

## **Evolving Paradigms of Gender Inclusion: A Shift from Women in Development to Gender and Development**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper based on evolving paradigms of gender inclusion” refers to the shifting theoretical and policy frameworks that guide how societies understand and promote equitable participation of all genders. It captures the progression from women-centered approaches to more intersectional and structural models addressing power relations and systemic inequalities. The history of gender inclusion in development has been greatly conceptually and practically transformed to shift to the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm as opposed to the Women in Development (WID) paradigm. This paper critically analyzes this historical path and how this has impacted on the current gender-equity policies and practices in Nepal. Developed in the 1970s, WID focused on including women into the prevalent developmental frameworks with its orientation on productive labour and significant disregard of structural inequalities, reproductive labour, and social-cultural limitations. The latter approach of Women and Development (WAD) offered a structural analysis, acknowledging both feminine household and economic roles of women with a focus on systemic subordination as a result of patriarchal and capitalism relations. AD took a relational and transformative approach by the 1980s, anticipating the gendering of power relations, institutional hierarchies and practices and suggesting interventions that could involve both men and women in dealing with substantive equity. These principles were operationalized into policy and planning strategies through such tools as the Moser Gender Planning Framework. The political involvement of women was limited by historical governance structure and other deep-rooted socio-cultural beliefs in Nepal. The 2015 changes in the legislation, provisions of the constitution, and quota systems have seen a significant rise in numerical representation, and women now hold almost 40% of the elected positions on the local level. However, there are still qualitative constraints: women*

*are still left in junior or back-off positions, and the decision-making process in the executive position is male dominated. The conclusion of the study is that although the shift in WID-to-GAD has made women more visible and recognized by the institution, the true empowerment of women is achieved through structural inequities, social norms, and hierarchical power relations. This cannot be represented numerically and therefore transformative, context-sensitive approaches are needed to substantive gender equality in development.*

**Keywords:** Evolving Paradigm, Gender Inclusion, Women in Development, Gender and Development, Role

## **Introduction**

The evolving paradigms of gender inclusion” refers to the progressive transformation of theoretical frameworks, policy approaches, and institutional practices aimed at promoting equitable participation, representation, and empowerment of all genders. It encompasses the historical shift from women-focused development strategies to more comprehensive, intersectional, and rights-based models that address structural inequalities, socio-cultural norms, and power relations shaping gendered outcomes across societies. Gender roles in the development have experienced a major shift in the last few decades. Initial strategies like Women in Development (WID) were more concerned with including women in the existing formation of development so that they would participate but the concept did not alter the deep-rooted gender framework. In the course of time, researchers and practitioners came to the realization that the ultimate outcomes of development, it is impossible without involving the immediate social, cultural, and power relations which predetermine gender inequality. The transition saw the emergence of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach, which is more holistic and relational in its approach to understanding the way male and female interactions affect the process of development. The shift to GAD, as opposed to that of WID, can be described as an essential paradigm shift, to be more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable in both policies and practice in the areas of development. As described in the groundbreaking work of the renowned social scientist, Ester Boserup on the role of women in agriculture, the policy objectives of women in the development process have been given more attention by the development agencies and the work can be well-documented. Between the 1972s and the 1990s there was a significant change of policy and practice that was formerly embodied in the Women in Development (WID) approach (Razavi and Miller, 1995), a shift that is welcome as elucidating the fundamentals of gender identity as an outcome of injustices. In 1995, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women which was hosted in Beijing put the rights of women in center stage before the government policymakers as well as the rights workers in all parts of the world. The Platform of Action of the Beijing conference (UN, 1995) has certainly

led to a higher profile of the concerns of gender relations in the human society and to better awareness of the necessity to end, gender-based injustice (Bushra, 2000).

