



*Research Article/ Gender Studies*

## **Gendered Citizenship Rights: A Case Study of Women in Morang District**

**Prathicchya Acharya, PhD Scholar**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0849-3051>

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pokhara University, Nepal

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### **Corresponding Author:**

*Prathicchya Acharya*

[acharyapratikshya@gmail.com](mailto:acharyapratikshya@gmail.com)

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper attempts to identify the intricate factors contributing to the alienation of rural women from obtaining citizenship and the far-reaching consequences this has on their overall wellbeing and livelihood options. The study delves into the underlying causes and seeks to shed light on the multifarious challenges faced by rural women in their pursuit of citizenship rights. The study is a qualitative research, following an exploratory research approach. The study site for this research was Morang District, which is one of the southern eastern Terai districts in Koshi Province of Nepal. The study has employed an experience survey to present the lived experiences of the affected women due to lack of citizenship. Analysis of data was done to identify recurring themes and patterns among the participants' experiences that have faced discrimination in accessing citizenship rights. The data were analyzed using phenomenological analysis to explore the participants' subjective experiences, perceptions and emotions to fulfill the research objectives. The major reasons for women to lack citizenship as identified by the field study were poverty, landlessness, illiteracy, patriarchal value system, and unjust provision, which make women dependent on their male counterparts for citizenship rights.

**KEYWORDS:** Gendered citizenship, rural women, citizenship rights, Nepal's constitution

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of gendered citizenship emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, as feminist scholars began to explore the ways in which citizenship experiences are shaped

by gender. Feminist theorists argue that the traditional conception of citizenship has been shaped by a patriarchal social structure that has historically privileged men over women, and has therefore excluded women from a full participation in the political and social life (Young, 1989; Bubeck, 1995; Lister, 1997). The feminist idea of citizenship is a perspective that critiques the traditional notion of citizenship as being inherently male-centric and exclusionary of women's experiences and concerns. Young (1989) challenges the traditional conceptions of citizenship that have been based on a male, white, and middle-class model and argues that citizenship should be redefined as a more inclusive and egalitarian concept that takes into account the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups, particularly women by recognizing and valuing the contributions of women to society, as well as their unique needs and experiences. Her approach also emphasizes the importance of addressing social and cultural factors that contribute to gender inequalities and exclusion. This includes efforts such as challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes, promoting education and awareness about gender equality, and providing resources and support to help women overcome structural barriers to citizenship.

Care is another aspect that has been highlighted by the feminist researcher in the context of citizenship. Bubeck (1995) argues that care is a fundamental aspect of citizenship, as it is necessary for the reproduction and maintenance of social life. However, she also notes that care work is often invisible and undervalued, and that care responsibilities are disproportionately borne by women. She emphasizes the importance of recognizing care as a key factor in shaping citizenship experiences, and the need to address gender inequalities in care policies and practices. She argues that care should be recognized as a public responsibility, and that policies and practices should be developed to support and value care work. She also emphasizes the importance of promoting more inclusive citizenship practices that recognize the diverse ways in which care is provided and received. Phillips (1998) recognizes gender as a key factor in shaping citizenship experiences and a dire need to address gender inequalities in citizenship policies and practices. Phillips's (1998) concept of inclusion through difference highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing the difference between individuals and groups in society, rather than trying to erase or assimilate those differences. She argues that this approach can help to promote more inclusive citizenship practices that recognize and value the contributions of all individuals to society, regardless of their gender or other social characteristics. According to Isin and Turner (2007), citizenship should be redefined as a more inclusive concept that recognizes and values the contributions of all individuals to society, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or other social characteristics. Their approach emphasizes the importance of social citizenship, which includes the right to access resources and social services, as well as the right to participate in public life. Shachar's (2009) approach to citizenship emphasizes the importance of a "pluralistic" conception of citizenship that recognizes and values the contributions of diverse groups to society. Her approach challenges the traditional notions of citizenship that have been based on a narrow and exclusionary model, and highlights the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in citizenship policies and practices.

The concept of welfare and inclusive economic opportunities has also been highlighted by the feminist researcher. Fraser's (2020) feminist approach to citizenship emphasizes the importance of economic justice and social welfare in promoting gender equality and inclusion. Her approach challenges the traditional notions of citizenship that have focused primarily on the political rights and obligations, and highlights the need for

a more comprehensive framework that takes into account the economic and social dimensions of citizenship.

