# The Inclusion of Women in Nepalese Forest Bureaucracy

# Perspectives from Feminist Institutionalism

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# Abstract

Forest institutions are vital for shaping human actions that are associated with the management and governance of forests. These institutions may be formal or informal, legal or customary. Gender issues have been prominent in forest institutions as there are conflicts around who contributes to, and who has, control over forest governance. Previous studies have shown that women are, and have historically been, attached to forests in their day-to-day lives, particularly in the developing world. However, compared to men, they have less access to decision making associated with forests. The issue of access of women to decision making pervades government, community and private sector forest institutions. This research focuses on one of these three categories of institutions (government), and uses a gender lens drawn from Feminist Institutionalism to examine Nepal's forest bureaucracy. The overall aim of this study is to explore the role of women employees in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy and to reflect on previous, current and future approaches for the inclusion of women.

The history of forest management in Nepal includes a gradual shifting of forest governance from a feudal system of control, through regulation by government, to community-based management. Historically, forest institutions were male-dominated, but the onset of community forestry in the 1980s provided some space for rural women to become engaged in local institutions. Also in the 1980s, some girls were admitted to forestry courses in educational institutions, but the number of women working in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy has not yet reached more than around five percent of the total workforce.

The literature reveals that the relationship between gender and the environment has been most often studied from three different perspectives: ecofemism, feminist environmentalism and feminist political ecology. These three perspectives have particularly highlighted the roles of women working in grassroots environmental protection movements, including in forests, but have overlooked the status and issues of women working in public institutions, such as government forest bureaucracies. This theoretical gap led to the consideration of New Institutionalism and its three strands, namely Historical Institutionalism, Sociological Institutionalism and Rational Choice Institutionalism, as a framework for this study. Since it was first developed, New Institutionalism has been enriched with Feminist Political Theory giving rise to 'Feminist Institutionalism' (FI). This research has adopted FI as its theoretical framework and explores the concepts of women's inclusion, organizational culture, formal/informal institutions, structure/agency and power relations in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy through the world views of research participants.

The concept of the inclusion of women in Nepal's forest bureaucracy was found to be highly contested and interpreted differently by different actors. An increase in the number of women employees in the forest bureaucracy was reported by research participants as one parameter for women's inclusion. However, a gender friendly working environment, a higher number of women at the executive levels and provisions for women to gain access to decision making were found to be more important than simply the total number of women in the bureaucracy.

This thesis also considers the inclusion of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy from the perspective of policy changes. Very recent policy documents, and some newer government initiatives, acknowledge the need for women's inclusion in every aspect of social,

political and economic life and promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. However, the translation of these policy reforms and government initiatives into practice has encountered some problems.

The organizational culture of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy was found to be highly male-dominated; discriminating against women in terms of office facilities, social status, access to official positions and access to mentoring. Bullying and sexual harassment were commonly reported. Formal institutions, such as policies and planning guidelines were found to be 'women-inclusive'. However, the informal institutions, such as values, norms and practices were found to advantage men and to disadvantage women, resisting the changes, in favour of women, that were envisaged in the formal institutions. Some informal institutions created by women foresters were noted, but these were not influential enough to challenge the male-dominated informal institutions.

The structure component of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy was found to be highly rigid and resistant to changes which might support of the interests and needs of women employees. The agency component, on the other hand, was a difficult context. The activist roles, which women employees assumed, in addition to their assigned roles in the organization, produced positive effects; increasing gender inclusivity in the changing forest bureaucracy. However, there were unequal power relations between male and female staff of the bureaucracy in terms of numbers of staff, their influence, the availability of resources, the availability of opportunities to grow and access to decision making. Male staff were found to be more powerful than female staff, sometimes irrespective of their positions in the bureaucratic hierarchy.

This research highlights key factors that can challenge the existing unequal power relation in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. These include structural changes, opportunities for

agential influence, networks of women employees which extend beyond institutional structures, a collective gender voice and the support of gender sensitive male champions. The Feminist Institutionalist model is presented as an appropriate approach to find an alternative space for in which change toward a women-inclusive forest bureaucracy in Nepal can occur.

# Declaration

In accordance with Monash University Doctorate Regulation 17.2 Doctor of Philosophy and Research Master's regulations the following declaration are made:

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Name: Radha Wagle

Signature Date: 04/04/2019

The research for this project received the Human Ethics Certificate of Approval of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project Number: CF14/1865 – 2014000955)

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I dedicate this thesis to all women and girls who - despite rampant gender discrimination in households, workplaces and society at large - work in forest institutions; in government, community, civil society, academia and the private sector. Together we will strive for gender equality and a just world.

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# List of acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CA | Constitution Assembly |
| CBS | Central Bureau of Statistics |
| CDO | Chief District Officer |
| CEDAW | Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CF | Community Forestry |
| CFMUG | Collaborative Forests Management User Group |
| CFUG | Community Forestry User Group |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| DANIDA | Danish International Development Agency |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DFO | District Forests Offices |
| DNPWC | Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation |
| DoF | Department of Forests |
| DoPCR | Department of Civil Personnel Records |
| DoPR | Department of Plant Resources |
| DSCWM | Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management |
| EC | Executive Committee |
| F | Female |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| FECOFUN | Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal |
| FG | Forest Guard |

| | |
|---|---|
| FI | Feminist Institutionalism |
| FPTP | First-Past-The-Post |
| GAD | Gender and Development |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GESI | Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy |
| GFP | Gender Focal Point |
| GMS | Gender Management System |
| GoN | Government of Nepal |
| GRB | Gender Responsive Budgeting |
| GRBC | Gender Responsive Budget Committee |
| HI | Historical Institutionalism |
| HIMAWANTI | Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association |
| HMGN | His Majesty's Government of Nepal |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organization |
| JS | Joint Secretary |
| LFUG | Leasehold Forest User Group |
| M | Male |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| MFSC | Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation |
| MoWCSW | Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare |
| MPFS | Master Plan for the Forestry Sector |

| | |
|---|---|
| MSFP | Multi Stakeholder Forestry Program |
| MUHREC | Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee |
| NARMSAP | Natural Resource Management Sector in Nepal |
| NEFTA | Forest Technicians Association of Nepal |
| NFA | Nepal Foresters' Association |
| NGA | Non-Gazetted Admin |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NI | New Institutionalism |
| NJFA | Nepal Junior Foresters' Association |
| NPC | National Planning Commission |
| NRSTP | North River Sewage Treatment Plant |
| NWC | National Women's Commission |
| OF | Officer |
| PF | Panchayat Forests |
| PPF | Panchayat Protected Forests |
| PR | Proportional Representative |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| PSC | Public Service Commission |
| RA | Ranger |
| RCI | Rational Choice Institutionalism |
| REDD | Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation |
| RFUG | Religious Forest User Group |

| | |
|---|---|
| SAMARPAN | Strengthening the Role of Civil Society and Women in Democracy and Governance |
| SDC | The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| SI | Sociological Institutionalism |
| SNV | The Netherlands Development Organization |
| TGG-N | Transiting to Green Growth: Natural Resources in Nepal |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| TYIP | Three Years Interim Plan |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCED | United Nations Conference on Environment and Development |
| USA | United States of America |
| USAID | The US Agency for International Development |
| WID | Women in Development |
| WOCAN | Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management |

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter introduces the thesis, providing relevant background and context about the dependence of rural Nepalese women on forest resources, the role of women in managing forests, the exclusion of women in decision making within forest institutions and the role of institutions in forestry. The aim and objectives of the research are then articulated and a justification of Nepal as the chosen location for this study then follows. In later sections within this chapter, the approaches taken in this research are summarised and Feminist Institutionalism (FI) is introduced as the underpinning theory for the thesis. The contribution of the research to existing knowledge systems is also discussed. Finally, the structure of the thesis and the outline of its eight chapters are presented.

## 1.2 Background

Forest ecosystems provide a number of goods and services vital for human life, livelihoods, socio-cultural activities and economies (MEA, 2005; Patterson & Coelho, 2009; Persha *et al.*, 2011). The supplies of these goods and services are contingent upon human actions associated with forests, such as policy and legal frameworks, tenure arrangements, forest management systems, governance structure, and rights-based activism, which can collectively be referred to as forest 'institutions' (Robbins, 1998; Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007), and which contribute to good forest governance. These institutions may be formal or informal, legal or customary (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). They affect and are affected by people who are dependent on forests for their livelihoods and economies. While institutions are crucial for the protection, management and use of forest resources, the actors and stakeholders with defined access to, control over and use of forest resources provide governance of forests and forest institutions (FAO, 2011; Larson

*et al.*, 2010; RRI, 2009). The categories of actors associated with the access to, control over and use of forest resources include, but are not limited to, males or females, landlords or tenants, industrialized or developing countries, bureaucracy or communities, state or private sector and so on (Larson *et al.*, 2010; RRI, 2009). A cross-cutting category among these actors is the category of 'women'. However, the roles and responsibilities of women in forest institutions has been a highly contested issue in recent decades (Agarwal, 2010a, 2010b; Coutinho-Sledge, 2015; FAO, 2006; Sarker & Das, 2002; Shiva, 1989; Sunderland *et al.*, 2014; Wagle *et al.*, 2017b).

The direct attachment of women to forests, particularly in developing and less developed economies, has been widely acknowledged across space and over time (Buckinggham-Hatfield, 2005; Mwangi *et al.*, 2011; Shiva, 1989). Women collect firewood, medicinal herbs and water from forests, and may also have the responsibility of grazing their family's cattle within forests (FAO, 2006). Despite the attachment of women to forests, the management and use of forests (known as 'forestry') has long been controlled by males and male-dominated institutions (Coutinho-Sledge, 2015). A number of cultural, social, economic and institutional factors implicate women in having less access to decision making about, and fewer benefits from, forest resources in comparison with their male counterparts (FAO, 2006). There is general consensus among recent researchers that forestry (both as a profession and as a practice) is gendered; implying that there are differences between men and women in access to, control over and use of forest resources (de Vos & Delabre, 2018; Mwangi & Mai, 2011; Sunderland *et al.*, 2014; Thapa, 2017; Wagle *et al.*, 2017a; Wagle *et al.*, 2017b). This differentiation is considered to be characterised by a greater involvement of males in decision making and the ways benefits are derived from forests that favour men over women (Mwangi *et al.*, 2011).

A large body of literature acknowledges the crucial roles of women in the protection and sustainable use of forest resources around the world (Agarwal, 2010a; Colfer, 2013; FAO, 2006, 2007; Mai *et al.*, 2011; Sewell Jr, 1992). Notwithstanding their contributions to forest management, women in developing countries are still largely excluded from decision making in forestry organizations including government organizations, civil societies and private sector institutions (FAO, 2007). This exclusion of women is particularly apparent wherever governance, benefit sharing, policy making, capacity building, education and employment opportunities are taken into consideration (Colfer, 2013; Gurung *et al.*, 2012). Within the forestry profession, and in the setting of developing countries, gender roles, knowledge and interests are often undermined or overlooked either due to the absence or minority of women in decision making fora; or to a lack of gender sensitivity among those who are engaged in decision making (Khadka, 2009; MSFP, 2014a). Most forestry related decisions are made by males, resulting in the marginalisation of women's interests and needs in forest management, and minimization of both actual and potential opportunities for women to participate and contribute to enhancing the benefits from forest resources (Agarwal, 2010b; Christie & Giri, 2011; Khadka, 2009; Lidestav & Reed, 2010; MSFP, 2014a).

The considerable day-to-day engagement of women with forest environments and forest resources (this engagement requires and develops significant knowledge of forest ecosystems), alongside their lack of access to forestry related decision making across space and over time is contradictory. On the one hand, women, and women's knowledge of forest ecosystems are considered vital for the sustainable use and conservation of forest resources (Mwangi & Mai, 2011; Shiva, 1989). On the other hand, the participation of women in the decision making processes of forest managmeent is not easily accepted in forest institutions; and may be activley

resisted (Agarwal, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c; de Vos & Delabre, 2018; Khadka, 2009; Mwangi *et al.*, 2011).

The contradiction between the attachment of women to forest ecosystems and their exclusion from forestry related decision making process raises three fundamental questions. First, how do legal and policy frameworks in certain forestry jurisdictions, such as at country level or forest management unit level, take the role of women into account, both in terms of forest management and decision making processes? Second, how can new insights be offered into forestry institutions in terms of their capacity to facilitate women's access to and management of forest resources while also documenting any tendencies to dismiss or restrain women's roles in decision making in practice? Finally, how can forestry be viewed from a perspective of gender equality; a perspective that may challenge the existing male-dominated or masculine stereotypes associated with forest governance?

The answers to these questions are sought in this study. It is essentially a case study of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, which is comprised of forest technicians and other civil servants arranged in heirarchical orders within government forest organizations (Guarascio *et al*., 2013). Forest bureaucracy differs from forest insitutions in that the former includes the hierarchical collection of staff members, with the Secretary of the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Environment at the top and field level staff at the base of the heirachy, whereas the latter includes the staff as well as the rules associated with the tripartite relationship between staff, forest resources and their stakeholders. The Nepalese forest bureaucracy is therefore a sub-set of the wider suite of forest institutions present in Nepal. Since Nepal has a world-leading reputation in forestry, particularly in the successful establishment of the community forest management regime, which demonstrates gender balance in its structures (Agarwal, 2010c; Dahal &

Chapagain, 2008; Luintel *et al*., 2017; Pokhrel *et al*., 2015), a study of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy offers an interesting example of how inclusion of women in community forests is considered important, while the same issue is simultaneously overlooked within the forest bureaucracy (McDougall *et al*., 2013). The Nepalese case is of special relevance due to a number of issues, such as variation between policies and practice with regard to women's participation, the proportion of women comprising community insitutions and women's lack of access to decision and male-dominated forest bureaucracy (Agarwal, 2010a, 2010b; GoN, 2007b; Gurung *et al*., 2012; Khadka, 2009; MSFP, 2014a). These issues make Nepal an interesting location for the geographical focus of the study.

## 1.3 Aim and objectives of the research

There are few studies which investigate whether existing legislative measures and institutional practices facilitate or constrain the role of women in Nepalese forest institutions. Also largely unexplored, is how gendered institutional norms and values associated with forest-governing institutions shape the nature and extent of women's involvement in decision making processes in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

Against this backdrop, the overarching aim of this study is to analyse processes for the inclusion of women and the role of women employees in the Nepalese forestry bureaucracy. The study uses a 'gender lens' drawn from Feminist Institutionalism (FI) and is framed around the four following specific objectives:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of current legislative and policy frameworks for the inclusion of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy;
- To examine the dynamics of organizational culture, formal and informal institutions, and structure and agency in and around forest bureaucracy in Nepal;

- To assess power relations in forestry institutions, focusing on influential participation of women forestry professionals in the bureaucratic structure; and
- To gain insights about the alternative space of FI in connection with women-inclusive forest bureaucracy.

## 1.4 Rationale for selecting Nepal as case study site

In Nepal, and elsewhere, forest governance consists of a wide range of actors and institutions, ranging from government forest bureaucracies through community or civil society institutions to private entrepreneurs (Pokhrel & Niraula, 2004). Among these three sets of institutions, the (government's) forest bureaucracy, in addition to governing itself, guides the rules of the game for the remaining two: community institutions and the private sector (as it relates to forestry). The forest bureaucracy delivers services to community and private sector institutions, while the latter two deliver services directly to people or tax payers. This research will examine Nepal's forest bureaucracy from a gender perspective to address the aim and objectives stipulated above. It targets problems inherent in Nepalese forest bureaucracy because of the influence of this particular institution on all kinds of forest institutions and activities in the country.

Nepal is well known for its participatory forest management programs, such as the community forestry program. Participatory forest management was introduced in Nepal in the late 1970s and is characterised by the decentralization of authority to local people to conserve, manage and use forest resources on a sustainable basis (Gilmour & Fisher, 1991; GoN, 1989, 1993, 2015b). Before the introduction of community forestry programs, Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation with its subsidiaries (referred to here as the forest bureaucracy) was the major organization responsible for governing the nation's forests and the forestry sector (Gilmour & Fisher, 1991; Hobley, 1996). After the introduction and advancement of community

forestry programs, and the entry of civil society, donor and other private sector organizations, the scope and nature of forestry governance in Nepal has expanded considerably. This expansion of forestry governance includes a greater role for local people in forest resource management, acceptance of civil society as service providers, and greater recognition of the private sector in up-scaling forest-based enterprises (Pokhrel & Niraula, 2004; Subedi *et al.*, 2014). Subsequently, the role of the government has changed from controller to regulator and facilitator (GoN, 2004b, 2015a, 2016a). Although this paradigm shift opened up space for the entry of women into various forestry institutions, this study demonstrates that women are still under-represented in terms of number, status and power in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, which is still a major influencer of forestry governance in the country.

In Nepal, the professional entry of women into the forestry sector began in 1982 with the intake of women into academic forestry institutions. These women would later graduate and seek entry into the forest bureaucracy (Christie & Giri, 2011). Now, after three decades of women's entry into forest bureaucracies, only five percent of people employed in these areas are female, and most of these women are working as lower level staff (GoN, 2018c). As a result, women lack influence in policy-making processes as well as in designing implementation frameworks, which further reinforces their exclusion from forestry governance.

While there is a consensus among forestry researchers, policy makers and social activists that women should be empowered sufficiently so that they may influence decisions, Nepal's forest bureaucracy is still considered male-dominated and insensitive or unresponsive to women's voices and roles in forest institutions (Awasti & Adhikary, 2012; Bennett, 2008; Bhatta, 2013; Wagle *et al.*, 2017b). Formal rules (such as policy and legislative measures) to facilitate the inclusion and empowerment of women are in place within forestry institutions, but

implementation of such policies is by no means complete. There is a clear need to describe and understand the resistance to a full implementation of these formal rules. Even though the Government of Nepal has accepted that women are socially and economically marginalized (GoN, 2015a, 2017a, 2017b), the voices of women in the forest bureaucracy are largely overlooked or dismissed. The reasons behind this are yet to be explored. Hence, Nepal's case offers nuanced insights into the contestations over the inclusion of women in forestry institutions.

## 1.5 Summary of research approach

This study adopts a qualitative methodology which can be considered to comprise of three components: the theoretical underpinning, the analytical framework and the methods of data collection. Feminist Institutionalism (FI) provides the theoretical underpinning. FI offers a compelling gender-based framework for the study of organizational culture, formal rules, informal practices, structures, agencies and power relations that bring in continuity and change in institutions (Kenny & Mackay, 2009; Mackay *et al.*, 2010). FI is broadly understood as a combination of New Institutionalism and Feminist Political Science (Krook & Mackay, 2015); FI is explained in detail in Chapter 2.

The analytical framework for the research includes policy and evaluation analysis and content analysis. Policy and evaluation analyses are applied to policy documents and implementation procedures relevant to the Nepalese forest bureaucracy (Spencer *et al.*, 2006). Content analysis is used to analyse policies and the transcripts of interviews/focus group discussions (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Neuendorf, 2016). Here, information is categorized into different thematic groups (Patton, 2002). The analytical framework is further explained in Chapter 4. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions are the main methods of data collection. These are also described in detail in Chapter 4.

## 1.6 Key contributions of the study

This study offers three sets of contributions to current knowledge regarding women's roles and the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy. First, it contributes to gender and institutional theory by strengthening the relationship between feminism and gender inclusion within a developing country context. Second, it adds to a rich research base through its methodology by applying Feminist Institutionalism to the context of forest governance. Third, it contributes to social research, reinforcing the collective feminist movement as a tool for movement towards women-inclusive bureaucracies.

## 1.7 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and overview to the study and a small introductory paragraph for each chapter.

In Chapter 2, the literature pertaining to the involvement of women in the forestry profession is reviewed in a global context. It includes an in-depth examination of published examples of the inclusion and exclusion of women from the forestry sector in the past. Based on the literature, the chapter also explores the opportunities, barriers and challenges for women who are currently working, or are seeking to work, in the forestry profession. This review examines the theoretical and methodological concepts underlying the study of gender in institutions. This involves an examination of 'Feminist Institutionalism', the name given to a recently proposed research theory which facilitates the study of the gendered nature of institutions.

In Chapter 3, a second body of literature is reviewed in order to provide an insight into the importance of forest resources for Nepalese people. Chapter 3 describes the historical overview of forest management in Nepal, with a particular emphasis on women's roles, and provides further context for the research.

Chapter 4 illustrates the research approach, design and methodology applied to address the research questions. As the research is undertaken using qualitative methods, in this chapter, the justification behind the use of a qualitative approach is described followed by detailed descriptions of the specific procedures applied to achieve each of the objectives of the research project.

In Chapter 5, the legal and policy frameworks of Nepal's forestry sector are reviewed and analysed. This chapter seeks to address the first objective of the research (To evaluate the effectiveness of current legislative and policy frameworks for the inclusion of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy).

In Chapter 6, results from interviews and focus group discussions are discussed and analysed. Women's inclusion in forest bureaucracy is first reconceptualised. Then the information derived from research participants is presented and analysed under the following themes: organizational culture, formal and informal institutions, structure and agency and power relations in forest bureaucracy.

Chapter 7, provides a discussion of the research findings in the context of organizational culture, formal and informal institutions, structure and agency and power relations. This Chapter, together with Chapter 6, addresses the second and third objectives of the research.

In Chapter 8, some alternative avenues for the development of a women-inclusive forest bureaucracy are recommended. These are based on the findings of Chapters 5, 6 and 7. This Chapter addresses the final objective of the research (i.e. To gain insights about the alternative space of Feminist Institutionalism in connection with women-inclusive forest bureaucracy). This Chapter also presents an overall conclusion for the research thesis.

## 1.8 Limitations of the research

This research has some limitations. These limitations can be categorized mainly into two areas: those related to the transition of governance structure of Nepal and those related to the limited amount of literature available which deals with forest bureaucracies in the context of gender. There were also some limitations related to the nature of the questions asked of participants in the key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

The research began in 2013 and was originally scheduled to be finished by the end of 2016. However, due to a devastating earthquake in Nepal in 2015, the field work schedule was heavily affected. When and data collection recommenced, this coincided with a transition in the country's governance. Nepal promulgated a new governing Constitution in 2015 which replaced the former Interim Constitution of 2007. The new Constitution resulted in political, legal and structural changes which permeated various aspects of this study. On the one hand, it was necessary to adapt the study to the changing context, while at the same time, full transition from the previous unitary structure to the new federal structure is still (at the time of writing) underway. This transition has resulted in limitations because of uncertainties relating to institutional arrangements, including the names of (particularly government) institutions that are still changing. The findings of this research pertain mostly to the unitary governance system, which has already transformed to a federal structure. The inclusion of women in Nepalese forest bureaucracy described here is the result of previous policy and legislative measures.

A paucity of literature related to women in forest bureaucracies is another limitation of this study. Very little research at the interface of gender and forest bureaucracy has been undertaken, which meant that it was very difficult to cite relevant literature. Most of the issues

relating to women's participation described in the literature are related to or based on community forestry programs. This literature is also mostly dated.

The guiding questions used in key informant interviews and focus group discussions in this study also have some limitations in terms of research neutrality. These questions address the issues of women employees in the forest bureaucracy. They may look, somehow, inclined towards a female point of view (rather than appearing to have a more unbiased viewpoint, equally balanced between the perspectives of both male and female participants). Since the available literature emphasized the masculine dominance of forest bureaucracies, the guiding questions had to deep-dive into the challenges faced by women working, and willing to work, in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Gender neutral guiding questions would have dismissed the idea of Feminist Institutionalism as a theoretical framework for this research.

# Chapter 2: Gender perspective in forestry and Feminist Institutionalism- a literature review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a review of the extant literature surrounding the participation of women in the forestry profession in a global context. This is achieved through an in-depth examination of examples of how women have been included or excluded from the forestry sector in the past. The chapter also explores the current status of women as well as opportunities, barriers and challenges for women who are working, or are seeking to work, in the forestry profession. First, this review examines the theoretical and methodological concepts underlying the study of gender in institutions. This involves an examination of 'Feminist Institutionalism', the name given to a recently proposed theoretical framework, used to guide investigations of the gendered nature of institutions, including in this thesis. Second, potential new areas of, and frameworks for, research theory are explored by combining Feminist Theories and New Institutional Theory. In doing so, this thesis both strengthens the proposed new theory of Feminist Institutionalism and offers a framework for analysing the gendered nature of forest institutions. The application of Feminist Institutionalism (FI) in a novel context, which is in understanding the gendered nature of forestry institutions in a developing country (Nepal), thus both applies and builds on the theoretical framework.

## 2.2 The concept of gender

Gender as a social construction refers to the difference between men and women. According to Gherardi and Poggio (2001) gender describes the perceived attributes of maleness and

femaleness which define the different behaviours and roles of men and women. Unlike biological differences, gender is socially created and refers to human attributes in relation to norms, values and cultures in a given circumstance (Pearse & Connell, 2015; Reed, 2008). Therefore, gender is related more to the perceived (expected or allowed) roles of men and women which have developed through sets of social practices based on economy, politics and culture (Amato & Booth, 1995; Pearse & Connell, 2015; Skolnick *et al.*, 2013). It is a dynamic phenomenon which is negotiated and contested over time as an element of social relationships (Elmhirst & Resurreccion, 2008). Generally, gender provides additional criteria, alongside biological differences, in distinguishing between men and women in social contexts (Gherardi, 1995). Gendered roles are learnt through the processes of socialization which are embedded in various institutions (Gatens, 1998). For example, the family is considered as a core institution in which an individual's behaviour is shaped through acting, learning or reflecting the gendered norms and values within the family. This shaping of a gendered identity occurs during the initial stages of life (Gatens, 1998; Musolf, 2003). Different roles and behaviours allocated to, or adopted by, men and women may create different needs, uses and patterns of resource sharing in a community (Agarwal, 2010b; Littig, 2001).

Gender interacts with other social attributes, such as class, ethnicity, race, geography and level of education (Nightingale, 2006; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). Thus, gendered roles can differ among individuals within a community or across communities. Typically, however, disparities created through gender coding contribute to social hierarchies and produce unequal power relationships between men and women (Pearse & Connell, 2015). In most cases, men are benefitted by gender norms and values and are more powerful than women (Roy *et al.*, 2008). Men are often less restricted by social norms and values and this allows them to greater access to

public, political, social and economic activities (Keleher & Franklin, 2008; Sarkar, 2015). Social hierarchies can also determine access to and control of resources. In developing countries, resources are often limited, and hence access to and control of resources can be equated to power (Haan & Zoomers, 2005; Youssef, 1995).

Gender differences in society at large can be reflected in public institutions at various degrees. In this connection, forest institutions are considered to be highly gendered (Sewell Jr, 1992) and affected by gendered perspectives in resource use and sharing patterns. Having clarified the meaning of gender, this chapter will review gender perspectives in forest resource governance with a special focus on the representation of women in forest institutions.

## 2.3 Gender and the environment

The relationship between gender and the environment has long been studied and emphasized as an important component in regard to various environmental issues. Several theories, ideas and frameworks have been postulated to explore the connection between gender and environment. Among them ecofeminism, feminist environmentalism, environmentalism and feminist political ecology shape some of the theories and movements which describe the relationship between environment and women (Agarwal, 1991; Merchant, 1996, 2005; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996; Sewell Jr, 1992; Shiva, 1989). 'Ecofeminism' asserts that there are important connections between women and nature and claims that both are oppressed by the dominant structure of patriarchal society (Wilson, 2005). Ecofeminism considers that the failure of recognizing those connections has resulted in inadequate care for both the environment and for females. 'Feminist environmentalism' on the other hand emphasizes that the gendered division of labour creates different needs and interests among men and women, which in turn creates different material-based interests, in particular with regard to natural resources and ecological processes (Agarwal,

1991). ‘Feminist Political Ecology’ as postulated by Rocheleau *et al.* (1996) emphasizes the cultural, political, economic and other feminist perspectives to highlight the connection between gender and environment.

All these ideas and theories hold that there is a special and unique relationship between women and environment which is different from the relationship between men and environment. However, scholars present conflicting arguments around the connection between women and environment. Ecofeminism, feminist environmentalism and feminist political ecology each provide insights on the evolution of feminist ideas regarding the environment. Each is explained in detail below.

