How Homogenous are the Madhesis? Implications for Inclusive and Affirmative Agendas

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Abstract

Ethnicity, social inclusion/exclusion and inequality have been much more important and also equally debatable issues in contemporary Nepal. Some scholars (Bhattachan, 2009, 1995; Gurung, 1997; Gurung, 2012; Lawoti, 2005, 2012; Mabuhang, 2012) argue Bahuns, particularly hill Bahuns is the most privileged group with highest access to resources and opportunities and all other non-Brahmans such as Janajatis, Dalits, Madheshi, Muslims, and so on are the most deprived/excluded groups with least access to resources and opportunities. This paper, in contrast, based on NSII (2014) data, argues that Madhesis is neither a single nor a homogeneous group rather it is a broader caste/ethnic category which includes a number of Tarai/Madhesh caste/ethnic groups distinctly different from each other in terms of education, health, economy and politics. Some caste/ethnic groups, within Tarai/Madhesh groups or Madhesis, have better access to resources and opportunities and other Tarai/Madhesh groups have poor access to resources and opportunities. This kind of intra-group inequality can also be observed within all caste/ethnic groups of Tarai/Madhesh; Tarai Brahman/Chhetri, Tarai Dalit, Tarai Janajati, other Tarai Castes, and Muslims including heterogeneous Bahuns (Gautam, 2015). Therefore, Madhesis, as broader Tarai/Madhesh caste/ethnic group, is neither a single nor a homogeneous group rather it is a heterogeneous category with wider inter-group inequality in terms of access to resources and opportunities.

Key words: Tarai/Madhesi, ethnicity, inclusion, exclusion and inequality

1. Introduction

Ethnic debate in Nepal has taken two principal forms. The first visualizes ethnicity as historically and socially constructed and contingent. Ethnicity, in this view, is constructed and sharpened within the context of specific political, economic, cultural structures and processes (Mishra, 2012; Subedi, 2015). The second vision is that ethnicity is primordial attributes of group of people with a set of attributes which is fixed and remains unchanged. Globally, the legitimacy of the essentialist positions has become weak due to modernization and globalization, expansion of intercultural interaction, and migration. In Nepal, however, data collection and generalization of

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developmental activity and governmental and non-governmental reports have overemphasized on the essential characteristics of ethnicity, and used individual and group category of the people while analyzing and interpreting the data.

The social inclusion/exclusion debate in Nepal focuses heavily on caste and ethnicity issues (NSII 2014). However, there are other issues including inequality, such as access to resources and opportunities, as inclusion and exclusion, which is particularly related to ethnic inequality. The inequality explained so far in Nepal is more inclined towards the argument that Janajatis, Madhesi, Dalits, and Muslims are deprived, excluded and marginalized resulting very low level inclusion in almost all aspects of access to resources and opportunities. This kind of explanation assumes that each of these caste/ethnic groups including Madhesis is homogeneous. This paper, in contrast, attempts to explore whether there is the inter and intra-group inequality within Madhesis and whether it is a single homogeneous caste/ethnic category.

 Some scholars and ethnic activists (Bhattachan, 2009, 1995; Gurung, 1997; Gurung, 2012; Lawoti, 2005, 2012; Mabuhang, 2012) consider ethnicity as rigid and unchangeable phenomenon having an important implication in determining overall life chances including access to resources and opportunities, which in their views, is the fundamental cause of exclusion and inequality among people of different caste/ethnic groups of Nepal.

Social inclusion has now therefore become a national agenda for Nepal to analyze Nepali society and state and it has been taken as an important category/unit of analyzing social inclusion/ exclusion. In the present socio-political context of Nepal, there is the tendency to define all Nepalis as socially excluded except male Bahuns of hill origin. This kind of discourse highlights on the inclusion of non-Bahuns in each and every opportunity in the state. This is not very useful for targeted economic and social interventions (Das and Hatlebakk, 2010)**.** A number of studies conducted during last decades (DFID/World Bank, 2006; Das and Hatlebakk, 2010; Bennett and Parajuli, 2013) reveal that there are persistent gaps in development outcomes, access to opportunities and participation in decision making within, between and among the people of different sections in Nepal.

