



Building Inclusive and Resilient Nepal: A Sociological Debate on Progress, Challenges, and Pathways Forward

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Abstract

Nepal's journey towards an inclusive and resilient society is marked by a complex interplay of historical legacies, structural inequalities, and dynamic political transformations. Despite significant constitutional and policy advancements aimed at promoting equality and social justice, deep-seated issues such as the enduring caste system, pervasive intersectional discrimination, and governance challenges continue to impede progress. The concept of "inclusion" often falls short between its aspirational policy ideals and the lived realities of citizens, while "resilience" is frequently viewed through a lens that may inadvertently reinforce existing power imbalances. This paper provides a comprehensive sociological analysis, highlighting how weak governance, economic precarity, and regional disparities exacerbate vulnerabilities, particularly for marginalized groups. It examines the roles of civil society, communities, and international aid, revealing both their contributions and the inherent limitations when systemic issues remain unaddressed. Achieving a truly inclusive and resilient Nepal necessitates moving beyond reliance on robust policy frameworks alone. A fundamental shift in societal norms, a dismantling of entrenched power structures, is required, especially when it comes to demonstrating a policy-backed determination to eradicate exclusion *ex debito* (therefore enforcing inclusion *ex gratia*) and vulnerability through integrated, multi-sectoral approaches.

Keywords

Nepal; inclusion; resilience; inequality; governance

Introduction

Nepal has a strategic advantage due to its territorial position. Posited between two developing nations, such as China and India, Nepal gained a pinnacle in its history by enacting a new Constitution in 2015. While the country seeks to instill a constitutional ethos through policies that engage institutional infrastructure, assessing these policies may inform decision-makers in refining their provisions. Concurrently, it may also help stakeholders realize outcomes in measurable terms, thereby perpetuating a feedback mechanism.

Since the promulgation of the 2015 Constitution, Nepal has undergone a profound transformation in its political and institutional order, shifting from a unitary monarchy to a federal democratic republic founded on principles of inclusion, social justice, and constitutional pluralism. This transition has fundamentally reshaped the nature of state sovereignty, governance structures, public policy, and institutional arrangements, making Nepal an important case for examining the relationship between law, society, and state transformation. Assessing these developments requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines sociological analysis with comparative jurisprudence. A sociological perspective illuminates how historical inequalities, social identities, and power relations shape the implementation of constitutional ideals, while comparative jurisprudence provides a framework for evaluating Nepal's evolving legal and institutional architecture against broader international experiences of democratic transition and inclusive governance. Furthermore, as a member of the South Asian regional community and an emerging developing economy, Nepal's political stability and governance reforms have significant implications for regional cooperation, economic development, and social cohesion. The country's heavy reliance on tourism further underscores the importance of peaceful coexistence, effective public administration, and inclusive institutions in sustaining economic growth and international confidence. In this context, the relationship between inclusion and resilience becomes particularly significant. An inclusive state that guarantees equal rights, political participation, and recognition of diverse identities strengthens social trust and institutional legitimacy, thereby fostering societal resilience. Conversely, a resilient society characterized by social cohesion, adaptive governance, and collective capacity to manage conflict and change reinforces the foundations of an inclusive state. This reciprocal relationship provides a valuable analytical framework for understanding Nepal's ongoing constitutional and sociopolitical transformation.

The connection between social inclusion and resilience may appear counterintuitive. While the former describes the homogeneity within a community and thus pertains to statistical population studies, the latter falls within the domain of qualitative inquiry. Notwithstanding this, a unitary view of governance is contemplated, situating

resilience and inclusion within a single cycle. The cycle intersects with disaster management and all related matters incidental thereto.

By linking social inclusion and resilience, it is essential to move beyond disciplinary boundaries, and recent scholars have sought to integrate sociology with comparative jurisprudence. This permits the construction of an intricate picture of how legal colloquy operates within social realities, especially in countries with historically ingrained social hierarchies. While comparative jurisprudence locates Nepal within global and regional constitutional trends, the sociological inquiry shifts the onus to the processes through which these statutory enactments shape social reality.

With a comparatively recent amendment to the Constitution, Nepal has reached a crossroads in history, both nationally and internationally. By adopting a new framework for its Diceyan Rule of Law, Nepal is well-positioned to realize transformations in sovereignty and political decision-making. The obvious ones often go unstated. The rule of law requires the absence of arbitrary exercise of power, which arises from the principle of equality before the law. The Constitution places nuanced emphasis on the rule of law, marking a shift in the lawmaker's intent.

