

# **Redefining Leadership through the Lens of Conflict Affected Women**

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**By**

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The Degree in the Master of Arts  
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Faculty of Social Science and International Relations



**PAÑÑASASTRA UNIVERSITY OF CAMBODIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The decade long armed conflict in Nepal concluded formally with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006. The effect of the conflict was widely spread, and amongst all, women were hit the hardest. The plights of women were more severe due to gender specific violence and inequalities exacerbated by the conflict. Even in the post conflict period, due to the patriarchal social structure, women were sidelined from the mainstream political discussions and decisions.

Despite all odds, the role of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) in implementing intervention activities such as training, awareness campaigns and psychosocial support have been instrumental in achieving impressive growth in building a foundation for assuming the civil and political leadership role by women.

Nagarik Aawaz being one of the non-governmental peace building organizations, have been involved in creating space for the conflict affected women to express their feelings, grief and needs. It also provides them with the opportunities to create networks and gain encouragement to move ahead in their lives with enhanced capabilities. Through various activities, it has been transferring the core values of care, safe space, everyday peace, trust and relationship building and listening to unheard voices of the conflict affected women. Nagarik Aawaz also focuses on developing leadership skills of the conflict affected women to make them the change agents for their communities.

This action research intends to support Nagarik Aawaz team and the conflict affected women to establish a common understanding of leadership style that empowers the latter. It further gives an opportunity to integrate a decade long experience of developing leadership skills and

theories in creating a standard framework that can be applied in the works of other NGOs and CBOs established for the same cause.

Various leadership theories propounded in different times and contexts are considered in the research to explore different dimensions of leadership. These theories recognize that all meaningful and enduring social change begin with the equal and just participation of both, male and female. These theoretical approaches are considered viable for empowering women to fight for their just cause. Subsequently, they help identify injustices and oppressions and inspire to develop a more just and equitable society with equal political, economic and social rights.

The research identifies prevailing patriarchal societal norms and values as a major impediment against women leadership at community level and highlights the effectiveness of participatory leadership approach as a platform for women in exercising their rights. It further stresses the fact that the women leadership in a society where leadership itself is embedded within a deeply engrained gender system; its social acceptance is highly questionable. Thus, the role of the NGOs and CBOs in implementing gender sensitive intervention activities to support women to withstand existing social barriers is realized. The research, likewise, identifies that women and their constituent identity as a feeble group of the society has created a resonant effect on their role as a leader. Until, women as a group is not empowered, it is evident that empowering selected women hardly bring changes that benefit women. Therefore, it is evident that well-founded initiatives are essential in establishing the social identity of women as a more influential social group and creating a gender balanced society. The research, at the end, develops a position paper that would be a foundation for shaping conflict affected women leadership program in the future.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The ten years armed conflict is a major driver of socio-political change in Nepal. The losses it has inflicted in terms of human and social capital is irreplaceable. The effect of the conflict was widely spread, and its consequences are still reverberating. As in any conflict, women were hit the hardest. The plights of those women who suffered and who are still suffering are the major source of inspiration of this research.

This research entitled "*Redefining Leadership through the Lens of Conflict Affected Women*", would not have gained this shape without the supervision, guidance, cooperation and assistance of several individuals and institutions. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my mother Nita, husband Jayendra and my two beautiful children Prajay and Nyra for their unflinching encouragement and support throughout.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACTS – Applied Conflict Transformation Studies

CAW - Conflict Affected Women

CBO - Community Based Organization

CPA - Comprehensive Peace Agreement

CPN-M - Communist Party of Nepal- Maoist

FAR - Feminist Approach Research

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

INGO - International Non-Government Organization

NA - Nagarik Aawaz

NGO - Non-Government Organization

PAR - Participatory Action Research

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Conflict Analysis**

Nepal is a small and beautiful landlocked country rich in its culture, natural beauties, people and places. It is between the two big countries India and China. Its total area is 1,47,181 square kilometers. Nepal is popularly symbolized across the globe, by the highest mountain in the world; Mount Everest.

Looking back at the history of Nepal, it was governed by a series of royal dynasties until the 1900s when a pro-democracy movement was launched by various political parties which resulted in multiparty democracy in 1991.

Traditionally, social life in Nepal has been highly stratified, marked by caste and other hierarchies that shaped much of the country's social, economic and political life. The dramatic political changes of 1990 raised popular expectations of social progress and greater equality, but although some statistical indicators from the early 1990s show positive developments in the economy, the living conditions of most people remained poor (Mandal, 2018 ). Around this time, some analysts were noting that deep-rooted socio-economic conditions favorable to armed conflict existed in Nepal, and warned of the possibility of a radical movement rising to channel longstanding grievances (OHCHR Nepal, 2012).

Nepal has a diverse society which has a mosaic of various caste and ethnic groups. According to 2011 census, 81.3% of the Nepalese population is Hindu, 9.0% are Buddhist, 4.4% are Muslim, 3.0% are Kiratist (indigenous ethnic religion), 1.4% are Christian, 0.1% are Sikhs, 0.1% are Jains and 0.7% follow other religions or no religion. Each group having their own

socio-cultural traditions, Hinduism being the dominant religion. Hinduism is deeply patriarchal which heavily influences the way women are treated in the society. Women have been long perceived as inferior to men and has been suffering a multilayer of discrimination just being a woman. Traditionally, the majority of the women of Nepal were confined in the domestic sphere and neglected from basic health, education and economic independence. Therefore, there was a huge participation of girls and women as combatant in the Maoist movement.

The decade long conflict which started from 1996 between the then Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and the government came to an end in 2006 with signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006 leaving behind wounds which are yet to be healed. Women were the ones who suffered the most and are yet to get peace dividends due to forever patriarchal structure and political unwillingness to accommodate women in the peace building process. Of the total 13,344 people killed during the period of Maoist insurgency 10,297 were men and 1,013 were women. Similarly, of the 84,969 people abducted during the period of Maoist insurgency 2,087 were women, while identity of 69,403 people abducted during the period was not known (Baidya, 2009) . The government never kept women at the center point while drawing Comprehensive Peace Accord and in vital processes such as army integration or social integration which clearly states the negligence of the government despite their commitment to tackle with the issues of all forms of discrimination concerning gender, caste, class, and religion. The CPA itself under its article 7.1.1. reiterates that nobody should be discriminated against on the basis of color, gender, language, religion, age, race, national and social origin, wealth, disability, birth and other status, thought or belief<sup>1</sup>. According to the UN,

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<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive Peace Agreement held between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) on 2006 under its article 7.1.1 states that both sides reiterate their commitment to the respect and protection of human rights and to international humanitarian law and accept that nobody should be discriminated against on the basis of color, gender, language, religion, age, race, national and social origin, wealth, disability, birth and other status, thought or belief.

only 18 out of 300 peace accords signed since 1989 (representing 10 of 45 conflicts) has women participation (Barsa M. , 2014 June 10th ).

Female ex-combatants and other conflict affected women who contributed as social capital in development and peace process are not officially recognized. During the integration of People's Liberation Army with the government of Nepal army, most of the female ex- combatants, unmarried or married, with or without children were rejected on the ground of inadequate capacity. The government provided them with a minimal amount during an enforced voluntary retirement, which was inadequate to start any new venture or career. The conflict affected women are often the victims of social conflict when people delve into their past in name of discerning 'purity' and are often discarded as unmarriageable women (Deon, 2017). This stigmatization prevents them from using their experience which they gained during war for their personal and community's advancement in all sectors from social, economic to culture; which further led to narrow down their space for assuming leadership roles.

However, there was an impressive growth in building a foundation for assuming the civil and political leadership role by women as a result of the decade long conflict. It left a remarkable awareness that the involvement of women in every sector of the society is fundamentally important. Women rights advocates rejoiced the advancement in women's roles as a result of the conflict. Women started taking the tasks which were earlier reserved for men; for example- being the head of the house and taking major decisions, taking part in the funeral which was considered inauspicious in the past and women being part of the National Security Force and People's Liberation Army. It challenged the patriarchal notion that women are receivers and need protection. The change was welcoming and got reflected in the new progressive Constitution which promotes gender equality. Under the new Constitution, the rights of women as a fundamental right (FR) is ensured through legislation from the very initial stage under

Article 38. Consequently, the constitutional provision setting aside 33% representation of women in Nepal's all state machineries is a major breakthrough (Jha, 2015).

After the Comprehensive Peace Accord when the country moved forward towards peacebuilding; government and non-governmental, national and international organizations have been engaging with the conflict-affected women for their empowerment that would help to build their capacity to lead their respective communities. Various interventions such as training, awareness campaigns, psychosocial support and orientations on transitional justice, peacebuilding and human rights have been conducted in targeted areas of the respective organizations. Similar faces are seen in trainings and orientations of various NGOs which is not bad for them as they get to learn and explore more. However, the gap lies in reaching out to more conflict-affected women who are struggling to sustain their daily lives, carrying trauma and frustration. There is a lack of coordination and strategy amongst the NGOs working with similar targeted groups which would have to multiply the efficiency of work and reach more people.

Most NGOs focus on the program and fail to reflect upon the learning gained through the experience while conducting the programs. Hence, it is very important to reflect upon NGOs work, and define and deconstruct the kind of leadership NGO wants to develop with the conflict-affected women. With an experience of working with the conflict affected women on their leadership development, I believe reflection of our work will help assess the value and efficacy of leadership development interventions that we are engaged in. As a social organization and human rights activists, we have invested an enormous amount of resources and energy in building leaders for social transformation. However, we have never critically analyzed our understanding of leadership and the kind of leaders we have created.

Nagarik Aawaz being an NGO working on conflict transformation and peace building have been engaging with more than 1800 conflict-affected women from all the seven provinces to provide them relief, support them while undergoing the transitional justice mechanism and empower them to lead their respective communities. Some of these women have even taken a leadership role in the new federal system of Nepal. The key interventions are creating space for them to express their feelings, grief and needs. This space also introduces them to other conflict-affected women where they create networks and gain encouragement to move ahead in their lives. Capacities are built through trainings and orientations in peacebuilding, gender, basic psychosocial care and issued based workshops to update them on the present legal provisions and policies of the government and ways to seek justice. The leadership program is a combination of training and small grants to channel their learnings in their respective communities. The training is provided twice a year and it is a residential training with a duration of five days long. After each training, the interested women participant takes this issue forward through various peace initiatives in their respective communities. Prior to the commencement of the event, they submit a proposal and conclude it with an after-action report. These processes are part of enhancing their leadership skill. Nagarik Aawaz firmly believes that by empowering and engaging conflict affected women through leadership development that inherits self-assurance, they could be the change agents for their communities and support other less privileged people.

