They are popularly known as “Mochi” or “Ram”. In terms of traditional caste occupation, Chamars are cobblers, skimmers of dead animals, tanners, shoe-makers and scavengers. In addition, Chamars, also play musical instruments and drums during marriages, *Holy* and other festivals. The Chamars also claim to be Hindus. They have their own priest to perform rituals. Including agricultural labourers, the women are traditionally *sudenis* or midwives (Save the Children US and INHURED International 1999).

The Chamars with more than 10,000 population are found in 13 districts of the Tarai and their percentage in the district’s population is relatively higher in the following districts: Siraha, Parsa, and Bara (Table 2.8).

2.4.5 The Mushahars

The Mushahar is the second largest group in terms of population size among the Tarai Dalits. In the 1991 census, they numbered 141,980 or 6.2 per cent of the total Dalit population of Nepal. The Musahar population with more than 10,000 are found in six districts but their heavy concentration is noted in Siraha and Saptari districts (Table 2.8).

Table 2.8: Chamar and Musahar Population More than 10,000 by District, Nepal 1991

Chamar Population and its Percentage in District Population				Musahar Population and its Percentage in District Population			
SN	District	Population	%	SN	District	Population	%
1	Siraha	23,517	5.1	1	Morang	16,409	2.4
2	Rupandehi	19,683	3.8	2	Mahottari	14,444	3.3
3	Dhanusa	19,034	3.5	3	Dhanusa	12,919	2.4
4	Parsa	16,991	4.6	4	Sunsari	14,713	3.2
5	Bara	16,618	4.0	5	Siraha	26,170	5.7
6	Nawalparasi	16,490	3.8	6	Saptari	22,935	4.9
7	Saptari	16,484	3.5				
8	Sar lahi	16,020	3.3				
9	Kapilbastu	14,226	3.8				
10	Rautahat	14,166	3.4				
11	Mahottari	14,050	3.2				

Source: CBS (1991).

Only the groups such as the Chamar, Dushad, Dom and Halkhor accept water and cooked food from the Mushahar. Earth- work and catching rats are considered their traditional occupation. It is said that they are the rat-eaters group in the Tarai. As they eat rats (*Mus* in Maithili language), it is likely that they are known as Mushahar. Traditionally, they also used to be collecting leaves, and medicinal herbs from the forests and selling them in the market (Save the Children US and INHURED International, 1999). They are also

popularly known as Sada in their area. Musahars are mostly landless or marginal landholders in the Tarai. Adult literacy is almost nil and the lowest (4.2%) among all groups in Nepal.

2.4.6 The Paswans (Dushad)

This is the third largest group in population size among the Tarai Dalits and numbered 93,242 or 4.1 per cent of the total Dalit population. Dushads are also popularly known as Paswan in the Tarai. The traditional occupation of Dushad is to sell fermented juice of *Khajur* and *Tadi* trees. They also claim to do the work as *Chowkidar* or watchman, but most of them do farming these days.

The Dushads are mostly the landless people in the Tarai, who make their living either as tenants or agricultural wage labourers. Many young adult males migrate to different parts of India to do the various types of jobs. A number of Dushad men were also blamed as dacoits some years ago, active in the mid-Nepal India border area. They have their own priests called *Bhagat* who performs all the rituals.

2.4.7 The Doms

The Doms are considered the lowest untouchable caste groups of the Tarai. Any other caste member of the Tarai except Halkhor does not accept water and cooked food from them. If any member of the high caste Hindu group is ever touched accidentally by them, he/she must purify either by sprinkling "gold water" or taking bath in the pond as well. Even today, Doms are not allowed to fetch water either from the private or public tube-wells. They have separate tube-wells for their own use or go to the nearby stream to fetch water.

Making a variety of baskets from the bamboo is their traditional caste occupation. In addition, grave-digging and cremating dead bodies are also considered their traditional occupation (Save the children US and INHURED International, 1999). This is their main source of earning a livelihood. These days, many of them are also employed as sweepers in the municipality.

The population size of Doms is not available.

In the Tarai, only Doms, Halkhor and Paswan raise pigs for consumption and sale.

2.4.8 The Dhobis (Baitha)

Dhobis are washer-men by tradition. Not only men but also women are equally involved in this profession. In the Tarai, however, not only the low caste Hindus but also Muslims equally engage in this profession. But the CBS has not separated the Hindu Dhobi and the Muslim Dhobi while counting their population. According to the 1991 census, the total population of Dhobi was 76,594. They are densely distributed in Saptari district (11,324) and relatively in good numbers (above 5,000) in districts like Rautahat, Rupandehi, Sarlahi, Kapilbastu, Bara, Parsa and Dhanusa. Their literacy rate (21.5%) and the male and female literacy rate is relatively better than other Tarai Dalit groups. Though the Dhobi is mostly landless in the Tarai, they make relatively good living than other Dalit groups because of their profession as washer-men. Sharma et al (1994:11) study treated Dhobi

as "touchable community" (from whom water is accepted) in the Tarai.

2.4.9 The Halkhor

This is one of the lowest Hindu untouchable groups in the Tarai. They are also properly known as *Mehtar* or sweepers. Traditionally, the Halkhor people are engaged in agriculture. They are indeed considered as slaves in the household of other high caste people. They are not allowed to touch and use even the well in orthodox families, and they are not accepted to touch food and share accommodation as other Dalits.

A Situation Analysis Report by Ghimire et al (1999) in the context of Sarlahi Community suggests that there is a clear hierarchical structure within Dalits and the ranking within Tarai Dalits is as follows.

1. Tatma,
2. Khatwe (Mandal), Paswan (Dushad), Mushahar, and Batar,
3. Chamar (Ram),
4. Dom, and
5. Halkhor.

(Note: 1 indicates highest rank and social ranking decreases with increasing number).

In other words, Mushahar, Khatwe, Dushad/Paswan and Batar are treated equal in social platforms. Tatma is treated highest in social status whereas the Halkhor has the lowest status within the Tarai untouchable community.

Most of the young boys and girls of the Tarai untouchable ethnic/caste groups go to Punjab, Delhi and Kathmandu for seasonal labour for livelihood (Mishra et al., 2000). This finding indicates that the Dalit labourers often search for communities other than the local and known one for work.

CHAPTER III EXISTING DATA ON DALITS (BOTH MACRO AND MICRO) AND DATA GAPS

3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW AND DATA GAPS

There is quite a good amount of literature on Dalits in Nepal. List of publications on Dalit at SCF/US shows a total of 29 different kinds of publications on Dalits in Nepal (see references). Of them, three volumes by scholars and consulting firms (Sharma et al., 1994; TEAM Consult, 1999; Bhattachan et al., 2002) are relatively detailed study on social, economic, health status and political participation by Dalits in Nepal. Recently, another volume, *Chhapama Dalits* (Dalits in Press, Onta et al., 2001) has collected articles on Dalits published in different news media over the last five years and put them together in the book form. Likewise, there is another volume “*Nepali Mediyama Dalit Tatha Janajati* (Dalit and *Janajati* in the Nepali Media, Onta and Parajuli, 2001) and this book provides a picture of Dalits in the Nepali media up to 2001. In addition, many Western scholars have received Ph.D. degrees from the Dalit materials and published books and articles on them (see Patricia Caplan 1972; Cameron, 1998; and Maskariree, 1995). The first Ph.D. degree on Dalit is received by a Hill Brahmin (Koirala, 1996). There are three Ph.Ds from the Dalit community but their dissertation is not based on Dalit materials. Though there are well as over 30 MA degree holders within Dalits, only an MA thesis is written on Dalit materials (Kisan, 2000).

Below, a selected review of literature on Dalits is presented to assess the situation of Dalits in Nepal as a whole. The intention here is not only to show the situation of Dalits in social, economic, and political contexts of Nepal but also to identify data gaps in the discussed materials.

Chhapama Dalit has collected 110 articles from various sources and organised them in 11 different sections such as History, Religion and Tradition, Economics and Development and so on. Though the nature of these articles is qualitative and many times subjective than objective in goals, the interesting aspect of this book is that many articles (48 articles or almost 44 per cent of the total articles) are contributed by the Dalit themselves, showing a growth of Dalit academics in Nepali society. Some of the articles have very clearly highlighted the feelings of suffering and oppression being a Dalit in Nepali society and provided their own views how development efforts could be made on Dalits in Nepal.

There are two big survey reports on Dalits, including “others” in recent years.

The first survey report was prepared by Sharma et al. (1994) for the Save the Children, US (some reviewers thought the findings of the report were outdated but we feel that the findings of this report are still very much valid for comparative analysis over time). This survey report covered 1,022 households in five districts - Jhapa, Chitwan, Kaski, Surkhet and Kailali (with 1,022 respondents covering 28 untouchable and other communities with 6,757 populations in total). Of the total 1,022 household respondents or informants, information on 684 households (or 67%) of Dalits was provided. The report as a whole provides a good deal of data on social, economic and health aspects of Dalits in Nepal.

Some of the shortcomings of the report are:

- Sample districts and villages for the study were chosen in relatively accessible areas. Because of accessibility, findings on Dalits in areas such as education, health and economic conditions might represent better conditions, which may not be the true situation in Nepal as a whole.
- In many situations, disaggregated information on Dalits (separating one Dalit caste group from another) is not available.
- Only negative case studies are highlighted. Mostly the Hill-based information on Dalits is available.

This second survey report was prepared by TEAM Consult (1999) for the UNDP, Nepal. The sample size included 5,181 households (includes the Tagadhari, Matwali, untouchable and other) in which the sample of untouchables included 40.1 per cent (144 settlement clusters in 18 districts - Mountain 4, Hill 8, and Tarai 6). Though the research team used the findings of this survey extensively, there are many data gaps in this survey report as well.

- The name of the VDC was not identified. The clusters for sampling interviewing were designed with reference to district headquarters in which accessibility to people with a walking distance of two hours and more than a day were taken into consideration. There was a tendency for surveyors not to cover farther distances and many were confined in urban centres in Kathmandu. So there is a high degree of possibility of sampling bias and thus findings may not represent the true situations of Dalits within the area. In addition, coverage of respondents varies in different sites without justification.
- In many situations disaggregated information on Dalits (one caste group from another) is not available. Because of this it is difficult to note which Dalit group is better in terms of social, economic or political conditions in the research area. Nowhere qualitative information is highlighted to justify the quantitative data. Also the coverage of the Tarai Dalits is less in the sample than the Hill Dalits.
- The quality of data on economy is poor. How much land is sufficient to produce food for a family or how much income is required to meet the food deficiency of the family is meticulously omitted.

The third report prepared by Bhattachan et al. (2002)³ was qualitative in nature but combined with some quantitative findings as well. Eight VDCs and Municipalities from eight different districts were selected based on two criteria: a) the perceived intensity (high and low) of untouchability by Region (Hill and Tarai) and the nature of settlement (rural/urban). A sample survey of 25 households was conducted in each sample site (12 non-Dalits and 13 Dalits and thus total sample respondents of 200 households) to collect the quantitative information. In other words, quantitative information on Dalit community as a whole was available only for 104 households. Emphasis was given to qualitative

³ Draft report prepared on December 2001 by Bhattachan et al. was used for the draft version of this report. In the course of finalizing this report, final version of Bhattachan report became available. So, the final version, which was submitted on February 2002, has been cited in this report.

tools, such as focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews were conducted to collect the necessary qualitative information.

The interesting finding of this report is that there is high degree of caste- based discrimination from the “upper caste” Hindus (48.1%) and the *Indigenous Nationalities* (38%) to the “low caste” Hindus or untouchables even today. Caste- based discrimination is equally observed between the high caste Dalits and the low caste Dalits. A total of 205 existing caste-based discrimination was identified. This is the only well-written qualitative report prepared on Dalits up to date. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings in this report as well.

- In the sample, the Tarai Dalit as a whole is less represented. Only one out of eight sample sites, the Tarai Dalit was included. Again the study areas were chosen close to the district headquarters. Because of this it is likely that many informants either conceal or exaggerate information for their own benefits.
- The report is overwhelmingly qualitative in nature. This could lead to the subjective biases of the reporter unless the respondent is properly chosen. Sometimes, these qualitative data need to be complemented through quantitative data, particularly the economic situation of people demands adequate quantitative data to justify them as poor or rich.
- Only negative case studies are highlighted to justify that there is very high degree of caste-based discrimination even today. This may nullify the overall development approaches and reformatory measures done in the name of Dalits by government and various NGOs and INGOs over the years in Nepal.

General observation and data gaps in other reports and articles are as follows:

- a. Most of the other sources of information on Dalits are the newspaper articles. The nature of these articles is more subjective than objective in nature. In many cases, data are not given and arguments are loaded with high political tones. There is one excellent Ph.D. dissertation, which focuses on the educational problems of Dalits in Nepal. But the overall approach is micro and thus difficult to generalise even the educational status of Dalits of Nepal as a whole. Likewise, there are reports prepared by various NGOs/INGOs on Dalits but because of the methodological problems, these reports are weak in assessing the situations of Dalits in Nepal.
- b. Except the CBS data on population of Dalits, other sources of population data are rather fragmentary and mere assumptions without any scientific base. Even the CBS population data on Dalits are perfunctory in nature.

In brief, no serious research on Dalits has been conducted so far either by HMG or various agencies and organizations such as NGOs/INGOs. The sections below discuss the existing social, economic, health and political conditions of Dalits in the overall framework of Nepali society. Both available micro and macro level data on Dalits are used to assess the situations of Dalits in the comparative framework -Dalit versus non-Dalit (i.e., with the high caste Brahmin/Chhetri and Indigenous Nationalities). As already mentioned above, the quality of data to reflect the situations of Dalits is limited and sometimes this research team is compelled to make assumptions to project their situations.

3.2 SOCIAL CONDITION

Four sets of data are presented below to reflect the social conditions of Dalits in Nepal. These are categorised as: i) Demography; ii) Literacy and Educational Attainment; iii) Caste-based social discrimination; and iv) Gender.

3.2.1 Demography

a. Size of Population

The total population of Dalits in Nepal varies from one source to another (ranging 12 to 20 per cent of the total population of Nepal in different sources). The only reliable source to date, which gives the population size of Dalit in every District and Village Development Committee, is the 1991 census of Nepal. The total population of 10 Dalit groups as enumerated in the 1991 census was 2,201,781 or 11.9 per cent of the total population (Table 2.1). In this population size, the share of Newar Dalits is not known. According to the estimate of some Newar Dalits, the population size of Newar Dalit could go as high as 10,000. Likewise, the population size of Tarai Dalits, who were not enumerated in the 1991 census (such as Batar, Tatma, Dom and Halkhor), could add the figure of another 200,000 (the Batar alone could number up to 50,000; see Dahal and Mishra, 1993). If all these figures are added, the total Dalit population could number up to 2,411,781 in the 1991 census. If this population size is multiplied by 2.1 per cent growth rate per annum between the 1991-2001 censuses (the national growth rate was 2.1 per cent between the 1991-2001 censuses, according to the CBS), the population of Dalits could go as high as 2.6 million in 2001.

The average household size of Dalits, based on Sharma et al. report (1994:5), is as follows (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Average Household size of Various Dalit groups

Dalit group	Total Households	Total population	Average Household Size
Kami	170	1053	6.2
Damai	156	892	5.7
Sarki	157	985	6.3
Badi	46	293	6.4
Dhobi	3	36	12.0
Dum(Dom)	17	106	6.2
Gaine	51	290	5.7
Kasai	34	244	7.2
Mushahar	9	61	6.8
Pode	17	108	6.4
Total	660	4,068	6.2

Source: Sharma et al. (1994:5); Table 2.

Though all Dalit groups are not included in the study, the table clearly suggests that the average household size of Dalits is much larger (6.2) than the national average (5.6) and other *Indigenous Nationalities* and Hindu high caste groups in Nepal.

The population size of Dalits by sex and their major concentration districts in Nepal are

given in Table 3.2. The proportion of males (49.4%) is slightly lower than females (50.6%). This pattern is normal if one compares this figure with the national male/female ratio pattern. But the interesting pattern of this population size by sex shows that there are more females than males in all the Hill Dalit groups. On the other hand, there are more males than females in every Dalit group of the Tarai. This may be due to the fact the male migration more than six months is higher among the Hill Dalit groups than the Tarai Dalits as a whole. The high concentration districts of Hill Dalits are Surkhet, Kailali and Kaski and Siraha, and Saptari for Tarai Dalits.

Table 3.2: Population Size of Dalits by caste and Sex with Major Concentration Districts

Caste	Males	Females	Total	%	Major concentration districts
Kami	472,038	491,617	963,655	43.8	15 districts (see Table 2.3)
Damai	178,420	189,569	367,989	16.7	Accham; Kailali; Kaski; Jhapa; Dang; Surkhet
Sarki	134,233	141,991	276,224	12.5	Gorkha; Dhading; Kaski; Baglung
Chamar	104,053	99,866	203,919	9.3	Siraha; Rupandehi; Dhanusha; Parsa; Bara; Nawalparasi; Rautahat; Kapilvastu
Musahar	71,567	70,413	141,980	6.4	Siraha; Saptari; Morang; Sunsari; Dhanusha
Dusadh	47,932	45,310	93,242	4.2	Sarlahi; Siraha; Dhanusha; Bara; Rautahat
Dhobi	39,572	37,022	76,594	3.5	Saptari; Rautahat; Rupandehi; Kapilvastu;
Khatwe	34,141	32,471	66,612	3.0	Saptari; Dhanusha; Mahhottari; Siraha;
Badi	3,395	3,687	7,082	0.3	Surkhet; Bardia; Dang; Jajarkot; Kailali; Banke;
Gaina	2,182	2,302	4,484	0.2	Kaski; Gulmi; Arghakhanchi; Salyan
Total	1,087,533	1,114,248	2,201,781	100.0	
%	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%		

Source: CBS (1991); Table 25.

b. Age/and Sex Structure

Age structure refers to the breakdown of a population into various age groups. Based on Census of 1991, the age structure of Dalits shows a heavy concentration in early ages (Table 3.3 and 3.4).

