

Use of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Poverty and Livelihood Study: Sharing of Some Anthropological Experiences from Academic Research in Western *Tarai*, Nepal

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1.0 Background

This article shares the experience on qualitative and quantitative methods used to fulfill the objectives of an academic study in the field of anthropology which was focused on poverty and livelihood systems in the *Tarai* district. Under these methods, various tools and techniques such as participant observation, informal interview, key informant interview, focus group discussion, case study and structured interview were used in order to gather the information from the local community. The qualitative method has been considered as the backbone in this social anthropological study.

2. 0 Research Site Chosen for the Academic Study

In the past, anthropologists conducted their researches mostly in the Hill and Mountain areas of Nepal. But the author of this paper selected Nawalparasi, a *Tarai* district, for the purpose of his academic study because the district represents the characteristics of ecology and ethnicity of mid-hills, inner-*Tarai* and *Tarai* proper, and its 25th position in Human Development Index (HDI). By and large, it can be considered to have an average level in many other aspects among the districts of the *Tarai* region. The study district, however, is not very unique among the districts located in the same ecological zone. The dynamics of people's movement in the recent history has made no significant difference in the composition of various ethnic groups in any district of the same ecological area. The people of an area having common socio-economic status use more or less similar livelihood methods to cope and survive. Horizontally, this district is in the middle of Nepal. One unique aspect is that the 100 km-long East-West Highway cuts across the middle of this district. Another unique feature of this district is that it is divided into two parts, east to west, by a mountain range known as Daunne Siwalika Range (*Daunne Ko Dada*) and it can be further subdivided into three distinct geographical divisions such as mid-Hills (*Pahad*), Inner *Tarai* (*Bhitri Madesh*), and *Tarai* (*Madesh*) up north, east, and southwestern part of the district, respectively (DDC, 2001).

Considering the composition of caste and ethnicity in it, the district is an ethnic mosaic. According to the census of 2001, there are four major ethnic groups, viz. *Magar* 17.2 percent, *Hill Brahmin* 16.9 percent, *Tharu* 16.5 percent, and *Chhetri* 5.7 percent (Dahal, 2003, p. 125). Linguistically also, there are various languages which are spoken widely, viz. *Nepali*, *Bhojpuri*, *Magar*, *Tharu*, *Gurung*, *Newari*, and *Hindi*, etc. Based on these considerations, the district was selected to conduct the fieldwork.

The percentage of landlessness of households according to the census 2001 was given due consideration as a basis in order to select a VDC for fieldwork. All the households were divided into two categories in order to determine the percentage of landlessness. One category of households is those engaged in their own land-based enterprises (i.e. those having land, livestock and poultry to be engaged in, or land and livestock but no poultry, or land and poultry but no livestock, or merely agricultural land to cultivate). Another category of households are those doing agricultural chores for other holders as they do not have their own land. Out of the total 73 VDCs in the district, there were six VDCs (*Gaidakot*, *Jamuniya*, *Nayabelhani*, *Makar*, *Sunwal*, and *Tribeni*) where more than 25 percent of the households did not have their own land (Western region Census, 2002, pp.79-80). It implied that the inhabitants of these households depended upon sources other than agriculture for their livelihood. *Makar* VDC is one of them. In addition to the above features, a number of castes and ethnic groups belonging to mid-hills and *Tarai* are also inhabited in the district. According to the data, the percentage of *Brahmin/Chhetri* is 26, that of *Hill Janajati* is 22, *Tarai Janajati* is 14, *Hill Dalits* is 7, *Tarai Dalits* is 5 and the rest accounts for *Muslims*, *Newars* and other castes of hills and *Tarai* (DDC, 2001, p.10). In view of caste and ethnic composition also, the district represents a culturally diverse society.

