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## Impact of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal

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The Impact of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal

By

Christina Rajbhandari

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Science

in

Women and Gender Studies

Minnesota State University, Mankato

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“The Impact of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal”

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This Master’s Thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student’s committee.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the gendered impacts of the 2015 earthquake on women in Nepal. The purpose of this study is to identify factors contributing to the vulnerability of women and explore gender sensitivity of the relief materials provided post-2015 earthquake. Five major themes were identified that put women in vulnerable situations. These include, menstruations and pregnancy, which are unique experience of women; bathing and toilet needs, which are different than their male counterparts; caretaking duties, which was found to be the primary role of women interviewed; age based vulnerabilities, which puts older women in unique conditions that affect their vulnerability and; Violence against women. Findings of this study also indicate a huge lack of gender sensitivity in relief materials and its distribution. This study utilizes Sandra Harding's "Standpoint theory" and Patricia Hill Collin's "Theory of intersectionality" to examine the unique gendered experience of women, and the impact of factors like caste, age, poverty on their vulnerabilities. The findings of this study can be utilized by local and international agencies to plan better gender-sensitive disaster preparedness; by researchers interested in exploring specific themes that cause vulnerabilities; and national Governments in bringing about policy level changes to better serve the population of women during the time of disaster.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Nepal is listed as one of the top 20 most disaster prone areas in the world. It lies in the high seismic hazard zone, which makes it susceptible to the earthquakes (Dangal, n.d.). On April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015, an earthquake of 7.9 Richter scale hit Nepal killing almost nine thousand people and displacing hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. Although the occurrences of these earthquakes are gender neutral, their impacts on individuals are not (Cannon, 1994).

The research on natural disasters have neglected the study of gender, Enarson names this form of neglect as “calculated blindness” and asserts that it occurs because of generalizations of behaviors of individuals (2012, 2). These generalizations result in gender-blinding of studies concerning disaster issues and impacts. Enarson further stresses the importance of addressing gender issues in disaster response and planning. Considering the lack of research on issues of gender during a disaster, this study conducted interviews with twenty Nepalese women, who experienced the earthquakes. The purpose of this study is to provide a gendered lens to exploring women’s experiences after the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal.

This research study includes semi-structured interviews and two main research questions; how was the earthquake experience influenced by gender? And, were relief materials distributed gender sensitive or not?

The research study includes several terms that are important to be defined and contextualized. One of those terms is “vulnerability”. Angela McRobbie explores Judith Butler’s assertion that individuals have varying experiences in life that affect their

vulnerability (2006). This vulnerability varies depending on individual's condition and situation. According to Gilson (2013), vulnerability is universal, omnipresent and shared among member individuals. It is the exposure of an individual that makes one prone to things that is beyond one's control. She, however, attempts to challenge the negative definition of vulnerability that defines individual as dependent and weak. This feminist perspective situates vulnerability as a neutral term not only in relation to women but as a condition brought about by shaped by factors of race, gender, and class.

Another term that is important to define in this study is "gender mainstreaming". Dimitrijevic defines gender mainstreaming as a process of being conscious of the needs, concerns and abilities of all gender groups in all levels of planning and managing relief resources (2007). She identifies the need of integrating a gender perspective in every phase of disaster response. She asserts gender mainstreaming can be achieved by the inclusion of a gender perspective according to Maslow's hierarchy. Maslow's hierarchy is based on humanist's belief that human beings strive to move up in levels of creativity. His theory of needs is composed of five levels of basic needs, which according to him an individual passes a level higher in this hierarchy only if the bottom level/levels are satisfied (McLeod, 2007). These levels are physiological needs, safety needs, the need of love affection and belongingness, need for esteem and need for self-actualization. The physiological need is the first level in this hierarchy. Thus, according to Dimitrijevic, if we include a gender perspective in every level, "gender mainstreaming" can be achieved. This inclusion of gender perspective is vital for this research study, as it attempts to explore the impact on women due to lack of gender sensitivity.



## **Organization of Chapters**

To provide context for this research study, Chapter 2 presents the overview of the relevant literature that structures this study. The literature review is divided into three bodies of knowledge: 1) gendered vulnerability during disasters 2) gender and humanitarian response and 3) women's role in disaster response. The first body of literature discusses the ways women are vulnerable and impacted during a disaster because of various gender roles, characteristics, and cultures that are associated with their gender group. The second body of knowledge explores gender and humanitarian response and the importance of gender-sensitive planning and managing disaster relief materials. In the literature review, I suggest that the needs of an individual differ to great extent based on the individual's gender. The third body addresses the ways a natural disaster does not only make women more vulnerable but also open up a space of opportunities for them. These opportunities are not limited to change in traditional roles, opportunities for organizing and activism, and future job opportunities.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology of this research. Here I discuss standpoint theory and theory of intersectionality as a theoretical framework for the study. I explain in detail the ways the research was conducted, outlined, and the limitation of the study. I also discuss the significance of reflexivity in the interview study design and conducting interviews.

In Chapter 4, I analyze the findings of the research. The findings are solely based on the responses received from the twenty women interviewed. The results chapter is divided into three main themes that complement the 3 main bodies of literature in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5, includes discussion and presents the conclusion of this research study. This section also discusses implication and future scope of this research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The following literature review suggests the unique experiences of women to the disaster preparedness, disaster period, and post-disaster response. Here, the literature explores ways women are vulnerable to disasters. These reasons include their physical difference with men, gendered roles in the household, and patriarchal culture where women depend on husbands for major decision-making processes. Furthermore, when discussing humanitarian relief materials, the literature shows a great need for gender sensitivity in relief materials. The literature explores ways gendered needs like needs during pregnancy, lactation, family planning, needs of the elderly population are not considered in the planning of disaster response. These might occur due to various reasons such as the lack of women's participation in the planning of disaster and distribution of the services. Also, during post-disaster situations, the roles of men and women might change, which might change social conditions where women can make major family decisions. These decision-making processes might not have been the case in a normal scenario. Further, the literature suggests the ways that disaster opens opportunities for women. These opportunities can range from working outside homes; which they would not have done otherwise, to participating in women's organizing and political involvement of women in the community. The detailed literature breakdown is given below divided according to the three bodies of knowledge that this research study is based on.

### **1. Gendered Vulnerability during Disasters**

To study the vulnerability of women during a disaster, it is important to know which factors cause these vulnerabilities. Also, it is important to know if the vulnerability is life threatening. Thus, the following literature is divided into 2 sub-categories to explore factors that contribute to gendered vulnerability. These vulnerabilities are divided into 1) vulnerability based on biological, physiological, social, cultural and economic characteristics and 2) the relation of vulnerability to life threatening situations.

### **Vulnerability based on biological, physiological, socio-cultural difference and economic characteristics**

Cannon (1994) asserts that people are vulnerable in natural disasters because of various characteristics that might include their social, economic and cultural standing, with the inclusion of one's gender, ethnicity and class. According to Enarson (2000) disasters intensifies a society's strength and weaknesses, and in this condition, the impact on a particular gender group will depend on the level of gender inequality in a society. Thus differing in level of social hierarchy in terms of gender inequality will render individuals vulnerable to disasters in varying degrees. Enarson identified three types of vulnerability: 1) livelihood 2) self-protection and 3) social protection. Thus vulnerability can be reduced by helping individuals and groups become more resilient, by improving the social, economic, political factors that make them vulnerable.

Among the populations that suffer, various reports show that women and children are the most vulnerable to a natural disaster (DFID, 2004 and IPCC, 2007) and that the impact of disasters is more on women (Dasgupta, Siriner and Partha, 2010). Dimitrijevic (2007) mentions the difference in experiences exists based on gender because of the

difference in the division of work, the difference in individual development like literacy, health status; the presence of life supporting skills, access to information, legal protection and decision-making power. Neumayer and Plumper (2007) developed a concept according to which the gendered nature of vulnerability is explained in terms of three main overlapping causes. They are biological and physiological, social norms and role, and exacerbation of gender discrimination due to exasperated post-disaster conditions. According to the first cause, the physiology of men and women differ which might affect their self-rescue capacity like running, climbing, swimming. However, a study shows that self-rescue depends on learned skill than physiological condition of an individual (Oxfam, 2005). Rivers (1982) argues that women in some conditions can survive better, like in the case of famine as their body needs fewer nutrients with the exception of pregnant and older women. However, social factors also play a role here, as Becker (1996) in discussing early 1960 Chinese famine mentions accounts of men choosing which daughter to let die first because of limited food. In terms of physical infrastructure, like in the case of the 1993 Maharashtra earthquake, women slept inside houses and men outside, which placed women in more danger of mortality due to collapsed buildings (Bryne and Baden, 1995). The physiology of women also plays an important role in case of pregnant women, who are limited in their mobility and further requiring obstetrical care which might not be readily present post-disaster (Neumayer and Plumper, 2007). Neumayer and Plumper also discuss social factors which include women's responsibility to look after family members as a hindrance towards their self-rescue efforts. Furthermore, social norms and customs like in the case of Bangladeshi women, who wear sari can affect their mobility capacity to run or swim, further having to follow husband's

orders might put them in a peril in search for her husband (Ikedia, 1995). Islam (2012), Rahman (2013) and Ahmad (2012) also demonstrate that women, old age, and the children are the ones to be most affected. This is because women often play a subordinate role in a family that takes away most of the major decision-making power in their family structure.

Furthermore, according to Alam (2010), women's subordinate position limits their economic independence which in turn makes them more vulnerable to disaster. One of the examples of this social characteristics include women's lack of swimming skills due to social restriction, Oxfam (2005) found that during the 2004 Sri Lankan tsunami, men easily swam and climbed trees to save their life, but women could not. Alam and Rahman (2014) assert that the frequency of incidence of disaster is in direct co-relation with the asset vulnerability. That is the higher the incidence of disaster, the more vulnerability and lesser intention to accumulate materials. They also identified an increase in women's vulnerability with the death of the husband.

Neumar and Plumper describe the effects of the social division of labor as a source that increases the risk for women who reside at home taking care of family members. As women stay home, for this reason, their husbands go out to work. This division of labor that makes women stay within the house puts them at more risk of death than men by collapsed building. Bradshaw (2004) argue that women after a disaster are vulnerable to incidences of domestic and sexual violence. In the case of Nepal, Aryal (2014) identifies factors like gendered roles in households, social and cultural norms and gender discrimination as a cause of women's vulnerability in Nepal. The importance of

studying disaster vulnerability from a gendered lens is important to improve disaster response activities (William, 1993-1994). To improve the disaster response efforts, it is important to target the socially constructed gendered norms (Enarson and Fordham, 2001). Hence it is clear that the vulnerability in relation to disaster is gendered in nature. My own view aligns with this statement that women in Nepal were more vulnerable and were impacted by the number of earthquakes that occurred in 2015.