However, the program limitation in developing the leadership skills through training and provision of small grants to conduct peace initiatives, lacks space for innovation and creativity. Nagarik Aawaz have always inculcated its core values – care, safe space, everyday peace, trust and relationship building and listening to unheard voices in all its program including conflict affected women’s leadership program. Through this program, it has also been transferring these values to the participants. However, not all the new staffs are aware about the essence and ways



to instil these values in our work. Therefore, the leadership program is mainly lead by the core staff as they are familiar with the values and working modality of Nagarik Aawaz. This leads to dependency on the core staffs which further narrows the space for creativity and innovation for both the core staffs and the new ones.

There is strong need to create space both for the conflict affected women participants of the program and the working teams to create a common understanding of what kind of leadership is Nagarik Aawaz guided. This creates a foundation to design, create and take forward the program as per the common understanding of Nagarik Aawaz team and with the inputs and needs provided by the conflict affected women who are direct result of the program.

Therefore, this action research gives an opportunity to institutionalize the values and integrate the decade long experience of developing leadership skills and recent theories in creating a standard framework that can be applied in the works of other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) working for the same cause.

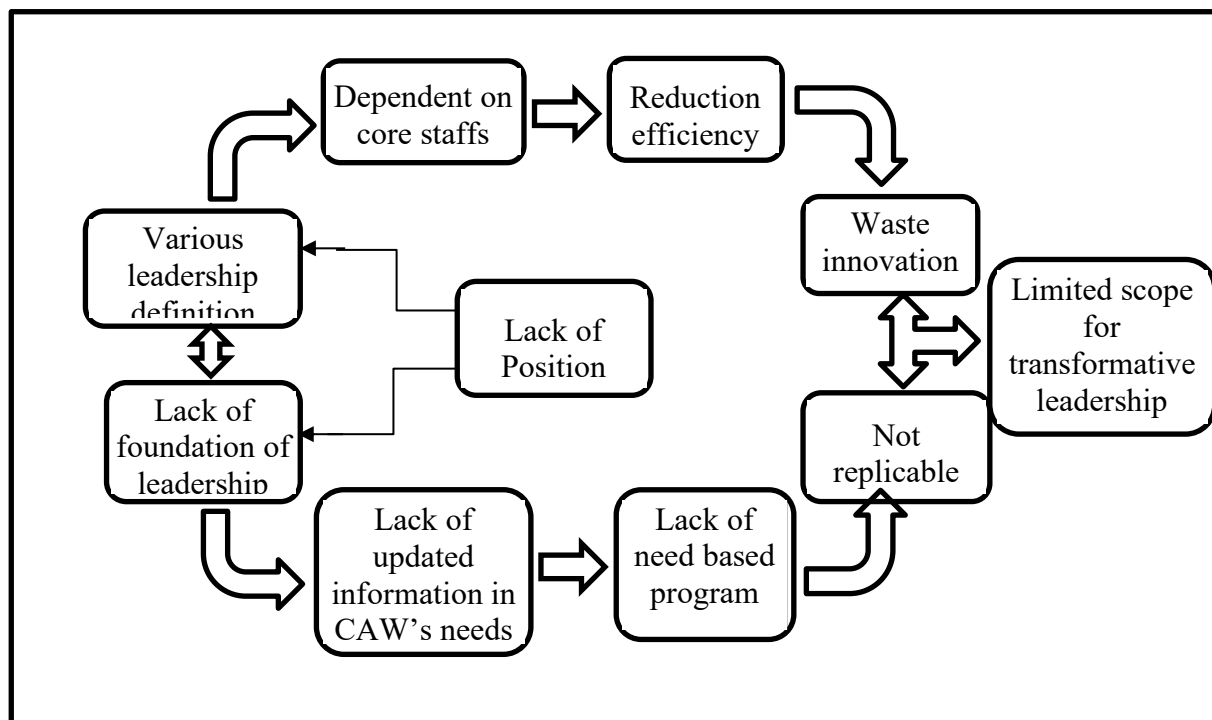


Figure 1: Illustration of Conflict Analysis of the action research.

## **1.2 Work Context**

Nagarik Aawaz is a peacebuilding organization working to capacitate, encourage and engage young adults and women for a just and peaceful society. It was founded in Nepal in 2001 to respond to the escalation of violence during the armed conflict between the Maoist and state security force. The main goal of this organization is to minimize the effects of conflict and create safety nets through peacebuilding initiatives.

It has initiated constructive mobilization and engagement of youths and women in various peacebuilding initiatives. The primary target group of this organization has always been the conflict-affected women. The interventions have been very contextual and as per their need. In the beginning, the primary focus of the organization was on providing immediate relief, creating space for them to share their grief with other conflict-affected people. However, at present, with the changing context, the focus has also been shifted to empowering them to actively participate in the community peacebuilding process through various trainings and orientations on contextual issues.

I am currently leading the program named 'Women Leaders in Action' which aims to alter the identity of conflict-affected women as victims to community leaders through enhancing their skills and providing opportunities to play the role of community peace initiators in their respective communities. The main objectives of the program are to promote conflict-affected women's recognition as community peace leaders in their society and create a space in the local decision-making structures. Apart from it, they are also given the platform to share their knowledge with fellow conflict-affected families and communities through the program funded community peace initiatives.

The program is designed to prevent the re-victimization of conflict-affected women by providing them relief and awareness programs. It gives space to exchange information of various districts and explores the good and bad practices to uplift the CAW from their status as victims. Through this exchange, the good practices are taken forward and the bad ones are considered as lessons learned. This program engages two groups of CAW; the first group consists of CAW who are already engaged in community peacebuilding works and has occupied spaces in the local government bodies. Whereas, the second group consists of those who are still confined within their households. The program covers CAW of all the seven provinces covering 28 districts.

The designing of the program through a provincial approach has helped to correlate the national and local level context in the transitional justice process of Nepal. Providing space for these women has created a multiplier effect in their leadership skills for various contextual issues. Since I am leading this project, this research will help me to critically analyze the intervention to meet the goals. Further, it will also allow to have an in-depth study to look over the Nagarik Aawaz's definition of leadership.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

Nagarik Aawaz is growing as a regional entity as it is building a memorial and a learning center for peacebuilding in Nepal. Therefore, in terms of scope of work and staffing it is emerging. This creates an added demand for the core staffs to take forward the leadership program as they are the only ones who are aware of the core concept of leadership in Nagarik Aawaz. It has created dependency of the NA's leadership program on the existing core staffs. This further narrows the space for innovation and new ideas as the core staffs are occupied in transferring the present knowledge to the new staffs. Sometimes, this leads to unclear understanding and

transfer of knowledge. Due to variation in the understanding of leadership program, it is not replicable.

On the other hand, the program has its limitation in developing the leadership skills through training and provision of small grants to conduct peace initiatives. These all leaves plenty of room for inclusiveness, innovation and efficiency in taking forward transformative leadership programs. Incorporating the needs and context of conflict affected women to enhance their leadership and also by having a common organizational definition of 'leadership' would bring uniformity as well as space for creativity while working with conflict affected women.

Therefore, a more systematic and in-depth action research inquiry process will help to reflect on our work, find out the missing gaps, address these gaps and develop a framework on 'transformative leadership development of conflict-affected women'.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

This research is guided by two main questions:

- What are the enabling factors that influence the leadership in conflict affected women?
- How does Nagarik Aawaz define and address leadership in its leadership programs that focus on conflict affected women?

To analysis it, at first, we need to focus on ourselves, how do we perceive our work as a peace practitioner? This action research is an opportunity to analyze and evaluate the ongoing organizational effort and bring about a change as desired. Therefore, the research will try to capture the two main areas; Firstly, knowing the experiences and learning of the conflict-affected women who are leading their personal lives and formal settings. Secondly, exploring the understanding of the program team of Nagarik Aawaz about the concept of leadership while

working on leadership development of the conflict-affected women. Hence, the findings of this action research will help to explore a new arena for leadership programs.

### **1.5 Research Objectives**

- To explore the common understanding of leadership among the program team.
- To explore the experience and challenges that motivated the Conflict Affected Women's Leadership Skill.

### **1.6 Research Goal**

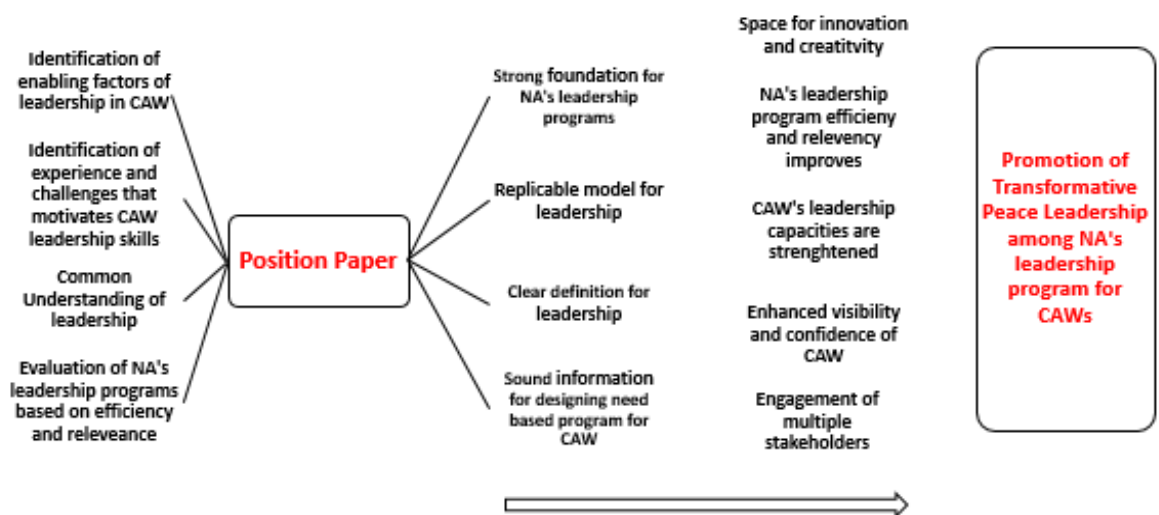
The goal of this research is to develop a position paper "Transformative Peace Leadership" which will contribute on the efficiency and relevancy on the leadership programs for the conflict affected women.