While looking into the percentage-wise population composition of the study VDC, it is slightly different from that of the district demographic picture. But the overall trend is in line with the district trend. Thus, *Brahmin/Chhetri* constitute 44 percent, *Hill Janajati* 19 percent, *Tarai Janajati* 16 percent, *Hill Dalits* 12 percent, *Tarai Dalits* 3 percent, and other castes are 6 percent of the total population. Caste/ethnicity is broadly divided into six categories as stated above. Further, a number of sub-castes and clans are included within them. In *Brahmin/Chhetri*, there are such sub-castes as *Neupane*, *Nepal*, *Thapa*, *Kandel*, *Gyawali*, *Bhusal*, *Ghimire*, and *Basnet* etc. Likewise, the *Hill Janajati* includes *Magar*, *Gurung*, *Tamang*, *Rai*, *Limbu*, *Bhote*, and *Thakali*, etc. Similarly, *Hill Dalits* include *Kami*, *Damai*, *Sarki*, etc. *Tarai Dalits* include *Pattharkatta*, *Musahar*, *Harijan*, *Chamar*, *Dhobi*, etc. Besides, the 'other' category includes *Newar*, *Giri*, *Puri*, *Bharati*, *Muslim*, and other *Tarai* castes. The division into six broad groupings is not based on a standard national

categorization of caste/ethnicity; it has been done for the purpose of the present study so as to reflect the different points of view in terms of socio-cultural and ethnic diversity in relevance to its objectives.

3.0 Official Formality and Village Entry

For the first time to go the study site, researcher took a micro-bus early morning (at 6 o'clock) from Kalanki. It took eight hours to reach Narayanghat which was very long time in a normal situation. He reached Sunwal at 6:30 p.m, an intersection point on the East-West Highway to go to Parasi, the district headquarters of Nawalparasi. At this hour, there was no bus and other mode of transportation for onward journey. There was no functioning telecommunication service in Sunwal for more than three months. It was because of the high time (2004 AD) of conflict. The day researcher was there, the Maoists had shot to death a police sub-inspector in Sakhuwagachhi *bazaar*, which is about 10 kilometers south of the district headquarters. Hence, the security had been tightened further in the district headquarters and its peripheral areas. The following day the researcher reached Parasi. After making the arrangement for food and lodging, he went to the Chief District Administrator's Office (CDO) and met the officers concerned, handed over the official letter of introduction from the Dean's Office, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, and explained them the purpose of the research. Then, he met the Local Development Officer who was also acting as the DDC Chairperson. At that time, people's representatives were not holding office in DDCs, and the government had authorized the civil servants to act for them too. Both of these offices extended their moral support for the research study. And they also narrated the overall security situation of the district to the researcher.

When the researcher was waiting for his turn in one of the offices at the district headquarters, he overheard someone asking for favor from an officer to go to Narayanghat on the office vehicle. But the officer exclaimed, "Oh! no, it is not possible at this moment. For a few months, we have not been using our 'white plate' vehicles (the government vehicles have white number plate). There is a long stretch of forest on the way from Sunwal to Narayanghat. It is too risky. They (meaning the Maoists) have been targeting the white plate vehicles." One could easily sense the overall security situation of the district as the government officials at the headquarters were panicky. All Village Development Committee (VDC) level offices were locked out. The list of households could not be obtained from District Development Committee (DDC). It was learnt that in the beginning of 2004, the District Education Office (DEO) had conducted a survey for the purpose of non-formal education program.

4.0 Challenge and Opportunity

After completing the official formalities and copying down the list of households at the district headquarters from the DEO list, the researcher discovered a serious discrepancy in the listing of households of Ward No. 4 of the VDC when comparing its data with that of the CBS Census in 2001, especially the total number of households. It was important that the actual number must be traced. So, he went to the village, met with the ex-chairperson of the VDC and briefed him with the purpose of visit and objective of the research study. The ex-chairperson narrated the current situation as the VDC office had been locked out by the Maoists and no VDC staffer had been working for a pretty long time.

According to the suggestions of the ex-chairperson, he went to meet with staffers of the Daunne Devi Cooperative and Health Post, a complete list of the households became available. The household listing of the DEO survey was found correct except for Ward No. 4. So, only the missing list of the households of Ward No. 4 was necessary to have complete data. Although there was a time lag between the two surveys, it was ascertained that it would not make any significant difference when compared with the census data. The researcher took rounds in the village to meet some knowledgeable persons and discussed at length the overall situation in relation to the development interventions in the VDC. After one month, he came back to Kathmandu and prepared the list of household heads in order to plan further for the resumption of field work.