Feminist approaches to citizenship emphasize the importance of recognizing women's experiences, needs, and contributions in shaping the social and political landscape. This means that challenging the traditional assumptions about what it means to be a citizen, and advocating for a more inclusive and equitable understanding of citizenship that recognizes and addresses the gender-based inequalities. Feminist theorists argue that women's experiences and contributions have historically been undervalued and marginalized in traditional notions of citizenship. As such, recognizing and valuing women's experiences is a crucial aspect of feminist citizenship. Feminist ideas of citizenship emphasize the importance of recognizing and supporting women's agency, or their ability to act and make choices for themselves. This includes recognizing women's autonomy and advocating for the policies and practices that enable women to fully participate in the political and social life. Feminist approaches to citizenship also recognize that gender is not the only axis of inequality that shapes women's experiences and opportunities. As such, an intersectional approach to citizenship recognizes and addresses how multiple forms of oppression, such as racism, classism and homophobia, intersect with gender to shape women's experiences. Although the theoretical framework for gendered citizenship has been well-developed, there is a lack of empirical research that examines how these theories manifest in the real-world contexts. There is more research required in this field which includes in-depth case studies of the affected women and marginalized groups to present their experiences and perceptions.

Nepal has a long history of citizenship law, dating back to the country's first legal code, the *Muluki Ain* of 1854. Over the course of history, citizenship law in Nepal has undergone several changes, reflecting shifts in political, social, and economic conditions. While the specific details of citizenship laws have varied over time, citizenship has generally been tied to the notions of nationality and belonging, with citizenship rights being extended primarily to those who are considered to be part of the Nepali nation (Gellner, 2005). In Nepal, citizenship is the most vital document which helps people to interact with the state. Historically, the criteria for obtaining citizenship and definition of citizen have been a very contentious issue, leading to political turmoil. Nepal's citizenship law has undergone several changes since the country's unification in the mid-eighteenth century. Nepal has so far enacted seven constitutions. They were enacted in the year 1948, 1951, 1959, 1962, 1990, 2007 and 2015. The enactment of new constitutions was also followed by the formulation of new citizenship provisions. The first citizenship law was enacted in 1952 after the promulgation of Nepal Interim Government of Act 1951, which was the result of political revolution of 1951. This provided for citizenship by descent and naturalization. In 1964, a new citizenship law was enacted that established three provisions for citizenship based on patrilineal descent, citizenship by birth and 12 years' consecutive stay in Nepal and ability to speak and write Nepali to receive citizenship by naturalization (Dahal, 1983). The challenges to obtain citizenship increased for uneducated and landless people as it required official proof of birth certificate, citizenship of parents, and landowner ship (Pathak, 2009). The previous Citizenship Act, 1952 was believed to make increased migration from bordering state of India, so stricter provision was considered in the new Citizenship Act, 1964. This affected marginalized groups of Terai severely making it difficult to obtain citizenship. A large scale migration program was initiated to resettle government officials, farmers, and ex-military service men to the Terai region of Nepal (Kansakar,

1894; Elder, 1976). The linguistic provision was also considered discriminatory and in 1984 a number of local political leaders from Terai starting lobbying for more equal citizenship provision to reflect rights of Terai people (Gellner et al., 2012). With the restoration of multiparty democracy following a period of political upheaval and social unrest, reforms were made to the citizenship law. The 1992 Citizenship Act increased minimum stays of 15 years to receive citizenship law and continued the provision of patrilineage descent and citizenship by marriage.

In 2006, a decade long armed conflict and political instability led to the formation of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 which mentioned that any person born and living in Nepal before the end of mid-April, 1990 shall acquire the citizenship of Nepal by birth with the existing law. This led to massive campaign in 75 districts of Nepal where 2.6 eligible Nepalis who were able to present documents such as land registration of immediate family members and supporting documents provided by then Village Development Committee (VDC) and other relevant documents mentioned in the law (Gurung, 2003). However, this provision was valid only till 26 November 2008 and there was still a section of eligible individuals that could not access this benefit. The constitution also provided for greater recognition of the rights of marginalized groups, including women, Dalits, and ethnic minorities. With the promulgation of new constitution 2015, provisions were made for Nepali mothers to pass on citizenship by descent whose father is not traced. She has to declare that her husband is unidentified if such claim is turned to be false she is punishable by law. If the spouse of the women who is Nepali citizen is a foreigner, she can only transfer naturalized citizenship. On the other hand, a child born from a father who holds citizenship by descent can transfer citizenship by descent to their children irrespective of the citizenship status of the mother. However, there is still research needed to understand the challenges with implementing the law in practice. The Nepali mothers were also not being able to transfer their citizenship by descent to children if her husband had citizenship by birth. Many Nepali citizens who received citizenship by birth during the citizenship campaign were not able to transfer citizenship to their children even though the mother of such children had citizenship by descent.