### **1.7 System Thinking**

I believe the position paper developed along with the team of NA will act as a strong foundation for designing future leadership programs and enhance the existing programs. It will work as a guiding document for Nagarik Aawaz for the leadership enhancement of the conflict affected women. This will help replicate the leadership programs of NA to its partners, working communities and others as well. This position paper will derive clarity among all the implementing staffs as it will incorporate the findings of the research- enabling factors and needs to promote their leadership and a common understanding and definition of leadership for Nagarik Aawaz.

Therefore, it will enhance the space for innovation, creativity and confidence of the staffs in NA. Then, I believe the leadership program of NA will be more efficient and relevant because

of the position paper. This in return will help improve the visibility and confidence of the conflict affected women for their engagement with multiple stakeholders. Hence, this position paper will promote transformative peace leadership among all the conflict affected women NA works with.



## SYSTEM ANALYSIS

Figure 2: Illustration of System Thinking of the action research contributing to leadership program.

### 1.8 Operational Definition

**Transformative Peace Leadership:** Transformative peace leadership value relationship building and value each & individual. This principal accommodates each and individual person and create space for the people to grow. It also emphasized on self-awareness quality of the people where they can also recognize their strength as well as weaknesses as being real. In addition, it believes in human development, follow integrity, moral virtue and create belongingness with mutual respect and trust. A strong personal commitment is necessary to act

as a peace leader, as well as the ability to make other people approaching peace through dialogue and mutual understanding (B, 2009).

**Conflict affected women<sup>2</sup>:** Women who have lost their husbands, abducted in the time of conflict, who have lost their family members, who were physically and mentally tortured & injured at the time of conflict, as well as displaced women. 13<sup>th</sup> February 1996 - 21<sup>st</sup> November 2006 and are part of the project “Women Leaders in Action”.

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<sup>2</sup> According to the National Action Plan of Nepal on Conflict Affected Women in Implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820. (See detail in the Appendix 6)

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORITICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

This chapter discusses on some relevant theories based on Leadership. I have looked into different theories of Leadership that have merged with time and context, to have a clear understanding of which leadership traits fits to my action research. I have looked into different theories: and Feminist leadership Theory, Participatory Leadership and Social Identity Theory. These theories will help to explore different dimensions of leadership and help focus on theories relevant to the base of this action research.

##### **2.1.1 Feminist leadership Theory**

Feminist approaches to and definitions of leadership were often indirect products of their struggles to examine their own relationship to and practice of power, to advance gender equality in positions of power in the public and private sector, and to create feminist structures that would not reproduce the patriarchal models that dominated most societies and cultures (Batliwala, 2011). The shift from existing structure of the use of power was greatly sought after under varying theoretical discourses. Feminist approach to leadership is one such theoretical discourse which paved the way to an equal access to power and its utilization further.

Feminist leadership is concerned with the balanced sharing of power and responsibilities. It is an approach to fight a long ingrained social prejudice against females. There are various conceptual frameworks that support equality, mutuality and collectivity irrespective of sexual distinction. Feminist leadership being one of them renounces external paraphernalia of power and their influence.



According to the definition of CREA Sexuality and Rights Institute, Feminist leadership is a process by which women assert their rights by continually evaluating relevant experiences, questioning their roles in society, challenging power structures, and effectively catalyzing positive social change. The elements particular to a feminist leadership construction include a focus on both individual or micro level and societal or macro-level social justice concerns, a desire to bring marginalized voices to the center of the conversation, and a willingness to take risks as one strives to enact a transformative agenda (Barton, 2006).

As rightly observed by Tracy Barton, leadership from a feminist standpoint is informed by the power of feminist lens which enables the feminist leader to identify injustices and oppression and inspires her to facilitate the development of more inclusive holistic communities (Olusola). Feminist leadership is not just about women being leaders, it is about empowering women to lead differently, with feminist values and ideology, to ensure social justice for all.

Shawna Wakefield, in her book, *Transformative and Feminist Leadership for Women's Rights* mentions about an article by Laurien Alexandre in a book *Leadership: Gender Excluded Yet Embraced*, where, she asserts that leadership is embedded within a deeply engrained gender system, in our distribution of power and resources, in our self- and collective perceptions of effective leadership, in our identities as leaders and as followers, and in our expectations of who can lead, of where leadership takes place and for what purposes (Wakefield, 2017). The leadership is a process of mobilizing by people with shared motives and values. Understanding leadership is about relationship; valuing connection over disconnection and cooperation over competition; building mutual goals; desire for leaders and followers to grow in connection through empathy and mutual empowerment; and a recognition of the need to avoid reliance on a single archetypal leader. Lauriene in her seminal article *Leadership: Gender Excluded Yet Embraced*, states that women, by nature, are more compassionate in their leadership styles to

be fundamentally suspect and simplistic. She asserts that women's ways of leading have much to do with the organizations in which they lead, the societies in which they are raised, and the families to which they are born. Therefore, an individual's way of leading is a reflection of the overall social structure. In her view, the lack of women who had inspired social movements for society's betterment along the trajectory of humankind was simply because of the absence of women in leadership positions (Couto, 2015). The leadership within social/historical circumstances contains an opening for women because it suggests that there is no ideal universal, timeless personality type for all situations. However, Lauriene mentions that real change is unlikely to be so fundamental unless the pervasiveness of the social institution of gender and its social construction are made explicit.

A study carried out by three prominent scholars, Moven C. Ndlovu, Edgar Hoffman Tekere and Robert H. Gibbs, reviewed the theoretical models of leadership and feminist theory that are particularly pertinent from the discussion of women leadership. The scholars in their paper *Theoretical Models of Leadership and Feminist Theory that are pertinent to Women Leadership*, have compared the intertwining views of various scholars on the relationship between the theoretical models of leadership and feminist theory. According to them, women will be more caring, and relationship oriented than men due to her biological possibility to give life. It is the basic idea that accounts for approaches to women leadership, that differ from those traditionally established for and by men, normally more competitive and controlling aggressive. In addition, the dominant male culture has projected onto the subordinate female culture all aspects of life that are psychologically unpleasant, with the result that women have developed a foundation of extremely valuable psychological qualities that are particularly relevant to leadership based on relationships encouragement and support (Moven C.Ndlovu). The writers, in the paper, have chosen two women leaders, Mary Kay and Mother Teresa, who exercised their leadership in two considerable different contexts, with the aim of recognizing

and understanding better the peculiarities of leadership from a female perspective. The stories of two prominent women leaders, showcased how the love for others contributed to shape their leadership style with the highest level of commitment for other's good. Both the leaders placed more emphasis in emotional health, values, servant hood, authenticity and self-awareness, all key characteristics of a female. The writers finally assert that the narratives of two successful women leaders encourage researchers to broaden their thinking about how to approach the topic of women leadership taking into account subjective realities.

### **2.1.2 Participatory Leadership**

Participatory leadership is the process of making collaborative decisions or at least sharing influence in decision making by the superior and subordinates. Thus, participative leadership is the most common leadership theory where the leaders let the chance to all stakeholders in the matter of concern either in organization or the issue. The participation may take place in procedural and substantial form in the decision making, policy formulation, planning, managing, implementation and sharing the benefits (Hamal). Being a more advanced, more democratic and more effective model of leadership, it harnesses diversity, builds community, and creates shared responsibility for action. It deepens individual and collective learning yielding real development and growth (A participative way of leading organisational development, 2020).

Edwin A. Locke, a professor emeritus of leadership and motivation at the University of Maryland, offers an expanded definition of democratic leadership by adding participative to the equation. Participative leadership is “any power-sharing arrangement in which workplace influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise unequal hierarchically (What is Democratic/Participative Leadership? How Collaboration Can Boost Morale, 2018)

The traditional view of leadership supported a hierarchal style and the idea of democratizing leadership was not popular. But overtime, especially with the changed dynamics of the corporate world and after consumer's trust had waned in these organizations, participatory or democratic leadership has continued to become an increasingly popular option for leaders these days.

Jessie Sari, in her article *Lewin's Leadership Styles*, mentions participatory leadership also as the democratic style of leadership. According to her, participatory leadership in view of Lewin is a collaborative approach of leading, where the leader not only expresses their priorities and values when setting goals and making decisions, but also does his or her part in the group's work and is open to advice and suggestions from colleagues (Sari, Toolshero , 2020). In general, this type of leader is appreciated more by team members because they see him or her as one of them. However, the effectiveness of the participatory leadership rightly depends upon the effectiveness of the group or team itself. The more experienced and effective the team is, the more productive this leadership would be. Lewin perceives that in the case of an inexperienced team, participative leadership isn't always the right choice. Without strong leadership, their lack of experience could turn into a major problem. A team with moderate experience and plenty of enthusiasm, on the other hand, would be an excellent fit for this option (Sari, Toolshero , 2020). In this leadership approach, a sense of ownership to the made decisions make the team members more engaged and motivated.

Edwin A. Locke, a professor emeritus of leadership and motivation at the University of Maryland, offers an expanded definition of democratic leadership by adding participative to the equation. Participative leadership is "any power-sharing arrangement in which workplace influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchical unequal" Locke and his colleague David Schweiger explain in "Participation in Decision-Making: One More Look

(Gastils definition of democratic leadership ). The authors are also of the opinion that the participatory leadership may rebound when the inputs of subordinates are not well considered. Besides these minimal drawbacks, it empowers employees to have a strong hand in managing organizations and is one of the most popular leadership styles among subordinates.

### **2.1.3 Social Identity Theory**

Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory explains that part of a person's concept of self comes from the groups to which that person belongs. An individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups. A person might act differently in varying social contexts according to the groups they belong to. When a person perceives themselves as part of a group that is an in-group for them. Other comparable groups that person does not identify with are called out-groups. We have an "us" vs. "them" mentality when it comes to our in-groups and their respective out-groups (Tajfel, 1986).