Dalits aged under 15 years (the young population) constitute 44.3 per cent of the total population, which is considerably higher than the national average (43%) and other Matwali and high caste Hindu groups (Table 3.3). This percentage is little less than a half of the total Dalits population. The young population is even higher among the Hill Dalits than the Tarai Dalits (see Table 3.3 and 3.4)) This eventually indicates: i) high proportion of young dependants; ii) high fertility potential; and iii) existence of child labour. The similar age structure is observed for both the Hill (*Pahade*) and the Tarai (*Tarai*) Dalits. In the case of sex structure, Dalit population has experienced deficit of males. For instance, the sex ratio was 97.6 in the 1991 census. The deficit was prominent in ages between 15 and 35.

Table 3.3: Age and Sex Structure of Dalit Population in Nepal, 1991

Age group	Hill Dalits			Tarai Dalits			Total Dalits			Sex ratio
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
< 15	23.0	22.3	45.3	21.8	19.8	41.6	22.7	21.6	44.3	105.1
15-64	24.4	27.8	52.2	27.8	27.6	55.4	25.3	27.7	53.0	91.3
65+	1.4	1.1	2.5	1.4	1.5	3.0	1.4	1.2	2.6	116.7
Total	48.8	51.2	100.0	51.0	49.0	100.0	49.4	50.6	100.0	97.6

Source: CBS (1991); Table 25.

Table 3.4: Age and Sex Composition of Dalit Population in Nepal, 1991

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	N
0-4	8.1	8.0	16.1	354,625
5-14	14.6	13.6	28.2	621,343
15-24	7.7	9.3	17.1	376,056
25-34	6.4	7.4	13.8	304,308
35-44	5.1	5.3	10.4	228,624
45-54	3.7	3.5	7.2	157,715
55-64	2.4	2.2	4.6	100,919
65+	1.4	1.2	2.6	57,897
Total	49.4	50.6	100.0	294
N	1,087,533	1,114,248		2,201,781

Source: CBS (1991); Table 25.

This can be attributed to the out-migration as well as emigration for the purpose of seeking a job for survival. But due to the lack of the ethnic/caste- disaggregated information on absentee population, it is hard to explain whether they migrated within or outside the country. Nevertheless, Bhattachan et al. (2002) indicated that the tendency of Dalit males to migrate both within and outside the country for employment has been increasing due to the unavailability of jobs around the place of residence.

In case of migration outside the country, Hill young Dalit males mostly go to India as well as Middle East and Tarain young Dalit males mostly go to Panjab and Haryana in India for the seasonal agricultural labourer (Mishra et al., 1999).

c. Dependency Ratio

Dependency ratio is the number of people of dependent ages (0-14 and 65+) to people of economically active ages (15-64). In other words, this indicates both social as well as economic dependencies over the potential working population (Table 3.5). It has implicit policy implication. Over all, of the 100 working age population of Dalits, 88.6 Dalits (83.6 are children below 15 years and 5 are adults over 65) in Nepal are dependants. The dependency ratio is higher by almost 10 among the Hill Dalits (91.7%) than the Tarai Dalits (80.4). The higher dependency ratio among the Hill Dalits comes from the "young population" among them. The high percentage of population in younger ages, and high dependency ratio has several demographic and socio-economic reasons and results. The high young age dependency ratio is the ultimate effect of high fertility. In other words, a working age adult person has to feed more children in the household. Furthermore, high fertility could be the result of high illiteracy, high unemployment opportunities for the women and low age at marriage espoused with low knowledge and use of family planning methods.

Table 3.5: Dependency Ratio of Dalits in Nepal, 1991

Dependency Ratio	Hill Dalits			Tarai Dalits			Total Dalits		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Young Age	94.4	80.3	86.9	78.4	71.6	75.0	89.7	78.0	83.6
Old Age	5.6	4.1	4.8	5.1	5.6	5.4	5.5	4.5	5.0
Total	100.0	84.3	91.7	83.5	77.2	80.4	95.2	82.5	88.6

Source: CBS (1991); Table 25.

This age structure indicates the need of employment for the growing labour force in the

future. Furthermore, it indicates the need of fertility planning, and appropriate education and training in order to make qualified and prosperous manpower for the community as well as the country.

d. Child Labour

The child labour normally refers to the people of ages between 5-14, who are working at various conditions for their livelihood and to support the family as well. The data given below suggest that Dalits are very poor and are heavily dependent on child labour for their survival.

As the information shows, the Dalit children under 15 are 44.3 per cent of the total (Table 3.3) and children 5-14 are 28 per cent of this under 15 population (Table 3.4). This clearly indicates that Dalits have potential child labour population. KC et al. (2001a:132) found that Dalit children (Kami, Damai and Sarki) are 21 per cent of the total 300 child rag-pickers, one of the worst forms of child labour, representing the highest proportion compared to other ethnic groups. Another study by the KC et al. (2001b:13) shows that Dalit children are 21.5 per cent of the total 300 child porters interviewed in the survey. A study conducted in Siraha district found a number of the Dalit children working under their parents in traditional sectors (CWA and SC, 1997:39).

Subedi (1991) found that a majority of Dalit children must work in order to support their families and themselves. A Dalit child of 12 years old, on an average, contributes 60 per cent of adult work to the family's economy.

Save the Children, US and INHURED International (1999) nicely present some case studies of children of untouchables groups such as Mushahar, Dom and Chamar in Siraha district, demonstrating why these children have to work as child labour.

Child labour and education are correlated to each other and further implicitly correlated to the child labour. Need of work in the family by a child means no education for the child as well. Subedi (1999), in rural Nepal, found that the proportion of Dalit children in school is lower among those who are working and going to school (23.9%) than those going to school only (27.9%) and working only (26.1%).

The major cause of child labour among Dalits is poverty. It is generally believed that poor breeds faster than the rich; the consequence is obvious as there is high potential of child labour population among Dalits.

3.2.2 Educational Status of Dalits

Koirala (1994:51) very well discusses the educational status of Dalits in Nepal. According to him "the Dalits in Nepal never had a written tradition". In the past, the schooling system was based on the *Varnashram* model during the *Vedic* and post-*Vedic* periods as well. There was deliberate denial of schooling to *Shoodra*, especially "*Pani Chalne*" and "*Pani Nachalne*" groups in the *Varnasram* system of education because of their prescribed duty "service to people of other castes". In addition, the Buddhist value based monastery schools, which were operating in Nepal since long time, never permitted Dalits to enter into their schools. This is because of the Buddhist religious values that perpetuated in Nepal and some countries of South Asia were governed by the larger Hindu Great

Tradition. In other words, the Buddhists of Nepal have also internalised the Hindu hierarchical caste structure in their day to day life.

Traditionally, the educational opportunities were limited to some high caste people in Hindu-Buddhist society of Nepal. But if one observes carefully the literacy rate and educational attainment of people in Nepal over the years, most people of Nepal were deliberately debarred from getting education and the literacy rate of people, as a whole was barely 2 per cent up to 1950. This might be attributed to the little system of formal education and more people were to acquire education informally with selected tutors (Gurus). Such informally expanded education system did prohibit Dalits from the opportunity. Therefore, no doubt, education was prerogatives of the high caste Hindus, particularly Brahmins (see Annex IV). But one of the elements which is overlooked in most of the studies is that the development of education in Nepal as a whole is restricted not only for the untouchables but also to other groups as well.

Only after the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950 gave access to formal education, particularly the Western system of education to all groups, including the Dalits in Nepal. But because of the deeply rooted Hindu values to all groups in Nepal for centuries, Dalits children faced a number of problems while getting admission in the school, and sitting and eating together with other students while at school (see below).

a. Literacy Status

The overall literacy rate of Dalit was 22.8 per cent in the 1991 census. The male literacy rate was 33.9 per cent whereas the female literacy was only 12.0 per cent. The literacy rate of Hill Dalits was 27.0 per cent compared to only 11.0 per cent of Tarai Dalits. This total literacy rate of Dalits is almost 18 percentage point lower than the national average (39.6%) and almost 66 percentage points lower than that of the highest literacy of Marwadi (88.4%). The literacy rate among Tarai Dalits is even worse, only 11.0 per cent, which is less by 29 percentage point than the national average and by almost 16 points than that of Hill Dalits (27%) (Table 3.6).

No Dalit group is below 30th position in the overall literacy rate, that is, their literacy rate ranges from 30th to 60th positions among various groups. Majority of the Tarai Dalits (particularly Khatwe, Chamar, Dusadh and Musahar) fall on the lowest boundary of the position and the literacy ends up to 4.2 for the Musahar group.

Comparison of the literacy rate has been made to understand visually the situation of Dalits with the national level as well as with the people who have the highest literacy rate in Nepal recorded in the 1991 census. It clearly gives a picture of Dalits in terms of education. The difference of literacy of Dalits with national average ranges, in general, from 10 to 35 with the exceptional case of Gaine (difference is 8.5) and with Marwadi group it ranges from not less than 57 to 84 percentage points.

While looking at the adult literacy rate of Dalits by sex and terrain (Table 3.7), Hill Dalits have the highest literacy rate (47.6%) compared to Mountain and Tarai Dalits. This could be due to better economic and social conditions of Hill Dalits than Dalits living elsewhere. Particularly in the Eastern and the Central Hill Regions, the living conditions of Dalits are better than Dalits living in other parts of Nepal (Table 3.9).

Table 3.6: Literacy of Dalits (aged 6 years & above) and Its Comparison with Other groups, 1991

Dalit Castes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Rank (in descending order)	Deviation from national aggregate (Nepal=39.6)	Deviation from highest literacy (Marwadi=88.4)
Gaine	45.1	18.1	31.1	30 th	-8.5	-57.3
Damai	41.1	16.2	28.2	34 th	-11.4	-60.2
Kami	39.8	13.3	26.2	39 th	-13.4	-62.2
Sarki	37.5	12.3	24.4	45 th	-15.2	-64.0
Dhobi	32.8	8.0	20.9	53 th	-18.7	-67.5
Badi	31.9	10.8	20.8	54 th	-18.9	-67.6
Khatway	19.9	2.9	11.6	57 th	-28.0	-76.8
Chamar	17.4	2.6	10.1	58 th	-29.5	-78.2
Dhusadh	16.4	3.1	10.0	59 th	-29.7	-78.4
Musahar	6.7	1.7	4.2	60 th	-35.4	-84.2
Hill Dalits	40.2	14.7	27.0		-12.6	-61.4
Tarai Dalits	17.6	4.0	11.0		-28.6	-59.8
Total Dalits	33.9	12.0	22.8		-16.8	-65.6

Note: Rank is based on the identified 60 ethnic/caste groups in 1991 census.

Source: CBS (1991); Table 26.

Table 3.7: Adult Literacy Rate of Dalits by sex and Terrain

Region	Male	Female	Total
Mountain	48.0	14.6	30.7
Hill	61.7	33.4	47.6
Tarai	42.2	16.7	29.7
Nepal	51.1	23.6	37.4

Source: TEAM Consult (1999:28).

b. Educational Attainment

The 1991 census shows that the educational attainment of Dalits is considerably lower, that is only about 15 per cent of the total Dalits (Table 3.10). This is almost half of the national average. The educational attainment is even less than 1 per cent for those who have attended the SLC and above. Among the Dalits, Hill Dalits have relatively better educational attainment (Table 3.8). However, educational attainment of other *Tarai* Dalits such as Khatwe, Chamar, and Dusadh is very poor and that of Mushahar is almost none. In various communities of so-called lower caste people there are examples of none of the children attend the schools (CWA and SC, 1997:38). Likewise, the literacy of Dalits by sex, ethnic groups and development regions shows that Hill Dalits of Eastern and Western Development regions are better than other development regions. The literacy of Tarai Dalits is better in Farwestern Development region than other regions (Table 3.9).

In contrast, TEAM Consult (1999) demonstrates that the life-time educational attainment of Dalits (untouchables) in Nepal was estimated to be 37.4 per cent, which is considerably high compared to 1991 census data. Similar pattern is found in adult literacy, even though it is the lowest among Dalits (37.4%) compared to *Tagadhari* (61.9%) and *Matuwali* (57.5%). This may be due to the sampling bias⁴.

⁴ Although the reference date of survey is 9 years later than 1991 census, it can not be expected such an educational attainment of Dalits within 9 years. The sample was taken with the reference of District

According to TEAM Consult's report (1999), the untouchable has the lowest literacy rate (37%) and the *Tagadhari* has the highest (62%).

The information on both literacy and educational attainment clearly indicates that the future of the Dalit population in terms of skilled or educated manpower for the country is still negligible. In order to bring Dalits into the mainstream educational level the government has to pay heavy attention to Dalits to make them an average level manpower for the country.

Table 3.8: Literacy of Dalits by Sex and Ecological Regions, Nepal, 1991

	Mountain			Hill			Tarai		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Tarai Dalits									
Dhobi	29.3	44.3	18.1	47.4	61.9	34.2	19.0	30.9	5.9
Dhusadh	30.0	25.0	33.3	46.1	61.8	29.4	9.8	16.2	3.0
Chamar	14.5	25.8	3.2	21.3	28.9	12.9	10.1	17.3	2.6
Khatway	46.7	58.3	38.9	46.6	59.2	35.9	11.4	19.7	2.6
Musahar	41.3	58.8	26.8	6.2	10.4	1.9	4.1	6.6	1.7
Total	30.2	44.0	19.5	30.6	40.2	21.3	9.9	16.6	2.8
Hill Dalits									
Gaine	26.3	38.1	13.2	30.3	45.3	15.9	32.9	45.3	21.8
Damai	21.8	34.0	10.1	27.0	40.0	15.2	33.4	46.3	21.1
Kami	18.3	30.3	6.6	24.4	37.7	12.2	32.3	46.8	17.8
Sarki	14.0	23.3	4.9	25.1	38.8	12.7	27.4	40.1	14.9
Badi	16.3	26.7	6.9	19.7	30.9	9.3	22.6	33.6	13.0
Total	18.4	29.9	7.1	25.2	38.4	13.0	31.9	45.8	18.2

Source: CBS (1991); Table 26.

Table 3.9: Literacy of Dalits by Sex and Development Region

	Eastern			Central			Western			Mid-Western			Far-Western		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
Tarai Dalits															
Dhobi	29.7	47.4	10.9	17.2	26.2	7.6	20.6	33.7	6.4	16.1	25.7	5.2	32.5	49.8	15.2
Dhusadh	13.5	22.4	4.3	8.7	14.3	2.6	15.7	25.4	6.1	37.3	46.5	27.5	48.5	68.8	29.4
Chamar	10.8	19.1	2.5	7.5	12.8	2.1	14.3	24.3	3.6	10.9	17.8	2.7	7.3	11.8	2.2
Khatway	14.0	24.3	3.4	8.0	13.6	2.0	27.1	36.5	17.6	43.5	53.8	30.0	28.6	0.0	33.3
Musahar	5.2	8.2	2.1	2.5	4.0	1.0	6.9	11.1	2.7	21.1	29.2	7.1	32.0	40.0	26.7
Total	11.1	18.6	3.4	8.2	13.4	2.7	15.4	25.8	4.3	13.1	20.9	3.9	22.1	32.7	11.2
Hill Dalits															
Gaine	50.0	56.8	42.7	43.8	57.3	31.4	31.7	47.9	16.9	22.2	35.2	9.9	24.7	36.4	14.3
Damai	36.9	49.3	24.8	28.2	40.3	16.4	31.8	44.4	20.7	21.6	34.1	9.6	20.6	36.0	7.0
Kami	34.3	48.1	20.5	25.8	38.2	12.9	31.4	44.7	19.6	21.2	33.9	9.1	21.4	37.6	6.7
Sarki	25.9	38.8	13.3	21.6	33.1	10.0	30.6	45.4	17.9	19.9	32.3	8.0	15.9	28.6	4.3
Badi	30.5	50.0	15.2	22.9	32.3	14.8	25.2	38.5	14.2	20.8	31.9	10.4	16.1	25.1	8.6
Total	33.7	47.0	20.7	25.5	37.6	13.2	31.3	44.8	19.4	21.1	33.7	9.1	20.5	36.1	6.5

Note: T=Total; M=Male; F=Female

Source: CBS (1991); Table 26.

Headquarters considering one accessible and another not accessible (distance about 1 day from the Headquarter) from each direction (east, west, north and south).

Table 3.10: Educational Attainment of Dalits, Nepal 1991

SN	Dalits	Primary	Secondary	SLC	Intermediate & above	Total
	Nepal	16.2	8.9	2.0	1.5	28.6
1	Gaine	15.7	3.7	0.3	0.1	19.8
2	Damai	15.2	3.2	0.2	0.1	18.7
3	Kami	13.7	3.1	0.3	0.1	17.3
4	Dhobi	8.9	5.3	0.9	0.7	15.8
5	Sarki	12.6	2.5	0.2	0.1	15.4
6	Badi	10.1	2.4	0.2	0.1	12.8
7	Khatway	5.4	2.4	0.4	0.1	8.3
8	Chamar	4.8	1.9	0.2	0.1	7.0
9	Dhusadh	4.2	1.8	0.3	0.1	6.5
10	Musahar	1.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.9
	Total Dalits	11.4	2.8	0.3	0.2	14.6

Note: Other category is not included in calculation.

Source: CBS (1991); Table 26.

Table 3.11: Educational Attainment of Dalits 6 years and above by educational level, Sex and Geographic Region, Nepal 1999

Region	Primary		Secondary		High school	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mountain	36.0	17.0	13.0	3.0	-	-
Hill	37.0	27.0	21.0	8.0	1.0	-
Tarai	27.0	15.0	13.0	4.0	1.0	-
Nepal	32.0	20.0	16.0	6.0	1.0	-

Note: There are no Dalits attended above than high school and no females attended high school as well.