### **Vulnerability and life threat**

Ikeda (1995) argues the loss of life of women is significantly higher than that of men. The claim is further bolstered by Neumayer and Plumper's (2007) study, which found that natural disasters affect the life expectancy of men and women differently. This study found that women lost their lives more in comparison to men. The study also found the difference in mortality is higher in developing countries. In other words, the more intense the disaster the more significant the impact on gender gap and life expectancy is observed (Alston, 2009). Molin (2009) and Rivers (1982) suggest that the difference in gender mortality is due to the difference in gender roles constructed by the society. This is because of its direct correlation with the exposure to risks associated with the gender-based roles. They also connect this impact inversely with the women's higher socio-economic conditions. According to Parkinson (2011), poor women are more vulnerable as they are likely to reside in areas that are more prone to the disaster's effects, like weak housing infrastructure. Furthermore, Henrici, Helmuth, and Braun (2010) suggest that women affected by poverty had limited access to resources to run away from disasters. This limitation would, in turn, put them in danger. Enarson (2006) assert, in the case of the developed world, women are more vulnerable to economic insecurity than death

because women in disaster prone areas are employed in low-income jobs with no or very less job security. Further Enarson and Phillips (2008) argue the patriarchal culture will worsen the economic security of women as their role changes from earners to caregivers. And will face more difficulties because of gender stereotypes that will affect their job opportunities, increase workload, and women's ability to obtain external economic assistance (Enarson, 2000).

Rivers (1982) presented an example that in two of the Russian earthquakes that occurred in 1948 and 1966, the mortality of women was significantly higher than that of men. Parasuraman (1995) found that even among the group of women, women of the age group 25 to 29 were the most affected because of their gender-defined roles. Fothergill (1998) also found the results similar with the increased deaths of women in the case of the 1976 Guatemala and the 1992 Cairo earthquakes. Fothergill also mentions the case of Indian earthquake, that if a father had to decide on keeping a son or daughter, the choice would be to keep son to continue the family lineage. It was also observed in the case of the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone where the justification of saving a son's life by giving up on daughters was to continue the family line. In economically disadvantaged households in Bangladesh men are privileged to receive food first and women the leftovers; further the system of dowry challenges girl's priority even more (Salagrama, 2006). This demonstrates how women's lives are devalued in comparison to the life of men. Even though it has been documented, especially in the case of developing countries that women's lives are more in threat than men. The difference in life threat is also evident in developed countries. According to Fothergill (1998) in the context of the United States, more men died in comparison to women in disasters like thunderstorms, flash floods, and



hurricanes. Neumayera and Plumperb (2007) pointed out, this might be because of men's nature of being involved in outdoor activities and neglecting weather warnings.

Considering the risk to women's life, Scanlon (1998) pointed out the chances of increased battering of women post-disaster. Any study regarding the violence against women in a post-disaster setting should recognize the sensitivity of the topic, and the tendency of women to not speak the abuse, especially if they are victims in an intimate relationship (Parkinson, 2011). According to Forthgill (2008), there is a lack of research that can help us understand the rates of the battering in post-disaster communities. However recent research suggests, the increasing rates of violence against women (Enarson, 2000 and Dasgupta and Partha, 2010). Austin (2008) mentions the statistics of the post hurricane Katrina, in which the reported sexual assault cases showed a drastic rise among the population. Bookey (2010) mentions the 2010 Haitian earthquake disaster, where because of the cramped shelter areas, women could not maintain their privacy and were subjected to sexual assaults.

According to Rees, Pittaway, and Bartolomei (2005) the violence against women increases during the time of the disaster because of the preexisting social conditions that marginalize women. Thus, women could experience violence as a continuation to post-disaster, or as a new event. Enarson (2006) has also identified men's challenge to their masculinity (feeling unmanly) post disaster as a potential precursor to addiction to drugs and alcohol, which in turn might create a threat to the ones surrounding them (women). Austin (2008) argue that a form of "hyper-masculinity" arises in the aftermath of a disaster in response to the stress, which would cause men to feel failed in term of their

masculinity that influences violent actions towards women. According to Fothergill (2008), the response to violence after a disaster depends on how the society handled the violence prior to the disaster. Jagannath (2011) asserts the silence surrounding the sexual assaults in Haiti, was a result of long rooted gender discrimination. According to Neumayer and Plumper (2007), there is always a “gender blinding” in disaster concerns because of the reluctance of women to talk about sensitive issues like violence and sexual assaults.

## **2. Gender and Humanitarian response**

To know the full impact of the disaster on women, it is important to know the ways that the nature of the humanitarian response affect women. The literature on gender and humanitarian response discuss the importance of gender sensitivity in disaster response. This section reviews literature that focus on gender sensitivity of the relief materials, their planning, and importance of women’s involvement in planning, managing and distribution of the humanitarian materials.

### **Need of gender sensitivity in response materials**

According to the literature, many researchers have focused on identifying the vulnerable nature of disasters in terms of gender, but there exists a gap in the research that focuses on the need for gender sensitivity in disaster response. Dimitrijevics (2007) mentions the loss of life as a tragedy in both developed and developing countries, but also mentions that most developing countries lack the capacity to self-sustain and to do that

efficiently. Even in countries that are most likely to be affected by the disaster, the inclusion of disaster perspective in planning is found to be scarce.

Alam and Rahman (2014) found in their research that most affected populations received food materials but other forms of support varied. Dimitrijevic (2007) puts forth the problems in the distribution of relief materials. Some of the problems she identified are the distribution in which is often led by men and distribution of food based on the head of household, which is often assumed to be men. Another problem of distribution is that it excludes households headed by women. Furthermore, there is a risk of resources being misused or sold in the informal market (Marshall, 1995). Also, elderly men and women are vulnerable to not receiving relief materials. In the case of the 2004 Tamil Nadu Tsunami, the elderly population was exempted from receiving relief because of the perception that they needed a little food for survival (Pincha et al. 2007).

Dimitrijevic (2007) also identifies clothing needs can be different within cultures and age group within a society, like adult women and young girls might wear different clothes. Further, she noted undergarments for women are also noted to be absent from relief materials. Murthy (2005) during the post-tsunami found that the aid materials did not include clothes worn by adolescent girls. The situation becomes more challenging in the context of materials for cultural minorities with specific requirements. Pincha et al. (2007) found that in India, burkhas were provided only in limited numbers to the Muslim communities.

Another requirement unique to women is the need of blood absorbent products for menstruation. Dimitrijevic (2007) mentions the aid agencies failure to provide materials

for menstruation might be because of the perception, that women in communities have traditional ways when in fact they would be using common sanitary materials. Another issue she raises are the specific needs of pregnant and lactating women. Because of their special condition, it is important to consider their unique needs like adequate milk, vitamins, and other nutrients, that play an important role in mother's and the fetus's health. Shedding light on the needs of adolescent health Krause (2005) discusses, the increased requirement of reproductive and sexual health supplies to prevent sexually transmitted disease like HIV/AIDS. Rawal et al. (2005) found that people in tsunami-affected areas suggested the inclusion of alcoholism prevention programs in combination to the psycho-social services.

Relief shelters play a very important role in saving lives of people. The shelter supported by the Red Cross during the Orissa cyclone in 1999, saved thousands of lives (Schmuck, 2001). However, it is also important to consider the cultural implications in shelters which are discussed in the next section.

### **Need of gender mainstreaming of humanitarian relief on women**

In discussions of humanitarian relief, one issue that arises is whether the relief materials are benefitting both men and women equally. Dimitrijevic (2007) defined gender mainstreaming as a process of being conscious of the needs, concerns and abilities of all gender groups in all levels of planning and managing relief resources. She identifies the need of integrating a gender perspective in every phase of disaster response. She asserts gender mainstreaming can be achieved by comparing the inclusion of a gender perspective per Maslow's hierarchy, that is to focus on gendered needs on each level of

needs theorized by Maslow. Parkinson (2011) identified the importance of society's perception of gender, for post-disaster response. Alam and Rahman (2014) found that gender insensitive relief caused women various problems like lack of separate toilets, insufficient food supply, and unfair relief distribution. Ahmad (2012) asserts the importance of gender sensitivity in disaster preparation and response, and that this can save lives, help in proper distribution of aid and secure safety concerns arising in shelter areas. In the shelter areas post flood in Bangladesh, he found women vulnerable to sexual and physical assaults in the shelter and relief camps due to lack of privacy and seclusion for them. The victims were mostly adolescent girls. These assaults especially occurred in the case of using toilets, bathrooms and maintaining hygiene during periods. This literature suggests the challenges of women's privacy in relation to performing basic hygiene routines like bathing, sleeping, urinating and menstruation.

Benelli, Mazurana, and Walker further stressed the latrine problems faced by most women. These problems included lack of separate toilets, toilets at a distant location, lack of lighting and devoid of locks etc. D'Cunha (1997) found that in 1991 Bangladesh cyclone and flood, single women who did not have a male partner sought out sex-segregated latrine services. However, the facility was not gender sensitive, it did not have separate toilets and neither provided sanitary materials for women. Also important is the proximity of the shelter to the houses of the victims (Dimitrijevic, 2007). A study by Oxfam (2005) found that women especially felt concern for their protection in shelters which lacked gender segregation, lacked proper locks and lighting system (Pincha et al. 2007).

Fisher (2005) mentions incidences where people responsible for victim's protection become the assailants. In the Indian tsunami of 2004, a mental health patient was physically assaulted by two officers. In Sri Lanka, cases of police officers raping a woman, watching women bathe and harassing them were reported. The absence of privacy was also found to incite domestic violence in Sri Lanka post-tsunami when husbands encountered wife's reluctance to have sex in the closeness of children and neighbors (Fisher, 2005). For incidences like this Dimitrijevic (2007) stresses on the inclusion of women as service provider. However, the cases have been reported where women relief workers are stopped from going to the field for their protection (Akhter, 1992). The recovery process of women has been found to be slower than men because of their limited accessibility to recovery and relief materials (Khondker, 1996). Mainstreaming gender in relief activities is essential because gender affects an individual's role and capacity post-disaster. Due to this, people of a different gender will have distinct needs, capacities, and desires (Dimitrijevic, 2007).

### **Women's role in Disaster response**

Even though the early literature suggests women as vulnerable, it is important to realize that post-disaster settings also open up opportunities for women (Hallegatte, 2009). This section reviews the roles of women in a post-disaster setting and the potential act of women's activism and organizing during the aftermath of a disaster.

### **Women's role in planning disaster response**

Dasgupta, et al (2010) asserts that an individual's gender impacts an individual's reaction to the disaster and the ways of coping. According to Alam and Rahman (2014), the immediate issues include finding shelter and managing foods after the disaster. They identified the perception of women as vulnerable and men as capable of challenging to women's involvement in post disaster activities. It is important to acknowledge that women's involvement is vital for effective change, thus they too should be granted decision-making opportunities in response to a disaster (Scanlon, 1996). According to Neumayera and Plumperb (2007) women played important roles that helped protect lives and assets. However, they also found that women were always given a secondary role than primary. And if women were provided with better information than that could have resulted in better preparedness.

Chowdhury (1993) and Forthrgill (1996) identified women's primary role post-disaster as taking care of the family members and providing food. Women are often depicted as victims that lack agency during a disaster, however, studies have shown they can be very useful too. According to United Nations Development Program, (2010) report the women's social roles can be mobilized as capacities for adapting in vulnerable areas. Skidmore (2002) and Hallegatte (2009) emphasize that disasters might not always render women vulnerable, but also open up opportunities as well. According to Rees, Pittaway and Bartolomei, (2005) post-disaster, women are more subjected to marginalization because of the preexisting social inequality that gets worse when the involvement of women is limited. The conditions are challenging when women lack a male figure attached to them, for example, widows, divorced, lesbian, single mothers as

they are limited from having resources and relief materials that are predominantly maintained by men (Enarson and Phillips, 2008).