Social Identity Theory of Leadership is a theory started by Michael A. Hogg. In his book "Social Identity Processes in Organizational Contexts," he came up with "ingroup prototypicality" theory which describes how groups view themselves and the issues they feel are important. The theory's general premise is that leaders can be identified by a specific social group rather than by the leader. This gives the leader power to push through the agenda of the group with his approval and achieve a result by appealing to the group's needs (Hogg, Leadership Vs Management , 2020).

Michael A. Hogg states that leaders are people who have disproportionate influence, through possession of consensual prestige or the exercise of power, or both, over the attitudes, behaviors, and destiny of group members. According to him, leadership is about how some individuals or cliques have disproportionate power and influence to set agenda, define identity,

and mobilize people to achieve collective goals (Hogg, Social Identity Theory of Leadership , 2001 ).

The Social Identity theory as propounded by Hogg focuses on the importance of an individual's confirmation with a group as a member. The group membership based social attraction enables the leader to secure compliance with suggestions and recommendations and also endows the leader with status and evaluate differentiation from the rest of the group. The leader after all occupies a high-status role and is able to be actively innovative.

The central argument of the social identity theory of leadership is that as people identify more strongly with a group, the basis for leadership perceptions, evaluations, and endorsement becomes increasingly influenced by prototypicality; prototypical members are more likely to emerge as leaders, and more prototypical leaders will be perceived to be more effective leaders (Hogg, Social Identity Theory of Leadership , 2001).

From this perspective, leadership emergence is the degree to which a person fits with the identity of the group as a whole. As groups develop over time, a group prototype also develops. Individuals emerge as leaders in the group when they become most like the group prototype.

Leadership does not operate within a vacuum but that leaders are also always members of the teams or organizations which they lead. The social identity theory of leadership further argues that leaders can gain in effectiveness the more they are attuned to the respective group's identity (Rolf Van Dick R. K.).

In the case of women, identity is a major factor that rarely recognizes women as a leader. The gender identity becomes more salient when women are a minority in their organizations and being seen as a legitimate leader may be especially challenging for women in such

circumstances. Equally, woman might find it more difficult to identify with appropriate role models in male-dominated organizations (Guillen, 2011). From this perspective, building a leader identity for women is often challenging and entails integration of multiple identities that requires both individual effort and favorable external conditions.

The above theories clearly state various traits of leadership that have evolved with the time and context. However, this research will pick three of the theories- Participatory Leadership Theory, Feminist Leadership Theory and Social Identity Theory. These theories complement each other and provide comprehensive guidance for the action research by focusing on leadership as self-development action, inclusiveness, mutuality and absence of sex role behaviors.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Methodology**

This research has used action research methodology to make inquiry on emerging leadership among survivors, the conflict affected women. It is descriptive in nature and is primarily a qualitative research. My research questions are intended to diagnose the gaps and identify the enabling factors for enhancement of conflict affected women leadership programs. Therefore, the focus was on the conflict affected women who are the part of the Leadership program, NA program team who have been engaged in writing, designing and executing the leadership programs. Active participation of NA program team is important to ensure the credibility of the findings. It is equally important to engage the CAW who are part of the Leadership program throughout the research period as their experience and feedback are the key source of information. Therefore, I have used Participatory Action Research (PAR) method and Feminist Research Approach (FRA) methodology to conduct my action research.

Participatory Action Research focuses typically outside the organizational context and involves egalitarian participation by a community to transfer some aspects of its situation or structures (Brannick, 2014). PAR puts people and their experiences in the core. It allows the people to actively investigate their problem, reflect and co-find the solutions to achieve their goals. It promotes social learning between and among the community and the researcher and embraces the strength of the community or people. Therefore, this methodology perfectly fits into my research findings.

I have also used Feminist Approach Research (FAR) to compliment my action research. FAR honors the experiences and perspectives of women that have not been valued in the public



domain, making them visible. They are determined to honor the concerns, experiences and rights of women, children, old and poor people that have not been recognized and taken into account (Francis, 2007 ). This methodology will enhance my findings as it is value-based and women –centric.

This has given enough space to reflect my work. Similarly, reflective and reflexive process is followed in the entire action research which has allowed me as a researcher to have a critical self-reflection.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Primarily, this research explored the leadership program designed and implemented for CAW. The target group of this research are the program team of Nagarik Aawaz who have been designing, planning and executing the leadership program for the CAW and the CAW participants who have been part of the leadership programs.

Therefore, an action research team was formed from the Nagarik Aawaz program team. All the research team members are involved in the planning, action and reflection. There is an active participation of the research team members throughout the analysis and findings in each research cycle.

The main research tools were to explore the research questions with key informant interviews, focus group discussion and personal observation and reflection. The key informant interviews helped to uncover the beliefs, behaviors, attitudes and motivation of the people while focus group discussion allowed participants of similar experiences to explore more on the research questions.

The findings were shared among the Action Research Team as well as with the entire team to get their feedback and opinion regarding the outcomes and way forward.

### **3.3 Research site selection**

The focus group discussions were conducted with the participants from province 1,2,3,4,5 and 7 which is the project. Nagarik Aawaz have been working with the conflict affected women and men in all these provinces since many years. These areas were severely affected during the conflict and Kailali (province 7) has one of the highest numbers of conflict affected women. The participants for the in-depth interview were from province 1, 3 and 7.

### **3.4 Research Sample Selection**

The sample for the research were program team members of Nagarik Aawaz and conflict affected women from the ‘Women Leaders in Action’ program province 1,2,3,4,5 and 7. The criteria for selecting women included: conflict affected women within the age group of 18- 50 years and those who are or were involved in the program ‘Women Leaders in Action’. For Cycle 1, all together 5 program team members were selected. Whereas for Cycle 2, all together 19 conflict affected women who have been part of the project by participating in leadership training, who are already initiating peace initiatives in their respective communities and also those conflict affected women who are representing themselves in decision making committees.

### **3.5 Nature and Sources of the Data**

The data was primary sourced from the program team members and the conflict affected women participants from the project “Women Leaders in Action”. Desk research of project, project reports and research journals were taken to reflect the interview and discussions.

### **3.6 Data analysis process**

In-depth interviews and focus group discussion was the key tools for the data collection. However, training on transformative peace leadership was also one of the major tools to observe and collect data. My personal observation and discussion with the team of Nagarik Aawaz also served to collect the qualitative data.

### **3.7 Action Research Cycles**

This section will cover the design of my individual research cycles. I will be using the three action research cycles. For each cycle, the objective, timeline and expected output of each cycles will be highlighted.

#### **3.7.1 Research Cycle 1**

The action research cycle 1 focused on the preparatory work which laid the foundation for the entire action research. It focused on formation of research team and literature review. The research team compiled and reviewed the existing documents and reports of the leadership program. As a part of the action in this cycle, I had developed guiding questions for focus group discussion with the program team. It helped to explore the gaps and common understanding of leadership by the program team.

**Cycle 1: To explore the common understanding of leadership among the program team.**

No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Plan</b>			
1	To get support throughout the action research	Formation of action research team	March 2019
2	To familiarize the action research	Orient the action research to the research team	March 2019
3	To get inputs for the action research	Consultation with the Chief Executive Officer of Nagarik Aawaz	April 2019
4	To Reflect the previous work on Leadership	Review of project documents and reports. Review Literature Develop questionnaires	April 2019

**1.1**

No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Action</b>			
1	To explore the common understanding of leadership among the program team.	Conduct FGD with the program team.	May 2019
No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Reflect</b>			

1	To reflect the entire Cycle 1 process	Reflection meeting with the research team	May 2019
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### 3.7.2 Research Cycle 2

Based on the reflection of cycle 1, data collection/interviews, FGDs and data analysis was done.

**Cycle 2: To explore the experience and challenges that enabled the Conflict Affected Women's Leadership Skill.**

No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Plan</b>			
1	To cross check our intervention with the present context of the conflict affected women for their leadership development.	Review theories relevant to identify gaps and areas of improvement from cycle 1	May 2019
2	To select new theories do include in the position paper.	Select the key theories	May 2019

No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Action</b>			

1	To identify the enabling factors that motivated the CAW's leadership.	Develop questionnaires and check list for the interviews and FGD.  Conduct interviews and FGD with the CAW participants	June 2019
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No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Reflect</b>			
1	To reflect on Cycle 2	Cycle 2 reflection meeting	July 2019

### 3.7.3 Research Cycle 3

#### **Cycle 3: To develop a position paper on “Conflict Affected Women Leadership”**

Cycle 3 will develop and introduce a position paper on “Transformative Peace Leadership” to the program team members to finalize.

No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Plan</b>			
1	Link the practice with theories and findings.	Review the findings from cycle 1 and cycle 2 that needs to guide the position paper.	July 2020
		Conduct a training on “Transformative Peace Leadership”	July 2019

		Make a video that reflects the findings of the research.	
2	To ensure the program team members accepts the new position paper.	Orient the program team members who have been engaged in the leadership programs with the new position paper.	August 2020
3	Finalization of Action Research and submission.	Share the draft with the ACTS faculty for review and guidance. Finalizing the Action Research.	September 2020

No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Action</b>			
1	Submission for the final presentation	Regular communication and coordination with the supervisor.  Edit and draft the complete action research.	

No	Objective	Activity	Timeline
<b>Reflect</b>			
1	To reflect the whole cycle 3 process		

### 3.8 Significance of the Study

Nagarik Aawaz has been working towards identity shift from victims to community leaders with not just only through one program but there are other programs that also works towards leadership development. The study will contribute to rethink about our present intervention modalities and also to the improvement of the overall leadership programs. The findings will

also be useful for organizations that intends to strengthen the leadership skills of conflict affected women.