Source: TEAM Consult (1999:30).

From the above data it is clear that some Dalits, particularly Hill Dalits are better in literacy rate and educational attainment than the Tarai Dalits as a whole. This could be due to two major reasons: i) The Tarai Dalits are poorer than the Hill Dalits, and ii) The caste - based discrimination is higher and the level of awareness is lower among the Tarai Dalits than the Hill Dalits.

3.2.3 Caste-based Discrimination

The caste-based discrimination to Dalits is found not only from the higher caste Hindus and the *Indigenous Nationalities* but also equally observed within Dalits even today. The intra -Dalit discrimination could be the result of the larger Hindu caste model of hierarchical structure where Dalits themselves became a part of it. Below, a review of caste- based discrimination to Dalits (the share of *Indigenous Nationalities* in this regard is basically the same) is presented. After that how the caste-based discrimination within Dalit groups (from the “upper caste” Dalit groups to “lower caste” Dalit groups) operates is discussed.

a. Attitudes towards Untouchability by the High Caste Hindus and the Indigenous Nationalities

Bhattachan et al. (2002) listed a total of 205 existing practices of caste-based discrimination, which they lumped them into nine broad social categories. They are: i) Denial of entry into the house, hotel/restaurants, temples, etc. ii) Service, where the

wearing of the sacred thread is not permitted, worship conducted by Dalits is not acceptable and so on, iii) Access to common resources such as using the water tap, pond, etc is denied, iv) Denial to participate in public activities or entry into public places such as the religious function, government function, etc., v) Forced labour or discriminatory practice of labour such as **Bali Ghare**, **Khalo Pratha**, or **Haliya Pratha** or bonded labour or to carry the dead animals, vi) Dominance to Dalits in behaviour such as **Jadau system** (practice of obeisance), vii) Atrocities, such as more rape cases to Dalit women than others, and so on. viii) Social boycott – if a “high caste Hindu” /*Indigenous Nationalities* member marries with the Dalit of either sex, he/she is boycotted from the society, and ix) Attitudinal untouchability such as if one sees Kami early morning it is inauspicious or if there is a Dalit teacher, children of high caste groups will not attend the school and so on.

In this broad list of caste-based discrimination, the highest proportion of Dalit respondents have been discriminated against of denial of eating/drinking (38.9%) and prohibition of entry into the house, temple, etc (28.3%). Sharma et al (1994) also found discrimination like the denial to touch source of drinking water, denial of entry into hotel, shops, houses, cowshed, and temple; denial to touch water pitcher and to mix up with higher caste students while eating and drinking at the school; denial to mix up with high caste people in the feasts, and discrimination against job opportunity. Both studies found that the caste-based discrimination is higher in the Western region than the Eastern region of the country.

Below, a brief discussion follows on various forms of caste-based discrimination.

Denial

Dalits are ubiquitously denied of entry into non-Dalits' and "upper caste" Dalits' house, temples, restaurants and teashops. Dalits are denied for the priestly service, wearing of *Dora* or sacred thread, or to carry dead bodies of “upper castes”. Denial of access to common resources is related to drinking water resources. Inter-caste marriages between non-Dalits and Dalits and also between "upper caste" and "lower caste" Dalits are also denied. Legitimising the illicit relationship between Dalits and non-Dalits are the main denial of developing kinship or social relationships. Denial of relationship is also related to interaction between Dalits and non-Dalit students and teachers and also between Dalits of different castes. Besides, Dalits are also denied in participating in feasts/party, festivals, government programs, NGO/s programs, and in marriage procession and funerals. A few case studies given below on this issue justify how “denial” to Dalits in various socio-economic sectors is still prevalent in the Nepali society.

Case I: Transfer of a Teacher

Children were commonly separated according to their caste status and also in the classroom of a school in the Far West until a couple of years ago. A teacher of the untouchable community, as he went against such discriminatory segregation, was transferred to another school (Sharma et al., 1994:27).

Case II: Transfer of a Teacher

A Dalit teacher in Kailali was sent away from his village school in Dhangadi on deputation, because he ordered students of higher castes and untouchable caste to sit together in the luncheon provided under the Nutritious Food Programme. The school

inspectors were satisfied with his teaching quality, but the headmaster, a Brahmin, who did not accept this value, influenced the District Education Officer against the teacher (Sharma et al., 1994:33).

Case III: Break off of an inter-caste marriage between a Bahun boy and a Dalit girl

A young Bahun was in love with a young Dalit girl in the Budhabare VDC. When they got married, many non-Dalit people including DC Chairperson tried to break off their marriage. As the tension mounted, some Dalit well wishers helped the new couple to leave the village for their protection. The couple returned to the village after a few months. It created tension in the Brahmin community. They threatened the Bahun boy by saying, "Either you must leave the Dalit girl or leave the village immediately". Under tremendous pressure, relatives of the boy forced the boy to leave the Dalit girl for good. He obeyed them. Thus, the Dalit girl was left to nowhere (Bhattachan et al., 2002:59).

Social boycott

Social boycott of a member happens under three conditions: i) if there are inter-caste marriages, ii) if Dalit or non-Dalit rebels against traditional norms and values, and iii) if certain traditional caste-based occupation, such as disposal of dead animals, is refused by certain Dalit caste, such as Chamar (note the case of Siraha).

Forced labour

The forced labour cases, which Dalits have to do, as discussed by Bhattachan et al. (2002:51-53) are: a) continual of traditional caste-based occupation, b) bonded labour (Bali Ghare and Haliya system), c) work with no wages or little wages, d) dispose off dead animals, e) carry dola (hammock) and f) prostitution. But the research team feels that many of these information are either exaggerated or problematic without understanding the context of Dalit society itself and the Nepali society in general. Historically, many Dalit families are dependent on high caste/janajatis for their livelihood by selling their traditional skills and it is not the forced labour.

Attitudinal Untouchability

The "upper caste" /*Indigenous Nationalities* people believe that Dalits lack qualification and ability. These groups have the deep rooted negative attitudes towards Dalits that they should not be given loans (they won't pay back), tickets during the elections, (they will loose the election), give milk and yoghurt (it will spoil cow's milk) or allow entry into temples and water sources simply because of the fear of some possible misfortunes. Case studies given below suggest how attitudinal untouchability is very much prevalent in Nepali society.

Case IV: Denial of Providing Job

An untouchable man with teacher's training for lower secondary school approached a Minister on official visit to Doti, for a teacher job in a vacant position in a school. The Minister turned him down by saying, "I cannot order this position for you because people of high caste will not accept you as teacher" (Sharma et al. 1994:34).

Case V: Denial of Teaching Job

A Sarki teacher, temporarily posted in a school in Kaski, was not obeyed and respected by the students, slighted by the staff, the managing board members and high caste people in general. They influenced the District Education Administration to replace him by a teacher of higher caste and his service was dismissed.... (Sharma et al. 1994: 32).

Discrimination

According to Bhattachan et al (2002), Dalits are discriminated against religious and cultural spheres, doing jobs in central and local government offices including the NGOs and development programs of donors as well.

Though Bhattachan et al (2002) noted that Dalits are denied to practice Hindu religion even though they are Hindus. The research team, however, feels that this is not entirely true as they celebrate Hindu festivals and employ their own priests to perform various rituals (Cameron, 1998). They are forced to continue their traditional occupations, even though they are lowly paid for their services and stigmatised by the society at the same time. Dalits are discouraged to hold executive and teaching positions because these posts are highly respectful and non-Dalits never want a Dalit to be respected person. Dalits are used only as the vote bank but are discouraged to represent in high level political and party positions. A case study given below suggests that how discrimination exists in the basic thing even in the public offices such as the municipality.

Case VI: Discrimination at the Municipality Office

There are two Dalit employees, one Mukhiya and one peon, at the Mahendranagar Municipality Office in Kanchanpur district. Whenever employee need tea or snacks they press the call bell to ask the peon to bring it from nearby teashops. After ringing the call bell if non-Dalit peon comes, they ask him to bring tea or food. If the Dalit comes, instead of asking him to bring tea or food, they ask him to call another peon and ask to bring tea or food. When he was asked how does he feel when he experiences such behaviour of his superior officers, the Dalit peon said "I feel very bad about it: I get hurt. Why should they treat me differently when all of us are government's servants?" (Bhattachan et al., 2002: 66).

Attitude on who are responsible for such a caste-based untouchability is little complex. A majority of Dalits (58.6%) believe that this is an exploitation from the elitist group of the society and only one-fourth reported that it is "God-made" (Sharma et al., 1994). According to Bhattachan et al. (2002), it is the "upper caste" (48%), who are responsible for untouchability in the society. Religion and God are also equally responsible for it, reported by another 30 per cent of Dalits.

b. Attitudes towards untouchability by the High Caste Dalits to the Low Caste Dalits

In addition to their untouchable status in the larger Hindu model, Dalits themselves practice untouchability in their day-to-day life, and there is clear ranking of status among themselves. The social discrimination within them is distinctly observed in eating food and drink and while performing life cycle rituals. Marriage is strictly endogamous in nature, i.e., Kami will marry only with the Kami and not with groups such as Damai or Sarki. A

clear hierarchical structure within Dalits communities is already discussed in Chapter II. Koirala (1996:60) in his research in Bungkot village writes, “A *Damai* is *Pani nachalne* to a *Kami* and a *Sarki*, and a *Kami* and *Sarki* who claim equal status do not dine together or marry each other”. According to Sharma et al (1994:14) “*Damai* people do not accept cooked rice and water from the *Hudke*” (plays musical instruments), a subgroup within the *Damai*.

Bhattachan et al (2002) write “Denial of entry to Dalits by non-Dalits and to “lower caste” Dalits by “upper caste” Dalits is ubiquitous in all study areas, especially inside the house to anyone and to newly married couple who are married with the Dalits”. In the Tarai Dalits as well, the hierarchical structure within them is strictly observed and each group marries within their own group (Gaige 1975; Dahal and Mishra 1993; Ghimire et al.,1999).

To sum up, there exists caste-based discrimination in social-cultural behaviour even today despite the provisions made in constitution and new legal codes. The old legal codes are responsible to some extent for the prevalence of discriminatory behaviour against Dalits in Nepal.

3.2.4 Gender Perspective

In any society, women are the basic indicators of social and economic development. Any behavioural change in the role of a woman (wife and mother) brings changes in social, economic, and demographic structure of the society. As the Nepal society is organised in the patriarchal model, the status of women is lower to that of males in every field of life-social, economic and political.

The position/status of Dalit women in Nepali society is not very different to that of Nepali women in general. But the position of Dalit women has to be assessed in the overall framework of Dalit’s social structure. As the Dalit society as a whole has the pathetic situation in Nepali society, the position/status of Dalit women is much lower to that of Dalit males in general (Hemchuri, 2001). Below, the overall situation of Dalit women in social, economic and political terms is discussed so that they have the proper share within the context of Dalit society in general.

According to the 1991 census, the total female Dalit population in Nepal was 1,114,248 or the 50.6 per cent of the total population. Breaking down into the specific caste groups within Dalit, the *Kami* women are highest in number and they are distributed throughout the kingdom. Among the Hill Dalit women, the *Gaine* women are not only lowest in number but also in social status. In the Tarai the *Chamar* women are highest and *Halkhor* women are lowest in number. The social status of the *Dom* and *Halkhor* women is lowest compared to other Tarai Dalit groups.

It is estimated that more than 98 per cent of the Dalit women live in the rural areas. The female Dalit population in the broad age groups is given in Table 3.2. Information clearly shows that the young female Dalit population is quite high, more than 42 per cent of the total population. Similarly, the age at marriage of females is quite low; more than 60 per cent of Dalit women are married below 16 years of age. Within the Dalit groups the Tarai Dalit women are married earlier than the Hill Dalit women. This is because of rigid social structure of the Tarai Hindu groups as a whole.

The overall education of Dalit women is much lower to that of Dalit males. In the 1991 census, the literacy rate of Dalit women is only 12.0 per cent compared to male literacy rate of 33.9 per cent (Table 3.7). The literacy rate is more than 3 times higher among Hill Dalit women (14.7%) than among Tarai Dalit women (4.0%).

More than 70 per cent Dalit females are engaged in agriculture and the other main source of income is farm-wage earning. In addition, women equally do the caste- based occupation such as Damai women do tailoring, the Kami women help their husbands to make iron tools and the Chamar women of the Tarai work as sudeni (midwives). Some Badi women have also adopted prostitution as their way of life and supporting their families.

The separate data on the health status of Dalit women is virtually non-existent. One can simply assume that the Dalit women seem to be less healthy than their own men. It is little known about the kinds of illness the Dalit women mostly suffer, or how they are treated or women's nutritional status or their maternal mortality rate as a whole. The Action-aid, Nepal reported that 90 per cent of Dalit women in its project area had a disease called uterus prolepses. Many Badi women are also suffering from the venereal diseases, as they are practising prostitution for their livelihood (Cox, 1993).

The participation and representation of Dalit women in the Village, District and National level is still very weak. At present, the representation of Dalit women in the Upper House and Lower House is nil. Likewise, the representation of Dalit women in the District and Village level government is insignificant.

On the other hand, the social status of Dalit women is relatively higher than those of the high caste Hindu women in Nepal. The, pure/impure dichotomy, which operates in the high caste Hindu society in various contexts between male and female, is not very functional in Dalit society. According to Cameron (1998:43), the lesser social prestige of Dalit-caste women is primarily lined with her caste (*Jat*) but not her temporary impurity as female. In addition, the Dalit women have more freedom and autonomy in decision-making process in economy, and marriage and there is little restriction in movement of Dalit women within and outside of the village. They can remarry when they like or don't have to live as widow as practiced by the high caste Hindu women. Cameron (1998:59) aptly describes this in the context of Bhalara village of Bajhang district, an area where Hindu values are considered more orthodox than other areas in Nepal.

“The distinctive features of gender relations in the lower-caste family (here untouchables), compared with the upper caste family, include greater complementarity of women's and men' work, women's greater marital satisfaction, women's choice of earning an income in agricultural and artisan production, women's greater power to acquire land, diminished Hindu based patriarchal authority of men, widow and remarriage.”

In brief, because of their cultural values of openness within their societal context, they can benefit themselves in any development forum of women, if programs are targeted for them. In addition, the Dalit women need different strategy and program focus, based on geographic regions.

3.3 ECONOMIC CONDITION

In Nepal, poverty is commonly associated with landholding. The other indicator of

poverty is the size and type of houses. The income from various sources (excluding land and house) is the other sole determining factor for measuring the poverty or prosperity of people. Below, five sets of data are presented to reflect the economic conditions of Dalits in Nepal: i) Land ownership and food sufficiency, ii) Ownership and type of house, iii) Occupation and economic activities, iv) Income and expenditure, and v) Level of poverty.

3.3.1 Land-ownership and Food sufficiency

As Nepal is a country of an overwhelmingly agricultural based economy, the primary source of economy of people is land. Therefore, it is necessary to look at ownership of land to understand the extent of basic economy of Dalit population.

The landless people in Nepal are mostly the Dalit groups as a whole. Though the Tarai is considered the granary of Nepal, the percentage of landless people is found to be highest in the Tarai (ARTEP Report 1974; Zaman, 1972). In other words, the landlessness is more prominent in the Tarai Dalits than the Hill Dalits in the Tarai. They are mostly the untouchable groups, such as the Chamar, Batar, Mushahar, Dushad and Dom (Gaige, 1975; Dahal and Mishra, 1993; Jha 1998; Ghimire et al., 1999; Save the Children US and INHURED International 1999 and Action-Aid , Nepal, 2002). In the Hills, the landless people are mostly the untouchable groups such as the Kami, Sarki, Damai, Gaine, and Badi (Caplan, 1972). Of the total 9.7 per cent population of Dalits in Dolakha, only two per cent Dalits were found landless (SAP, Nepal, 2002).

According to Koirala (1996:63), the Dalits as a whole occupy the poorest position in the Bungkot economy. On an average, a Dalit household owns 15 ropani (note 20 ropani=1 hectare) of land and only few households own cultivable land for producing paddy.

Bhattachan et al. (2002) noted that Dalits in Tarai are approximately synonym to landlessness. This is because of two reasons: i) many Dalits settled themselves in the land of big landlords of the Tarai, and they were used as labourers to farm their land; and ii) because of their relaxed culture (drink, enjoy life), they hardly put pressure to save their earnings to buy land (Jha 1998). Even if some Tarai Dalits own little land, it is either infertile for agriculture production or occupied by the house itself. Sharma et al. (1994:43) found that the proportion of Dalits either of landlessness or of having marginal land (<5 ropani) is considerably higher than that for non-Dalits.

According to TEAM Consult (1998:277), the average landowning per household among the Dalit group is 2.46 ropanis of *Khet(irrigated land)* and 4.5 ropanis of *Pakho(dry up land)*. They (1999:48) found that untouchable has the lowest proportion of cultivated land (3%) compared to other groups like *Tagadhari* and *Matawali*. The TEAM Consult (1999:49) found that the extent of land shortage is the highest among untouchables (64%) compared to *Tagadhari* and *Matwali*.

According to TEAM Consult (1998:49), among the total of 5,162 (99.6%) respondents who responded on food deficiency/sufficiency issue, the food deficiency as a whole was reported by 3,686 or 71.4 per cent of total respondents. Of them, food deficiency was reported highest by the untouchable (49.6%), followed by the *Tagadhari* (31.6%), *Matwali* (13.8%) and others (5.1%). Food deficiency of Dalits by geographic region shows that a highest proportion of Dalits in Tarai has food deficiency (46.4%), followed by Hill (43.3%), whereas a least proportion of Dalits living in mountain has food deficiency (10.3%) (Table 3.12). This is little anomaly in the data quality considering the fact that

agricultural land available for cultivation is minimal in the Mountain region.

Table 3.12: Food Deficiency among Dalits by geographic Region

Geographic Region	Number	Per cent
Mountain	189	10.3
Hill	791	43.3
Tarai	848	46.4
Total	1,826	100.0

Source: TEAM Consult (1998:49).