Researcher's Position in the Study Area

During the field work, the researcher had a memorable experience while acquiring household information in one of the settlements of Makar VDC which was *Badhipidit* cluster (flood victim area). He explained the purpose of his visit and the community people talked in a free and frank manner. But, some of the informants would become skeptical and even reluctant to answer the questions. One of the respondents in the *Badhipidit* settlement enquired for the researcher's credentials and asked him pointedly which side he belonged to: the government or the Maoists or the *Khaoists* (those pretending to be Maoists and extorting money from the people). He also wanted to know why he must oblige the researcher. He said he might as well seek the advice of his sons before answering the questions. But unknowingly, he revealed, "I have three adult sons working outside the country. The security situation is very fluid here". The researcher convinced him that he was none as he suspected. The researcher is pursuing a Ph.D. degree and Makar is his area of fieldwork where he has to collect the data and he was one of the invaluable respondents of his study. Initially, the researcher had introduced himself to his wife and daughter, but when he arrived he commanded the patriarchal authority which was manifest in his voice and body language. He demanded for the researcher's credentials

and the researcher fulfilled his demand. He read it thoroughly and wanted to retain it. After some time, he agreed for conversation.

While informing about the financial situation, his wife urged him emphatically to mention all the loans taken from the relatives, banks, and neighbors. That was a clear indication to her husband that he inflates the loan figures. The body language of his wife and his facial expression showed that they were keen to hide the real income obtained from the remittances. They have a good re-enforced concrete and cement (RCC) building which would cost more than Rs 10 lakhs (US\$1 is equivalent to Rs 70). They have one *bigha* (0.667 hectare) of agricultural land, excluding homestead land, which produces year-round sufficient food for the entire family. They have four milking buffaloes; each of them would cost Rs 15-20 thousand. A milking buffalo can give minimum 5 liters of milk daily. And he told the researcher that his sons have sent a total of just one hundred thousand rupees. Two of his three sons have been working in Gulf countries; one is in Malaysia for more than three years now. While chatting with other villagers, it was learnt that his calculations were unrealistic. On an average, he got Rs 360,000 per annum as a remittance. It was extremely difficult to get such sensitive information. One could vividly see through a respondent that he was reluctant to reveal true information. In normal times too, it is a universal phenomenon in the village not to provide such information to the outsiders (Campbell & Stone, 1979, p.56). Hence, in the anthropological field studies, participant observation is the key to acquire real information.

Put Your Hands Out of Pockets!

One chilly morning, the researcher was returning from a teashop. It was about 7 a.m. The cold wave had started blowing into the region from Narayani River; so he had his hands in the pockets of his trousers. The security men were coming from the opposite direction. One of the armed policemen asked him to take out his hands at once. The researcher got bewildered, "What was he saying? What could be the reason?" Immediately, the situation had turned tense as they suspected each and every individual as a potential enemy. An unfamiliar person might be carrying a socket bomb or pistol and could use the 'hit and run' technique. The researcher reflected that the security men were themselves feeling insecure, they were psychologically disturbed and they were obsessed with the defenseless syndrome of suspicions. In his first few days in the village, the researcher was assured by the villagers that theirs was relatively safer place in the district. But then the villagers advised him to take one among them as a companion so as to keep his mission trouble free. One could realize the gravity of the situation. So, the researcher agreed to abide by their sincere advice, although many of them had become familiar with him.

Soon after the initial ice breaking among the villagers, the researcher started to discuss with them in a very informal manner. Various people from different

walks were ready to open up and share their views on the prevailing scenario due to deteriorating socio-economic conditions, throttled development interventions, and the political impasse with its incongruity. As a consequence of the situation, transportation and communication services had become the first casualties which had caused severe difficulties along with steep rise in cost of living and deepened feeling of insecurity. Those who were very poor, such as rickshaw pullers, firewood sellers, and daily wage workers, had their own stories full of hardships and problems to be shared with. Nevertheless, the commonality that was observed and expressed too was that they were a hard hit people by the ongoing conflict and they had no shock absorbing capability. The ongoing situation had caused psychological disturbance among the people of all walks and had influenced them in different ways. This was not so some 6/7 years ago. Small children played with guns and bombs and adults argued on the causes of the woeful situation.