Gendered citizenship laws, policies, and practices systematically disadvantage women and limit their access to rights and services. Despite progress in some countries, such gendered laws remain a persistent challenge in many countries including Nepal. Existing research has identified a range of factors such as patriarchal norms, discriminatory laws, and policies and limited access to education and resources (Laczo, 2003). The Nepal 2022 human rights reports – executive summary estimated 6.7 million individuals who are eligible for citizenship lack citizenship documentation in Nepal. The legal framework for granting citizenship laws has been identified as one of the major factors contributing to statelessness in Nepal especially for single women, widows, Dalits, Madhesis, Adiwasi/Janajatis, sexually trafficked returnees, landless people, former bonded labors, and members of the LGBTQI community. Although a significant change has been made to improve the accessibility of citizenship rights to Nepali citizens with the amendment of the Citizenship Act (2006), there are still provisions that discriminate against Nepali women from transferring citizenship rights into their foreign spouse and children. There is also a research required to understand the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of current changes in the legal provisions. While a strong theoretical foundation for gendered citizenship has been established, empirical studies that look at these theories' application in actual situations are limited in the case of Nepal. Therefore, this study has focused on presenting the challenges and barriers

faced by women to fully exercise their citizenship rights due to gendered provisions and other socio-economic factors to provide recommendations for a more equitable provision.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study is based on qualitative research method, following an exploratory research approach. This study aims to study various discriminatory provisions regarding citizenship policies in Nepal and its socio-economic and gender implications faced by women. More specifically, the study aims to identify the various reasons that rural women are deprived of citizenship and how it affects their well-being and their livelihood option. The study site for this research was Morang District, which is one of the southern eastern Terai districts in Koshi Province of Nepal. There are eight municipalities and eight rural municipalities in Morang District out of which 2 municipalities and 3 rural municipalities were randomly selected for primary data collection. The primary data were collected using purposive sampling techniques to ensure the inclusion of cases of affected women with diverse issues. In total, there were 50 participants. Prior consent was taken from the participants and pseudonyms were used to maintain the privacy of the participants. The study primarily includes qualitative data; however, some quantitative data were also collected using semi-structured questionnaire. The qualitative data were collected to present the case studies of the marginalized women without citizenship and the difficulties that they are facing due to lack of citizenship rights. The quantitative data such as assets owned, saving practices among respondent and education status were collected to assess the socio-economic status of the affected women. This study was primarily based on case studies of Dalits, Janajati, and Muslim women from Terai. The study has employed experience survey to present the lived experiences of the affected women due to lack of citizenship. Analysis of data was done to identify recurring themes and patterns among the participant's experiences that have faced discrimination in accessing citizenship rights. The collected data were analyzed using phenomenological analysis to explore participants' subjective experiences, perceptions and emotions to fulfill the research objective.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The data collected through experience surveys, which were presented through lived experiences of the affected women who lacked citizenship.

**Table 1**

*Selected Rural Municipalities and Respondent per Municipalities*

<b>Selected Municipalities/Rural Municipalities</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Rangali Municipality	18	36
Belbari Municipality	11	22
Katahari Rural Municipality	8	16
Dhanpalthan Rural Municipality	11	22
Budhiganga Rural Municipality	10	20

Table 1 shows the selected municipalities and rural municipalities and the number of participants from different Rural Municipalities /Municipalities. Out of the sampled population, all are married, out of which 20 percent are widowed, 66 percent are living together and 14 percent are living separately due to polygamy and domestic