Sharma et al. (1994) found that 21 per cent of the Dalit households produced food grains sufficient for less than 3 months, 19.5 per cent for 4-6 months, 15.4 per cent for one year and only 5.1 per cent produced surplus food grains. Thus, 40.5 per cent of the Dalit population could produce food grains that lasted less than 6 months. Among Dalits, Sarki and Kami have relatively better position in terms of food sufficiency, where as Dom, Hudke (Damai), and Mushahar have no food of their own as they only work on other's land (Sharma et al., 1994).

In brief, landlessness, marginal and small landholding, and food deficiency for more than six months of the year are the typical feature of economy of Dalits or untouchables in Nepal. But within Dalits, special attention needs to be paid to Tarai Dalits in special program. For example, if land has to be distributed in the name of Sukumbasi (landless people), the priority should be given to Tarai Dalits.

3.3.2 Type and Ownership of House

In the Nepali society, the type and size of household indicates poverty or prosperity of the family. The other interesting fact is that almost all people living more than a year in the rural areas owns a house for shelter though the quality and type of house differs from one household to another. This applies to all Dalits of Nepal as well who are living in the rural areas. According to TEAM Consult (1999:41), the households with a low housing status (plank wall and thatched roof, and thatched roof) are found highest among untouchables (almost 50%), followed by *Matwali* (over 31%) and *Tagadhari* (about 30%). Among the sample of 2,079 households of untouchables, the highest percentage of Dalits have thatched roof houses (35.7%), followed by brick/stone wall and thatched roof (24.8%) and brick/stone wall and tin/slate roof (22.0%) (Table 3.13). Only 1.8 per cent of Dalits own the concrete house.

Table 3.13: Type and ownership of Households among Dalits

Type of Households	Number	Per cent
Concrete	38	1.8
Brick/stone wall and Tin/slate roof	457	22.0
Brick/stone wall and thatched roof	515	24.8
Plank wall and thatched roof	179	8.6
Thatched	743	35.7
Other	147	7.1
Total	2,079	100.0

Source: TEAM Consult (1998:41).

The above data clearly indicate that most of the households (above 51%) of Dalits have the plank walls and thatched roofs. In other words, Dalits are poorer than other groups while considering the type of households.

3.3.3 Occupation

Excluding the ownership of land, the other major means of livelihood of Dalits is the sale of their traditional caste occupation. Historically, Dalits have been practicing their traditional caste occupation and selling it to their clients to make a living. For example, Kamis not only make new agricultural tools and household utensils such as sickles, knives, axes, hoes, spades, plough tips, and nails but also repair them when needed. A goldsmith or Sunar makes golden or silver ornaments as demanded by their clients. The Parkis are basket weavers who make a variety of storage baskets and floor mats from bamboo. The Chunara, a blacksmith group of far-western Nepal, makes utensils from wood. In the Damai group, both men and women are tailors who sew clothes for their clients both in cash and kind. The Sarkis are leatherworkers who make shoes and other products from the skin of dead animals such as cattle and water buffaloes. The Badis are also potters who make different kinds of earthen-ware pots, etc. particularly they make good earthen pipes for smoking purposes. At the same time Badis are singers and dancers and some Badi girls and women practice prostitution to make their living. The Ganes sing songs from their traditional instrument, *Sarangi*.

Similarly the Tarai Dalits such as Chamar are leather workers. They make and polish shoes also dispose off dead animals for their clients. The Tantis are weavers and Doms and Halkhor are sweepers who clean the public streets and bath rooms for the government as well individual households. Dhobis are washermen by profession who work mostly in cash. The Chamar women also work as *Sudeni*.

The Dalits of Kathmandu valley, particularly the Chyame, Poda and Halahulu have the monopoly of cleaning public and private bath-rooms, hotels and government offices. In addition, they clean the public streets for the municipality. Kasai or Khadgis are traditionally butchers.

Historically, the various services of Dalits are supplied in the context of an ongoing relationship between a client and craftsman or a system also known as patron-client relationship. The services of craftsmen to clients (clients are mostly the high caste Hindu groups, *Indigenous Nationalities* and Dalits as well) are known by different names in different parts of Nepal such as Bali Ghare Pratha (eastern Nepal) or Khalo-Pratha (western Nepal) and Khan system (in the Tarai). The services of Dalits are paid mostly in kind (grains) and sometimes cash as well depending upon the amount of landholding (for blacksmith group) and the number of members (for tailors) in the family. In addition, each craftsman also gets his traditional share (food, vegetables, cloth, etc) when there is a festive occasion, marriage and some rituals in the house of the client. The client – craftsman relationship can be temporary or permanent. Normally this kind of client – craftsman relationship is renewed every year.

Bhattachan et al. (2002) found that only 19 per cent of the Dalits reported that they are involved in traditional caste-based occupation. Mainly the Damais are involved in their traditional activity. Sharma et al. (1994) found that Damais are the ones who maintain their caste-based occupation as their highest priority even if a large number of them also involve in agriculture. Chhetri (1996:61) suggests within Dalit groups, Damais have the highest proportion who are continuing their caste-based occupation. Besides, some Kamis, a few Sarkis, and Dhobis are also involved in their caste-based occupation regularly. But, among Kamis, only gold-smiths or Sunar have maintained their traditional occupation. Decreasing involvement in caste-based occupation is mainly due to the fact that, for

example, blacksmiths are hard hit by the availability of factory-produced farm implements, Damais by the availability of ready-made clothes, and Sarkis by the availability of cheap footwear (Sharma et al., 1994: 52).

In brief, though the caste-based occupation was the major means of livelihood for Dalit populations up to couple of years ago, it has been gradually disappearing over the years primarily due to three reasons: i) they themselves think that their occupation has lower social prestige and demeaning socially; ii) many young educated Dalit boys and girls do not like to follow their fathers' foot-steps, and iii) they are finding difficulty in competing with the open market which is supplying various types of similar goods depending upon the needs of the customer.

These days, Dalits do a variety of occupations to make a living. The primary occupation of the economically active Dalit labour force (population between 15-64 years of age) by geographical region and sex as indicated in the TEAM's report is given in the following Table (3.14). Almost 54 per cent of the population do agriculture, followed by service (15.7%), non-farm wage earning (14.2%), farm wage earning (6.1%) and others. Business is one of the areas where the involvement of Dalits is very low.

Table 3.14: Pattern of Primary Occupation of Untouchable by Geographical Region and Sex

Occupation	Mountain		Hill		Tarai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture	65.9	87.3	32.0	67.1	25.2	44.7
Cottage Industries	9.6	4.2	6.3	8.0	2.4	3.8
Service	9.2	0.6	24.0	2.9	18.0	3.3
Business	0.6	0.0	2.7	0.6	3.0	2.3
Farm wages earning	5.7	4.2	6.2	6.3	11.2	14.9
Non-farm wages earning	8.9	3.7	28.8	15.2	38.6	31.0

Source: TEAM Consult (1998:99).

It is interesting to note that a highest proportion of Dalits do agriculture in the Mountain region, followed by the Hill and the Tarai. Very few Tarai Dalits do agriculture in the Tarai because many of them are simply landless. The data suggest that the Dalit females are more engaged in agriculture and farm wage earning than the Dalit males in all geographical regions. In contrast, Dalit males are more engaged in service and non-farm wage earning than the Dalit females. This suggests that Dalits males are more active in economic pursuits outside home than females.

A tabulation of data set of a survey conducted by the Central Department of Population Studies, Tribhuvan University in 1996 in 73 districts of Nepal found that almost 18 per cent of total Dalits were wage labourers. Only 11.4 per cent Hill Dalits were wage labourers while 32 per cent of Tarai Dalits had the same as the source of livelihood. The non-Dalits engaged as wage labourer were only 5.7 per cent compared to Musahar and Khatway who were engaged in this profession by 42 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively (Table 3.15).

These figures also suggest that landlessness of Dalit people force them to depend on the wage-labour for their livelihood.

Table 3. 15: Percentage of Population aged 5 years and above of Different Groups of Dalits and Non-Dalits in Occupational and Social Category, Nepal 1996

Caste/Ethnicity	Agriculture and related	Service	Trade Commerce	Wage Labourer	Sick, Disable, Dependent	Students	Others	Total (N)
Kami	53.0	4.0	1.0	9.7	11.8	16.3	4.2	4,586
Sarki	51.0	3.4	0.4	10.1	13.4	18.0	3.7	1,568
Damai	41.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	33.3	0.0	12
Badi	37.7	3.5	2.9	17.1	11.2	20.9	6.7	1,771
Gaina	40.6	9.4	3.1	0.0	15.6	21.9	9.4	32
Total Hill Dalits	49.2	3.8	1.3	11.4	12.0	17.7	4.6	7,963
Khatway	39.1	1.6	0.5	36.0	11.3	8.9	2.6	619
Chamar	38.4	1.5	0.9	29.2	17.3	8.8	3.9	1,402
Dusadh	39.6	2.4	1.3	28.2	18.0	8.0	2.5	550
Musahar	28.9	1.8	0.4	42.0	19.9	4.3	2.8	834
Dhobi	48.7	3.2	2.4	18.3	14.5	10.3	2.7	339
Total Tarai Dalits	37.5	1.9	0.9	32.0	16.7	7.8	3.2	3,746
Total Dalits	45.4	3.2	1.2	18.0	13.5	14.5	4.2	11,709
Non-Dalits	46.5	5.9	3.0	5.7	10.1	26.1	2.8	103,791
Total	46.3	5.7	2.8	6.9	10.4	24.9	2.9	
N	53,530	6,550	3,223	8,015	12,035	28,788	3,359	115,500

Source: Calculated from the MEBDC Data file tapes

In brief, though the caste –based occupation is gradually declining, this is one of the major means of livelihood for Dalits even today. As Dalits have little land and they are the least educated people, modernization of their traditional skill is the single most alternative for strengthening their economy in coming days.

3.3.4 Economic Activity Rate

The overall economic activity rate, according to 1991 census, is 63.6 per cent of the total Dalit population aged 10 years and above, which is slightly higher than the national average (57%) (Table 3.16). Similar pattern is found for both male and female Dalits. Economic activity rate is also higher among Hill Dalits (65.8%) than that of total Dalits and even higher than the national average. This is so for both sexes as well, whereas, it is slightly less among *Tarai* Dalits (57.4%) than the national average. The notable thing among the *Tarai* Dalits is that males' economic activity rate is higher than females' in all categories. This clearly shows that male involvement in diverse economic activity is considerably higher, whereas female involvement is lower indicating that females are more dependent on males. Except Dhobi, all *Tarai* Dalits have the rate of 80 per cent or more, which no Hill Dalits have.

According to Sharma et al (1994:51), one of the main economic activities of majority of Dalits is wage labour. The groups more involved in this activity are: Damai, Sarki, Gaina, Hudke, and Badi. Bhattachan et al (2002) also identified the main activity of the Dalit for survival is non-agricultural activities (51%), mostly wage labour. Dependency on wage labour has a direct correlation with the landholding position; the landless and those holding less than 5 ropani of land have no better option than to work on daily wages (Sharma et al., 1994:52). Actually, data suggest that many Dalits do both wage labour and agriculture side by side, because only one would not be sufficient for survival. So, Dalits have adopted multiple resource tapping strategies for their survival (Chhetri 1996:61).

Table 3.16: Economic Activity rate of Dalit population (aged 10 years and above), 1991

	Male	Female	Both Sexes
<i>Pahade Dalits</i>	74.2	58.1	65.8
Sarki	74.2	63.0	68.3
Damai	73.9	57.7	65.4
Kami	74.4	57.1	65.4
Badi	71.4	41.2	55.5
Gaine	62.7	41.2	51.6
<i>Tarai Dalits</i>	80.8	33.2	57.4
Musahar	86.3	45.9	66.2
Chamar	80.1	31.9	56.3
Khatway	80.3	30.3	55.7
Dhusadh	80.0	26.6	54.0
Dhobi	74.4	24.0	49.9
Nepal	76.0	51.8	63.6

Source: CBS (1991); Table 27.

3.3.5 Income and Expenditure

In addition to land and house, there are other sources of economy such as service, business, wage labour, remittances, etc. According to TEAM Consult (1998), the mean income from service is found lowest among untouchables. The highest mean annual income group was Tagadhari (Rs.33,130.0), followed by Matwalis (Rs.30,300.0) and Untouchables (Rs. 25,910.0) (p.57). On the other hand, the income from labour was found highest among Dalits, (72.4%) followed by Matwali (42%) and the Tagadhari (24.8%) (p.60). In Nepali society, the wage labour job is done only by those people who cannot make a living other than doing wage labour.

Traditional occupation and income of Dalits (data on three major Hill Dalit groups - Kami Damai and Sarki are provided) from various sources as summarised by Koirala (1996:63) in his village Bungkot is given in Table 3.17. This Table further suggests that the Dalit groups such as Kami, Damai and Sarki do a variety of occupations including the modern jobs and make a living in their areas.

Except the expenditure on meat and fish where untouchables spend more money than other groups, expenditure on other items such as clothing, education, medicine are found lowest among untouchables (TEAM Consult, 1999:68-78). Likewise, though a highest proportion of Untouchable households (40.8%) reported spending money on alcoholic beverages, the interesting fact is that the *Tagadharis* had the highest mean annual expenditure (Rs.2,480.0) on alcoholic beverages, followed by the *Matwali* (Rs.2,330.0) and untouchables (Rs. 1,880.0) (TEAM Consult, 1998:82).

In addition, Dahal et al. (1991) carried out a socio-economic survey to understand the social, and economic conditions of people living in various VDCs of Darchula District, one of the remote districts of Nepal. This survey included the high caste Hindu groups, Byanshi (*Indigenous Nationalities*) and untouchables (Kami, Damai and Sarki) in the sample. Though the sample size is not very significant (only 286 households in total), and data are slightly old in today's context, this study provided some basic socio-economic data, reflecting the level of socio-economic conditions of Dalits compared to other groups (Table 3.18).

Table 3.17: Dalit's Occupation and Honorarium Paid to Them

Occupation	Damai	Kami	Sarki
a) Traditional caste specific occupation	Sew clothes; play music for different groups; go for <i>baya</i> (an act of begging by playing traditional music)	Blacksmithing (make and repair home appliances as well as agricultural equipment	Wash cooking pots in feast, ceremonies; fetch <i>doli</i> and other kinds of load; plough land
Income from traditional job	For sewing A Damai household gets approximately ten <i>pathi</i> (25 kg) unhusked rice and one <i>khangra</i> (15 kg) of corn	A Kami household gets approximately ten <i>pathi</i> (25 kg) unhusked rice and one <i>khangra</i> (15 kg) of corn	For washing cooking pots they get leftover foods and a small amount of cash, a little less than Rs.30.00; for fetching <i>doli</i> and load they get Rs. 30-70 a day depending on the situation and the distance; for ploughing land , they get two types of honorarium if they do <i>niju</i> (do all the farm work of a high caste household including ploughing) they get food for the family and approximately Rs. 1000.00 cash a year; if they do <i>thado siyo</i> (only ploughing), they get 100 kg of unhusked rice or corn depending on the area of the land they have to plough.
b) Traditional non-caste specific job	Do any kind of agricultural and domestic work.	Do any kind of domestic and agricultural work	Do any kind of domestic and agricultural work.
Income	Male Rs. 30 a day and female Rs. 25 a day.	Male Rs.s. 30 day and female Rs. 25 a day	Male Rs.. 30 day and female Rs. 25 a day.
C) Transitional job	Masonry; Carpentry	Masonry; Carpentry	Masonry; Carpentry
Income	Rs.50-100 a day	Rs. 50-100 a day	Rs. 50-100 a day.
D) Modern job	Service inside Nepal, police, army, peon, watch person, porter coolie; service outside Nepal-police, army, peon, watchperson, porter, coolie.	Masonry; Carpentry	Masonry; Carpentry
Income	Inside Nepal Rs. 1200-2000 a month; outside Nepal rs. 2000-3000 a month	Rs. 50-100 a day	Rs. 50-100 a day.

Source: Koirala (1996:63-64); Table 3.

Table 3.18 Basic socio-economic indicators of various groups (including Dalits) in Darchula District

Basic Socio-economic Indicators	High-caste Hindu	Byanshi	Low caste (untouchable)	Total
Households in sample	227	39	20	286
Total population	1688	242	155	2085
Av. Household size	7.4	6.2	7.7	7.3
Pop. Below 15 years(%)	37.4	37.6	45.8	40.3
Literacy rate(total)	56.9	69.8	36.0	59.0
Male literacy Rate	79.9	73.6	53.1	81.0
Female literacy rate	32.7	65.7	18.0	36.0
Joint/extended family	76.6	35.6	30.0	68.0
Household depended on agriculture	80.6	66.7	90.0	79.0
House type (stories)	Most 2	2-3	1	-
Roofing(CGI sheets or slates) in per cent	35-40	85-90	6-8	40-42
Skills per household	28.6	82.1	70.0	37.8
Av. Land (ropani) per household	20.47	10.82	4.85	17.0
Av. Animals per household	10.8	13.4	4.9	10.0
Av.h'hold income (Rs.)	17,337	21,400	8,032	14,311
Per capita income (Rs.)	2,343	3,452	1,043	1,934
Av.h'hold expenditure (Rs.)	14,621	21,649	12,935	15,335
Per capita Expenditure (Rs.)				
Food	811	1,355	767	
Cloth	355	426	235	
Education	125	690	59	
Health	96	149	70	

Source: Dahal et al. (1991).

The above data clearly suggest that Dalits are the most poor in every socio-economic indicator compared to the high caste Hindu and Byansi groups of Nepal. In fact, Byansi (*Indigenous Nationalities*) are the richest community in this district.. Because of the low income of Dalits, the per capita expenditure of Dalits on food, cloth, education and health is lowest than other groups.