The practice of gender work is still viewed as primarily about women in the late 1980s when the policy changed to Gender and Development approach rather than the Women in Development approach. The pressure of the men to a socially determined role, and the social curtailment of them that may be, are treated in a token manner, at best. Both WID and GAD developed within an economic approach to development policy environment, which has not yet lost its grip. Women economic empowerment was chosen as the primary approach to attain gender equity by many development agencies, which believed that this would automatically result in gender equality, but women around the globe reported the experience of discrimination in a variety of other spheres of their life including their political life that characterized their power in controlling resources in the social relationships and their needs in emotional safety and reproductive rights in an interpersonal relationship. Gender must not be viewed as a politically correct ideology, but that is a part of a broader inquiry of a profound explanation of human conduct, which is concerned with bodily and emotional requirements, perceptions, inspiration, instances, and frameworks. The notions of identity, agency, and power are used to explain how human beings attempt to cut desirable lives to themselves within the confines dotted by their historical locations, their social roles, and their qualities. To make gender a useful concept in the development and the advancement of the rights of women, the GAD research, policy and practices should focus their energies in attempting to understand the meaning of this and similar concepts, and should not propagate itself as an unquestioned good (Boserup, 1970). The recent years of empirical work have revealed very vividly how the relative respect and regard of the well-being of women are heavily dependent on such variables as the capacity of women to earn a separate income, to get employed outside of the family, the rights to ownership, and to be literate and educated decision-makers both outside and inside the family. In fact, even the disadvantage of women as against men in developing nations appears to plummet and can even be eradicated, as development occurs in the aspects of these agencies (Sen, 2003). Sen also posited that empowerment of women in the family can contribute to a great deal of reduction in child mortality. Much further, with education and employment determining women agency and voice, this, in its turn, can affect the character of the public discussion of numerous social topics, such as the acceptable fertility rates (not necessarily only in the family of the specific women in question) and environmental priorities. The other significant concern is the intra-family split of food, health care, and other supplies. It all depends on the way the family economic strength is utilized in order to support the interests of various people in the family: women and men, girls and boys, children and adults, old and

young. The division of sharing in the family is provided, to a large degree, by the traditional convention, but they are also affected by the same factors like the economic role and empowerment of women, as well as by the values of the community, in general.

Four approaches, welfare, equality, anti-poverty, and efficiency; and empowerment were developed by Moser (1993). The welfare was only perceived as an effort to make women to be a better mother. The second measure was aimed at obtaining equality in women. The anti-poverty strategy of targeting poor women in order to enhance their productivity had the tendency to segregate poor women in a different group. The efficiency approach that aimed at enhancing the efficiency of local economy through the mobilization of the contribution of women was problematic in its disposition of only extending the working time of the women. The fifth one is bottom up but not top-down orientation, empowerment (Walby, 2009). There must be a sixth method of efficiency and empowerment that incorporates democratization and efficiency together, and to women, as well as to men. (Castells, 1996). The political struggles of women have played an important role in offering women a vote and representation in most forms. Nonetheless, women gaining more seats in parliament are a phenomenon that is not only related to what is going on in certain national fronts but to international political alliances. This has seen more women in parliaments overlap with a overall third wave of democratization yet longer term increase in the representation of women. There is a greater number of countries that democratically choose assemblies today as compared to early 1970s. This alone has entailed significant transformations to women as well as men, yet this can hardly be observed in otherwise broad coverage in texts about democratization (Huntington, 1997). Modernization theory, which was equal to physical infrastructure building and industrialization, was devised and implemented in the west after two great World Wars and also implemented later in the developing nations to enhance the standard of living. This has led to the fact that in the first decade of development (1960- 1970) the world Gross International Product (GIP) grew by one trillion dollars with the industrialized nations acquiring eighty percent of the total gains, and the poor nations receiving six percent, even the developing nations attained the five percent growth rate at the end of the first decade. However, in the same breath, unemployment, inequality and wasted natural resources were growing at an appalling pace as a result of the export of the products. GNP went up yet the people had not been provided with the necessities. The idea of Community Development once more aligned itself with physical infrastructure in order to shrink the emerging gap and sartorial development came up and was implemented in various nations, Green revolution, and miracle seeds are some of the efforts of the time (Rathgeber, 1990). Gender inequality is still deeply rooted in social, economic and institutional frameworks even after decades of developmental efforts. The early development policies by

the Women in Development (WID) program paid much attention to the integration of women into the current development systems without targeting the very power dynamics that support inequality. Consequently, numerous interventions that were gender-oriented generated minimal, narrow-range, or superficial transformation. With the formation of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach, there was the shift of focus on gender relations, structural inequalities, and the necessity of transformative change. Nevertheless, the gaps remain in the comprehension of how well this transition has been conceptualized, operationalized as well as translated into policy and practice. The development of WID into GAD needs to be critically analyzed and evaluated on whether this conceptual change has contributed meaningfully in terms of gender inclusion in development-related setups. Hence, the research question in this paper, which is How has the gender inclusion approach changed since Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) and In what ways did the transition of WID to GAD change current gender-equality policies and development practices?