violence. Gita Khawas, a woman from Rangeli Rural Municipality was married at the age of 18 and has a daughter. She has been facing mental and physical abuse from her husband since the early age of her marriage. Her husband is addicted to drugs and does not take any responsibilities of the family. She is deprived of citizenship because her husband denied providing her any supportive document to apply for citizenship. Similarly, Rukshana Khatun is a Muslim woman from Babiya Birta village in Rangali Rural Municipality. She was married at the age of 16 and has two daughters. After 11 years of marriage, her husband married another woman. Her husband denied her to provide any supportive documents to claim citizenship so that she would not be able to claim his property. She says, "without citizenship many other women like me cannot file any cases to the court to seek justice." All of the interviewed participants were illiterate and 70 percent of them could not even write their own name. Mina B.K says, "I want to get citizenship certificate but I have no idea regarding the procedures." Most of the participants, i.e., 62 percent of them are Terai Dalits followed by Terai Janajatis and 16 percent of them are Muslim women. Furthermore, 84 percent of them lacked both birth certificate and marriage certificate and only 24 percent of them have registered their children's birth. Meere Sunwar says, "My husband got citizenship by birth during the campaign but I was unable to get naturalized citizenship due to lack of document even though I have been here for more than two decades." Out of the sampled, none of the women had any assets in their name. Seventy-six percent of owned house as their assets which was either registered in their husband's name or unregistered. The house they owned were made of mud. Fourteen percent of them had both home and land registered in their husband's name, which was marginal in size, i.e., less than 1 Katha (3645 sq. ft.). The remaining, i.e., 10 percent of them lived in a rented home. Fulan B.K. lamented, "Our family is living here for more than five generations but still we are deprived of citizenship because of lack of documents to prove our residency. We are landless and the small home we own is not registered in our name." One of the participants from Budhiganga Municipality says, "We are deprived because we are poor, we're ignored because we are illiterate and people who were not eligible to get citizenship got it because of money and power." Another participant added, "Government should make citizenship more accessible for poor and illiterate women like us. Our children will also suffer if we don't get a citizenship. We don't know anyone in the government to help us. Many who had access got citizenship during the campaign but we couldn't get it." Yet another participant Dhakini Khawas says, "Last time I couldn't attend the free health camp organized in my village due to lack of citizenship. Then I realized citizenship certificate is important for many reasons. My husband has a citizenship and I want to get it to but he always ignores my request." Dhakini husband said that he's always busy working in the farm and do not have time to go to town to get a citizenship for her wife. Majority of these women father never registered for a citizenship so they have to depend on their husband to get citizenship. Only 42 percent of the participant's husband had citizenship certificate. If the husband denied the supportive document, they do not have any proof to get citizenship. One of the participants from the Rangeli Municipalities says, "We are poor and do not have any idea about the various requirements to get a citizenship. We also do not have any idea regarding its importance." Similarly, an old woman from Rangeli Municipality Saraswoti Roy says, "I understood the importance of citizenship when I couldn't apply for old age allowance which can help me with my daily expenses and medicine as I cannot work anymore due to my ill health." These evidences show that many women have no citizenship due to lack of required documents for citizenship application.

In the 2007 government campaign to distribute citizenship to those who were born before 1990, which was valid for two years, many of the women and their family applied for citizenship but failed to acquire due to lack of required documents. Moreover, due to the limited period for applying for the certificate, they were not able to register and gather necessary documents for their family members within the period of campaign; thus, they were deprived of citizenship. Many who were not able to apply during the campaign were turned down by the officials later. Mald Devi Rishidev, a Dalit woman from Katahari Rural Municipality and her husband both are deprived of citizenship. During the campaign in the village, Mald Devi's husband was out for work. Later they went to the office to register their names, but they were turned down by the officials. Similarly, Ramkumari Devi Rishidev, a widow from Katahari is deprived of citizenship. Her husband died without having a citizenship. When she approached the mobile citizenship distribution team during the 2007 campaign, they denied her the right to apply for citizenship, saying, "Why would an old woman like you need citizenship?" She was 61 years old during the campaign, her son was provided citizenship, but she was denied due to the discrimination and ignorance of government officials.

Thus, women like Ramkumari who have been denied citizenship are also deprived of several government allowances such as old age allowance and widow allowance. Similarly, Kesari Dom, a 55 years old widow, showed her voter registration certificate and lamented, "I have been voting in every election but still when I approached for citizenship during the campaign, I was denied." Women like Rajkumari and Kesari despite fulfilling the requirements are unable to receive their citizenship. The highest number of the participants, i.e., 54 percent is the daily wage worker, which included the factory workers and the agriculture laborers. Similarly, 18 percent are farmers, 14 percent are domestic workers, 10 percent are vegetable sellers, and the rest of them, i.e., two of them had a tea shop. The saving practices were also very low among these women. Out of the 50 participants, 22 percent had some kind of savings and majority did not have any savings. For instance, Kalwali Tajpuriya says, "I have saved some money without letting my husband know and I wanted to deposit it in the women cooperative so that I can utilize it later in a better way but due to lack of citizenship I'm unable to do it." Like Kalwali Tajpuriya, Laxmi Mandal from Belbari Municipality has the same opinion about saving money:

I have saved up some money working as a domestic worker which I want to save for my daughter's marriage; I have been separated from my husband since many years due to domestic violence. My parents died without getting a citizenship. Although my husband has a citizenship, he has already married another woman. I am worried about my daughter's future as she will also not be able to claim for citizenship because my husband doesn't acknowledge me anymore and didn't provide any supportive document to claim for citizenship.