### **3.9 Limitation of the Study**

This study limits to the scope of Nagarik Aawaz's program context and could not reflect the experiences of all CAW in Nepal. Likewise, there are few literatures on transformative peace leadership as this is an emerging issue and it's a fusion of various topics. Another limitation could be hesitant from the conflict affected women participants of sharing their actual thought on leadership to the organization that they have been associated for a long period of time due to cultural barriers and trust.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

Since research often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different disciplines and institutions, ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness (Resnik, 2015). As this research involved conflict affected women; the experience shared was from the conflict era and also involve some personal stories. Therefore, prior informed consent was taken from each of the respondents and was ensured about the confidentiality.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This research was conducted in three research cycles as outlined in Chapter Three to meet the research goal of evaluating the leadership program based on its efficiency and relevance in achieving the set forth objectives. Each research cycles consisted of three steps: planning, action and reflection. After completion of cycle 1, there was reflection on the information from cycle 1 and theories. This chapter will focus on chapter 1 and explain in detail the process, analysis and findings which will help to plan action accordingly for the next chapter.

#### **4.2 Cycle 1: Exploring the common understanding of Leadership**

Cycle 1 aimed to explore the common understanding of leadership among the program team engaged in the conflict affected women leadership program. To meet this objective, in the planning stage three basic steps were conducted:

- (1) Formation of an action research team
- (2) Review of existing reports, documents of the leadership program
- (3) Review of leadership theories.

**Plan:** The first step in the planning phase was to form the action research team who would aid as co-researchers in this research. The action research team was formed with five team members including me who have been engaged in this project directly. All the research team members agreed to participate, analysis, discuss and take decisions in every phase of the research. In the second step, the research team members compiled the quarterly and yearly reports, other existing documents such as concept note, proposals, monitoring and evaluation

reports relevant for the research. The documents and reports reviewed and reflected upon by the research team.

At the end of the preparatory phase, the research team planned to base the research on the three different theoretical approaches that would ultimately help meet the research objectives. Considering the complexity of effects on the conflict affected women and the need to identify the strength and context that promote their leadership; the need to identify approaches that best suit to minimize these effects, the research has adopted three leadership theories, namely, Participatory Leadership Theory, Feminist Leadership Theory and Social Identity Theory. These theories recognize that all meaningful and enduring social change begins with the equal and just participation of both, male and female. They also help identify injustices and oppressions and inspires to develop a more just and equitable society. In a conflict-ridden society, these theoretical approaches are considered viable for empowering women at all levels to fight for their just cause. They also help identify injustices and oppressions and inspire to develop a more just and equitable society with equal political, economic and social rights. The research has given prominence to these theoretical approaches based on the premise that a more effective and efficient growth of a society can only be achieved when both female and male are provided with an environment where they can equally participate in the decisions and processes that shape their lives.

**Action:** After completion of all the preparatory steps to start the cycles, the foremost step for cycle 1 started which was developing questions for the focus group discussion (FGD). The questions were reviewed by the action research team. The questions focused on understanding of self-leadership skills and understanding leadership development in regards to the conflict affected women leadership development program. All together five team members who had or have been engaged in this program participated in the FGD. The FGD helped to reflect back to

our previous interventions on leadership development program and how with the time and context the program has been taking its shape. After the FGD, the key findings were shared with the action research team and reflected upon.

**Reflection:** There were two phases of reflection; one I reflected on my own and then the research team also reviewed the discussion and records from the FGD. Some of the factors that we tried to look upon where how did we draw our understanding of leadership and what does the reports and documents related to the conflict affected women leadership program reflects. It was quite challenging in the initial phase of cycle 1, especially for other research team members to take responsibility and opportunity to conduct the research. It was quite confusing for me as well to place my position in the research as we are driven by the traditional approach of being an outsider and researching and here, we were questioning our own working modality as well.

#### **4.3 Cycle 2: To explore the experience and challenges that enabled the Conflict Affected Women's Leadership Skill.**

Reflecting on the key findings from cycle 1, the research team conducted key informant interviews with the four conflict affected women and FGD with other 15 of them. The interviews with the four women and FGD with the 15 women gave an insight on what were the challenges and experience along the way from victims to leaders and what are the enabling factors to rise to a leadership position. Key achievements from cycle 2 are the chance to keep into account the common understanding of leadership of the program team and incorporating the needs and factors that enabled the leadership of conflict affected women despite being chained by various challenges.

**Plan:** There were two major activities to be conducted in cycle 2: interviews and the FGD. In cycle 2, the research team planned to create a space to analysis the findings from cycle 1 and based on that prepare questionnaires and guiding questions for the interviews and the FGDs. The focus of cycle 2 was to find out the needs and enabling factors from the participants to strengthen the leadership program by applying the learning and findings from cycle 1 and 2 into a position paper on “Transformative Peace Leadership”. The research team also planned to make a short documentary and conduct training during the second cycle.

**Action:** In cycle 2, first and foremost task was to select participants and fix the time and date of all the participants within the research timeframe which was critical. The research team selected participants considering their time, interest in engaging in the research and the leadership position they were holding. Based on that, all together 4 women were selected for the interview and 15 women for the FGD. They were contacted and date was fixed for the interview and the FGD. The list of women interviewed and conducted FGD with are provided in annex 2. The research team prepared the guide questions for the FGD and questionnaires for the interviews taking the findings from cycle 1. The guide questions and the questionnaires for the interview is provided in annex 3 and 4. The FGD was facilitated by myself and one of member from the research team. Whereas, all the four interviews were conducted by myself. The process was comfortable though we were digging into harsh past and the tough journey these women had crossed. However, due to strong linkage and communication the interview and FGD went smoothly. The participants were very expressive and each of them took time, reflected back on their experience with the leadership program they were engaged in tally with their needs and context. The discussion and interview went as per the designed questions.

**Reflection:** The reflection phase of cycle 2 was quite interesting as the research team not just only reflected on the process, opinions and conclusions from the FGDs and interviews but also

tallied their context, need and expectation with our intervention. Each research team members were given space to share their learning and experiences. During the FGD and the interviews, the participants expressed that they are still perceived as victims who have nothing to offer rather demand. Therefore, they liked the idea of sharing their achievements and struggle of their journey from victims to leaders through short documentary. This could help to showcase their strength, position and achievements as leaders in their respective areas to the government agencies, local leaders and community people. The research team also designed a training content on “transformative peace leadership” incorporating the reflection that came up in this cycle. During this phase, I realized how my other research team members equally owned this research and gave their time, opinions and efforts regardless of me being the lead researcher. This showed a good example of team effort and leadership. Cycle two was full of learning and realization of the work we were doing and the strength of working with the conflict affected women.

#### **4.4 Cycle 3: To develop and introduce a position paper on “Transformative Peace Leadership” and share with the program team to finalize.**

Reflecting on the key findings of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, our research team developed a position paper under Cycle 3. The key achievements of this Cycle 3 are the opportunity for the research team to explore, analysis and then develop a position paper which will be a foundation for shaping conflict affected women’s leadership program in the future.

**Plan:** The first and foremost step in Cycle 3 was taking into account all the findings from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 and having a clear theoretical understanding among the research team to develop a position paper on “Conflict Affected Women’s Leadership”. The research team focused on our weakness and sketched need assessment based on Cycle 2. An outline for the position paper incorporating the necessary changes from the reflection. Before, sharing the

outline with the other team members, it was very important to explain what is position paper and what is the need of it. Most of the team members were not aware of it and therefore the research team did not expect much of a critical feedback. After, giving introduction of the position paper, the outline was shared with the other program team members in the office, as they are equally responsible and part of the conflict affected women's development program in the future. All the program team members gave their approval for the outline of the position paper. The orientation helped all the program team members to understand the changing context and need of innovation in our interventions.

**Action:** In Cycle 3, meetings among the research team was conducted on a regular bases to discuss on the writing of the position paper. Two of the research team members- Communication and documentation Manager and myself the lead researcher and took the responsibility of the content writing.

**Reflection:** During this phase, I realized how big responsibility it was to develop a position paper for an organization. During the writing phase, the research team had to go back to Nagarik Aawaz's history of working with the conflict affected women on their leadership development. The first step was to get the history from our Chief Executive Officer, Susan Risal. She helped us to relate the past work with the future initiatives that we planned to do. We were aware about different works that Nagarik Aawaz had been doing. However, listening to it in detail and incorporating it in the paper was equally challenging and exciting. We looked into each aspect of the findings and tried to relate it with our value driven initiatives. The position paper began with a brief conflict history of Nepal and how conflict affected women were positioned. Then, we highlighted the initial phase of Nagarik Aawaz and how it started working with the conflict affected people and how it focused it program on leadership development of the conflict affected women. The other two parts were the counter argument and argument where the writing and justification was heavily based on our work experience

with the conflict affected women. While writing the paper, one thing that stood out prominent among the research team was that we had good number of case studies and examples to share but lacked database that would provide additional validity of our work. The entire process of reflection was very empowering for the team members because we learnt from the experiences and develop about approaches to overcome our challenges and enhance our work.

All the three cycles were discussed in detailed which made my action research informative and reflective. All the three cycles were equally important as it resulted into capacity building of the team in analyzing and critically assessment of the programs and bringing out tangible outcome for the organization. In each cycle, we learnt about the theory and reflected on new learning which was incorporated in the position paper. The main findings and lesson learnt in each cycle will be further explained in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the overall findings of my action research based on my research questions, goals and objectives in further details. As outlined in the methodology section, the findings are mostly drawn from the reflection with the team and conversation with the participants. Findings here are interpreted in consideration of the theory that are reviewed in the theoretical background section. I will focus on the findings that will help incorporate the understanding of leadership among the program teams and enabling factors that influence the leadership of the conflict affected women. Position paper will incorporate the findings needed for leadership promotion among the conflict affected women.

#### **5.2 What are the enabling factors that influence the leadership in conflict affected women?**

The participants were part of the conflict as cadres, family member of the cadres or from the security force which result into stigmatization and in many cases rejection from the society. Their leadership skills were carved through their struggle of being a single woman, ex-cadres themselves or family member of the ex-cadres. The rejection from the society and the need to survive left no choice but move ahead. All the participants coming from a low middle class and poor class background, economic sustainability was one of the major concerns for them. One of the things that stood prominent among every participant was the continuous, strong support from the NGOs/INGOs to uplift their lives through various dimensions. Though being responsible for the overall management of the house and the family members as single women or head of the house, they still lacked decision making power; access to resources which are basic tools to run the family.