Gradually, the villagers accepted the presence of the researcher as a participant in their teashop deliberations. Such discussion forums provided the researcher with ample opportunities to understand their views on various issues. The researcher got some opportunities to participate in a few group meetings of some organizations, like the Center for Legal Research and Resource Development (CELARD), Daunne Devi Cooperative, Chisapani Community Forest Users' Committee and also attended some other social and cultural events in the village. He also got to know first hand about their process of conducting meetings, recording minutes of the meetings, and taking decisions.

5.0 Rapport Building

An academic researcher has to seek information from the respondents in an amicable manner. S/he should always maintain neutrality toward all of them and should not be inclined in any direction of controversies related to ethnicity, religion and political affiliation. Nor s/he should get involved in a conflict between factions or communities. Likewise, s/he should not make any promise to be a 'good doer' for them. Indeed, it is a dilemma for a social science researcher. It is an act of getting something in lieu of nothing. The toughest part of the job comes when the social science researcher has to extract qualitative information. S/he has to face this challenge again and again while interviewing the respondents in order to collect information without violating the norms of neutrality. To smooth her/his task, the researcher visited some organizations and he explained the purpose of his visit and objectives of the research to the officials there.

As the researcher was able to get along well with the people of different classes, communities, castes, ethnicity, and gender as well as the leaders and cadres of various political parties, it provided him an opportunity to acquire wider

perspective which helped him to cross check the acquired information. However, amicable relationship with the people might have been developed with the researcher in the field, there is always some degree of indifference and alienation even when the researcher has to consciously position himself as a neutral person. Similarly, community members are also mindful of the temporary nature of the stay of the researcher who is after all an outsider in their community and so one must not disclose such information to an outsider which may defame an individual or all the members of the community. It was obvious that they tried to conceal what they considered sensitive information from the researcher. Also, it was difficult for a male researcher to obtain women-sensitive information.

6.0 Sampling Procedure

According to the 2001 census, the ethnic distribution of the district population is as follows: 26 percent *Brahmins/Chhetris*, 22 percent *Hill Janajatis*, 14 percent *Tarai Janajatis*, 7 percent *Hill Dalits*, 4 percent *Tarai Dalits* and the rest belonged to *Newars*, Other *Tarai* castes and *Muslims* etc. (DDC, 2001, p.10) whereas the population composition of the study VDC (Makar) was found as: *Brahmins/Chhetris* 44 percent, *Hill Janajatis* 19 percent, *Tarai Janajatis* 16, *Hill Dalits* 12, *Tarai Dalits* 3, and the rest 6 percent belonging to *Newars*, Other *Tarai* castes and *Muslims*, etc. The ethnic distribution of the VDC population is given in the table below. Looking at the ward-wise distribution of population of the VDC, 40 percent (n=8430) of the population resided in

Table: 1 Ethnic Distribution of Households in the VDC and Sample Area

Caste/Ethnicity	VDC			Sample Area		
	Hhs	%	Population	Hhs	%	Population
Brahmin/Chhetri (BC)	1559	44	9026	90	42	499
Hill Janajati (HJJ)	660	19	3908	40	19	226
Tarai Janajati (TJJ)	566	16	3671	31	15	197
Hill Dalit (HD)	406	12	2459	29	14	176
Tarai Dalit (TD)	113	3	587	9	4	53
Others (O)	213	6	1320	13	6	76
Total	3517		20971	212		1227

Source: Prasain, 2007

Ward No.4, followed by 16 percent (n=3246) in Ward No.2. Ward No.1 consisted of 12 percent (n=2585). Compared to Ward No.4, very few people were residing in Ward No.3 which consisted merely 2 percent (n=428).