### **Objectives**

- To analyze how gender inclusion methods have developed over time since Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD).
- To examine the ways in which the transformation of WID to GAD has transformed the modern day policies and practices in development to embrace gender equality.

### **Methodology**

This paper has employed a mixed research methodology based on the primary and secondary sources to present thorough and valid results. Even though the study was primarily based on secondary data to answer the research questions, aspects of primary data have been taken into consideration, and triangulation has been handled where deemed necessary. An extensive review of literature was used to collect the secondary data and assist in formulating both qualitative and quantitative rules of analysis. The main secondary sources were the assessment reports, seminar papers, published journals, the local government act, national and international research articles, GESI reports, CBS publications and other pertinent datasets. These sources were available in libraries, government agencies and non-governmental organizations. The fact that several reliable sources were used supported the validity of the research and allowed analyzing the transformation of Women in Development (WID) into Gender and Development (GAD) in depth.

## Literature Review

To understand the development of gender inclusion in the study of development, we need to look at the theoretical paradigms that have developed over time to influence policy and practice. The alteration between Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) is indicative of the pervasive changes in feminist ideas, theory of development, and discourse on global policy. This literature review is a reflection of significant academic contributions, arguments, and theories with the aim of shedding light on the development of gender perspectives and how they have transformed in relation to the research goals of analyzing historical evolution and how these changes affect the modern development practices.

### Emergence of the Women in Development (WID) Approach

The name Women in Development (WID) has developed in the early 1970s and came about through a grouping of female development professionals located in Washington, D.C (Irene, 1990). These experts criticized prevailing developmental theory that believed that the fruits of development would have a trickledown effect on men and women on an equal basis. They instead claimed that economic development significantly varied in terms of effects on both genders to a disadvantage of women in most cases. The emergence of WID was coincidental to the revival of the women movements in Europe and North America, especially the liberal feminist movements in the United States that demanded equal rights, equal wages, as well as employment. The early WID agenda had been heavily influenced by liberal feminism. According to Connell (1987), the liberal feminists reasoned that limiting women to their secondary position in society could be defeated by disrupting the conventional gender roles, broadening the access to education, and establishing the policies of equal opportunities. This preoccupation with the inclusion of women in the current development systems defined the vision of the WID.

Nevertheless, the initial WID strategy was very limited to the productive aspects of women, neglecting the reproductive issues and social welfare. Most of its criticisms have been based on the radical efforts of Danish economist Ester Boserup, who showed that women were key- but devalued participants in the production of agriculture and the economy. Boserup research was an empirical data on how women had been seen as invaluable economic actors thereby contradicting the existing approach to welfare that was prevalent at the time which had largely regarded women as mere beneficiaries of social assistance. WID became known on the international level after the first world conference on women in Mexico City in 1975 that became the start of the United Nations Decade for Women. This era institutionalized

WID into development patterns of the world, and made it an issue of mainstream development instead of an activist's issue (Razavi, Miller, 1995).