3.3.6 Level of Poverty and Human Development Index

TEAM's Consult (1998), while considering the poverty of people in the study area, noted that the proportion of poverty was high among all groups. But the population below the poverty threshold level was found highest among untouchables (68%), followed by the *Tagadhari* (61.3%) and *Matwali* (58.5%) (TEAM Consult, 1998:97). Sharma et al. (1994) indicated that 60-70 per cent of Dalits are below the poverty line. The level of poverty of Dalits can be very easily ascertained while looking at their Human Development Index (HDI).

The NESAC (1998) noted that Dalits are the most deprived group of people in Nepal in all respects and their HDI value is lowest, only 0.239 compared to Hill Brahmin who have 0.441. The various index reflecting the conditions of Dalits in Nepal based on Human Development Report (1998) is given in Table 3.19.

The above data also clearly reflect that Dalits or untouchables have the lowest socio-economic indicators compared to other groups in Nepal They fall far below than the national average as well as Newar group. Their "quality of life" is worse or they are the most poor people in Nepal as a whole.

Table 3.19: Human Development for Occupational castes (Or Dalits) and Others, 1996

Indicators	Value (Dalit)	Value (Newar)*	Value (Nepal)
Life expectancy	50.30	62.2	55.0
Adult literacy ratio	23.80	54.80	36.72
Mean years of schooling	1.228	4.370	2.254
Per capita Income (NRs.)	4,940	11,953	7,673
Per capita income (US\$)	764	1,848	1,186
Life expectancy index	0.422	0.620	0.500
Educational attainment index	0.186	0.462	0.295
Income Index	0.110	0.289	0.179
Human development index	0.239	0.457	0.325
Ratio to national HDI: Nepal=100	73.62	140.73	100.0

Source: NESAC (1998:266), Annex 3.7.

Note: * Newar group is considered here for comparative analysis as they have the highest HDI than all other ethnic/caste groups in Nepal.

In this context, Cox (1994:100) concludes,

“.... untouchables are caught in a vicious economic cycle. They are unable to receive an education that would qualify them for a well paying professional position. This means that most of them end up working in their traditional caste occupation and/or as unskilled labourers, usually for a limited income. Consequently, they are unable to give their own children an adequate education and the whole cycle repeats itself.”

3.4 HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Except the off-hand notes on the health and nutritional status of Dalits in Nepal, virtually there is little scientific accounts, which reflect the health and nutritional status of Dalits as a whole. The following data from various sources indicate the health and nutritional status of Dalits in Nepal, which is very poor compared to other groups.

- The life expectancy of Dalits was 50.8 years compared to 57 years for the national average in 1996 (NESAC, 1998).
- U5MR (Under 5 Children Mortality Rate) was 171.2 compared to 79 of the national average (per 1000 live births) in 1996 (NESAC, 1998)
- IMR (Infant mortality rate) was 116.5 (compared to 52.5 for Brahmin) per 1000 live births in 1996 (NESAC, 1998).
- Average life expectancy of Mushahar in the Tarai was 42 years (CARE Nepal). The average life expectancy in Nepal was 55 years in 1998 (NESAC 1998).
- Immunisation coverage on Dalit children is 43 per cent, which is less by 20 per cent than the national average.
- Among the lowest status caste and tribal community, Sharma et al. (1994) found that 32 per cent of women surveyed received immunisation, which is lowest in Kailali. Only about 30.4 per cent had the latrine facility.
- Action Aid, Nepal reported that 90 per cent of Dalit women in its project area had a

disease called uterus prolapse (DWO/FDO, 1994:11).

- Untouchables were the main sufferers of various diseases in all three ecological regions (Mountain, Hill and Tarai) and more so in the Tarai. The common diseases among untouchables are diarrhoea and pneumonia (TEAM Consult, 1999:35).
- Regarding the young age mortality, the child mortality was reported 15 out of 33 from the Dalits (TEAM Consult, 1999; Table A4.2a: 256).
- A survey noted that 300 Badi women were suffering from sexually transmitted diseases.

3.5 LEGAL AWARENESS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

This section is described in two parts: i) The level of public awareness about the laws relevant to Dalits and, ii) Dalit's participation in the political system

3.5.1 Level of Public Awareness about the Laws

It would be interesting to note here the level of awareness about the various laws pertaining to Dalits, particularly the New Legal Code of 1963 which treats Dalits equal with other ethnic/caste groups of Nepal. Except for some information by Sharma et al. (1994) and Bhattachan et al. (2002) on legal issues about the rights of Dalits, there is no study at all which deals with this issue. Sharma et al (1994) compiled information on legal awareness but the information is not disaggregated on the basis of Dalits and included tribal communities as well. They think that the study population of the area have virtually similar status economically and politically.

Sharma et al (1994:71-72) noted that Dalits had a low level of awareness about various laws. For example, of the total respondents, only 5.6 per cent were aware of the existence of the New Legal Code (1963) and 9.5 per cent were aware of rights to equality.

Bhattachan et al (2002) found that only a few Dalit respondents, such as intellectuals, political leaders, NGO workers and activists were aware a little bit about the national laws, whereas non-Dalits were more aware of it. The national laws are: the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1990), New Legal Code of Nepal 1963, political platforms of different political parties (after 1990), the Eight-point Social and Economic Program declared by the Prime Minister (Mr. Deuba) and laws prohibiting discrimination, including untouchability.

3.5.2 Level of Awareness About the International Laws and Human Rights Instruments

According to Bhattachan et al. (2002), none of the Dalit respondents of the study area were aware of the following International Laws and Human Rights Instruments: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); Human Rights Instruments including International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (1996); Civil and Political Rights, Economic Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women and World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance (2001). On the other hand, due to closeness

to India, some Dalit respondents from Namsaling (Ilam), Dharan (Sunsari), Kodena (Sarlahi) and Mahendranagar (Kanchanpur) had heard a little bit about the New Constitution and the system of reservation for Dalits in India.

We would like to add a small footnote here. Not only Dalits but also many other groups, including the high caste Brahmins and Chhetris, are not aware of the national, as well as international laws and human rights instruments. This is simply because except few who have to deal with these subjects, many people are not concerned at all about these things. This demands a serious awareness campaign for Dalits and non-Dalits together about the social equality and human rights.

3.5.3 Party Policies towards Dalits and the Dalits' Perception about the Role of the Government

The policies of the Nepali Congress (NC) Party and the Communist Party Nepal -United Marxist Leninist Party (CPN-UML) towards minority and backward communities based on their "Election Manifestos" of 1991 and 1994 are as follows:

Nepali Congress Party

- Primary education in mother-tongue,
- Consideration of minority language in state-run electronic media
- Special consideration for ethnic groups and backward communities
- Special concession for women in education, health and employment,
- Increase women's participation in politics and decision -making

CPN-UML Party

- End of constitutional provision relating discrimination on the basis of caste, language and religion,
- Make Upper House an assembly of ethnic and disadvantaged groups,
- Reservation (of seats)for the people of backward community/areas in education, health and employment,
- Primary education in mother-tongue,
- Equal opportunity rights to women.

Source : Hachhethu (2000: 252 and 257).

No doubt some of the policies outlined by CPN-UML are more radical than the NC's but none of these policies are adopted in practice by the parties to improve the quality of life of minority and backward (here Dalits) communities in Nepal.

Many Dalit respondents believe that the role of the national and local government could do a lot in reducing untouchability. Some Dalit respondents reported that the Prime Minister's recent declaration that untouchability is a punishable crime has boosted the self-confidence of Dalits to fight caste-based untouchability in their locality (Bhattachan et al., 2002).

3.5.4 Dalits Participation in the Political System

In Nepal, ethnic/caste representation has been a dominant feature in the Nepali political life throughout its history, though the participation of various groups such as Dalits depends upon the ethnic consciousness or the political culture of the respective group. Though untouchables groups participate in village, district and national level politics, their representation as a whole is very low in any level throughout the kingdom.

Dalit candidates in three general elections in Nepal are given in the following Table.

Table 3.20: Dalit Candidates in Three General Elections in Nepal

Political Parties	2048 B.S.	2051 B.S.	2056 B.S.
Party candidate	10	11	66
Independent	5	7	23
Total	15	18	89
Total candidates (Nepal)	NA	1,449	1,604

Source: Vishwakarma (2001); Table 1,2, and 3.

For example, of the total 1,449 candidates in the General Election of 2051 B.S, only 18 Dalits (1.2%) came forward as candidates (Table 3.20). After four years, i.e. in the General Election of B.S. 2056, this percentage of candidacy is improved only marginally, 5.5 per cent in the total candidates. One of the significant aspects of the B.S. 2056 General Election is that more than 74 per cent Dalit candidates applied their candidacy through the party lines, almost 15 per cent improvement than the previous election. But the serious question here is the number of Dalit candidates who were elected during the General election.

Considering the Members of Parliament (in both the Lower and the Upper house) in 1991 election (BS 2048), only one Dalit each was elected in the Lower House (Damai) and the Upper House, respectively. After that no Dalit candidate was elected in the Lower House. But Dalit candidates were chosen from the respective party and King as the Member of the Parliament in the Upper House. Of the total 60 Members of Parliament in the Upper House, currently four Members are from the Dalit community.

A study carried out by Hachhetu (2000) in six districts of Nepal (Dhankuta, Dhanusa, Kathmandu, Tanahu, Bardiya and Bajhang) shows that the representation of Dalits in the party organisation and elected members at the village/city level, District level and Central level was very low compared to other ethnic/caste groups in Nepal.

Table 3.21: Representation of Dalits at various levels in the Nepali congress and UML Party

	Village/city Level		District Level		Central Level	
	Organisation	Elected	Organisation	Elected	Organization	Elected
Nepali Congress	6.3	6.2	4.1	0.7	0.0	0.0
CPN-UML	14.0	8.8	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: Hachhetu (2000:98 and 106).

The low caste/untouchable was one group whose representation in the Congress Party decreased from 6 to 4 per cent in organisation and from 6 to 2 per cent on elected seats.

On the other hand, the CPN/UML provided greater space to the low caste/untouchables since these groups had been given 14 per cent against their representation at the grassroots level leadership. The representation of Dalits or untouchables in the organisation and elected members at various levels is presented in Table 3.21.

A sample of four districts, namely Surkhet, Kathmandu, Kailali and Ilam was selected at random basis and four VDCs in each district and a municipality were also chosen for the collection of information regarding participation of Dalits as local level representatives. Only one male was found representing in the District Development Committee in Surkhet whereas almost all other districts have no representation of Dalit male or female members in the District level. Since Surkhet possesses a relatively larger population of Dalits it is natural that more Dalits are elected as representatives in that district. Otherwise, all other districts have similar numbers (10, 10, 12) of Dalits in local level. No woman has been elected in other posts except those allocated for women (Table 3.22).

Table 3.22 Dalit Representatives in Sample VDCs of some selected Districts

District	Surkhet	Kathmandu	Kailali	Ilam
Number of Ilaka	15	15	13	11
Number of VDC	50	57	42	48
Dalit VDC Chairperson	0	0	0	0
Dalit VDC Vice-chairperson	0	0	0	0
Dalit Ward Chair	6	2	1	0
Dalit Ward Member	35	7	7	10
Women Member	6	1	2	2
DDC Member	1	0	0	0
Total	48	10	10	12

Source: Election Commission, Kathmandu.

Sample Districts and VDCs:

Surkhet: Chhinchu, Gurni, Ranibas, Ghatgaun and Birendranagar Municipality

Kathmandu: Pukhulachhi, Gokarneshwar, Tookha, Manamaiju, and Kathmandu Metropolitan City

Kailali: Lalbojhi, Pahalmanpur, Chuha, Chomal and Dhangadhi Municipality

Ilam: Phikkal, Laxmipur, Gajurmukhi, Sumbek and Ilam Municipality

CHAPTER IV REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICY AND PROGRAMMES LAUNCHED FOR DALIT UPLIFTMENT

4.1 BACKGROUND

This section of the report deals with the policy and programmes formulated and conducted to uplift the conditions of Dalits in Nepal. Government policies are basically extracted from the Legal Code of 1963, Constitution of 1990, the Eight and Ninth Plans and UUDUVS documents, whereas activities of various Dalit related NGOs/INGOs are collected to assess the effectiveness of their programs. Therefore, a bi-fold assessment of policy and programs launched by HMG/N, and programs and activities conducted by various NGOs/INGOs for enhancement of the quality of the lives of Dalits in Nepal are presented.

4.2 GOVERNMENT RELATED POLICY AND PROGRAMMES

Some attempts have been made by HMG to enhance the quality of life of Dalits in Nepal over the last couple of decades. In this context it is worth considering the following to assess the effectiveness of policies and programmes launched for the Dalit upliftment in Nepal

- i) The review of New Legal Code of Nepal (Naya Mulki Ain) of 1963
- ii) The Constitution of B.S. 2047 (1990)
- iii) Review of the Eight and Ninth Plan documents, and
- iv) Review of the activities of the Dalit Vikas Samity

4.2.1 The Review of New Legal Code of 1963

A brief introduction of the New Legal Code of 1963 regarding the caste system in Nepal is already mentioned in Chapter I. No doubt, many of the strictures of the caste system such as the “defiling of food and water” by the low castes and religious sanctions against anti-caste behaviour have weakened after the introduction of the New Legal Code of 1963. The review of the literature, however, suggests that impact of this New Code was more effective in the Eastern Hill regions than in the West and the Far West Hill regions of Nepal. On the other hand, the caste system is very much alive and in some cases, has become more distinct and prominent over the years (Bhattachan et al., 2002). A general observation shows the negative association of development with fundamentalism-based discrimination. The cultural and religious paradigms encouraging discrimination and social exclusion become weaker with modernisation. The target is change in orthodoxy and day-to-day behaviours, but its path goes through the improvement in economy of the victimised households. Some instances like the case of Dalits not washing tea glasses in a hotel run by a Gurung in Kavre, and the Chamar not willing to dispose off dead animals in Siraha demonstrate that the Dalits are Dalits because of their inaccessibility to economic opportunities. The traditional posture of society further suggests that the caste system is alive not only within the Hindu groups but equally prevalent among the *Indigenous Nationalities* and Buddhist groups as well (SP, 2001:27-28; Basnet, 2001:42).

The introduction of the New Legal Code was bold attempt in the traditional Nepali society but it could not function effectively because of the poor economic system of people as a whole. The Dalits could not go against this traditional Hindu model, as they were heavily dependants on the high caste Hindus and *Indigenous Nationalities* for their survival. There

might be other hidden problems, but the irony is that they need to fight for their rights against those who are virtually seem to have been supporting their livelihood. Therefore, the Dalit emancipation campaign relatively has been taking a long time in Nepal.

4.2.2 The Constitution of Nepal 1990

The fundamental rights of the citizen as provisioned by the Constitution of Nepal 1990, in Article 11, Sub-articles 1, 2 and 3 ensure that all are legally equal. No discrimination based on religion, caste, sex, creed, ethnicity or political inclination will be made by the state in the course of law enforcement. The Sub-article 4 is directly focused on the Dalits and it ensures that no one will be discriminated on the basis of caste and creed in public presence, and in the use of public properties. The subsequent sentence further declares that the discriminating behaviour against this provision is punishable by law.

Onta et.al. (2001:21-80) enumerated twenty articles published in print media over the last five years that focused on the experiences and problems of untouchability in Nepal. The provisions made by the constitution are overridden in day-to-day social and cultural transactions. There are seldom court cases in which the law has attempted to sanction against those demonstrating discriminatory behaviour (Onta et. al, 2001:245-249). However, due to the poverty of almost all Dalits in the society, they hardly have the psychological and socio-economic capability to file a court-case against the higher hierarchy and so-called socially prestigious people.

The Article 19 of the Constitution ensures the rights for all to follow and continue the religious and cultural practices within the preview of one's own cultural traditions. Somehow, the article 11 acknowledges the need for a cultural change in the society and the article 19 fears for the change and contradicts with 11 and further mentions the freedom for practising what has been practised for unknown number of years. This article also prohibits the change of religion that indirectly imposes people where they are should be. Therefore, for an advanced social and cultural behaviour, the article 19 should mention that there is freedom of practising ones own religion and culture, without contradicting with the provisions made in the Article 11.

4.2.3 Other Legal Attempts

Besides the constitutional and Civil Code, other legal attempts are also to be discussed for the clarity of Dalit conditions in national and international sphere. In June 1996 a non-government Bill in the Parliament was registered by one of the honourable parliamentarians that was not brought under the discussion, but the copies of that proposed Bill were circulated to the press and common people. Of course, it was not made a law but created an atmosphere of understanding for the Dalit rights. The provisions made in this proposed documents were related to the rights to enter into the temples and other public places; respectful behaviours in hotels and restaurants; and access to crematorium as others were ensured later in 2001 by a statement made by the Prime Minister (The Rising Nepal, 2001:). It indicates that the government does want fostering a cultural change but it has made insufficient attempts to make legal provisions of sanction for defying.

The international conventions and resolutions of the conferences in which Nepal is one of the signatories are equally treated as the law of the land. The human rights conventions, resolutions of population and development and women conferences have explicitly

mentioned the equality of all citizens of nation regarding the highest possible use of their potential in total production, consumption and national development processes. The ICPD 1994 also stated that the specific need of the people must be addressed and all forms of discrimination must be eliminated. To enhance the understanding of the issues of such population subgroups a conspicuous and routine update of their data and status pertaining social, economic, demographic and other characteristics is required (UN, 1994:40-41).

4.2.4 Review of the Eight and Ninth Plan Documents

The Eight Plan of Nepal conceived the essence of Dalit reformatory programmes such as social security, scholarship schemes, grassroots-based projects, skill-oriented training, self-employment programmes and social awareness campaigns (Janchetana, 2000:50). However, the programs were designed with the concept of decentralisation and due to lack of effective institutional networking, the programmes did not achieve expected outcomes. Also the Eighth Plan period did not pay due attention on the human resource development of downtrodden communities and their skills and specialities were not given national recognition. Moreover, there was lacking on the part of Dalit themselves that they did not feel as equal partners of development process. Finally, the plan document reviewed with an acknowledgement of the essence for the institutional sufficiency for successful implementation (NPC, 1997: 708).

