KATHMANDU
A CITY FOR WOMEN

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Cities Without Slums

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Street view in
Kathmandu, Nepal

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FOREWORD

Charles Rochford Callanan,

UNOPS Country Director for Nepal

Women and girls live in cities historically designed by men, with little female input. Around the world, how women and girls experience their cities is hindered by infrastructure which doesn't consider their needs. However, if designed, built and managed correctly, infrastructure has the potential to work for everyone, including women, girls and other disadvantaged groups.

At UNOPS Nepal our collective goal with government, civil society and the community is to ensure women's voices, needs and interests are a core part of the post-earthquake reconstruction and a stronger Nepal. A central component of this is to include women's perspectives at every stage of infrastructure planning. Applying this approach to all aspects of urban-life, this report brings together national and local institutions, women-led organisations, students and industry professionals to collectively explore ideas for women's empowerment in city planning and policy.

The participatory approach led to the voices you hear in this report and how they assess the infrastructure and services supporting women in their daily lives. It is not a full picture of the entirety of Kathmandu's experience and there is clear acknowledgement of the many improvements made and still to be made. At the same time, these voices are important in our considerations for future plans and initiatives. The results place the perspective of women at centre stage, as they reflect on their lived experiences within their cities, covering important themes of safety, access to public spaces and use of public transport within the Kathmandu Valley.

By bringing women's voices to the fore, this report offers further insights that encourages diverse thinking about the cities we want for the future. As infrastructure underpins all of the SDGs, we hope that the collective aspirations of women, girls, government, civil society and the community at large are all heard in city planning that helps deliver a platform for Nepal's future and a brighter tomorrow.

FOREWORD *(continued)*

Giulia Maci,
Urban Specialist, Gender Focal Point, Cities for Women Programme, Cities Alliance

In a world where half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and the majority of the population is made up of women, the question of women's place in cities is crucial. How is the presence of women visible in the streets of the cities? How do women feel in public buses? What main issues do they come across every day, and how can these issues be addressed to improve their access to public space? Gender data are key to provide the evidence necessary to answer these questions and identify gender differences across all areas of urban life. There needs to be a holistic understanding of how social inequalities are built into cities through an exploration that combines cultural norms, social behaviours, political structures, and the physical space. Therefore, it is so important to incorporate the perceptions, stories, and ideas of women and community members in the city planning.

"There needs to be a holistic understanding of how social inequalities are built into cities through an exploration that combines cultural norms, social behaviours, political structures, and the physical space."

Giulia Maci

In this regard, Cities Alliance has recently developed the Women's Engagement City (WEC) profile, a tool for policy makers to guide the collection and analysis of data on how women and girls interact with their city. What is key in this participatory approach to planning, particularly given current COVID-19 restrictions in most countries, is to build strong collaboration amongst local and international experts and actors.

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In Nepal, the post-earthquake and post-COVID recovery provides an opportunity to apply the WEC approach and revive urban spaces and policies with gender inclusion, addressing the needs of all people, irrespective of age, gender or abilities. UNOPS Nepal and Cities Alliance, in collaboration with the local institutions, have launched a women-focused participatory process, concentrating on the urban areas of Kathmandu Valley. This report collects women's perceptions and experiences in the city (including accessibility, political representation and use of public spaces) and highlights the need to take gender aspects into account in the design of public services.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Although Nepal is one of the least urbanized countries in the world, its urbanization rate is one of the highest and is projected to rise at an annual rate of 1.9 per cent until 2050.[1] Most urban growth is concentrated in the Kathmandu Valley, one of the fastest growing urban conglomerations in South Asia, with rapidly expanding boundaries because of urban sprawl. With a population of 1.4 million in 2020[2], Kathmandu is the only city in Nepal with a population of more than 1 million.

The government of Nepal has instituted several measures to address the problems that arise with rapid urbanization, along with addressing the need to rebuild many areas following the devastating earthquake of 2015. The most important of these measures include a focus on decentralization with devolution of authorities and resources to the municipalities and rural municipalities or villages formed in accordance with the new constitution. Since the Kathmandu Valley has three districts, two metropolitan cities, 16 municipalities and two rural municipalities, Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (KVDA) was established in 2012 to coordinate and facilitate integrated urban development planning, develop and regulate planning standards and norms, and draw up physical development plan and implement such plan. Currently, the government is using the National Urban Development Strategy, 2017, and the National Urban Policy, 2007, as the major guidelines for managing the increasing urbanization. The KVDA is also planning the construction of four new towns in the Valley. The city plans are generally prepared using a participatory approach in which women participate; however, the real participation of women, especially the marginalized and disadvantaged, is not encouraging in terms of making their voices heard.[3]

UNOPS Nepal and Cities Alliance seek to include a women's perspective in city planning and post-earthquake reconstruction and to do this, we have launched a women-focused participatory process focusing on the urban areas of Kathmandu Valley. This process allows women to participate in planning their future, exploring and sharing their lived experiences in the city (including accessibility, services and use of public spaces), and promoting women's social and economic empowerment. It is important to conduct this process, because many urban plans are developed without women's meaningful participation, knowledge and interpretation, even though women constitute about 50 per

1   Bakrania, 2015.
2   https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cities/nepal.
3   Ministry of Urban Development, Nepal. *Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development* (*Habitat III*).

cent of the urban population and actively use urban spaces and public facilities. This process will help identifying potential key strategic interventions that could improve the lives and opportunities not only of women in urban areas, but of all residents.