### **Women and Development (WAD): A Critical Expansion**

Women and Development (WAD) approach is a critical response to the weaknesses of WID that appeared in the late 70s. According to scholars, including Rathgeber (1990), WAD was the result of dissatisfaction with the modernization theory, which presupposed that women would be lifted by development per se. Rather, WAD theorists hypothesized that women were never new actors in the development process as WID sometimes suggested. In contrast to WID that concentrated on inclusion of women into the system, WAD was based on the neo-Marxist and dependency theory viewpoints. It perceived the subordination of women as not as the outcome of exclusion only, but the result of structural processes that occurred when the forces of patriarchy and capitalism interacted (Barriteau et al., 2000). WAD approach has stressed on the idea that development programs were only likely to exploit the labor of women without addressing the issue of systemic inequalities. One of the most important principles of WAD is that it acknowledges women as individuals who play two aspects in society, both in politics and family. This model focuses on the economic contributions of women and also emphasizes that the fact that women are involved in the development processes does not always imply that they are challenging the patriarchal framework. WAD is, therefore, viewed as more critically important and transformative as compared to WID since it questions structural inequalities instead of looking at participation and integration as the sole aspects. Another area that WAD pioneered was the women-only programs by claiming that females have knowledge and social responsibilities that need special interventions. Even these efforts were narrow since they tended to perpetuate gender divisions as opposed to changing them.

### **Transition to the Gender and Development (GAD) Paradigm**

Criticism of WID and WAD had grown by the 1980s and prompted the development of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. GAD was a radical conceptual break as far as it did not only emphasize on the issue of women but gender relations that are socially constructed structures of power between men and women (Armendáriz, 2010). One of the most influential theorists to GAD was Oakley (1972) and Rubin (1975) who stressed that gender is socially and culturally constructed, never natural. These pieces of work illuminated the way gender norms are constructed socially to place women in a subordinate position and restrict their resource access, access opportunities, and power to make such decisions. Among the critical critiques of the WID by GAD was that it homogenized the

target group of women or it viewed women as an untapped resource of development (Moser, 1993). GAD rather said that gender inequality is the result of institutional power relations, in which the family, community, market, and state are involved. Development interventions should, therefore, be able to deal with these underlying power hierarchies, and not just make women more active.

### **Two Conceptual Tools Underpin the GAD framework:**

1. Gender Roles Analysis- revolving around reproductive, productive and community roles and their influence on the distribution of responsibilities and access to the resources. 2. Social Relations Analysis- the distribution of power by institutions in which gender inequality is recreated within social systems is examined (Reeves, 2000). In contrast to WID, GAD does not use women as the sole issue and remedy. Rather, it aims at redefining gender roles ascribed to men and women. To illustrate, GAD challenges the prevailing norms and beliefs that men are the paid workers and women the caregivers and homemakers and this is what leads to the differences in wages and the power to make decisions (Armendáriz, 2010).

### **The Moser Gender Planning Framework**

The most successful GAD-based instruments is the Moser Gender Planning Framework, which was developed by Caroline Moser in the 1980s. This framework institutionalized GAD principles in the development planning and policy. It combines both quantitative and qualitative information to: determine gender roles, gauge gender needs, evaluate control over resources, plan interventions to balance household and productive, responsibilities, draw the line between practical and strategic gender needs and engage gender-aware organizations in development processes (Armendáriz, 2010). The Moser model is more extensive than the Harvard Analytical Model (which is associated with WID) that was essentially amassing information on women activity. Instead, Mosser approaches the issue of inequalities and their transformation. This renders it a very important instrument of gender sensitive development planning.

### **Contemporary Debates on Gender Inclusion**

The transformation between WID and GAD failed to address all the issues of gender inclusion. Many researchers indicate the presence of incessant tensions and gaps in implementation. According to Mukhopadhyay (2007), gender mainstreaming which is the key instrument of GAD implementation has been depoliticized and transformative project has been turned into a checklist. She points out that gender equality needs to address the

political power relations and not merely change bureaucracy processes. On the same note, White (1996) cautions that gender issues are commonly re-packaged into technical problems and, therefore, development institutions can carry on with the same levels of power without necessarily dealing with inequality. In addition, Goetz (2007) also introduces a significant contribution to the modern debates by establishing a connection between gender justice and the wider context of citizenship, rights, entitlement, and legal reform. She describes three major dimensions of gender justice:

1. Gender influences all categories of the society and generates the differentiated interests.
2. Inequalities in gender relations in the house influence more injustices.
3. The provisions of patriarchy in personal life is transferred to the state in institutions, which affects the economy, politics, and social life. Such discussions support the thesis that attaining gender equality is a structural issue that cannot be solved through inclusion only.