The Ninth Plan seems to be slightly heading more than earlier plans towards discrimination-mitigated society that focused some on downtrodden and oppressed communities in Nepal. The Ninth Plan aimed to achieve elimination of all forms of social discriminations and disparities and eradicating unemployment and poverty from the downtrodden communities within two decades. Therefore, the objectives of the Plan included fighting against social superstitions, modernising the traditional occupational practices, and empowering this sub-population to contribute to national development, enhancing social justice and preserving the cultural heritage. In brief, the Ninth Plan not only outlined 5 major objectives for the Dalit upliftment *per se* but also put forward a vision of 20 years programme for elimination of all forms of discrimination (NPC, 1997:708).

No doubt, the objectives of the Ninth Plan were the elimination of social disparity and superstitious tradition prevailing in the society. However, the modes of integration of Dalit and non-Dalit people were not identified in the implementation strategy. The traditional occupations of Dalits are at the threshold of extinction by the availability of well-finished products. The policies and implementation strategies of Ninth Plan included empowerment of downtrodden community by decentralised institutional arrangements, supports to communities to reform structurally and institutionally and fostering the enhancement of traditional skills of occupational castes. Their skills require modernisation and collective efforts for mass products to substitute imports, but an insignificant amount of resource was made available for those Dalits seeking assistance through Dalit projects by UUDUVS in FY B.S.2056/57. The other strategies were related to credit facilities through social mobilisation and savings, and priority to income-generating programmes with education, health and hygiene. Additionally, the scholarships for technical education, and the institutional base for formulation, implementation, and evaluation of programmes for their well-being with an integrated approach (NPC, 1997:709).

The programme of Ninth Plan was segregated into two major headings as: i). Institutional

arrangements and programme implementation procedures, and ii) Human resource development programme and education. The former included a four point agenda with commitment for the establishment of a council that would be responsible for collecting the proposals from the districts and co-ordinating with government entities for implementation. In addition, the district level committees are made responsible for assessing the feasibility of the proposed projects in the districts as a recommendatory body of the council. The funding provisions from national and international sources are attempted to illustrate and the district bodies are given freedom to implement programmes with their non-governmental partners (NPC, 1997:709-10). The recent information does not support the government commitment regarding channelisation of sources to all 75 districts through a government institutional mechanism, with non-governmental partners. Only a few attempts have been made in some selected districts in an unorganised and unplanned form.

The human resource development programme and education are further divided into education, health and sanitation, and training and capability enhancement. Educational programmes are more focused on the need of reservation of the scholarships and management of a higher education fund. It also focused on the informal education, compulsory primary education, and provision of at least one teacher in schools from the downtrodden community. Health and sanitation provisions included mobile health clinics, integrated approach of population education, family planning and child health provisions and women from these communities utilised as health volunteers as well (NPC, 1997:711). However, the downtrodden women as health volunteers are limited in few numbers of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) that are treated as untouchables after completion of post-delivery impure period of 7-11 days.

The training and capability enhancement programme completely focused on the need of modernising the traditional skills of Dalits. The institutional infrastructures are supposed to assist them in their enhancement endeavours. Admission in the training in technical schools, credit facilities, social awareness, and minimum wage fixation attempts are spelled out in the Plan document (NPC, 1997:711). However, the implementation aspect of the formulated policies and strategies is relatively poor. Until the date the Dalit Vikas Samity and any other Dalit non-governmental organisations have not come forward with consolidated suggestions for a minimum wage rate for the services of Shoemakers (Sarki and Chamars), Blacksmiths (Kami and Lohars) and Tailors (Damai, Suchikar, and Pariyars). Neither the institutional attempts have been made to improve the traditional skills of Dalits nor the marketing for their goods and services has been promoted.

The same section oddly includes other social and economic development programmes that elucidated the special employment programmes with certain tax exemption for employing the downtrodden group of people. Similarly, drinking water as major element of dispute and discrimination was identified and attempts were made to make drinking water available to the downtrodden or Dalit communities (NPC, 1997:711). The abundance of the media covered stories by the non-Dalit ethnic/caste groups controlling the water sources creating dispute and discriminatory environment refute the significance of government efforts.

A special provision has been made in Ninth Plan that certain portion of grant received in the DDC and the VDC must be used for the Dalit or downtrodden or oppressed communities. The respective ministries and government agencies have no information regarding how much money and in what proportion they spent annually for the Dalit

related programmes (NPC, 1997:712). Monitoring and evaluation with review of the programmes launched for the Dalits is the responsibility of Ministry of Local Development, but the ministry mechanism does not support to Dalit-based information channel and well functioning system of evaluation and monitoring. An alternative and effective mechanism that routinely monitors the Dalit (downtrodden and oppressed) development programmes has to be brought under the ministerial system. Also the generalised programme outlines for all conditions are the limitation of plan document and it fails to spell out the requirement of the people at grassroots in different districts and social settings.

One of the objectives of the Plan was to form an independent Dalit and Upekshit Parishad to run the programmes for Dalits directly. Recently the HMG has constituted a National Dalit Commission and existing UUDUVS is also to be upgraded. A bill is prepared to be approved in parliament. Recent structure is the committee headed by the local development minister, and proposed bill has the provision of a council with prime-minister as chairperson. These attempts are positive to sensitise the Dalits issues in higher national levels. However, the establishments of Commission, or Council do not institutionalise the government mechanism from central to grassroots level. Because these are auxiliary functioning agencies with no linkage with the DDC and VDC levels where the programmes are to be implemented. The need of the day is to establish a line functioning institutional mechanism from central ministerial level, that moves through regional level to at least DDC level to identify the local needs, formulate coherent alternatives within main national policy umbrella and implement the programmes in grassroots level.

The existing Dalit Vikas Samity (UUDUVS) is not an autonomous body to make its decision. Its chairperson is the Minister (or Minister of State) responsible for the portfolio of Local Development. The criteria for the appointment to the position of the Vice-chairman do not directly mention that the person must be from the 'Dalit' community. However, it mentions that the person with substantial contribution to Dalit development efforts is eligible to be nominated by the government. To ensure that the Dalits be appointed in all Dalits positions, the explicit mentioning in the government provisions are expected. Then the appointments of whether Dalits or non-Dalits would be non-controversial and there would be no accusation that persons selected are according to the personal taste and choice of the ministers.

Similarly, it was stated in the Plan that a district-level Dalit Samity would be formed with the close co-ordination of District Development committee. The formation of this kind of Samity was also not materialised. Similarly, a separate fund for the Dalit upliftment has not been made though a fixed sum of money has been allocated every year.

4.3 THE DALITS VIKAS SAMITY (UUDUVS)

His Majesty's government of Nepal established an Upekshit, Utpeedit ra Dalitbarga Vikas Samity (Committee for Enhancement of Ignored, Oppressed and Downtrodden Group) under the chairpersonship of minister (or state) with the portfolio of Local Development in September 1997.

The body of the committee is headed by the Minister (or Minister of State) responsible for the portfolio of Local development. The State or Assistant Minister is joint chairperson and the government one among those substantially contributed to Dalits development appoints the vice-chairperson. The related NPC Member, and Secretaries in MLD and

Ministry of Culture are the members. Moreover, five Dalits representatives one each from five development regions; and two non-government organisation leaders are also nominated as members by HMG. The Executive Director, equivalent to gazetted first class (joint-secretary) appointed by the government is the Member-Secretary.

The objectives of the Samity include: identification of programmes related to economic, educational, and social development and implement them; establishment of a network of national and international agencies, development of Dalits related data base; provide consultations related to Dalits issues; conduction of community development programmes; and, finally launch of awareness programmes (see UUDUVS leaflet, undated). The major controversy in between Ninth Plan and Samity objectives is that Samity has completely negated the essence of the improvement of traditional skill and exploration and enhancement of marketing facilities for these skills and services. Many of the Dalits NGOs have also not included the development of traditional skill development programmes in their anticipated activities.

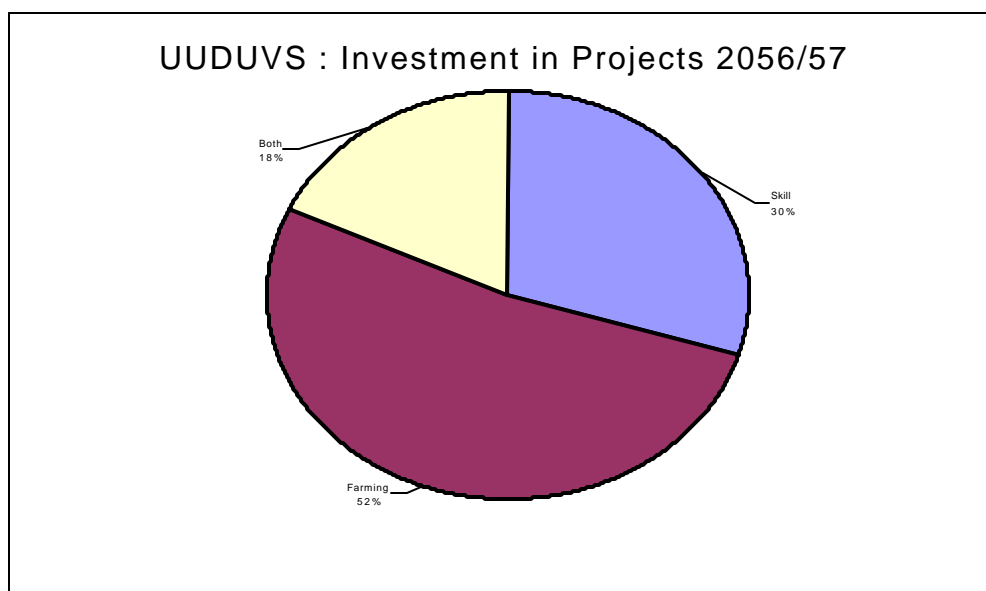
4.3.1 Review of the Activities of Dalit Vikas Samity

The Dalit Vikas Samity was formed by His Majesty's Government of Nepal in B.S. 2054 (1997). In Section 4 of the Constitution of Dalit Vikas Samity, HMG has clearly stated the work, duty and rights of this Samity. A total of 12 defined work areas are outlined for the upliftment of Dalits in Nepal. In this context it is rather unfair to review the activities of this Samity as this is hardly four years old. But it would be interesting to note some of their programmes and activities during this period. The most focused programme is on the scholarship to Dalit students rather than aiming to uplift their traditional skills and economic development either through the short-term or the long-term goals. In the fiscal year 2057/58 (2000/01) the Samity has distributed 3201 assistance altogether. Out of this, 3000 were school level scholarships, 169 were higher education level scholarships, 6 were the awards to diligent students, and 21 were supports to study and training. Thus the major activity of Samity seems to support to education. Most of the budget of Samity goes to educational efforts. However, Samity has not been able to keep the records of the students whether or not they completed the study for which the scholarships were given. Also, in many cases, Samity's distribution of scholarships seems to be 'equal' to all development regions instead of assessments of needy persons with an approach of equity.

In fiscal year 2055/56 (1999/2000), the Samity established a library and documentation centre, initiated a radio programme for awareness, published Samity's mouthpiece magazine and some awareness posters. In addition it attempted to release an audio-cassette with awareness songs. It also conducted interaction programmes in 12 zones covering the participants from all 14 zones. Furthermore, it continued the income generating and skill development programmes by assisting some projects in the grassroots level.

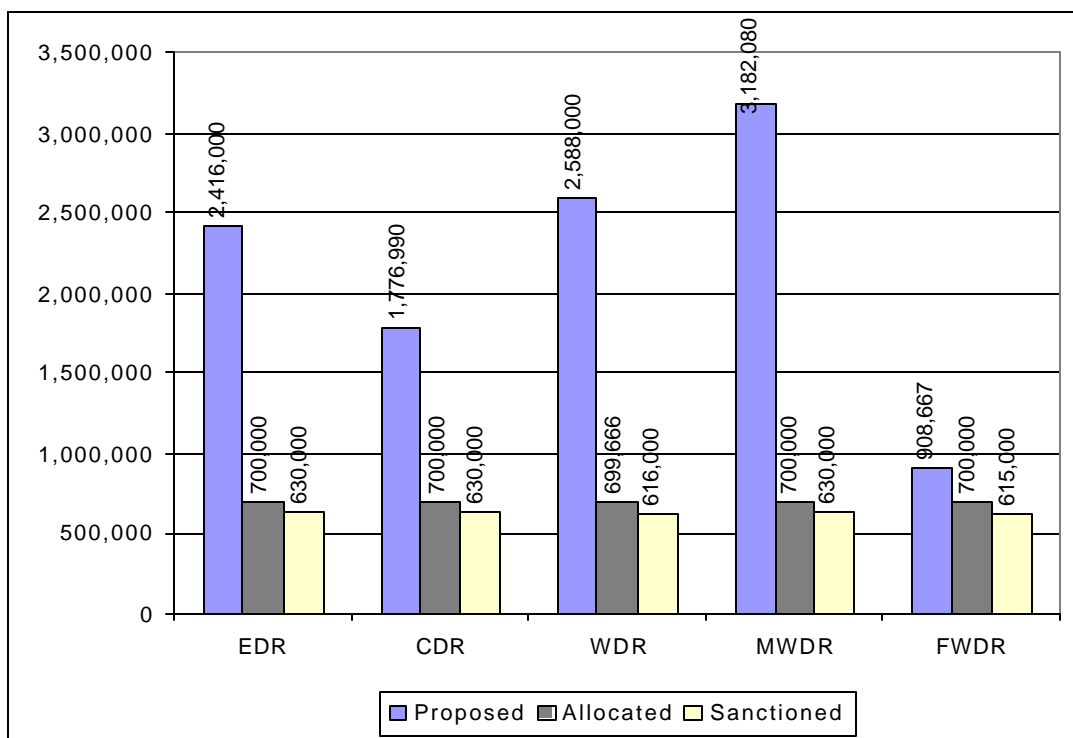
In every financial year starting from the B.S 2054/55, the Samity has been allocated virtually a fixed amount of NRs 12,500,000 from HMG. It looks that almost half of the total resource is simply spent for the administrative cost such as salary, etc.

Figure 1: Assistance to projects by UUDUVS



Source: Table 4.1

Proposals, Allocations, and Sanctions by Development Region, UUDUVS, FY 2056/57 VS



Source: Table 4.1

An observation of the list of projects funded by the UUDUVS conducted in FY 2056/57 show some disparities. Out of the total 21 supported projects, 11 projects were funded for the farming purposes. The planning document has given stress on the need for traditional skill preservation and development and only 5 projects were funded for entirely skill development purposes. Amazingly the rate of allocation of farming oriented projects was higher as 66.6 per cent of proposed amount compared to 31.5 per cent for skill oriented projects and 13.1 per cent of the projects for both objectives (Table 4.1).

The Mid-Western development region and its districts are found demographically, socio-economically and culturally in severe conditions that needed aggressive support systems to uplift the Dalits. Whatever proposals were obtained, the allocation and sanctions are seem to have been proportionate to the development regions that does not match with the spirit of requirement basis programme implementation of development norms. The huge gap between proposals and allocations indicate two fold problems with the Dalit Vikas Samity. First, is the lack of grassroots areas to identify the appropriate project and estimation of pragmatic budgetary constraints, that also ultimately falls within the arena of capacity building that must be attempted by the Samity. Second, the Samity was adopting the egalitarian and equality approach while distributing the funds. It must be in accordance with the need and potentials of the projects. The projects in development regions with few proposals had received a full funding compared to a number of projects in other regions that were given some funding to satisfy all applicants (Table 4.1).

If the performance indicators of Samity include its identification of projects and funding to enhance the quality of life of Dalits in Nepal, the Samity was able to allocate only 32 per cent of what was demanded. Almost less than one third of the expected activities were supported by Samity in terms of projects funding, even with some disparities.

Table 4.1: Projects and their Proposed, Allocated and Sanctioned Budgets in 2056-57 by UUDUVS

SN	Region	District	Proposed	Allocated	Sanctioned	Skill Oriented	Farming	Both	Prop: (All/Pro)	Prop: (Sanct./All)	Prop: (Sa/Pro)
1	EDR	Udayapur	404,800	200,000	180,000			Y	49.4	90.0	44.5
2	EDR	Tehrathum	225,000	100,000	90,000		Y		44.4	90.0	40.0
3	EDR	Sunsari	1,136,200	200,000	180,000	Y			17.6	90.0	15.8
4	EDR	Solu	650,000	200,000	180,000	Y			30.8	90.0	27.7
5	CDR	Parsa	201,640	150,000	135,000		Y		74.4	90.0	67.0
6	CDR	Rautahat	309,000	175,000	157,500		Y		56.6	90.0	51.0
7	CDR	Chitwan	817,450	175,000	157,500	Y			21.4	90.0	19.3
8	CDR	Mahottari	448,900	200,000	180,000		Y		44.6	90.0	40.1
9	WDR	Baglung	432,000	233,333	205,000		Y		54.0	87.9	47.5
10	WDR	Kaski	263,000	233,333	205,000	Y			88.7	87.9	77.9
11	WDR	Gorkha	870,000	100,000	90,000			Y	11.5	90.0	10.3
12	WDR	Gorkha	418,000	83,000	71,000			Y	19.9	85.5	17.0
13	WDR	Gorkha	605,000	50,000	45,000			Y	8.3	90.0	7.4
14	MWDR	Dang	177,400	150,000	135,000		Y		84.6	90.0	76.1
15	MWDR	Dailekh	216,000	175,000	157,500		Y		81.0	90.0	72.9
16	MWDR	Surkhet	752,300	150,000	135,000			Y	19.9	90.0	17.9
17	MWDR	Mugu	1,773,580	50,000	45,000			Y	2.8	90.0	2.5

../contd.