Nepal changed from a monarchical state to a federal democratic republic, and the paradigm shift involved overhauling the entire governance structure and the State's policies. In furtherance of this, a transformation in the systems of governance, administration, and education is warranted. The Nepal State is becoming more inclusive and democratic due to these governance reforms.

Given Nepal's territorial and geopolitical position as an esteemed member of SAARC, its strategic advantages in negotiating regional affairs cannot be overstated. It is an area of opportunity for Nepal to influence and promote developmental policies in its accord. Sharing borders with China and India, natural disasters and crises impact human lives beyond political demarcations. Therefore, Nepal can play a crucial role in bringing the big players to the table to execute long-term solutions and mitigation plans.

Nepal, being one of the developing countries in the global South, faces similar challenges, including infrastructural deficiency, poverty eradication, gender inequality, and the social dynamics of a diverse population. Given the pivotal role tourism plays in generating revenue for Nepal, the State is open to leveraging the spiritual relevance and environmental capital. Peaceful cohabitation across diverse ethnic, caste, and religious groups, and collective resilience, thus, become economic necessities. This is complemented by Nepal's involvement in regional cooperation on

environmental, trade, and security matters. Such geopolitical positioning positions Nepal as an active participant vis-à-vis its acknowledged role in broader South Asian aspirations.

In light of this, it is argued that there is a symbiotic relationship between social inclusion and resilience; the presence of one strengthens the other.

Permitted in such a context, the paper contends that mapping social inclusion with a reciprocal relation with resilience is possible. It is asserted that policy-supported institutions can promote the symbiosis embedded within such relations that often go hand-in-hand in nurturing one another,

A socially inclusive society fosters social trust and increased institutional legitimacy, which are important for building resilience in crisis situations. Resilience, in turn, increases the cohesion required for social inclusion over time. The interdependence of these two concepts makes it difficult to adopt a linear approach to policy making. Inclusion should, thus, be regarded as both a constitutional goal and a prerequisite for resilience.

Research Methodology

This paper applies interpretive and social constructivist methodologies to explore the interaction between social inclusion and resilience in Nepal. Proceeding on the assumption that legal statutes, sociological facts, and institutional norms are all products of social values and discourse, this paper aims to reveal the meanings of social inclusion and resilience as perceived and enacted through Nepal's legal and governance system. The research method adopted here is qualitative, using thematic coding and content analysis as the tools for investigation-

The paper assesses the statutory corpus of The Constitution of Nepal, in force since 2015, and also dwells on several reports published by international institutions of repute, such as the UNDP. These documents are viewed as discursive texts in which concepts such as social inclusion and resilience are constructed, interpreted, and institutionalized.

The analytical process consists of three stages. The first step is to undertake an in-depth textual analysis for extracting concepts and principles associated with inclusion, such as equality, non-discrimination, and affirmative action, as well as resilience, such as environmental governance, disaster response management, and institutional sustainability. Such analysis incorporates a contextual reading, combined with Nepal's domestic opportunities.

The analysis takes a dimensional shift in the next step, wherein the pervading presence of structural binaries is examined. The selection of such themes involves selecting the recurring patterns and their interactions with other social categories. This process is contextualized by discussing the repercussions of inclusivity, both formal or statutory and substantive, and resilience vis-à-vis social and institutional constraints. An attempt has been made to indicate the structural differentiation between rights *in rem* and capabilities *in personam*.

Lastly, the relationship between these concepts is examined through content analysis to understand their interactions, overlaps, and contradictions. It is asserted that this relationship reflects the totality of the domestic and international tensions Nepal faces within its constitutional framework.

In alignment with the social constructivist approach, the paper engages with the theoretical positions of Ronald Dworkin, Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, and Jürgen Habermas, and with the ethnographic work of Lynn Bennett to contextualize the findings and cast them as analytical frameworks. This facilitates a critical examination of how legal inclusion and resilience are produced at the institutional level, and how these constructions may mask systemic disadvantages and reproduce structural inequalities for certain sections of people. This approach is chosen specifically to highlight the intersection of social inclusion and resilience, the central concern of this paper.