### **Comparative Overview of WID and GAD**

Elucidation of conceptual change, researchers, including Moser (1995), Rathgeber (1990) and Razavi and Miller (1995), describe significant differences between the WID and GAD models. The main issue that WID recognizes as the lack of women in development and tries to incorporate women into the current system with specific projects. However, GAD is focused on unequal power relations, and aims at changing the very process of development by focusing on the strategic gender interests. Whereas WID pays particular attention to enhancing the productivity, income, and management capacity of women within the household, GAD pays special attention to the challenge of structural determinants of inequality and the participation of both men and women in the equal growth.

The change of WID to GAD can be seen as a dramatic shift in the way thinking about development, where the emphasis is on women being integrated into the existing structures instead of changing the gendered power relations, which define the structures. WID and WAD played a significant role making women visible in development discourse and patriarchal and capitalist structures, respectively. GAD took a next step in the direction of gender relations, institutional power, and transformative possibilities of gender responsive planning tools such as the Moser Framework. In line with the aim of this study, the literature is explicit on the ways in which changes in history of WID to GAD have redefined conceptual insights and practices of development. It also throws the light on the still existing arguments and issues that still influence the gender inclusion strategies in the modern development settings.

## Results

The process of women political participation in Nepal is a long and complicated process which is influenced by the historical governance system, socio-cultural values, political system, and constitutional changes. These statistics and historical accounts presented in Tables 2.3-2.10 confirm that up until a few decades, even with the recent constitutional assurances and electoral reform, women have been symbolically active or structurally limited in the political arena. A critical analysis of these trends depicts how gendered power relations, institutional constraints, and patriarchal standards have influenced accessibility of women into political space since the Lichhavi period to the federal democratic republic of Nepal.

### **Historical Context: Absence of Formal Inclusion and Structural Patriarchy**

Political structures that existed were the Lichhavi, Malla, Shah and Rana periods which were highly hierarchical and dominated by men. Although some institutions like the Gram Panchayat or Mahajan Kachari were there, the representation of women is not recorded. Even when it is possible to mention some strong females leaders like the Queen Rajyalaxmi in the Shah dynasty, their impact was rather exceptional than systematic. The social circumstances during the Malla period including sati also suggest the very patriarchal social structure that denied women any space and freedom in the political arena. Such historical trends emphasize the fact that the denial of women in governance is not only a political phenomenon but also a socio-cultural phenomenon that is deeply embedded. Although the Rana regime (1846-1951) also saw some legal changes such as Gram Panchayat Justice Act (1949), it did not change much with regard to structural gender exclusion. Despite the early feminist activists such as Yogmaya Neupane bringing in awareness of women in politics, women involvement was still informal, resistance based, and outside the formal structure of state. As can be seen in the historical evidence, the early political arena thus provided women practically no institutional space to participate in.

### **Gender-Inclusive Policies and Legal Provision in Nepal**

Nepal has come up with a longstanding policy and legal structure that will enhance gender equality and inclusive involvement of women and marginalized groups in every sector in society. The legal principle of gender equality provides an equal right of each gender to property, and this is ensured by the Muluki Ain (11th Amendment, 2063/ 2006). In addition to this, the Muluki Dewani Act (2074 B.S.) adds strength to the concept of non-discrimination based on gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, or language and provides equal rights to share parental property. Gender inclusion is also highlighted in the electoral and

governance laws. The Local Level Election Act (2017) requires females, Dalits, and marginalized populations to be represented at the local committees and therefore everyone is represented at the grassroots. In the same manner, the Local Government (Mobilization and Operations) Act, 2074 B.S. stipulates that at least one female member has to be present in the local mobilization committees. The Election Commission Act (2016) guarantees the presence of females in the election organs and the need to provide gender-friendly conditions in any political process. The act of 2055 B.S. Local Self-Government and its regulation of 2056 B.S. played a central role in setting aside a minimum of 20-40 per cent of seats of women in local government committees which strengthened the women further in their active participative role in governance, planning and empowerment initiatives. The various sectorial acts clearly incorporate the gender equality ideals. Both sexes were free of bonded labor in Kamaiya Elimination Act (2053/Amendment 2072). The Staff Provident Fund Act (2074/ Amendment 2063) provides equal access to social security benefits and the Jail Act (2074/ Amendment 2072) demands that inmates should be treated in a gendered way. According to the Public (Criminal and Punishment) Act (2027/Amendment 2015), gender-based violence is criminalized; equally, the offenders are subject to legal responsibility. The Civil Rights Act (2012/Amendment 2068) also continues to place more weight on the equality of rights, dignity, and protection of all citizens. Social Security Based on Contribution Act (2074) and National Women Commission Act (2074) ensure that women are included in management committees, empowerment programs, and legislation checking bodies, to institutionalize the gender inclusive governance.