The term Madhes refers to Madhyadesh, which originally meant central realm in terms of the Hindu political canons of Nepal but generally it came to refer to plain land, i.e., India. Thus, Madhesh had connotations of being different from Pahad Desh (or Hill country) in the everyday language of people (Riaz and Basu, 2010, p. 84 cited in Gautam, 2013). In this sense, Madhesis should refer to the group of people living in the Madhesh region but this has not been the case. People who are living in Tarai/Madhesh for centuries are not considered Madhesi if their surname is, for example, Koirala, Ghimire, Nepal, Gurung, Magar, Sherpa, Rai and Limbu. In fact, it is commonly used term 'Tarai/Madhesi' is a broader cultural group rather people living in Tarai/ Madhes. The people within this Madhesis are divided into different caste/ethnic groups forming sub-caste/ethnic groups. The important point to take into account here is that different GOs/ (I) NGOs including government of Nepal are treating Madhesis as a single category and providing opportunities for Madhesis in general but not to the excluded, marginalized and discriminated Madhesis. This clearly tells us that different inclusionary provisions made by the government

and other institutions/organizations will not be able to reach the targeted really excluded and marginalized people.

The government of Nepal has introduced a number of measures for inclusion of excluded communities in the plans, policies and programs based on broad caste/ethnic categories: Brahmin/ Chhetri, Janjati, Tarai/Madhesi, Dalits, Muslims, women and backward community. Within Tarai/ Madhesi, there are various caste ethnic groups and there is a wider variation among Tarai/Madhesi. In this paper, we focus on Tarai/Madhesi caste/ethnic group because of the enduring relevance of the caste categories in contemporary Nepal. Based on Tarai/Madhesi caste and ethnic domain, we have attempted to provide statistical evidence on economic and social dimensions of Tarai/ Madhesi social groups to depict the real fact that Tarai/Madhesi is a highly heterogeneous group in terms of education, health and sanitation, economic and political dimensions. Our conviction is that Amartya Sen's capability approach which provides the foundation of the human development concept can be seen as an appropriate framework for conceptualizing and operationalizing empowerment. If human development is about enlarging people's choices by enhancing their functioning and capabilities, empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities made possible through freedom of choice and action. Therefore, analysis of access to resources and opportunities among the major caste/ethnic categories of Tarai/Madhesh could be very much useful to understand the inequality persistent in Madhesh region of Nepal.

2. The Data and Methodology

The primary objective of this research paper is to explore the inequality among major caste/ethnic groups of Tarai/Madhesh in order to understand whether Madhesis is a single homogeneous category or it is a single as well as heterogeneous group. Focusing on this general objective, this paper aims to examine 26 different indicators (Annex 2) of access to resources and opportunities developed in terms of education, health and sanitation, economic access and assets, employment, politics and living standard. On the basis of comparison of access to resources and opportunities, this paper further attempts to analyze the inter-ethnic inequality among Madhesis in order to explore how homogeneous Madhesis are.

The data used in this paper are mainly borrowed from Nepal Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index (NSII) research conducted by the Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology (CDSA), Tribhuvan University (TU) in 2014. As mentioned earlier the social inclusion/exclusion issues in Nepal are more focused on caste/ethnicity. But there was not any inclusion/exclusion index to reflect levels of social inclusion/exclusion until the publication of NSII report. In that context CDSA, TU, has conducted a research project, Social Inclusion Index (SIA) and Ethnographic Profile (EP), SIA-EP for short, in 2012-13 which has a wider coverage. It has also published a report NSII which includes the social inclusion index of 97 different caste/ethnic groups of Nepal according to Census 2011. This research report is, in fact, a pioneering one in the areas of social inclusion. The report covers 39 different domain sub-indices and six dimensional indices. However, for the purpose of this paper only 26 indicators have been used. The NSII has also borrowed raw data from various sources such as The Nepal Social Inclusion Survey (NSIS, 2012), Census 2011, Election Commission of Nepal, Ministry of General Administration and similar other reliable sources. All these data sources except NSIS are high quality reliable and

authentic sources of data. Therefore, it would be better to discuss a bit more about NSIS for its reliability and authenticity from methodological point of view.