Understanding Inclusion through Various Frameworks

Legal inquiries reveal that inclusion is the extent or measure of formal incorporation of diverse individuals and communities in a constitutional space guaranteed by the State *in commendam*. Tracing its genealogy back to Vedic jurisprudence and the pre-Socratic Greeks, to Aristotle, the foundation of formal inclusion rests on the idea of equality, or more specifically, '*treating likes alike*'. The term was used in the context of slavery in ancient Greek and Roman jurisprudence, but it now refers to the combination of various social groups within a social setup.

Inclusivity gains particular significance in the natural law tradition advanced by Ronald Dworkin, who argued that judges should strive to identify the "right answer" to legal disputes, even when society is deeply divided over what that answer should be (Dworkin, 1985). Through the metaphor of Judge Hercules, Dworkin illustrates an ideal judge who interprets the law by integrating legal principles with moral reasoning, thereby extending *de jure* commitments to inclusion into their practical enforcement. Rooted in the principles of equity, such an approach emphasizes equality, dignity, and fairness as foundational values of jurisprudence. While this rights-based legal

framework provides an important normative foundation for inclusion, its application remains constrained by institutional and social realities. Moreover, as experiences in many Western democracies suggest, even robust rights-based legal systems continue to face persistent ideological tensions over the interpretation and realization of equality and justice.

Dworkin's conception of inclusion departs from Berlin's notion of liberty by emphasizing the role of rights and equality in achieving substantive justice rather than merely protecting individual freedom (Berlin, 2002; Dworkin, 1985). From this perspective, concepts such as equality, liberty, and inclusion are not fixed ideals but are interpreted within specific historical, social, and political contexts. An inclusive state seeks not only to guarantee formal equality but also to eliminate discrimination and promote affirmative measures that enable marginalized groups to participate fully in social, political, and economic life.

In Nepal, this commitment is reflected in the Constitution, which guarantees a wide range of rights, including the right to equality, the right against untouchability and discrimination, the rights of women, children, Dalits, senior citizens, and the rights to social justice and social security (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, arts. 18, 24, 38–43). These constitutional provisions demonstrate the legislature's intention to promote substantive inclusion and social justice through the country's fundamental law. Such aspirations are broadly consistent with the principles of global constitutionalism and international human rights norms, particularly the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948, arts. 1 & 7) and the obligation of states to eliminate discrimination against women under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN, 1979, art. 4[1]).

Constitutional aspects of inclusion are generated through normative recognition, for example, by identifying subjects as rights-holders and citizens, and through procedural integration affirmative action. Such a constitutional enactment calls for citizenry participation in communicative processes of inclusion, exemplifying the broader themes (Habermas, 1996). Habermas would point out that legal inclusion is a function of formal rationality, such that its legitimacy is derived through the universalization of rights and procedural fairness of legal norms.

This functions in theory, so long as the assumption that constitutional expression of rights translates into substantive equality *remains unquestioned*. Such assumptions, ambitious as much as precarious, are best Hegelian abstractions in the sense that individual subjects are assumed to have equal rights, notwithstanding (and often,

deliberately ignoring) their social conditions, which determine the access and capacity to such rights in the first place. From a theoretical perspective, this incorporation of individuals into legal equality while retaining their structural inequalities produces superficial, or thin inclusion. Such abstractions, far from being informative about the quality of rights, tend to locate those rights in relation to other rights, thereby circulating a system of interrelated definitions that often contradict one another in the real world.

The phenomenon of thin inclusion has not gone unnoticed in academic analyses. Nobel prize Winner, Sen (1999), highlights the vacuum created in economies when formal legal rights are divorced from substantial capabilities. Precisely speaking, Sen brings the concept of realized freedom as an analytical criterion into the calculus of development. His ideas of development are a continual project of increasing or empowering the rights of their people, or in other words, amplifying their easements. Such endowments make sense to the classical sociologist and the neoliberal alike, though the point of divergence in such universalization and their enforcement often leaves countries like Nepal in the doldrums.

An enunciation similar to Sen's idea of development as freedom resonates in the towering works of Martha Nussbaum, who, in the context of complex political societies, asserts the pivotal importance of examining people's capability to achieve inclusion. Her methodological emphasis on capabilities is indicative of its underlying asymptotes of natural justice. She visualizes each capability as subsisting above a universal lower critical point, below which life ceases to coexist with the notion of dignity (Nussbaum. (2006). Nussbaum anticipates the perils when such a threshold is breached, or when societies tend towards non-inclusiveness, therefore contending that the political limits of a functional society are defined by its ethical directives in promoting a social condition derived from the capabilities of the subject, wherein the capabilities exist above a certain critical point, which in turn defines the universal ground zero for human dignity (Nussbaum,2006).