Women are expected and limited to play integral roles in disaster response, but not in places where they have decision-making power (Krajeski and Peterson, 2008). Lack of women's participation leads to the continual negligence of women's needs (Neumayera and Plumperb, 2007). Dobson (1994) described the lack of recognition for the work that women perform post-disaster by explaining the private nature of women's work and public nature of men's. Because of which, men's work is praised and women's work, of caregiving in terms of ensuring family member's physical, emotional and psychological well-being is confined within the boundaries of the four walls of the house (Honeycombe, 1994). As a result, this contributes to the misrepresentation of male activities which are publicized and that of women's are not (Fuller, 1994). In response to this Fuller suggests the need of an increase in women's involvement in all phases of disaster response. Finlay (1998) discusses the ways that inability to view disaster as a gendered phenomenon, results in seeing disaster as a gender-neutral phenomenon.

Dimitrijevic (2007) suggests mainstreaming gender in recovery and reconstruction as a way to expedite the process and at the same time promote gender equality. She also discusses the opportunities of women in reconstructive phases, which often is seen as less important. Fordham (2001) in the context of the 1998 hurricane in Nicaragua presents the example of women working on the rebuilding process. Another issue of reconstruction is the maintenance of livelihood, for the loss of business. It is important to pay attention to women's business as well, however, it has been found that



financial credits were given preferably to male-owned businesses (Enarson, 2000).

However, Oxfam (2005) found that post-disaster, women have found themselves working and establishing in new and non-traditional areas of work.

### **3. Women's organizing aftermath disaster**

According to Dasgupta (2010) and Quarantelli (1994), the disaster setting can be used as an opportunity to induce social change. According to Tyler (2007) women in New Orleans, post-disaster incited activism among women to form women's support groups. Akcar (2001) identifies several reasons for women's involvement in local governance. One of them being the rise of "main actors" in a disaster setting, as people immediately after a disaster involve in activities of saving lives. Women can be more active and involved in such conditions. Secondly, disaster setting requires working together that involves marginalized groups too. Third, disaster setting provides opportunities for women to get involved. Lastly, disasters that include economic crisis, will open up opportunities for men and women to work together for the combined good. She identifies women's role in transferring information of disaster as a valuable asset. During the relief phase, women are more aware of their neighbors and can save life by identifying places where people were. In the rehabilitative phase, women can act as caregivers and informed person of who are in most need help in distributing relief materials. Furthermore Akcar also found that women learned from another women's group. Dhungel and Ohja (2012) mentioned the formation of women's empowerment center as part of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian program, to help address the causes of vulnerability due to flood. However, these groups are selected and formed

by an organization in Nepal to initiate women's empowerment and involvement in a local level.

### **Conclusion**

This literature review shows how women are impacted by a disaster because of various gender roles, characteristics, and cultures that are associated with their gender group. It sheds light on the importance of gender-sensitivity during the planning and managing disaster relief materials. And the importance of addressing post-disaster setting as a potential opportunity for women. It is also important to acknowledge that impact of various groups of people differs from place to place, and there is a very limited study conducted on the disaster impacts on women and that of women in Nepal. The literature also suggests the need for more comprehensive research on the impact of a disaster on women as a gender group acknowledging the intersection of caste, class, and age. The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide a gendered lens to exploring women's experiences after the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal. This research study further attempts to shed light on the unique experiences of women in Nepal, to explore factors associated with vulnerability of women and impact of the gender sensitivity of response materials on women.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

After the devastating earthquake that took place on April 2015, and its consecutive multiple aftershocks, my family back home in Nepal and friends had been displaced from their home. People took shelter in nearby open fields or any space they thought would protect them from the collapsed buildings. I learned about villages that were almost completely ruined with no house standing, which created a havoc among people. Local and international news started to cover stories on national and international organizations bringing relief materials. These included a variety of material ranging from foods, blankets, and medicine. My friends on Facebook shared their unmet needs of sanitary pads, lack of proper toilets, and lack of care kits for pregnant and lactating mothers. These experiences led me to question the ways that women's needs were not addressed and search for answers to why the impact was gendered in nature. I decided to conduct interviews of women in the earthquake-affected area to find answers to these concerns.

The purpose of this study is to provide a gendered lens to exploring women's experiences after the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal. The focus was to identify the potential vulnerability of women, and factors associated with it, explore gender sensitivity of humanitarian aid and relief materials and to explore the role of women in post disaster activities. I set out to explore if women are impacted because of various gender roles, gender norms, functions, and cultural implication based on their gender. They were vulnerable because of their biological, physiological, socio-cultural, and economic factors. I also set out to determine if relief materials were gender sensitive at a certain

level, however, failed to meet many gender-based needs. The research attempted through its findings to inform importance of gender sensitivity in planning, managing, and distributing relief materials; also, to encourage participation of women in post disaster activities.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Standpoint theory**

This feminist research study is guided by the standpoint theory. Standpoint theory as Sandra Harding (2004) argues brings a new perspective in understanding difficult problems and creating new knowledge. It helps to collect the experience of women in a scientific way following research disciplines. It is a way of vesting power on marginalized groups, acknowledging their unique experiences (Collins, 2002). According to Harding, because women occupy a marginalized position in the society, their experiences are limited to understanding by those on the top of the social hierarchy. In contrast, if the power relation is studied from the women's perspective, it will provide a better understanding of the way social power functions.

As Harding further explains, if knowledge is considered situated socially, then situating the knowledge based on a dominant or dominated group will help understand the situation of either group. That is if we are considering the domination of the dominated group, and situate knowledge on the dominated group, it will help identify the scope of oppression, which can be further used in an advantage of the dominated group. Based on standpoint theory, this research attempts to situate knowledge from the women who experienced the impact of the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal. According to Harding

(1992) stressing on the experience of women, as a marginalized group is conducive to discussing their lived experience and will help develop new knowledge.

### **Theory of intersectionality**

This research is also based on the Patricia Hill Collins theory of intersectionality. It focuses on the experience of women in the context of the intersection of gender, social class, age, and physiology. Thus, considering these intersections makes it relevant in terms of multiple standpoints of the women (Collins, 2002). Shields (2008) defines intersectionality as “the mutually constitutive relations among social identities.” It is important to have an intersectional view as an individual might be affected in a certain way because of any one of the identity markers and experiencing something else because of another identity marker. This makes an individual an amalgam of identity markers, with each marker affecting individual’s experiences of either an oppressed or privileged. This research study attempts to differentiate experiences of women in context to the earthquake in Nepal, not in an isolation of their gender but acknowledging the difference in age, social class, caste, and physiology.

### **Procedures**

#### **Research location**

The research was conducted in three districts of Nepal (Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur) together called the Kathmandu valley. It is based on the collection of data in these urban locations of Nepal. The Kathmandu valley in 2011, had a population of 2,510,788.

### **Research participant criteria**

The eligibility criteria of the research included only women who are Nepalese citizens, 18 years of age or older, an inhabitant of the Kathmandu valley and who experienced the 2015 earthquakes.

### **Recruitment procedure**

The interviews were conducted via telephone. A flyer with all the details of the research including the title, objective, purpose and the researcher's contact information of Facebook, Skype and Gmail contact information was circulated among my contacts in Nepal. I used a snowball method of recruitment and asked personal friends to spread the word and post the flyers in various public areas of the three Nepalese cities to increase the chances of a response. After the initial contact from the interested participants and ensuring they match the research selection criteria, the Recruitment Script (please see appendix) was read to describe the research. If the woman agreed to participate, a consent form (please see appendix) for participation was sent. After receiving the signed consent form via email, the date and time for the interview were set. The interviewer called each of the twenty interviewees via telephone.

### **Interview process**

Interviews were conducted with the help of preset semi-structured interview questions (please see appendix). The responses were audio recorded. The interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interviewees were requested to be alone when interviewed to ensure privacy and comfort in answering the questions. The process of interviewing is important in context to this research because it provided first-hand

responses that are lived experiences of the women in Nepal. Getting to know about their lives and experiences from the women themselves validates this study. Preset semi-structured questionnaires helped get information on all the main topics the study intended to cover, and further, its semi-structure format gave space for women to talk and lead the response in any direction they wished.

### **Potential risk to participants**

The potential risk the participants encountered was emotional distress in recalling earthquake incidents. The potential risk was minimized by mentioning early during the interview that if they feel uncomfortable during the interview process, they have the right to stop the interview. It made them feel in control of their answers and the whole interview process. Furthermore, as the interview proceeded, the participant's reactions to questions were observed, to identify signs of discomfort. The participants of this research did not receive any form of compensation and the decision to participate was voluntary.

### **Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity**

The interview process ensured anonymity of the participants. The population of the Kathmandu valley is very high and identifying any individual with only their caste, age, educational status is not possible or rather very difficult. During all the phases of the research study, the recordings of the interview were kept in the encrypted password protected laptop. The names of the participants were not asked and a pseudonym will be provided to ensure complete anonymity of the participant.

### **Language and Translation**

All interviews were conducted in Nepali. After the interviews were completed, the interviews were then translated and transcribed simultaneously in a word document. One of the limitations of this study is losing data during translation. When translating from English to Nepali, some data might have been lost. Some words even though mean something in Nepali, the English translated word used to translate might not have the same meaning. Best efforts were made to use exact meaning words in English, if not the word that means the closest to its meaning was used.

### **Data analysis**

Each individual interview transcript was read thoroughly to identify common and outlier themes. The first phase included the thematic analysis, where I look for common themes and experiences of the women. During the entire process, I used the three bodies of knowledge as my three pillars of analysis 1) Gendered Vulnerability 2) Gender and Humanitarian Response and 3) Women's Role in Disaster Response. The second phase of data analysis included identifying themes and dividing them into various tables in Microsoft excel by coding each theme into 5 subgroup/categories of analysis. Further themes were identified based on other the intersections of factors such as gender, old age, caste group, pregnancy/ nursing status. The most common themes that emerged from the data analysis are considered primary themes and those with lower were considered secondary themes. The themes with very fewer occurrences or just one occurrence were not included in the final data analysis.

### **Reflexivity**



When I first got the message of the earthquake and its devastating impact, there were sleepless nights. The trauma of not being able to hold a conversation with my family was the most devastating and helpless moment I have ever felt. Knowing half of your city was destroyed, turned into a pile and many villages in your country turning into pieces, with no homes standing is not a situation anyone would like to be. Over the course of 3 weeks, things improved for my family and I could cope mentally, but to know that there are families back home who lost their loved ones, families that were and are currently struggling for basic necessities is my concern. What drew me to this topic was the difference in experiences of women as compared to men during the time of the earthquake. I noted as I went through my friends' Facebook posts who needed sanitary pads and proper toilets as they were sheltered in a fragile tent built from bedsheets. Life in Nepal has its own kind of challenges. First, most of the Nepalese cultures are structured by patriarchy. Women are considered secondary members in the households; the decision-making capacities are mostly that of men in the house. These social conditions place women in a very difficult and dependent situation. The extent to which patriarchy exists might differ from family to family but it is evident in the culture, which, further in emergency conditions like disasters have a potential to exacerbate gender inequalities.