The Nepal Social Inclusion Survey (NSIS) was conducted by CDSA, TU, in 2012. Moving beyond the conventional approach of analyzing the data it is a completely fresh survey carried out to explore the level of social inclusion of 97 caste/ethnic groups. The NSIS is a national sample survey and its aim is to generate primary data to cover multiple indicators that are comparable between social groups. The sample of the NSIS covers 98 groups based on census 2001 that spread across the country. The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nepal had financially supported the study through Social Inclusion Research Fund, the Netherlands Development Organization (SIRF/SNV). This NSIS is thus a reliable source of data to analyze social inclusion/exclusion in Nepal.

The NSIS focuses on 'social sampling', the target of sampling is caste/ethnic groups, rather than a geographical area such as ecological zones, development regions or districts. The sample size is determined to be 152 for each caste/ethnic groups with a 10 percent error margin. With this sample size, a four-staged stratified probability cluster design is adopted. Selection is made first on the district and then VDC/Municipality, settlement and, finally, household level. Before the selection of samples, the population of each caste/ethnic groups is stratified into two categories: population living in 'core' and 'periphery' areas. A region or certain number of districts with the highest number of population concentration is defined as core areas. All other areas are defined as peripheral areas. The degree of population is examined on the basis of the 2001 population census database.

The NSIS has formed core professional team supported by data manager and research associates. A seven-days training is provided to the selected field staff by the core research team and guest experts. A manual with a set of field guides on survey methodology and interviews is developed and distributed to the field staff as reference material for fieldwork. Various measures are taken during data collection period to ensure collection of quality of data. Attempts are made to make cultural-friendly interviews by hiring field staff from various caste/ethnic groups and women researchers. In addition, the fieldwork is regularly supervised and monitored by the core team members and quality control supervisors.

The target sample size for the national level is 14,896, but the survey is able to enumerate 14,709 households for 98 caste/ethnic groups. The findings are based on household survey representing factual information and perceptions of household level respondents. Thus, this paper uses reliable and authentic data on selected indicators to explain the intra-group inequality within Madhesis in order to see whether Madhesis is a homogenous caste/ethnic category.

3. Access to Resources and Opportunities among Madhesis
The people of Nepal are socially segmented along lines of caste, sub-caste, ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. The number of such groups cannot be stated with sufficient precision, partly because it is dependent on the definition employed (NESAC, 1998). Information on caste and ethnicity of the population in Nepal was started to generate from 1991 Census, soon after the fall of

Panchayat regime in 1990 and restoration of multi-party democracy. The 1991 Census listed 60 caste/ethnic groups. The 2001 Census listed 103 social groups, comprising various castes, ethnic groups, religious, linguistic and unidentified groups, some of whose number constituted less than 0.1 percent of the population. The number of caste/ethnic groups increased in 2011 Census and reached 125 caste/ethnic groups in the list. This paper, however, uses 2001 Census to categorize major ethnic groups of Nepal as NSII follows the same census for broader caste/ethnic categorization (Annex 1) of Tarai/Madhes as Tarai Brahman/Chhetri, Tarai Dalit, Tarai Janajati, other Tarai Castes, and Muslim. In addition, from this categorization this paper analyzes inequality among the caste/ethnic groups of Tarai/Madhesh as per the objective of this paper.

Inequality among individuals and households is not natural and it is social and created due to a number of factors in a particular context. Most important factor is access to resources and opportunities which creates inequality of various kinds including economic, social and political among different ethnic groups. The inequality in inclusion among different caste/ethnic groups of Madhesh is explained in terms of 26 indicators in the following sections.