Standing in stark contrast, sociological inclusion speaks to the epistemological basis of the community's economic, cultural, and social life. Social inclusion presupposes Nussbaum's capabilities approach, thus contemplating the capability to participate and benefit in good equity. It suffices to note that the focus shifts from equality to equity, a broader currency of social trust, for example, in the allocation of resources, in community relationships with modes of production, and, consequently, in power relations; therefore, the entire normative structure of governance. It is in this matrix of value production that exclusivity must be looked for and eradicated immediately.

Social systems posit trust as an expectation currency that regulates, normalizes, and examines the cooperation among its members (Fukuyama, 1995). One can see why the currency of trust, grounded in equitable considerations, can yield policies that create opportunities for equality (Uslaner, 2002). It is also not unreasonable to locate the failures of modern democracy in the breaking of institutions that once propagated equity within their communities. The tension between normative cooperation and equitable returns decides the outcome of a constitutional project, and that is where social systems struggle to sustain challenges.

In a social system galvanized with unequal distributions of capital, inclusion ceases to be an agenda for institutions alone. Instead, as Bourdieu (1986) might suggest, inclusion is made possible only when deeper social designs are restructured. Unless such a transformation is achieved, those deficits in capital, *inter alia*, social recognition, the marginalized, perhaps dissenting voices, will find trouble in mainstream associations, thus experiencing exclusion. Indeed, Nepal can learn from the postcolonial experiences of African and Latin American countries to gauge the politics of development relative to resource allocation. While their situations may be poles apart and Nepal does not have to deal with political crises shared with Latin American or African counterparts, the lessons for inclusion must be sought from every possible avenue within a geopolitical setup.

Examining inclusion through a poststructuralist perspective reveals the mechanisms of exclusion that are regenerated in institutional power (Foucault, 1977) and supplanted by discourse and norms. It may then be argued that social inclusion requires not just material redistribution but also reforms in micro-structural exercises of power. A provisional inquiry regarding the concordant patterns within such power structures yields the inner nodes, the decisive corners that tend to benefit from the said asymmetric relations of production. Whereas countries like Nepal enjoy the status of *tabula rasa*, in contrast to Western developed nations, which have reached a certain level of civilizational saturation (Huntington, 1993), the deficiency of existing institutional frameworks slows the upstream journey toward a stable polity.

Resilience in the Circuit of Social Inclusion

Eminent scholar Holling (1973) perceives resilience as an internal capacity or potential to withstand external shocks or disturbances that compromise its basic structure, including its essence and function. Communities may be financially resilient if they can withstand market crises. The agriculture sector has repeatedly shown its resilience to external market conditions, though the trend is now challenged by multinational merchandise trade. A community may as well be politically resilient, such that its ideologies are not forsaken when politics enters troubled waters. A

stable constitutional sovereignty is a product of economic, political, and other forms of resilience, built upon the outcomes of community action, ensured by continuing solidarity among members.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, resilience has become increasingly central to sustainable development discourse and is now widely recognized as a key component of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2025). Resilience is commonly understood as the capacity of communities and societies to withstand, adapt to, and recover from external shocks arising from social, geopolitical, economic, and environmental changes (Adger, 2000).

Given Nepal's disaster-prone geography, further exacerbated by climate change and periodic socio-political instability, resilience has emerged as a critical dimension of community well-being and sustainable development. From a legal perspective, resilience may be understood as the institutional capacity to maintain social stability, safeguard rights, and effectively respond to crises. Emphasizing both normative durability and effective implementation, legal resilience operates through disaster governance mechanisms and the rule of law, particularly in protecting vulnerable populations. The Constitution of Nepal incorporates several provisions that contribute to the construction of social resilience, including the rights to equality, protection from discrimination and untouchability, socio-economic rights, and group-specific protections for women, Dalits, and marginalized communities (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, arts. 16, 18, 24, 31–37, 38, 40, 42, 43). Furthermore, the Directive Principles, Policies, and Obligations of the State articulate a broader vision of resilience and inclusive development (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, art. 51).