My identity as a Nepali, Newari, woman I believe impacted the study in different ways. I play both insider and outsider role in this research. I, being from and having grown up in Nepal, I am familiar with the cultural environment back home. This increased the level of understanding about the lived experiences of women in Nepal. That gave me an insider position during the interview process. However, it is important to note

I myself did not experience it. And as a graduate student studying in the United States, it creates a difference in experience between me and the research participants that puts me in an outsider's position. Further, I am also an interviewer and a researcher that creates a dynamic relationship between me and the research participants. Because of this unique positioning, I am in while conducting this research, I play the role of an outsider within, which Collins (1986) describes as a status within which an individual simultaneously occupies two positions which are exclusive to one another.

Even though I am an outsider, I still am an insider. Also, my ability to talk and hold a conversation in Nepali puts me in an advantage as the conversations were more productive which will foster an understanding discussion and interviews.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study is based on the experience of women in three urban locations of the country, thus these might not represent the experience of women in rural communities or the entire country of Nepal. Also since Nepal is rich in cultural diversity, the experience of one cultural group might be different than other. My role as both an insider and outsider may also impact the study. As I am from Nepal, the respondents might have felt comfortable sharing their experiences however as I did not experience the earthquake with them, it makes me an outsider. Because of my outsider position, women might have felt uncomfortable to share information with me. However, throughout the interview procedure, I ensured that women are comfortable and ensure them that their responses will be confidential and that they could feel free to share their thoughts and experiences with me.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

This research study grounds the experiences of women during the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal. It is theoretically based on standpoint theory and attempts to understand the unique experience of Nepalese women placing attention to the differences that might be among Nepalese women themselves. To consider these differences, this research also uses the theory of intersectionality, acknowledging the different experience among Nepali women based on their differences. This chapter presents the finding of my analysis of the interviews that I conducted with twenty women in three urban cities of Nepal where they share their personal experience with the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants, all the names have been changed.

### **The study's participants**

This research had diverse participants, it is also important to note that Nepali women are diverse too, and bringing together the experience of diverse groups of women will subsequently help us to understand the overall experience of the Nepalese women. Among the total twenty participants, six of them were between 18-30 years old; two were between the ages of 31-40; four were between 41-50; five were 51-60 and 3 participants were above 60 years old. Newars are the native group of the Kathmandu Valley where this research is focused on, and consequently, the majority of the participants (9) are Newars, followed by five Chhetris and two of each caste group Brahmin, Gurung/Rai and Dalits. Ten of them are married, and five are single and five are widows. Eight families have members over 60 years of age living in their household. It is important to note these characteristics because I document the difference in the experience of these members

further in this discussion. When asked about the heads of households in their family, six of them mentioned their husband; four of them mentioned their father; another four mentioned their sons; two mentioned their father-in-law and one each mentioned both her parents and herself. Among the eighteen who chose to answer this question, sixteen of them mentioned a male member in their house as the head of household. It is reflective of the patriarchal culture that Nepalese society predominantly follows. Among the twenty participants, all of them were living in their own homes except one who was renting before the earthquake. However, after the earthquake, five of them are still living in tents after more than a year since the earthquake. It is important to understand why their current place of residence matters because of the unique experiences of women during their stay in tents.

### **Gendered vulnerabilities**

By gendered vulnerability, this research implies those vulnerabilities which are unique to the experience of women. All participants mentioned their stay in tents or shelter during the time of the earthquake. The average stay in the tents of women was three weeks not including the ones who are still living in tents. This research has found that women's stay in tents was one of the most important factors in increasing the vulnerabilities of women. This discussion highlights gendered vulnerabilities connected to five major themes 1) menstruation and pregnancy 2) bathing and toilet needs 3) caretaking duties 4) Age-Based Vulnerabilities and Poverty 5) Violence Against Women. I will also discuss a related theme found in the interview data that looks to the significance of providing counseling services post disaster.

## Menstruation and Pregnancy

All the research participants stayed in tents least for a week. The average stay in the tent was almost three weeks. Most women in this research shared their problems of menstruation during the time of the earthquake. Several of them mentioned changing pads and maintaining personal hygiene as a major challenge. Nisha mentions, “When the earthquake hit, I was menstruating... Having to change the sanitary pads was a struggle.” Pratika’s experience was also similar, she shared, “Changing my pad was a huge problem, my mom would cover me and I would change fast and then throw away the pad.” Along with having troubles in changing their pads, the research participants also mentioned a lack of sanitary pads as a major problem.

Many participants also mentioned shops being closed and difficulty in finding shops that sold sanitary pads. Due to this lack of availability of the sanitary pads, most of the participants had to find alternative methods to hold blood during menstruation. This included using pieces of clothes/ sari. Rama who has a daughter shared,

“When my daughter got her period, she needed a pad, but we could not find any shops open and we can only afford cheaper ones. But I told her to use pieces of my sari... Cleaning those clothes and drying were a challenge. Had she been a boy she would never have to go through all of this.”

Poonam expresses similar issues,

“I had my period the second week and it was so difficult maintaining hygiene. I tried to look for shops that were open to buy sanitary pads, but it was difficult as many shops were not opened...I have a heavy flow, I had to really be cautious when I moved in and out of the tent and while sleeping. It was so difficult buying sanitary pads because most of the shops were closed.”

The above quotes demonstrate the struggle for women to find sanitary pads during menstruation and the need for women to be weary of trying to be careful of the blood stains. Some also mentioned having to observe cultural traditions during the menstruation. In Nepal, Hindu women, while having periods are restricted in performing some activities and are supposed to have some boundaries of restrictions (Mahon and Fernandes, 2010). These rules differ based on location, castes, and adherence. These include and are not limited to prohibiting girls to enter the temple, enter the kitchen, cook food, sleep with husband in the same room, eating separately, showering early morning on the fourth/seventh day, etc. Some also force women to sleep in cow sheds which is a prominent practice in rural villages (Baruah, 1961).

The participants mentioned the difficulty in following these rules during the time of the earthquake. Sabnam mentions her experience with failure to comply with these rules,

“When my daughter in law has her periods, we have certain rules we have to follow. Once her blood was all over the bedsheets and she had to wake up 3 am in the morning and go to tap to clean it. I still worry when she has her periods. We all live together, so having periods, brings impurity to everything. She goes to her friend’s house to take shower during those times.”

Radha also shares similar experience with her daughter-in-law’s periods,

“When my daughter in law got her periods, she kept on touching everything and we couldn’t “baarne” (following restrictions) properly. I made her take shower inside the house early morning on the fourth day.”

The above quotes clearly explain, cultural implications of menstruation and women’s strict attempts to comply with them even in times of disaster, risking their wellbeing and

comfort. Having to follow rules of exclusion and bathing puts women in unique conditions that might force them to risk their lives. Participants shared similar experiences while they were pregnant and lactating.

### **Pregnancy and nursing women.**

Pregnancy and childbirth are unique to women's experiences. These life events occurred during the time of disaster puts women in a different situation. They require proper rest, food, and care. However, in times of the earthquake, according to the research participants, they were vulnerable to various threats. For example, Maya shares her experience,

“The women staying in the tents with me was pregnant and she would always come to me and complain that it was really hard for her. The beds were not there, so sleeping in hard surface and in cold it was especially hard for her. Proper food was also not available that were nutritious for a pregnant woman.”

The above quote explains the difficulty of pregnant women in terms of comfort. Sabnam talks about the aspects of food and fear of miscarriage.

“My daughter-in-law was pregnant with her third child. Yes, it was difficult for her because she was seven months pregnant and we had to be very careful. We were afraid of miscarriage, because she ran, didn't get proper food, it was cold and wet during the second week. We had to send her to her parents' house because we had nowhere to live.”

The participants also mentioned pregnant women not getting proper rest, not getting enough care and lack of proper nutritious food as the challenges they faced during the time of disaster. Here Chiring mentions the difficulty in getting proper health care.

“As she [daughter-in-law] was pregnant, we had to take extra care of her. She was really scared, as at one point she fell down and hit her belly. We

couldn't get hold of her doctor until 3 weeks, and went for a checkup and thankfully everything was fine. Being pregnant is a hard task. She needed complete rest and good food for her and her baby.”

Having to cook during pregnancy also places pregnant women in a difficult situation. A number of respondents mentioned being miscarried or a family member who was pregnant suffered from miscarriage. Pallavi speaks of her daughter-in-law's miscarriage-

“My daughter in law was six months pregnant with her first child. After the earthquake, she hit her stomach while trying to run out of the house. It was hard for her because she had to run, be in cold and it was stressful. We took her to health care and did an ultrasound and after three days and the doctor told us, that she had miscarried her child.”

Pratika talks about her then pregnant daughter in law,

“She was 4 months pregnant. Due to stress or trauma, she had a miscarriage. I have heard this happens to many pregnant women, and unfortunately, it happened to her as well. After 3 days from the earthquake, she bled and we took her to the hospital nearby and the doctors suggested we had to curette her and there was no hope. The hospital service was also provided in a tent. It did get a little awkward because of privacy issues as people came inside the tent without letting anyone know. Pregnant women are supposed to stay in sun and receive oil massages, but at that time she had to experience extremely cold weather and sleep in uncomfortable spaces.”

Both menstruation and pregnancy are 2 natural life events that are affected by the earthquake. In both cases, Nepali women struggled to find resources to adequately take care of themselves and some even experience miscarriage during these stressful times. As a result of the destroyed infrastructure, Nepali women also experienced gendered vulnerabilities in everyday activities such as bathing and using the toilets.

### **Difficulty bathing**



Research participants mentioned not being able to take showers in absence of proper bathrooms. The findings also suggest that women considered themselves to be in greater problems which they had to solve and figure out ways of taking showers. This challenge can be understood by Shova's comment, "Bathing was not even in our mind. Our basic needs of eating and sleeping were our priority problems to be addressed. I did not even get to properly wash my face in mornings for about 3 weeks. Let alone bathing." Pratika also mentions having similar experiences, "Honestly speaking, I did not bathe for 16-17 days (awkwardly laughing). I don't think anyone could even think of bathing in that situation. It was a luxury only some could get or risk for." It can be asserted as a gendered vulnerability because being women caused a barrier to exercising what would be a regular personal hygiene routine. The quotes clearly mention bathing as a women's problem. Dolma also mentions, "Because me and my daughter-in-law were women we couldn't bathe. The condition was like only men could bathe in middle of the road but women could not...I did not bathe for about three weeks."

I found the situation for women still living outside in tents being the same. As, Shanta who at the time of the interview was living outside in tents puts it,

"We shower outside in a public place, still. No privacy, since we are poor, we don't get privacy. It is easier for men to take shower, but for me and my daughter, it has been a struggle. I had a shower 4 times in this past year, and I am not even concerned about that. I have bigger problems to worry."

Rama's experience of bathing was also similar,

"Bathing is a problem. There is a well near where we lived, so we used to go there and bathe. Yes, in public, now I do not even feel shame. That's

like a regular thing for me. I used to feel awkward before, my daughter still gets so conscious when people walk right through us and we would be rubbing a soap against our body.”