### *2.3.1 Ecofeminism*

Ecofeminism has developed as both a theory and as a social movement around the relationship between women and the environment. The term ‘ecofeminism’ was coined by the French feminist writer Francoise d’Eaubonne in 1974 to explain the crucial role of women in saving the world from ecological destruction (Braidotti, 1994; Merchant, 1996). Ecofeminists argue that women are spiritually connected with nature and that the connection between women and the environment is natural or inherent (Harding, 1986; Shiva, 1993b). Some authors, such as Merchant (1996) and Tomalin (2008) divide ecofeminism into different types such as liberal, social, and cultural/spiritual. Liberal ecofeminism deals with existing structures of governance including laws and regulations in relation to women. Social ecofeminism is concerned with matters of social injustice created by patriarchy and capitalism. Cultural ecofeminism criticizes patriarchy and emphasizes the biological relationship between nature and women. According to Sachs (1997), ecofeminism sees three major issues in the area of women and environment: the relationship between women and environment, the connection between the domination of women

and that of the environment, and the role of women in solving environmental problems. In ecofeminism, references to environment primarily refer to the natural environment or nature. Thus in ecofeminism, nature (the environment) is considered to be similar to the female body on the basis of shared life giving capacities and vulnerability to male domination (Merchant, 1996). Ecofeminism also argues that women and nature share the same fate and the same history of oppression (Besthorn & McMillen, 2002). Many scholars consider that the planet, which is considered as feminine in gender, has been destroyed by the power of male dominance (Braidotti, 1994; Littig, 2001; Merchant, 1996; Mies, 1993). Some authors observe that women may be subordinate to men within a family (when a husband rules over his wife) and that women's roles are fixed and limited to a confined area (Connell, 1987). Characteristics often associated with women, such as being caring, nurturing, generous, wanting to please others, combined with their softness and emotionality, are considered to be interwoven with women's subordination to men (Gherardi, 1995).

Ecofeminists hold that the environment and women have both been ruthlessly exploited over a long period of time; and that this exploitation accelerated after industrialization and has been exacerbated by technological advancements (Merchant, 2005; Mies & Shiva, 1993). The advancement of industrialization is seen to have resulted in negative impacts on both women and the environment (Shiva, 1989). Ecofeminists acknowledge the biological processes of pregnancy and childbirth as the sources of women's power and motivation by which they join ecological activism and attempt to save the environment (Shiva, 1989).

The concept of ecofeminism gives greater emphasis to 'essentialist' or 'biological' aspects of the association between environment and women, rather than the practical aspects of a woman's life within the environment (Merchant, 2005). Some proponents of ecofeminism claim

that there is a spiritual association between women and the environment. Some authors such as Mellor (1997) try to combine cultural or spiritual aspects of ecofeminism with utilitarian (materialist) views to describe feminist perspectives of the environment in relation to ecofeminism. Others do not agree, rejecting the idea of inherent spiritual relationship between women and the environment. Ecofeminism is also criticized as being 'white feminism' connotating it with the western philosophy and as excessively focused on cultural and spiritual aspects of women and the environment, overlooking the more pragmatic, day-to-day linkages between women and natural resource management in the developing countries (Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996; Tomalin, 2008).

The concept of ecofeminism has progressed over time, both as a theory and as a social movement. Ecofeminism refers to both the theory and the movement promoting social change to challenge the dominant gendered power structure in environmental concerns, albeit its limitation to address gender issues in the developing countries (Berman, 1994; Braidotti, 1994; Kaur, 2017; Larrere, 2015).

Ecofeminism's theoretical contributions to environmental studies include, but are not limited to, comparing women with nature, explaining women's dependence on forests as a spiritual connection between women and nature, and establishing industrialization as a key factor for exploitation of both women and the environment simultaneously. Despite the contribution of ecofeminism, authors such as Agarwal (1991), Rocheleau *et al.* (1996), and Braidotti (1994) argue that ecofeminism as a theory fails to incorporate the gendered nature of society created through caste, class, gender, geography and ethnicity, all of which play important roles in environmental issues. Ecofeminism is also criticized by researchers for not being compatible with the idea of women's economic, social and political participation (Littig, 2001). Instead

scholars see the connection between women and environment as being linked to ‘utilitarian’ elements rather than ‘essentialist’ or ‘biological’ factors which they articulate as ‘feminist environmentalism’ (Agarwal, 1991; Schroeder, 1993).

### *2.3.2 Feminist environmentalism*

Feminist environmentalism holds that there is a material linkage between women and the natural environment (Agarwal, 1991, 2010b), in contrast to ecofeminism that stresses spiritual linkages. It is in this sense that feminist environmentalism is a more practical relationship between women and the environment in comparison with ecofeminism. In other words, ecofeminism explains the women-nature relationship as a spiritual bond, while feminist environmentalism describes the role of women in recognising and protecting the environment as the provider of the material necessities required by society. This relationship is argued to be stronger in developing countries because of the traditional roles of women associated with their household responsibilities including rearing domestic animals and their roles in small-scale agriculture, forestry and the management of local water resources (Buchy & Rai, 2008; Hombergh, 1993; Shiva, 1993a). In an eastern patriarchal society where division of labour is highly gendered, women work more closely with the environment to access resources necessary to maintain livelihoods at the household level. For example, women typically collect water, fuel, food and fodder for animals. Women's relationship to the environment is strengthened through their resource utilization patterns (Agarwal, 2010b; Elmhirst & Resurreccion, 2008; Hombergh, 1993). For example, a study carried out in community based forestry systems in the Himalayan regions of India and Nepal found that women’s and men’s reliance on forests differed (Agarwal, 2010b). Agarwal (2010b) found that women’s and girls’ dependence on forest resources is higher and more frequent than that of men and boys, due to a gendered division of labour. Women’s roles and

responsibilities require regular connection with natural resources; more frequent than the connections that men have. Men access forest resources for items such as small pieces of timber for agricultural tools, and logs for construction and maintenance. These are required occasionally rather than frequently (Agarwal, 2010b, 2010c).

Women also use forests as sources of income, which makes their relationship with nature stronger (Agarwal, 2010b; Venkateswaran, 1995). Women are more likely than men to obtain an income in this way because women have less access to education and privately-owned property. In developing countries, women play a significant role in forestry labour by preparing ground for planting, raising seedlings in nurseries, cleaning, weeding and other silvicultural practices (Venkateswaran, 1995). It is argued that women's engagement in such activities strengthens their relationship with nature and generates a higher degree of environmental consciousness among women compared to men (Mohai, 1992).

Feminist environmentalism as a theory contributes to the studies of environmental management from gender perspective. However, it is confined within the material relationship between women and the natural world. It fails to recognize the role of the wider political contexts, such as policies, political economy, and social structures that largely determine the dependence of women on natural resources (Rangan, 2000; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996)

### *2.3.3 Feminist political ecology*

As political ecology explains the relationship between political, social and economic systems with changes in the environment (Robbins, 2012), feminist political ecology examines political ecology through a gender lens. Political ecologists such as Rocheleau *et al.* (1996), and Thomas-Slaytee *et al.* (1996) see the historical and material based relationship of women with the environment from a gendered perspective through feminist political ecology. Feminist political

ecology, as a theory, draws on three major themes to promote its gendered perspective on the environment. These are: *gendered knowledge*, *gendered environmental rights and responsibilities*, and *gendered environmental politics and grassroots activism*, as explained below:

*Gendered knowledge* refers to the realm of environmental knowledge attributed to women as being different from men's knowledge. Women's and men's knowledge of the environment is considered to be different, as a result of gendered roles and responsibilities which are shaped by society (Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). A wide range of feminist scholars agree that women are more knowledgeable, and care more about, some aspects of environment compared to men (Agarwal, 2010b; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996; Shiva, 1993a, 1993b).

*Gendered environmental rights and responsibilities* refer to the access to and control of property and resources. Women and men have different access and control over the same resources. Women often lack property rights and ownership of the land which they cultivate, such as private agricultural land (Buchy, 2012). This applies to both *de jure* (legal) and *de facto* (practical) rights (Nightingale, 2006). In most developing countries in Asia and Africa, women have *de facto* access to common property, such as forests from which they collect fuelwood, fodder and non-timber forest products, but they have no control over private agricultural land, or over land or timber in public forests. The *de facto* right to sell private land, animals and timber lies with the men, although women may hold land titles (Buchy, 2012; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). Women usually have the right to collect consumptive products such as firewood, herbs, leaves and water (valued in terms of the necessity of their utilization), whereas men have the rights to harvest marketable products such as whole trees, land and sources of water for irrigation (highly valued in monetary terms).

*Gendered environmental politics and grassroots activism* focuses on women's collective roles as activists and leaders, and as a source of empowerment in environmental movements (Nightingale, 2006). Due to their strong connection with the environment, their associated knowledge, and their daily requirements, women have played a significant role in various movements against environmental degradation throughout the world (Littig, 2001; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996; Shiva, 1993a).

Feminist Political Ecology as a conceptual framework is assembled from a number of building blocks, such as political economy, environmental history and human geography to explore women's access and control over environmental resources (Robbins, 2012; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). Nightingale (2006) further stresses that gender is a dynamic phenomenon based on socio-economic and political factors that affect and are affected by production relation and environmental changes. Feminist political ecology establishes this reciprocal relationship between gender and environment through a political lens while at the same time establishing a relationship between politics and environment through a gender lens (Nightingale, 2006; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996).

As seen above, ecofeminism, feminist environmentalism and feminist political ecology are three expressions of feminism which have helped shape, or describe, the roles women have within the environment. The following section describes examples of these roles, particularly in environmental movement.

### *2.3.4 The role of women in the environmental movement*

The following paragraphs illustrate examples of the role of women members of the environmental movement in halting environmental destruction and the production of resources

across the globe. The examples presented are drawn from different parts of the world and detail cases from both developing and developed countries. Most examples are related to the forestry sector because of the focus of this thesis.

In the 1980s, American women in the West Harlem area of New York City opposed the establishment of the North River Sewage Treatment Plant (NRSTP) (Miller *et al.*, 1996). The treatment plant was found to promote poor health outcomes with incidences of bronchitis, asthma, respiratory problems and skin diseases increasing after the establishment of the plant. The women's protests against the establishment of the treatment plant was considered to be *Environmental Action* against *Environmental Racism* because the location of the plant was in the area populated largely by African-American (Miller *et al.*, 1996). Due to strong opposition from the women, the New York City Council decided to build an ambitious River Bank State Park in West Harlem as compensation for the effects of the proposed NRSTP. Along with this, the West Harlem Environmental Action Group, comprised of local women, was granted the authority to monitor the flow and capacity of the plant in order to provide feedback to reduce environmental damage (Miller *et al.*, 1996).

The *Chipko movement*[1] is a well-known and well-studied example of a successful non-violent protest against environmental damage by indigenous women. It involved feminists from the rural community of Garhwal, in India (Mellor, 1997; Rangan, 2000; Shiva, 1989, 1993a). In the 1970s, the State Department of Forests appointed a logging contractor with the aim of replacing the natural vegetation with commercial eucalyptus and pine plantations, to which local people would not have access. As a consequence of deforestation, people in the area experienced a severe scarcity of firewood and fodder. Many previously reliable water sources dried up; this

[1] Chipko is a Hindi word which means to protect the trees from felling by embracing them. In this way the loggers cannot gain access to the tree.

was attributed to the excessive loss of vegetation; and it increased the hardships experienced by women, who were responsible for collection of water for their households. Ordinary rural women initiated the protest. Later, local youths and male protesters joined in the movement (Rangan, 2000). Local women embraced individual trees as a symbol of protection to guard the trees from loggers (Shiva, 1993a). They also tried to convince the Indian Government to stop the logging by pointing out how important the trees were for local subsistence economies and for soil and water conservation. Eventually this movement spread throughout India and was successful in preventing mass deforestation due to logging.

The *Women's Green Belt Movement* of Kenya is another example of a well-known environmental campaign repeatedly mentioned in the literature (Maathai, 2004; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). This movement was initiated as a plantation program to combat desertification, to control soil loss and to work toward alleviating poverty (Maathai, 2004). A Non-Governmental Organization based in Nairobi (founded in 1997 by Wangari Maathai, a woman professor who was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 2004) initiated massive tree planting programs and other environmental activities. The organization trained and mobilized rural and urban members of the community – a large majority of which were women – for community development and environmental protection (Maathai, 2004). The group also protected public parks around Nairobi (Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996).

The examples above illustrate a great concern toward the environment and forests held by women from various parts of the world. In developing countries, it is argued that the role of women, in collecting household necessities from forests, such as fuelwood, leaves and water, meant that women would be more affected by deforestation (Shiva, 1989, 1993a) and desertification (Maathai, 2004). Women in developed countries have also shown concern about

environmental pollution (Miller *et al.*, 1996). This is contrary to the fact that the forestry profession or business is largely dominated by males across the world (Coutinho-Sledge, 2015).

The following section examines how the policies and practices of masculinity and male domination have historically been maintained in the forestry sector.

## 2.4 Male dominance in forestry

The forestry profession is largely divided into two categories: 'practical forestry work' (plantation, silvicultural operations, final harvesting, transportation etc.) and managerial activities (administrative and financial management work) (Brandth & Haugen, 1998, 2000). As with other occupations such as police work, firefighting, and defence (Connell, 1987; Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006), the role of the individual in forestry has been perceived as gendered. Practical forestry work is traditionally considered as masculine in its nature. These activities involve work which conjures various images usually associated with the masculine domain (Brandth, 2002; Mohai, 1992; Reed, 2003). Masculine images in forestry are associated with physical strength, getting dirty, facing danger and risk and coping with a harsh environment (Brandth, 2002; Follo, 2002). Masculinity in forestry has been studied by various researchers in European contexts, which provide relevant examples from developed countries (Brandth, 2002; Follo, 2002).

Managerial activities, on the other hand, refer primarily to office and administrative work, to tasks which are not seen as requiring a degree of physical strength; a characteristic that is often seen culturally as different between men and women.

The forestry sector has considered forests primarily as a source of timber. In fact, within the forestry sector, timber has traditionally been seen as the sole important product of forests;

and ‘forestry’ can be defined in a narrow sense, as a set of activities and processes which are applied with the intention of maximising the amount of extractable timber (Varghese & Reed, 2011). This narrow definition of forestry underestimates the complexity of the forest ecosystem and ignores many of the forest products valued by women. It negates the roles of women within the realms of forest utilisation and management and has helped to maintain an association between forestry and masculinity for a long time (Brandth *et al.*, 2004; Brandth & Haugen, 1998, 2000; Reed, 2003; Varghese & Reed, 2011). In the past, the extraction of timber was undertaken manually, largely by males. This was because it was seen – through cultural eyes – as requiring physical strength and skills which were perceived only as characteristics of males (while females were seen as being needed for child rearing and housekeeping.) After the introduction of heavy machinery, masculine dominance continued because the operation systems, and skills required to operate the machinery were also considered the domain of males (Brandth & Haugen, 1998; Reed, 2003). The media also reinforced this masculine dominance by using images of physically strong men when advertising forestry company jobs in the newspapers (Brandth & Haugen, 2000). While this was happening, women, who customarily were seen as being tasked with roles involving less ‘muscle’, were given work (if they were involved in forestry at all) which was considered as requiring less physical strength. As a result, men dominated the roles they were more comfortable in such as those which involved physical strength.

The gendered division of labour created a barrier preventing women from engaging in forestry work. Traditional forestry work such as logging and transporting timber included staying away from home for long periods of time, which was not perceived as appropriate for women (Brandth & Haugen, 1998). Because of women’s engagement in caring for their families and

farming, they were not allowed to leave their families for extended periods, which helped keep them away from forestry work (Reed, 2003).

In the European context, another important factor, the property rights pattern, also played a significant role in maintaining a masculine view of forestry. For example, before 1971, according to Norwegian law, the first-born male member of the family had the right to take over ownership of the forest and farmland owned by his family (Follo, 2002). By tradition, the sons in the family followed their fathers working in forestry. This deprived women of the opportunity of acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for forestry work in Scandinavian countries (Johansson, 1989).

In Northern Europe, some women served as cooks and assistants at logging sites, as plantation labourers, and as mushroom and berry pickers in practical forestry. This is the forestry work they were involved in, yet because it did not require physical strength and also was not directly associated with timber harvesting, it was not accepted as true forestry work (Brandth & Haugen, 1998; Follo, 2002). Even though women in Norway worked in 'practical forestry work' as technicians, scalars, enforcement officers, and loaders etcetera, these women were not given the same status as men who worked in logging and transportation (Reed, 2003). Reed (2003) observes that it is not only men who contribute to maintaining the image of masculinity in forestry work. Reed (2003) further emphasizes that women in forestry lose their personal identity and serve as wives and helpmates, and hide their feminine identity behind the masculine identity of forestry work. In this way, the masculine hegemony associated with forestry culture denied women roles or recognition in practical forestry work from the very beginning of forest utilisation (Brandth & Haugen, 1998; Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007).

The context of developing countries is similar to that of developed countries in terms of the dominance of masculinity in forestry (Agarwal, 2010b; Buchy & Rai, 2008; Coutinho-Sledge, 2015; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). Before the colonization that occurred in many developing countries, forests were not commercialized but were used for subsistence only. From the time of colonization, commercialized forestry was encouraged (Rangan, 2000). The use of timber increased and the roles of men involved in the timber business also increased (Gurung, 2002; Gurung *et al.*, 2012). The direct impact of colonial regimes, or the colonizing of neighbouring countries, caused most developing countries to imitate western forest management patterns, including the introduction of western masculine forestry cultures. While changes have occurred in some developed countries, leading to greater equality of men and women in society generally, and within the forestry sectors specifically, a masculine view of forestry largely persists in developing countries. Due to the contribution of timber to developing economies, forests were used as state property and foresters were trained as police or guards to protect the forests from the people (Enuoh & Bisong, 2015; Hobley, 1996). Therefore, the image of the forester was one of having a masculine character like the para-military with their uniforms, weapons and guns (Blaikie & Springate-Baginski, 2007; Gurung, 2002). Colonial governments across Asia, Africa and Latin America, employed foresters and forest guards, who were all males, to enforce state laws (Agarwal, 2010b; Enuoh & Bisong, 2015; Hobley, 1996). Paradoxically, the contribution of women in menial work such as forest protection, plant nursery works and preparation of plantation areas has been higher in developing countries irrespective of colonialism but their work is considered negligible in economic terms (Agarwal, 2010b).

The legacy of male dominance has also continued in managerial and policy making jobs in forestry organizations across the world. Forestry has been mechanized and muscular strength

no longer required, but women are still considered unfit for practical forestry work (Coutinho-Sledge, 2015; Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007). Since men have dominated practical forestry work, they have also historically been chosen for, and promoted to, managerial or policy making jobs within the forestry sector; despite the roles that women play in protecting forests and the broader environment. The perceived masculine nature of forestry has resulted in male dominance in the forestry sector irrespective of whether the work to be done is practical or managerial. Hence, in many parts of the world, when managerial work is concerned, women are still largely excluded from the forest sector at local, academic, professional, institutional and policy levels in relation to forest governance, benefit sharing, policy making, as well as in regard to capacity building, education and employment opportunities (Christie & Giri, 2011; FAO, 2006, 2007; Varghese & Reed, 2011)

## 2.5 Initiatives for the inclusion of women in forestry

Despite the crucial role of women in conserving and managing forests over the history of human civilization (Shiva, 1989), their employment in forestry profession, in positions such as foresters, rangers and wildlife biologists only began in the 1970s (Asher & Varley, 2018). The inclusion of women in public forest bureaucracies is an even newer concept. Historically, the masculine hegemony associated with the nature of jobs in private forest companies worked as a barrier for women seeking access to employment (Christie & Giri, 2011; Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007). For example, around the 1960s, in Nordic countries, women were not appointed as professional foresters despite the availability of female forestry graduates in such countries. Forestry work in private companies was still considered as practical forestry work, requiring male strength and skills (FAO, 2006). Forestry companies underestimated the capability of women working in the practical forestry field, therefore they were hesitant to employ women (Lidestav & Sjölander,

2007; Reed, 2003). As public forestry organizations were heavily involved in administrative tasks, they started recruiting women foresters, at a time when the private sector was still reluctant to employ women (Reed, 2003). In Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s, public sector organizations employed a few female forestry graduates as forest supervisors. It was only after the1990s that forestry companies and forest owner associations began to hire women foresters for field-based work (Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007). In many developed countries, before 1960 there were only a few professional women employed in the Forestry Service, but most of them worked as clerical staff (FAO, 2006; Thomas & Mohai, 1995). The proportion of women employed in forestry has increased since the 1990s in many developed countries (FAO, 2006).

The inclusion of women in the forestry profession in developed countries was initially driven by structural change in their societies, towards greater gender equality. The effects of these changes were widespread and were not limited to the forestry sector. In the 1980s, many northern countries such as Norway, Sweden and the United States adopted policies promoting equal opportunities as a means of gender equality (FAO, 2006). The United States Forest Service applied measures to increase the number of women and other underrepresented groups in traditional and non-traditional forestry fields, including in decision making positions (Thomas & Mohai, 1995).

Many authors emphasize that the recognition of the role of women as a result of the activities of various feminist movements is the major contributing factor for acknowledging the role of women in natural resource governance (Braidotti, 1994; Elmhirst & Resurreccion, 2008; Littig, 2001). Women's movements have been effective in protecting the environment across the globe; women have proven themselves as agents of social change (Braidotti, 1994; Littig, 2001; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996) and feminist movements have gained in momentum. Such movements

were instrumental in developing new theories regarding feminism and the environment (Elmhirst & Resurreccion, 2008). Gender has become the central analytical category for exploring the inclusion of women not only in forestry, but in a range of other development sectors (Leach, 2007). Critical studies have begun to explore how gender is constituted in different contexts and how power relationships exist between men and women (Leach, 2007; Nightingale, 2003, 2006). The negative impact of unequal power relationships on access to resources and opportunities for women have been highlighted and explored in several contexts (Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). Studies by ecofeminist and feminist political ecologists have found gender roles to be imperative for resource production and utilisation. The emergence of the feminist agenda in the development sector thus contributed to lobbying for the inclusion of women in forestry institutions.

After the 1990s, various international conventions, agreements and agendas relating to forests, environments and their management, such as Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, have come into effect. Such forums have become instrumental in creating alliances among feminist champions and activists from developed as well as developing countries to work together for the empowerment of women. The concept of the inclusion of women was incorporated into 'Agenda 21' at the Rio Conference in 1992 as the 'Women's Action Agenda 21'(Littig, 2001). Following the thrust of the Rio Conference, a model of sustainable forest management became an priority for the forestry sector. To promote sustainable forest management, a diversified work force (gender, race, professions) became a requirement for this sector (FAO, 2006; Halvorsen, 2001; Temu *et al.*, 2005; Thomas & Mohai, 1995; Varghese & Reed, 2011). Such a requirement involving gender balance was a strong step toward the inclusion of women in forestry sector.

As forestry organizations began to employ women, their participation also brought about social change, particularly in the area of sustainable forest management (FAO, 2006; Giri & Darnhofer, 2010). Effective social change movements, involving women, further highlighted the importance of the inclusion of women in the forestry sector. Research indicates the validity of women's long held claims; that women are assets in forest management and should not be ignored (Agarwal, 2010b).Thus women have good credentials for seeking involvement in decision making within forest institutions, particularly in participatory forest management models (Coutinho-Sledge, 2015).

In participatory forest management, the local community (rather than the state) is responsible for the maintenance and utilization of forest resources. Women are often the most frequent users of forest resources such as fuel wood, fodder and medicinal herbs. The sustainable use of these kinds of resources is one of the major objectives of participatory forest management (Agarwal, 2010b). In many developing countries, the role of foresters has shifted from forest technician to social worker, in order to facilitate and encourage the involvement of appropriate local forest users in the forest management process (Temu *et al.*, 2005). For example, in Nepal the recruitment of women motivators and facilitators was considered necessary to empower local women to take part in community forestry processes in the early 1990s. Similarly, the inclusion of a diversity of professionals including policy makers, planners, managers, technicians and researchers was felt to be necessary for sustainable forest management in European countries at around the same time (FAO, 2006; Manfre & Rubin, 2012; Reed, 2003). As a result, a number of policy and institutional reforms were initiated in many countries to address gender issues and to include women in the forestry profession (FAO, 2006, 2007).

Developmental organizations such as the United Nations and other bilateral and multilateral organizations have contributed to gender mainstreaming in forestry through policy and institutional inputs, especially in developing countries (Braidotti, 1994; FAO, 2007; Khadka, 2009). Women working in forest agencies, networks and alliances have also played significant roles in increasing the participation of women in forestry education, professions and institutions at grass roots level (FAO, 2006). Norway and Sweden were pioneer countries in establishing women's networks in the forestry sector in the late 1980s and the early1990s. Those networks lobbied for women's entry into forestry education and forestry jobs. They also provided role models to inspire women in other European countries and even outside Europe (FAO, 2007).

Similarly, the adoption of concepts of decentralization and devolution in resource management agencies in various countries led to the involvement of different categories of people (poor, marginalized and women) in decision making processes. This approach has contributed to the empowerment of women in several sectors, including forestry (Bandiaky-Badji, 2011; Temu *et al.*, 2005). The United Nations Women's Conference held in Beijing, China, in 1995 served as a major milestone for gender mainstreaming in development processes in general. The countries represented at the conference agreed to adopt and implement gender mainstreaming policies to include women in policy processes and decision making (FAO, 2006, 2007). As a result, various countries crafted their own laws to maintain the gender balance in each development sector. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) put gender equality and women's empowerment as one of the eight universal goals to be achieved by 2015 (NPC, 2016). Following the MDGs, the United Nations again put 'gender equality' as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that need to be achieved by 2030 (UN, 2015). All these global initiatives have drawn international attention to issues of gender.

Despite efforts made to develop and maintain gender inclusive governance in forestry, the evidence supports the claim that women remain disadvantaged. The next section will explore the representation of women in forestry professions across the world.

## 2.6 Representation of women in the forestry profession

Since the 1970s, substantial efforts have been made by several international organizations, such as the United Nations, to increase women's participation in forestry (FAO, 2007; UN WOMEN, 2015). Nonetheless, empirical investigations conducted in several countries reveal that women remained largely underrepresented in forestry organizations; in both developed and developing nations (Asher & Varley, 2018; FAO, 2006, 2007; ILO, 2018; Lawrence, 2016; Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007). The number of women in forestry professions is much lower than that of men in Europe, North America and Australia (ABARES, 2015; Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2018; Deda, 2017; Lawrence, 2016). In Portugal, 35 per cent of forestry jobs are held by women, which is the highest among European nations, while only eight percent of Ireland's forestry sector workforce are women (Deda, 2017). On average, only 15 percent of workers in the forestry sector in Europe are women. Kuhns *et al.* (2002) noted that only 10 per cent of foresters in the US were female in 2002. The situation has improved recently in the US, but not significantly. Only 25 per cent of total workforce in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting in the US are women (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2018). In Australia, while 47 percent of the overall workforce are women, only 19 per cent of jobs in forestry are held by women (ABARES, 2015).

The proportion of women involved in the forestry profession across developing nations is even lower than in developed nations. In a study of eight African countries, FAO (2007) revealed gender inequality in forestry organizations in Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali,

the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia and reported very low representations of women in the professional forestry sector. For example, in Tanzania and Ghana only 10 and 11 percent of professional forest employees respectively were women in 2007 (FAO, 2007). A similar situation was found in Asia and the Pacific despite several policy interventions for mainstreaming women into the forestry profession (RECOFTC, 2015). The proportion of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is also very low: only about 5 per cent of officials working in Nepal's government forestry institutions are women (DoCPR, 2018). Although the figures for women's professional representation in forestry are increasing across the world, the statistics show that there is some way to go before equal representation is achieved.

## 2.7 Reasons for women's underrepresentation in professional forestry

The low representation of women in the forestry profession reflects a variety of factors (historical, political, social, economic and cultural), which create explicit and implicit values in society (Christie & Giri, 2011; Colfer, 2013; Davidson & Black, 2001; FAO, 2006, 2007; Varghese & Reed, 2011). These dynamics create barriers to the entry and progress of women in the forestry profession. Women's and men's employment areas are shaped through institutional, legislative, normative and infrastructural measures (FAO, 2006).

In Europe and the USA, before the 1980s some legislation (for example, laws pertaining to property inheritance and wages) was biased toward males (Brandth & Haugen, 1998; FAO, 2006, 2007; Thomas & Mohai, 1995). Land tenure issues and other property rights laws also constrained women's opportunities and choices (Bandiaky-Badji, 2011; Mwangi *et al.*, 2011). In many developing countries, including India and China, women have had no legal right to possess land until recent years (Mwangi *et al.*, 2011; RECOFTC, 2015). These property rights patterns

have negative consequences for women in private and public spheres who may also be challenged by inadequate access to education, careers, and choice of economic activities.