It is noteworthy that the Constitution was promulgated only a few months after the devastating earthquakes of April 2015, reflecting the state's commitment to reconstruction, inclusion, and resilience. Environmental protection is explicitly recognized as a fundamental right under Article 30 of the Constitution. Moreover, the Constitution promotes ecological sustainability and biodiversity conservation as key state policies (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, art. 51(g)(1)) and embraces internationally recognized environmental principles, including prior informed consent and environmental responsibility (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, art. 51(g)(8)). Nepal's commitment to international legal frameworks, including its participation in the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (New York Convention, 1958), further demonstrates its effort to balance domestic resilience with international obligations. Within Nepal's constitutional democracy, these safeguards are intended to promote social justice, prevent discriminatory and exclusionary practices rooted in historical inequalities, and strengthen democratic

governance by preventing the concentration of power within a centralized state structure.

The distinction is broadly construed and includes several technocratic applications (such as in IT laws, where consumer data collection is a grey area) and the right to freedom of speech, guaranteed under Article 17, when read with its six provisions on ‘reasonable restrictions’. In the context of disaster or civil conflict, the enforcement of the Nepal Constitution signals a shift in socio-cultural perspectives. That is to say, traveling beyond military pragmatism of force, i.e., *Inter arma enim silent leges*, to *Salus populi suprema lex esto*, meaning that the conflict situation in Nepal is viewed as precise moments demanding special fidelity to the rule of law.

Orienting our inquiry in the realm of Habermas, the legal resilience of a system may then be formulated as “its ability to secure and renew legitimacy under changing conditions” (Habermas, 1996). The message is out there: for Nepal to demonstrate resilience, it must ensure the functionality and responsiveness of its legal order, especially under stress. Such stress may not be confined to domestic turbulence alone. International war climates require international agencies, including nations, to take sides, and in the wake of new war regimes, Nepal has to make calculated moves in the times ahead.

And yet, the Habermas model hardly grasps the monumental tasks ahead. Apart from being a system-centric analysis that emphasizes durable institutions and uniform governance ideologies, this model lacks measurable indicators to assess the impact when such resilience translates into support for victims, let alone marginalized groups. Sans any measurable indicator, the effectiveness of a policy remains subject to majoritarian perceptions. Likewise, not accounting for those who fail to be counted in the records, such as due to procedural technicalities, is a problem that goes to the root of the matter. In short, unless a model is tested and its limits acknowledged, its implementation will yield only a lower kinetic of the model’s desired outcome. Legal resilience in this context must be construed to include the citizen’s rights to relief as well as other constitutional safeguards. Therefore, such legal recognition of resilience remains confined to its institutional commitments and is not expected to yield social outcomes.

Resilience as an Everyday Practice: Nepal’s Climate Risks

The quest for resilience is existentially linked to Nepal’s exposure to climatic extremes and disasters, such as landslides and floods, and to the ecological impacts of these events. With the exception of a few municipalities in the southern part, Nepal is prone to moderate to high landslide risk (Amadio et al., 2023).

With a labor force majorly dependent on agriculture and livestock, natural calamities harm the capital and labor subsistence in more ways than imagined. Consider the situation of drought in Nepal: most droughts occur in the southern part of the country, where around 30% of agricultural land suffers recurring losses (FAO, 2022). In human terms, recurring droughts have reduced production and, consequently, increased prices, market inflation, and other costs. The loss is borne collectively by the service and other sectors, which are themselves exposed to air pollution. Understated as a hazard, air pollution triggers a vicious cycle of production, with air pollutants interacting with the atmosphere to create climatic vulnerabilities ranging from glacier melting to the ignition of wildland fires.

Nepal's social and political life cannot be dissociated from disaster risk mitigation. The challenges ahead for social inclusion with robust resilience are particularly pronounced in Nepal, where its topography is counterproductive to several service-delivery mechanisms. The tenets of uplifting capability per capita must be translated into reality in a demographic with limited coping strategies. It is suggested that Nepal's per capita capacity must be strengthened by improved access to government relief schemes and credit markets. A certain heterogeneity in policy distribution may also yield better results, especially when historical geospatial data on such calamities is duly considered before resource allocation.