18	MWDR	Banke	262,800	175,000	157,500		Y		66.6	90.0	59.9
19	FWDR	Bajhang	442,000	233,333	205,000	Y			52.8	87.9	46.4
20	FWDR	Kailali	233,333	233,333	205,000		Y		100.0	87.9	87.9
21	FWDR	Dadeldhura	233,334	233,334	205,000		Y		100.0	87.9	87.9
Summary by Development Region											
1	EDR		2,416,000	700,000	630,000	2	1	1	29.0	90.0	26.1
2	CDR		1,776,990	700,000	630,000	1	4		39.4	90.0	35.5
3	WDR		2,588,000	699,666	616,000	1	1	3	27.0	88.0	23.8
4	MWDR		3,182,080	700,000	630,000			2	22.0	90.0	19.8
5	FWDR		908,667	700,000	615,000	1	2		77.0	87.9	67.7
Total			10,871,737	3,499,666	3,121,000	5	11	6	32.2	89.2	28.7
Summary by Types of Areas											
1		Skill	3,308,650	1,041,666	927,500	5	29.72%		31.5	89.0	28.0
2		Farming	2,739,407	1,825,000	1,627,500	11	52.15%		66.6	89.2	59.4
3		Both	4,823,680	633,000	566,000	6	18.14%		13.1	89.4	11.7
Total			10,871,737	3,499,666	3,121,000		100.00		32.2	89.2	28.7

Source: Janachetana.

4.3.2 Line Functioning Agencies

Furthermore, the UUDUVS has no functional linkage with several sectoral ministries. The Samity's resource and outreach to grassroots level is limited. The carriers of the programmes in grassroots level are the sectoral ministries like education, health, local development, physical development and public construction, agriculture and co-operatives etc. The Samity should rather be able to co-ordinate all ministries to operate Dalits development activities through the annual programmes of respective ministries. This approach carries various socio-economic enhancement efforts to the Dalits communities.

Therefore, there must be an institutional mechanism that the Ministry of Local Development would have a central level policy and programme formulation body with five monitoring and evaluating regional agencies and programme operating cells in all 75 districts. The bodies like Aayog (Commission), Samity (Committee) or Parishad (Council) have always a nature of advisory role and consulting responsibilities. The Dalits development requires a conspicuous administrative mechanism for implementation of routine policies.

4.4 THE NATIONAL DALITS COMMISSION

In March 2002, the HMG of Nepal has established a National Dalits Commission with objectives of high level policy making and programme formulation for Dalits enhancement. All Dalits members are nominated in this autonomous body. It is also an esteemed institution that attempts to prevent the violation of human rights of Dalits and mitigate the discrimination and social exclusion. The detailed role and functions of the commission are still to be outlined and it is still to run in full swing. There is possibility of overlapping in the role and functions of this commission with National Women Commission and National Human Rights Commission.

4.5 ACTIVITIES OF NON-GOVERNMENT SECTORS

In recent years, the donors as well as the government consider non-governmental organisations as the essential partners for development. The Ninth Plan aimed at

developing NGOs as partners of development for people, particularly in extending services and facilities to the grassroots level. The Plan explicitly states in its strategy that NGOs will be involved in mobilisation of internal resources, training, sharing of experiences to bring about continuity and effectiveness in their organisations, programs and resource identification.

4.5.1 The International Non-government Organisations (INGOs)

There are broadly three types of roles of INGOs. First, operating activities after identification of need in the grassroots with own local field offices; second, supporting to local NGOs to operate the programmes; and, third, obviously the mix of the both roles. Some of the INGOs have history of more than three decades of development activities in Nepal. Several INGOs have shown their interests in the development of Dalits in Nepal.

The Action-aid Nepal (AAN), Save the Children US, and CARE Nepal are among the major INGOs working in the field of development of Dalits. Their programmes are focused primarily on social transformation by awareness and public campaigns; economic improvement by a number of income generating and employment opportunities with skill development; career (personality) development with improvement in education, health and living conditions; and improving the participation in decision making process. In addition GTZ, Lutheran World Service, HELVETAS, DANIDA, OXFAM, HUGOU, Royal Danish Embassy, GRT (Italy), WCC (Geneva), IUCN, ICIMOD, CCO (Canada), PACT Nepal, UN agencies, Plan International and others have also conducted some programmes on Dalits and other communities.

4.5.1.1 Major Activities and Lessons

Of the launched programmes by these INGOs the advocacy programme with involvement of non-Dalits is a model that could be expanded to all districts. Similarly, the scholarship schemes for Dalits school-going children and provisions of endowment funds for sustainability programmes are effective. Such programmes could be conducted by DDC themselves.

The activities of health including reproductive, maternal and child health care services conducted by INGOs are effective. Some of the programmes include counselling on STDs, HIV/AIDS. The other activities related to sanitation, literacy, and empowerment in total have been catalytic in changing Dalits communities in Nepal.

In many cases, the discrimination or untouchability is symbolised by not accepting drinking water. These INGOs have attempted to demolish the traditional system using two separate water taps or two wells, one for non-Dalits and one for Dalits; by constructing only one water tap at a spot. Also, construction of local consumer committees that includes both Dalits and non-Dalits is a simultaneous achievement towards mitigating demarcation line between two groups. It is also noteworthy that these INGOs were behind the reformative campaign of Chamars in Siraha and Saptari.

These INGOs are also attempting to establish linkage and network with local and national political leaders and civil societies to ensure proportional reservation of Dalits seats in local election, and positions at the community level with a favourable environment to increase women representation in some VDCs. These NGOs are also forming some

pressure groups that supports legal aids and strengthen leadership among Dalit women to protect human rights and legal rights of Dalit community. This instance should be expanded to all over the country by forming Dalit Watch Groups (DAWAG) in Ward, VDC and DDC levels.

4.5.2 Activities of Selected Dalit-based NGOs

The assessment of the activities of NGOs is based on the information of a total of 11 recognised Dalit based non-governmental organisations⁵ selected on the basis of their programmes in recent years, to furnish information regarding their endeavours for the Dalit enhancement. The collected information depicts the major categories of activities of organisations that analyse the acrimonious process of assimilation of Dalits into socio-economic mainstream.

4.5.2.1 Major Activities

Observations on the major focus areas and activities of the NGOs provide ground to categorise them into different groups as the following. Some groups may overlap each other and some minor activities might have been ignored due to their possible inclusion in the major heading, however the listing covers the Dalits activities by and large, conducted by a number of NGOs.

- a. Social enhancement: Education, health and sanitation,
- b. Cultural change: orientation to non-Dalits on the equal rights of Dalits, campaigns against untouchability, public programmes of sharing water and food, fighting for the rights to enter into the temples
- c. Women empowerment: Activities related to empower women with education, advocacy of their rights, reproductive and sexual health, organising them through grassroots level Dalit-women pressure groups
- d. Income generation: Income generating different activities such as leather and shoe production, manufacture of agricultural tools, vegetable and livestock farming, small scale business, grocery shop, formation of credit group and co-operative
- e. Political, legal and administrative: Legal awareness, demonstrations, orientation on human rights issues including child and women rights, voting rights campaign, building of pressure group and bargaining capacity to ensure enhancement in quality of life, campaign for political participation
- f. Campaign and advocacy: Programmes of awareness, especially related to untouchability and not accepting water and food, mobilisation of local level representatives with partnership of non-Dalits

⁵ 1. Batabarnia, Krishi Tatha Bikash Kendra (Environment Agriculture and Development Centre, 2. Bal Bikash Manch (Child Development Forum), 3. Dalit Jagaran Manch (Dalit Awakening Forum), 4. Dalit Welfare Organization, 5. Jagaran Media Center (Awakening Media Center), 6. Jana Utthan Pratisthan (Academy for Public Upliftment), 7. Nepal Uttapidit Dalit Nari Samaj, 8. Self-reliant Development Organization, 9. Feminist Dalit Organization, 10. Nepal National Dalit Welfare Organization, and 11. Dalit Federation.

- g. IEC and media: Use of Audio, audio-visual, print and live media as cultural programmes for the awareness
- h. Capacity building: Both institutional capacity building by raising capacity of partner NGOs and conducting skill development training programmes for the individuals, leadership development training,
- i. Agro-forestry and horticulture: Agricultural development programmes as well as cultivation, management and marketing of cereals, fruits and herbs
- j. Community development and sharing resources: development of community without biases, equal access to local level natural and development resources by raising voices in VDC and DDC levels,
- k. Miscellaneous: different programmes.

Almost all NGOs are financially supported by international donor agencies⁶. The programs carried out by organisations are inadequate but are claimed to be somewhat effective and able to bring change about the life of Dalits.

Empowerment of Women

Almost all Dalit NGOs are aware of the women's empowerment and their enhancement. Out of the contacted 11 NGOs, 2 were completely women-related and all the executives reported in these two organisations are women. Irony in the rest of the NGOs is that only 12 (14.8%) women are in the executive positions compared to their 69 (85.2%) male counterparts.

4.5.3 Question of Sustainability

The NGOs are seen heavily based upon the financial assistance of donor agencies and sustainability even after the alien sources are stopped is not illustrated. Access to international assistance for the enhancement of quality of life of the downtrodden people within nation is an achievement, however, this might lead towards an adhocism. The skill of identifying problems and their solutions; preparing proposals with detailed budget outlines is essential even in grassroots. But, the counter-aspect of becoming dependent on foreign funds and handicapped after it stops ensues in frustration and failure of the campaign in the long run. Therefore, exercises of identifying the problem, enumerating the solutions and modestly implementing the programmes with low cost model might help the local organisations become sustainable. Even if the seed fund is of a small amount the regular resource assistance is to be made available to NGOs by national resources too.

⁶ Some of the Donor partners: Action -Aid Nepal, Save the Children US, CARE Nepal, OXFAM, DANIDA, HUGOU, Royal Danish Embassy, GRT (Italy), Lutharan Service, HELVETAS, WCC (Geneva), IUCN, ICIMOD, CCO (Canada), PACT Nepal, UN agencies.

4.5.4 Co-ordination and Area Coverage

The geographical coverage of Dalit-based NGOs is arbitrary. The available data do not support that the selection of programme area had some basis of nationally representative information. The NPC, Ministry of Local Development, federations of DDC, VDC, Municipality and Dalit NGO and such co-ordinating agencies require regulation of programmes in terms of their coverage.

The programmes of INGOs and NGOs are confined in some selected districts and areas. The districts of Mid-western and Far-western Development Regions with heavy concentration of Dalits population relatively lack attentions of more INGOs and NGOs. Similarly, some districts in Eastern and Western Tarai have attracted more INGOs and NGOs with more activities whereas other adjoining districts with similar socio-cultural set-ups have not. Therefore, the Commission or Council or MLD should develop a mechanism to co-ordinate in national level and DDC/VDC and MU in local level for disseminating the factual conditions and need of Dalits in various areas. The INGOs and NGOs also require reducing duplication and concentration of activities in convenient and accessible areas only. However, the model activities focusing on some particular communities are acceptable.

CHAPTER V

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The chapter is divided into two parts: i) Major findings and ii) Conclusion. Major findings highlight briefly the social, economic, health and political conditions of Dalits in Nepal on the basis of situational analysis. In addition, reviews of the government policies and programmes and activities of NGOs/INGOs have been made to assess the effectiveness of the programmes as a whole. The conclusion part demonstrates some of the potential constraints for Dalit empowerment and development over the years.

5.1 MAJOR FINDINGS

5.1.1 Problems in Defining Dalit

As of today, there is a serious problem in defining Dalits in Nepal. The term itself is a politically coined word, meaning “the poor and oppressed persons”. But, in practice, the term is understood as untouchables or *Achhoot* or used in the sense of Old Legal Code of 1854 up to today, *Pani Nacalne Chhoi Chhito Halnu Parne Jat* (caste from whom water is not accepted and whose touch requires sprinkling of holy water). Two interrelated problems have emerged because of lack of clarity in definition: i) there is an inclusion and exclusion in the list of Dalits even in the government run organizations such as the Dalit Vikas Samity (in 1997 this Samity identified 23 cultural groups as Dalits) and Dalit Ayog (formed in March 2002 this Ayog has listed 28 cultural groups as Dalits), and ii) As the list of Dalits fluctuates in various sources, so is the size of population of Dalits in Nepal, ranging 2.0 millions to 4.5 millions.

5.1.2 Dalit as a group

The Dalit *per se* is not a homogenous group. Like the other ethnic /caste groups in Nepal, their population is equally divided and their heterogeneity extends to language, religion and culture. More specifically, their heterogeneity and hierarchy can be better explained in the three broad regional groups: a) Dalits in the Hill community, b) Dalits in the Newari community, and c) Dalits in the Tarai community.

5.1.3 Research on Dalit

The scientific research on Dalits in Nepal is limited. Nevertheless, there is quite a good amount of literature on Dalits over the years. One of the serious weaknesses in the Dalit research and writing is that it is mostly the hill-based; most of the literature on Dalits has focused on Hill Dalits, neglecting views on the Tarai Dalits as a whole. The existing social, economic, health and political conditions of Dalits as of today is summarised briefly as follows.

5.1.4 Social Conditions

a. Demography

- The reliable data on population size of Dalits is lacking. It is because of two reasons. First, is the problem of defining Dalits in Nepal, and second, many so called Dalit groups are not enumerated by the census as they find no need to count them separately.

The total population of 10 Dalit groups as enumerated in the 1991 census was 2,201,781 or 11.9 per cent of the total population of Nepal. But if we include many Dalit groups as noted by the Dalit Vikas Samity (such as Newar Dalits groups, Batar, Tatma, Dom and Halkhor) and multiply the figure by 2.1 per cent growth rate per annum between the 1991-2001 census periods, the total Dalit population as a whole could number up to 2.6 million in 2001.

- On the regional level, the Hill Dalits account 73.6 per cent of the total Dalit population, followed by the Tarai Dalit (26.4%). Within these Dalits, the percentage of the Newar Dalits could be less than 0.5 per cent of the total population. The concentration areas of Hill Dalit population are the western and far-western regions of Nepal and more than 60 per cent of Hill Dalits live in these regions. In the Tarai it is eastern and the central Tarai regions where the concentration of Tarai Dalits is heaviest.
- According to the 1991 census, the females outnumbered males by 1.2 per cent. The population below 15 years accounted 44 per cent of the total population. Numerically, the Kami ranks highest in the population size of all Dalits whereas the Chamars have the highest population among the Tarai Dalits. The minority group by number (less than 5,000 population) is only the Gaine.

The Dalit children outnumber other groups in the worst form of child labour prevalent in Nepali society.

b. Education

- The overall literacy rate of Dalit was 22.8 per cent in the 1991 census, lower than the Indigenous Nationalities, the other high caste Hindu groups and the national average (39.6%). The male literacy was 33.9 per cent compared to only 12.0 per cent of the female literacy rate. The literacy rate of Hill Dalit is much higher, 27.0 per cent compared to only 11 per cent of the Tarai Dalits. The male literacy rate of the Hill Dalit is above the national average (40.2%). The lowest literacy rate among the Dalits is that of the Musahar (4.2%) and the highest is that of the Gaine (31.1%). The educational attainment of Dalit (primary, secondary, SLC and Intermediate and above) is only 14.6 per cent compared to 28.6 per cent of the national average.

c. Caste-based discrimination

The caste- based discrimination is very much alive even today, though the caste based discrimination is more flexible in the eastern region compared to the western and the far-western regions. At the same time, the caste- based discrimination to the Tarai Dalits is higher than the Hill Dalits, while considering the fact that the Tarai caste Hindus as a whole is more stratified socially than the Hill caste Hindus. The caste- based discrimination to Dalits is observed at two levels: i) It is the discrimination from the high caste Hindus and the Indigenous Nationalities against Dalits, and ii) Intra-Dalit caste-based discrimination. The caste-based discrimination is noted in the every day life of people and also observed in the government offices, corporations and NGOs.

d. Gender

- Women are more sufferers than males within the Dalit society. As the Dalit society is systematically integrated in the patriarchal model of the Hindu caste structure, their social and economic status is much lower to that of males. Likewise, the health and nutritional status of Dalit women is pathetic. The political participation of Dalit women at the village, district and the national level is much lower to that of the Dalit males as a whole.

5.1.5 Economic Condition

- Dalit as a whole is the poorest community in Nepali society. According to the survey conducted by TEAM Consult (1998), the average land-owning per household among the Dalit group is 2.46 ropani of khet(irrigated) land and 4.5 ropani of pakho (dry up land) land. Landlessness is acute among the various Dalit groups and this is more so among the Tarai Dalits. About 50 per cent of the Dalit households surveyed had the food deficiency. Sharma et al. (1994) found that 21 per cent of Dalit households produced food grains for less than three months, 19.5 per cent for 4-6 months, and 15.4 per cent for one year and 5.1 per cent produced surplus good grains.
- According to TEAM Consult (1998), 37.7 per cent of Dalit households owned the thatched roof houses, followed by brick/stone wall and thatched roof (24.8%) and brick/stone wall and tin/slate roof (22.0%) houses. Only 1.8 per cent of Dalits owned the concrete house.
- The mean annual income of Dalits is lowest compared to Matwali and high caste groups. Likewise, the expenditures on items such as clothing, education and medicine are found to be lowest among Dalit groups. Statistically, more than 54 per cent of the population do agriculture followed by service (15.7%), non-farm wage earning (14.2%) and farm wage earning (6.1%) and others. Sharma et al.(1994), however, noted that main economic activity of majority of Dalits is wage labour. In addition, caste- based traditional work (such as black- smithy, leatherwork, tailoring etc) is also the important economic activity of Dalits for their survival. Even today, many Dalit groups living in the rural areas of Nepal maintain their traditional *Bali* or *Khan* system with their clients for survival.