In order to incorporate the ideas and situation of the inhabitants from all the castes and ethnic groups, a proportionate number of households were selected for the study, as shown in Table 1. The sample consisted of 90 households of

Brahmins/Chhetris, 40 of *Hill Janajatis*, 31 of *Tarai Janajatis*, 29 of *Hill Dalits*, 9 of *Tarai Dalits* and 13 from the other categories. *Tarai Janajatis* and *Tarai Dalits* should be considered as the aboriginals of this area whereas *Brahmins/Chhetris*, *Hill Janajatis*, *Hill Dalits* had migrated from the western mid-hills of Nepal. Interview schedules were administered in more or less the same proportion of the households of the study area (as mentioned in Table.1) compared with the VDC. To administer the interviews, 6 percent (212 households) from among the total households (3517) of the VDC were selected by using the simple proportionate sampling method and the researcher followed the same trend of caste/ethnic composition of the VDC. Considering the size of the VDC and the population of the centrally located wards, which comprise most of the caste/ethnic groups, three wards (2, 4 & 9) were selected to start with in order to acquire quantitative information.

7.0 Information Collection: Methods and Techniques

After establishing a good rapport, the researcher planned to get into better understanding of the community and the households there. For this study, household is the basic unit of analysis. Therefore, whenever the researcher talked with the community members or any organization official, he always kept in mind the household level information. However, all that has direct and/or indirect bearing upon the socio-economic pattern of households in broader context may also be considered for the study. Such issues seemed very important to the researcher while discussing with the community members. Therefore, a range of methods and techniques for data collection were used to fulfill the research objectives. The methods and techniques are described in the following paragraphs.

In order to fulfill the general objective of this study, various tools and techniques were used to collect information and understand the general situation of the study VDC, the relevant information was collected by using observation, archives for published and unpublished documents, participating in focused group discussions, and interviewing key informants. Data on the underlying factors behind poverty issues with longitudinal perspectives were collected through interactions with knowledgeable key informants, participation in group discussions and by referring to relevant case studies. The data collected through these techniques are necessarily perceptual. Individual memory may not be precise and fail to deliver longitudinal information accurately, but it can indicate the general trend. So, the archives were visited to look for the secondary sources of information which furnished a good deal to establish the relationship between the first hand impressions and historical documents, which, in turn, contributed to more precise information.

In order to collect information on the development strategies which have effected livelihood options of the community, some key informants were selected from among different stakeholders (viz. government officials, people's representatives, NGO/CBO representatives, knowledgeable persons, school and college teachers, rights activists, etc. and interviewed with the help of checklist. Besides, a good deal of information was collected by conducting focused group discussions among different people from all walks about the role of state and non-state actors in development efforts and their impact upon the rural people's situation and livelihood. In addition to the opinions of the key informants and stakeholders, a survey was carried out among the 212 households across different castes to collect quantitative information on education, group membership, food sufficiency, landholding, number of livestock and livestock related income, loans, and remittances. By quantitative method, the household survey was conducted at a single point of time.

In order to authenticate the information, 10 households from different ethnic groups from among the study households (212) were randomly chosen. The actual figures related to income and expenditure over a period of eight weeks was collected to establish the average annual trend. Similarly, to obtain the information on the role of cultural factors (e.g., family type, resource management, culture of planning) vis-à-vis rural poverty and livelihood issues at micro level of this research, it was not advisable to limit to only one tool to contribute to the research objective. Hence, different techniques were also used, which are briefly summarized in Table 2.

Table: 2 Data Collection Tools and Purposes

Tools/ techniques	Number	Purpose
Households (hhs) survey	212	To collect quantitative information on income, expenditure, remittances, livestock population, landholding, food sufficiency, literacy, and group membership
Case Study & hhs survey	10	To know the income and expenditure over a certain period
Focus group discussion (FGD)	7	To derive qualitative information based upon the perceptions of the participants on the roles of state and non-state actors in development interventions and their impact upon rural poverty and overall livelihood.
Key informant interview	14	Do
Case study	9	To have in-depth study on various aspects such as struggle for landholding, livelihood strategies of a family, and attitudes towards literacy, social capital, development, etc.