In line with their commitment to a women's perspective of life in Nepal, UNOPS Nepal and Cities Alliance conducted a survey that reached about 100 respondents. Respondents anonymously answered questions in both English and Nepali, the official language of Nepal, to assess the inclusion of women in Kathmandu and their quality of life.

"I believe a more female friendly reorganization of Kathmandu would make the city liveable, not just for women but also men, who are also suffering from the catastrophic increase of motorcycles, cars, pollution and closing off of previously available public spaces to gather and spend community time."

Kathmandu resident

Following the survey, workshops were held online through *Google Meet* on 30 September 2020 in English and on 1 October 2020 in Nepali to discuss in more detail. Participants at the workshops are affiliated with a variety of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs):

- Kathmandu Valley Development Authority
- Department of Architecture and Urban planning, Pulchowk Campus
- Regional and Urban Planners Society of Nepal
- Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO)
- Lumanti Support Group for Shelter
- Women for Human Rights Nepal
- Women's Inclusion in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (WISTEM)
- Association of Students of Architecture
- Society of Nepalese Architects
- National Indigenous Women's Federation
- Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC)
- Federation of Women Entrepreneur's Associations of Nepal (FWEAN).

Quotations from respondents at the workshops are presented throughout this publication, which explores in-depth the results of the survey and workshops.

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2 GENDER AND THE URBAN CONTEXT IN NEPAL

Nepal's Constitution (2015) enshrines several key international frameworks to address women's rights, and the government makes considerable efforts to ensure that all laws and policies conform to the constitution's provisions on gender equality. One of the eight constitutional bodies include the National Women Commission. The constitution makes it mandatory for all political parties to abide by the principles of inclusion and promote proportional representation for appointment in government services. The government is implementing the Women's Empowerment Program, and gender-responsive budgeting has improved.[4] The current five-year development plan reflects gender concerns, and the population and housing census now reflects gender-disaggregated data, a major step in promoting and monitoring gender equity. Other relevant legislation includes the following: the Gender Equality Act, 2006; the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007 and Regulation, 2008; and Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2009 and Regulation 2010. Programmes such as Making Politics Work with Women have led to stronger leadership skills of women leaders and increased exposure of Constituent Assembly members to gender equality and women's human rights issues.[5]

In terms of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Nepal has made significant progress in reducing overall poverty, but challenges remain in hunger, nutrition and food security, and in maternal and child mortality. Education has improved, but with marked disparities across provinces. The proportion of households living in safe houses reached 40 per cent against the 2019 target of 37.8 per cent. The Rule of Law and Voice and Accountability indicators for Nepal show better performance compared to previous years. However, COVID-19 has caused huge disruptions in all aspects of life and will most likely negatively affect income, poverty, employment, and economic growth, while the existing financing gap widens[6].

As part of the process, key national statistics relevant to women are gathered. Table 1 provides this information for 2019 (unless indicated otherwise).

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4   National Planning Commission, 2020.
5   UN, 2020.
6   Ibid.
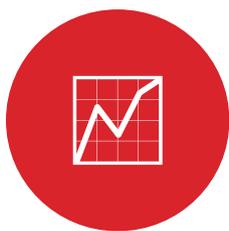
25%

of women live below
the poverty line

25%

of women have
experienced violence

34%

of seats in the
national parliament
are held by women

34%

of women own property
in their name

Table 1: Key National Statistics Relevant to Gender Equality

INDICATOR	VALUE	SOURCE
Gender Inequality Index[7]	0.476	Human Development Reports (HDR) 2020: Nepal
Population vulnerable to multidimensional poverty	22.3%	HDR, 2020
Women living below the poverty line	25.34%	HDR
Violence against women ever experienced	25%	National Planning Commission (NPC), Nepal, 2020
Proportion of population with access to internet (2017)	73%	HDR, 2020
Density of mobile phone users	137%	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Labour force participation rate[8]	Female participation in the labour market is 81.7%; 84.4% for men	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Female share of employment in senior and middle management	13.9%	HDR, 2020
Proportion of seats in Federal Parliament held by women, 2020	33.5%	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Proportion of seats in provincial assemblies held by women, 2020	34%	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Proportion of elected positions in local assemblies and ward committees held by women, 2020	47%	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Women's participation in public service	13.6%	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Women's participation in decision-making level in the private sector (%)	29.61%	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Women in public service decision-making positions (% of total employees)	13.6%	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Proportion of population under 14 years old	29.57%	World Bank, 2019
Secondary level of education or more	29.0% of adult women; 44.2% of men	HDR, 2020
Ratio of girls enrolment in tertiary education (graduate level)	0.90 (up from 0.88 in 2015)	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Percentage of literate women	57.7% compared to 75.6% men	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Percentage of women who owned property in their name	33.93% (target of 40% by 2030)	NPC, Nepal, 2020
Expected urban growth rates, by 2025	22.9%	Worldometer[9]

7   The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates that the GII shows the loss in potential human development due to disparity between female and male achievements in reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market. It ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater inequalities.