### **Toilet problems**

The participants consistently noted that they faced difficulty in using toilets because of various reasons. Some of the reasons mentioned were the lack of toilets, unhygienic toilets and lack of gender differentiated toilets which challenged the women’s privacy. Women in the research also talked about men easily urinating outside but due to private nature of women in urination, they encountered further challenges. For instance, Pallavi shares her frustration with the toilets,

“There were no separate toilets. There were only 4 toilets for about 40 people staying there. Which wasn’t that bad, we managed somehow, but not having gender differentiated toilets was a problem because we couldn’t maintain our privacy well.”

Shova also expressed similar sentiments,

“Having to go to the toilet was a big problem, there were only two toilets and we living in the place were more than 75. It made going to toilet very difficult. As toilets were limited, it was easy for men to stand and urinate, but for girls, since we had to sit, it was hard, even though, I managed to find open spaces and urinate there.”

Both Pallavi and Shova mention gendered experiences faced by women. It is reflective of most of the responses from the participants who felt the lack of gender differentiated toilets created barriers for women. In the following section, I turn our attention to the gendered vulnerabilities experienced by study participants as a result of the particularly gendered context of their caretaking duties in the family.

### **Pressure of taking care of husband, children and family**

The women in the research study mentioned the pressure of taking care of their husband, children, and other family members as a challenge during the earthquakes.

“It was expected out of women in the family to cook food and feed the family anyhow. It was often neglected that women are scared for their life too. Women are also humans; we feel scared too.” -Surabhi

“Yes, I take care of kids in the house, not being able to feed them is very frustrating. They get all cranky and cry loudly. People stare at you when they cry as if it is only a women’s responsibility to take care of kids. Cooking in public with whatever you have has also been a challenge.” – Sabnam

“I saw some old couples who lived alone had a hard time fetching water from the stone tap which was 20 minutes’ walk. But there were some community members who helped old women carry water from there.” - Puja

The above statements demonstrate the frustration and pressure on women to take care of their family irrespective of the conditions they were living in. This can also be because of the internalized gender-based roles. When participants were asked about the roles in their household, their answers were as below:

“It is like any other family. My husband earns the money and I take care of the house. Do chores, cook, and look after kids, laundry.” – Rama

“My dad and mom both go to the office, my mom cooks and does laundry. My dad does shopping. I help mom in the kitchen because I have to learn it before I get married.” -Puja

“Women in the house take care of the family, they cook, laundry, clean and take care of the kids and men are the ones who are the primary earners. Now a day I also work, but that is an extra addition to whatever I had always been doing.” -Pallavi

It is clear these roles have been internalized and normalized. The gender-based roles in the household were clearly delineated based on gender that it facilitates learning roles based on the gender too. However, there were only two women who mentioned an absence

of gender-based roles in their household. They are Dolma and Sering. Both of them belong to a certain caste group Gurung/ Rai which might have played a role in this difference. As Chiring puts it,

“We are very helpful to each other and do not have any roles specific based on our gender. My husband cooks too and helps in cleaning and all. We are not like the typical family where men earn and do not take part in performing household chores.”

Many of research participants also mentioned having trouble cooking in public. The findings suggested two major roles women had played during the time of disaster, which was cooking and caregiving. As cooking was considered a women’s task they had to somehow manage to find food and cook for the family. The respondents stated women’s fear of losing their belongings made them afraid to leave their house and search for a space for a tent.

“Women tend to think about their belonging more than men. I know women who went inside their houses while it was shaking to save their jewelry and money. Many didn’t seek shelter and choose to stay in their fragile houses to protect what they had saved throughout their lives. The second earthquake killed many women like those, who died because the rubbles collapsed on them. Men didn’t care much, they thought about their own life more than the belongings. But for women, we struggle to collect gold jewelry. And protecting that became our priority for which women risked their lives.” –Pallavi

“Even if my son and daughter in law had decided to go, I would not have left the house. I shall rather die in this house than live outside.” –Durga

“I insisted my mom move out of the house but she was very stubborn and did not let go. She was scared thieves would come and steal our stuff as there were an increasing number of reports of stealing in my community. She had jewelry saved up for me and my sister’s wedding.” Anisha

The above quotes mention how women's love for belongingness put them at risk for their life. Their desire to protect their belongings surpassed their attempt to protect their lives. Furthermore, the participants spoke about the stigma that young girls face if they lose their husband or fiancé to the earthquake,

“Yes, one of my neighbors lost her husband. They were newly married and just two of them living together. People are not looking at her in a positive way, she is blamed for bringing bad luck and curse to the family. I have heard she will be moving out of that house soon.” -Sabina

Surabhi also mentions about the stigma associated with the death of a husband.

“A family lost two sons and only members left were father and mother in law and two daughters in laws. The daughter-in-laws were so young, and they will probably face a lot of discrimination now. You know how when young women lose their husbands, they are blamed for being unlucky and the chances of them remarrying are so negligible. Their whole life is ruined now.”

These responses suggest women are blamed for losing their husband by bringing bad luck to the family. This superstitious ideology subjects women as a case of a mishap and brings more stress to the widow. Participants who had lost their family members during the time of the earthquake spoke about the conditions where they were not able to perform mourning rituals which are culturally important. Sabnam illustrates this point,

“Yes, I lost one of my brother who lives in a village over in Gorkha. The situation was so bad; I could not travel there and attend the funeral. Culturally, it is very important for a sister to be present, I couldn't even mourn properly.”

The gendered division of labor places most of the caretaking and cooking duties on women. Because of superstitious ideas, women are often blamed when their husbands died after the earthquake. These conditions present unique challenges for women during

post-disaster. In addition to these challenges, age-based vulnerability and poverty are gendered vulnerabilities that emerged as issues in the research study. I will discuss these issues in the next section.

### **Age-based vulnerability**

There were several situations when the intersections of gender and age placed women in a vulnerable situation. The participants mentioned difficulty in running down stairs during the earthquake in sari. Most women over 60 years of age mentioned the difficulty in running or coming down stairs because of the sari they were wearing. It can also be considered a cultural vulnerability because women wearing a sari is an older tradition. The women also mentioned tripping over their saris and hurting themselves.

“I was with my granddaughter upstairs in my house, when people started screaming and I could feel the house shaking. So, I lifted her in my arms and ran downstairs. We have a very old stair made from woods. While coming downstairs, my sari tangled in it, and I fell dropping my granddaughter. Thank God, nothing happened to her, but I had a big bruising in my leg, that took weeks to heal.” -Sabnam

According to Surabhi, because her grandmother was wearing a sari, she was injured. Like other elder women also faced challenges of finding and cooking food for their husbands. The findings also suggest older women over 60 years of age had difficulty in using toilets that required them to squat.

### **Experience of Dalit women.**

The intersection of gender and caste created a unique experience and vulnerability for the women belonging to a lower caste.

“Our neighbors do not like us because we are Dalits, and look at us in a derogatory way. But we try to be as amicable as possible.” -Sabnam

“We live in Brahmin community, and people don’t like us here. Our neighbor who is an older lady did not let me and my family use her toilets because we were untouchables. I am also old; I have back pain and have the hard time walking a long distance. But I had to walk 20 minutes to reach the nearest public toilets. We also had to go far to fetch water... People had unwelcoming attitudes towards us.” –Amrita

It is important to identify caste as a factor of vulnerability that places women in more danger and risk. The above quotes describe the unique experience of the women of Dalit community that exposes them to vulnerabilities in addition to the ones that Nepali women were already being exposed to. In this final main section of the analysis, I will focus my attention on violence against women.

### **Violence against women**

The findings of this research found violence against women as a theme that is not discussed in the society. Most women in the research mentioned knowing about violence against women and its private nature. Shanta mentions what she had witnessed when living in tents,

“When I was living in a tent I knew a couple who fought every day, the man would drag the women and beat her. I did hear other reports of violence against women too, in tents it is very difficult for women to have their own space, everything is open to everybody, and so safety is and was then an important concern... Men will always be men. Women will always have a hard time protecting themselves. It is the responsibility of women to keep her husband happy, or else the man in the house will beat her, or leave her.”

Chiring also mentions being aware of these incidences,

“My neighbor... used to beat his wife a lot. Even in small reasons like the food was cold or she forgot to put water for him... People don’t seek help

for this kind of situation. Once I tried to stop her husband and help her, but she scolded me instead. It is considered inappropriate to come in between a couple's fight."

The above statements make it clear the private nature of these incidences. The following quote explains how majority of the cases were addressed,

"Nobody in my community talks about it but there is a drunk man who beats his wife every other day... The situation is just the same... I have talked with that sister a couple of times, to ask her to complain about him to police, but she scolds me. My mom also stops me from bothering her. If we call the police she might deny it, and it would only create a scene which might cause even worst violence, so I shut my mouth." -Puja

Also, many respondents mentioned little or no services available to deal with violence against women. The findings suggest the private nature of these incidences makes the society cautious when discussing them, thus this impacts provisions and use of services centered on them.

### **Harassment and unwanted sexual advancement**

Some of the women shared their experience of harassment and unwanted sexual advancement by men when living in a shelter. Many the respondent mention having heard about or seen violence against women occurring. Surabhi mentions, "After the earthquake, since women were staying out in tents and these tents were pretty overcrowded, I did hear about some men trying to take advantage of the situation."

Nisha also shares what she had heard about it,

"Since women were outside in open I did hear from other people and news that cases of harassment and unwanted sexual advances took place as it was like an opportunity to the abusers. As women were sleeping outside,



men were touching and coming to the places women were sleeping. I did see police patrols. So, in my community, I felt secure.”

Sabina’s experience validates what Nisha shares,

“I have heard about some reported cases of violence against women. The earthquake situation had made women more vulnerable to violence and assault. It is obvious that life in tents had created obstacles for women staying there.”

Puja experienced the harassment herself,

“I had difficulty, sleeping outside. There were some young guys in our community, and they kept on staring me that made me so uncomfortable. I tried to ignore them, but they would talk loudly or walk across me. I told my mom about it, and we started sleeping inside the house after that.”

Pallavi thinks the incidences of violence against women has intensified after the earthquake, she says,

“I see it [violence] intensified because I have heard a number of stories of how men would beat their wives even in public. It might have been a hidden family affair, but when the earthquake happened nothing was personal when we lived together in open with everybody.”

The findings of this research illustrate, women’s safety being at risk during the time of the earthquake. Especially when residing in open places in a tent.

### **Other Themes**

Even though these findings are not gendered in nature, they are important to be addressed. The research findings suggest the prominent existence of these problems and see the requirement of immediate attention, especially as it pertains to providing counseling services for disaster victims.

All the respondents mention suffering from some form of trauma, anxiety or emotional turmoil after the earthquake.

“First few days I could barely speak, I was traumatized. I could not believe what had happened. All I wanted to do was to cry. No services were provided to help people cope. Our social circle is all we have and we just talked to each other to help relieve pain and suffering of experiencing almost death. Even now, when I am at work, if I hear something I think if it is an earthquake!” -Nisha

### **Food crisis**

The majority of women interviewed mentioned experiencing food insecurity. Here Sabnam speaks of her experience of food crisis,

“There was no food. Our house was not safe to enter and bring food from, so we stayed empty stomach for a day. Next day my son went inside the house and brought whatever food we had. We brought our stove outside too and started cooking. Later, the committee organization also did provide foods for few weeks but now, we are all on our own.”