Use of Archives and Documentary Records

Ancient as well as contemporary historical records are important for a social science researcher to understand the evolving nature of a community in all aspects, including its dynamic organism, structures and functions that exist in a household or a community (Young, 2000, p. 148). The way of life of a people (i.e. their behavior, attitudes, living standard, economic condition, etc) cannot be understood without resorting to the archives of historical records. It is crucial for a social science researcher to set up a relationship between the past and the present. In this regard, various scholars and government agencies have documented huge information which would be immensely helpful to understand the people at their household level from macro to micro level contexts – their livelihood over time as an outcome of the historical process. The government plans, policies, census reports, reports of the DDC, VDC, and NGOs, as well as some books by experts have been referred to and quoted as and when necessary throughout the research study. It was also considered necessary to understand, contextualize, and establish an interrelationship on the basis of micro, meso and macro- level information of a particular ethnic group with the rest of the people.

Observation

After the initial ice breaking through patiently handled rapport building method, the researcher could enter into the community life of the village and have close observation. It was a way to be closer and nearer to the people from whom he had to acquire information to fulfill the research objectives. The term observation technique of information collection is defined as systematic viewing, coupled with the consideration of the seen phenomenon (Young, 2000, p. 161). Observation is the backbone of systematic fieldwork carried out by social scientists, especially anthropologists. For long, it is highly acknowledged by sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists in order to dig out information from the respective group of informants. The researcher also followed the same path so as to get a large variety of information which was essential to present a holistic view of the issues that he wanted to address. The technique helps a researcher in getting closer to the people by making them feel comfortable enough with his/her presence so that s/he can observe and record information about their lives (Bernard, 1994, p. 136). Some of the events are so momentary that one cannot capture it well by simply enquiring the informants. Thus, it helps the researcher to be nearer to the reality as is mentioned in Box 1.

'Social world is a constructed reality,' which cannot be understood until one participates in it. Participant observation is one of the prominent tools for a social anthropologist. Social events cannot be adequately captured by merely putting queries to an individual or a group of people. A researcher in this field,

like an investigator, should listen and watch the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the events, activities and processes by participating himself with the natives in their real life situation.

Box: 1

Why He Preferred Fictitious Name?

Akabar Sanyashi (fictitious name) has four family members ranging from 17 to 46 years. He had not mentioned his pension amount while filling out the interview schedule. It was revealed only after several interactions with his family members. He had resigned from the army service five years ago when he realized the grave situation due to which he thought he was always posted in risky locations. He believed that his commanding officer did not assign him in a fair manner. He became reluctant to continue in service; so he desired for early retirement which was not easy in times of conflict. Therefore, he got it certified that he was a heart patient. He was able to do so by 'pleasing' a medical doctor. Thus, he got the retirement and he was getting the pension. That is why, he did not want to disclose anything related to the army service. Concealing the information was his strategy to protect his previous false statement. Observation is one of the effective tools to dig deeper and reach at the true information, as it was done by the researcher during the fieldwork.

Source: Prasain, 2007

It may be noted that the researcher had spent a couple of years in the same area more than a decade ago. So, he was not entirely unaware of the general situation there. However, moment by moment and event by event, things may happen differently. Social relations may have changed since the restoration of democracy. Society has become more open; the prevailing social ties have taken a different direction; the changes have brought about more politicization rather than the strengthening of social configuration (Devkota, 1999, p. 313). The social fiber has been further shattered by the decade-long conflict. In the villages, people not only hesitate but resent having guests coming in the evening. In the old days, people used to regard a guest arriving at the door in the evening as God. Contrary to the tradition, people now get scared when they see a stranger coming toward their house. In a village setting, the neighbors are divided by the immature politicians for the myopic interests of their leaders in the name of caste, creeds, ethnicity, etc. Participant observation offers an opportunity to get in-depth information from community. At the same time, the technique also has some limitations. It does not help in getting historical and evolutionary type of information. Therefore, this technique must not be the

only determinant of a research. During the field work, the social dynamics on how the discussions are held, how the decisions are made, how an individual consults others on a matter of interest and the daily schedule of household chores were some of the main areas of observation. All these have helped to triangulate information obtained from other sources. By using observation for information collection, the researcher was able to learn about and collect information on the general situation of the village, state of progress made by the development interventions and their impact upon the people, and the role of development agencies at the community level.