Historically, women have had less access to forestry education compared to other educational fields. This was due to the perceived masculinity of the forestry profession; and of the education programs themselves (Christie & Giri, 2011; FAO, 2006, 2007; Khadka, 2009; Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007). Women's entry into forestry education is quite new in comparison to that of men. It has been reported that the first time a Norwegian woman graduated in forestry education was in 1964, and that it was a decade before the next woman followed (FAO, 2006). Only ten women foresters had graduated by 1984 (FAO, 2006). In Sweden, it was 1966 before the first woman completed her M Sc. in Forestry (Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007). The acceleration of women's entry into forestry education started in the 1980s in northern Europe, while there is evidence to suggest that forestry education was not accessible to women in some Asian and European countries when formal forestry education commenced. For example, in Slovakia and Nepal women were not permitted to study forestry science until 1962 and 1981 respectively (Christie & Giri, 2011; FAO, 2006).

The low number of female graduates has had an impact on the representation of women in related professional fields. In general, after the introduction of women's empowerment policies and other affirmative actions, the number of women entering forestry education has increased on an average, but in some regions it subsequently decreased again. A study in Africa found that there was a drop in the number of female students from 1994 to 1998 due to a decrease in public sector job opportunities (Temu *et al.*, 2005). Women without formal education in forestry are prevented from obtaining important positions in the forestry sector, since they do not have the required qualifications (FAO, 2007). In Europe, the number of women with a

forestry education has increased, but not all of them have been hired in the forestry workforce (FAO, 2006). Another study showed that the number of women studying postgraduate (Masters and Doctoral) courses in forestry in Africa increased as a result of effective gender balancing policies and the introduction of social science into forestry (Temu *et al.*, 2005). The same study found that there were fewer gender gaps at the postgraduate level in South East Asian countries compared to elsewhere. Whether this has translated to equal representation of women forestry professionals in the workforce has not been examined.

Varghese and Reed (2011) reported that men were preferentially selected over women by institutions with responsibilities for recruiting and training forestry officials, whereas other studies found that gender norms and rules act as barriers for women's entry into forestry education and training (Ameyaw *et al.*, 2017; Christie & Giri, 2011). In Africa, a tendency to encourage women forestry professionals into careers in research institutions, rather than in the practical forestry and managerial fields has been reported (Ameyaw *et al.*, 2017; Mwangi & Mai, 2011). This direction of women into forestry research has led to opportunities to work in laboratories or academic institutions, but their presence in managerial or decision making positions within forest organizations has been minimal (FAO, 2007). It has also been reported that women do not pursue a career in forestry after obtaining a degree due to limited opportunities in the profession, and a lack of flexible working hours, among other things (Christie & Giri, 2011; FAO, 2006). The limitations hanging over professional working women are pushing them to face challenges to perform in their roles. The next section will discuss these challenges that women are facing in their organizations.

## 2.8 Challenges for women professionals in the forestry sector

Studies in Norway and Sweden indicated that women have encountered and experienced serious gender bias and negative attitudes upon joining the forestry profession (Brandth & Haugen, 1998, 2000; Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007; Reed, 2003). Similarly, the first women forest rangers who graduated from the Central Forest Ranger College in Chandrapur, India, encountered resistance from senior officials (Sainath 2007 cited in Christie & Giri, 2011). In Canada and the US, female forestry professionals reported gender discrimination in their work place (Kuhns *et al.*, 2002; Reed, 2008). The masculine perception and practice of forestry, and its domination by males, is typically considered as a challenge for women foresters (Varghese & Reed, 2011).

Brandth and Haugen (1998) argued that both practical forestry workplaces and forestry organizations became important stages for masculine pride and identity, which in turn functioned as a barrier for women. Thus women who entered such a male dominated field faced the problem of fitting into a male occupational culture (Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007). Some authors have noted that women who entered into the forestry profession tried to hide their femininity in order to gain respect from their male colleagues (Gurung, 2002). In Nepal, female foresters have described experiences of gender discrimination from their colleagues and seniors (Christie & Giri, 2011) within their institutions. Although many women foresters were found to be competent in their jobs, they were often accused by their male counterparts of not being able to carry out their work, and of being lsess capable to work than men (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008b). In another study, many women forestry professionals from Nepal expressed that they had to work harder than their male counterparts, to win recognition for their work (Christie & Giri, 2011). In another example, a pioneer female forester in Nepal was underestimated by her

supervisor (District Forest Officer-DFO) and assigned more administrative tasks rather than professional forestry work of the type carried out by her male colleagues (Christie & Giri, 2011).

Professional opportunities and benefits within the forestry sector have been described as biased against women, due to gender attitudes within forestry organizations (Christie & Giri, 2011; FAO, 2006; Kuhns *et al.*, 2002; Reed, 2003). Reed (2003) also reported that Canadian forestry organizations favoured the hiring of male workers over females. Similar cases have been reported in the USA, Nordic regions, and in European countries such as Armenia. In Armenia, it was found that the State Forestry Agency preferred males to females when they recruited foresters (FAO, 2006; Thomas & Mohai, 1995). Some women working in forestry in Canada reported that they were not able to access to training and advancement opportunities because of the gendered division of labour in the rural areas in which they lived. Family responsibilities including childcare and care of the elderly, which are very much considered to be the responsibility of women (Reed, 2008), prevented women from utilizing opportunities when they were offered. From a cultural point of view, women's reproductive responsibilities were found to be a barrier for career progression, as child rearing leaves less flexible hours for work (Reed, 2008; Varghese & Reed, 2011).Women with young children find long working shifts difficult and may quit their jobs for this reason (Reed, 2008). Evidence suggests that some women in Sweden left their forestry jobs due to strained and insecure working conditions (Villa, 1999). Contrary to this, some practical strategies have been designed to address the social constraints of women. These include concessions in areas such as the financial incentives, childcare/eldercare facilities, and appropriate timing for meetings for women (who need appropriate consideration to avoid clashes between workplace and home/family commitments) (Varghese & Reed, 2011).

The perception of outsiders towards female foresters was also found to be negative. For example, in Canada many professional women foresters were perceived as secretaries (assistant) because of the embedded masculine culture in, and of, the industry (Reed, 2003). Many Nepalese women foresters reported similar challenges when they worked in the community as foresters because the villagers assumed that they were wives, lovers or junior staff of the men, even though in some cases they were team leaders (Christie & Giri, 2011). Such biased attitudes and practices have perpetuated due to the perception of forestry as a 'work of wood' (working with wood is tough for women), and the persistent concept that forestry institutions are not for women (Reed, 2008). Forestry work is often located in difficult physical terrains. Some authors reported that it is more challenging for women than for men to work in such areas (Varghese & Reed, 2011). Follo (2002) mentioned that due to the physically demanding and remotely based nature of forestry, fewer women in Norway are attracted to forestry education or careers in forestry.

In many countries, patriarchal socio-cultural norms and values, attitudes, traditions and customs act as challenges for professional women foresters working in the field or in forestry institutions; and for women students in forestry education, (FAO, 2006, 2007). Policies and practices for gender mainstreaming have been enforced in various countries to address these issues.

## 2.9 Effectiveness of gender mainstreaming policies and practices in forestry: an international perspective

The ongoing process of gender inclusion in the forestry sector is progressing slowly (Colfer & Minarchek, 2012; FAO, 2006, 2007; Siscawati & Mahaningtyas, 2012).Various forestry institutions have adopted different approaches for gender mainstreaming in forestry governance. These processes involve the design of gender sensitive policy and programs, followed by

implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these. Some affirmative policies for the inclusion of women in the forestry profession include, but are not limited to, the provision of a quota for the employment of women, maternity leave, child care facilities, and a reduced probation period, among other things. However, these gender friendly policies have been less effective in increasing the number of women in the forestry sector when compared with other sectors (Varghese & Reed, 2011). Some of these processes are criticized as being more focused on women's participation rather than addressing gender issues associated with factors such as culture, class, and religion that constrain the inclusion of women in forest institutions (Siscawati & Mahaningtyas, 2012).

Some constraints in the implementation of gender-inclusive policies are highlighted in the literature. Many 'invisible' gendered characteristics are responsible for the ineffectiveness of these policies (FAO, 2006). After the introduction of the Equal Opportunity Act (1980) in Sweden, for example, gender equality in the workforce was implemented by creating suitable working environments for both men and women (FAO, 2006). Although the act compels employers to recruit females in underrepresented professions such as forestry, the impact evaluation study of the act in 2004 found that gender equality lagged behind in the forestry sector in comparison to other sectors. To increase women's representation in the forestry sector, a separate Gender Equality Plan 2000 was implemented (later revised in 2002) which addressed the issues of women's representation, income distribution, ownership and inheritance, informal obstacles and structures. The policy interventions and launching of different actions in Norway after the 1980s and 1990s attempted to reduce gender inequality among forestry professionals. As an affirmative action it was decided that women would comprise 40 percent of membership

in any public committee, council or board, but the forestry sector could not meet the reserved quota for women because of the low number of female graduates (FAO, 2006).

A study of the US Forestry Services found that 'affirmative action 'and 'equal opportunity' policies were instrumental in bringing about change in the culture of forestry organizations (Kennedy, 1991). The National Environment Protection Act (1969) provided opportunities to hire women professionals in the wildlife and fisheries sectors so that about the half of the recruits in the 1970s were female. Women were tasked with multiple and unanticipated roles which matched neither their skills nor their attitudes. However, they accomplished their roles successfully and served as agents of change (Kennedy, 1991). This was an example for effective implementation of policies toward the inclusion of women in forestry. In contrast, faulty and ineffective implementation of policy can hinder the achievement of gender balance in the forestry sector. For example, a sound gender justice policy exists in Indonesia, as a component of other supporting policies, but this has not been properly implemented (Siscawati & Mahaningtyas, 2012) largely because gender sensitization training was not granted to high level officials within the hierarchy of influential Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) staff.

## 2.10 Scope for contribution in the area of gender perspectives in forestry

It is clear that transformative change in both policy and practice is necessary to facilitate influential roles of women professionals in forestry institutions. Policy revisions can be crucial tools for bringing about change in gender inequality. In some cases, however, the situation is not so clear-cut. In some African and European countries, the lack of compatibility between policy and practice can be a barrier for the empowerment of women in forestry institutions, where specific qualifications and rules of entry are required (FAO, 2006, 2007; Varghese & Reed, 2011). Studies conducted to date have not addressed the question of why the policies and

practices of some organizations have been ineffective in achieving their intended outcomes. However, gendered cultural values, social norms, and attitudes can often act as barriers to the implementation of those policies.

Most of the research associated with women's institutional representation is confined to the developed countries (such as Canada, USA, and Europe). Studies of women's participation issues in the African and Asian contexts are usually limited to an examination of women's participation in community level resource governance. This is especially the case in Nepal. Mai *et al.* (2011) also indicated that there is a knowledge gap about the roles of male and female forestry staff in public and civil society forestry organizations globally. A review of women's participation in Nepalese public and civil society forestry organizations (presented in detail in Chapter three) suggests that there is a significant gap in research regarding the representation and performance of women forestry professionals in forest bureaucracies, civil society organizations and private sector organizations, particularly in developing countries such as Nepal. The effect of national level government forestry institutions and their policies and processes which pertain to gender has not been widely studied in overall forestry governance. A deeper analysis of policy, process, institutions and actors within and beyond forestry (which can influence the forestry sector) from a gender perspective, therefore becomes crucial.

To address this research gap, a research framework, 'Feminist Institutionalism' (an advanced form of 'new institutionalism' proposed by authors such as Mackay *et al.* (2010)) will be used to explore the prevailing policies, legislative frameworks, practices, norms and values which affect the opportunities and constraints of women forestry professionals in the forest bureaucracy of Nepal (Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and its subsidiary institutions).

The following section will describe the theoretical aspects of different forms of institutionalism and explain the contribution of this thesis in its application of Feminist Institutionalism to explore gendered perspectives in Nepalese government forestry institutions. The next section describes the development of Feminist Institutionalism as a combination of feminist theory and institutional theory in the study of forestry institutions.

## 2.11 Institutionalism

Rapid institutional change has been witnessed since the 1980s as a response to growing decentralization and constitutional changes in various parts of the world (Mackay & Meier, 2003). Institutions and institutional procedures have played crucial roles in these changes. Processes of institutional change have laid the foundation for modern institutionalism as a separate branch of political theory. According to Peters (2005), institutionalism considers how individuals and structures interact with each other and how an institution works in a given situation to serve the people. Institutionalism also recognizes the importance of formal and informal institutions in the policy process and their role in governance. Institutional redesign, introduction of democratic practices and modernisation allude to the studies of the different dimensions of institutions (Mackay & Meier, 2003).

Contributions of various scholars have given rise to different forms of institutionalism (Goodin, 1996; Peters, 2005; Weimar, 1995). Some versions of institutionalism, for example, include Historical Institutionalism, Normative Institutionalism, Sociological Institutionalism, Rational Choice Institutionalism, Empirical Institutionalism, and Discursive Institutionalism, to name a few (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Goodin, 1996; Hall & Taylor, 1998; Hay & Wincott, 1998; Immergut, 1998; March & Olsen, 1984; Thelen, 1999). These forms of institutionalism are also examined through the lenses of old and new institutionalism. While the traditional form of

institutionalism or the 'old institutionalism' was in place to emphasize the role of the structural/organizational aspect of institutions, new institutionalism has emerged as a more robust theory; approaching institutions as a dialectical process of organization-human interactions (Goodin, 1996).

Authors such as Hall and Taylor (1996) and Mackay and Meier (2003), discuss three types of institutionalism – Historical Institutionalism, Sociological Institutionalism and Rational Choice Institutionalism – under the umbrella of New Institutionalism. These three varieties of new institutionalism offer avenues for incorporating a number of social and cultural issues such as values, attitudes and beliefs in order to approach discourses about institutions. In related areas some authors propose a separate theory of 'Feminist Institutionalism' by incorporating gendered perspectives within New Institutionalism (Kenny, 2007; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013; Mackay *et al.*, 2010; Mackay & Meier, 2003).

Before entering into discussions of New Institutionalism and/or Feminist Institutionalism, the following paragraphs will present feminist perspectives in Historical Institutionalism (HI), Sociological Institutionalism (SI) and Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) in order to describe how gender can be incorporated in all three variants of New Institutionalism.

## 2.12 The feminist perspective within Historical Institutionalism (HI)

Historical Institutionalism as described by Steinmo (2008) is an approach to studying politics and social change based on 'empirical questions, historical orientation and giving attention to the institution which shape behaviour and outcome'. Steinmo (2008) stresses that in using history as an analytical tool we can explore how a political outcome is shaped by an institution. According to Steinmo (2008), HI lies between two views of human beings as rational agents and as 'rule

followers. Peters (2005) describes the concept of HI by arguing that the behaviour of the individual is largely shaped by institutions and that the free will of individuals is overly constrained. He states that political thinking is the root of institutional design and analysis, and it is imposed by the state through its formal and informal rules. Hall and Taylor (1998) claim that HI is more focused on macro-level political outcomes. Moreover, HI is argued to be too structural or too agential by nature rather than allowing a balanced consideration of structures and agencies in an institution (Mackay *et al.*, 2010).

Historical Institutionalism is attentive to historical legacy; therefore it views history as a fundamental matter for change processes (Peters, 2005; Waylen, 2009). Historical legacies within institutions stem from decisions that were made during their establishment, which remain unchanged until a strong political force exerts sufficient pressure (Peters, 2005). This concept is termed 'path dependency' (Hay & Wincott, 1998). Some authors argue that HI is more focused on analysis of 'critical juncture' (crucial founding moments of an institution) which are important in shaping the formation of institutions in the past and which continue to be important for their development paths (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Thelen, 1999). Critical junctures are like punctuation marks within periods of continuity, where branching of historical advancement occurs; and new development paths are formed (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Based on these concepts of HI, some scholars have tried to find a link between HI and Feminist Theory.

Historical Institutionalism, however, is criticized for being inadequate to embrace a feminist perspective. HI is significantly older than other feminist theories and does not explicitly incorporate gender issues (Waylen, 2009). But HI has importance in gender studies because of its role in shedding light in the historical underpinning of gender differences in institutions (Foucault, 1998). Waylen (2009) portrayed the view that HI could offer a very strong basis for

institutional studies in gendered perspectives. HI answers questions such as: how a critical juncture or particular event could bring change in institutional legacies (gender perspectives in institutions); how policy shifts happen in regard to gender issues; how key outside and inside actors bring about, or resist, change in institutions; and how broader social, economic and political changes influence institutions (Foucault, 1998; Waylen, 2009).

HI is more focused on structures and less concerned about normative or social aspects of institutions. Since gender is a normative phenomenon, using HI theory alone as an analytical framework cannot provide sufficient scope for feminist perspectives on institutions. The next sub section examines feminist perspectives in normative or sociological institutional theory.

## 2.13 The feminist perspective within Sociological Institutionalism (SI)

Normative or Sociological Institutionalism deals with the norms which shape the function of institutions and the behaviour of individuals associated with those institutions (Peters, 2005). Political institutions often have formal and informal rules, norms, values and understandings which define the actions of individual members of the institution according to acceptable roles and forms of behaviour (Mackay & Meier, 2003). Mackay and Meier (2003) further explain that those rules, norms and values are regarded as legitimate whether they are embedded in formal or in informal institutions. March and Olsen (1984) termed them a 'logic of appropriateness' which constrains the behaviour of a member of an institution by hampering them from being a rational individual. And Peters (2005) states that individuals join and take part in institutions by accepting the embedded norms in those particular institutions. SI admits that there are two way relationships between actors and institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), and unlike in HI, SI is guided more by social and cognitive features of institutions rather than by their structures (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). An institutional actor perpetuates a way of acting (doing) as a reflection of

the culture (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). Hence, SI is rooted in diverse sets of practices associated with culture.

Possibilities for common interests between Feminist Political Science and SI can be identified (Kenny, 2007; Mackay & Meier, 2003; Mackay *et al.*, 2009). These researchers argue that Feminist Theory and SI both share the same ontological base; both are related to social constructivism (socially constructed). That is, both theories are concerned with informal norms, values and practices which influence either institutional continuity or change (Mackay *et al.*, 2009). Mackay (2004) stated that feminist theorists have shifted their concern in recent days from 'women and politics' to 'gender and politics'. This shift is toward institutional study because 'gender' is more concerned with institutions than 'women', as such (Kenny, 2007; Mackay, 2004). That gender as a social construct is influenced by culture to be responsible for the creation of gendered institutions is obvious (Acker, 1992a). Gender also creates unequal power relationships among actors within the institutions. The inadequacy of SI is that it does not recognize the conflicting interests of different actors that has implication in unequal power relations among them (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

SI does not account for the power conflicts between actors inside and outside of institutions, which is important from a Feminist Political Science perspective (Mackay *et al.*, 2009). Mackay *et al.* (2009) further argue that gender, ethnicity, sexuality and other social gendered phenomena are not acknowledged in SI though they are deeply rooted in institutions. Mackay *et al.* (2009) conclude that gender, strategy, power and change are core concepts of Feminist Political Science which cannot be explored by using Feminist Institutionalism based on SI alone. The analytical framework provided by SI is useful for exploring how institutional

processes work regarding gender and change, but feminist analysis needs a greater understanding of power and agency in regard to its in-depth analysis of processes (Mackay *et al.*, 2009).

Social Institutionalism and Historical Institutionalism are both theories which ignore the rational behaviour of human beings and argue that humans are bound by formal and informal rules, values, and beliefs embedded in institutions. However, Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) argues that there is a state of equilibrium between those formal and informal rules and rational behaviour of humans. Hence, it is necessary to find a feminist perspective within RCI.

## 2.14 Feminist Perspectives in Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI)

The school of Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) is different from other schools of institutionalism because it argues that the behaviour of the individual is largely dependent on his or her choice or will, rather than that of the institution. This theory highlights the human component and subsequently devalues the importance of institutions in constraining and facilitating human components (Peters, 2005). However, in RCI, the individual views the institution as a source of rules, motivations and consents within which a political actor can work to maximize personal utility (Mackay & Meier, 2003; Peters, 2005). Utility maximizing is the primary focus of an individual and the individual in RCI is convinced that he/she can achieve his/her goal through institutionally shaped behaviour and actions (Peters, 2005).

Driscoll and Krook (2009) explored the possibility of Feminist Rational Choice Institutionalism as an approach. They found that fewer scholars discussed feminist perspectives in RCI. However, some authors like Itzin (1995b) tried to bridge the gap between Rational Choice Theory and social science by incorporating social phenomena such as identity and expression. Calvert (1995) claimed that proper formulation of RC theory by integrating social phenomena would be a useful tool for the study of social dimensions such as gender.

Driscoll and Krook (2009) claim that there would be no value in creating Feminist RCI, although they saw the possibility of a combined approach, incorporating both feminism and the RCI concept, in order to work on 'gender, strategy, institutions, power and change'. They also argue that gender and identity are possible areas of cooperation between RCI and feminists, when it comes to studying the gendered nature of institutions. Using feminist perspectives within RCI, Driscoll and Krook (2009) compared the quota system for women candidates adopted by various countries for mainstreaming women in political institutions.

The discussions in previous paragraphs found that, individually, none of the theories which comprise the New Institutionalism approach (HI, SI and RCI) provide a robust framework for rigorously including feminist perspectives in an examination of institutions. Another approach has emerged to address the gaps. New Institutionalism (NI) merges HI, SI and RCI together.

## 2.15 Features of New Institutionalism (NI)

New Institutionalism (NI) is an approach which can be used to cut across various disciplines. It can serve the interests of historians, sociologists, economists, political scientists and social theorists (Goodin, 1996). New Institutionalism has developed as 'one from many'; which means it is consolidated from many diverse disciplines. In the 1980s, social, political and economic institutions became vibrant throughout the world, but the contemporary institutional theories failed to incorporate many emerging issues of institutions (March & Olsen, 1984). As a response, New Institutionalism was constructed from HI, SI and RCI as a progressive version of these older, descriptive approaches to institutionalism in order to understand the influences of formal and informal rules which affect the political behaviour of individuals (Gherardi, 1996).

Scholars of NI define institutions as a set of formal and informal rules in a society. For example, Lijphart (1984:3) states that an institution is a set of 'formal and informal rules and practices that are used to translate citizen performances into public policies'. The most widely cited definition, however, is by North (1990) who states that 'institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction'. By these definitions, the analysis of institutions involves both the formal (rules that human beings devise such as incentive and authority) and informal (norms, process, conventions, behaviour).

NI as a tool analyses social and political outcomes as a function of formal and informal institutions (Gherardi, 1996; Hall & Taylor, 1996). Among the three components of NI, RCI contains areas of economic and political science, SI is concerned with organizational study, and HI is rooted with the history of state institutions and institutional change (Maddock, 1999). These diverse approaches within NI provide a framework for studying a wide range of political perspectives. However, NI is criticized for not providing precise definitions of an institution as well as not prescribing common research methodology because of its mix of different approaches (Immergut, 1998). Despite being complex in nature, NI has gained a wide acceptance, particularly in the field of political science because of the world-wide dominance of social, political and economic institutions (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Such institutions are the core variable for analysing political dynamics and their outcomes.

Analyses of the three forms of New Institutionalism and feminist perspectives within them have been carried out in previous sections. Here in this section the core components of NI are further discussed before exploring the interface between feminism and New Institutionalism and its parts. This can be helpful in evaluating the enabling influence of NI as a single approach to providing a suitable framework for studying feminist perspectives in institutions.

Mackay and Meier (2003) indicated that there are five major core components of NI.

Institutions as a measurable variable for shaping behaviour and examining the outcome of political processes: NI stresses the role of institutions as a whole is more significant than the role of actors in shaping the behaviour and outcome of the political process. The role of structure, on the other hand, is important in shaping the social and political spheres.

Institutions as broad spectrum: The definition of institutions is very broad with diverse elements in it (Immergut, 1998). Political organizations are not necessarily considered as institutions. Institutions may be formal or informal, *de jure* or *de facto*. They are comprised of associated rules, norms, practices and ideas which are conceptualized as institutions because they can also predict and influence political behaviour. Even marriage and/or families are considered as forms of institutions (Gatens, 1998).

Institutions are created by human agencies: As a response to political processes, human agencies create institutions. Institutions emerge through accident, evolution or prior informed design (Goodin, 1996). Bringing change to institutions is difficult once they are formed as a response to a particular process.

An institution constrains the actors' behaviour: Institutions constrains the role of the individual through formal and informal rules. Individual behaviour is shaped in two ways in institutions—first, they are cultural norms and beliefs within social contexts, on the one hand, while at the same time, the other includes rules and incentives (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

By nature, institutions are value-laden: Institutions appear to be neutral but they are value-laden. For instance, historical and normative institutionalisms are not neutral as they follow a 'value-critical' approach. Their hidden values and norms create and provide partiality

privileges for some groups but not others (Acker, 1992a). For example, the adoption of different selection processes may often exclude or include different types of actors.

## 2.16 Feminist perspectives within New Institutionalism (NI)

New Institutionalism (NI) provides a framework for both mainstream and feminist political science. Both are well studied fields which parallel each other. Some scholars have explored the intersection between institutionally oriented Feminist Political Science and New Institutionalism (Acker, 1992b; Driscoll & Krook, 2009; Kenny, 2007; Krook & Mackay, 2011; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013; Mackay *et al.*, 2010; Mackay & Meier, 2003; Martin, 2004; Waylen, 2009). These authors maintain that there are many similarities between feminist theories and NI. Lowndes and Roberts (2013) state that feminist perspectives are inherent in institutionalism. However, they do not agree that all institutionalism is necessarily feminist. Rather, they argue that there are some similarities between NI and Feminist Political Theory. Lowndes and Roberts (2013) contend that these similarities are based on continuity of culture, the problems and hierarchies created by binary structures (men vs women, mind vs body, rational vs emotional, private vs public), and the importance of historical accounts. Both theories pay attention to the role of formal and informal rules and norms in shaping institutional processes and practices (Kenny, 2007). Both NI and Feminist Political Science are concerned with the origin of institutions, continuity, resistance and change (Kenny, 2007; Mackay *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, both theories emphasize the importance of power dynamics and power relations in political and economic outcomes (Immergut, 1998; Kenny, 2007).

In line with Mackay *et al.* (2010), the following sections discuss the common areas of dialogue between Feminist Political Theory and NI.

## Formal and informal institutions

The focus on formal and informal institutions and their interplay is a major common interest of both feminist and institutional approaches, with the difference being that feminists analyse the formal and informal institutions on the basis of gender (Mackay *et al.*, 2010).The role of formal and informal institutions to shape public and political life is acknowledged by all forms of NI (Goodin, 1996; Hall & Taylor, 1996). NI does not necessarily provide clear theory and methodology to study both formal and informal types of institutions. In NI studies there is tendency to focus more on formal elements of institutions (rules) rather than the informal elements (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Zenger *et al.*, 2002). In most political institutional studies, informal and formal institutions are treated separately (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). Moreover, formal institutions have been examined quite independently from informal institutions. NI accepts the importance of both formal and informal institutions in political and economic life, however there is lack of a theoretical framework to explore the interplay between formal and informal institutions (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). Helmke and Levitsky (2004) carefully explain the genesis of informal institutions (rules) and explain that informal rules are adopted if formal rules are incomplete and the actor cannot achieve the desired solution through application of the formal rules alone. A similar argument has been raised by Farrell and Heritier (2003) who state that formal institutions change at a particular moment and give rise to informal institutions, which may affect the negotiation of future formal institutions. The role of both types of institutions is important in policy forming as both interact and give rise to cooperative decisions.

## Power

Power is another area of common interest between Feminist Political Science and New Institutionalism. Most of the forms of NI such as Historical Institutionalism (HI) and Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) include power as either a central or peripheral component (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Mackay *et al.*, 2010; Mackay & Meier, 2003; Moe, 2006). HI scholars argue that power is at best a 'central component' of HI because the distribution of asymmetrical power across social groups privileges some groups to access the decisions by marginalizing others (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Thelen, 2004). The asymmetrical power relation among different groups in an institution allows the privileged group to use its resources to exercise power (Kenny, 2007). HI often uses power as an analytical tool in institutional studies, but in a conservative sense it overly emphasizes the power of past decisions which have affected future development (Peters, 2005). Kenny (2007) also complains that HI views power (with some exceptions) from a path dependent perspective rather as a present function of institutions (Thelen, 1999, 2004).