8   This measures the proportion of the working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work.

9   https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nepal-population/ [Linked accessed 25 October 2020]

Despite the legal framework, women in Nepal still face discrimination and multiple challenges. The National Planning Commission acknowledged:

"The main challenge towards ensuring gender equality in social and economic life and eliminating violence is the prevalence of patriarchal social ethos including multiple discriminations at the intersection of caste, class and gender. Unless there is a change in the mindset of the people through sensitization programs and other legislative measures, reaching the targets under this goal may not be possible. Furthermore, the commission highlighted that for example "it is essential to focus on the elimination of the structural barriers to gender equality, taking into account the various roles and vulnerabilities of diverse women and their level of influence at individual, household, community, national, and global levels."[10]

The workshops' discussions indicate that traditional practices and social norms frequently limit women's freedom, socially, economically and physically, and many laws are not actually implemented. According to the 2015 constitution, at all levels 40 per cent of nominee seats need to be for women. Inward committees, two of the four members must be women, one of them from the Dalit caste. In municipalities either the mayor or deputy mayor must be a woman, and three of the nine members in District Coordination Committees need to be women. Despite these significant steps to include women at all levels of politics, women in politics face huge challenges related to the prevalent patriarchal social norms, and communities are wary of accepting women as leaders. For women to take an effective place in decision-making, not only will there need to be capacity building and support, but strong measures are also needed to address the social and cultural barriers to their political participation[11].

Only 2 per cent of women have been elected as mayors or chairpersons of local governments, whereas women hold 91 per cent of deputy positions[12]. However, though women representatives are mostly found taking the deputy role, they are given the responsibility to monitor, evaluate and advocate which does carry significant responsibility and weight, even if this is not as much as the planning itself.

Women's participation in the labour market is high, and many women now work outside the home; however, women face a double burden, often dealing with multiple forms of discrimination based on such characteristics as caste, class or religion. Women are also paid less than men, even for senior professional positions, as evidenced by the personal experience of a workshop participant. One in four women has experienced violence against them[13].

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10 NPC, 2020
11 Baruah and Reyes, 2017.
12 UN Women, undated.
13 UN Women, undated.

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Although the newly identified municipalities in Nepal generally have low urban densities and few development initiatives, informal settlements are increasing; poverty levels are high; access to land and services is limited; and housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable as pressures increase because of rapid urbanization. Few jobs exist in the formal sector, and people face huge challenges in making a living as costs increase. Vocational skills and training opportunities are limited[14]. Only 25 per cent of the country's population has access to safe drinking water, although 88 per cent of households have access to electricity[15]. Little attention is paid to protecting ecosystems, or providing green and recreational spaces. Most public open spaces are polluted and under-utilized because of poor security, criminal activities, litter and sexual harassment, and as a result, open spaces, such as Ratna Park in the heart of Kathmandu, are not conducive to recreation and socialization. Urban residents are increasingly vulnerable to extreme environmental, climate and health disasters; there is inadequate investment in infrastructure; and a disparity is growing in access and levels of basic services. Cities are becoming increasingly overcrowded with people and vehicles. Local governments lack capacity and are unable to mobilize additional revenue. Legal procedures tend to be complex and inadequate, limiting the access of the people[16].

To develop an inclusive and productive city, women and girls need to feel safe and be able to reach their full potential. Yet, they face a range of challenges in both urban and rural areas, some of which are exacerbated in cities. As one survey respondent noted:[17]

"Women and child girls, who had to migrate from rural areas to the city due to ten years' armed conflict and poverty are the most exploited and vulnerable ones needing immediate attention and support."[17]

Workshop's participant

Several years ago, Action Aid conducted a women's safety audit in Kathmandu as part of its Safe City programme. This audit found that women and girls face violence, sexual harassment and abuse in all areas of the city, including their homes. Fear of this violence severely restricts their access to the city's amenities. Action Aid's research noted that lack of "access to quality services, such as public transport, streets and streetlights, electricity, public toilets, market, education and employment opportunities, safety and security are of great concern for different categories of women who participated in this study[18]". In particular, the research showed the following:

14 MoUD, 2016.
15 NPC, 2020.
16 MoUD, 2016.
17 Quotes throughout the publication are from participants of the UNOPS Nepal-Cities Alliance survey and workshops, unless noted.
18 Action Aid, undated.

- Violence remains a persistent feature of many women's lives. Fifty-three per cent of the women feel unsecured while travelling on public transport and walking around the bus stand; 63 per cent of respondents fear travelling on public transport; and 73 per cent feel being a female affects their personal security.

- Public harassment has become a normal phenomenon. Women and girls are discouraged from reporting cases because of lack of effective policies and mechanisms to address them. Those who do report cases are not able to get proper justice, discouraging other victims from reporting the cases.

- Growing tourism is encouraging drug and alcohol addiction, street vendors, brokers, and the sex market, which all directly affect women's security.

The report noted that public safety of women and girls should be understood from the perspective of the rights of women and girls and included in planning, with a focus on their right to mobility. Women and girls have a right to enjoy the streets, parks, public vehicles, public toilets, marketplaces and neighbourhoods of their city. Women-friendly infrastructure, streetlights, efficient transportation with special seating arrangements for women, strict safety norms with respect to harassment, and other public services should be facilitated.