Gender inclusion has also been incorporated in the policies of the major Political parties in Nepal. As an example, the election offers of the Nepal Communist Party (UML) and Nepali Congress (2074/2017) include a promise of at least 33 percent female representation in all state institutions and sectors, as well as to eradicate gender violence and empower women through education, training, and employment. The Rastriya Janata Party Nepal and Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum, Nepal lay stress on the participation of women in the process of political and social development, but the specific quotas are not described so clearly. On the constitutional level, the constitutional rights of Nepal (2015) determines the rights of women to equal paternity, equal representation in all state institutions, property ownership, safe motherhood, and affirmative discrimination in the field of education, health, labor, and social insurance. It also ensures that the rights of the socially and culturally marginalized groups are safeguarded and empowered by being included in the government proportionately, thus gender equality becomes an institutional principle of state policy. All these legislations, rules, and political engagements are evidence of the comprehensive

approach to gender inclusion in Nepal, which is endeavored to eradicate discrimination, increase the role of women, and support a fair balance of opportunities in the social, political, and economic environment.

### **Post: 1951 Political Transitions: Slow Institutional Recognition but Continued Marginalization**

A first time opening of political spaces occurred in Nepal with the establishment of democracy in 1951. In 1953, Sadhana Pradhan was elected Kathmandu Municipality and Dwarika Devi Thakurani in the 1959 parliamentary poll was a milestone. These instances were however exceptions and not signs of structural inclusion of gender. Women were still marginalized by the Panchayat system (1960-1990). Despite the 1980 provision of direct election to the Rashtriya Panchayat that did not produce many opportunities, representation was insignificant: two and three women respectively won the first and second Panchayat election. This implies that even in the face of procedural democratic reforms, the patriarchal norms and structural obstacles to the education gap, weak mobility, and party support, women continued to find it challenging to participate in politics.

### **Democratic Era after 1990: Introduction of Quotas but Persistent Barriers**

The Constitution of 1990 became a turning point as it required women candidates in the parliament at least five percent. But Table 2.8 reveals that the percentage of candidacy and success of women in 1990s was extremely low. As an example: In 1991, the number of candidates (women) was 5.9% and the number of elected (women) was 2.9%. In 1994, 6.0% of the candidate was women and 3.4% of them were elected. In 1999, 3.4% candidates were female candidates demonstrating regression and only 5.8% were victors. These trends serve to emphasize the idea that by merely demanding the candidacy of women and not promoting structural inequalities through lack of resources, male-dominated party elites and socio-cultural inhibitions leads to cursory substantive representation.

### **Local-Level Participation: Quotas as an Entry Point but Not Full Inclusion**

According to the local election reports 2017, indicate that, the 2.5 gives important insights on the influence of reservations in local bodies. The requirement that one woman be present in every ward in the year 1997 drastically raised the number of women in the local level. Table 2.4 indicates that more than 40,000 women joined local government because of reservation which is 19.67 out of 100. Nevertheless, structural inequality is also shown in the same data: 17 women became VDC Presidents and 17 Vice Presidents out of 3,913 VDCs. There is No woman was elected Mayor or DDC Chairperson. The Women had

massively filled reservation seats instead of competitive seats. This demonstrates how the effect of more visibility was reserving women, but power still remained in the hands of men. Women were there yet non-empowered. The also illustrates the gender inequality in the 1991 local elections: at the VDC level, women only represented 0.5% of the elected people and 0.9% of those who stood; this proves that the role of women in it is even less without gender-inclusive legal provisions.