Power is an object of practice as well as a condition and a function (Connell, 1987). The concept of power in HI seems relatively more static and structured in its concern with institutional continuity rather than change. Thelen (1999, 2004) have explored the power dynamics in HI from different dimensions. Thelen (2004) examined the institutional change process as an outcome of political contestation and conflicts. On the other hand, RCI scholars acknowledge the importance of power relations in institutional analysis, but it is not necessarily used as the norm, although it may be used as an exception (Moe, 2006). Sociological Institutionalism (SI) which is a culture-based or normative theory undermines the power conflicts created through social norms and values (Mackay & Meier, 2003). The existence of

power struggles between inside and outside actors, as well as between competing interests, is ignored by SI scholars such as Hall and Taylor (1996).

Power is used as an analytical component in some of the forms of New Institutionalism. Little attention has been given to power relation in NI. Therefore, NI is often criticized for not accounting for power relations as an important component and instead using it as a slippery term (Kenny & Mackay, 2009). Several authors express their doubts about whether New Institutionalism provides an adequate framework for analysing power dynamics through a gendered perspective, since gender and power are the central components in feminist political research (Kenny, 2007; Kenny & Mackay, 2009; Mackay & Meier, 2003; Mackay *et al.*, 2009).

## Institutional change

The process of institutional change is another area in which NI and feminism are common features. Both theories emphasize the importance of the contribution of strategic actors in the process of institutional change (Mackay *et al.*, 2010).

NI provides valuable tools for the study of institutional origins, continuity and changes (Goodin, 1996; Hall & Taylor, 1996). New Institutionalists agree that institutions are created through accident, evolution or conscious design to perform particular functions (Goodin, 1996). It is argued that the literature concerning the three older forms of new institutionalism overly focused on institutional stability (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). The older versions argued that once institutions are created it is difficult to change them because the institutions tend to remain on the designed paths (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Nonetheless, institutional change occurs sometimes if an exogenous shock (a critical juncture) occurs and disrupts the path dependency (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Goodin, 1996). However, there are differences among institutionalists on the concept of change in institutions.

Some NI scholars, such as Thelen (1999, 2004), as well as Capoccia and Kelemen (2007) view institutional changes as a more dynamic concept. They criticise some of the older views about institutional change processes and argue that institutional change is a gradual and functional process (Thelen, 1999, 2004). They further emphasize that the institution evolves through contestation and renegotiation as a gradual process over time as a result of both internal and external factors. Other recent literature on institutionalism by Mahoney and Thelen (2010) portray more gradual ways of processing change in institutions. These include *layering* (renegotiating elements of existing institutions while others remain unchanged), *conversion* (redirecting existing institutions toward a new purpose), *drift* (actively neglecting existing institutional arrangements), and *displacement* (prevailing rules are ignored for the sake of new institutions) through internal processes.

Some institutionalists also argue that institutions do not constrain the actors, but they provide strategic resources for them (such as Thelen, 1999, 2004). These insight into change processes are considered as ground breaking work in NI, and they open up the potential for dialogue between Feminist Political Science and NI (Kenny & Mackay, 2009). This is a useful development since Feminist Political Science is typically more concerned with transformative agendas which are merely products of critical junctures. Feminism holds that transformative change arises through gradual contestation and negotiation, and therefore there is the potential for NI to accommodate feminism in part by incorporating various dimensions of gender issues which resist or contest the institutional process of change (Kenny & Mackay, 2009; Mackay *et al.*, 2010). From a feminist perspective, complex functions and dynamics between institutional continuity and change are created through gender and power relations which occur from day to

day institutional practices (Acker, 1992a, 1992b). Following from this, recent developments in new institutionalism and feminism can be complementary to each other.

## Structure and Agency

Agency is a feeling of control over actions and their results while structure is the frame which either hinders or supports the agent in his/her will (Moore, 2016). The relation between individual agencies and social structure and their roles is often the central debate among institutionalists. Waylen (2007, 2009) argues that actors play key roles in Historical Institutionalism. Hay and Wincott (1998) argue that there is a co-constitutive relationship between structure and agency. HI examines how actors within and outside institutions adopt strategies to achieve their complex and constantly changing goals (Hay & Wincott, 1998). Actors within institutions (such as within bureaucracy and government) and outside institutions (people in civil society and interest groups) are strategically placed to achieve some goals by favouring certain strategies over others. In contrast, Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) is sometimes seen as 'action without agency' because RCI (in the extreme case) loses sight of agency (Hall & Taylor, 1996:954). Many Sociological Institutionalists highlight the relationship between structure and agency and label it as 'highly-interactive and mutually-constitutive' (Hall & Taylor, 1996:948).

The structure and agency relationship in institutionalism is still under debate. Feminists also debate the role of structure and agency in political life. Unlike within institutionalism, feminist thought in structure and agency is highly gendered. Mainstream NI is often considered gender-blind because it has paid little attention to gendered perspectives (Kenny, 2007; Kenny & Mackay, 2009). However, the normative perspectives of NI open the possibility of incorporating the effect of gendered social norms to shape political institutions.

## 2.17 Importance of Feminist Institutionalist approach

The discussion in the previous section highlighted potential areas of dialogue between feminist political science and New Institutionalism. Those approaches mentioned try to compare feminist political science and New Intuitionalism in order to strengthen both. Institutional theory can provide a better approach to analysing the stability of and change in political life, the development of policies and legislative measures and their impact, the interplay between formal and informal rules, and the relationship between social movement of actors and political institutions (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). However, the relationship between gender and institutions is largely overlooked in the NI literature. Gender is too often seen as a part of culture rather than an important component for the study of institutional transformation which is an important factor for day to day power exercises that bring change through contestation and negotiation.

To date, little work has been done in using New Institutional frameworks in gender study in institutions. However, works by NI scholars such as Pierson (2004), and Thelen (1999, 2004) tried to incorporate dynamic processes of institutional change which may open up the space for incorporating gender relations and institutions in NI. Some feminist political scientists, for example Chappell (2002) (in her study of feminist engagement in state institutions) and Krook (2003) (in her study application of quota systems for women's representation in political institutions) have adopted the NI framework to study gender dimensions in institutions. However, NI, in general, has given little attention to Feminist Political Science in institutional studies. Recently, gender is gaining more interest in Feminist Political Science because the focus has changed from 'women and politics' to 'gender and politics' (Kenny, 2007:455), where gender is understood as 'processes, practices, images and ideologies and distribution of power in social life' (Acker, 1992a:567).

NI is criticized for not being able to utilize the extensive literature of feminist political science to study gendered perspectives in institutional analysis, such as the introduction of gender friendly policies, gender quotas including the potential role of gender dynamics in institutional processes (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). Further, it is necessary to analyse the failure of formal rules to achieve their intended outcome due to informal gendered norms (Chappell & Waylen, 2013). Therefore, several feminist political scientists found the attention of NI scholars who proposed to develop a new form of institutionalism by integrating gender and institutional theory (Kenny, 2007; Kenny & Mackay, 2009; Krook & Mackay, 2011; Mackay *et al.*, 2010; Mackay & Meier, 2003; Mackay *et al.*, 2009; Waylen, 2009). Feminist Institutionalism (Mackay & Meier, 2003) is the incremental theory created through incorporation of gendered perspectives in New Institutionalism to analyse feminist perspective in institutions. Keeping this in mind, the following section proposes Feminist Institutionalism as a methodological approach for studying the inclusion of women forestry professionals in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

## 2.18 Scope for contribution: strengthening Feminist Institutionalism (FI)

As reviewed above, Feminist Institutionalism (FI) is the blending of Feminist Political Theory and New Institutionalism (NI). Various elements of NI are assessed and analysed from gender perspectives (drawn from Feminist Political Theory) in order to frame FI (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). This research will contribute to FI by incorporating 'women's inclusion in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy' through the lens of various elements of NI and gender world views. In this process a new methodological approach to study feminist perspectives in institutions will strengthen Feminist Institutionalism. The research will critically contribute to the knowledge of FI in the following themes.

## Gendered institutional cultures

In the nineteenth century, culturally constructed dualisms such as men vs women, public vs private, rational vs emotional, and mind vs body confined women in their private lives and separated them from economic spheres (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). Later on, after the 20th century, many studies, social movements and changes in dualistic social constructions have contributed to the emancipation of women and their living conditions. As a result, women's participation in public life has increased and various cultural, social, psychological, material, and other barriers have gradually been removed (Gherardi & Poggio, 2001). However, the cultural interpretation of gender is still dichotomous (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). Institutions are typically gendered in everyday practice (Acker, 1992a). Acker (1992a:567) used the terms 'gendered institutions' to mean 'the gender (that) is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distribution of power in various sectors of social life'. She further explained that state created policies, regulations, religion, cultures, academic institutions, structures and economies that are biased towards males; and which are responsible for the reproduction and continuation of gendered institutional bias. All of those institutions, Acker (1992a, 1992b) claims, were envisioned without the presence of women (Acker, 1992a, 1992b).

Hegemonic masculinity pervades many institutions such as the military, politics, the police force, forestry and academia, where female representation is very low (Brandth & Haugen, 1998; Connell, 1987). Even the effectiveness of some equal opportunity policies and practices implemented to help empower women is in question, due to prevailing gendered structures of institutions (Chappell & Waylen, 2013). The intended outcome of such policies and practices is hindered not just because of culture, but because of the continuous flow of the gendered message through cultural practices to keep women in their 'proper place' (Newman, 1995). As a result,

women are often placed and kept at low levels within hierarchies, in positions such as that of administrative support or clerical, cleaning, and catering jobs. In comparison, males have greater access to higher level executive positions (Itzin & Phillipson, 1995). Although gender neutrality is a characteristic of institutions, in practice institutions act as non-neutral entities by favouring or denying individuals on the basis of gender and by failing to address the gendered culture. These trends reinforce the gender order and perpetuate the gendered norm because of less access for women to decision and policy making positions (Gherardi, 1995). Acker (1992a, 1992b) explains the four stages of the production of gender order as a process:

- The production of gender division involving gendered patterns in employment and wages, along with segregation, exclusion, and the construction of hierarchies based on gender.
- The creation of gender images, symbols and ideologies which legitimize in institutions, justify or oppose gender division.
- The creation of dominance, subordination, alliance and exclusions through interactions among individuals.
- The realization of gender identity as the internalized gender within individuals which places them in a particular gender category.

Acker (1992a) recommends that the exploration of gendered institutions provides a critical perspective on how and why women are excluded from institutional structures and processes. The analysis is important in exploring the gender perspectives of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, the roles expected to be performed by women, and the different job patterns and hierarchies assigned to women.

Moreover, feminist work on gender and institutions suggests that gender is an issue which exists in all institutions. Therefore, gender analysis is important in formal and informal institutions, and sheds insight into institutional origins, change and continuity, structure and agency, and power relations, in exploring women's perspectives in Nepalese forest institutions.

## Formal and informal institutions

The role of formal and informal institutions and their interplay is an important component of both feminism and institutionalism. Formal and informal institutions provide rules and norms that either constrain or motivate the actor to achieve institutional goals (North, 1990). Even though NI acknowledges the roles of both formal and informal institutions as being central to institutional processes and outcomes, it encourages the researcher to examine both types of institutions in isolation (Zenger *et al.*, 2002). The specific role of formal and informal institutions and the interplay between formal and informal institutions is still under-theorized and less emphasized in both gendered and non-gendered institutional analyses in political science (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). Before entering into theoretical approaches, however, it is necessary to define formal and informal institutions from NI perspectives.

According to North (1990) there are various elements in formal institutions such as constitutions, political and judicial rules, statutes and common laws, rules and specifications and operational guidelines. The acceptance of these elements is based on compliance. If the rules are violated, there are measures to punish the violator (North, 1990). Formal institutions are the officially accepted, enforceable rules and measures that are formulated and disseminated (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). These formal institutions have rules which shape the political,

economic and the enforcement (judicial) systems (Lekovic, 2011). Government authorities are typically responsible for enforcing formal rules.

Informal institutions are those that 'come from socially transmitted information and are a part of the heritage that we call culture' (North, 1990:37). They are the traditions, customs, moral values, religious beliefs, and all other norms of behaviour that have passed the test of time. These rules are often called the old ethos, the hand of the past, or the carriers of the history (Lekovic, 2011; Pejovich, 1999). Definitions of informal institutions seem vague, however. Helmke and Levitsky (2004:747) described informal institutions as 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels.

On the basis of institutional outcomes, Helmke and Levitsky (2004) describe four types of interaction between formal and informal institutions. They categorise the functionality of formal rules into convergence (the intended outcome of formal rules) and divergence (a substantial deviation from the expected outcome of formal rules). In each category there are two types of interaction between informal and formal institutions (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004):

- Informal rules complement formal rules and actors expect the rules to be enforced (Convergence).
- Informal rules accommodate formal rules and create incentives to alter outcomes of formal rules (Divergence).
- Informal rules compete with formal rules and create incentives to violate the rules (Divergence).
- Informal rules try to achieve what formal rules try to achieve but fail (Convergence).

According to Helmke and Levitsky (2004), to analyse the interaction between formal and informal institutions it is first necessary to find the informal rules which constrain the actors' behaviour through processes of the actors' mutual understandings. Second, we need to find the communities where informal rules apply (such as bureaucracies, a group of women employees). Third, we seek the mechanisms by which informal rules are implemented and enforced, such as hostile behaviour, gossip etcetera The application of these guidelines will assist in evaluating the length to which informal rules converge or diverge, as well as shed light on the gender inclusive legislative measures adopted by the Government of Nepal in maintaining their forest bureaucracy.

Lowndes and Roberts (2013) articulated how rules are gendered and how they work. They explained that there are identifiable formal or informal 'rules about gender' and that these shape the behaviour of male and female actors (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013:3). These formal or informal rules also promote 'rules with gendered effects' because of the interaction of these rules with other sets of rules, such as those used in determining venues and timing for meetings, in relation to standard business hours on the one hand, and women's family responsibilities on the other (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013:3). The actors who 'work with rules', whether as rule maker or breaker, are also gendered (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013:3). The construction of masculinity and femininity impacts on rules and the way they create, interpret, communicate, enforce, shape and comply with the existing status quo (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). It is challenging to explore rules about gender, gendered effects and concepts such as working within rules. However, where we can determine the rules about the gender (Chappell & Waylen, 2013), we can also uncover the roles of formal and informal institutions in influencing institutional outcomes. Further, discrimination against women can be better understood when formal rules (and whether and how they are officially enforced) are understood.

## Structure and agency

The relationship between structure and agency is a central analytical tool of institutionalism, although it is controversial (Hay & Wincott, 1998). Structure is one of the most important and elusive terms in social science (Sewell Jr, 1992). Giddens (1984:25) accepts that 'structure' has dual meanings: structures are 'both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems'. Sewell Jr (1992:27) further states that 'structures are constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemes and sets of resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action'. Musolf (2003:6) tries to give a precise definition of a structure, saying it comprises 'the innumerable social facts over which the individual, *qua* individual, does not have much control and which he or she cannot escape'. Race, class, sex, ideology, institutions, hierarchy, family, culture, and rules and so on, are all considered as a form of the structural dimensions of social life (Musolf, 2003). Structures enable the agency to mobilize the resources to enact the scheme and they also influence the efficacy of actors (Sewell Jr, 1992).

NI is broadly structuralist since it focuses more on the role of institutions in shaping political life, while in FI, both structure and agency are taken into account as equally important (Mackay & Meier, 2003). It is necessary to strengthen FI in this respect by incorporating dynamic relationships among 'gendered institutional architects, gendered institutionalized subjects and gendered institutional environments' where agency is a strategic, creative and intuitive actor (Hay & Wincott, 1998:977). Hay and Wincott (1998) further stress that change processes result from the interplay between structure and agency.

Women as agents of change try to build networks and women's organizations for various purposes (Maddock, 1999). They also adopt strategic actions to bring change into institutions. Women often achieve change through contestation. When women enter a male dominated area such as forestry they receive varying responses from the males (Gherardi, 1996). These responses might include treating women in a friendly manner as though they were guests or treating them with hostility as though they were intruders (Gherardi, 1996). Every woman who enters into a 'male world' adopts survival strategies (Maddock, 1999). If they want to transform the organization, they need to adopt deliberate tactics in order to handle the situation. This research will use FI to explore the strategies adopted by women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, and their attempts to transform the gendered forestry culture.

## Gendered culture and power relations

The conceptualization of gendered power dynamics provides another approach for FI. FI recognizes that there are processes relating to the production and reinforcement of asymmetrical power relationships among different actors (Kenny & Mackay, 2009). Power is produced and reproduced through gendered practice (Gherardi, 1995). People (usually men) who work in formal institutions such as government departments, corporations and academic sectors try to hold the power. They have responsibility for distributing resources and which are difficult for women to access (Gherardi, 1995). There is a dominance and over-representation of men in many organizations which provides them with positions of power (Newman, 1995). Over time, women's representation has increased in public institutions. However, there is no guarantee that women will reach a parity with men in political, public and legal institutions, because power relations are rooted in informal institutions such as the family, social norms and values (Chappell

& Waylen, 2013). Foucault (1998) argues that power relationships exist in every social body, between a male and a female, between a boss and a subordinate. Feminist theory views power from a human rights perspective, as the right to determine one's choice of life and influence in social change (Bunch & Carrillo, 1990).

Most of the critical work in feminism is focused on cultural power such as women being portrayed as weak members of society (Connell, 1987). Bureaucracy is an organization where different types of culture exist, such as role culture (based on procedure and power), power culture (control exercise by an individual at the centre), person culture (individual as a focal point ) and task culture (influence is based on expertise) (Handy 1985 cited in Itzin, 1995b). All of these cultural categories are gendered in public institutions where males largely hold the positions and roles of power. Itzin (1995b) states that cultures replicate and perpetuate policies and practices to sustain the male culture through their male personnel.

To understand male supremacy (through holding positions of power) in forest institutions, it is necessary to analyse power relations from a gendered perspective. Thus, FI is an appropriate framework to examine the effect of the existing male culture in bureaucratic organizations. Such effects are reflected in the performance of women and the mismatch between intended and actual political outcomes of policies. Women may fail to achieve their potential if senior managers do not recognise and address women's issues (Itzin, 1995b) These issues include long working hours, a lack of encouragement from male managers, disadvantaged positions in reviewing policy, isolation, lack of support, sexual harassment, and hostile behaviours, etcetera. Understanding different types of power relations in policy processes and policy outcomes can give insights into the effectiveness of gendered policy implementation. FI provides critical insight into inclusion or exclusion aspects (Kenny, 2007), and into how power relations maintain

the exclusion or inclusion of women from different policy and decision making processes. Women's access to resources such as formal and informal networks, networking among women, information, training, positions of responsibility, and office resources can also be determined through power dynamics. Power relationships are also linked to concepts of knowledge (Chappell, 2006). However, this aspect of power is not discussed by feminist researchers to the extent that it facilitates or constrains the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy.

## Institutional change and continuity

Understanding gender issues in institutional change processes can provide the tools and concepts needed for analysing feminist perspectives in institutional transformation (Kenny & Mackay, 2009). Recent works in NI also provide insight into the effects of power dynamics and its function for institutional transformational processes. Feminist Political Science is explicitly concerned with how institutions reproduce gender power distribution and how these institutions are transformed (Kenny & Mackay, 2009). Both NI and Feminist Political Science can complement each other and can be combined to form FI by emphasizing the gendered perspectives which are not explicitly mentioned in NI (Mackay & Waylen, 2009). Feminist Political Science is more concerned with how institutions reproduce gender power distribution and the change induced through power relations within institutions (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). Since both exogenous and endogenous strategic actors are a source of institutional innovation and policy change (Chappell, 2006), the interaction among different institutions (formal and informal) becomes crucial. Institutional change is a gradual process where change occurs after contestations and negotiations in day-to-day practice (Bacchi & Rönnblom, 2014; Krook & Mackay, 2011).

Formal institutions are often easily changed but changing informal institutions is relatively difficult (North, 1990). Sometimes change in informal institutions can be induced through formal institutional change (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). As a product of culture, informal institutional change often depends upon changes in social values which are slow and incremental (North, 1990).

The specific role of change in relation to gender within formal institutions is theorized by Tripp (2007). The adoption of gender equality policies, such as quotas for the representation of women in the workforce, or on committees, and other gender mainstreaming policies are some of the formal measures used to promote institutional transformation, but sometimes they fail to achieve their intended outcomes due to barriers created by informal rules. In this context, Tripp (2007:406) suggests answers to questions such as, 'Under what conditions are women friendly policies adopted? Why doesn't the state adopt women-friendly policies? What are the sequences of events and circumstances that lead to the adoption of such policies? How are policies framed over time? What has given rise to changing norms over time? Why are some policies easier to adopt than others in different time periods?' Tripp (2007) further states that critical junctures such as civil war, women's movements, or people's movements bring about radical changes for the adoption of particular policies related to women and or gender. Recruitment, retention and promotion policies can be analysed in terms of their gender sensitivity (Itzin, 1995a), but how these policies bring about changes in formal and informal rules in bureaucracy is yet to be analysed.

## Gendered knowledge

Various forms of masculinity and femininity exist across all institutions. This masculinity and femininity are accepted as a gendered 'logic of appropriateness' by institutions (Chappell,

2006:223). Masculine hegemony such as physical aggression has been observed in the police force (Connell, 1987), as well as in many other institutions. Women are often presented as soft and caring and these may not be considered as desirable traits of a boss or manager. On the basis of masculine and feminine traits, political actors, often men, have created masculine and feminine characteristics within institutions as 'logic of appropriateness'. Men are portrayed as knowledgeable and skilful actors in the institutions whereas women are considered as emotional, fragile and dependent. As a result women may not be considered for management positions, or other positions of authority and power (Chappell & Waylen, 2013). The socialization processes between men and women create and segregate distinct gendered knowledge and skills. Women's different domain knowledge is acquired through multiple roles as a producer, reproducer and consumer (Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). It is necessary to analyse how gendered knowledge is acknowledged, or not, in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, and how government institutions are effective in incorporating social dimension in regard to forests, in terms of gendered knowledge.

## 2.19 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed forestry practices and forest institutions from gender perspectives. It also critically surveyed various theories around Institutionalism and then focused on Feminist Institutionalism as an emerging field, appropriate to use in this study of gender issues within institutions. Forestry practices and forest institutions were found to have masculine features until 1980s irrespective of the economies - developed or developing. Women were treated as passive beneficiaries of forest goods, while decisions were made by males. Women started studying forestry in the 1980s, and thereby tried to enter forestry profession. But it was more difficult for women to enter the forestry profession in comparison to men. Nonetheless, women's roles in

protecting the environment, including forests, were visible in some cases; and this brought the gender debate into the forestry arena. Several strains of theories emerged for examining gender perspectives in environmental institutions. A blending of New Institutionalism and Feminist Political Theory gave rise to 'Feminist Institutionalism' which provides a nuanced approach to studying gender issues in institutions such as forest bureaucracy.

# Chapter 3: The history of forest management in Nepal with reference to the roles of women

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a contextual insight into the history of Nepalese forestry management with reference to women. It provides an account of the development of Nepal's forestry sector from the historical period of feudal governance to current times. The evolution of today's more people centred governance system has provided space for gradual steps towards the inclusion of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. The chapter is divided into five sections.

Section 3.1 provides an insight into the importance of forest resources for Nepalese people. It reflects on how different sections of the population (economically poor, economically well-off, men, women, urban dwellers, village dwellers) use forests for various purposes. It also illustrates the existence of two-way relationships between people and forests; and the involvement and contribution of people in the maintenance of state forest resources in Nepal.

Section 3.2 describes the historical development of forest policy and management in Nepal. Three broad timeframes are considered: (i) pre-nationalization of forests (before 1957); (ii) post-nationalization of forests (1957-1976); and (iii) following decentralization of forest governance (after 1976). It describes how institutional transformation and the gradual reform in forestry policies and practices relate to the needs of rural people in Nepal.

Section 3.3 explains the involvement of both government and non-government forest institutions in current forest management[2] in Nepal. The roles of these various organisations in crafting forest policies and ensuring their effective implementation are considered.

Section 3.4 considers the gendered perspective in Nepalese government and non-government forest institutions. The status of, and challenges and difficulties experienced by, female forestry professionals and forest-users in the Nepalese forestry sector, are described. The legislative and institutional measures applied by Nepalese forestry institutions to encourage gender inclusive forestry governance are discussed. Finally, in section 3.5, areas in which further research is required are explored in relation to gender issues in forestry governance in Nepal.

## 3.2 The interdependence of forests and people in Nepal

Nepal's population is recorded to be about 30 million with a growth rate of 1.09% (Countrymeters, 2018). The majority of the Nepalese population (65.6%) are engaged in agriculture (including forestry), which contributes about 32.6 percent of the country's GDP (Sharma & Dahal, 2017). The dependence of people on forests is intricate and has a long history in Nepal. According to the 2011 population census, nearly 60% of the population resides in rural areas. People living in rural areas have a higher dependency on timber and non-timber forest products for their livelihoods compared to urban people, whose dependence on forests is limited to the supply of timber for construction and furniture. Nepalese people rely mostly on state-

[2] The term 'forest management' used in this thesis generally refers to activities relating to the management of silvicultural endeavours such as nursery management and seedling production, tree planting, weed control, pruning of trees, thinning of forest stands, final tree felling for timber and the extraction of forest products other than timber (such as grass, leaf-litter, herbs, firewood etc.). This term also implies the use of managerial activities related to product distribution and the mobilization of people for forest management.

owned forests for forest-based requirements since private forests are not abundant enough to meet these needs. In fact, 53 % of private landholdings are less than 0.5 hectare in area (GoN, 2011). Small landholdings less than one hectare in size are used mainly for crop production and are too small for tree growing. Households that possess more than one hectare of land generally use it for agroforestry purposes rather than as forest only (Joshi, 2018; RIC, 2018).

There is a strong link between forests and farming practices in Nepal (Amatya *et al.*, 2018). Forests are important sources of fodder and bedding material for animals. Domestic livestock such as goats and cattle (e.g. cows, oxen, buffaloes) are the main source of fertiliser (farmyard manure) and traction (e.g. ploughing) for farmers growing crops. These animals are also an important source of protein and milk as well as source of income.

Forest resources are also an important source of energy in Nepal. About 64 percent of rural Nepalese households derive cooking and heating energy from firewood, most of which is obtained from forests (CBS, 2012). A further 10 percent of energy is derived from the use of cattle dung as a cooking fuel which is also linked with forests (CBS, 2012).

Forests also provide timber for the construction of dwellings and agricultural implements; grass for thatch; various herbs used for medicinal purposes; fibres for rope and cloth; and wild fruits, berries and tubers for food. All of these forest products are important resources for people's livelihoods (Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007). Moreover, forests are sources of a broad range of economic and ecological goods and services including water for irrigation and hydroelectricity, pollination, climate regulation, soil conservation and raw materials for industry such as plywood, furniture, paper, electricity poles, medicine, paint (Hassan *et al.*, 2005).

The dependency of Nepalese people on forest resources varies and is contingent upon economic conditions, ethnicity, gender and geography. Various studies have identified poor

families, indigenous people and women as having a greater and more frequent dependence on forest resources (Agarwal, 2010a, 2010b). Likewise, women and poor families in the mid hills and the Terai region of Nepal have high dependency on forest resources for food, vegetables, forest products related to energy and agricultural implements and income generation (WOCAN, 2017).

The poorer members of Nepalese society have a much greater reliance on forests than relatively better off families. Small land holders and individuals from poorer communities, (which may include environmental and political refugees, immigrants and landless people), may shelter in forests or reside adjacent to forest areas, collecting their firewood, fodder, leaves, wild fruits, tubers, herbs and thatch (Agarwal, 2010b; Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007) from within the forests. They also sell firewood and non-timber forest products collected from forests in order to maintain or improve their subsistence livelihoods. While direct use of forest resources, such as the use of firewood and timber is common irrespective of well-being or class, the better-off families make use of forests in indirect ways as well. Unlike the poorer section of the community, the better off households can afford to buy construction timber (Agarwal, 2010b). They also benefit from irrigation and hydroelectricity derived from forest-based ecosystem services (Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007).