One area of particular concern for women has been public transport. Research by the World Bank and Australian Aid in 2013 showed that in peak times women are at least one-third of the traveling public[19]. While both women and men are concerned about overcrowding on public transport, personal insecurity is far more of a concern for women, particularly those 19 to 25 years old (43 per cent of this group noting insecurity as a concern, particularly inappropriate touching, and 26 per cent of women 19 to 35 years old having experienced some form of sexual assault on public transit). Women also have the difficulty of traveling with young children. Although all public transport is legally required to have special seats reserved for women, this requirement is seldom enforced. Micros and tempos are the only public transport option for many women[20]. Several initiatives have been implemented to address safety concerns for women commuters. In 2015, Kathmandu began to run four 16-seat buses exclusively for women, along the busy Kalanki-Balkot route during peak hours[21]. The service is run by the Bagmati Transport Entrepreneurs Association and eventually hopes to have an all-female staff. Informal motorbike taxi apps have been implemented; however, they are too expensive for many people. Users can create a female profile and have the option to request a female motorbike driver, but since there are few female drivers, requesting a female driver can mean very long waits or no drivers being available.

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19 World Bank and Australian Aid, 2013.

20 Micros are small minibuses that are crammed with over-capacity in seats and as many standing passengers that will fit. Tempos are small, three-wheel open trucks on the back of a scooter. Those with a green stripe are electric.

21 Byrnes, 2015.

3 CITY PROFILE AND ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Methodology

In developing the Women's Engagement City (WEC) profile, the approach to engaging women and women's organizations in planning for their future in the city is very flexible and is designed to be adapted according to the context and the objectives for each city. It is a way of describing the extent to which an urban area is gender-responsive and of representing the nature of women's engagement in the city. What is key in this participatory approach to planning, particularly given current COVID-19 restrictions in most countries, is to build strong collaboration amongst local and international experts and actors. An iterative approach is being adopted that combines available technology and small group meetings (where possible, and given the maximum capacity allowed in the country under the current restrictions), with online meetings held in English and in the local language. Additional options can be the use of local radio networks, local *Facebook* pages, and *WhatsApp* groups, along with providing computers for small groups, if necessary. International experts share their methodologies, experience and approach, and provide such technical assistance as report writing, while local practitioners facilitate the process on the ground, engage community groups, and steer the implementation of the process, and planning. This is a capacity-building process that builds trust amongst the different groups, both in-country and internationally. It is also about identifying the essential part of a project and could provide lessons for future projects, such as developing ways to ensure more local engagement and ownership.

In Nepal, initial engagement involved identifying key stakeholders, contacting leaders and women's groups, and finalizing the indicators to be used in the assessment. Key stakeholder meetings were organized to discuss the workshop agendas and methodology with the primary intention to elicit and understand the local perspective and local knowledge, along with identifying additional stakeholders. Afterwards, on-line surveys were sent out to assess how the city's infrastructure and services support women in their daily lives. About 95 people completed the survey anonymously based on their own perceptions and knowledge. Following the survey, two collaborative workshops were held, with a total of 14 representatives of local groups to discuss the survey results, giving their views on a range of issues that women face in the city. The workshops are designed to encourage discussion and debate amongst the women, who then arrive at a general consensus on a rating for different characteristics of the situation women face in the city. In both the surveys and the workshops, women were asked to evaluate various aspects of women's lives in their cities, on a scale from 1 (critical) through 5 (almost satisfactory), to 9 (full), looking at questions relating to the preconditions, economic, political-institutional, and human and social capital aspects of their lives.

3.2 Urban Women: Caught Between Tradition and Change

The key issues raised by respondents through the participatory processes (particularly the survey and workshops) are discussed below. Overall, they assessed all characteristics of urban life as unsatisfactory or worse for women. Given the high levels of dissatisfaction with each of the characteristics identifying aspects of women's life in the city, what is particularly useful are the explanations that residents provided for their responses. For detailed reports of the outcomes of the survey and of the workshop discussions, please see Appendix 2 and 3.

CHANGES IN THE POSITION OF WOMEN DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS
One of the questions asked of survey respondents was whether the position of women in the city has improved or not during the last two years. Table 2 shows the responses.

"It is positive (change for women), as the Government and every organisation now have mandatory quota and encouragement for women."

Survey respondent

Table 2: Survey on Improvement of Women's Position in the City

EXTENT OF CHANGE IN TWO YEARS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Tremendously	5
Moderate	24
Slight	47
No change + normal	24

Interestingly, no respondents indicated an overall deterioration in the position of women, although the comments reveal more subtle nuances in responses, with some aspects mentioned as having deteriorated. These negative aspects included online shaming, pervasive harassment particularly on public transport, poor mobility for disabled people on public transport, and increased overcrowding on streets, making walking difficult. Regarding gender-related policies, lack of implementation is a problem.

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Specific issues mentioned by some respondents that have changed positively include greater participation by women in politics and business, increased opportunities for education for women, introduction of some measures to increase women's mobility and safety (such as women's seats on buses and the safety pin campaign), increased access to information and technology, and stronger laws in favour of equality. A survey respondent pointed out that *"With the introduction of some female-positive initiatives by development partners and government, some traction can be seen in terms of visibility and opportunities. However, deeper assessments of the impacts of these initiatives have not been undertaken, and thus cannot verify beyond surface level shifts"*.

Another respondent said: *"Overall, there have been positive changes. More women are being educated. In fact, in some segments, there is a larger presence of girls/women participation such as higher education. There is also an increase in women-led enterprises, albeit it is mostly in 'gendered' work, such as beauty salons, tailoring, etc. However, there has been an encouraging increase in the mobility sector with a growing number of women behind wheels"*

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF COVID-19
A negative change pointed out has been the impact of COVID-19 on women, as it has *"deepened the gendered division of labour and added more care responsibilities to women."*

URBAN-RURAL DISTINCTION
Survey respondents and workshop participants emphasized the difference between urban and rural areas, indicating that the situation of women in urban areas was generally far better than that of their rural counterparts, as women in rural areas face more challenges for most characteristics under consideration.