The participants defined leadership in different ways. For some leadership was having a political position where they could contribute in changing or bringing new policies. However, for some, leadership started from themselves and expressed that ability to motivate, change family members or neighborhood is also a leader's trait. Basic traits of leadership that were common from all were- skill that can be learned, ability to motivate, empathetic and team work. Engaging with men and local government entities is vital to have the acceptance and acknowledgement of their leadership. Many women shared that though they are in a position where they have space to coin their opinion; it's challenging to prove that they have skills and knowledge to analysis. It is because they are still since as just conflict victims rather than a leader who have their own experience and can coin their voice based on their knowledge and experience.

Enabling factors that influence the leadership in conflict affected women which came up during action research are:

### **5.3 Community engagement is vital to build foundation and acceptance for their leadership**

Conflict affected women shared that there is resistance to conflict affected women's leadership in the community. Some of the participants during the FGD shared that when they attempt to engage in community decision-making, they face considerable discrimination. Government authorities and the local stakeholders are rarely supportive and undermine their legitimacy. Kalpana Subedi (single women whose husband had been killed during the conflict) shared that stigmatization is attached with the label "conflict affected" as needy, always demanding and nothing to offer back to the community. She has experienced numerous times rejection from government agencies asserting they always come for support and help and have no value in terms leading or proposing ideas to advance. Rajina, one of the conflicts affected women who

is now an elected ward member of her ward in Ramechap. She feels that she has been given the position just to fill the women quota in the committee. There is space to coin voice but there is lack of acknowledgment and acceptance.

Some participants also implied that they faced domestic and community violence when they took leadership roles in public arena. One of the participants from Saptari shared that her neighbors and family members taunt her saying “enjoying trip to Kathmandu and other cities in the name of the deceased son”. She further explained that “they cannot accept the fact that a woman who is at her 50s, does not know how to read and write goes to training. But I come here to escape the pain and the environment that reminds me of my son”. Importantly, most participants made clear that discrimination tended to wane over time as they demonstrated their “ability to coin their voice” and make contribution to community life. They credited their ability to their involvement with NGO networks, family support and economic independency. As feminist leadership theory asserts, women leadership in a society where leadership is embedded within a deeply engrained gender system, its social acceptance is highly questionable. Unless, the distribution of power and resources is balanced and the male centric general perception of leadership is changed, women leaders in the post conflict society will continue to encounter challenges that are associated with the socio-politico and socio-economic structure of the society. Moreover, an environment conducive for the leadership development will gradually form when the conflict affected women start getting along with the community life. The external intervention would be required in the beginning to support them to withstand such numerous social barriers and the role of the NGOs becomes subordinate.

#### **5.4 Building partnership, alliances and collective action for leadership**

The participants in this research practiced and stood in different leadership positions. Out of 19 participants, one of them is the parliament member in the provincial government; two of

them are the board chair and the treasurer of the district level conflict affected women's network respectively. One of them is the ward member of the municipality she belongs to. 13 of them are leaders in their own respective communities and districts. Some of them are members of the district level conflict affected women 's network and some of them prefer to guide and support other conflict affected people and marginalized groups in their communities. Whereas, 2 of them are not active nor represent themselves in any of the committees or groups. They cannot even read or write and participate actively in the workshops and trainings. They shared that they are solely part of the program because they want to come out and interact with other people with similar trauma and pain. They want a space to heal and share their griefs.

Though they stand in different levels in terms of leadership and their roles, but they described common themes in how they navigated the political and social landscape to achieve their goals. While describing their rise to leadership, few of them gave credit to their other fellow conflict affected women in developing their leadership skills and capacity. The conflict affected women leaders established networks and brought other women to the group. One of the tortured victims and participant of the research shared that, the network and collaboration among the conflict affected women among themselves and others have helped to sustain her life. Without any hesitant she shared, "if I was not part of the network I would have not survived until now. Society doesn't understand our suffering and tortured victims are also seen as rape victim". The participants shared that; the network is a place where they are not looked down upon. They can share and talk about their personal issues without any hesitance and the network maintain confidentiality. They plan and conduct various advocacy related to seeking justice for them in the network through equal participation. Jessie Sari, in her article *Lewin's Leadership Styles*, mentions participatory leadership also as the democratic style of leadership. According to her, participatory leadership in view of Lewin is a collaborative approach of leading, where the leader not only expresses their priorities and values when setting goals and making decisions,

but also does his or her part in the group's work and is open to advice and suggestions from colleagues. In general, this type of leader is appreciated more by team members because they see him or her as one of them. However, the effectiveness of the participatory leadership rightly depends upon the effectiveness of the group or team itself. The more experienced and effective the team is, the more productive this leadership would be. (Sari, Toolshero , 2020).

Whereas, one of the interviewees reflected that her turning point was when she noticed that there were many other conflicts affected women who need help. She took initiatives to help and bring change in other similar conflict affected women's life despite initial resistance, resulting in widespread recognition of her leadership. She has formed an informal network of sexually abused and tortured conflict affected women concealing their identity.

Therefore, establishing and supporting these conflicts affected women lead networks and alliances should be promoted specifically because they are marginalized, and their collective strength is critical to amplify their power.

### **5.5 Holistic approach to leadership including psychosocial care, and economic sustainability components**

The brutality of war- loved ones being killed, sexual abuse, torture, separation from loved ones and exposure to extreme violence and cruelty has left these women with scarcity, mental stress, trauma and isolation. Government and non-government organizations have not given attention as needed to the psychosocial care and economic advancement of these conflict affected women. Out of 19 participants, 14 of them have displayed one or the other kind of symptoms such as anxiety, stress, lack of appetite, lack of sleep, recollections of traumatic incidents and depression. While asked how do they cope up with the mental health issues, they shared their faith on god, belief in karma that one day they will get justice. Majority of the mothers found

their healing in their kids. Therefore, there is a strong need to work on the mental health of these women.

Majority of the women are single whose husbands have been killed and /or forced disappeared during the conflict. They are the head of the households and sole responsibility holders to take care of their children and other family members. These women are physically, mentally weak and therefore cannot engage in labor work for sustaining their lives. One of the participants from Kailali shared, “the struggle during the conflict time being a cadre and later being physically and mentally tortured is showing up right now. My whole-body aches and I can’t carry out my daily chores comfortably as before. Maybe I am ageing. I have spent almost one lakh Nepalese currency for my checkup but the doctors can’t fully cure”. Education is another barrier to sustain their lives. Out of 19 participants, only two of them have passed their higher secondary education. Therefore, majority of the women are uneducated with no formal degree to apply for desk work and they do not pose property to start business. The struggle to meet their end needs and to cover the cost of medical bills divert their will and determination to advocate and take leadership in their communities. Therefore, a holistic intervention is needed to promote their leadership as per their context and need. Women demonstrated remarkable resilience and nurturing nature to carry forward their lives and strike a balance between their personal and community leadership life despite the hurdles they face every day.

## **5.6 Identity Crisis among the conflict affected women**

The post- conflict settings have provided a rare opportunity to re-shape gender roles and relations through constitutional reforms in different platforms such as political, social and economic life. Even though the women, at present, secure a prominent size in the state functionaries, their contribution in the policy making is still negligible. They are still identified as feeble and weak, the identity which has long been affiliated with the women. Generally,

their presence is perceived as being given, not as being earned. It is largely due to the part of the society to which they identify themselves as being part of, and which is often considered as weak. One of the conflict affected women who is the parliament member at the province level shared that, “still I am perceived as conflict victims, no they don’t say upfront but during the meetings or informal talks their discussion revolves around be being conflict victim and I have only issues of conflict victims. But I represent my party and all the people who voted me not just conflict affected people. That dingle identity is quite difficult to erase”.

As defined by the social identity theory, an individual’s act is the consequences of the multiple selves and identities associated with his/her affiliated groups. The stronger the group to which an individual identifies himself/herself is part of, the more influential and decisive would be his/her actions. The group membership-based leadership identity has restricted women leaders to perform more actively and innovatively even after occupying a high-status role. Women leadership at various levels of governance, thus, lack influence to set agenda, define identity and mobilize people to achieve collective goals. Overall, women and its constituent identity as a feeble group of society has created a resonant effect on their role as a leader.

### **5.7 How does Nagarik Aawaz define and address leadership in its leadership programs that focus on conflict affected women?**

Nagarik Aawaz since its beginning has believed in humble approach to help conflict affected women develop their leadership. It did that through humanitarian approach and helping develop their leadership. However, it had an understanding from the beginning that to build leaders organization have to put itself in the background and push women to take leadership. They need to earn their trust and leadership from others, so we can't force others to trust their leadership. We can inspire them, encourage them, and educate them but they need to prove themselves to the community. Our programs focused on designing programs for conflict

affected women's leadership advancement. It believes that with right investment, approach and support Conflict-affected women can become excellent leaders and can shift their identity from victim-hood to leaders. This process of playing a supportive role is a long hall.

While reviewing the proposals and annual reports, few things were very clear and prominent. Project was extended based on the need assessment and did not end in between. To enhance the relevancy of the project, it paid attention to the views and feedback from the participants; however, within the framed interventions. For example, trainings, orientations and providing small grants for the participants is the core intervention of the project. Therefore, the project continued those activities and also incorporated what kind of topics and issues to cover in the trainings and orientations. But it lacks space to accommodate other kinds of needs beyond these three interventions. There is very slim space for inclusion of other stakeholders and local government of the conflict affected women respective communities in regard to promoting their leadership. After all, leader is not just about having skills of leadership but also being accepted by the people.

Within the organization, there is diversity in terms of defining leadership. Similarities were seen among the staffs that have been engaged in the conflict affected women leadership program and especially new staffs. However, the core essence of leader shared were that it is about having vision and purpose, takes over all responsibilities, smart and swift and holds people accountable. However, I felt the need to define leadership from the perspective of conflict affected women's need and context. This indicates that there is need of having a common understanding and definition of leaders in this project which will further create a foundation to promote leadership programs for conflict affected women.

Looking further, inside the organization as the organization is growing in terms of members and diversity of work. There is need to develop strategic thinking, nurturing and mentoring the

new talents, accumulating diverse cultural and thinking groups within the values of Nagarik Aawaz to sustain the process and have success in the long run. There has been deliberate effort to identify, recognize and prepare a talented pool of people to take leadership in different strata whenever necessary. Nagarik Aawaz believes and practices humbleness, equal partnership, empathy, everyday peace while designing and executing its programs. The same values have been engraining in the leadership programs for conflict affected women. However, more attention needs to be given to invest and promote individual leaders among the conflict affected women as the organization have been doing that within the team. Every organization is different and with the context and the working environment, the leader should modify themselves. The leader should have an ability to diagnose the context and adopt to the given circumstances.