Globally, indigenous cultures have been shown to have a very high dependence on forests (Angelsen & Wunder, 2003). This also applies in Nepal. For example, hunting and gathering communities such as the *Rautes* and *Kusundas* are entirely dependent upon the forest for food, cover and shelter (Fortier, 2009; Whitehouse *et al.*, 2004). The *Rautes* are nomadic hunter/gatherers of Tibeto-Burman origin. *Rautes* communities are found within forests located in the Western part of Nepal. The *Kusundas* are a semi-nomadic people of Indo-Pacific origin

who live within forested areas in Central and Western parts of Nepal and use bows and arrows to hunt game for food (Paudel, 2016). Traditionally, members of these communities occupy forested land and hunt wild animals and collect wild fruit, mushrooms and tubers for food (Bhattarai, 2017). They also use forest herbs for medicine and create domiciles using small pieces of timber and other leafy materials. The *Rautes* community also use forest products to make handcrafted goods to sell as a source of income (Fortier, 2003).

In the broader rural community, women generally use forests differently and more frequently than men (Agarwal, 2010b). As in other developing countries, Nepalese women are traditionally responsible for domestic work such as cooking, cleaning and feeding and caring for domestic animals (Upadhyay, 2005). These responsibilities are still largely in place today. In order to fulfil these responsibilities, many rural women in Nepal require access to a wide range of forest products. Women collect firewood, grass, bedding material, fodder, roots, tubers, fruits, herbs and many more forest products as part of their daily activities (Wagle *et al.*, 2017a). Women from economically poor families also gather forest products such as firewood, medicinal herbs and wild fruits; and sell these products in the nearby markets in order to obtain some income (Agarwal, 2010b; Upadhyay, 2005).

Although located distant to forest areas, the growing urban population of Nepal also depends on forest resources such as timber and firewood. In the past, urban and sub-urban communities depended heavily upon forests for firewood. However, the introduction of government-subsidized liquefied petroleum gas for domestic use from the 1990s has reduced this dependence at least for the time being. Although different from rural communities, a strong dependence of urban populations on timber continues (Pokharel & Chandrashekhar, 1994; Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007).

As people are dependent on forests, so are forests dependent on people in Nepal. People have contributed to the maintenance of forests in numerous ways including planting trees, protecting trees and restoring forests. Traditional and indigenous customs and practices such as *birta, jagir, kipat* etc (described below) have existed and contributed to forest management over long periods. These traditional management practices have dwindled, while more recent approaches such as community forestry and leasehold forestry have emerged since the 1950s.

Nepal has experienced frequent and drastic changes in environmental policies in a comparatively short time (from the1950s to the 1990s) (Gautam *et al.*, 2004; Malla, 2001). The influence of British colonial forestry from neighbouring India, the adjustments to internal political upheavals and the interests of various international donor agencies have all contributed to the forest policy reform process in Nepal (Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007). As a result, the roles of institutions and local people in forest management have changed over time.

The latest Forest resource assessment of Nepal estimated that the total forest area of Nepal comprises 6.6 million ha which is 44.74% of the total area of the country (DFRS, 2015). This estimate includes 4.38 percent of the country's area under shrub land, so the proportion of Nepal's land area covered by intact forest ecosystems is 40.36 percent. A forest is defined as an area of land at least 0.5 ha and a minimum width/length of 20 m with a tree crown cover of more than 10% and tree heights of 5 m at maturity (DFRS, 2015). Shrub-land, in comparison, lacks well-defined trees and is characterised by understorey species. The Department of Forest Research and Survey defined shrub land as an area occupied by woody perennial plants, generally 0.5–5.0 m height at maturity, and often without definite stems or crowns (DFRS, 2015). Degraded forests may fall into this category.

The Nepalese government manages most of Nepal's forests, but, importantly, 41 percent (approximately 2.2 million hectares) of Nepal's forests are owned by the Government but are managed in partnership with local people under various participatory management models (DoF, 2018). The degree of involvement of local people varies from one model to another.

Nepal is well-known for its success in initiating and implementing effective community based natural resource management programmes (Buchy, 2012). This success is largely due to the enormous public support for participatory forest management, especially regarding the community forestry programme (see section 3.3.2 for details). However, there remain concerns that the poor, the landless, indigenous communities and women are excluded from participation in forestry governance and have little influence in decision making processes, even within community-based forestry systems (Gurung & Gurung, 2018; Maharjan & Maharjan, 2017; Sherpa *et al.*, 2018). Due to the shortcomings of existing legislative measures and institutional practices, these groups rarely have the opportunity or the capacity to influence policy making for forest management (Agarwal, 2010b; Dev & Adhikary, 2007; Khadka, 2009). Consequently, it is argued that those who manage and protect the forests, and who have the greatest need to access forest resources, are being neglected by forestry institutions at all levels (Banjade *et al.*, 2017; Paudel *et al.*, 2012).

The interrelationships between the values of forests to humans and the role of people in sustainably managing forests have been more prominent since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in Rio in 1992 (also known as the "Earth Summit" or the "Rio Conference"). About 20 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to be derived from deforestation and forest degradation (Stern, 2008). Various international agendas regarding forest management are receiving much attention in Nepal and are

becoming areas of national concern. One example is the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) scheme, which has an ambitious goal of selling carbon credits from Nepalese forests in the international market by 2020 (GoN, 2018b). If such schemes are not designed and implemented with due consideration for traditional use patterns of forestry resources, there is a considerable risk of further marginalization of local communities, especially women, indigenous people and poor people (WOCAN, 2012).

Political changes within Nepal have had a large influence on policy and processes pertaining to Nepalese forestry management. Historically, some sections of the Nepalese community have not been involved in the development and implementation of forestry policy processes, in institutional representation or in benefit sharing. The subsequent section will further examine the history of policies and institutional measures in management of forests in Nepal.

## 3.3 History of legislative measures and institutional practices in Nepalese forest management.

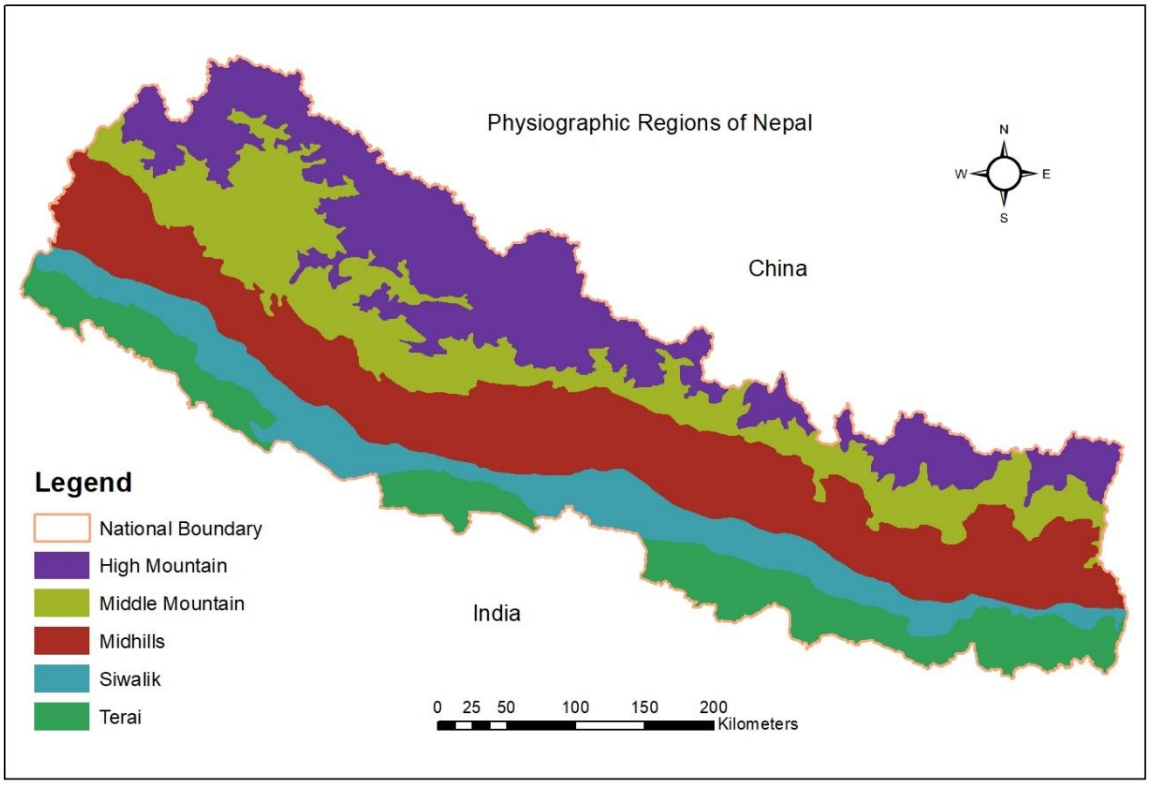
Policies and institutional changes relating to Nepal's forestry sector Nepal can be examined through three major time periods, namely: before the 1950s, during the 1960s -70s and after the 1980s. These changes are associated with political transformations at the national level, but also encompass the changing internal and external contexts within and surrounding the relationship between forests and local people. These changing contexts required new forestry institutions. A summary of forest policy development over time is described in the following subsections and presented in table 3.1. For a better understanding of the physiography of Nepal, a map is presented in 3.1.

### *3.3.1 Pre-nationalisation of forests (before 1957)*

Prior to the 1950s, a feudal system of government known as the 'Rana Regime' existed in Nepal. Members of the Rana regime were the descendants of the first Rana Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana who ruled Nepal from 1846-1877.

The Rana regime describes the period in which Jugna Bahadr Rana and his descendants held the power of Monarchy by making the prime ministerial and other key administrative positions hereditary for male members of the Rana family (Levi, 1952). The regime was keen to establish power and wealth and exploited Nepal's natural resources in order to do so (Hobley, 1996).

There was little administration of forestry activities; and few institutional models for forest management during the Rana regime. Those that did exist included Ban Janch (Forest Checking Offices) and Kastha Mahal (Forest Wings). The functions of such formal institutions were to facilitate the supply of railway sleepers to Britain's East India Company in India and to maintain strong state control over Nepal's natural resources (Kanel & Acharya, 2008). The regime controlled the forest resources in the name of the state through persons who were often the relatives of Rana rulers or favoured, elite members of local communities. Such people served locally as proxies of the Rana ruler. These people will be referred to here as 'local elites'.




**Map 3.1: Physiographic regions of Nepal**

Rana rulers and their representatives frequently formulated and changed regulations (laws) relating to forests and the use of forests in order to establish control of, and exploit, valuable forest resources. The Rana rulers made gifts of forest areas ranging from a few hectares to thousands of hectares to chosen members of the local elite in order to build good relationships and generate revenue (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002; Malla, 2001). For example, Rana families sometimes used such relationships in order to acquire assistance from local people during their hunting expeditions in the Terai (the relatively flat, fertile and densely forested areas of southern Nepal-see map 3.1). They could also call on the local elites to carry out duties such as tax collection and forest protection. Areas of forest were gifted either as *birta* (land granted to an individual in exchange for special services; such as tax collection, forest protection) or *jagir*

(land assigned to local functionaries as a salary for serving the government in areas such as civil and military work) (Gautam *et al.*, 2004). Likewise, another system, *kipat* (a kind of communal ownership system of land not meant for sale or purchase) was used to allocate land according to the needs of the community (Adhikari, 2011). Thus, prior to 1957, most of the accessible forest of Nepal was under the control of various local elites such as *talukdars* (tax collectors), *jimmwal-mukhiyas* (village heads), and *chitaidars* (forest watchers) who collected fees in the form of cash and in-kind goods and services from local people) under the *birta, kipat* and *jagir* systems (Hobley, 1996).

Tax exemption was granted for the forest area under the *jagir* and *birta* systems and, while the forest area awarded under the *jagir* system was not inherited by members of the next generation, the landlord and his descendants retained land awarded under the *birta* system as long as the regime allowed (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002). Needy local people were required to make a payment in the form of an amount of grain (*mana, pathi*) or free labour to local elites in order to access forest resources (Malla, 2001). In the eastern hills of Nepal, extensive areas of forest were under *kipat* (Hobley, 1996). Although local people were allowed to collect the forest products under the *kipat* system, the *talukdar* (tax collector) had de facto ownership of the forest (Joshi & Maharjan, 2007).

By the end of the Rana regime, one third of Nepal's forest area was under the *birta* system, and in the control of family members of the Rana rulers (Gautam *et al.*, 2004; Regmi, 1963). This established a 'patron-client relationship' between forest dependent people and local elites with all power vested in a small number of people, limiting the control of the people over the use of forest resources (Malla, 2001). During this period the Rana rulers systematically exploited forest resources, especially from the Terai, in harvesting and exporting high value Sal

(*Shorea robusta*) timber to India for the construction of railways. In addition to providing financial income to the Rana rulers, this transaction assisted them to maintain a good relationship with the British East India Company (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002). The relationship was important for sustaining the power of the Rana dynasty in their roles as state functionaries. The Rana rulers also hired Indian forest experts to oversee the harvesting of the Terai forests since there were no forestry officials in Nepal with silvicultural training. At the same time, some forestry institutions such as the Forest Inspection Offices (*Banjanch Adda*) and Check Posts, which carried out roles relating to the regulation of the sale of forest products and game management, were established (Hobley, 1996). In 1942 the Department of Forests was established with 3 regional offices (officially named as circles) and 12 Forest Inspection Offices under the supervision of British foresters working on behalf of Indian Forestry Services.

**Table 3.1: History of forest policy change in Nepal and its effect on forest management**

| Rana regime with Monarchy | | |
|---|---|---|
| Year | Forest Policy and institution | Effect on forest management |
| 1927 | Revenue generation, Kath mahal as state forest administration office was established | Supply railway sleepers to India, strong state control over the forest |
| 1939 | Eastern and Western Wing of field office for forest revenue collection was established | Revenue generation and expansion of state control over forest resources |
| 1942 | Department of Forests Established (3 circles and 12 forest inspection offices) | Administrative coverage of forests in all districts of the Terai region and in some districts of the Midhills region. |
| During the Rana regime, forests and forest resources were held and managed by state functionaries (elites) under various systems such *birta*, *jagir*, *kipat*. | | |
| 1957 | Private Forest Nationalization Act | All forests were nationalized, and all forest became national property and responsibility of government to protect and utilize it |
| 1959 | Ministry of Forests established and *Birta* abolition act 1957 | Tenureship of forest returned to state |
| 1961 | Forest Act 1961 promulgated, and Timber Corporation of Nepal established. | Forests were strictly controlled by state forest department, but government failed to control deforestation |
| 1964 | Nepal Resettlement Company established | Relocated people from hills to Terai; forest lands converted into agriculture and settlements |
| 1967 | Forest Protection Special Arrangement Act promulgated | Offences and penalties defined by this act created antagonism between people and state agencies |
| 1974 | 9th National Forestry Conference conducted (all forest officers participated in the conference) | failure of existing 'command and control' system acknowledged and participatory forest management recommended |
| 1976 | National Forestry Plan | Introduction of Panchayat Protected Forest and Panchayat Forest as community-based forest management model |
| 1989 | Master Plan Forest Sector (for 25 years) formulated | Community based forestry program has given priority for poverty alleviation, involvement of local people in forest management started |
| Multiparty Democracy with Monarchy | | |
| 1993 | Forest Act promulgated | Ensured people's right and access to forest through different community-based forestry regimes (community Forest, Leasehold Forest, and Religious Forests etc.) |
| 1994 | Forest Regulation promulgated | Further strengthened the community rights over forest |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | resources |
| 2000 | Revised Forest Sector Policy endorsed | Introduced another form of community-based forest management for Terai and Siwaliks (commonly known as Churia Hills abruptly rises from Terai and ends with the beginning of the middle hills range) |
| 2015 | Forest Policy | Emphasizes the continuation and strengthening of participatory forest management, sustainable management of forest resources. |
| 2016 | Forestry Sector Strategy | Acknowledged the achievement of Master Plan for forestry sector, emphasized sustainable forest management, enabling policy and working environment, governance improvement, gender and social inclusion |

(Hobley, 1996)

### *3.3.2 Nationalization of forests (1957- 1976)*

The Rana regime was overthrown in 1950. A period of quasi-constitutional rule followed, during which the monarch, assisted by the leaders of fledgling political parties, governed the country. Additional legal frameworks for forestry governance were created and implemented and the forest bureaucracy was substantially reformed. The government also nationalized all private forests via the Private Forest Nationalization Act 1957 and abolished the *birta* system via the Birta Abolition Act, 1959. This extended government control over the country's forest resources (Gautam *et al.*, 2004). In 1959 the Ministry of Forests was established as a separate ministry of the Government of Nepal. The new Ministry was charged with oversight of the Department of Forests (DOF) together with other departments and their subsidiary organizations; and a national forest policy and legal frameworks were developed (Gautam *et al.*, 2004; Hobley, 1996). At this time, the Government attempted to imitate Indian forest administration systems, which were in turn highly influenced by their colonial hegemony (Hobley, 1996). The motives behind forest nationalization were to earn revenue by selling high value timber and to take control of forest areas from the local elites (Joshi & Maharjan, 2007; Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007). In

general, the Nepalese people welcomed the Forest Nationalization Act 1957 because it removed the *de jure* power of the elites, which had been used to restrict local people's access to, and use of, forests in Nepal.

In 1961, the Nepalese Government formulated the Forest Act 1961 with the intention of implementing stronger state control over forest resources. The new Forest Act strengthened the power and control of the Department of Forests over the management and use of forests across the country. The new act authorized forestry officials to criminalize any person entering forests without permission and to shoot offenders on the pretext of defence (Bhatta *et al.*, 2007). Local people were denied access to forest resources. This separation of people from their access and rights to use forest resources created antagonism between the authorities and local communities (Bhatta *et al.*, 2007; Malla, 2001). As a result, government forestry institutions lost credence among local people; and this led to a decline in public support for forest conservation (Hobley, 1996).

Despite stringent laws and regulatory frameworks, forestry institutions and agencies of this time period failed to protect Nepal's forests due to deficiencies related to institutional capacity, (i.e. a lack of trained staff) and, importantly, because of a lack of public support for their aims and objectives (Hobley, 1996). In terms of deficiencies of institutional capacity, it should be noted that forestry education was not available in Nepal until the 1950s. Less than a dozen foresters, graduates of institutions in India, worked for the Department of Forests in the early 1960s. These few foresters were unable to control and manage the country's forest resources properly.

The understaffing of the Department of Forests coupled with the lack of support from the general populace at local levels resulted in massive deforestation from the 1960s to the 1970s.

This was largely attributed to the exploitation of resources by government decisions either to fulfil the demand for extra land for agricultural purpose or for commercial purposes (Bhatta *et al.*, 2007).

At this time, forest exploitation occurred at two levels. With sole control over the nation's forests, the government continued to generate revenue via the export of valuable timber to India, while overlooking the needs of local people (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002). Meanwhile, local people worked to convert forests into cultivated land in order to prevent the land from being appropriated by the government under the Private Forest Nationalization Act 1957. The rationale was that if the land was not forested, it would not fall under the government's responsibility under the Act. The Act was also highly criticized for destroying established indigenous forest management systems and accelerating deforestation by removing local management systems (*kipat, jagir, birta* etc.) (Joshi & Maharjan, 2007), which although flawed, did allow regulated access to forest resources for local people.

In 1964, the Nepalese Government established the Nepal Resettlement Company (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002) and started a resettlement programme aimed at relocating people from the midhills to the Terai region. Forests in the Terai were converted to farmland and settlements for the intentional relocation of people away from highly eroded areas (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002; Eckholm, 1976). Simultaneously, malaria in the Terai region was successfully eradicated (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002). This removed a barrier to migration for the hill people, who had previously been reluctant to migrate to the Terai area despite its more productive soils due to the risk of contracting malaria. Further pressure on the Terai forests occurred when institutions such as the Timber Corporation of Nepal and The Fuelwood Corporation of Nepal were established in 1961 and 1966 respectively to address the demand for forest products from Nepal's growing

urban populations (Hobley & Malla, 1996). Both organizations were government enterprises, which provided timber and firewood to urban communities at a subsidized rate. This use of forests again ignored the needs of the majority of Nepalese people who were resident in rural areas; and contributed to deforestation in the Terai through unsustainable forest harvesting and associated corruption in public sector institutions (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002). The latter was characterised by the excessive power handed over to government staff for the protection of the forest.

Despite the enormous formal power of government forestry institutions, Nepal's forests were not managed effectively during this period; and were essentially converted into de facto open access resources. Local people accessed the forest illegally and unsustainably in an attempt to meet their needs, putting further pressure on forests. The result of the increased pressure on Nepal's forests, combined with the inability of the government to manage forest resources led to high rates of forest loss in the Midhills and the Terai; resulting in several resource and ecological crises in Nepal.

By and large, during this period of the nationalization of Nepal's forests (1957- 1976), government institutions failed to protect Nepal's forests and local people did not have adequate access to forest resources. The resulting ecological crisis and the scarcity of forest resources continued throughout the 1960s into the 1970s (Bhatta *et al.*, 2007; Gautam *et al.*, 2004; Hobley, 1996; Malla, 2001).

### *3.3.3 Decentralization of forestry governance (1976 – to present)*

The Ninth Forestry Conference of Nepalese Foresters, held in Kathmandu in 1974, was a major turning point in the management of Nepal's forests. At this conference the failure of the then

government's 'command and control' type of forest protection measures were acknowledged (Hobley & Malla, 1996). Some foresters' past experiences of working with local people in forest management highlighted the importance of local participation and a policy shift was recommended (Hobley & Malla, 1996). Tej Bahadur Singh Mahat was one of some foresters who argued that local communities held the key to effective management of Nepal's forests. He initiated community involvement in forest management while he was a District Forest Officer in Sindhupalchok, one of the midhills districts. In the Nepalese midhills deforestation had led to loss of resources including forest-related ecosystem services and resulted in geological disasters such as landslides, flooding and siltation. These events all had additional downstream effects. The situation was raised in the international arena as a serious concern (Eckholm, 1976). The observed chain of ecological disasters later gave rise to the highly controversial 'Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation' (Muldavin & Blaikie, 2004). This theory was based on earlier research which identified eight factors, including high human and cattle populations and unsustainable harvesting for forests resources, as responsible for the collapse of the environment, the economy and the social structure. Eckholm (1976) pointed out the causes and consequences of deforestation in Nepal, including its subsequent international effects on downstream and neighbouring countries, such as flooding and siltation.

At this time –during the mid-70s – the alarming rate of deforestation and associated environmental crises received significant attention from the international community and the Nepalese government was urged to take strong and effective action to halt deforestation and address the crisis (Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007). The new National Forestry Plan of 1976 recognised the issues raised during the Ninth National Forestry Conference in 1974, especially regarding the need to include local people in improved approaches to forest management

(Hobley, 1996). Two types of community based forest management models (*Panchayat Forest* and *Panchayat Protected Forest*) were proposed by amending the existing forest law in 1976 (Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007). *Panchayat Forest* (PF) was a term applied to barren public land ready to be planted, whereas *Panchayat Protected Forests* (PPF) were defined as areas of degraded forest which required active management to reinstate functional ecosystems. Central government authorities handed over management of forests to village level political bodies (the *Nagar Panchayat* and the *Gaun Panchayat*) resulting in the decentralization of forest management to local political bodies. In these systems, only the people who held significant power within the village-level political institutions tended to benefit, other forest users were marginalised (Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007). In Panchayat Forests or Panchayat Protected Forests, poor and marginalized people who had previously lost their rights to use forests, such as for grazing their cattle, were forced by the Panchayat (the local political body) to work in forests as unpaid workers (Bhattarai, 2016). Other limitations persisted under the PF and PPF systems, including continued poor forest condition, lack of proper identification of forest users and lack of awareness among the local community about the need for sustainable forest use. Decentralising forest management from a national to a local government body was a positive move, but it failed in its goal of sustainable forest management due to a lack of social inclusion and ownership of the majority of local people (Bhattarai, 2016).

In Nepal, the wider decentralization of political power to local authorities began in the 1980s with the introduction of the Decentralization Act, 1982. The concept of decentralization is to provide various government services close to the people instead of compelling them to travel long distances to access such services. The forestry sector was also influenced by this decentralization concept, which provided an opportunity to overcome the shortcomings of the

Panchayat Forestry (PF) and Panchayat Protected Forestry (PPF) models. In 1989, a 25 Year Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (1989) was approved that emphasized further decentralization of forest management authority to local communities. Distinct from the PF and PPF models, the Master Plan had, as its core intention, the involvement of local people in forest governance; and identified community based forestry programmes as priority programmes that could be used to achieve that intention. Controversially, the implementation of the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector 1989 also provided avenues for the influence of international donor agencies in the policy and programmes of the forestry sector (Bhatta *et al.*, 2007; Hobley & Malla, 1996). It opened the avenue for Community Forest management plan preparation, handing over of Community Forests to the local communities, supporting communities for technical, financial and community management tasks which demanded external supports (Pandey & Paudyall, 2015).

In 1990, a two-month long mass protest, which was jointly called by Nepali Congress and the Left Alliance political party took place across the country. The protest was against the one-party Panchayat system and is popularly known as the 'People's Movement of 1990' (Parajulee, 2000). As a result, a new multiparty democratic government of Nepal was established replacing the previous Panchayati system of the government, which had held power from 1960-1990. The new government opened opportunities for the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to engage with development processes. Civil society organizations ranging from local-level, grass root activists to national and international NGOs became involved in the management of Nepalese forests (Malla, 2001).

A completely new Forest Act (1993) and the Forest Regulation (1995) were issued. These were aligned with the spirit of the new multiparty Constitution and with the existing forestry

Master Plan (GoN, 1993, 1995). The Act and the Regulation broadly classified Nepalese forests into two categories, based on ownership: private forests and national forests. Private forests were defined as forests growing on privately-owned land whereas the national forests comprised all forested areas throughout the country growing outside of private land boundaries. The national forests were further categorized according to the five major management models in use at the time. These were community forests, leasehold forests, religious forests and government managed forests (see sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2).

Community Forestry (CF) is now the major participatory forest management model in Nepal in terms of government priority, area of coverage, success and fame (Bhattarai, 2016; Pandey & Paudyall, 2015). Extensive resources have been provided to ensure that community forests in Nepal support local people's needs and livelihoods (Blaikie & Springate-Baginski, 2007). The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation has also restructured its forestry institutions and provided intensive training and skills development programmes for its staff in order to facilitate participatory forestry programmes.

Although the legislative measures have provided space for local people to participate in forestry governance, there remains concern that women and poor communities have been unable to take advantage of those legislative measures. Some authors (Buchy & Rai, 2008; Buchy & Subba, 2003) argue that the community forestry approach has ignored the prevailing power structure of society and considers the community as a homogenous group; and that as a result, women and the poor have generally remained excluded from CF processes, let alone other forestry models which are characterised by more stringent government controls.

The combined effect of the introduction of various community-based forest management models and the people's movement of 1990 created an opportunity to involve non-governmental

organisations (including civil society organizations, community-based organizations) in forestry governance (Pokhrel *et al.*, 2007). Such organizations have become influential in Nepalese forestry policy and processes since 1990 to date (Fischer, 2017).

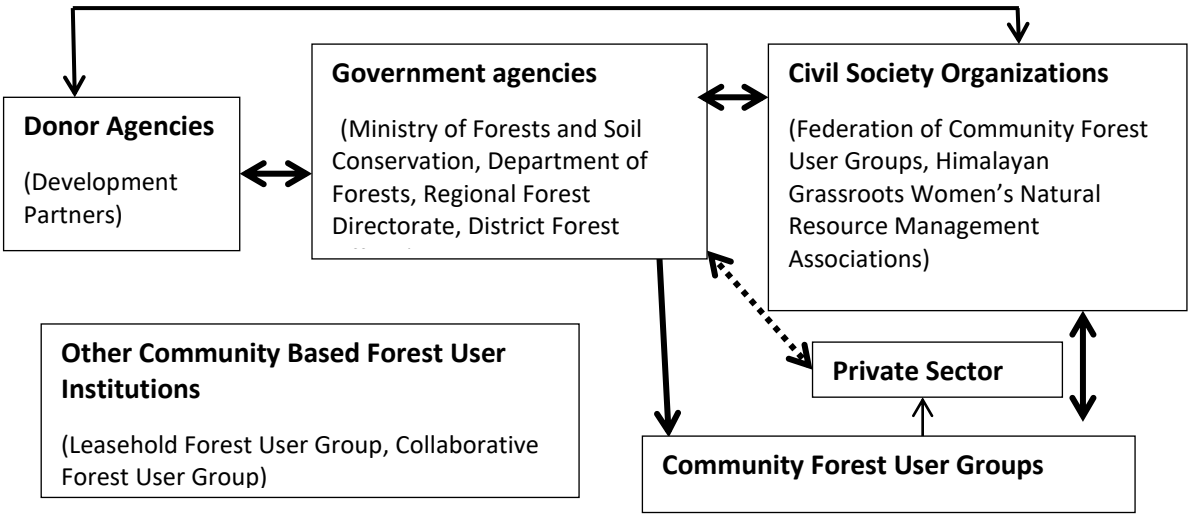
Nepal's unstable political situation continued to influence the management of the country's natural resources. The dismissal of the National Government in 2006, the subsequent rise of the democracy movement and the abolition of the monarchy in 2008 facilitated some inclusive policies in the forestry sector. These included the formulation of the Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy 2008, the Forest Policy 2015 and the Forest Sector Strategy (2016-2025). Those documents adopted more participatory and inclusive models than had previously been seen in Nepal's forestry sector. They particularly highlighted sustainable forest management, conducive policy and operational environments, responsive and transparent organizations, gender equality and social inclusion.