Interviews

A researcher in the field of social sciences often resorts to the method of interview, and sometimes it is considered as an easy way of getting information from the respondents. However, even asking pertinent questions to and getting truthful answers from rather reluctant respondents is not an easy job. Conducting meaningful interview is not a simple two-way conversation. While interviewing a person, it is very important to observe the tonal expression, in-between pauses, facial expressions and gestures, and in fact the entire body language. The in-between pauses in conversation often reveal subtle feelings of the speaker (Young, 2000, p. 214). An interviewer should be able to dig out the meaning of the body language, eye movements, facial expressions and other gestures during the conversation. If an investigator is not experienced in conducting interviews, it would be very difficult for him/her to get in-depth qualitative information from the respondents, particularly in the fields of sociology and anthropology. Sometimes, the behavior of an informant may mislead the interviewer on its face value (Wiser and Wiser, 195, p. 158). Interview is of various kinds that may be formal or informal and structured or unstructured.

Unstructured Interviews with Key Informants

An unstructured interview is frequently used by the anthropologists. It is not considered strictly scientific due to the reason that social anthropologists take it for granted (Bernard, 1994, p. 208). Getting the information by using this technique is vital for the researcher. The researcher prepares the points in advance as a checklist for guiding the interviews with the key persons. But the researcher of the present study gave free hand to most of the key informants to express their ideas frankly and without frequent interruptions by the researcher. The method was used to acquire information from various types of people, e.g. ex-civil servants, ex-DDC/VDC representatives, NGO personnel, cooperative leaders, managers, and marginalized people. The researcher discussed with as many as 14 persons who were key informants. Their age ranged from 35 to 70

years. With regard to ethnic representation, almost all the caste and ethnicities were represented, although the majority constituted *Brahmin/Chhetri* and *Hill Janajati*. The interviews were conducted mostly in a pre-arranged location and time, but it was also an informal manner of conversation with prior consent. While talking with a group of people or an individual at a pre-arranged time and place, taking very short notes was possible and so it was done sometimes by slightly steering the deliberation when required and in line with the previously prepared checklist list.

During the fieldwork, the researcher was able to have conversations with two persons or two groups of people at the most in a day. The conversations were not conducted in a rush or hurry of any sort. They were scheduled in advance one in the morning and another in the afternoon. After the sessions were over, the researcher would go to his shelter to prepare the field notes in as much detail as possible with the help of the jotted points during the sessions and recalling through his memory. He did not use a tape recorder basically for two reasons. First, the security situation was very sensitive; its use might have required some sort of approval from the concerned office. Besides, the authorities might require him to report back and they might censor or at least hear the recordings, which would be unethical as all such information must be kept confidential and must not be used for any purpose other than academic. And the second reason, the tape recorder hinders the free flow of conversation, as the researcher had experienced in other instances. The respondent is likely to become conscious and s/he might talk what may not be true; the information could be very much distorted (Chamber, 1993, p. 107).

With the help of checklist, the researcher covered a range of issues like general information of the study area, occupation and employment situation of the respondents, their livelihood patterns then (15 years back) and now, local initiatives to improve their livelihood, social support system for the people, agricultural calendar, cropping patterns, resource management, etc.

Focus Group Discussion

With the help of checklist prepared beforehand for steering the focus group discussions, the researcher conducted as many as seven focus group discussions with the people of various caste and ethnic group, gender, and age in different clusters of the research site as shown in Table 3. The number of participants in a focus group discussion (FGD) ranged from 7 to 13. The topics of the discussions were: i) perceptions on the impacts of the development interventions upon *Dalit* community particularly at their household level;