Another participant from Dhanpalthan Rural Municipality says that she wanted to be part of women cooperative so that she could save some money and burrow some money for her daughter's marriage, but she could not do it due to lack of citizenship. She further says that her husband also lacks citizenship. They missed the opportunity to apply for citizenship during the 2007 campaign. Later, they were denied citizenship. Thus, although many families have lived for generations because they are landless and poor, they could not get the recommendation for citizenship. As a result, their children would also remain without citizenship. She also added that she was more worried about her children. The same case was with another participant who was a vegetable seller opines,

My husband is alcoholic, whatever I earn, he takes away more than half of it. I want to save my money in cooperative but couldn't do it due to lack of citizenship. My husband has a citizenship and I have requested him multiple times but he always ignores my request and says that I don't need it. I had even tried getting a citizenship without his knowledge but couldn't fulfill the procedure on my own.

The abovementioned women who participated in the study have been found to be deprived of saving cooperatives and micro-credit facilities due to deprivation of citizenship, which can play an important role to overcome poverty. Karkini Dhimal, an Adhiwasi woman from Danghihat village in Belbari Rural Municipality is deprived of citizenship. She says, "I want to go to foreign country to work like many other women but without citizenship I cannot have a passport to travel." One of the woman participants from Saurabhag village in Dhanapathan Rural Municipality explains, "We have to show our citizenship to participate in free health camps conducted by hospitals but we are deprived of such services due to lack of citizenship." This suggests that women are systematically denied numerous government security benefits including widow allowances, old age allowances, and allowances for Dalits. This underscores the fact that poor and hardworking women, who strive to earn their livelihood, are unjustly stripped of their citizenship rights. Widows are required to submit death certificate from the municipality and hold citizenship certificate to apply for these allowances. Therefore, many women are unable to get their citizenship because they are less powerful citizens in the society.

## Discussion

The important documents required to acquire a citizenship are a copy of father's citizenship or husband's citizenship and marriage certificate in case of married women and registration of death of spouse in case of widowed women. Apart from these documents, land ownership certificates or receipts of house tax, recommendation from the municipality, a duly filled out citizenship form, lineage certificate and migration certificate. In Nepal, poverty and illiteracy is so high among the Muslim and Terai Dalit women, the process of getting the prescribed form and filling up all the details required correctly and seeking the letter of recommendation from the municipality and submitting the application to the Chief District Office (CDO) along with the various documents as a proof to get the citizenship certificate is a complex and huge debacle. The linguistic condition such as written and spoken Nepali also bars them from getting citizenship because most of these women speak their native languages such as Maithili, Bhojpuri and Awadhi. They also face difficulty to receive the recommendation letter from the municipality because of the lack of documents due to illiteracy, poverty, and dependence on their husband or father to get the citizenship. As identified in the result, women are illiterate who cannot even read and write their own name. These women are the marginalized group within another marginalized group. In cases where the husband had a citizenship, they did not have it because their husband were ignorant towards their request of applying for citizenship and without their support, they are not able to produce any documents which are necessary to get a citizenship. In some cases, as identified earlier in the case of women in polygamous relationship where the husband was reluctant to provide any supportive document in fear of sharing the family property with his wife. Many women have also not understood the importance of having a citizenship. Many acknowledged its importance only when they could not get access to credit facilities, free health camp or government allowances.