3.1 Access to Education

Education is often perceived as the aggregate of all the processes by which a person develops abilities, attitudes and forms of behavior with practical value to the society in which he or she lives (Pande, 2006). Education opens up the way for opportunities by enhancing the capability of each person to expand their knowledge, acquire marketable skills and secure highly paid technical and professional jobs. Although capability enhancement is at the core of the agenda of human development, its framework emphasizes not only the enhancement of capabilities but also uses of such capabilities. Enhancement and use of human capabilities add value to human life" (Gautam, 2015:2). Thus education has become a primary factor in improving living standard of people everywhere in the world.

Regarding the value of education the NSII includes educational index which is composed of the adult literacy, the net enrollment at all level of education, and completion of basic education. Adult literacy rate is defined as the percentage of the population aged 15 years and above who can read and write in any language. There is a greater variation on adult literacy among Tarai/Madhesi group (Table 1). Among Madhesis, Tarai Dalits have the lowest adult literacy rate (23.1%) followed by Muslim (35.4%) and Other Tarai/Madhesh Caste. The adult literacy of Tarai Brahmin/Chhetri is 80 percent, a fairly higher than national average (59.6 %). The net enrollment rate at all levels of education shows a national average 71.1 percent. The Tarai Dalits (49.4%), Muslim (47.1%) and Other Tarai Castes (64.1 %) have net enrollment rate lower than national average. Tarai Janjatis have almost equal (70.8%), and the Tarai Brahmin/Chhetris (79.1%) have higher net enrollment rate than national average (Table 1). Similarly, completion of basic schooling also clearly varies among the Madhesi groups. Only 9.5 percent of Tarai Dalits have completed basic schooling, followed by Muslim (10.9%) and Tarai Janjati (16.6%). The national average is 21.9 percent and that of Tarai Brahmin/Chhetri is very high (45%).

Table 1. Access to Education among Major Madheshi Groups

Madhesi Caste/Ethnic Group	Adult Literacy Rate (%)	Net Enrollment Rate (%)	Basic Schooling Completion Rate (%)	Education Domain Index
Tarai Brahman/Chhetri	80.0	79.1	45.0	0.6805
Tarai Dalit	23.1	49.4	9.5	0.2733
Tarai Janajati	54.1	70.8	16.6	0.4716
Other Tarai Castes	45.0	64.1	20.7	0.4326
Muslim	35.4	47.1	10.9	0.3113
Nepal	59.6	71.1	21.9	0.5086

Source: *The Nepal Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index, CDSA, TU, 2014*

Overall, Table 1 further shows that Tarai Brahmin and Chhetri have the highest education domain index (0.6805) and the Tarai Dalits the lowest (0.2733) among all Madhesis whereas national average is 0.5086. Thus, there is wider variation in access to education among major Madhesi groups indicating wider intra-group inequality within Madhesis.

3.2 Access to Health and Sanitation

Health is regarded as an important component in measuring overall development outcomes. The human development approach links one's health conditions with one's capability to function efficiently and effectively. Sen (2000) stresses health as a contributive factor to development and the need for basic recognition that deprivation of health is an aspect of underdevelopment, because people's productivity depends on their level of nutrition and health. The functioning of the economy suffers from illness-related absenteeism. Gautam (2013) highlights the importance of health as:

The most important thing in individual's life is to be physically fit so that he/she can contribute efficiently in his/her work to generate necessary income to maintain livelihood and ultimately gain good health. Income is directly associated with the consumption of food because individuals try to maintain balance food in their everyday lives when income is sufficient for livelihood. Only balanced diet maintains good health, which is a capability of an individual. (p. 112)

It is therefore important to explore the health status of individual. In order to explore the health status of an individual NSII (2014) has computed health domain index. The health and sanitation domain index is composed of the health service affordability, child survival rate, the access to safe drinking water and the access to modern toilet facilities. The status of access to health and sanitation among major Madhesi groups is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Access to Health and Sanitation among Major Madheshi Groups