"Cities are much safer because of visibility, economic opportunities, health facilities. Rural areas are getting worse; lots of young girls are raped in rural areas due to people's mentality", said a participant.

"Things that are difficult in urban centres are magnified in the rural context."

Workshop's participant

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY, PUBLIC SPACES, AND OVERALL SAFETY IN THE CITY
A major concern for women in urban areas is their safety, particularly on public transport, on the roads and in public spaces.

Public Transport

Nepal has very high taxes on owning and importing cars, so many people rely on their own scooter or use taxis or public transport. Several participants mentioned being harassed on public transport.

"The first thing I have to think of as a student is, will I be home by sunset, how will I travel? It is a hindrance and the first thing I have to think about as a woman."

Workshop's participant

The psychological impacts of this fear were also discussed.

"It is not only facing the physical torture but also mental. Every time we have to think about our body and if we will be harassed. There is always a pressure. Physical and mental pressure also. Traveling in public vehicles for women, even in city areas, is not safe."

Workshop's participant

Another participant noted that because boys are physically strong, they push their way into the microbuses and girls have to wait for hours and hours to get a microbus. On the positive side, as noted earlier, there are now some big buses with areas for women, and bus conductors give space for women. Traditional taxis are very common, but they are expensive in comparison to micros and tempos and the haggling required and safety concerns mean that not many women use them alone. Several apps have been developed to offer cheap private transport, such as Tootle and Pathao (a mobile-based motorbike taxi app). It is possible to ask for female drivers; however, there are not many female drivers, so waiting times can be long or the journey is cancelled. Having more female drivers who only take female customers is a short-term option for women to be able to move more freely. However, currently, a lack of regulation means that harassment is possible when using the app. Apps, such as *Pathao and Eddy cab* could provide a solution as the rider can select the driver's gender, and the transit is trackable. Improving monitoring and the regulatory environment could go a long way to address this.

Road Safety

Increasing urbanization in Kathmandu Valley has also led to a rise in the use of vehicles and a corresponding increase in pollution. Very few residents of Kathmandu Valley own their own vehicles (less than 5 per cent of residents), so the residents need to walk, use a scooter or public transport, or cycle to get around. Very few women cycle to work, with challenges relating to extremely high levels of pollution, lack of cycling lanes, overcrowded streets,

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and theft of bicycles. Similar problems hinder walking around the city or using scooters: narrow and overcrowded sidewalks; dust; pollution; lack of streetlights; and high risk of accidents. The use of bicycles decreased from 6.6 per cent to 1.5 per cent between 1991 and 2011, along with the proportion of people who walk, from 53.1 per cent to 40.7 per cent in the same period[22], primarily because of air pollution. In Lalitpur very few local people cycle, most cyclists are foreigners with heavy air purifying masks. Residents have started a campaign, Kathmandu Cycle City 2020, to increase the use of bicycles by making the city more cycle-friendly, thereby also addressing social inequality. The campaign includes lobbying for more cycle lanes across the whole city, a point emphasized in the workshop discussion. Recent reports suggest that the number of cyclists has increased with COVID-19, as people turn to bicycles instead of public transportation. In September 2020, the cycling advocacy organization, Nepal Cycle Society, reported that more than 45,000 new cyclists have been added in Kathmandu, with more than 100,000 cyclists in Kathmandu Valley. Imports of bicycles to Nepal increased from Rs 801.3 million in 2015/16 to Rs 1.5 billion in 2018/19.[23]

Public Spaces
Participants noted that women-centric spaces are limited and are particularly unsafe at night. However, there are more open spaces planned in the new cities, which is commendable, and some new public spaces have been provided, such as those inside the ringroad, but *"they just need to be made more safe, with lights for example"*.

"A reluctance of being in public as it is seen as a male space. Less women work and more stay at home to look after families. Women do not go to cafés by themselves or meet regularly in women-only groups. Men, however, meet in groups, drink in public and sit alone in public spaces. There is a fear of sexual harassment or violence on public transport (cramped buses) and a fear by many parents of allowing their daughter out in public by herself. Women struggle to own land or work outside the domestic sphere. Thus, they are financially dependent and kept at home. With family prohibiting travel for women outside the home, it is difficult for women to claim space" - Workshop's participant.

22 Tuladhar, 2020.
23 Ojha, 2020.

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"As a student of architecture, we need to go to these public spaces to study the space. I have never been to these spaces in the night-time, just because it is unsafe, and I don't want to put myself in a dangerous situation. That speaks for itself. It is sad that I have not been."

Workshop's participant

There is a general lack of public spaces for both women and men. Traditional ponds, courtyards and water sources are good public spaces, as they are functional and spaces where people can meet and walk. But even the traditional water areas are drying up and when they are dried up, people build on the land. Public spaces are traditionally used for elders and community members to rest and hold community or cultural events, but these spaces are not protected and were damaged in the earthquake, and they have not been prioritized for rebuilding and preservation. They are important cultural heritage and public spaces, but they are disappearing. The little existing open spaces that do exist (such as ponds, water sources, and courtyards) do not include greenery. Lack of open space negatively affects the poor, who live in very crowded conditions, with no recreational areas, parks or open spaces nearby; while the lack of green space, the high amount of dust, and high pollution all impact the small amount of public space that does exist.