The new policy measures opened the way for more democratic and independent management of Nepal's forests, largely by involving local communities to a greater extent than had occurred previously. In 2018, around 40 % of Nepal's forest area is managed under community-based management models. The remaining forests are still under government control (Lamsal, 2018). The next section will describe the major government and non-government institutions involved in current Nepalese forestry governance.

## 3.4 Major forestry institutions currently involved in forest governance in Nepal

In 2018, the major forestry institutions with responsibility for forestry governance in Nepal can be classified as either a government or non-government institutions. Government agencies

include the Ministry of Forests and Soil conservation and its subsidiary organizations, whereas non-government institutions are comprised of community-based organizations, civil society organizations, donor agencies/development partners, private sector companies and so on. There are diverse interrelationships among these forestry actors which are illustrated in figure 3.1.




Note: The bold two-way arrows show strong two-way relationships, the bold one-way arrows show strong one-way relationships, the broken two-way arrow shows a two-way shallow relationship, the thin one- way arrow shows a one-way relationship (Khadka, 2009).

**Fig.3.1: Relationships among various forestry sector institutions in Nepal**

### *3.4.1 Government institutions*

Nepal's National Planning Commission is responsible for formulating the country's strategic development polices and plans. It is a cross-cutting entity that coordinates all the Ministries for formulating five year plans and policies of the government and also monitors the progress of the plans and policies. Based on these policies and plans, the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MFSC) is the major organization responsible for policy formulation in the

Nepalese forestry sector (Gautam *et al.*, 2004). The MFSC implements forest policies and programmes through its subordinate organizations (See Fig 3.2). Since its establishment in 1959, the structure of the MFSC has changed frequently in line with the changing political and ecological contexts. Among other changes, the Ministry has modified its structure and increased staff numbers. In 2018, the MFSC consists of five main divisions, namely Planning and Human Resources, Monitoring and Evaluation, Foreign Aid, Environment and Administration. There are five regional directorates across all the five political regions under the Ministry. The regional directors are responsible for coordinating, planning and monitoring of the district forestry activities within the region (See Fig 3.2). The Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MFSC) has five departments, namely Department of Forests, Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation, the Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management, the Department of Forest Research and Survey and the Department of Plant Resources. Out of these five the Department of Forests (DOF) is most relevant to this research because this is the government office with major responsibility for the management of Nepal's forest resources.

The DoF is responsible for governing Nepal's forestry resources by adopting various management modalities outside protected areas. The responsibility for the protection of forests inside protected areas rests with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation. Such forests are not typically used for resource extraction activities. The DoF is the largest and the oldest department in the Ministry and has offices throughout the nation. In 2018, there are currently 74 District Forest Offices (DFOs), 92 Ilaka (sub-district) offices and 698 range posts. More than 7000 DoF staff are responsible for the protection and management of forest resources across the country. DFOs are the major programme planning and implementation bodies at the local level, and each office has the rights and responsibilities associated with the management of

the forests under its jurisdiction. Wherever community-based forest management has been adopted, the Department of Forests works in collaboration with local people.

When the government's forestry institutions were first established, the major role for staff of the District Forest Offices was a policing role (Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007). Before the 1990s they patrolled the forests with a mandate to protect the forest from villagers who would steal forest products for subsistence uses and who felled trees for financial benefit. As the policy shifted toward the participatory forest management programme, the role of DFO staff changed. Their roles began to include extension work, facilitation and training of local people and the implementation and promotion of participatory forestry programmes (Gautam *et al.*, 2004).

When participatory forestry programmes were first introduced in the 1990s, the history of coercive methods of forest protection and the former (policing) role of the forester in the implementation of regulations were challenged. Amicable relationships between the forestry staff and the local people were envisaged, and sought, in order to advance community forestry (Gautam *et al.*, 2004; Malla, 2001; Springate-Baginski & Blaikie, 2007).

After the initiation of the community forestry programme, government forest officers built good relationships with local people in order to facilitate and promote the community based forest management programme (Malla, 2001). Capacity development programmes for forestry staff were initiated. These included training related to forest management and nursery skills. Such programs also focused on changing attitudes and behaviours, so they had a dual purpose; to develop skills and to enhance the capacity of forestry staff across all levels of the hierarchy. During this period, five regional forestry training centres were established across all five regions of the country to provide training for foresters, administrative staff and local forest users; and to

develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for the successful implementation of the community forestry programme. Funding and other resources to support human resource and institutional development were provided by international donor agencies and the Nepalese government (Khadka, 2009). The process of handing over community forests to local people has continued, although a large proportion of the forest area in Nepal still remains under government control. Given the various constraints in the country such as financial, political and technical challenges, this progress is quite reasonable.

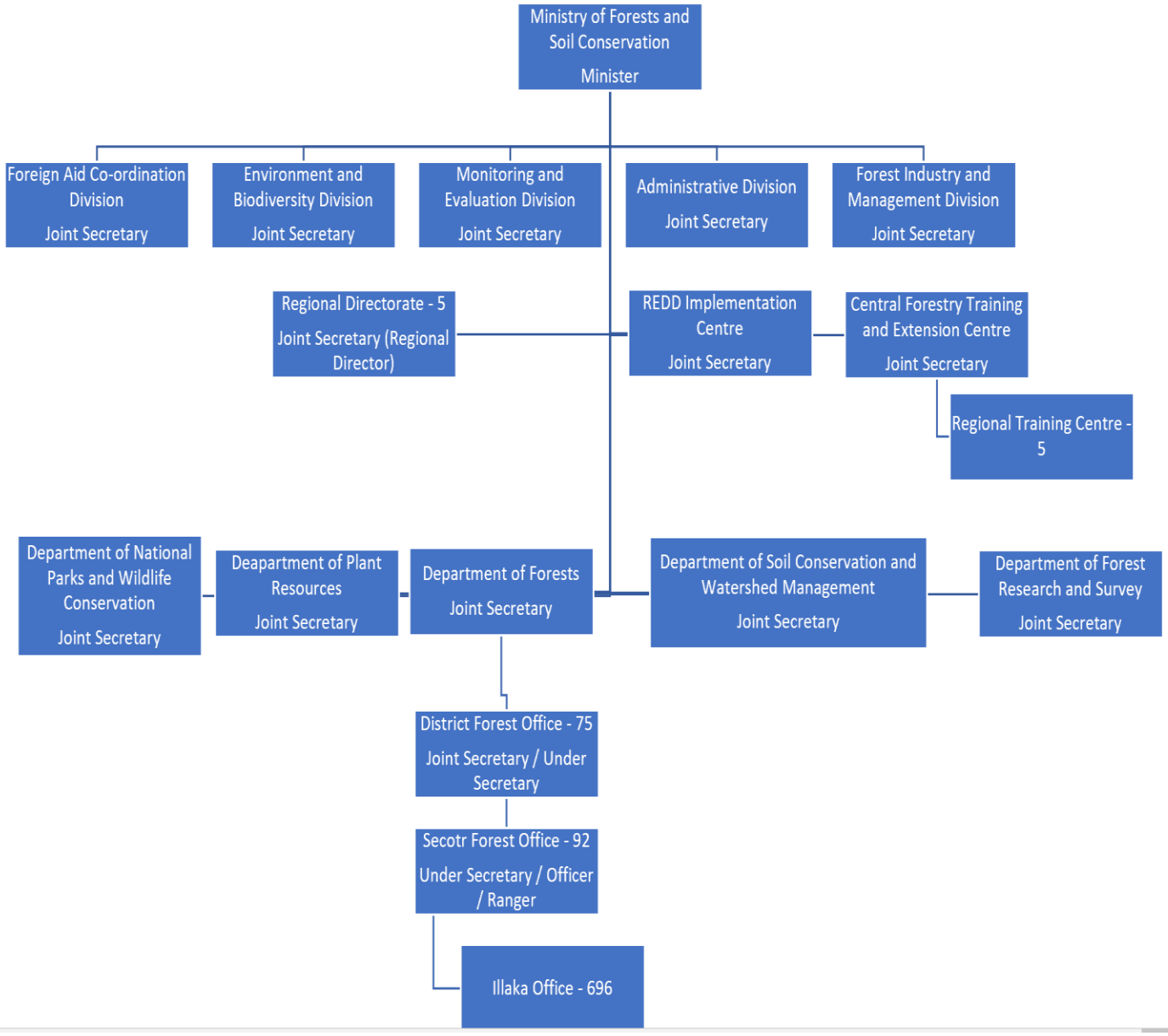



**Figure 3.2: Organizational structures of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation Nepal**

About 60% of Nepal's forests have remained outside of the community forestry programs, under direct control of the government. These are located mostly in the Terai and Siwalik (fragile land between Midhills and the Terai) regions. Despite the huge change (between 1960s-1990) in

organizational structure and quality of staff with the DoF, relatively little success was achieved in the area of sustainable forest management of government managed forests because most of the government's resources were directed towards community based forest management programs (Gautam *et al.*, 2004). Today, these government-managed forests are generally not managed on a sustainable basis, nor are the people of the Terai able to gain easy access to essential forest resources. Although the government attempted to introduce sustainable forest management systems in these areas through their preparation of management plans for all the 20 Terai districts, these were never implemented. Lack of both political will and public support was considered to be the main reasons for this failure (Bhatta et al., 2007). Areas of forest under government control (as opposed to community control) are continuously under pressure from villagers and other individuals, who illegally fell trees and encroach on forest resources. As a result, government forestry institutions faced challenges in curbing deforestation and in supplying enough forest products to meet local peoples' demand for forest products. This was especially the case in the Terai and Silwalik regions (Hill, 1999). In 2000, the government introduced a new forest management model in collaboration with the people (see the discussion about the collaborative forest management program in section 3.3.2).

### *3.4.2 Community-based forestry institutions*

Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs), Leasehold Forest User Groups (LFUGs), Religious Forest Users Groups (RFUGs) and Collaborative Forest Management User Groups (CFMUGs) are four types of community-based forestry institutions. The first three were developed under the Forest Act 1993 and Forest Regulation 1995. Collaborative Forest Management User Groups were not created by law. They were developed under the Forest Policy 2000 but are not provisioned in the Forest Act 1993 or the Forest Regulation 1995. Institutions such as these

manage areas of government-owned forest under various names (see Table 3.2). Community Forest User Groups cover the highest number of community-based forest institutions followed by the Leasehold Forest User Groups. These institutions have received substantial policy support, programmatic priorities, technical assistance and financial aid over time from various government and non-government sources.

By the end of 2018 as many as 22,266 Community Forest User Groups had formed across Nepal. These groups have responsibility for 1.65 million hectares of forest and include 35% of all people in Nepal (Lamsal, 2018). Each Community Forest User Group (CFUG) is an autonomous institution with its own constitution (document for managing people) and operational plan (document for managing the forest and forest resources) for the independent management of an identified area of forest. Each CFUG is legally registered with the relevant District Forest Office (DFO) and is comprised of local people. The constitution and operational plan of each CFUG is prepared by its members with technical and administrative support from the DFO.

Leasehold Forests in Nepal total 43,300 hectares of forest. These are managed by 6,784 Leasehold Forest User Groups (LFUGs) (Lamsal, 2018)). Each Leasehold Forest User Group typically comprises 5-10 families who are living below the poverty line as defined by the Government of Nepal. Like Community Forest User Groups, each LFUG has a constitution and an operational plan to manage their forest resources. However, after degraded patches of forest are handed over to the leasing community, active forest management (undertaken by the community but subsidised by the Government) occurs. This involves the planting and maintenance of fast-growing tree species along with perennial fodders and grasses to obtain necessary forest products.  Approximately 63,000 households are involved in Leasehold Forest

User Groups across Nepal. Like Community Forestry User Groups, District Forest Offices also support these groups (see table 3.2 for the details for community based forest management modalities).

**Table 3.2: Summary of information of various forest management modalities in Nepal.**

| Forests Management Modality | Number | Area coverage (hectare) | Household Coverage | Population coverage | Managing Institutions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Community Forest** | 22,266 | 2.38 million | Above 2.9 million | More than 10 million | Community Forest User Groups |
| **Leasehold Forests** | 7,484 | 43,300 | 72,100 | About 63 thousand | Leasehold Forest User Groups |
| **Collaborative Forests** | 30 | 76,012 | 8,64,015 | 4.2 million | Collaborative Forest User Groups |
| **Buffer Community Forests** | 436 | 138,184 | 64,587 | 3.2 million | Buffer Zone Community Forest User Groups |
| **Religious Forests** | 36 | 2056 | - | - | Religious Institutions |
| **Private Forest** | 2,458 | 2,360 | 2,360 | 11 thousand | Private Owner |
| **Government Managed Forest** | N/A | 2.97 million | N/A | N/A | District Forests Offices under the Department of Forests |
| **Forest Under Protected Area system (excluding buffer community forests)** | 20 | 1.07 million | N/A | N/A | Protected area offices under the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation |

(DNPWC, 2017; DoF, 2018; Lamsal, 2018)

Although CFUGs and LFUGs successfully manage a substantial proportion of forest area in the hill regions, the majority of the forests in the Terai and Siwalik (foothill area between Terai and Midhills) remain under government control. As discussed above, there were serious forest management challenges in these regions. A comprehensive management model, called the

Collaborative Forest Management programme, was introduced as envisaged in the Revised Forest Policy 2000. This represented the government's attempt at decentralization and devolution of forest management in the Terai and Siwalik regions by involving local stakeholders in forestry governance. Collaborative Forest User Groups are institutional collaborations comprised of representatives from national government, local government, as well as local stakeholders and community members who all jointly collaborate to manage the forests. About 73,000 ha area is under this type of management regime.

Although decentralization of forestry governance in Nepal has occurred via different modalities, a large area of forest (see Table 3.2) is still under the sole control of government forestry institutions and is subject to ineffective management, protection and utilization (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002; Gautam *et al.*, 2004). It is necessary to manage these forests on a sustainable basis for the benefit of local people. The Nepalese people's dependency on government managed forests is still high. In fact, if a community forest imposes bans on collecting forest resources, people shift their attention to the adjacent government-managed forest to collect their essential forest products. The quality of community-managed forests is higher than that of state-managed forests because of the efforts of local people. This is seen in activities such as planting, management and protection (Dev & Adhikary, 2007). Local people take more ownership for community forests and make every effort to look after them. This is influenced by the participation of local community members in CFUGs.

For the last two decades, community-based institutions have been forming networks and alliances to protect their rights over resources. Civil Society organizations such as the Federation of Community Forest Users in Nepal (FECOFUN, established in 1995), the Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI -established in

1998), private sector organizations, development partners (donor agencies) and various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have made efforts to initiate changes in policy, processes and outcomes and institutional development, by working on various aspects of community based forestry programmes and users rights (Dev & Adhikary, 2007).

### *3.4.3 Civil society organizations*

In the Nepalese context of forestry governance, the term; civil society organization (CSO) generally refers to non –government, not-for-profit, community-based organizations and users' federations (Luintel, 2006). The Federation of Community Forestry User Groups (FECOFUN) and the Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI) are considered major CSOs engaged in the forestry sector in Nepal because of their significant contribution in forestry policy advocacy and grass root level forest resource management.

**The Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN)**

The Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) is a non-government, non-profit organisation which represents community forest user groups (CFUGs) across the country. It was established in 1995 as an advocating organization for the government initiated community forest programme (Gautam et al., 2004). FECOFUN works for policy advocacy and lobbies for community rights over resources. It is the most influential civil organization in Nepal's forestry sector (Bhatta *et al.*, 2007; Buchy, 2012). There has been some policy debate between FECOFUN and the government regarding progressive changes made in community forestry processes. One consequence of this debate is an amendment to the Community Forestry Guidelines which provides special provision for the inclusion of various disadvantaged groups in the community, including women (Dahal & Chapagain, 2008; Gautam *et al.*, 2004). Recent

lobbying by FECOFUN placed the Community Forest management modality under the jurisdiction of local level government in the Constitution of Nepal 2015.

Some government policies are still in dispute, because of the objection and concerns of FECOFUN. Examples include the government-imposed tax system for commercial use of forest products from community forests; and the introduction of the new Collaborative Forest Management Programme to manage Terai and Siwalik forests. FECOFUN has a vertical structure, which comprises national, regional, district and local level networks throughout the country with almost 13,000 forest user groups as members. It claims to be the largest civil society organization in the country (Dahal & Chapagain, 2008). It works in close coordination and collaboration with other government and nongovernmental organizations to raise awareness among community forest user groups about Community Forest legislative measures and user's roles and responsibilities. It also enables civil society activism: it played a significant role in the Democratic People's Movement in 2006 by mobilizing its CFUG members in protest rallies to re-establish democracy (Dahal & Chapagain, 2008).

## The Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI)

The Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI) is a non-profit making, non-governmental organisation working to strengthen the role of women in sustainable natural resource management in Nepal. This includes the management of land, water and forest resources. Currently it has its networks in 32 of the 75 districts of Nepal. The networks are multi-tiered structures ranging from village to national levels. HIMAWANTI is composed entirely of female members. The membership of HIMAWANTI includes female members of Community Forest User Groups, that is, the members of HIMAWANTI are female members of the CFUGs. This organization collaborates

and cooperates with developmental partners, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations to work for women's empowerment through various capacity development programmes, for example, training, workshops and exposure visits. It is also a policy advocacy organization with a special focus on women's issues (Buchy, 2012).

### *3.4.4 Private sector organizations and development partners*

Nepalese forest policy has long recognized the roles of the private sector and the local community as equally important in forest management. This is evidenced by the inclusion of both community and private forestry in its first priority programme in the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (GoN, 1989). However, the actual role of the private sector in Nepalese forest management and utilisation appears to be minimal. Private enterprise relating to forests and forest products in Nepal is mostly confined to those involved in the marketing of forest products. Due to a lack of policy support, investment in private enterprise in the forestry sector has not occurred to any great extent (Ojha, 2000). Government-imposed taxes and hurdles relating to the transportation of forest products from remote areas are considered barriers to entry for the private sector (Pathak *et al.*, 2011). A few organisations associated with forestry-related enterprises do exist, such as the Nepal Rosin Association, the Nepal Herbs and Herbal Products Association and the Federation of Forest Based Industry in Nepal. Except for the latter, none have a significant role in the development of forest policies. Established in 2009, the Federation of Forest Based Industry in Nepal has been involved in policy discussions and is gaining momentum to change forest related policies towards increased community rights and access to forestry resources (Pathak *et al.*, 2011).

By comparison, the strong influence of donor agencies (development partners) is readily observed in Nepalese forest policy. International donor support in the Nepalese forestry sector began in the 1950s with the support of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) which provided expertise in forest management (Gautam & Pokhrel, 2011). Since then, many donor agencies have contributed to policy formation in Nepal via either financial or other resources. In particular, after the introduction of the community based forestry programme, donor agencies provided extensive resources and support for policy development, institutional strengthening, human resource development and the overall governance of the forestry sector (Bhatta *et al.*, 2007; Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002; Hobley, 1996; Khadka, 2009). Major development partners which have been involved significantly and recently in this sector include the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Department for International Development (DFID), the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), Australia's AusAID, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Government of Finland, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Care Nepal (Gautam & Pokhrel, 2011; Khadka, 2009; Timilsina & Gotame, 2013).

Initially, the major focus of community-based forestry programmes was on restoring forests through planting and the protection of trees. Donor support was limited to the technical and social aspects of forestry such as operational planning and preparation of governing constitutions, plantations, silvicultural operation and protection. After realizing the importance of the socio-political aspects of the community-based forestry programmes, development partners are now working on socio-political issues as well. Among these, gender and social inclusion is one of the major areas of focus for the donor community through policy and institutional support. Donor agencies have contributed to the development of gender friendly policy, programmes and

practices in various forestry institutions in Nepal (Khadka, 2009). The formulation of Nepal's Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy, 2008 was supported by the Department for International Development (DFID).

Despite the efforts of several organisations and with the introduction of some policy measures, the representation of women within forestry institutions is still low; and the women who do participate are typically not influential. The following section will analyse the inclusionary aspect of women in different forestry institutions in Nepalese context.

## 3.5 The inclusion of women in Nepalese forestry organizations

Nepalese society has a complex structure and is comprised of a diversity of classes, castes, ethnic groups, language groups and cultures (Gurung, 2006a, 2006b). Numerous authors have identified patriarchy as a significant factor in many developing countries (Mies, 1988, 1993; Shiva, 1993b) and this is also the case in Nepal (Bennett, 2008). Men are influential in domestic and public spheres because of property rights and endowments. Formal and informal institutions such as political bodies, government and non-governmental organizations are also male dominated (Buchy & Rai, 2008). In general, women's roles are undermined in Nepalese society despite their heavy involvement in the economies of their households, of wider society and of wider economies (Bista, 1991). Women are often seen as subordinate to men, and it is generally expected that women should obey their male counterpart(s) at work and within the family (Buchy, 2012). Compared to men, women in Nepal have poorer access to education and fewer economic opportunities. This is at least partly due to several restrictions imposed on their mobility. For example, women are less able to travel because of their family responsibilities. Women in Nepalese society are also very much restricted by social customs which limit their movements. Reflecting the views of society, women are portrayed in the community, civil

society, and in government and non-government forestry institutions as lowly and without influence (Buchy & Rai, 2008).

Against this backdrop, the Nepalese government has been trying to include women in various institutions, including forestry institutions, by developing women friendly policies, however, success has yet to be achieved. The chronological development of women friendly policies in relation to the forestry sector is presented in Chapter 5 (table 5.4).

### *3.5.1 Women in community forest user groups*

The inclusion of women in various aspects of community forestry institutions is a highly studied area of research in the Nepalese context. Many researchers (Agarwal, 2010b; Buchy & Rai, 2008; Christie & Giri, 2011; Giri & Darnhofer, 2010; Khadka, 2009; Lama & Buchy, 2002) have identified a range of factors responsible for the exclusion and marginalisation of women in Community Forestry (CF) processes. These factors may prevent women's participation and/or involvement in decision making. The consequences of exclusion are deprivation of the material, monetary and social benefits of community forestry programmes (Buchy & Rai, 2008; Buchy & Subba, 2003; Lama & Buchy, 2002). Policy and institutional measures, social attributes and economic dimensions are considered to be factors responsible for the exclusion (or limited effectiveness) of women in Community Forestry (Khadka, 2009).

When first introduced, policies and processes relating to community forestry were not gender sensitive. Early policy considered Nepalese society as culturally, socially and politically homogenous with everyone deserving an equal opportunity to take part in each and every process (Buchy & Rai, 2008). The first drawback of these early policies was the 'membership granting system'. With only the head of household allowed to be a member of a community forest user group (Agarwal, 2010b), this legislative measure ensured that almost all Community Forest User

Group (CFUG) members were males as, typically, the male is the household head in the Nepalese context (Agarwal, 2010a, 2010b; Buchy & Rai, 2008). The second weakness of the policy was associated with membership fees and the cost of forest products. Although it was not mandatory to apply membership fees and to require payment for forest products, many Community Forest User Groups charged fees and set prices because of the domination of men and wealthier community members in CFUG decisions; and the exclusion of women and poorer community members. Many of the poor, women and others in the communities were deprived of the use of forest resources because they were unable to pay for forest products which were freely available before the creation of CFs (Hobley, 1996).

Through the dominance of a few (typically wealthier, male) community members, CFUGs tried to protect forest resources through imposing bans or limits on the collection of forest products, or shortening the duration of collection times (Dev & Adhikary, 2007). These restrictions increased the hardships endured by women by compelling them to walk long distances to collect products from other open-access forests.

The institutional process of forming Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) was another barrier to the effective inclusion of women in community forestry (Lama & Buchy, 2002). In the initial stages of the formation of CFUGs, processes involving the identification of forest users and the scheduling of, and invitations to, meetings (as well as what occurred in the meetings) did not include attempts to contact, include or motivate women. The male forestry officials tended to contact 'important people' in the community who were mostly the elite men (Lama & Buchy, 2002). In this way, women were less informed about Community Forest (CF) rules and regulations and elite males crafted the CF rules on the behalf of the entire community (Agarwal, 2010a).

### *3.5.2 Social and cultural factors affecting women's participation in community forestry*

Hofstede (1991) argues that power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity are the four key dimensions of cultures that determine norms, values, beliefs and perceptions in a society as well as in an organization. Hofstede (2001) later added a fifth dimension, that of long-term versus short-term orientation. A sixth dimension (indulgence) appears on the interactive online tool (Hofstede Insights, 2019) based on Hofstede's work. The tool allows broad comparisons between nations along these six aspects of workplace culture. It ranks Nepal (comparatively) as high in terms of power distance, defined as 'the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally' (Hofstede Insights, 2019). By comparison, developed nations such as Australia and the United States of America have a low power distance score, but rank highly in terms of individualism and indulgence. According to this analysis, individuals in Nepalese society favour collectivism over individualism and are likely to expect others who are members of a particular ingroup to look after them. In addition, Nepalese society tends to suppress gratification of needs, regulating indulgence via strict social norms (Hofstede Insights, 2019). These cultural factors affect the environment of the workplace, contributing to either conducive or restrictive environments. In the context of this research, they influence women's participation in organizations, such as Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs).

Within CFUGs, the norms, values, beliefs and perceptions in relation to caste, class and gender were found to create additional barriers to the effective participation of women (Nightingale, 2002; 2003; 2005). Community forestry processes included official procedures, for example formal meetings, discussions, decision making, and the election of the Community Forest

Executive Committee, etcetera. These procedures required behaviours which are not considered socially acceptable for women, such as socialization outside the family, participation in meetings and prioritising other activities over household responsibilities (Buchy & Rai, 2008; Nightingale, 2003). Traditionally, Nepalese women have been responsible for household and other unpaid menial tasks, such as caring for livestock and managing kitchen gardens, while social responsibilities such as leading community welfare, rural development and social mobilization have been the domain of males.

The power relation between males and females in Nepalese society is heavily unequal. Due to lack of access to property and paid work, females are less powerful than males. The power dynamics and their low place in the social hierarchy also prevents the active involvement of women in related social and community activities (Lama & Buchy, 2002).

Studies have also found that the literacy of a person is also a determining factor for their participation in forestry institutions (Buchy & Rai, 2008; Lama & Buchy, 2002; Nightingale, 2006; Yadav *et al.*, 2008). The female literacy rate is 57.4% as compared to the male literacy rate of 75.1% across the country (GoN, 2012). This literacy rate is even lower among women from disadvantaged communities such as the *dalit* (a highly stigmatized community, historically suppressed under the culture of untouchability) and those in other indigenous communities (Yadav *et al.*, 2008).

Another important social reason for the lack of participation of women in CF is the heavy domestic workload of women (cleaning, cooking, fetching water, child caring, and feeding cattle, among many other tasks) which prevents their attendance at meetings (Lama & Buchy, 2002). For example, CF meetings typically occur at a time convenient for men rather than women, and sometimes the meetings take a duration of time, which the women cannot invest. Economic

reasons also have a significant role in their exclusion: most households are very poor and both male and female family members need to involve themselves in labouring tasks and agricultural activities in addition to their domestic tasks (Lama & Buchy, 2002).