Madheshi Caste/Ethnic Group	Health service affordability (%)	Child survival (%)	Household access to safe water (%)	Household access to modern toilet facilities (%)	Health domain index
Tarai Brahman/Chhetri	53.4	10.1	16.1	49.0	0.5211
Tarai Dalit	56.4	19.0	14.1	5.5	0.3927
Tarai Janajati	53.9	19.2	20.8	23.2	0.4467
Other Tarai Castes	57.1	18.1	16.6	19.4	0.4375
Muslim	53.6	32.2	18.0	20.7	0.4001
Nepal	54.7	18.9	47.8	41.7	0.5632

Source: *The Nepal Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index, CDSA, TU, 2014*

The national average for health service affordability is 54.7 percent. The health service affordability is highest for Other Tarai Castes (57.1%) and lowest for Tarai Brahmin/Chhetri (53.4%). The right to water is a human right in international covenants. Data on safe drinking water in the present study is collected in relation to the usual source of drinking water used by the households. In the study, piped water, tube wells and protected (covered) wells are considered to be safe source of drinking water. Table 2 indicates that overwhelming majority of Madhesis have access to safe drinking water. However, there is wider variation among Madhesis of various caste/ethnic groups in terms of access to safe water. It ranges from 14 percent among Tarai/Madhesh Dalits to about 21 percent among Tarai Janajati. Another interesting point is that access to modern toilet facility is highest (49 percent) among Tarai/Madhesh Brahman/Chhetri and lowest (5.5 percent) among Tarai Dalit. Thus, there is wider inequality in access to health and sanitation among Madhesis indicating that Madhesi is not a single homogeneous category.

3.3 Access to Landownership and Non-agriculture Employment Status
Land is still important in the context of Nepal. The people in most of the rural areas of Nepal are still living with subsistence production from agriculture. In this sense, land ownership reduces the probability of being poor in rural areas. The belongingness with land has a powerful cultural and economic significance to all sections, groups and communities of Nepal. Land is considered to be one of the essential productive assets in the rural agrarian economy; average landholding rates are used as evidence of access to productive resources. The size of land holdings of an individual and family determines their socio-economic conditions (how rich or poor they are) in a particular family or community or in a society as a whole. Land has some other utilities including keeping collateral for loan in any Bank. This is how one can understand how important the land is.

Considering the importance of land in Nepal NSII (2014) has regarded access to land as one of the important indicators of explaining inclusion/exclusion in the context of Nepal. The indicator on access to land is also included in this paper. The land has both economic and social value in Nepal. The agricultural land among Madhesi people is also unequally distributed across different caste/ethnic groups (Table 3).

Average landholding size of Nepal is 0.3757 hectare. Interesting, the average landholding size among the people of Tarai/Madhes other castes is highest (0.6317 hectare) followed by Tarai Janajati (.5800 hectare) and Tarai/Madhesh Brahman/Chhetri (0.5799 ha). Tarai Dalit (0.1895 ha.) households own fairly lowest size of landholding among Tarai/Madhesi groups which are at the bottom in many social inclusion indicators. Muslims also have the smallest size of agricultural landholding (0.4110 ha.). Thus, access to agricultural landholding is unequally distributed across different Madhesi people indicating that Madhesis is not a single homogeneous with equal access to land property.

Table 3. Economic Access among Major Madheshi Groups

Madheshi Caste/Ethnic Group	Average landholding (ha.)	Non-agriculture employment	Economic access Index
Tarai Brahman/Chhetri	0.5799	60.4	0.6048
Tarai Dalit	0.1895	30.5	0.2310
Tarai Janajati	0.5800	30.3	0.4545
Other Tarai Castes	0.6317	33.0	0.4977
Muslim	0.4110	42.2	0.4169
Nepal	0.3757	33.4	0.3519

Source: The Nepal Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index, CDSA, TU, 2014

Work and employment are most prominent areas for human development. Most of the lives of the people are spent in work or employment for earning their livelihoods. Availability of employment and associated issues of the terms of employment are others major concerns of the poor. People adopt various alternative occupations for their livelihoods and maintenance of the households. The social relations and status of an individual household in the society are established and determined by the employment status of the household. In human development studies, works and employments are considered as job promoting tools. Employment is regarded as an important opportunity for the citizens of any country. One can find different sectors of employment in each country.