Some got relief food materials from community groups whereas others did not.

Many of them mentioned received food from a community group. Shova is one of them,

“Yes, I and my family had no money and we did not have any food, so we did suffer from the food crisis. The community group, however, was very helpful and provided two meals a day, with which we survived for weeks. They fed us noodles, beaten rice and anything available.”

Some of the respondents mentioned receiving food only for some time and being left in isolation after the population of residents staying in tents decreased. Rupa talks about her experience,

“We did suffer from the food crisis. In initial days, everyone was shocked and didn’t know what to do. The community group then started cooking meals for everyone for about a month using the food that was distributed as relief and we ate over there too. I had food stored in my house, we

slowly brought them out and started using them as well. Later everyone started moving out from tent area and we were few ones left to suffer.”

### **Poverty and vulnerability**

Although poverty does not only impact women, prolonged stay in the tent due to lack of money to rebuild a house or rent one has made many residents homeless. This homelessness forces them to still inhabit outside in open spaces, building tents. The findings of this research clearly demonstrate increased in vulnerabilities of women while living in tents. It is evident through the above experiences, that staying in tents definitely places women in a more vulnerable position than men.

### **Gender sensitivity of the relief materials**

One of my major findings demonstrates the gendered vulnerability. The majority of the research participants pointed out the presence of need of gender sensitive relief materials. The women in the research also stressed on the presence of a huge gap in gender sensitivity. Pratika and Surabhi here expressed these needs not even being considered.

“People and government were too busy with the initial relief activities I do not think anyone paid attention to these needs and if any services were provided.” -Pratika

“I do not even think anyone even considered about the needs specific to women.” -Surabhi

As mentioned before, sanitary pads were hugely required but women had to face difficulty in accessing it. Some women did mention receiving or having someone received sanitary pads, but mention distressfully that the amount distributed was not enough.

According to Puja,

“Sanitary pads were hugely required, which was not distributed. The government should have considered these things too. But they only focused on food and tents. Which seems reasonable if you think at first, but pads are also a necessity. It’s about personal hygiene... that was a major concern for me. The youth organization I got it from had like 100 packs of it. Which is not enough even for 50 women. And it’s a monthly requirement. Family planning materials and other stuff were so important but nobody paid any attention to it.”

Anisha also mentions few items being distributed by an organization that addressed the gender issue,

“The organization I got involved with did put together few things to be distributed to women in our community. It included towels, blankets, and few instant noodles. Baby formulas, sari, and soap.”

None of the women in the research mention about receiving family planning materials. Only three of them mentioned receiving sanitary pads which were also inadequate for a cycle of menstruation.

### **Women’s group/ organization**

The majority of research participants were not aware of any women’s organization providing the relief materials. However, they did mention some women providing medical help, distributing pads, which demonstrates women’s understanding of women’s problems and challenges.

In the following quote by Sabina, it is evident that having women’s participation resulted in the inclusiveness of women’s needs being addressed.

“Not exactly women’s group but there were groups who were ready to help. Since sanitary pads are women’s major concern women members were active in those organizations in giving away these items.” -Sabina

The majority of them mention women supporting one another by cooking together.

“Yes, in a lot of families, all women made a group and would cook together for their families and talk about their experiences. It really helped them and me too to feel calm and control anxiety.”- Punam

Also, in many cases, women were also found helping each other out.

“They [women] provided support to one another. In some places, when women did not have access to bathroom, all women would go to the nearby well and shower together, ensuring protection and privacy.”

Even when women wanted to help, it was found in this research that women were often not allowed with an excuse of protection them.

“I wanted to go help people who were struggling with survival due to destructions caused by the earthquake. But my mom and dad were very strict and did not let me leave the house at all because they are scared women would be abducted or are in danger. Or believe women cannot protect themselves. Later I convinced them to let me go promising I will take care of myself.” -Anisha

This research attempts to shed light on Nepali women’s experience during the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. The findings point out specifically gendered vulnerability faced by women. Unique experience during the time of menstruation and pregnancy that makes women vulnerable and, various reasons that result in gendered vulnerabilities. The findings also suggest the different experiences of women based on their unique characteristics, which is the intersection of gender and caste or age. This study finds that relief materials were not gender sensitive and lacked gender perspective. However, the study explored other ways women were found helping each other, primarily by cooking together and talking about their experiences. The findings demonstrate a lack of gendered sensitivity in all aspects of disaster experience. Lack of gender-based toilets, an absence of family

planning materials and lack of proper services for pregnant and lactating women all put women in a vulnerable situation. In conclusion, the 2015 earthquake had gendered impact on women.

One of the interesting findings of the study is that women had to risk their life to follow the cultural rules surrounding menstruation. Older women in the research expressed significantly, more concerns regarding following these rules. It is important to have conversations regarding cultural implications and its effect on women. This research showed that women were impacted in many gendered ways and that gendered needs were not given enough attention. Results show that living in tent increased a risk of vulnerabilities for women. To lessen the impact on vulnerabilities, either communities or the Government should plan ahead for better disaster preparedness, either by constructing shelter homes or by increasing police patrols in tent areas.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Five major themes were identified that put women in vulnerable situations. These included, menstruations and pregnancy, which are unique experience of women; bathing and toilet needs, which are different than their male counterparts; caretaking duties, which was found to be the primary role of women interviewed; age based vulnerabilities, which puts older women in unique conditions that affect their vulnerability and; Violence against women. To lower the vulnerabilities each of these themes needs to be studied separately and services are required to be molded based on the vulnerabilities. For example, to relieve the concerns of toilet needs, gender separate toilets need to be built and assigned. Special area and services should be provided for pregnant and nursing women as their needs are different than the general public.

The result of the study, also suggests that there were organizations and individuals who identified gendered needs and worked in an attempt to meet those needs. In fact, it was also found that women were supporting and helping each other out, in a family and in the community, as they shared household roles of cooking and taking care of kids. Involvement of women in disaster preparedness activities should be encouraged. Special focus must be put on women's needs of sanitary pads, family planning, and medicines.

According to the findings of this study, intersectionality played a major role in increasing the vulnerability of women. As Collins (2002) asserts an individual's experience is guided by multiple characteristics. An individual's one characteristic can lead to dominance and other can lead to being suppressive. However, if one belongs to the dominated group in all the characteristics, the interlocking systems of oppression acts

upon an individual. In case of the vulnerability, this study showed women were in a vulnerable situation because of their gender, but it is also evident that characteristics like age and caste group enhanced vulnerabilities for the women interviewed. The combination of caste group and gender created a unique experience and caused additional vulnerabilities. Nepal follows caste system, and various caste are placed under a rank system, one belonging to higher ranks are privileged and ones on the bottom are marginalized. Dalit community is a community that belongs to the lowest level of this caste system.

This study found the experience of Dalit women to be different than women belonging to other caste groups. They were subjected to disdain and disrespect. Because of their caste, they were forced to walk longer distance for basic needs like the use of toilets, and face discrimination based on their caste.

The results from this study suggest various areas for improvement. Continuous efforts and collaborations are required to decrease the vulnerabilities of women and increase gender sensitivity of the relief materials during the time of disasters. Results from this study also suggest that involvement of women in planning and managing the relief materials could make a considerable impact in gender mainstreaming of relief materials.

Involvement of women in planning disaster preparedness and management was seen immense in providing gender sensitive relief, however as a developing country where patriarchy is pronounced, the involvement of women is challenging. Women who follow gendered roles strictly struggle making their way to a decision-making position.



Moreover, as Enloe (2007) describes in her book, when in power of authority, women feel pressure to project themselves masculine, or they will not be taken seriously. She also mentions in developing or developed countries where patriarchy is prominent, feminizing any activity possesses a threat and fosters risk of loss. To address this issue, it is important to bring policy level changes that accept women as leaders. The gendered impact is real and addressing these issues should be a priority.

This study is important because it focuses on the experience of Nepali women due to the earthquake and questions what makes them vulnerable, what gendered problems they faced and if their needs were met or not, which the existing research is limited in describing. The results and recommendations mentioned in this paper can be of use to various stakeholders including national and international organizations that are involved in helping high-risk groups during time of disaster; Government of Nepal and any country that is situated in disaster prone area, to better plan and manage disaster preparedness activities, small community groups to have conversations regarding experience and impact of disaster on women. It is also helpful for those who are interested in helping women and solving problems faced by women and anyone interested in providing general support to women impacted by disaster. Also, this research study builds on the studies previously conducted to identify the impact of disasters on women and add it. I hope to create awareness about unique challenges women face during the disaster and their needs during those times. My attempt is to facilitate a conversation about the gendered impact and foster gender-sensitive preparedness in future.

Future research could focus on specific themes in more detail. Also, factors affecting involvement of women in disaster preparedness and management could be a great topic to identify factors hindering women's involvement in disaster preparedness, which is one of the prerequisites for planning gender sensitive relief materials. Also, I would like to see a research especially focused on marginalized communities of women. This research could also be helpful for those planning to find the impact of the earthquake on rural women in Nepal. The findings of this study can be utilized by local and international agencies to plan better gender-sensitive disaster preparedness; by researchers interested in exploring specific themes that cause vulnerabilities; and national Governments in bringing about policy level changes to better serve the population of women during the time of disaster.

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June 12, 2016

Dear Ana Perez, Ph.D. Women's Studies:

Re: IRB Proposal entitled "[908069-3] Impact of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal" Review Level: Level [III]

Your IRB Proposal has been approved as of June 12, 2016. On behalf of the Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB, we wish you success with your study. Remember that you must seek approval for any changes in your study, its design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study. Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research-related injury or other harmful outcome, you are required to report them to the Associate Vice-President of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies immediately.

The approval of your study is for one calendar year less a day from the approval date. When you complete your data collection or should you discontinue your study, you must submit a Closure request (see <http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/continuation.html>). All documents related to this research must be stored for a minimum of three years following the date on your Closure request. Please include your IRBNet ID number with any correspondence with the IRB.

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for maintaining signed consent forms in a secure location at MSU for 3 years following the submission of a Closure request. If the PI leaves MSU before the end of the 3-year timeline, he/she is responsible for following "Consent Form Maintenance" procedures posted online (see <http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/storingconsentforms.pdf>).

Sincerely,

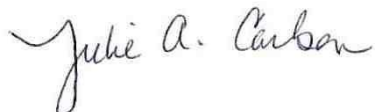
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Hadley".

Mary Hadley, Ph.D.  
IRB Coordinator



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Sifers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Sarah Sifers, Ph.D.  
LP IRB Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie A. Carlson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Julie Carlson, Ed.D.  
IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB's records.