The flash back to the work and efforts that NA has been putting to promote individual and enhance the quality of life of people has opportunity to conduct action research of the intervention that it has been doing since many years. Therefore, the team has decided to establish a research and program development department within NA to evaluate, reflect and promote the work that it has been doing.

Based on the above findings, recommendations from this action research will be presented in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter aims to reflect on the learning received from analyzing throughout the action research. This chapter covers my personal journey towards the process of learning and sharing the findings to a larger audience. It also infers this research to a larger audience to utilize the knowledge and findings in the field of peacebuilding.

**6.1 Conclusion:** This research tried to explore two major aspects for the enhancement of conflict affected women's leadership programs in NA. Firstly, it examined the perspective of the NA's team which is responsible to design innovative, context related programs, on leadership development of conflict affected women. Secondly, the research examined the enabling factors that influence the leadership of the conflict affected women. To explore that, I looked into the understanding of different dynamics of leadership among the NA team members and also explored into the experiences and challenges the conflict affected women face on their journey towards their leadership. The FGDs with the program team and the conflict affected women helped me to refine my understanding on the research problem. The findings highlighted that NA's understanding of leadership is more of a transformational and participatory where promoting individual members, taking into account each member's opinion and making collective decision is the core which is practiced among the staffs and its programs. However, NA needs to institutionalize its values and practices of leadership which it has been putting into action, through a position paper. The position paper will validate and provide uniformity on the common understanding of NA on conflict affected women's leader. The findings also highlighted that a holistic approach is needed to promote leadership among the conflict affected women. The experience and challenges that they have faced has huge

consequences in their mental and physical health. This has affected their opportunity to earn their living and live a dignified life.

My action research focused on three leadership theories- Participatory Leadership Theory, Feminist Leadership Theory and the Social Identity Theory. The expression shared by the women during the FGD and the interview showed that being a woman and a victim of the conflict have brought multiple affects in their lives. They also highlighted the strength of networks and put forward their opinion on how it has become essential for them to showcase their potential and efficiency in a larger group. These expressions affirm the tested theories.

Nagarik Aawaz believe that with right support it can become an important asset for conflict affected women. For conflict affected women to become leaders they need to own their narratives and our role is to help amplify their narratives. Conflict affected women need to grow as individuals. When they grow as an individual, we can collectively help them grow their movement. We want to create space for them to choose whether they want to be perceived as victims or leaders. We want to help conflict affected women become responsible persons: and can decide whether they are well or ill, and act or refuse to act and can choose to act one way rather than another.

The different reflection methods, observation and the theories created an opportunity to look at the practical aspects of my work and linking those practices into theories.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

In this section, recommendations for practice includes recommendation for Nagarik Aawaz who are responsible to design, plan and implement programs focusing on conflict affected women and organizations who are working in the same field to develop the CAW's leadership throughout the country.

## **To Nagarik Aawaz**

- Conduct workshop and reflection meeting with the larger team of NA to instill the values of the position paper and application methodology.
- Conduct an organizational level action research of other programs to have critical analysis and in-depth understanding of practical action based on theories.
- Establishment of a research and program development department which would facilitate the programs teams to enhance the quality of interventions based on the context and need.
- Networking and collaboration with different like-minded organizations working on similar issues for fund maximization which will create flexibility to meet diverse needs of the conflict affected women.

## **To other organizations working with the conflict affected women for their leadership development**

- It is recommended to integrate psychosocial care and livelihood support component while working on their leadership development. The holistic approach will help them to focus on their leadership skills and advocacy without worrying much for their daily survival.
- Networking and collaboration with different like-minded organizations working on similar issues for fund maximization which will create flexibility to meet diverse needs of the conflict affected women.
- Be more inclusive while networking and collaborating with each other. Also, make women part of the solution and promote a gender balanced internal structure.

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## **Annex 1**

### **Focus Group Discussion Guide with the Program Team**

#### Focus Group Discussion with the program team of Nagarik Aawaz

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the questions. Please share based on your experience working with the conflict affected women's leadership development program.

Please note that the questionnaires have been designed to be completed by the program team working with the conflict affected women for their leadership development.

1. Which of the following do you agree with?
  - Leaders are born.
  - Leadership is learned with experience.
2. What are the top five characteristics of effective leaders according to you from the given list?
  - Holds people accountable
  - Provides vision and purpose
  - Sets high expectation and standards
  - Is emotional and accepts his/her weaknesses
  - Visible
  - Has the right people by their side
  - His skilled and knowledgeable
  - Gets result
  - Takes overall responsibility
  - Is vocal
  - Is smart and swift
  - Invests in people
3. Do you think the program is based on holistic approach for their leadership development? Please briefly explain.
4. Do you think that our interventions have been vital in shaping the leadership skills of the conflict affected women? If yes, which interventions do you think worked well?
5. What are some of the essential factors that are needed to promote the leadership of the conflict affected women's leadership?
6. Do we actively engage the conflict affected women participants in planning, designing and implementing the program?
7. Do we communicate effectively with the group? Can you rate the effectiveness of the communication within the range of 1 to 10? 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.



8. Are we aware of the strength and weakness in the program? Can you mention the strength and weakness?
9. Any personal challenges that you come across working with the conflict affected women on their leadership development.
10. Is there anything that you would like to add at the end?

## **Annex 2**

### **Focus Group Discussion Guide with the Conflict Affected Women**

#### Focus Group Discussion with the Conflict Affected Women Participants

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the questions. Please share based on your experience working with the conflict affected women's leadership development program.

Please note that the questionnaires have been designed to be completed by the conflict affected women who are part of the leadership program in NA.

1. Which of the following do you agree with?
  - Leaders are born.
  - Leadership is learned with experience.
2. What are the top five characteristics of effective leaders according to you from the given list?
  - Holds people accountable
  - Provides vision and purpose
  - Sets high expectation and standards
  - Is emotional and accepts his/her weaknesses
  - Visible
  - Has the right people by their side
  - His skilled and knowledgeable
  - Gets result
  - Takes overall responsibility
  - Is vocal
  - Is smart and swift
  - Invests in people
3. How do you define leadership?
4. How has the conflict impacted your lives in terms of social, financial, physical and mental aspects?
5. How does your family, community and government representatives perceive after being actively engaged as community leaders?
6. What are your experiences and challenges as a conflict affected women?
7. What are the enabling factors for your leadership development?
8. Where do you see the current status of conflict affected women?

9. What kind of support do you expect from NGOs, government and community to promote your leadership?

### **Annex 3**

#### **Questionnaire for the Key Informant Interview with the Conflict Affected Women at the Key Positions**

##### Guiding questions for the Key Informant Interview with the Conflict Affected Women at the Key Positions

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the questions. Please share based on your experience working with the conflict affected women's leadership development program.

Please note that the questionnaires have been designed to be completed by the conflict affected women who are/were part of the NA's leadership program and hold Key Positions.

1. Which of the following do you agree with?
  - Leaders are born.
  - Leadership is learned with experience.
2. What are the top five characteristics of effective leaders according to you from the given list?
  - Holds people accountable
  - Provides vision and purpose
  - Sets high expectation and standards
  - Is emotional and accepts his/her weaknesses
  - Visible
  - Has the right people by their side
  - His skilled and knowledgeable
  - Gets result
  - Takes overall responsibility
  - Is vocal
  - Is smart and swift
  - Invests in people
3. How do you define leadership?
4. How has the conflict impacted your lives in terms of social, financial, physical and mental aspects?
5. How does your family, community and government representatives perceive after being holding key position in politics and/or committees?
6. What are your experiences and challenges as a conflict affected women?
7. What are the enabling factors for your leadership development?

8. Where do you see the current status of conflict affected women?
9. What contexts or situation have typically influenced or affected your experiences as a conflict affected women in a leadership position?
10. What kind of support do you expect from NGOs, government and community to promote your leadership?

## Annex 4

### List of Participants of the Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interviews

S no	Name	Province	District	Types of suffering	Remarks
<b>Key Informant Interviews</b>					
1	Shobha Dahal	1	Udayapur	Single woman, husband killed	Chair of the district level Single Women Network
2	Kriti Chaudary	7	Kailali	Single woman, husband killed	Focal person of the district of the National level conflict affected people's network.
3	Rajina Budathoki	3	Ramechap	Father being killed	Ward member of her respective ward.
4	Umita BK	1	Sunsari	Cadre	Province parliament member
<b>Focus Group Discussion</b>					
1	Kalpna Rai Dhakal	1	Udayapur	Single woman, husband killed	
2	Bimalal Kumari Pokhrel	2	Siraha	Tortured	
3	Anju Dutta	2	Dhanusha	Single woman, husband killed	
4	Indira Jha	2	Janakpur	Son killed	
5	Kalpna Subedi	4	Parbhat	Single woman, husband killed	
6	Cham Kumari Basnet	4	Baglung	Husband being disappeared	
7	Dol Kumari Banya	4	Myagdi	Single woman, husband killed	
8	Tilawoti Khadka	5	Banke	Tortured	
9	Seema Chaudary	5	Banke	Tortured	
10	Geeta Poudel	5	Dang	Tortured and husband killed	

11	Asha Kumari Chaudary	7	Kailali	Tortured	
12	Yamuna Khatiwada	7	Kailali	Single woman, husband killed	
13	Sharmila Tharu	7	Kailali	Single woman, husband killed	
14	Devaki Nath	7	Kanchanpur	Single woman, husband killed	
15	Himi Pokhrel	5	Banke	Physical and mental torture	

## Annex 5

### Position Paper of “Conflict Affected Women’s Leadership”

#### Nagarik Aawaz Position Paper in Conflict Affected Women’s Leadership Development

Introduction: *Nagarik Aawaz’s unique understanding on this topic on Conflict Affected Women’s Leadership*

The decade long conflict which started from 1996 between the then Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and the government came to an end in 2006 with signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006 leaving behind wounds which are yet to be healed. Women were the ones who suffered the most and are yet to get peace dividends due to forever patriarchal structure and political unwillingness to accommodate women in the peace building process. The government never kept women at the center point while drawing Comprehensive Peace, and in vital processes such as army integration or social integration which clearly states the negligence of the government despite their commitment to tackle with the issues of all forms of discrimination concerning gender, caste, class, and religion. The conflict affected women are often the victims of social conflict when people delve into their past in name of discerning ‘purity’ and are often discarded as un-marriageable women<sup>3</sup>. This stigmatization prevents them from using their experience which they gained during the war for their and community’s advancement in all sectors from social, economic to culture; which further leads to narrowing down their space for assuming leadership roles.