Given the limitations described above, there was very little participation of women in early Community Forest User Group (CFUG) executive committees and general assemblies. Nonetheless, the revised Master Plan for Forestry Sector (1990) mentioned the importance of women in forest management (along with the poor and landless) and recognized them as primary users (Buchy & Subba, 2003). Most CFUGs had only one or two women attending (Agarwal, 2010b). In order to facilitate better representation of women in community forestry, the second amendment of the Community Forestry Guidelines 1991 made it mandatory for at least one third of Executive Committee members to be women in order to represent their voices (GoN, 2003a). Membership barriers for women were removed by providing membership opportunities for both males and females from each household. In 2008, the MFSC formulated the Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (GESI) targeted at preparing gender sensitive policy, programmes, organizations for equitable access and the sharing of resources (GoN, 2008). Revisions were made to Community Forestry Guidelines in order to incorporate the spirit of GESI; as a result, the proportion of women members in Executive Committees rose from 33 to 50 per cent. However, current databases indicate the representation of women in CF Executive Committees as being only about 33 per cent across the country (DoF, 2018).

Although the representation of women in community forestry Executive Committees (ECs) and General Assemblies has increased through targeted policies and programmes, their effective participation still needs to be achieved (Agarwal, 2010b; Lama & Buchy, 2002). Many other studies also revealed that the role of women in decision-making is not influential even

though they may be physically present in meetings (Agarwal, 2010b; Buchy & Rai, 2008; Buchy & Subba, 2003; Nightingale, 2003). The women who take part in the decision-making processes are often from elite families since they have relatively more spare time than the women from economically worse off families. Also, it is easier for them to take part in the meeting since their male family members, such as husband or fathers-in-law often lead the executive committee. Instead of raising voices on behalf of all the women in the society, the evidence suggest that these women quietly support the decisions made by the elite men (Agarwal, 2010b). Lama and Buchy (2002) make similar observations; that in many cases women members of ECs have been only 'token women' who are present but are not able to represent the voices of women belonging to different castes, ethnicities and classes. Normally, women in the executive committee are silent spectators of the meeting where they witness the decisions made by men without contributing to (and in some instances without being fully aware of) decision-making (Agarwal, 2010b). The women members of ECs have themselves expressed that they lack ideas and knowledge of what to say and how to speak in the meetings, claiming that they are not properly informed about the agenda before the meeting is held (Lama & Buchy, 2002).

Wherever women are active in executive committees, their male counterparts may ignore them (Agarwal, 2010b). Studies have shown that the male executive members simply pretend that they are listening to women. They may not address the issues that women raise and they may make decisions without seeking any consent or input from the women (Giri & Darnhofer, 2010; Lama & Buchy, 2002). To overcome the problem of such 'participatory exclusion' (Agarwal, 2010), 'Women only Community Forest User Groups' (General Assembly and Executive Committee composing all women) were also formed and trialled in some community forests. However this was due to the pressing interests of donor agencies, rather than resulting from any

specific policy guidelines (Buchy & Rai, 2008). About 5% of Community Forest User Groups are currently considered women only Community Forest User Groups (DoF, 2018). Women only Community Forest User Groups, however, have been found to be non-productive in terms of the inclusion of women in community forestry. Rather than allowing an avenue for women's voices, such groups further contribute the isolation and further marginalization of women from the mainstream (Buchy & Rai, 2008). The patches of community forest handed over to women are either very small relative to the number of households represented (population) or non-productive in terms of resources (DoF, 2018).

### *3.5.3 Women in civil society organization, development partners and private sector institutions*

Civil society organizations and development partners have made substantial contributions in bringing about social change through community forestry programmes (Dev & Adhikary, 2007). Civil Society organizations including FECOFUN and HIMAWANTI have addressed gender issues in natural resource management since their establishment. These civil society organizations contributed to the political movement of 2006 against the Monarchy. Their noteworthy contribution included that of groups of women from community forestry user groups, HIMAWANTI and NGOs who participated in the movement under the leadership of FECOFUN. In an attempt to address social discrimination against women in Nepal, the interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007, provided guarantees for social justice and affirmative action (GoN, 2007b). This revolutionary effort brought substantial change in the political arena, such as in the parliament where 33% of seats (a quota) were reserved for females in order to ensure that women are represented. The interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 also demanded changes to various laws and regulations towards inclusion in favour of women and other disadvantaged community members.

The Constitution of Nepal promulgated in 2015 continued these provisions (details regarding policy provision is described in chapter five).

Following the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007, FECOFUN also made its own gender policy by reserving 50% of membership for women in each hierarchy of its structure. FECOFUN currently has women filling 50% of its leadership roles in its grassroots to central level tiers. The FECOFUN policy states that either its chair or vice-chair must be a woman. The same guidelines apply to the positions of secretary and treasurer within the organisation. One of the 13 members who founded FECOFUN, Ms. Apasara Chapagain, was the first female chairperson after adopting the gender policy and Ms. Bharati Pathak is the current chairperson. Women's leadership in FECOFUN has been instrumental in amending Community Forestry Guidelines and in the inclusion of women, the poor and the *dalit* community in Community Forestry decision making bodies (Chapagain, 2012).

HIMAWANTI, another civil society organization, is also working towards gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women through capacity building for livelihood improvement. It has 1056 groups involving more than 50,000 grassroots women across 31 districts in the country (HIMAWANTI, 2018). Being an organization of women only members, there is the possibility of marginalization. There is, as yet, insufficient research about the challenges and barriers faced by this group, both within and outside of the organization.

FECOFUN has been also running various projects related to forestry either under its own leadership or in collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental organizations. For example; Strengthened Action for Governance in Utilization of Natural Resources (SAGUN), Strengthening the Role of Civil Society and Women in Democracy and Governance (SAMARPAN), Hariyo Ban Program, Transiting to Green Growth: Natural Resources in Nepal

(TGG-N) etcetera Those projects and programs have worked towards governance improvement, policy advocacy and revision, capacity development and awareness raising among community forest users (FECOFUN, 2018). FECOFUN has also made a significant contribution to the revision of community forestry guidelines such as the provision for at least 50% females in the Executive Committee of Community Forest User Group.

The contribution of international development partners has been crucial for women's inclusion in institutions within Nepal's forestry sector (Gurung, 2002). Development partners have initiated gender inclusion by hiring gender experts within their own organizations since the 1990s. Each of the forest projects supported by international development partners has developed different strategies and programmes to address issues of gender and social inclusion. Various projects operating in Nepal's forestry sector aimed to support women's inclusion. Most partner organizations operating in Nepal have encouraged women to apply for various positions in their institutions (Giri & Faculty, 2008a). These organisations have helped to initiate the formulation of gender and social inclusion strategies within the forestry sector.

### *3.5.4 Representation of women forestry professionals in government institutions*

The forest bureaucracy of the Nepalese government is very much male dominated: only about 6 % of forestry officials working in Nepal's government forestry institutions are women (GoN, 2018c). Of 74 District Forest Officers, only two are female (GoN, 2018c). Previous authors have suggested that the reasons behind this are linked to the government's education policy, the nature of the education and training systems, accessibility to forestry colleges, and related social norms and values which affect women (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008b; Gurung, 2002).

Female students were not permitted to enter forestry courses at Nepal's educational institutions until 1982. An education in forestry was not considered suitable for women, since

forestry work was viewed as involving ‘masculine’ skills such as tree felling, tree climbing and sawing, which themselves were not considered suitable for women (Gurung, 2002). The physical training activities, residential programmes and field excursions which comprised an education in forestry were not female-friendly; and since Nepalese women were expected to remain close to their home and family and carry out their home duties (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008b), travel to attend forestry institutions in distant regions was also difficult for women. Concerns regarding security, safety, women’s mobility, the physically difficult nature of forestry work and the likelihood of a remote posting are also discouraging factors relevant to forestry education for women (Christie & Giri, 2011).

## 3.6 Opportunities for women in forestry education

In 1982 the Participatory Forest Management Programme opened the door for women in forestry education (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a, 2008b; Gurung, 2002; Lama & Buchy, 2002). At this time, the forester’s role changed from policing to facilitating and motivating; and it was felt that there was a need for women foresters among the workforce. Yet it was difficult to approach local women to participate in CFs. This was due to social norms and values associated with Nepalese culture. Traditionally, men were approached regarding all areas of leadership, and women were not considered worthy of having significant leadership roles in the community. In addition, stereotypical attitudes of male forestry officials towards female colleagues were prevalent (Gurung, 2002). Gurung (2002) argued that most of the government forestry personnel – even the staff of development partners – were conservative and not gender sensitive.

Giri and IOF Faculty (2008a) report that, in the late 1980s, donor agencies were beginning to support many Nepalese girls and women in pursuing a forestry education by providing scholarships and motivating them through personal contact. The staff of donor

agencies identified girls in local villages who were considered to have the potential to complete a forestry education. However, in the initial year of Community Forestry operation in 1980s, only one young woman had begun her forestry education at the Bachelor level (out of a cohort of forty students at Tribhuvan University's Institute of Forestry and only six young women (out of 150) had begun studies in forestry at the Proficiency Certificate level (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008b).

### *3.6.1 Difficult pathways into Nepal's government forestry service*

During the 1990s, some female foresters and female forestry extension staff were recruited to work within donor funded projects. These women facilitated CF programmes as supporting staff for DFOs. However, due to constraints in government policy, women foresters could not be recruited as government staff (Gurung, 2002). There was a 10% quota available for women in forestry education at this time, but no separate pathway (quota) available for female forestry graduates to enter the forest bureaucracy.

The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation has not been inclusive of women in recruitment of its own staff. The Civil Service Act, 1991, dictates the staff recruitment policy in the forestry sector, as in other government bureaucracies. Recruiting is done by the Public Service Commission under the umbrella act for the recruitment of civil servants. Reforms regarding positions for women (for example, a quota system) in the Nepalese civil service did not occur until after 2007. Prior to that point, women needed to compete (from their unequal social and family position) with male candidates to gain employment in government institutions. No goal or quota was stipulated for recruitment of women into the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

### *3.6.2 Policy changes to include women in government forestry organizations*

The importance of including women in grass roots level forestry institutions was incorporated into the policies and practices of those institutions since the early 1990s. However, it took more than two decades for this important policy change to emerge in government forestry institutions (GoN, 1991). Although, Government staff were provided with gender sensitization training after the initiation of the Community Forestry Program in the 1990s, no gender friendly policies were formulated until the Interim Constitution of 2007. This is despite positive change in the attitudes of staff towards the participation of women and the importance of empowering women in CF management (Christie & Giri, 2011; Gurung, 2002).

The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 resulted in an amendment to the Civil Service Act 1991, which guaranteed a 45% reservation in government organizations for women, the dalit, indigenous people and those from other disadvantaged communities. Of this 45%, a third (33%) of the reservation in the Nepalese Civil Service is for women. Women forestry professionals have been recruited into government organizations according to this provision, hence the proportion of women foresters in the civil service has increased in the last decade. Since the reservation is made only for positions open to 'free competition' and not for those open to internal competition or promotions, the number of women employed at higher levels (such as Secretary, joint secretary and secretary see figure 3.2) is yet to increase, with 90% of vacant posts at the joint secretary level being filled via the internal promotion system (GoN, 1991). The detail of these policy changes is discussed in Chapter 5.

### *3.6.3 Studies of the experiences of women in forestry*

There have been only a few studies of women, and their experiences, in forestry in Nepal. Giri and IOF Faculty (2008a) documented a profile of 21 women forestry professionals currently

working in government organizations (under the Ministry of Forests), non-governmental organizations and development partners. The study found that when Nepal's first female Ranger attempted to register after passing the civil service exam in mid 80s, the male staff member at the recruiting agency (the Public Service Commission) denied her registration because he was not aware that a woman could be a Ranger. She was required to provide additional documentation (an official letter) in order to complete her registration for government service. After her employment, this woman experienced significant negative bias from senior officials. Male Rangers were tasked with the preparation of operational plans and constitutions, but she was given only administrative tasks (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a).

Another study by Giri and IOF Faculty (2008b) found that the behaviour and attitude of male colleagues and students seemed quite biased against female foresters; and that the administration did not acknowledge or understand that such bias was due to deeply rooted, male-dominated cultural norms. Similarly, the first female Ranger experienced harassment and was discriminated against by other staff. Senior staff tried to hide information from her, which obviously made it difficult for her to work effectively (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a). Being the only female member of staff, she reported facing difficulties in discussing women's issues and requirements, especially as the District Forest Office was completely unaware of the requirements of women, and there was no provision to address women's issues. However, she argued with her boss and worked successfully to achieve mobilization and participation of local women in community forestry processes. Most of the Executive Committees (ECs) governing Community Forests were either male dominated or lacked female members entirely (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a). She tried to empower women to participate in ECs through encouragement and

moral support. Eventually her efforts were recognised, and she was granted a prestigious award for her contributions to forest conservation and livelihood support.

Another female forest Ranger employed by the government in 2010 also experienced serious social discrimination in one of the Terai region District Forest Offices (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a). Local people believed that only 'women of loose character' take on paid work; but she decided to disprove this belief by working hard to bring changes in society through forest extensions. Finally, people started to see her as a role model and wanted their daughters to be like her.

While working within communities, many women have reported obstacles due to the patriarchal structure of Nepalese society. The villagers often viewed women foresters as wives, lovers or subordinate staff of accompanying male committee members, even when such women had been appointed as the leader of the team (Christie & Giri, 2011). Some local community members undermined female staff by refusing to recognise them as District Forest Staff (Rangers) (Christie & Giri, 2011).

The first female District Forest Officer expressed the view that social and cultural factors should not be barriers for women and their career development (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a). This woman was fortunate in that she received the full support and encouragement of her family, teachers and colleagues throughout her studies and after her entry into the professional field. Studies (Christie & Giri, 2011; Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a, 2008b) confirm that practical support from family, teachers and colleagues is crucially important for women in study or work because safety and security concerns are very important for women. Many female foresters have acknowledged the supportive role of family, teachers and others (Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a).

## 3.7 The importance of including women in forestry

Gender justice in forestry is important because women have a greater connection with forest resources which they use and manage in their daily lives. It can be argued that they should therefore, be included in any decision related to forest governance (Marcoes *et al.*, 2015). Since, 51% of Nepal's population is comprised of women, (GoN, 2012), it also necessary that this section of the country's population is not excluded from forest governance. Women's inclusion needs to occur in both government and non-government forestry organizations.

Arguably, the MFSC has a particular responsibility to include women in its activities, compared to other government ministries, since the majority of the primary users of the forests are Nepalese women, who are highly dependent on forest resources. Such women hold specific knowledge related to some aspects of forest resources (Agarwal, 2010b). A greater involvement of women and their knowledge sets at various levels of decision-making is required, not only for gender justice, but also for resource sustainability and social equity.

Rapid economic, social and ecological changes at the global level have affected forest dependent communities in Nepal at local levels. This is likely to continue. For example, climate change is likely to have significant impact on forest dependent communities in developing countries such as Nepal (Karki *et al.*, 2009). At various stages in history, women have shown greater concerns for environment and forest protection because they are often the primary victims of forest resource degradation (Mohai, 1992). Studies have shown that the relationship between women and their environment is spiritual, historical and complex (Agarwal, 2010b; Shiva, 1993a, 1993b; Wangari *et al.*, 1996). If women are excluded from decision making processed for environment related agendas, including those related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, at local, national and global levels, the solutions proposed for environmental

problems may be partial or ineffective (WOCAN, 2012). The influential presence of women within government and non-government forestry institutions can lead to better outcomes in environment and forest resource related decisions in national and international forums.

The majority of gender related studies in forestry have been focused on community forestry institutions rather than on government, civil society or private forestry institutions. There is a significant gap in research in gender issues in Nepal's forestry sector. The next section will explore these knowledge gaps, providing an indication of the direction for this research.

## 3.8 Directions for this research/ Gaps in research

This chapter has considered the interdependence of forest resources and people in Nepal. Forest resources are intricately linked with the livelihoods of rural people as well as with the macroeconomic spectrum of the country. Among the members of forest dependent-communities, women, indigenous people and economically poor families are directly dependent on forest resources so that gender, ethnicity and class are important lenses through which to consider the policies and practices of forestry institutions and the governance of Nepal's forests.

The history and development of Nepal's forestry organisations has been presented above, together with an exploration of the challenges associated with the inclusion of women's voices in past and present forest governance. This has been particularly difficult within government institutions, especially in relation to sustainability, equity and democratic norms. While some remarkable efforts and achievements have been made in community-based forestry institutions, resulting in women-friendly policies and practices, these achievements are not widely reflected in the overall governance of the forestry sector in the country.

While issues of gender inclusion in Nepalese forest management are reasonably well-researched, studies in this area are largely confined to an exploration of the opportunities and challenges of women's inclusion in community-based forestry governance (Agarwal, 2010a, 2010b; Buchy & Subba, 2003; Ghimire-Bastakoti & Bastakoti, 2006; Giri & Darnhofer, 2010; Gurung, 2002). The majority of the studies explore how and why women are neglected in forestry institutions, thus they focus on the exclusion of women rather than their inclusion (Buchy & Subba, 2003; Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a, 2008b; Nightingale, 2006). These studies analyse the cause and effect relationship between the patriarchal society and inequitable governance in forestry sector institutions. They focus mainly on the effect of patriarchal power relationships on practices; and rarely address the overall policies and regulatory frameworks in the forestry sector and beyond. Broader sociological premises have been considered important in these studies.

Very few studies focussing on government-sector institutions have been carried out from a gender perspective, and wherever these studies are found, they are again confined to the scope of understanding the contributions of women government forestry professionals in relation to community-based forest institutions (Christie & Giri, 2011; Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a, 2008b; Khadka, 2009). The role of legislative measures and institutional practices in influencing gender inclusion in forestry institutions remain largely unexplored.

Some authors have highlighted the role of women in governing community-based forestry institutions (Agarwal, 2010b; Buchy & Rai, 2008; Lama & Buchy, 2002). Most of this literature is confined to a period after initiation of community forests in 19980s and does not continue much beyond 2010. Despite comprising a robust documentation of a number of case studies and insights into women-led community organizations, these studies are also based on practices and

do not address whether there are forestry policies and regulations in place to facilitate, sustain or oppose these practices. There is also scope for further investigation regarding whether institutional practices affect the capacities and performance of women to influence policies and decision-making processes in their relevant institutions. In addition, the roles of women in institutions beyond the community level, such as in government forestry institutions are also underexplored.

Some authors have analysed the status of women professionals in wider forestry institutions in Nepal including at the Ministry and Department levels (e.g. Giri & IOF Faculty, 2008a, 2008b; Khadka, 2009). Such studies provide ample consideration of the conditions in which women professionals can work efficiently. However, most of these studies consider forestry governance in relation either to donor funded projects or community forestry outcomes. Although nearly 60 percent of Nepal's forest areas are under government control, the gendered nature of forest management and governance in government institutions remains largely unassessed.

Considering the aforementioned gaps in gendered forestry research, the subsequent chapter will elaborate the research questions for this thesis and present the methods applied to collect data in order to investigate those questions.

# Chapter 4: Research methodology and methods

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological framework and methods used in this study. Feminist Institutionalism (see chapter two) is employed as the theoretical framework for the research; it is the lens through which the research objectives are addressed. The approach utilises qualitative methods. In this chapter, the research design, the various components of the methods and the actual data collection processes are described. First, the concept of qualitative research is introduced. Second, a justification for employing a qualitative approach for this research is presented. Third, the data collection strategy is explained. Fourth, the process of data collection and analysis is described. Finally, the ethical considerations, perspectives on the 'insider researcher' and a validation of the overall strategy for research are provided.

## 4.2 Theoretical framework

As described in Chapter 2, Feminist Institutionalism (FI) is used as a theoretical framework to conceptualize this research. FI provides a foundation for examining political institutions, such as Nepal's forest bureaucracy, through a gender lens (Mackay et al, 2010). FI combines 'institutionalism' and 'feminist political science' in such a way that both mutually contribute to offering a robust theoretical foundation for critical research (Krook and Mackay, 2015). Based on the degree of masculinity and femininity, FI describes how gendered norms and values interact with the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion around political institutions (Mackay et al. 2010). Following Mackay and Waylen (2009), Mackay et al (2010), Mackay (2011), Kenny (2013), and Krook and Mackay (2015), four principal components of FI are taken into consideration to examine and analyse the issues identified in this research. These are:

1. Organizational culture,
2. Formal and informal institutions,
3. Structure and agency, and
4. Power relations

Qualitative methods, which are most suitable for use within the FI framework, are employed to collect and analyse data and information for this investigation.

## 4.3 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is 'any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17). Denzin and Lincoln (2013:17) further emphasizes that the word 'qualitative' refers to the quality of person, procedures or functions that are not measured or obtained through experiment and which are not described in terms of 'quantity, amount and intensity'. Qualitative research is largely based upon the socially constructed nature of reality, the relationship between the researcher and the subject of the study, and other surrounding environments which influence the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Qualitative approaches are often contrasted with quantitative approaches to research. A quantitative approach emphasises numbers, measurements, control and experimentation (Creswell, 2013). In a quantitative approach, collected data is often organized and analysed using statistics and expressed in terms of statistical significance (Creswell, 2013; Punch, 2005). In comparison, qualitative approaches emphasise natural settings, observations, verbal narratives and interpretation. Text or verbal data is explored, organized and analysed subjectively, often by dividing it into different themes and groups. Thus, a qualitative study relies upon descriptive data which may be drawn from conversations, photographs, video and audio recordings and written documents (Boeije, 2010). While some quantitative data - for instance, numbers or percentages -

might be used in a qualitative study, the analysis of such data, in qualitative research, would be done qualitatively (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Yin (2011) maintains that qualitative research is a comprehensive area of inquiry which provides a broader description of various features rather than providing a singular definition of the research problem. These features are summarised as:

1. Capturing people's lived experiences from their real-world roles;
2. Capturing participants' perspectives and views;
3. Exploring experiences of participants from contextual condition
4. Exploring human social behaviour and thinking through by utilising existing and emerging concepts; and
5. Depending on and utilizing multiple evidences from various sources.

Qualitative research involves the examination of human activity in its natural setting (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). The foremost consideration of qualitative research is to capture the views and perspectives of participants in their familiar real world conditions. This approach helps to explore an understanding of the research participants through illumination, interpretation and explanation about their lived experiences.

Unlike observations carried out in laboratory settings, or within the boundaries of closed-end questionnaires, qualitative research is less likely to inhibit research participants (Yin, 2011). In the absence of artificial research procedures, participants can express themselves in more natural social interactions with the researcher (Yin, 2011). Hence, the respondents' perspectives of real life events can be captured with a minimum of interference from the researcher's conceptions and preoccupations (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003; Patton, 2002a). Qualitative research methodologies allow the capture of contextual conditions such as the social, institutional and

environmental settings within which participants live, since these conditions often have a strong influence on their interpretation of events. Hence, the qualitative method is effective for understanding and describing participants' personal perspectives in complex types of phenomena (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Qualitative research is a dynamic process which helps to explore human social behaviour through existing or emerging concepts (Yin, 2011). Qualitative analysis helps us to interpret such concepts because qualitative research is heavily based on interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Willis *et al.*, 2007). It aims to discover new concepts through interpretation rather than imposing preconceived ideas about the people and events (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). Therefore, qualitative research also provides opportunities for the researchers to develop new concepts and platforms for new inquiries (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Willis *et al.*, 2007; Yin, 2011).

A qualitative research approach allows the adoption of different procedures and techniques in order to obtain data from a variety of sources (Boeije, 2010). Those sources include observing the diversity of participants and their activities, interviewing participants in order to elucidate their world views and their understandings of situations and inspecting documents and records in the real world. Through interactions, interviews, or any other suitable methods, both the researcher and the respondents can bring their experiences, views and perceptions to their exploration of the research issues (Patton, 2002a). A qualitative approach also provides opportunities to triangulate information from different sources. This eventually helps to increase the credibility and the validity of the research (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013).

Key to the present study, a qualitative inquiry provides avenues to explore how and why decisions are made in a case study context, such as within an organization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In such an inquiry, the data is generated through participants' expressions of their

everyday roles. Such expressions may comprise research participants' own written documents such as diaries and journals; or conversations about their lived experiences (Yin, 2011). As highlighted previously, the qualitative approach is particularly based on 'words' and 'texts', rather than 'numbers'. Findings and theories are drawn from the data through analysis and interpretation. Hence, some authors explain the qualitative research approach as a method of exploring a person's life, knowledge, experiences, perceptions, behaviour, organizational functions, interrelationships, conflicts, and social movements in a particular context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of research methods, particularly in social research. They argue that credible research methods (that is, methods which result in high levels of confidence in the truth of the findings) require long term engagement of the researcher in the project, continued observation of variables, triangulation of data and adequate use of references. Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings in other contexts. Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and repeatable, while confirmability shows that the findings are based on the responses of the research participants rather than the researchers' own opinion. These four criteria for valid and reliable qualitative research were considered important while collecting, analysing and interpreting data and in deriving conclusions and recommendations from this research. They underpin the selection of data collection methods described in section 4.5 below.

## 4.4 Justification for the use of a qualitative approach

In any research endeavour, the choice of research methods largely depends upon the research questions and the theoretical framework used in the research (Creswell, 2013; Gray, 2013). This thesis explores the inclusion of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy and uses Feminist

Institutionalism as a broad methodological framework (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). Feminist Institutionalism has grown from combining Feminist Theory and New Institutionalism. Feminist theorists claim that women have privileged or specific knowledge regarding their everyday life, particularly in circumstances where they feel biased or oppressed (Narayan, 2004). Feminists also claim that marginalization, discrimination and oppression create different types of knowledge within the individual experiencing these pressures; and that these different types of knowledge are an ideal starting point to explore issues of exclusion or inclusion (Harding, 2004; Maynard *et al.*, 1994).

Feminist researchers have particularly emphasised research methodologies that involve listening, recording and understanding women's own views and experiences in order to reflect their actual life experiences as products of social construction and interpretation (Kelly et al, 1994). Some feminist researchers favour qualitative techniques to address feminist questions because such approaches allow the researcher to form an in-depth understanding of individual research subjects as well as providing the flexibility to interact with multiple dimensions of the subject matter (Boeije, 2010; Finch, 2004; Peplau & Conrad, 1989; Wilkinson, 1999). In this regard, a qualitative approach is well suited to the present study of gender issues within Nepal's forest bureaucracy.

The qualitative approach is arguably better than the quantitative approach where the research objective is to capture and understand experiences, knowledge, interpersonal relationships and behaviours. It is better understood as a theory of understanding (qualitative) rather than one of measurement or quantification. The basic ingredient of a qualitative technique is seeing the social world from the viewpoint of the actor (Bryman, 1984). Generally, the active role of the individual actors (in this research, women in the forest bureaucracy) in construction of

their social reality is assumed in qualitative research (Boeije, 2010). Unlike a quantitative approach, the qualitative approach facilitates exploration of the experiences and subjective views of women's life rather than imposing an externally defined view (Maynard *et al.*, 1994). A qualitative approach also provides an opportunity to quote women's views and expressions while analysing the data. It shows the reality of the conversation and draws the reader into the research, so that they feel that they are part of the study (Yin, 2016).

The Nepalese forestry bureaucracy offers an interesting context for the qualitative approach because the (relatively few) female staff in this organisation are likely to have experiences, understandings and perceptions about the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy which differ compared to one another, and compared to their male colleagues and counterparts. Male staff might have their own perspectives associated with their participation in, and experience of, a male-dominated environment, in terms of both numbers and power relations. The views and experiences of male and female staff in the forest bureaucracy and its associated entities can therefore be appropriately explored through adopting appropriate qualitative research approaches.

In this study, the knowledge, experiences and views of actors working in the forestry sector, are explored, in relation to the inclusion/exclusion of women in forestry governance, by inviting the active participation of those (women) actors in the construction of their social reality. However, the perspectives of males are also explored to find out about their experiences and knowledge, since these form part of the institution and because the knowledge, experiences and understandings of both genders has implications for this research.

The key elements of Feminist Institutionalism, such as organizational culture, formal and informal institutions, structure and agency and power relations, can be better understood through

discussions and texts rather than via quantitative data. These components are understood through an interpretivist approach (Brandon and All, 2010; Chan et al., 2011), which is a fundamental characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). In this approach textual forms of data, such as transcripts from interviews and focus group discussions, are interpreted.