Social Inclusion and Resilience: Challenges Affront

Ethnographic research conducted by Bennett (1983) demonstrates the challenges of inclusion in Nepal. Observing several hierarchies of caste and gender intertwined in kinship structures and symbolic rituals, Bennett shows how lived realities are situated beyond the contours of legal inclusivity. Her study on high-caste Hindu Nepali women (1983) challenges the idea of reducing inclusion to formal, legal categories. Instead, illustrating an empirical example of Foucault's power analysis, Bennett shows how women are symbolically celebrated (as "sacred sisters"), but socially controlled and subordinated (as "dangerous wives") simultaneously, thereby questioning whether constitutional inclusion converts into substantial rights, or, in our case, social inclusion, for targeted groups in particular?

In Bennett's ethnographic study of high-caste Hindu women in Nepal, power is reproduced through everyday social practices, kinship relations, and ritual norms that shape women's lived experiences (Bennett, 1983). These social arrangements exemplify what Lukács (1971) conceptualized as *reification*, a process through which social relations come to appear as natural, objective, and immutable realities rather than historically constructed forms of domination. As Lukács argued, reification occurs when "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and

thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity'. In the Nepali context, discrimination is reproduced through kinship structures and ritual purity norms, rendering unequal social relations seemingly natural and legitimate. Consequently, social inclusion itself becomes reified when constitutional and statutory rights fail to engage with the lived experiences of marginalized groups. Similarly, when suffering and its endurance are normalized through cultural discourses of purity, duty, and ritual performance, structural inequalities become obscured and accepted as part of everyday life. Under such conditions, resilience may also be reified, as individuals and communities are expected to adapt to systemic disadvantages rather than challenge the social structures that produce vulnerability and exclusion.

Therefore, the logical conclusion follows: in the realm of constitutional democracy embedded in a diverse society like Nepal, power ceases to remain juridical or even statutory. Instead, like Bennett shows, social fabrics are woven through kinship models (anthropological), purity discourses (epistemological), ritual performances (religious-cultural), and a host of other similar categories. Taking the particular example of high-caste Hindu women in Nepal, the community, much in sync with Luhmann's autopoietic system (Luhmann, 2004), internalizes, reifies, and finally reproduces these initial conditions of discrimination and harsh life realities.

While the Preamble of the Constitution of Nepal emphasizes the need to "protect and promote social and cultural solidarity, tolerance and harmony, and unity in diversity" through the recognition of the country's multi-ethnic, multilingual, multi-religious, multicultural, and regionally diverse character, and commits to building an egalitarian society based on proportional inclusion, participation, economic equality, prosperity, and social justice by eliminating discrimination based on class, caste, region, language, religion, gender, and caste-based untouchability (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, pmbi., para. 5), the realization of these constitutional ideals remains a significant challenge. Although the Constitution establishes an inclusive framework for governance and guarantees legal rights, these rights often fail to penetrate entrenched social structures and everyday practices. Consequently, a paradox emerges: while inclusion is constitutionally codified and legally protected, processes of social reproduction continue to generate and sustain exclusion. This gap between normative commitments and lived realities underscores the limitations of legal recognition alone in transforming deeply rooted social inequalities.

The gap between normative commitments and lived reality appears aggravated when examined from a macroeconomic perspective. Due to several multifaceted sources of disparity, such as gender, class, and caste, Nepal suffered a sizable decline (about a quarter) in its human development index (UNDP, 2022)

Ranking 146th in the Human Development Index with an HDI score of 0.601, and 113th position in the global Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2024). Nepal's female HDI value was 0.562, compared with 0.635 for males, indicating that Nepal's governance needs to prioritize gender sensitization. The UNDP Report (2022) also raises concerns in high-risk sectors, including healthcare, income, and education. This structural fracture calls into question the prescriptions of social inclusion and resilience alike.

Gender inequality in Nepal is indicative of bias against women in the division of labor, reproductive health, political and economic representation, and the list is not exhaustive. It seems, both from Bennett's ethnography and UNDP report, that women's resilience in Nepalese society needs to be expanded beyond systematic constraints, and in effect, produces transformations in several practices such as early marriage, lack of access to education or other amenities, gender-based domestic violence, etc. Therefore, such a gendered resilience program enables women to mitigate external shocks without seeking institutional support, thus disconnecting from social inclusivity. Only when social inclusion is liberated from systemic limits can we expect equitable outcomes.