Many women who have been separated from their husband and lack citizenship are also unable to get citizenship for their children. The children of single women without citizenship are also denied the multiple rights without citizenship. These children will not be able to pursue higher education without citizenship continuing the cycle of poverty or better opportunities to improve their standard of living. Women and children who are illiterate and poor without citizenship and birth registration become vulnerable to trafficking due to lack of legal identity to prove their nationality further deteriorating their condition. The poor and illiterate women from the marginalized community often have a weak access to the social network. They do not have any networking or nepotistic connection, which makes a huge difference in getting things done when it comes to bureaucracy. The field research also identified that these women who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy are almost always victimized and avoided by the bureaucrats. The unjust patriarchal attitude towards these women by the government officials have also played as an obstacle for them to receive citizenship certificate as in the case of Ramkumari Devi Rishidev where the son was provided the citizenship but she was denied. The ignorance and discrimination exhibited by government officials exacerbate the deprivation of citizenship rights among these women, perpetuating their marginalization within society and denying them crucial security. The inaccessibility to social security leaves them without vital protection against poverty, illness and daily hardships. In cases like Gita Khawas, Rukshana Khatun, and Laxmi Mandal, women become more vulnerable because without citizenship they do not have a legal identity and they are unable to pursue legal suits if their rights are violated. Many women, whose parents died without getting citizenship which was the case for many women, had to depend on their husband to receive citizenship. As identified in the field work, only 42 percent of the participants' husband had the citizenship certificate. If they are deprived of their rights, they are unable to get citizenship due to lack of documents or due to the lack of procedural knowledge to acquire citizenship. The lack of citizenship leads to disempowerment in multiple ways, which results in various forms of exclusion. Without citizenship, these women cannot have an access to education, government free health services, and social security allowances. Citizenship provides the multiple rights such as the social, economic, and political rights contributing to empowerment and independence. The denial of right to vote is another form of disempowerment faced by these women. They cannot travel outside of the country for work opportunity without citizenship, which can contribute to better income opportunities.

Although a significant change has been made to improve the accessibility of citizenship rights to Nepali citizens with the amendment of the Citizenship Act (2006), there are still provisions that discriminate against Nepali women to transfer citizenship rights to their husbands. The current provision has still not addressed the issue of children born to the single mothers who lack documents regarding the citizenship of the father. The Nepali mother still cannot transfer the citizenship rights independent of men. Similarly, the bill allows the foreign spouse of Nepali citizenship to receive citizenship after revocation of the previous citizenship certificate without any waiting period, but the same provision is not true in the case of women. The children of mother having the foreign spouse can only transfer the naturalized citizenship to their children born and residing in Nepal, but a Nepali man can transfer his citizenship by descent to their children. The women rights activists have been critical of such matrimonial provision and consider it to be gendered and discriminatory towards women and their children, deeming them to be the second class citizens. These impacts can be particularly severe for women and their children who are unable to obtain citizenship due to such a

discriminatory framework. Children born from women who are the sexual violence survivors also face difficulties procuring citizenship certificates due to lengthy and complicated procedures. A further research is required to understand such cases and its implications on women and children. It is crucial that the discriminatory citizenship laws presented be reformed respecting women as independent citizens having their own identity irrespective of men. There is also a need for a literacy campaign in rural municipalities to make citizenship accessible to rural women and the government help desk to reduce administrative hurdles. Furthermore, awareness campaign in rural municipalities to make people understand the importance of required documents to receive citizenship such as birth certificate, marriage certificate, and migration certificate. Apart from all these hurdles, the civil society and women rights organizations can play an imperative role to advocate and lobby for equal citizenship rights.

## CONCLUSION

The major factors that hinder women from receiving citizenship as identified by the field study are poverty, landlessness, illiteracy, patriarchal value system, and unjust citizenship provision. They make women dependent on their male counterparts to get citizenship, inaccessibility and lack of social network, and administrative complexities. The field study has also presented a similar claim made by the feminist theorists such as Young (1989), Bubeck (1995), and Lister (1907) that the traditional conception of citizenship has been shaped by a patriarchal social structure that has historically privileged men over women, and excluded women from a full participation in the political and social life. This study was confined to a limited number of women from Dalit, Janajati and Muslim backgrounds in five Rural Municipalities/Municipalities of Morang District. Hence, the study prevents a generalization of the findings outside the study area; however, it may be applicable in the case of women from similar community settlements and social economic status. There is also a need for a state level wider research to identify the people without citizenship in Nepal, addressing the issues of statelessness and its impact on marginalized communities.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

*I hereby wish to declare that I do not have any conflict of interests to disclose. However, I declare that the manuscript has not been published before and is not being considered for publication elsewhere.*

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

*I declare that this manuscript is originally produced by me.*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)

*Ms. Prathiccha Acharya is a PhD Scholar at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pokhara University, Nepal. She is pursuing her PhD in Development Studies.*

*She holds a Master's degree in Human and Natural Resources Studies from Kathmandu University. She was a lecturer in Disaster Management at Purbanchal University. Her research currently focuses on women's rights, gender, and equal citizenship rights.*

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