Conflict affected women were part of the conflict as cadres, family members of the cadres or from the security force which result into stigmatization and usually rejection from the society. Their leadership skills are carved through their struggle of being a single woman, ex-cadres themselves or family members of the ex-cadres. The rejection of the society and the need to survive left no choice but to move ahead. Most conflict-affected women come from low middle class and poor class background; economic sustainability was one of the major concerns for them. CAWs have received continuous and strong support from the NGOs/INGOs to uplift their lives through various dimensions. Though being responsible for the overall management of the house and the family members as single women or head of the house, they still lacked decision-making power; access to resources which are basic tools to run the family.

#### Our relationship to Conflict-Affected Women Leadership:

Nagarik Aawaz in 2001 was established to provide help to people displaced by war. We adopted a humanitarian approach to save lives during the war. Our programs were focused on saving the lives of youths (more than 70% female). We gave them safe space to ventilate their grievances, looked after their well-being and provided opportunities to take leadership in peace initiatives in their communities. We focused our programs to establish youths and women in their communities to establish sustainable peace. Nagarik Aawaz was the pioneer organization working with the conflict affected women for their leadership development in Nepal.

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<sup>3</sup> Deon, L.T (2017). The Advancement of Women in Post-Conflict Nepal. *Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies* 1-7.



Since 2001, it focused on designing programs for conflict affected women's leadership advancement. The program was based on creating individual leaders among the conflict-affected women who were limited to their victim-hood and community. New Voices New Leaders Program in 2011 focused on shifting the identities of conflict affected women from victims to leaders. The program selected the conflict affected participants through the government agency named Local Peace Committees that were formed in all the districts after the comprehensive peace accord. This opened up an opportunity to work with the ground level women who lacked exposure and movement. In this program, we worked with 144 conflict affected women from 72 districts. This program ended in 2014. We have designed and implemented programs like this to take their leaders a step forward. We are helping conflict-affected women build movement by training, networks, and resources.

We believe with right investment, approach and support Conflict-affected women can become excellent leaders and can shift their identity from victim-hood. We derive this position because of our nineteen years of experience and three researches on conflict-women leadership.

### **Counter Argument:**

**"Conflict Affected Women are victims and cannot become leaders."**

Still conflict affected women are perceived as victims rather than leaders. There is still resistance to conflict affected women's leadership in the community and the government. Government authorities and the local stakeholders are rarely supportive and undermine their legitimacy. Conflict affected women shared that stigmatization is attached to the label "conflict affected" as needy, always demanding and nothing to offer back to the community. They have experienced numerous times rejection from government agencies asserting they always come for support and help and have no value in terms leading or proposing ideas to advance. Rajina, one of the conflicts affected women who is now an elected ward member of her ward in Ramechap. She feels that she has been given the position just to fill the women quota in the committee. There is space to coin voice but there is lack of acknowledgment and acceptance.

### **Our Argument:**

**"Conflict Affected Women can become leaders and can make their own choices when we provide them with necessary support."**

**Reason #1:** Conflict affected women are breaking stereotypes and breaking history by creating spaces for themselves in the political arena.

Most conflict affected women who were part of the leadership program have shared that the discrimination tended to wane over time as they demonstrated their "ability to coin their voice" and make contribution to community and political arena. They credited their ability to their involvement with NGO networks, family support and economic Independence. Sobha Dahal, conflict affected have created district level networks and established strong relation with the local government authorities. Her actions have credited her to break the stereotype of victimhood and create space for her leadership.

**Reason #2:** Community engagement has built foundation for their leadership among stakeholders.

Engagement of community and local government in the conflict affected women leadership program have informed and created space for the stakeholders to understand and analysis their situation. This has opened spaces to collaborate and simultaneously accept their leadership. Ghodaghodi municipality of Kailali is one of the strong examples where engagement of both conflict affected and community have acknowledged and created annual funds to work on the issues of conflict affected people. Sharmila Tharu, conflict affected, and a community leader shared that it is possible due to small grants offered by Nagarik Aawaz to collaborate with the local government.

**Reason #3:** Psychosocial Care and Economic Sustainability will unburden them to take their leadership forward.

Extreme violence and cruelty have left these women with scarcity, mental stress, trauma and isolation. Government and non-government organizations have not given attention as much as needed to the psychosocial care and economic advancement of these conflict affected women. 75% of the conflict affected women that we work with and have displayed one or the other symptoms such as anxiety, stress, lack of appetite, lack of sleep, recollections of traumatic incidents and depression. These women are also the head of the households and sole responsibility holders to take care of their children and other family members. These women are physically, mentally weak and therefore cannot engage in labor work for sustaining their lives. Lack of education plays as another barrier to their economic uplift. The struggle to meet their end needs and to cover the cost of medical bills divert their will and determination to advocate and take leadership in their communities. Women demonstrated a remarkable resilience and nurturing nature to carry forward their lives and strike a balance between their and community leadership life despite the hurdles they face every day. Therefore, a holistic intervention would advance their leadership as per their context and need.

**Reason #4:** Building alliances and networks

Conflict affected women stand in different levels in terms of leadership and their roles but they described common themes in how they navigated the political and social landscape to achieve their goals. While describing their rise to leadership, few of them gave credit to their other fellow conflict affected women in developing their leadership skills and capacity. The conflict affected women leaders established networks and brought other conflict affected women who were confined in their lives to the outer world where they could learn, explore, share and fight for their justice. Tilawati Khadka, one of the conflict affected women from Banke shared that "we have our own network and that network is my strength, my family and my security. If we were not united, we would be left unattended by the society". We should promote and support conflict affected women who lead networks and alliances to become established. Collective strength is critical to amplify their power.

**Reason #5:** NGOs Sustainable Supportive Role for Conflict Affected Women's Leadership.

Nagarik Aawaz since its beginning has believed in humble approach to help conflict affected women develop their leadership. We have been supporting their leadership development for more than 19 years. We did that through humanitarian approach or helping develop their leadership. However, we understood from the beginning to build leaders we have to put

ourselves in the background and push women to take leadership. They need to earn their trust and leadership from others, so we can't force others to trust their leadership. We can inspire them, encourage them, and educate them but they need to prove themselves to the community. Kriti Chaudary from Kailali is one of the st

Playing a supportive role is a long hall. We have been at it since 2001 and to sustain peace is a process. It takes time to care, nurture and safe-guard. Sporadic efforts do not help conflict affected women in their leadership. We have to make sure we need to be there when they need us. We need to sustain our effort in really helping them become leaders. They will need our help in every step. From their mobility, movement and their leadership.

**Conclusion:** Nagarik Aawaz believe with right support we can become an important asset for conflict affected women. For conflict affected women to become leaders they need to own their narratives. Our role is to help amplify their narratives. Conflict affected women need to grow as individuals. When they grow as an individual, we can collectively help them grow their movement. We want to create space for them to choose whether they want to be perceived as victims or leaders. We want to help conflict affected women become responsible persons: and can decide whether they are well or ill, and act or refuse to act and can choose to act one way rather than another.<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Sen. Amartya 2011. Development as Freedom. *Women's Agency and Social Change*, 190.

## Annex 6

### **National Action Plan (NAP) on the Implementation of the United Nation Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1325 and 1820**

Nepal launched its National Action Plan (NAP) on the Implementation of the United Nation Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1325 and 1820 in February 2011. Nepal is the first country in South Asia to adopt a NAP on UNSCR 1325 and 1820. The adoption of the Action Plan and its launching demonstrates the political commitment and high priority of the Government of Nepal to issues related to women, peace and security.

The NAP was developed through an intensively collaborative and participatory process across the country in which, women and girls affected by conflict, representatives from the government, civil society, and development partners were engaged. The NAP is built on five pillars namely: participation, protection and prevention, promotion, relief and recovery and resource management and monitoring and evaluation<sup>4</sup>.

The NAP aims for the participation and leadership of women at all levels of decision-making, conflict transformation and peace processes including taking measures to address specific needs of women and girls in the design and implementation of all relief and recovery programs thereby creating sustainable peace and just society. According to the National Action Plan of Nepal on Conflict Affected Women in Implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820, conflict affected women means women who due to the impact of armed conflict or as a result of that are suffering from the following conditions notwithstanding their present status:

1. Women or girls displaced from their habitual place of living.
2. Single women.
3. Women or girls or their husbands or parents who are themselves physically disabled or have lost their limbs or are maimed due to the explosion of landmine or Improvised Explosive Devices, or due to the use of weapons or any other reason.
4. Women or girls who have been separated from their husbands or parents or from their families.
5. Former women and girl combatants who are pregnant, or nursing mothers or have infants with them and who are either living in the cantonments or outside.
6. Mentally affected women and girls.
7. Women or girls who could not continue their studies because the school they were studying in was seized or because of fear and insecurity or because of the displacement of teachers.

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<sup>4</sup> Assessed on <https://www.peacewomen.org/content/nepal-nepal-launches-national-action-plan-women-peace-security-internationally> on 05 August 2020.

8. Women or girls who suffered from sexual exploitation or rape.
9. Women or girls who because of sexual exploitation or rape became pregnant and were compelled to give birth or to undergo abortion.
10. Women or girls against whom action has been taken in suspicion of being affiliated to the security forces or armed groups or helping such forces or groups.
11. Women or girls who are in detention or in prison or who have undergone imprisonment.
12. Women or girls living in protection homes or child rehabilitation homes.
13. Girls against whom cases have been registered in courts for any charges.
14. Women or girls who have been abducted or subjected to involuntary disappearance or the women and girls from families whose members have been abducted or subjected to involuntary disappearance.