It is again emphasized that a serious study of Nepali resilience cannot undermine the disaster vulnerability of the territorial landscape. Nepal is exposed to natural calamities like floods, earthquakes, and landslides, which consequently decimate the national gross output, thereby forcing marginalized target groups below their socioeconomic strata. Again, a circular arrangement appears: while policies of resilience promote adaptation, such confidence is not reflected in addressing the below-the-surface vulnerabilities, including but not limited to poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to facilities, making marginalized groups more susceptible to harm.

Contemporary development discourse, such as UNDP's Breaking the Gridlock program, highlights a deep structural issue that has hitherto gone unaddressed. While Nepal's federal structure promotes decentralized governance, but regional disparities in administrative capacity and resource allocation persist across its provinces. The outer grids, as far as the report by Bhattarai et al. (2023) appears, seem to miss the mark on several key indicators of resilience.

The report highlights the asymmetry in the distribution of resources within the nation. Whether in terms of access to services/facilities or opportunities for upward social mobility, Nepal demonstrates multidimensional disparities. As one might expect, the resources are designed to support the urban population. The report makes particular references to the Bagmati and Karnali provinces, where the former

enjoys far greater access to services, in contrast to the latter, which remains in abject poverty and inequality. Likewise, the trend seems to replicate when local government institutions are accounted for. Save some exceptions, almost every local government body appears to be hit by disparity. Therefore, a case is made out in addressing the challenges ahead in the pursuit of inclusive governance vis-à-vis strengthening federalism in the Nepalese polity.

Pathways Forward for an Inclusive and Resilient Nepal

Compare Nepal's situation with a few other similarly placed countries. Nepal is not much farther from India (0.681), Bhutan (0.698), and Bangladesh (0.685) than from Sri Lanka (0.776), but is significantly farther from Sri Lanka than from India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. This data yields insightful takeaways: despite sharing structural challenges with these South Asian countries, such as poverty and demographic diversity, differences in governance and policy implementation have substantial effects on aggregate inclusion and resilience. To draw a correlation, better public health systems or inclusive educational policies can amplify social resilience.

A few suggestions regarding such transformative inclusion that are potent in elevating the resilience of Nepal are:

1. Statutory categories of discrimination (Art. 18) should be liberally interpreted but strictly enforced; thus, a case of purposive interpretation of Art. 18 is made out. This may go a long way in strengthening substantive inclusion.
2. Administrative gaps, such as disparities in capacity or resources, must be eradicated at the local, provincial, and federal levels by strengthening institutional capacity.
3. Key sectors such as transportation, energy, and digital grids must be redesigned equitably to benefit marginalized communities.
4. Nepal must move beyond the survival-adaptation metanarrative and collaborate with agencies proficient in promoting structural transformation to uproot the sources of vulnerability.

The project to improve per capita capabilities can manifoldly expand the scope of social inclusion and resilience mechanisms. Reading Sen's terminology, defining freedom as the growth of individual rights (in particular regarding the quality of life in material terms), the priorities lie in a quorum of increased per capita resilience capability for the country. The Constitutional mandate, explicitly pronounced in favor of social inclusion, must nurture institutional mechanisms that ensure effective enforcement. This goes hand in hand with establishing the Rule of Law, which remains

pivotal to social inclusion. Repeated cycles of effective planning and implementation suggest that this model of governance will yield broader amplitudes of resilience. As an analytical category in itself, capabilities per capita can inform the government and other stakeholders about areas for improvement and serve as a case study that has attracted scholarly attention worldwide.

In his seminal work, Luhmann observed that “the evolution of society is characterized by increasing differentiation of social systems” (Luhmann, 2004). In an era of accelerating technological change and globalization, Nepal can no longer view social inclusion and resilience as competing priorities, nor can it afford to privilege one over the other. Rather, contemporary global realities require a reconceptualization of these concepts as mutually reinforcing dimensions of sustainable development and democratic governance. Social inclusion without resilience risks producing fragile and vulnerable communities, while resilience without inclusion may perpetuate existing inequalities and patterns of exclusion. Evidence from international development experiences demonstrates that inclusive societies are better equipped to withstand and recover from social, economic, and environmental shocks, whereas exclusion undermines collective adaptive capacity.

Guided by the transformative vision articulated in the Preamble of the Constitution of Nepal, it is therefore imperative for the State to recognize and strengthen the interconnected roles of social inclusion and social resilience as foundational pillars of an equitable, democratic, and prosperous society.

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