## Impacted of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal

### Demographic information:

i. Age:

- a. 18-30      b. 31-40      c. 41-50      d. 51-60  
e. >60

ii. Caste:

- a. Brahmin    b. Chettri    c. Newar    d. Gurung/rai    e. Dalit    f.  
Other

iii. Educational status:

- a. Illiterate  
b. Literate:  
I. Primary    II. Secondary    III. SLC    IV. Higher education

iv. Marital status:

- a. Married    b. Single    c. Widow    d. Divorced    e. Separated

v. No. of family members:

vi. Family members:

Who is the household head (In relation to you? Example: father, brother, mother etc.)	
No. of Infants	
Children below age 5	
Member older than 60	

vii. Occupational status

Housewife      Others: Business/\_\_\_\_\_.

viii. Household income:

ix. Before the earthquake where were you living?

- a. Own house                      b. Rented place

x. Was your house ruined by the earthquake?

- a. Yes                      I. Completely                      II. Partial  
b. No

xi. Current housing condition:

- a. Mud house                      b. Brick and cement                      c. Wooden shades                      d. Other:

xii. Source of house (If yes to number Viii.):

- a. Family support/Income                      b. NGO's support                      c. Government Relief                      d. Loans

## 1. Disaster preparedness

- i. Do you know Nepal is an earthquake prone area? If yes, how did you find out?  
ii. Had your family saved money for emergencies? Why/why not?  
iii. Were you prepared for the earthquake?                      a. Yes                      b. No

If yes what did the preparation looked like: \_\_\_\_\_.

- iv. What was the immediate response of you and your family after earthquake?  
v. Where did you go? What was your immediate action of rescue (self and family)  
Or what happened?

## 2. Gendered vulnerability during disasters

### i. Vulnerability due to biological and physiological characteristics

- I. Was anyone in your family pregnant or had an infant during the time of disaster?                      I. Yes                      II. No

(If, yes)

- a. How do you think their experience differed than other in the community? Can you tell me in a form of a story?
- b. What are some of the difficulties faced by elderly? Can you tell me a story of what happened?

- I. Was any of your member sick during that earthquake? I. Yes
- II. No

- c. How did it affect your disaster response activity? Can you tell me a story of what happened?

**ii. Vulnerability due to socio-economic characteristics**

- a. Who takes the household decisions? Are women involved? How did this way of decision making affect your response to disaster?
- b. Did the earthquake change the decision making process? (More women involvement perhaps). Can you tell a story related to that?

**iii. Vulnerability due to socio-cultural characteristics/difference**

- a. Can you describe the division of labor based on gender in your family?
- b. Do you think because you are a women, you had difficulties facing the earthquake (Running, finding food, shelter, saving lives)? Can you elaborate into a story?
- c. Do you think because you are a women you were impacted more by the earthquake because of your roles in household? Can you elaborate it by saying a story?
- d. How did earthquake change your life?

**iv. Vulnerability and life threat**

- a. Did you lose any of the members because of the earthquakes? Did you witness any other family losing anyone? If yes, did you notice the impact of loss on the family? Can you elaborate in a form of a story?
- b. Did you know about any incidences of violence against women taking place before the earthquake in your community?

- c. Did the situation change after the earthquake? Do you see it intensified or lowering?  
Did you witness men using physical, emotional, spiritual violence against women?  
Can you mention it in a form of a story?
- d. Was any kind of services provided to tackle the incidence of Violence against women?

### **3. Gender and Humanitarian response**

- a. Where did you take immediate shelter?
  - I. In public setting or own house?
  - II. Shelter buildings
  - III. Other?
- b. If you had stayed in a crowded area (mostly shelter), what kind of problems did you encounter (Separate toilets? Biased distribution of relief?) Did you experience regarding bathing, using toilets, maintaining menstrual hygiene? Can you elaborate in a story?
- c. If you did not move to a shelter, what was the reason behind it? (Unwillingness of another family member, Far from your house, Fear of stealing, Due to family members restriction: small children, sick member, old member)
- d. Did you suffer from food crisis? If yes, how did you overcome it? Where did you get food from? And how? Can you explain it in detail?
- e. Did you receive any kind of support from anyone post-earthquake? Please mention what kind of support (Money, foods, housing materials, medical services).
- f. If yes, were you satisfied with the type and amount of support provided? Why/why not?
- g. What and whose needs were not met?
- h. Do you think the relief materials were distributed equally? Did you encounter yourself or see unequal distribution of resources? Can you elaborate?
- i. Did the relief materials include materials that were specific to women's needs? Did you receive any materials for menstruation? Or family planning materials?

Drugs? Pregnancy kits? Special materials for pregnant and nursing mothers?  
Was there a need? Can you elaborate into a story?

- j. Did you experience extreme emotional reactions to the incidence of earthquake? How did you cope with it? Was any services available for people suffering trauma?

#### **4. Women's role in Disaster response**

- a. Has your life continued to be the same as before the earthquake?
- b. If not, how are you recovering from the disaster's impact?
- c. Have you encountered any positive change in you, your family or society aftermath the earthquake? If yes, what kind? Can you tell a story related?
- d. What was your primary role post disaster in your family/ society (caregivers, decision makers, social worker and counselor)?
- e. Were there any opportunities post disaster which before disaster was not present?
- f. How can the recovery be speeded up?
- g. Did you see women playing important and exceptional role during the time of disaster? If yes, how so?
- h. Was there women's group formed? How do you think women helped each other?
- i. How do you think we can improve the present conditions? How can we plan better for future disasters?

## **Recruitment Statement**

### **The Impact of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal**

Hi, my name is Christina Rajbhandari, I am a graduate student in Minnesota State University Mankato. I am from Kathmandu, Nepal. My intent with this research is to find how Nepali women were affected and impacted by the 2015 earthquake. The inclusion criteria for this research study includes Nepali women 18 years and over, inhabitant of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal and who experienced the April, 2015 earthquake and aftershocks of it. So if you fit under these criteria, you qualify to be involved in this research.

In this research, what I am asking you to do is to answer specific questions. The questions will ask you about your lived experiences during the earthquake pertaining to vulnerability, relief materials and post-earthquake experiences. Feel free to ask me any questions if you have regarding this research. It will be a phone interview and I would need you to share your phone number with me. The interview will be audio-recorded and will take from 60 minutes to complete. Immediately following the interview I will delete your phone number and email address from my contact list. The recording will be transferred to a password protected encrypted computer. We are not going to audio-record your name or report any information you provide us that we think could be used to identify you.

The risk you may have during this interview is that you might feel emotional distress recalling the earthquake incidents. If you feel uncomfortable with any of the interview questions or want to stop the interview process you could say so. Since you are being audio-recorded, there is a risk that someone can identify you from your voice. This risk is minimized since all the recording and information received will always be kept in an encrypted password protected device and only available to me and my research supervisor.

Audio-recordings will be transcribed and the transcriptions along with the signed consent forms will be stored in a locked file cabinet at Minnesota State University, Mankato. They can be viewed only by me and Dr. Ana Perez. No names will be recorded other than the consent forms. I will email you a copy of the consent form and if you agree to participate, I would want you to sign and email me a copy of the consent form. Audio-recordings will be deleted, and transcriptions and consent forms will be destroyed after three years from closure of the research.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and denying to participate will not cause you loss of benefit or affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato.

The benefit you will receive through this interview is emotional comfort that you will achieve after sharing your experience. Other than this, there are no direct benefit that you will receive for your participation.

No compensation will be provided for participation in this study.

For more information, please email me at [christina.rajbhandari@mnsu.edu](mailto:christina.rajbhandari@mnsu.edu) or call me at +1 507-400-4573.

If you have any questions regarding this research, you can call Dr. Ana Perez at +1 507-389-5026 or email her at [ana.perez@mnsu.edu](mailto:ana.perez@mnsu.edu). You also may contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Institutional Review Board Administrator, Dr. Barry Ries, at +1 507-389-1242 or [barry.ries@mnsu.edu](mailto:barry.ries@mnsu.edu) with any questions about research with human participants at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Thank you for your time.



## Recruitment Statement (Nepali)

### सन् २०१५ मा आएको भूकम्पको महिलाहरुमा प्रभाव

नमस्ते, मेरो नाम कृष्टिना राजभण्डारी हो, म मिनेसोटा स्टेट यूनिभर्सिटी मा स्नातकोत्तरको अध्ययन गर्दैछु । म काठमाडौं, नेपालकि हुँ । यो अनुसन्धानको उदेश्य सन् २०१५ मा आएको भूकम्पको महिलाहरुमा भएको प्रभावको बारेमा थाहा पाउनुहो । म महिलाहरुले भूकम्पको बेला के कसो गरे भनेर थाहा पाउन चाहन्छु । यो अनुसन्धानको मापदण्ड काठमाडौं, ललितपुर वा भक्तपुरबासी नेपाली महिला १८ वर्ष वा सो भन्दा बढी जोस्ले २०१५ को भूकम्प र तेस्को प्रभावको अनुभवगरे हुन् । यदि तपाईं यो मापदण्ड भित्र पर्नु हुन्छ भने तपाईं यो अनुसन्धानमा भाग लिन सक्नुहुन्छ ।

यो अनुसन्धानमा, म तपाइलाई तपाइको भूकम्प बेलाको अनुभवको बारेमा प्रश्नहरु सोध्नेछु । यी प्रश्नहरु भूकम्प बेलाको राहत सामग्री र भूकम्प पछिको अनुभवकोबारेमा हुन् । यो अनुसन्धानबारे तपाइलाई कुनै प्राश्न छ भने तपाईं म संग सोध्न सक्नु हुन्छ । यो फोन-अन्तर्वार्ता हुनेछ, तेसैले मलाई हजुरको फोन नम्बर चाहिनेछ । यो अन्तर्वार्ता अदियो- रेकोर्ड गरिनेछ र यो अन्तर्वार्ताले ६० मिनेट लिनेछ । यो अन्तर्वार्ता सिद्धिने बित्तिकै म तपाइको फोन नम्बर र इमेल अड्रेस मेटाईदिनेछु । रेकोर्डिंग पस्वोर्ड सुरक्षित कम्प्युटरमा सारिनेछ । हामी यो अदियो- रेकोर्डमा तपाइको नाम लिनेछैनौं नही जानकारीहरु जोसबाट तपाइको परिचय हुनसक्छ उल्लेख गर्छौं ।

यो अनुसन्धानमा भाग लिए बापत तपाइलाई प्रभाव पर्नसक्ने जोखिम भनेको भावनात्मक बिलाप हो जुन भूकम्प बेलाको समयको याद गर्दा आउन सक्नेछ । यदि अन्तर्वार्ताको कुनैपनि समयमा कुनै पनि प्रश्नले तपाइलाई असजिलो महसुस भएमा भन्नु होला । तपाइको रेकोर्ड गरिएको आवाज बाट तपाइको पहिचान हुनसक्ने सम्भावना हुन्छ । येसो हुने सम्भावना कम गर्न बटुलेको सबै जानकारी र रेकोर्डिंगहरु पस्वोर्ड सुरक्षित कम्प्युटरमा राखिनेछ । यी जानकारीहरु मेरो पर्यवेक्षक र मलाई मात्र उपलाभहुनेछ ।