The new towns were planned without spaces for meeting. This situation is now being addressed with the new plan trying to include a *courtyard system* where neighbours (particularly the women and elderly) would be able to meet and mix in a relatively safe environment.

Safety at Home
Women are also not always safe in their homes. As was pointed out, there is a big issue with rape and sexual violence in Nepal.

"During lockdown, 82 per cent of sexual violence was committed by family members and relatives. This is worrying as family, the safe space, is not safe. Women and girls are still not safe, not only in their community but also in their own homes."

Workshop's participant

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Initiatives to address domestic violence include NGOs establishing *safe houses* for abused women and children, and the work by the Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare. There is a toll-free number where women can receive information about a place to live and counselling services. However, it is not clear that the women who need this most have this information. Trafficking in and through Kathmandu is also a major concern.

Economic and Financial Safety
Several issues relating to women's economic and financial safety and security were also raised. With regard to public transportation, the high cost impacts more negatively on women than men, with many women opting to walk rather than take the bus to save money. This is despite safety concerns associated with walking on overcrowded streets or those with limited lighting. Workshop participants said that they have many examples of people not being able to work and projects not happening as a result of the high transportation fares, which demonstrates these costs have a big impact on women's financial security.

Some legislated mechanisms benefit women economically. In government jobs, 33 per cent of jobs are now secured for women, and there are deductions in taxes on land purchases by women. As one respondent put it, *"this means that they have tried to be inclusive"*. A challenge is that this has not really led to increased economic security as it is often in name only.

As a participant said, *"The government came up with positive discrimination, tax deduction. That led to women having access in the house, but in terms of decision-making power they do not have ability to make decision."*

"People do it only for tax rebate now but in actuality there is no power. Numbers have increased and legally it has improved but there is not actually change in decision making power."

Workshop's participant

WOMEN'S TRUST AND CONFIDENCE TOWARDS PUBLIC AUTHORITIES
Several respondents applauded the positive change in the laws of the country, and the fact that there are now quotas for women at various levels of government, and *"reservation and improvement or amendment of law giving special discounts in property transfer /ownership tax etc."* Women are clearly visible in politics now, and the laws are seen to favour equality" said a participant, *"the women participation in the palika level like deputy mayor, is a positive change."*

Despite this, however, a characteristic rated as very low is the fact that women generally do not trust public authorities or have confidence that their issues will be addressed, and their voices heard. Several people pointed out that this lack of trust is not just by women, but that most citizens share similar views, and this situation has been exacerbated by the government's handling of COVID-19.

"Panellists of government events are always men. Women are given minimum time to give in their views. When discussion with audience happens, women are neglected. Questions are never put to women. Maybe because men do not feel comfortable doing it in our society. People talk about equality, but it is not happening in ground zero." - Workshop's participant

Public authorities are not easily accessible. Most people relate only to the ward and municipal government. However, a participant noted that the local government does not consult people in planning, budgeting, or considering their preferences. Another pointed out that local government is not always aware of its responsibilities.

"You can access government officials on websites, and you can find contact details. But the question is: Does the person know about the organization and can they help? Will they give you sufficient information?" - Workshop's participant

It is mandatory to elect women and have a woman in the ward-level community and have minority representatives as ward officials. Although women and minorities are represented in local government, this is not very effective at raising women's voices in politics as they are marginalized. Investment is needed to support women political leaders and reduce the gap in capacities that hinder women in politics.

"We have a quota for women to be elected, but they haven't been that successful because they are marginalized there."

Workshop's participant

ABILITY OF WOMEN TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT AND MAKE A LIVING
An important consideration preventing women from being able to make a living or be financially independent is skills development. Women with skills are better placed to gain employment, which increases their social standing and improves their ability make decisions and be financially independent. However, many women do not continue with the skills they develop or what they have learnt through education or vocational training, as society puts cultural pressures on them to get married and have children. This tends to be generational. Efforts to address this include those offered by Women's Inclusion in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (WISTEM), who provide training on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills to help women realize that they can be financially independent, if they continue with what they have learned.

Men get paid a higher wage than women; even professional, educated women are not paid the same as their male counterparts. One participant is a professional architect working on big projects, who faces clients who expect her to charge less as a woman. She noted that this is in the educated urban sector, and it is worse in other groups. When women receive home loans or financial loans, they have to put a man as a guarantor.

A woman participant mentions: *"The father-in-law, brother or husband has to be put on the paperwork. So, women cannot get financial loans without men. There is a trust issue there in that the men think women will not pay back the loans. Women also do not get houses handed over from in-laws or parents as the next generation."*

Generally, the better educated women have easy access to bank accounts. Less educated women tend to prefer cooperatives. One participant described how Lumanti, a non-profit organization, has worked on helping women set up cooperatives and saving small amounts and getting loans from the cooperative. Through this assistance, women avoid forms and working with formal banks; women using these services are not comfortable using banks and are often illiterate. Men and women are part of the cooperative now and can use it for any income-generating activity, or even for health, education, or culture.

Childcare is a financial and safety concern for both women and their children. A participant noted that women carry their children when they work to clean the streets, because there are no child-care facilities.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Several respondents noted that education for girls has improved markedly in recent years.

Participants noted that all people are more able to get jobs and perform them properly if they have proper and appropriate training. This training needs to be provided. Women need to be educated to be better able to overcome the patriarchal attitudes in the community.

"More women are being encouraged to take up technical subjects like engineering and although the proportion is nowhere near being balanced, it has improved a lot. We have seen women in leadership roles slightly more, giving young women hope for a more equal and balanced society."