The non-agricultural economic activity of the population of working age is considered as one of proxies of better employment opportunity. The percentage of population involved in non-agricultural activities is, therefore, chosen as an indicator of employment opportunity. There is a strong relationship between non-farm income share and total household income, and therefore, there is an even more pronounced relationship between the level of non-farm income and total income. The same holds true, in general, household landholding. Distribution of access to employment opportunities in non-agriculture sector across Tarai/Madhesi groups is presented in Table 3. Employment opportunities of any country are shifting from agriculture to non-agriculture. This trend is also true in the context of Nepal as well. Overall, one third of the employed people are engaged in non-agriculture sector. Surprisingly, almost 60 percent of employed Tarai/Madhesh Brahman/Chhetri is engaged in non-agriculture employment. This kind of access is also quite higher among Muslims (42%). The percentage of employed people engaged in non-agriculture

employment is similar. The case is similar to economic access index as well. Distribution of access to these indicators among Madhesi caste/ethnic groups clearly shows that Madhesi is not a single homogeneous group.

3.4 Non-poverty Situation

The result of a poverty head count computed using the cost of basic necessities reveals that one in every four Nepalis is poor. It is general assumption that the more spent on food consumption as a proportion of total household expenditure, the higher the level of poverty. Similarly, elementary (unskilled) occupations are likely to generate low incomes leading to increased chances of poverty. The poverty level has been assessed using three indicators: food expenditure as a percentage of total household expenditure, food sufficiency status, and employment in an elementary occupation; all of these are proxies of poverty (NSII, 2014, p. 24). The non-poverty index is also unequally distributed across Madhesi caste/ethnic groups (Table 4).

Table 4. Non-poverty Situation among Major Madheshi Groups

Madheshi Caste/ Ethnic Group	Food expenditure (%)	Food sufficiency (%)	Elementary occupation (%)	Non-poverty index
Tarai Brahman/Chhetri	46.4	89.3	10.5	0.8072
Tarai Dalit	64.2	53.7	42.5	0.3803
Tarai Janajati	51.9	84.4	16.1	0.7178
Other Tarai Castes	54.4	81.7	14.5	0.6970
Muslim	53.7	72.4	18.4	0.6517
Nepal	44.5	77.1	10.5	0.7813

Source: *The Nepal Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index, CDSA, TU, 2014*

Food expenditure is highest among Tarai Dalits (64.2 percent) followed by other Tarai castes. Food expenditure is the lowest (52 percent) among Tarai Janajatis. Similarly, the food sufficiency status is highest (89%) among Tarai/Madhesh Brahman/Chhetri followed by Tarai Janajatis (84.4%). Interesting, food sufficiency is lowest among Tarai Dalit again. Thus, the food sufficiency status widely varies among Madhesis. In the case of elementary occupation, the proportion of individuals engaged in elementary occupation is also highest (43%) among Dalits and the lowest among Tarai Brahman/Chhetri (11%). In contrast, the overall non-poverty index is highest (.8072) among Brahman/Chhetri and the lowest (0.3803) among Dalits. Thus, non-poverty status among individuals/households also differs interestingly indicating that there is wider inequality among Madhesis.