5.1.6 Health Condition

- Data reflecting the health conditions of Dalits is virtually non- existent. The life expectancy of Dalit is much lower (50.8 years) than the national average (57 years). Likewise, the infant mortality is much higher (116.5 per 1000 live births) compared to the national average of only 79. Nutritional status of both the male and female is poor and many women are suffering from a number of diseases, including the sexually transmitted diseases. The Human Development Index of Dalit populations as whole is lowest (0.239) compared to the national average (0.325).

5.1.7 Political Condition

- The Dalit population as a whole is least aware of the New Legal Code of 1963, the Constitution of 1990 and the international laws protecting the rights and empowerment

of downtrodden and oppressed people. The political participation of Dalit population as a whole is low. Their representation at the Village, District and the National level government is rather insignificant compared to their population size.

5.1.8 Development Paradigm

- There are two schools of thoughts emerging for Dalits development. First, development of Dalits community should be attempted through enhancement of their traditional skills as shoemaking, black-gold smithing, and tailoring as well as other so-called lower level occupations. Second, the improvement in the quality of life of Dalits is to be sought by the educational and income generating facilities as for other segments of population. In general, it is often expressed that the former is suggested by non-Dalits, and later is the chosen approach of Dalits. The second approach of improvement in education, employment and other social reforms is equally applicable for all downtrodden groups of people irrespective of their Dalits-non Dalits status. This might lead towards a culmination of programme and resource mix-up with other population sub-groups where Dalits issues are often disguised. Therefore, a third and intermediate approach of a mix-method of improvement in traditional skills as well as education and employment is to be adopted for the development of Dalits in Nepal.

5.2 CONCLUSION

- i) There is lack of clear definition on Dalits, which itself is a serious constraint for identifying the Dalit problems and issues in Nepal.
- ii) Except the three major surveys, other published materials on Dalit studies are more subjective in nature and cover a small area and population. Within these surveys also there are lacunas in sampling techniques and acceptable research methods to arrive at the general conclusions. There is little cross-table analysis to indicate whether frequencies have interpreted the results correctly. Some micro-level findings could be true for that particular community, but these findings are also not tested enough with scientific methods.
- iii) One of the serious data gaps in the Dalit research is that the disaggregated information (such as social, economic, health and political situations) on various Dalit groups (such as the Kami, Damai, Sarki Chamar, Mushahar Batar and so on) is virtually lacking. In brief, the other major constrain for identifying Dalit problems and issues have to be based on limited and poor quality data. Particularly the data reflecting on health and nutritional status of Dalits are virtually lacking.
- iv) The first and foremost need of the time is to conduct a baseline survey with nationally representative sample to identify the Dalits problems and issues. Also, the national census and all national and local level surveys and studies by government and non-government levels are to be made mandatory to collect disaggregated information by caste/ethnicity, so that further studies could be carried out in the different aspects of Dalits and non-Dalits population. A trend of hiding the real ethnic/caste background has been emerging over the years after 1990, which has been creating difficulties when the solutions for a particular sub-population are sought. Therefore, all are to be urged to supply

factual information in the surveys and enumeration.

- v) Among Dalits, the low level of literacy rate and sharply declining educational attainment in higher levels, especially for the females have serious constraints in overall Dalits-empowerment. The reformations in traditional socio-cultural settings are sought more with education and awareness. Moreover, the education among Dalits have two dimensional effect; first change in attitudes and behaviour within Dalits themselves and second, change in the inter-community culture. For both conditions Dalits education plays vital roles, and thus policy interventions are required to elevate the educational status of Dalits in Nepal.
- vi) The other serious constraint for the Dalit empowerment is the prevailing caste-based discrimination. Dalits are discriminated by the high caste and *Indigenous Nationalities* in many areas of their social, economic and political life. They don't feel socially equal with these groups of people. Up to today, they have no courage to protest such discriminatory behaviours and they reluctantly accept these things as their fate.
- vii) The other serious constraint within Dalits is the lack of solidarity among them. Some Newar Dalits have already started isolating themselves from the main Dalit group. In addition, there is serious cultural gap and understanding between the Hill Dalits and Tarai Dalits in terms of proper representation in politics and share in economies. This problem is serious as the policy for the Dalit upliftment should be targeted not only in the capacity building among various Dalits groups but also solidarity among them.
- viii) The other serious problem among the Tarai Dalits is that many of them are debarred from the Nepali citizenship even today because most of them are landless. The other complicated issue for the Tarai Dalit is that there is little vital record (birth, death, marriage record as such) available for them, making the issue more complicated while separating the Nepali Tarai Dalit from the recent migrants of India.
- ix) Except for changing their family names like the high caste family names in some cases, social mobility is virtually lacking among the Hill Dalit groups even today. In fact, some of these Dalit members are attempting to hide their own identity as Dalits in recent years and creating more confusion who are the real Dalit groups within them. Interestingly, a few Dalits groups in the Tarai (such as Sudi and Teli) are found vertically moved to upper social stratum mostly by economic enhancement and became non-Dalits over the last 10-20 years. Therefore, social discrimination, by and large, translated into the form of economic oppression, is the major problem with Dalits in Nepal. The deprivation of a number of economic opportunities further governs the household conditions and social and cultural posture of an individual, or a group of people. Education, participation in political and social decision-making, health, sanitation, employment and a number of opportunities that integrate Dalits into total national process are governed by the economic conditions of Dalit population.

- x) Despite the government's policies and programs for the Dalit upliftment over the years (such as the introduction of the New Legal Code of 1963, the Constitution of 1990, specific policies in the Eight and Nine Five year Plans, and establishment of Dalit Vikas Samity in 1997) and proliferation of many NGOs and INGOs in enhancing the quality of life of Dalits (the social, economic, health and political conditions), the fate of Dalits has not improved much over the years. Up to today, the Governments policies and programs fall short and NGOs and INGOs are not very effective in improving the quality of life Dalits in Nepal. Compared to the Matwali (popularly known as the *Indigenous Nationalities*) and the high caste Hindu groups, the social, economic, health and nutrition level and political participation of Dalits in Nepal is very low even today. This clearly suggests that there is serious lack of political commitment on the part of government for the Dalit upliftment even today.
- xi) In brief, it can be fairly said that the social, economic, health and political conditions of Dalits as a whole is in more dilapidated situation than the other high caste Hindus groups and the *Indigenous Nationalities* of Nepal. The situational analysis and the workshop conducted have identified a number of problems with Dalits in Nepal. The existing social and cultural paradigm has been oppressing Dalits in the form of discrimination that prohibits their integration in the activities with other population sub-groups. However, the economy of Dalits compels them to be used by non-Dalits espoused with a low bargaining power ensuing an oppression of the labour and skills they have. Isolation of Dalits in the one hand and Dalits have been used for limited purposes on the other is a dualistic nature of problems faced by the society.
- xii) Nevertheless, there are some positive aspects as well for changing the life of Dalits over the last 50 years. In Nepal as a whole, it can be fairly said that there have been changes in the life of Dalits, particularly after the introduction of New Legal Code in Nepal in 1963. Law has abolished the caste structure as a whole. In front of the law nobody can claim superior to one another on the ground of race, caste and creed. In many social and public occasions, eating food and drinking water with low caste members, particularly with Dalits have been relaxed. Today, high caste members increasingly find themselves confronted with low caste members attempting to assert their right to control and own resources (Caplan, 1972; Forteir, 1989).
- xiii) Over the years, the Dalit community has become politically more conscious of their rights and more determined to build themselves as one unified group so that they can challenge the democratic government for their rights and privileges. At the same time they are challenging the Hindu, Brahmanic model of caste hierarchical structure based on pollution and purity, and blame this model as their root cause of underdevelopment. Many NGOS/INGOS have become catalyst to gain this Dalit momentum introducing various social and economic measures to uplift themselves. The Constitution of Nepal, 1990 have given further rights to Dalits in more stringent legal terms.

Annex-I

(List of the NGOs and Representatives participated in the Workshop-I)

1. Jana Uththan Pratisthan	2
2. Nepal Rastriya Dalit Samaj Kalyan Sangh	2
3. Dalit Samudaya Uththan Parisad	2
4. Nepal Dalit Mahila Uththan Sangh	2
5. Jagaran Media Centre	2
6. Val Vikas Manch	2
7. Gandharva Sanskrit Samrakshan Samity	2
8. Dalit Mahila Sangh	2
9. Dalit Gaira Sarkari Sanstha Mahasangha	2
10. Aatmanirvar Vikas Mancha	2
11. CECOW	2
12. Dalit Seva Sangh	2
13. Nepal Dalit Jagaran Vikas Manch	2
14. LAAD	
15. Kanuni Adhikar Samrakshan Kendra	2
16. Samudayik Seva Uththan Samity	2
17. Nepal Ram Samaj Kalyan Sangh	2
18. Deula Samaj	2
19. Dalit Swantantra Vidhyarthi Sangh	2
20. Nepal Dalit Buddhijibi Pratisthan	2
21. Dalit Manav Adhikar Tatha Jati Bhived Sarokar Kendra	2
22. CARE Nepal, Representatives of Programme Areas	4
23. Action Aid Nepal, Representatives of of Programme Areas	4
24. Save the Children US, Representatives of the Programme Areas	4

Annex-III

Comments and Suggestions

Based on Workshop Seminar on Dalit Strategy in Nepal

May 19, 2002

There were about 100 participants in dissemination workshop seminar organized by National Planning Commission, HMG/Nepal on May 19, 2002. Participants were from a wide range of experts working in different sectors, such as civil society, government organizations, politicians to academics. Workshop seminar was focused on National Dalit Strategy Report for the upliftment of Dalits in Nepal. National Dalit Strategy Reports contain three separate volumes: Part I - Situation Analysis of Dalits in Nepal; Part II - Long Term Strategies for Dalits Upliftment in Nepal ; and Part III - Five Year Plan of Actions for Dalits Upliftment in Nepal.

Comments, and suggestions raised from the floor discussion after the presentation of reports are as follows.

Dr. Om Gurung, Anthropologist, Tribhuvan University

- Dr. Gurung raised the issue on limitation of time provided by NPC to conduct study, which is one of the weaknesses of the study. Consequently, it lacked information from the very grass roots level.
- Analysis has not been made according to geographical considerations such as mountain, hill, and Tarai as well as east to west development regions.
- Problems and situation should be analyzed according to different caste of Dalits.
- In the implementation, community participation should be emphasized.
- Priority areas of the programs are not in order.

Mr. D. B. Sagar, Chairperson, DNF

- Conclusion of the situation analysis seems to be not much practical.
- Modality of the strategy is not presented clearly which may mislead that it should like separatist approach not an integrated development approach.
- There is not clear modality of implementation that it does not demonstrate clearly who is the responsible agency for its implementation.
- This report is not clear about how to bring all political parties, NGOs, and the civil society together for the upliftment of the Dalits.
- It does not focus on the Dalits participation in their upliftment.

Mr. Govind Subedi, Lecturer, CDPS TU

- The main problem of Dalits or social discrimination against Dalits is the caste hierarchy of Hindu Model, which principally exists between non-Dalits and Dalits. Focus should be on not Dalits as well. It is because if the strategy would focus also problems within Dalits the main focus would deviate from the main issue.
- Off party political issue should be analyzed.

Representative from Vishwa Hindu Mahasangh

- Untouchability is not a religious issue but a political issue.
- There are a number contributions made by religious institutions to eliminate untouchability in Nepal, which should be analyzed in the report.

Mr. Raj Narayan Nepali, INSEC

- There is no problem in definition of Dalits but there is a problem in identity.
- Scholarship for the Dalit students should be clear that who and where it is to be provided.

Representation from Home Ministry

- For the definition of Dalits, it would be better to follow the Old Muluki Ain (1910) which defines as “Pani Nachalne”.
- There is an issue on the problems in obtaining citizenship certificate for the Tarai Dalits. It is not clear that where and how many persons have such problems.

Mr. Om Prakash

There is no provision in reservation for employment and promotion for Dalits.

Ms. Padma Mathema, Under Secretary

- Economic contributions of Dalits in various sectors such as traditional occupation, labor in, cottage industry, traditional music, etc. have not been analyzed.

- Report should be optimistic and on right based approach.
- Twenty-five years long term strategy is too long, it should be shorten and should not be more than 15 years.

Mr. Padam Singh Bishwakarma, Chairperson, National Dalit Commission

- Religion is responsible for classifying touchability and untouchability in the society. So, religious institution should be responsible for eliminating untouchability.
- There should not be any confusion in defining Dalits. It is straightforward that Dalits are those who are religiously discarded, socially oppressed, economically exploited, politically suppressed, and educationally deprived.
- The movement of development should be from the bottom for economic upliftment and from the top for abolishing untouchability against Dalits.
- Government should invest to develop traditional skills of Dalits. Traditional skills should be modernized. There should be no government tax for the industries and enterprises related to Dalit's traditional skills.

Mr. Bijul Bishwakarma, House of Representatives, Upper House

- Report should not highlight the exceptional cases like untouchability within Dalits.
- For the political reservation, system of voting should be based on the basis political party.
- Budget for the Five-year strategy plan is insufficient for the upliftment of Dalits.

Mr. Chakraman Bishwakarma, Gen. Secretary, DWO

- Dalit problem is not a social problem, thus, it should not be taken as social and should be taken as political problem.
- There should be strong provision of penalty and punishment for those who are guilty of discrimination and untouchability against Dalits.
- There is indispensable contribution of Dalits in Nepalese politics, which should be analyzed and realized in the report.

Prof. Basant Kumar Bishwakarma, TU

- Report unknowingly indicates that Dalits themselves are the responsible for being

Dalits, which is not true. It is the state who made Dalits.

- Dalits in the study team seem to be dominated from Non-Dalit groups.

Mr. Man Bahadur Bishwakarma, Ex. House of Representative

- Report seems to be the government's mouthpiece. It is not for Dalits.
- There should be integrated approach for the upliftment and development of Dalits.
- There should be Dalit representation in National Planning Commission.

Mr. Padma Lal Bishwakarma, Chairperson, Dalit Utpidit Jatiya Mukti Samaj

- The provision of reservation is not clear. It should not only be for economic upliftment but also for social upliftment as well.
- There should be separate constituency for Dalits and Dalits must have double voting rights.
- In every issue, women should be addressed.
- There should be promotion of access to resources for Dalits. There should be special provision of subsidy and reservation for the agriculture products and other products from traditional skills of Dalits.

Reply: We authors feel that answers of most of the questions raised by participants are already there in different volumes of the report.

Suggestions

From Discussion Workshop II: National Dalit Strategy Report

Organized by National Planning Commission

May 19, 2002

Group I Situational Analysis of Dalits

Moderator: Dr. Krishna B Bhattachan

- Define Dalits as such community who are suffering caste- based discrimination and untouchability.
- Make table of various acts, laws books, reports in which the different caste groups are listed as Dalits.
- The castes given below must be included within Dalit community
 - i. Mountain: Ghara, Luha
 - ii. Hill: Bhool, Hudke, Bhand, Kumal (Rana)
 - iii. Tarai: Dhanuk, Aghori, Bhanauchiya, Bantar, Kuchhe, Khatik, Kothi, Pasi, Mehta, Chidmar (Chimar), Newar-Dhobi
- Do not mention the term “Matwali”
- The statement in 5.2 (vi) “they have no courage to protest such discriminatory behaviors” is objectionable as there are many examples of movements against discrimination.
- Right to possess surname (Thar) to Dalits must be allowed,
- If the term “Matwali” refers to “Adibasi/ Janajati” then they should be used accordingly.
- Constitution 1990 and other laws have not eliminated caste discrimination, only rejected caste discrimination (not accepted)
- Constitution of Nepal 1990 allowed only limited rights to Dalits is not adequate.
- Only the context of discrimination and exclusion have been discussed. Focused must be given to untouchability.

Group II Education and Health

Moderator: Mr. Dinesh Kumar Thapa

- Establish “Dalit Skill Development Cooperation”
- Twenty-five percent of children must be taken from Dalit in SOS Child Village (Balgram).
- Conduct awareness program against caste discrimination to the parents of both Dalit and non-Dalit groups.
- Provide free health service for Dalits who are economically poor
- Reserve 20 per cent quota for Dalits in Health Education

Group III Political and Economic

Moderator: Ms. Pushpa Bhusal

- Implement Dalit upliftment program through local level as far as possible.
- Establish National Dalit Council immediately.
- Conduct political training and awareness programs
- In the definition of Dalits, so called untouchable designated before the Civil Code 1963 should be included.
- There should be appropriate representation in the employment opportunity in INGOs.
- Establishment of Dalit upliftment Funds.
- Ensure the market for the products related to Dalit profession.
- Provision of insurance of industries related to Dalit skills.

Group IV Plan of Action

Moderator: Mr. Ratna B Bagchan

- Non-Dalits should be made aware first to eliminate untouchability in the society.
- In the priority area of social sector, various contributions made by Dalits should be explore and highlight.
- Activities 3 and 4 in the Strategy Report must be changed into objectives.
- It would be better to include religious organizations among the implementing authorities of activity 4 (such as ensure equal rights to enter into temples).
- Electronic and print media work in such a way so that they create awareness against caste-based discrimination. It would also better to include awareness against caste-based discrimination into religious program in Radio Nepal.
- Provide scholarship and encourage Dalits to study “Sanskrit” and Karmakanda”.
- In Activity no. 38, quota must be proportional to population size.
- Include the contributions of Dalits such as “Bise Nagarchi” for the nation building in school education.
- Existing laws, acts, etc which disregards the UN international conventions including WCAR must be dismissed.
- Determine the role of Dalits and non-Dalits to implement the plans related Dalit upliftment.

Reply: We authors feel that most of the suggestions as raised in the workshop are already there in different volumes of the report. In some cases our opinions and suggestions slightly differ because of limitations in the scope of project as a whole. It is already suggested in the strategy report that the quota system for Dalits in different areas should be based on population size. Likewise, it is a big question, who should be included as Dalits and who should not.

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