Survey respondent

GENDER-RELATED POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Although there are many examples of laws and government policies being in favour of women and gender equality, in reality these laws and policies are often only on paper. What is needed is for awareness and implementation of the laws and policies to be addressed.

"An awareness campaign should be conducted; implementation of the policies provided in the constitution should be done; provision should be made for women-friendly public bodies; priority should be given to women's education in cities; some percentage certainty should be given to women in private companies and businesses."

Workshop's participant

TOP CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN

Survey respondents were asked what they feel are the three *most challenging problems* for women's participation in the city. Tradition, cultural norms, and domestic responsibilities were overwhelmingly the top responses, with more than half of respondents giving them as the most significant challenge. Respondents believe that social norms and traditional gender roles prevent women from participation.

4 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGING

The engagement of government representatives, residents and community organisations representatives in this participatory process has highlighted some of the positive changes in the lives of women in Kathmandu in recent years, but has also highlighted several challenges women continue to face in the city.

Based on the various inputs of women in the survey and workshops, several key priorities emerged for consideration in planning urban areas that promote and protect active participation by women in all aspects of their lives.

Challenge traditional cultural norms and share domestic responsibilities

As in many parts of the world, respondents felt that some people in Nepal are becoming more "gender-friendly." This is particularly true in cities.

"Women wish to be less and less involved in household management and child care, and are increasingly expanding their involvement in other areas of society. At the same time, the world is pushing towards greater equality, and women assume roles and responsibilities previously only filled by men". - Workshop's participant

Despite this, several recommendations were made to challenge cultural norms and expectations that are still placed on women. Government could start by engaging with families and raising awareness in order to achieve better opportunities and conditions for women to move ahead.

"Equality starts from home so there should be rigorous engagement with family, recognition of women's work and balancing unpaid care work needs to be discussed and minimized to make women economically sustained."

"Women need to feel like they are allowed and able to be anywhere by themselves in public."

Workshop's participant

Respondents pointed out that patriarchal attitudes of both public authorities and the private sector need to change: *"workplace governance and policies need to be inclusive in an intersectional way so that aspects of identity, for example, gender, ethnicity, religion, caste and so on do not cause discriminations - I am personally more aware of this being an issue in private sector and I'm not sure about public sector."*

At city level, governments could address this issue by prohibiting sexualised stereotypes of women in public advertising.

At all levels, efforts could be made to educate men and boys about gender stereotypes, women's basic human rights, and violence against women.

Make public spaces, streets and public transport safer for women

While there have been several notable initiatives to improve public spaces and public transport, particularly in terms of addressing women's concerns, several suggestions for improving city safety were provided by workshop participants and survey respondents including:
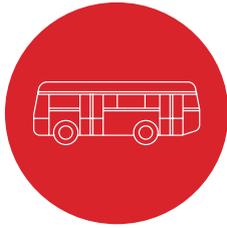
- Investing in bigger and more public buses will reduce women's reliance on the unsafe micros and tempos. A stop on request programme and a special bus pass for women can be also introduced on those routes servicing large numbers of women commuters. Trainings and sensitization of bus drivers and conductors on gender and women's safety can be conducted to increase their commitment to prevent harassment of women passengers. Now, Tootle and Pathao (a mobile based motorbike taxi app) offer cheap private transport. Apps such as Pathao and Eddy cab could provide a solution as they have preference of the driver's gender and are trackable. Improving monitoring and the regulatory environment could go a long way to address this.

- Collaborating with residents to raise consciousness about the need to keep the local area clean and improve relationships between neighbors by organizing cultural, sport and recreational activities in the neighborhood public spaces

  At the moment there are some cases of small-scale community action where people are conserving public spaces in their own local community, e.g. paving and gardening, but participants were not aware of a larger, city-wide civil society group doing this. Local government and civil society could work together to promote such initiatives city-wide.

- Continuing with efforts to improve cycling infrastructure, such as Lalitpur municipality trying to provide cycling lanes. Improving walking infrastructure, coupled with educating people about road safety could encourage more (and safer) walking and cycling.

- Creating safer, more open and well-lit public spaces is an urban planning priority. For instance, good lighting was highlighted as a prerequisite for making a space safe. Public toilets for women should be a priority especially near markets and public spaces. Vendors should be provided with amenities and facilities to work at different times of the day, in order to create more active public spaces.
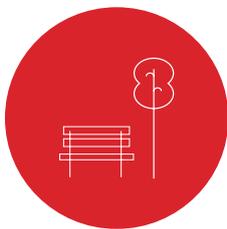
  Participants described how urban areas have traditional courtyards, which provide public spaces for all genders and people use the courtyard to meet neighbours and be outside. Both women and men use these types of spaces, and these spaces need to be protected. One of the problems with the planning of the new towns was they were planned without spaces for meeting. Currently, this is being remedied, with the new plan including a courtyard system. The new plan is awaiting approval from the government cabinet and it is hoped that having a courtyard system in

Investing in **bigger and more public buses** will reduce women's reliance on the unsafe micros and tempos.

Creating **safer, more open and well-lit public spaces** is an urban planning priority.

the new towns will be a priority for future projects. The plan is to set up a courtyard system that would provide communal spaces of about 50 sq. km area with over half being green space. Reintroducing the courtyard style in the new planning will allow residents to have safe open areas where they can meet and mix with their neighbours.