3.5 Living Standard

Housing primarily concerns with the accommodation in a dwelling or housing unit. Well being of the population, in genera, depends upon the quality and quantity of housing facilities available. Standard of living is assessed using four indicators: type of house, use of cooking fuel, access to household electricity and living conditions (CDSA, 2014 a; CDSA, 2014 b). Availability of

electricity creates many avenues for development and empowerment of people; it enables them to start up or expand small scale economic enterprises for reducing poverty and also creates the opportunity for climbing up the energy ladder. These all facilities together indicate the living standard of people. The condition of living standard of people in the Madhesh also differs by caste/ethnic groups (Table 5).

Table 5. Living Standard among Major Madheshi Groups

Madheshi Caste/Ethnic Group	Housing condition (%)	Living conditions bed rooms (mean)	Access to commercial cooking fuel	Access to household electricity	Standard of living index
Tarai Brahman/Chhetri	57.8	2.83	16.0	64.1	0.4818
Tarai Dalit	11.2	1.82	15.1	64.3	0.2802
Tarai Janajati	18.9	2.40	23.0	70.6	0.3826
Other Tarai Castes	32.7	2.57	14.1	65.1	0.3944
Muslim	31.6	2.45	17.1	66.5	0.3928
Nepal	28.0	2.55	24.6	67.3	0.4131

Source: *The Nepal Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index, CDSA, TU, 2014*

Housing condition of people in Madhesh is very poor among all except Tarai Brahman/Chhetri (58%). Tarai Brahmans/Chhetris hold the top position (0.4818) in overall standard of living index as well. It is followed by Muslim (0.3938) and Other Tarai Castes. Tarai Dalits have the lowest standard of living score (0.2802) among all. Among all, Madhesis Dalits have very low level of inclusion in terms of standard of living. The point to be noted here is that Tarai Dalits have the lowest inclusion index and Tarai Brahman/Chhetri the highest inclusion index.

3.6 Access to and Representation in Politics
Access to politics is discussed under four headings: political participation in central committee, representation in ministry of council, civil service employees, and voice and agency on current issues. Rising people's awareness about current political discourse is part of the task of the political parties at the central and local levels. This is supposed to address people's choice and rights. The NSII (2014) has used five different indicators in order to explain the access to politics. Thus access to politics among major Madhesis groups is also unequally distributed.

Table 6. Access to Politics among Major Madheshi Groups

Madheshi Caste/ Ethnic Group	Political participation (%) in central committee	Representation in ministry of council (%)	Civil services employees (%)	Voice and agency (current issues) (%)	Political dimension index
Tarai Brahman/ Chhetri	4.1	4.7	3.3	59.4	0.7969
Tarai Dalit	2.7	0.3	0.5	7.8	0.1373
Tarai Janajati	7.0	6.0	4.6	22.1	0.2634
Other Tarai Castes	13.4	11.0	9.7	24.1	0.2684
Muslim	2.6	2.7	0.7	27.8	0.3691
Nepal				24.2	0.2974

Source: *The Nepal Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index, CDSA, TU, 2014*

Political participation among Madhesis is highest among Other Tarai castes (13.4 %) and lowest (2.7%) among Tarai Dalits. More importantly, representation of Dalits in ministry of council is negligible (0.3 %). It is more accessed by Tarai other castes/ethnic groups which is 11 percent followed by Tarai Brahman/Chhetri (4.7%). In the case of access to civil services, the highest access is observed among the people of other Tarai castes (9.7%) and Tarai Janajatis (4.6%). The result in other indicators is surprisingly different. The percentage of people who have some knowledge on contemporary politics is 59 percent which is highest among all Madhesis. In this indicator too, Dalits have the lowest inclusion status.