### **Federal Democratic Nepal (Post-2015): Increasing Numerical Representation but Uneven Power**

This illustrate that the situation improved significantly since the 2015 Constitution required at least 33 percent of female representation. The local elections of 2017 in the federal structure resulted in the highest rates of participation: 38.98% of candidates and 40.96% of elected representatives were Women. The elected women in most of the local units surpassed the constitutional quotas. The local level of female-to-male representation ratio was 69 women per 100 man. This change is the first since the beginning of the history of Nepal that females reached almost critical mass representation throughout the current local institutions.

Nevertheless, it was still gendered power distribution. Although women were being elected in large numbers, they were mostly elected on to a reserved or junior post (Ward Members, Deputy Mayors), as opposed to an executive post. The male domination still exists in major decision making posts such as Mayor, Chairperson or Ward Chairperson. The data provided by election commission 2017 on the topic of Provincial Variations: Socio-Cultural Context Still Influences Participation shows some dramatic differences: The Provinces 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 have female elected representation over 40%. The Province 2 has by far lower levels, with 27.23% of elected women. The underrepresentation of Province 2 indicates a long-standing culture of patriarchy, caste system, and inhibitory gender roles promoted in the Madhesh region. This holds the view that legal provisions are not sufficient to break social barriers that are deeply embedded in the society. Analysis at District Level (Jhapa and Lalitpur): High Representation but Question of Influence. Only two district make comparatively analysis between gender and development, Lalitpur point to some positive dynamics: In Jhapa, the proportion of women candidates and elected officials reached 38 and 41.2 respectively. Lalitpur had 35.4% of women running and 39.4% of elected representatives. This data indicates the affirmation that women had almost parity in representation. This is however the critical question that your research objective would be to answer whether this numerical representation would translate into real influence in the

decision-making. Literature and field facts postulate: The deputy women in office do not have power since Mayors/Chairpersons hold the executive powers. The quotas that have resulted in the election of the many women are associated with their inadequate training, socio-cultural barriers, and male interference. The party formations are still male dominated when it comes to competitive posts. Therefore, not only are the data revealing quantitative improvement, but it is also apparent that it has certain qualitative constraints.

### **Conclusion**

The historical development of the inclusion of gender in Nepal features both the impressive developments and ongoing difficulties. Since the strongly patriarchal systems of the Lichhavi, Malla, Shah, and Rana, where women were not allowed much opportunity to take part in formal governance, the political participation of women has been influenced by the deeply ingrained socio-cultural patterns, the institutional obstacles, and the male-dominated system of power. Women had good access points to early legal provisions and constitutional guarantees, such as quotas, reservations, but structural inequalities were often restricting their substantive influences. The paradigm shift in development literature of Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) to Gender and Development (GAD) highlights how development and gender influence the shift to a paradigm of replacing women into the structures that already exist rather than gendered relations of power. WID and WAD had put women on the radar and structural inequalities into the limelight, whereas GAD, and such tools as the Moser Gender Planning Framework, focused on tackling power inequalities in the system and involved both men and women in equal development. These paradigms guide the research problem of discussing the role of historical changes in theory and practice in shaping current gender-inclusive development policies. Constitutional provisions and post-2015 changes in federal systems in Nepal that require 33% of women representation have delivered historic numeric competence at the local level, and women are currently taking almost 40 percent of the elective posts. However, as the analysis reveals, the concentration of power is still in the hands of the male executive posts, which creates a discrepancy between the representation and the real empowerment in terms of decision-making. The provincial and district-level differences also explain how the socio-cultural contexts mediate the impact of inclusion policies. On the whole, the history of the creation of gender-embracing policies, laws, and developmental models proves that Nepal has gone a long way and succeeded in raising the number of women within the country to a higher level, but to become truly empowered, it is essential to work on the structural and cultural obstacles. The study supports the fact that quantitative inclusion, as much as required, is never enough without qualitative change in power

structures, social constructs and practices at an institution, which squares well with the aim of the study to evaluate both the historical development and the current effects of gender-inclusion.

### Author contributions

**Dipendra Bikram Sijapati:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Study design, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data collection, Writing – original draft, Final writing – review and editing, and Research supervision.

**Mana Maya Mishra:** Conceptualization, Methodology/Study design, Data interpretation, Writing – Data finalizing.

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