- Planning safe public spaces for women and girls by starting with the analysis of the various uses of public spaces: who uses them, when, and for how long. Planning and design should also consider who doesn't use that public space , when and why. Women should be encouraged to collaborate with local institutions in the definition of safe and inclusive public spaces.

- At city level, cultivating a zero-tolerance attitude towards harassment in public spaces, and increasing visible policing could reduce levels of harassment and help to make women feel safer in public spaces.

Implement specific gender policies and fostering the participation of women in local governance

Many of Nepal's laws and the constitution are progressive in that they make specific mention of the need to promote gender equity and allow for quotas in politics. However, several recommendations have been made to improve implementation at all levels.

Many of Nepal's laws and the constitution are progressive in that they make specific mention of the need to promote gender equity and allow for quotas in politics.

- **Raise awareness of existing rights, laws and policies.** Respondents noted that many laws and the constitution are progressive, and should promote better conditions for women. However, they felt that there needs to be far more effective implementation of existing policies and laws. This requires awareness-raising of both public and the authorities themselves, particularly local government, along with improving access to information. As a couple of participants noted,

"Even when laws, such as non-discrimination in land rights and inheritance laws exist, practical implementations can be flawed (for example, a woman owns the land title but doesn't have any decision-making authority)."

Workshop's participant

"Providing access to information required (for example, knowledge about legal procedures, knowledge about ward-level budgeting, economic opportunities, training opportunities, access business loans and so on) and helping women to have safety net (such as access to social security schemes). " - Workshop's participant

Investment is needed to support women political leaders and to **reduce the gap in capacities that hinder women.**

• **Introduce gender-based planning and budgeting and support women in politics.** As indicated earlier, great strides have been made in overtly addressing gender in government planning, such as the five-year development plan, and the population and housing census. However, gender-based planning and budgeting is needed at municipal level. Although women and minorities are represented in local government (it is mandatory to elect women and have a woman in the ward-level community and have minority representatives as ward officials), this is not always effective in promoting gender-sensitive planning. As a workshop respondent pointed out: *"They are filling a quota for women, but then they (women) are marginalized once within."* Investment is needed to support women political leaders and to reduce the gap in capacities that hinder women. This requires targeted capacity building and leadership training for women in politics who hold decision-making positions. It would be useful to engage women in these positions and their colleagues to develop an understanding of what capacity challenges and shortfalls they feel they face in their workplace, and how they believe these could be overcome.
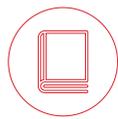
Improve education and training opportunities for women and girls

Education of girls is becoming more common and accepted, particularly in the city. However, more effective education and training for women and girls is needed to increase their ability to be independent. A respondent summarizes the changes needed:

"Ensure every girl child has access to better education from an early age so that she can compete for higher education; provide jobs equally with everyone; give special emphasis to girls on extracurricular activity in school (public school) and equality opportunity in all school programmes; and provide leadership training programmes." - Workshop's participant
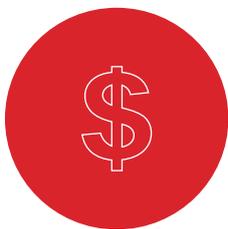
Lumati has worked on **helping women set up cooperatives** and saving small amounts, and ensuring that women are able to get loans from the cooperative

Assess the benefits of cooperatives for less educated women

One of the positive changes noted is that there are some noteworthy instances which highlight where women's engagement in economic activities is being actively encouraged, For example, Lumati has worked on helping women set up cooperatives and saving small amounts, and ensuring that women are able to get loans from the cooperative. Through this, women can avoid forms and working with formal banks which greatly assists the many women who are not comfortable using banks and are often illiterate. Men and women now belong to the cooperative and can use it for any income generating activity, or even health, education or culture. They also work with slum dwellers, and with slum dwellers initiatives themselves in Kathmandu valley.

It would be useful to assess the successes and advantages of this approach, and see how this could be replicated in urban areas across the country.

CITIES FOR WOMEN:

- Gender-transformative public advertising
- Women-only buses
- Community- led events
- Cycling lanes
- Public toilets
- Segregated and safe public spaces (women, boys and all)
- Support to street vendors, public lightning for active public spaces
- Traditional Courtyards and Urban greenery
- Zero tolerance towards sexual harassment (signages?)
- Gender-based planning and gender budgeting (close to the "municipal building"
- Community based childcares
- Women cooperatives and microcredits (close to a shop with a woman)

Overall, this participatory process seems to have been very successful, with several participants in both the workshops and the survey saying how much they had valued sharing experiences and knowledge as part of the process. This can inspire policy makers and local organisations to work together on improving women's wellbeing in Kathmandu. Partners involved expressed a strong interest in the topic and are eager to work on developing some specific solutions to help to make the new towns or the reconstruction projects more gender inclusive.

Indications are positive that local stakeholders (national, local, and community-level) and international stakeholders are willing to engage in the necessary collaboration to take constructive and tangible steps towards operationalizing the findings of this report. This requires more in-depth analysis such as community mapping, women-walk, safety audits of public spaces, and focus group discussions looking at women and their experiences. In designing and building the new towns these findings can help to identify and clarify planning recommendations and guidance on public space design, and housing. What is important is to engage residents, particularly the women themselves in a range of participatory processes. To this end, it would be useful to develop gender-planning guidelines for the new towns, and to engage residents and planning officials at all levels of government in developing, understanding and implementing them.

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