4. Concluding Remarks

Nepal has made some progress in raising the living standard, increase literacy rate, decrease maternal and child mortality and increase access to information and communication. However, development outcomes have varied inequitably, manifesting themselves in class, gender, caste/ ethnic group and geographical disparities. Though disadvantaged and marginalized groups have used new opportunities to organize themselves and voice their concerns, these advances have not reduced the powerlessness of the vast majority within the groups. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) provides a range of political and legal instruments to combat past inequalities through positive discrimination while recruiting people for public service jobs in the government and universities. Additionally special provisions are made for allocation of educational, economic and social resources. This measure is considered to be a milestone for the inclusion in the civil service, academic institution and other workplaces (Subedi, 2016). The Nepal Social Inclusion Index (NSII) clearly depicts that access to education, health and sanitation, economic access and non-poverty situation, living standard, and access to politics in Tarai/Madhesi group are differentially distributed across various Tarai/Madhesi groups. Tarai Dalits appear at the bottom of the social inclusion and the most marginalized group followed by Muslims. On the other hand, Tarai Bhahmin/Chhetri group has better positions in many indicators. It is empirically justified that Madhesis is not a single homogeneous ethnic category rather it is a broader cultural group and there is wider inequality among these caste/ethnic groups which was explained in some previous

studies (DFID and World Bank, 2006; Das and Hatlebakk, 2010; Gautam, 2013; Gautam, 2015). Therefore, Madhesis, a broader Tarai/Madhesh ethnicity, should not be treated as a homogenous groups while debating social inclusion and developing and implementing equity and social justice policies, strategies and program activities. The beneficiary policies should not be based on single blanket format of "Tarai/Madhesi" group because it is as much heterogeneous as are Bahuns (Gautam, 2015). Hence, the reservation policy should be aimed at the really marginalized and poor people and a caste/ethnic marker is not sufficient to identify them. Affirmative action should be class-based rather than caste/ethnicity based (Subedi, 2013). Thus, Madhesis is a widely heterogeneous category in which Tarai Brahmans/Chhetris have the highest level of inclusion and Tarai Dalits have the lowest level of inclusion and the inclusive policy should be focused to poor and marginalized Tarai Dalits and Muslims.

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Annexes: Categorization of Tarai/Madhash Caste/Ethnic Groups

Madhesi Caste/Ethnic Group	Caste/Ethnic group in 2001 Census
Tarai Brahman/Chhetri	Brahmin, Kayantha, Nurang, Rajput
Tarai Dalit	Bantar/Sardar, Chamar/Harijan/Ram, Chidimar, Dhobi, Dom, Dusad/Paswan/Pasi, Halkhor, Khatwe, Mushar, Tatma/Tatwa
Tarai Janajati	Dhanuk, Dhimal, Gangai, Jhangad, Kishan, Koche, Meche, Munda, Patharkatta/Kusbadiya, Rajbansi, Satar/Santhal, Tajpuria, Tharu
Other Tarai Castes	Badhae, Baniya, Barae, Bhediyar/Ghaderi, Bing/Binda, Dhuniya, Hajam/Thakur, Haluwai, Kahar, Kalwar, Kamar, Kanu, Kewat, Koiri, Kumhar, Kurmi, Lodha, Lohar, Mali, Mallah, Nuniya, Nurang, Rajbhar, Sonar, Sudhi, Teli, Yadav, Marawadi, Punjabi/Sikh
Muslim	Madhesi Musalman, Churaute

Annex 2. Major indicators used in explaining inequality among Madhesis

Dimension	Indicators
Social	1. Adult Literacy Rate (%)
	2. Net Enrollment Rate (%)
	3. Basic Schooling Completion Rate (%)
	4. Education Domain Index
	5. Health service affordability (%)
	6. Child survival (%)
	7. Household access to safe water (%)
	8. Household access to modern toilet facilities (%)
	9. Health domain index
Economic	10. Average landholding (ha.), 11. Non-agriculture employment
	12. Economic access Index, 13. Food expenditure (%)
	14. Food sufficiency (%), 15. Elementary occupation (%)
	16. Non-poverty index. 17. Housing condition (%)
	18. Living conditions bed rooms (mean), 19. Access to commercial cooking fuel
	20. Access to household electricity, 21. Standard of living index
Politics	22. Political participation (%) in central committee, 23. Representation in ministry of council (%), 24. Civil services employees (%), 25. Voice and agency (current issues) (%) and 26. Political dimension index