अदियो- रेकोर्डिंगहरुलाई ट्रान्सक्राइब गरिनेछ र ति प्रतिलिपिहरु र सहिगरिएको सहमति पत्रहरु मिन्नेसोता स्टेट युनिभर्सिटीको लक्ड दराज भित्र सुरक्षित राखिनेछ । यो अनुसन्धानमा संकलन गरिएका जानकारीहरु म र डा. आना पेरेज़ बिच निजि राखिनेछ । नामहरु सहमति पत्र बाहेक कतै पनि उल्लेखित हुनेछैन । तपाईं यो अनुसन्धानमा भाग लिन चाहनुहुन्छ भने, मैले एमेलगरेको सहमति पत्रमा हस्ताखच्छेर गरेर पठाउनु होला । यी जानकारी पत्रहरु यो अनुसन्धान बन्द गरिएको तिन वर्ष पश्च्यात नस्ट पारिनेछ ।

यो अनुसन्धानमा भागलिने निर्णय सम्पूर्ण रुपले स्वैच्छिक रहनेछ । तपाईं कुनै पनि बेला यो अन्तर्वार्ता रोक्न सक्नु हुनेछ । यो तपाइको अधिकार हो । तपाइको भाग लिने- नलिने निर्णयले तपाइको मिन्नेसोता स्टेट युनिभर्सिटीसंगको सम्बन्धमा केहि प्रवाव पार्नेछैन ।

यो अन्तर्वार्ताबाट तपाइलाई हुने लाभ भनेको भावनात्मक आनन्दी हो जुन तपैले भोगेको समाएको बारेमा सुनाउदा तपैले महसुस गर्नु हुनेछ । यो बाहेक तपाइलाई कुनै पनि सिधा लाभ छैन ।

यदि तपाईं यो अन्तर्वार्तामा भाग लिन चाहनुहुन्छ भने कृपया मलाई christina.rajbhandari@mnsu.edu मा इमेल वा +१ ५०७-४००-४५७३ मा फोन कल गर्नुहोला ताकी हामी तपाइलाई मिल्ने गरि कुनै दिन र समय तोक्न सकौं । तपाइलाई यो अनुसन्धानबारे केहि प्रश्न भएमा तपाईं डा. आना पेरेज़लाई ana.perez@mnsu.edu मा सम्पर्क गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ । मानिस संग गरिने अनुसन्धानको बारे प्रश्न भए मिनेसोटा स्टेट उनिभर्सिटी, म्यानकेटो इन्स्तीट्युसनल रिब्यु बोओर्डको प्रशासक डा. बेरी रिज लाई +१-५०७-३८९-१२४२ वा barry.ries@mnsu.edu मा सम्पर्क गर्न सक्नु हुन्छ ।

तपाइको समायकोलाई धन्यवाद ।

**Consent form:****The impact of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal**

Dear Participant,

The title of this research is “**The Impact of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal.**” The purpose of this research study is to explore the impact of the 2015 earthquake on women in Nepal. In this interview you will be asked to answer questions pertaining to your experience before, during and after the earthquake. All the questions are asked from the preset questionnaire that ask you questions pertaining to the context of the earthquake. The interview will take around 60 minutes to complete. It will be a phone interview and I would require your phone number for it.

To secure anonymity I will be deleting your number and email address from my contact lists immediately after the end of the interview. It is important for you to know that I will be audio recording your responses so that I can go back to it and, it will be used to aid in the analysis procedure. Your name will not be taken in any place in this research except in the consent form. Your personal identity will always remain protected and anything you say will not be related to your identity at all. All the recording and information received will always be kept in an encrypted password protected device. After the analysis procedure, the recordings and information will be saved in an encrypted password protected device. All these information will be deleted after three years from collection. The participation is completely voluntary, and denying to participate will not cause you loss of benefit or affect the relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato.

The benefit you may have is emotional comfort that you will receive after sharing your experience. The risk you may have during this interview is that you might feel emotional distress recalling the earthquake incidents. If you feel uncomfortable with any of the interview questions or want to stop the interview process please say so. You have the power to stop the interview at any time for any reason. You will be given a copy of this consent form, which after signing you can keep a copy for your records. If you provide consent to this research I will be asking your number and time you would be available for the interview.

There are no direct benefit that you would receive for your participation in this research study.

If you have any questions regarding this research, you can call Dr. Ana Perez at +1 507-389-5026 or email her at [ana.perez@mnsu.edu](mailto:ana.perez@mnsu.edu). If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by electronic storage of data, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk +1 507-389-6654 and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager. You also may contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Institutional Review Board Administrator, Dr. Barry Ries, at +1 507-389-1242 or [barry.ries@mnsu.edu](mailto:barry.ries@mnsu.edu) with any questions about research with human participants at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Thank you.

If you are at least 18 years old Nepali women, who experienced the 2015 earthquake when residing in one of the three cities of Kathmandu Valley, Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur and agree to participate in this research, please sign below, scan and email the signed copy to [christina.rajbhandari@mnsu.edu](mailto:christina.rajbhandari@mnsu.edu) Please keep the other copy for your records. Electronic signatures will not be accepted.

Your Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date of MSU IRB approval:

## Consent form (Nepali)

### सन् २०१५ मा आएको भूकम्पको महिलाहरुमा प्रभाव

#### सहमति पत्र:

सहभागी महोदय,

यो अनुसन्धानको सिर्षक "सन् २०१५ मा आएको भूकम्पको महिलाहरुमा प्रभाव" रहेको छ । यो अनुसन्धानको उदेश्य सन् २०१५ मा आएको भूकम्पको महिलाहरुमा भएको प्रभावको बारेमा थाहा पाउनुहो । यो अनुसन्धानमा तपाइलाई तपैले भूकम्पको पहिला, भूकम्पबेला र भूकम्पपछिको अनुभवकोबारेमा सोधिनेछ । सबै प्रश्नहरु पुर्वनिर्धारित प्रश्नावलीबाट सोधिनेछ । यो अन्तर्वार्ताले ६० मिनेट लिनेछ । यो अन्तर्वार्ता फोन मा हुने भएकोले मलाई तपाइको फोन नम्बर चाहिनेछ ।

तपाइको पहिचान गोप्य राख्नुकोलागी, अन्तर्वार्ता सक्किनासाथ तपाइको फोन नम्बर र इमेल अद्रेस मेतौनेछु । यो अनुसन्धानको प्रक्रियाभरि तपाइको अवाज रेकर्ड गरिनेछ ताकी पछि गएर यो सुन्दै अनुसन्धानको विश्लेषण गर्न सकु । यो सहमति पत्र बाहेक तपाइको नाम यो अनुसन्धानभरी कतै लियिनेछैन । तपाइको निजि पहिचान सदैव सुरक्षीत राखिनेछ । अन्तर्वार्ताको रेकोर्दिंग र जानकारीहरु सदैव पस्स्वोर्ड सुरक्षित कम्प्युटरमा राखिनेछ । विश्लेषणपछि रेकोर्दिंग र जानकारीहरु सदैव पस्स्वोर्ड सुरक्षित कम्प्युटरमा राखिनेछ । सबै जानकारीहरु बटुलेको तिनवर्षपछि नस्ट गरिनेछ । यो अनुसन्धानमा भागलिने निर्णय सम्पूर्ण रुपले स्वैच्छिक रहनेछ । भागलिन अस्वीकार गर्नुभएमा तपाइले कुनै प्रकारको लाभ गुमाउनुहुनेछैन । न तपाइको मित्रेसोता स्टेत युनिभर्सिटीसंगको सम्बन्धमा प्रवाव पर्नेछ ।

तपाइलाई भागलिए बापत हुन सक्ने लाभ भनेको भावनात्मक आनन्दीहो जुन तपाई भूकम्पबेलाको अनुभवको बारेमा बाँढेर पाउनुहुन्छ । यो अनुसन्धानमा भाग लिए बापत तपाइलाई प्रभाव पर्नसक्ने जोखिम भनेको भावनात्मक बिलाप

हो जुन भूकम्प बेलाको समयको याद गर्दा आउन सक्नेछ । यदि अन्तर्वार्ताको कुनैपनि समयमा तपाइलाई असजिलो महसुस भएमा भन्नु होला । हामी अन्तर्वार्ता रोक्नेछौ । तपाइलाई यो सहमति पत्रको एउटा प्रतिलिपि पनि प्रदान गरिनेछ, जुन तपैले सहि गरिसकेपछि अपनुलाई एक प्रतिलिपि राख्न सक्नुहुनेछ । तपैले यो अनुसन्धानकोलागि सहमति जनाएपछि म तपाइको नम्बर र फुर्सद को समाएकोबारे सोध्नेछु ।

यो अन्तर्वार्तामा भाग लिए बापत तपाइलाई कुनैपनि प्रकारको प्रत्यक्ष लाभ हुने छैन ।

धन्यवाद ।

यो अनुसन्धानबारे कुनै प्रश्नभए, तपाई डा. Ana Perez लाई +५०७-३८९-५०२६ वा ana.perez@mnsu मा इमेल द्वारा सम्पर्क राख्न सक्नु हुन्छ । यदि तपाइलाई गोप्यनियत र ईलेक्ट्रोनिक विधिले भण्डार गरिने जानकारीसंग सम्बन्धित अनामताको बारेमा थप जानकारी चाहिएमा, कृपया मिनेसोटा स्टेट उनिवर्सिटी, म्यानकेटोको इन्फोर्मेशन सिकुरिटी म्यानेजरलाई +१ ५०७-३८९-६६५४ मा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोला । मानिस संग गरिने अनुसन्धानको बारे प्रश्न भए मिनेसोटा स्टेट उनिभर्सिटी, म्यानकेटो इन्स्तीट्युसनल रिब्यु बोओर्डको प्रशासक डा. बेरी रिज लाई +१-५०७-३८९-९२४२ वा barry.ries@mnsu.edu मा सम्पर्क गर्न सक्नु हुन्छ ।

येदि तपाई १८ वर्ष वा बढीको नेपाली महिला हुनुहुन्छ जसले २०१५को भूकम्पबेला काठमाडौँ सहर भित्र पर्ने काठमाडौँ, भक्तपुर वा ललितपुरमा बसोबास गर्नु हुन्थ्यो भने र यो अध्ययनमा भाग लिन चाहन्छु भने, कृपया तल सहि गर्नुहोला र स्क्यान गरि christina.rajbhandari@mnsu.edu मा इमेलद्वारा पठाउनु होला । कृपया एसको प्रतिलिपि आफु संग पनि राख्नु होला । ईलेक्ट्रोनिक सहि स्वीकारिनेछैन ।

नाम (पुरा नाम): \_\_\_\_\_

सहि \_\_\_\_\_ मिति \_\_\_\_\_

आइ आर बि बाट स्वीकृत भएको मिति:

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Are you

- ✓ **18 years and older?**
- ✓ **Nepali women?**
- ✓ **Reside in Kathmandu valley?**
- ✓ **And had experienced the 2015 earthquake?**



We will ask you questions pertaining to your experience before, during and after the earthquake!  
It will take around 60 minutes.

Then you can participate in a research study "[The impact of the 2015 Earthquake on Women in Nepal](#)"



If you are interested please call **Christina Rajbhandari** at +1 507-400-4573 or email at [christina.rajbhandari@msu.edu](mailto:christina.rajbhandari@msu.edu) for more information  
This study has been approved by the Minnesota State University, Mankato Institutional Review Board. Participation will be kept confidential.

IRB number: 908069