Table: 3 Description of FGD Participants

Ethnicity	M	F	Total	Literat e	Illiterat e	Age Group		
						Below 20	20-50	50 +
<i>Brahmin/Chhetri</i> (BC)	6	2	8	8	0	10	40	6
<i>Hill Janajati</i> (HJJ)	5	2	7	6	1			
<i>Tarai Janajati</i> (TJJ)	6	2	8	6	2			
<i>Hill Dalits</i> (HD)	7	8	15	5	9			
<i>Tarai Dalits</i> (TD)	7	7	14	4	10			
Others (O) *	2	2	4	4	0	10	40	6
Total	33	23	56	34	22			

Note: O* includes *Newar*, *Tarai Caste*, *Giri*, *Puri* etc

Source: *Prasain, 2007*

ii) specific development programs for *Dalit* women by the interveners; iii) local initiatives on protection and management of natural resources (e.g. forest); iv) holistic change in the livelihood of *Tarai Dalits* between now and 15 years ago; v) social support system for *Tharu* community in the past; and vi) perception of the poor and marginalized people on the issues of poverty and livelihood.

Structured Interviews

It is often necessary to complement the qualitative information with the quantitative data. This was considered important in relation to the present study also. Two sets of interview schedules (which are the key to survey method) were used for the purpose of collecting quantitative information: i) interview schedule for quantitative information, and ii) weekly information form for 10 case study of households.

The first set of interview schedule was used mainly for collecting the information of general nature (such as educational status of the family members and their membership in formal and informal organizations, landholding, agricultural production, food sufficiency, mechanism to combat food insufficiency, cash crop production, livestock rearing, income from livestock, income from remittances, use of remittances, and loans taken for the household). The interview schedule was administered to 212 sampled households of the study area. This set of interview schedule was used only once. The entire process of using this set of interview schedule was accomplished during the period from October 2004 to April 2005. But, in order to get at various ethnic perspectives, the households were first selected according to the caste they belonged to and then the households were randomly selected as mentioned in Table 1.

Case approach

An individual's life cannot be understood by merely asking some questions or by observing her/his behavior for some length of time. It can partially depict her/his life, but cannot give a complete picture. Case study can introduce an individual through her/his experiences and insights. It depends on other perceptions as well, but it gets directly and not by an indirect and abstract approach (quoted in Young, 2000, p. 246). It provides rich and vivid description of an individual's life. In addition, the method would also be useful to know the evolutionary process of an agency from its inception to matured stage. The relationships of human life are very complex and intricate. So could be those of an agency or institution.

A case can illustrate an individual as well an institution through an incident happened at a single point of time or in an extended period. The technique has helped the researcher a lot to understand a person's life situation within the broad context of the society over a period of time. It further proved helpful information for him to present the analysis of this research study by contextualizing all the collected information and linking the micro- situation of an individual or a household to the meso and macro-level situation of the community and the country as well.

The case study method has been used in combination with other techniques to capture the life experiences of the concerned persons. It can vividly understand the frustrations and inner feelings of the person to get out of a difficult situation and also his strategies to cope with the problems of survival to get better livelihood options, or to change the existing situation within the socio-cultural milieu. During the course of fieldwork, a large number of case studies were collected, but only the pertinent ones were included in the main text of the research in an appropriate place of the relevant chapter. These case studies helped contextualize the situation of a broad social setting (*Prasain, 2007*).

8.0 Analysis of Data

The qualitative data were analyzed at three levels. Firstly, after going through all the field notes and observation records, the researcher developed the conceptual categories/themes. Secondly, the field information from the notes was fitted in the identified categories/themes. Thirdly, in order to find the interrelationships among different variables and explain the causal relationships, interpretations were made by drawing generalizations.

Similarly, with regard to the quantitative aspects of the study (e.g. demographic situation, caste/ethnicity, educational level, group membership, income, remittances, landholding, livestock, loan, etc.), all the data were processed by

using simple statistical tools (i.e. number, percentage, cross-tabulation, etc.) with the help of SPSS program.

9.0 Closing Remarks

Generally speaking, anthropological studies are criticized for being too qualitative in nature. But this article shows that one can blend both qualitative and quantitative data even in the anthropological studies. These two types of data have been supplementary to each other in the poverty and livelihood studies for the better understanding.

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