In this study, the researcher gathered verbal and textual data (the perceptions of actors), from both within and outside the forest bureaucracy, and examined them through a gendered lens. These perceptions are better described in words rather than the figures or numbers, and so qualitative research is more relevant than quantitative or mixed methods for this study. Tools and techniques commonly used to understand research participants' perceptions include (but are not limited to): interviews, group discussions, ethnographic studies, questionnaires and social surveys (Boeije, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). In this study, interviews and focus group discussions were used to unearth primary information. Government legislation (acts and rules), policies and reports, along with various other types of documents, were also consulted as secondary data sources.

The ideas and views of research participants make up the core information that is employed to reach a finding for the investigation. Later, the expressed views of the participants and languages are interpreted by the researcher in a way that shows how the participants themselves gave meaning to particular themes. Such an approach is described as involving constructivism and/or interpretivism, meaning that new ideas are constructed through blending of past and current knowledge and experiences (Brandon & All, 2010; Chan *et al.*, 2011). Qualitative research approaches are often heavily based on constructivism and interpretivism (Boeije, 2010). A qualitative analysis of secondary data sources was also carried out to interpret the content of participants' views, creating a document-participant interface. The detailed

methodological framework used in this research is summarised in figure 4.1 and explained in detail below.

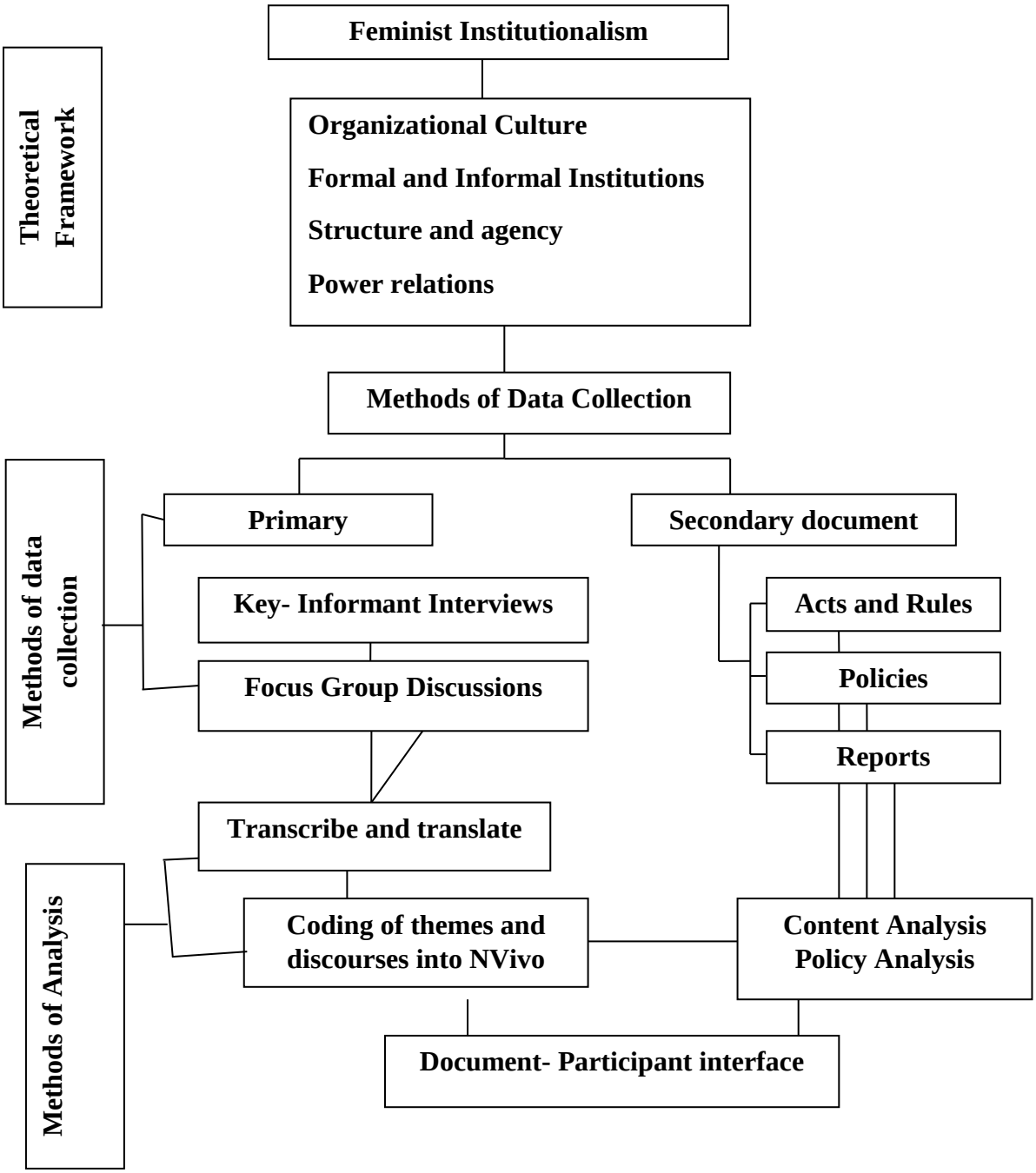



**Figure 4.1: Methodological framework for the research**

## 4.5 Data collection

The overarching aim of this study is to explore how gendered institutional culture, norms, values and associated power relations in forest-governing institutions shape the nature and extent of women's involvement in decision making processes in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. To obtain qualitative information to address this overarching research aim, this study analyses the processes for the inclusion of women, their roles and their challenges and the perceptions of employees of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy regarding the inclusion of women. The study takes a Feminist Institutionalist perspective to analyse the qualitative information. Two types of data, namely primary and secondary, were analysed to achieve the various objectives of the research (see Chapter 1).

Objective 1) is to evaluate the effectiveness of current legislative and policy frameworks for the inclusion of women in Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Secondary data sources were used to achieve this objective. Policy and legal documents related to women's inclusion in the forestry sector were of particular interest and are explored in Chapters 3 and 5. The broader general policy framework for women's inclusion general in the Nepalese context was also examined via various development plan, policy documents, acts and regulations, project reports and research documents. This work, presented in Chapter 5, reveals insights into the area pertaining to this specific objective as well validating the views from the research participants. Work relating to this first objective is also informed by a historical analysis of forest management in Nepal (Chapter 3). The historical analysis begins with a description of the general trends pertaining to forest management in Nepal. This was followed by a consideration of the roles of women in forest governance across three historical phases: before 1957, when forests were controlled under a feudal system of government; from 1957 to 1975 when the state had control of Nepal's forests,

and from 1975 to the present, when local communities held primary responsibility for managing the forest resources. Similarly, the policy analysis (chapter 5) begins with analysis of broader Nepalese developmental policies, constitutions, strategies and guidelines. Chapter 5 also presents the institutional mechanism for, and details quantitative information regarding, inclusion of women in various sectors of the Nepalese government, including forestry. The information for the historical and policy analyses was collected mainly from secondary sources including, but not limited to, books, research articles, policy documents, newspapers and magazines. However, information relating to the most recent phase was also verified and substantiated by discussions during the key informant interviews and focus group discussions (see below).

Primary data for objectives 2-4 (see Chapter 1) were obtained through focus groups discussions and key informant interviews. This data is presented in chapter 6 and divided into various section based on the Feminist Institutionalist framework used in the study. Various quotes from participants are also presented in the chapter.

The researcher used the framework of FI as a way of understanding women's inclusion in the forestry bureaucracy in Nepal. Objectives 2-4 revolved around understandings of coherence and contradictions, policy-practice variance, and resistance and change; and research findings associated with these objectives hint toward the space available for radical transformation for forestry institutions and governance which are more women-inclusive.

### *4.5.1 Primary data collection*

Primary data were collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions (described in a later sub-section). The details about the research participants, procedures and techniques applied during data collection are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

## Data collection strategy and techniques applied

Two types of qualitative techniques; key informant interviews and focus group discussions, were undertaken in Nepal, from September to December 2014, in order to collect primary data. Questions were initially tested individually with five participants (with their consent) in Nepal, before the actual interview process started. The objective for the testing was to explore potential practical problems in following the data collection strategy, and check the appropriateness of the guiding questions (van Teijling and Hundley, 2002). The pilot testing also provided the opportunity for the researcher to make necessary corrections prior to the interviews and ensure that all the data collection instruments functioned well (Kvale, 2007). Pilot testing in this context found that no substantial changes to the questions or the data collection strategy were required (see questions in Appendix.1).

Additional interviews and discussions were undertaken during a second visit to Nepal in March- April 2015, alongside a period of secondary data collection. This additional data collection employed the same techniques as in 2014 and was undertaken to increase the number of participants involved in the study. In both periods of data collection, open-ended and semi-structured questions were used to unearth the participants' experiences, perceptions and views. Semi-structured interview methods are useful to uncover the expertise of respondents regarding the issues they are being questioned about (Mason, 2002).

The techniques required for semi-structured and open-ended inquiry include, but are not limited to, interviews, group discussions, observations and workshops. A series of guiding questions was formulated for this study and these informed the development of a set of interview guides (checklists) which took into account the scope of the study and the flexibility required for open-ended responses. A set of interview guides or checklists is considered a core element of the

in-depth interview in social science methodology, without which the data collection cannot be tracked within the scope of the inquiry (Mason, 2002).

## Open-ended questions

The questions used in interviews and focus group discussions in this research were semi-structured in the sense that the key areas for the responses were defined, but there were no limitations on the respondents, allowing him/her to elaborate as much or as little as they would like around the open-ended question (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Semi-structured types of questionnaires are widely used in feminist research to allow the active involvement of respondents (Punch, 2005). From a practical viewpoint it is difficult to set a structure-free questionnaire, because the agendas and assumptions of both the interviewer and interviewee impose upon and influence the framework (Mason, 2002). One of the primary aspects of the qualitative inquiry is the nature of the question, which is 'open-ended' as opposed to closed-ended or a dichotomous structured questionnaire (Patton, 2002a, 2002b). Open-ended responses provide a broader scope of information that describes the experiences and views of the respondents more robustly and flexibly than information derived from closed-ended questions (Creswell, 2013). In this research, the flexible framework and open guiding questions allowed the respondents to elaborate and interact with the researcher to provide more information than the guiding questions defined. The guiding questions used in this study were arranged in various categories and are presented in appendix 1.

The questions and interviews/group discussions were flexible so that the researcher had plenty of space to probe with some depth into the responses by asking relevant sub-questions beyond the guiding questions. This approach enabled the researcher to understand and capture

the world seen and experienced by the respondents without a predetermined bias towards a certain point of view (Patton, 2002b).

Open-ended questions also provide opportunities for the researchers to extract direct quotations from the respondents, which enriches the field of inquiry with the lived experiences of research participants (Labuschagne, 2003a; Lester, 1999; Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). In connection with open-ended questions that put emphasis on direct quotations, Patton argues:

> *Direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions. The task for the qualitative researcher is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking (Patton, 2002a:21)*

The researcher facilitated all focus group discussions and led the key informant interviews during the entire data collection process. Both key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Nepali language and were audio-recorded, with the consent of participants. Recordings were later translated into English and transcribed prior to analysis. Translation and transcription were also done by the researcher. A field diary (notes) was also maintained by the researcher to document any unrecorded conversation and nonverbal languages and expressions before, during and after the interviews and the discussions.

## Research participants

This research explores the views of different actors from Government bureaucracies (especially the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation and its subsidiaries), civil society organizations

(such as Federation of Community Forests User Groups in Nepal, and the Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association) and other forest stakeholder organizations and individuals involved in the management of forest resources. Males and females working in the Nepalese forestry administration from the 1980s onwards were the main sources of the primary data in this research. The perceptions of these participants, employees of the Nepalese Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, its subsidiary forestry departments, Non-Governmental (forestry) Organizations (NGOs) and International Non-Governmental (forestry) Organizations (INGOs), were recorded in order to understand the opportunities and challenges relating to the inclusion of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

These stakeholders' views and understandings of the inclusion of women in Nepal's forest bureaucracy, and the extent to which the inclusion process has affected the governance of forest bureaucracy, were collected from the interviews and discussions. The individual interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken at various locations, such as in the office premises of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Department of Forests, Federation of Community Forestry User Groups Nepal (FECOFUN) and the Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI). The methods relating to the recruitment of participants, the collection of data and information, and methods of analysis are described in the following section.

## Recruitment of participants

Fliers advertising opportunities to participate in key informant interviews and focus group discussions were posted on the notice boards of various forestry stakeholder organizations. These included the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC), various departments of MoFSC, Federation of Community Forest User Groups Nepal (FECOFUN), the Himalayan

Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI) and other Non-Governmental and International Non-Governmental Organizations within Nepal's forestry sector. Office administrators also helped by providing the contact details of the researcher to people who were willing to participate. This process encouraged participation in the process regardless of gender. Many of the participants expressed their interest in participating in the research by contacting the researcher, and some of the participants suggested that others also contact the researcher in order to participate. The date, time and venue for the interviews were decided by the participants themselves; whereas the researcher set the time of focus group discussions, matching the previously stated availability of all participants. Most of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted inside participants' own office compounds. Written consent from each participant was obtained before starting the discussions, and after a brief introduction to the research. All participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and were advised that they were free to share and express their views, or not to answer any question, or to withdraw from the interview at any time and any stage. As an Officer in the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, the researcher had the opportunity to be familiar with the participants and explore the issues based on her experiences of more than 15 years in the sector. Following the advice of the University's human research ethics committee, the possible impact of power relations between the interviewer and the participants was minimized by explaining to the participants, at the beginning of the interviews, that the information would be used solely for research purposes, with no other implications for the participants' personal lives or careers. The actual process of key informant interviews and focus group discussions is described below.

## Key Informant Interviews

The key informant interview is an in-depth conversation between the interviewee and interviewer (Punch, 2005). It permits relatively thorough investigation of the individual respondent's perceptions and understandings (Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006). In such interviews, the interviewer and respondents both benefit by acquiring knowledge of the issue. According to the responses of interviewees on specific issues, further questions were asked to acquire more information. This is because in-depth interviews do not merely involve questions and answers, but they also involve dialogue which produces a common understanding of the issues (Rasmussen et al., 2006). Interviews were carried out using semi-structured and open-ended types of questions to provide flexibility during the conversation. Due to the nature of these questions, the interview was not rigid or structured, which allowed the researcher to reach the desired depth of inquiry. Interview guides were used to track the discussion within the scope of the inquiry. Discussions mostly related to the history of women's roles in Nepalese forest management, and opportunities and challenges for women to work in Nepal's forest bureaucracy.

In this investigation, 56 individuals working in various forestry sector organizations were interviewed. Out of those 56 participants, 33 were female, while 23 were male. There were 34 participants from the forest bureaucracy, 10 from Non-Governmental Organizations/Community Based Organizations, seven from freelance forestry professions and five from International Non-Government Organizations. Since the interview involves a dialogue between two people, the time limit for the interview generally cannot be fixed in advance, and sometimes can exceed two or three hours (Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006). However in this research, excluding rapport-building time, interview times ranged between 15 to 59 minutes, depending on the participants' interest, knowledge and the depth of information they provided. The total duration of all interviews was

**Table 4.1: Participants of Key Informant Interviews from Nepalese forest bureaucracy**

| Represented Office | Code | Male | Job experience | Position | Duration (minute) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regional Office | 1 | F | > 5 years | NGA | 23 |
| District Forest Office | 2 | M | > 15 years | DFO | 23 |
| District Forest Office | 3 | F | One year | FG | 19 |
| Regional Office | 4 | F | > 15 years | OF | 21 |
| Regional Office | 5 | F | One year | RA | 15 |
| Tribhuvan University | 6 | F | >15 years | OF | 17 |
| MoFSC | 7 | M | >20 years | JS | 33 |
| District Forest Office | 8 | F | >20 years | OF | 22 |
| District Forest Office | 9 | M | >10 years | OF | 24 |
| District Forest Office | 10 | F | >15 years | OF | 27 |
| Departments of Forests | 11 | M | > 10 years | DFO | 31 |
| Departments of Forests | 12 | M | > 20 years | JS | 35 |
| MoFSC | 13 | M | > 20 years | JS | 21 |
| MoFSC | 14 | M | > 15 years | JS | 43 |
| Department of Soil conservation | 15 | M | > 15 years | JS | 41 |
| Department of Forests | 16 | F | > 20 years | US | 37 |
| District Forests Office | 17 | M | > 20 years | US | 41 |
| DNPWC | 18 | M | > 25 years | JS | 39 |
| Department of Soil Conservation | 19 | F | > 20 years | OF | 27 |
| Departments of Soil Conservation | 20 | F | > 20 years | OF | 16 |
| MoFSC | 21 | M | > 20 years | US | 40 |
| MoFSC | 22 | M | > 20 years | US | 29 |
| MoFSC | 23 | F | > 20 years | OF | 25 |
| Department of Forests | 24 | F | 3 years | OF | 19 |
| MoFSC | 25 | F | > 10 years | OF | 21 |
| District Forest Office | 26 | F | > 20 years | FG | 17 |
| District Forests Office | 27 | F | > 5 years | RA | 26 |
| MoFSC | 28 | F | > 15 years | US | 39 |
| MoFSC | 29 | F | > 25 years | US | 20 |
| Regional Forest Directorate | 30 | F | > 15 years | RA | 31 |
| Regional Office | 31 | M | > 25 years | JS | 32 |
| MoFSC | 32 | M | > 25 years | US | 29 |
| Department of Forests | 33 | F | > 20 years | OF | 40 |
| Regional Office | 34 | M | > 20 years | US | 35 |

Note: NGA- Non Gazetted Admin, DFO- District Forest Officer, FG- Forest Guard, RA- Ranger, OF- Officer, JS- Joint Secretary, DNPWC-Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation

26 hours. The list of the interviewees (coded), their participating organizations and the duration of each interview is given in table 4.1 and table 4.2. Different sets of guiding question were used for interviews with participants from different organizations (see Appendix -1). The interviews were audio-recorded using a digital device and field notes were maintained during the interviewing process. The audio recording was later transcribed in Nepali and subsequently translated into English.

**Table 4.2: Participants of Key Informant Interviews outside forest bureaucracy**

| Represented from | code | Gender | Experience | Duration (minute) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forestry NGO | 35 | F | >15 years | 22 |
| Forestry NGO | 36 | M | >20 years | 27 |
| WOCAN-INGO | 37 | F | >15 years | 22 |
| Free Lancer | 38 | M | >12 years | 18 |
| HIMAWANTI | 39 | F | >10 years | 33 |
| Free Lancer | 40 | F | >7 years | 26 |
| ANSAB- NGO | 41 | M | >10 years | 21 |
| Forest Action-NGO | 42 | M | >10 years | 26 |
| Forest Action- NGO | 43 | M | >8 years | 18 |
| Forest Action-NGO | 44 | F | >8 years | 19 |
| FECOFUN | 45 | F | >12 years | 36 |
| FECOFUN | 46 | M | >14 years | 31 |
| FECOFUN | 47 | F | > 8 years | 41 |
| FECOFUN | 48 | M | >5 years | 17 |
| HELVATAS | 49 | F | >20 years | 55 |
| Free Lancer | 50 | F | >10 years | 35 |
| INGO | 51 | M | >20 years | 59 |
| INGO | 52 | F | >15 years | 56 |
| HIMAWANTI | 53 | F | >8 years | 15 |
| HIMAWANTI | 54 | F | >3 years | 15 |
| Free Lancer | 55 | F | > 15 years | 57 |
| Former Ranger | 56 | F | > 4 years | 30 |
| Total | | 22 | | 679 |

NGO - Nongovernmental Organization; HIMWANTI -The Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association; ANSAB- Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources ; FECOFUN-Federation of Community Forestry User Groups; INGO- International Non-governmental Organization

## Focus Group Discussions

A focus group discussion is an informal discussion among groups of 6-8 people 'who come from similar social and cultural background or who have similar experiences or concerns' (Liamputtong, 2011:3). The ideal number for a focus group discussion is not entirely consistent in the literature. For example, Liamputtong (2011) suggested that the number should be 6-8 while others recommended 6-10 participants as the ideal group size (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006). However, the group should be small enough to provide opportunities for each participant to express their opinion, and large enough to provide diverse types of opinion (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Focus group discussions are important for collecting data in qualitative research, particularly in the social sciences (Punch, 2005; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006). This method is useful to collect larger amounts of information about the attitudes, feelings and beliefs of people in a shorter period (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Punch, 2005). The validity and strength of data is higher than the single interview, as synergy, interaction, agreement and disagreement among the group helps to synthesize the conversation (Liamputtong, 2011). Liamputtong (2011), further suggests that focus group discussions help to reveal diverse perspectives 'feeling, thoughts, understandings, perceptions and impressions' of social phenomena as intended by this research.

A total of seven focus group discussions were conducted during this research. The number of participants varied from one group to another and ranged between seven to nine participants. A total of 56 people (30 male and 26 female) participated in the focus group discussions. The composition of the groups and other details of the focus group discussions are presented in table 4.3. Some groups are same gender (male only and female only) whereas some

are mixed. This allowed the researcher to collect data perceived by male groups and female groups separately without these groups influencing each other. The mixed group allowed data collection following interactions between people of both genders with some extent of consensus. The total duration of all focus groups discussions was 5.81 hours.

**Table 4.3: Participants of the Focus Group discussions of forest bureaucracy**

| Focus groups | Organization | Male | Female | Total | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Female Rangers and Officers 1 | DFOs | - | 7 | 7 | 60 minutes |
| 2) Female Rangers and Officers 2 | MoFSC | - | 10 | 10 | 72 minutes |
| 3) Mixed gendered Rangers and Officers | DFOs | 5 | 4 | 9 | 51 minutes |
| 4) Mixed Gender Forest Guards | DFOs | 7 | 2 | 9 | 40 minutes |
| 5) Male Rangers and Officers 1 | MoFSC | 7 | - | 7 | 45 minutes |
| 6) Male Rangers and Officers 2 | DFOs | 9 | - | 9 | 51 minutes |
| 7) Male and Female mixed executives and staff | NGOs | 2 | 3 | 5 | 30 minutes |
| Total | | 30 | 26 | 56 | 5.81 hours |

DFO- District Forest Office
MoFSC- Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation
NGOs- Non-Governmental Organizations

Unlike individual in-depth interviews, focus group discussions aim to explore only a few issues (1-3) as they involve a time consuming process (Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006). However, focus group discussions are considered efficient in terms of time saving since a group of respondents (not just an individual) provide information together in a limited time frame. As with an in-depth key informant interview with semi-structured and open-ended questions, guiding questions are helpful in shaping the discussion. However, due to the smaller scope, these do not need to be comprehensive. The core of the focus group is the moderator who keeps the discussion focused on the issues or problems (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). In this method of data collection, participants interact among each other and oppose or support one another's ideas. This helps to verify information from other sources, such as the interviews, which is an important aspect of

this method (Punch, 2005; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006). Focus group discussions are helpful in understanding the attitudes, feelings and beliefs of participants in a group (Patton, 2002b; Punch, 2005). Nonetheless, some precautions are needed to make the focus group discussions fruitful, since there is a likelihood that some vocal individuals might dominate the discussion, while other participants may be silent. The moderator needs to shape the discussion in such a way that all the participants have equal opportunity to express their thoughts and take part in interaction. In both individual interviews and focus group discussions the interviewer/moderator is a key element and plays a crucial role. Therefore he/she should possess the necessary qualities for conducting these interviews/focus group discussions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this research, the investigator carefully performed the interviewer/moderator tasks by applying skills learned from short courses on research methods, and experiences derived from working in the forestry sector. A separate comprehensive interview guide was prepared, as mentioned above, so as to not miss exploration of the important issues. To unearth knowledge and experiences and deepen insights, the participants' initial responses were probed with questions such as 'why', 'who', 'where', 'when', 'what' and 'how' (Patton, 2002a, 2002b; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006). Key areas for discussion in focus groups included the verification of some information from interviews, exploration of perceptions about the process of women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy, and consideration of the conditions that would provide space for women in the forest bureaucracy were discussed using this method.

Each focus group discussion took of minimum 30 to 70 minutes based on participant willingness and the strength of the discussion. As with the individual interviews, focus group discussions were also conducted in the Nepali language, recorded on a digital device, and later

transcribed and then translated into English. The researcher also noted some key points that were raised during the discussions in her field diary.

The field diary is a note taking diary where the researcher may document his/her personal observations and reflections during the collection of data (Ortlipp, 2008; Patton, 2002a). This technique is useful to document participants' non-verbal and body expressions as well as the thoughts and feelings of the researcher during the data collection process. The documented information can assist in critical analysis and also maintains the transparency of the research process (Ortlipp, 2008). In this research, a field diary was used to document the reactions of various categories of participants (categories separated by gender, by position etc.) to the research topic and how the researcher felt about these reactions. The field diary is a useful tool to keep the researcher focussed on the subject of research by allowing her to note down personal view points, feelings and beliefs not only based on the interaction with participants but observations during the course of data collection process. The field diary was consulted during the analysis, interpretation and write up processes in the research (Ortlipp, 2008).

### *4.5.2 Secondary data*

The study applied various techniques to collect secondary data. Secondary data relating to this research was derived from government policy documents, particularly from the forestry sector of Nepal. A comprehensive collection of documents relating to forest governance in Nepal was sourced. These were mostly legal and policy documents such as forest policies, legislations, directives, guidelines and progress reports. Documents relating to donor-funded projects, reports of project impacts, journal articles, dissertations, books, newspapers, annual progress reports, online news and other reports related to forestry sector organizations were consulted. Electronic documents from website and various office libraries were also consulted. The hard copy

documents were collected or borrowed, from: the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Department of Forest Research and Survey, Law Books Management Board, Public Service Commission, National Planning Commission, Central Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, National Women Commission, Institute of Forestry, Multistakeholder Forestry Programme, Forest Action, Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) and Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resources Management Association (HIMAWANTI) Nepal.

This secondary data provided insights into various aspects of women's inclusion in forestry institutions. These documents were helpful in contextualizing the research, historicizing feminist perspectives in forest resource management, and substantiating the information of interviews and focus group discussions.

## 4.6 Data analysis strategy

The major activities in qualitative data analysis involve segmenting and reassembling of qualitative data. The analysis is the 'segmenting of the data into relevant categories and the naming of these categories with codes while simultaneously generating the categories from the data. In the reassembling phase the categories are related to one another to generate theoretical understanding of the social phenomena under the study in terms of the research questions' (Boeije, 2010:74). Qualitative analysis involves organizing, interpreting and integrating the data, identifying the patterns and relationships among the data and drawing findings (Miles *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, data analysis in this context is compiling the large volume of data collected through the key informant interviews, focus group discussions and other secondary sources, labelling them into different themes, sorting them based on those themes, and comparing them in order to draw inferences.

In this study, all the data obtained through key informant interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed in Nepali then translated into English by the researcher. The translated transcription from the key informant interviews and focus group discussions were recorded, stored and organized using NVivo 10.0 software. The secondary information which was in the form of text was also uploaded in the in the Nvivo software to facilitate the analysis procedure.

NVivo is a database system which is developed to facilitate the process of qualitative data analysis. This software assists researchers in analysing information obtained from different sources (Bazeley, 2013; Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). NVivo itself is not an analytical method such as semiotic analysis, content analysis and critical discourse analysis (Berg et al., 2004). However, using Nvivo for qualitative data analysis is worthwhile because it allows the incorporation and management of data of various types such as videos, audios and text. It also speeds up retrieval, makes the analysis more systematic and can create linkages across different data sources (Bazeley, 2000, 2013).

NVivo may be used with any one of several analytical methods but it cannot be a substitute for them. Files such as documents, transcripts, audios, videos and pictures can be uploaded and labelled with particular descriptions into NVivo. This uploaded information can be retrieved with a particular theme (node) commonly known as a coding in qualitative analysis. Nvivo helps to organise labels (codes) into themes. It allows the researcher to make notes (memos) about connections between codes and concepts, and to generate relationships between themes and perceptions.

In the preliminary stage, data was coded into four themes on the basis of the theoretical framework (Feminist Institutionalism). These themes were: organizational culture, formal and

informal institutions, structure and agency and power relations. In Nvivo the theme is called a 'node'. The data was further divided into sub themes (sub-nodes) within each theme. Finally, those clusters of classified data (themes-nodes/sub themes) were analysed. Some of the ideas emerging from the transcripts, which did not directly fall under the four themes derived from the theoretical framework were included by creating a fifth theme: 'the inclusion of women' Perceptions and ideas related to the concept of women's inclusion were placed under this theme. The stepwise procedure of analysis is described in figure 4.2.

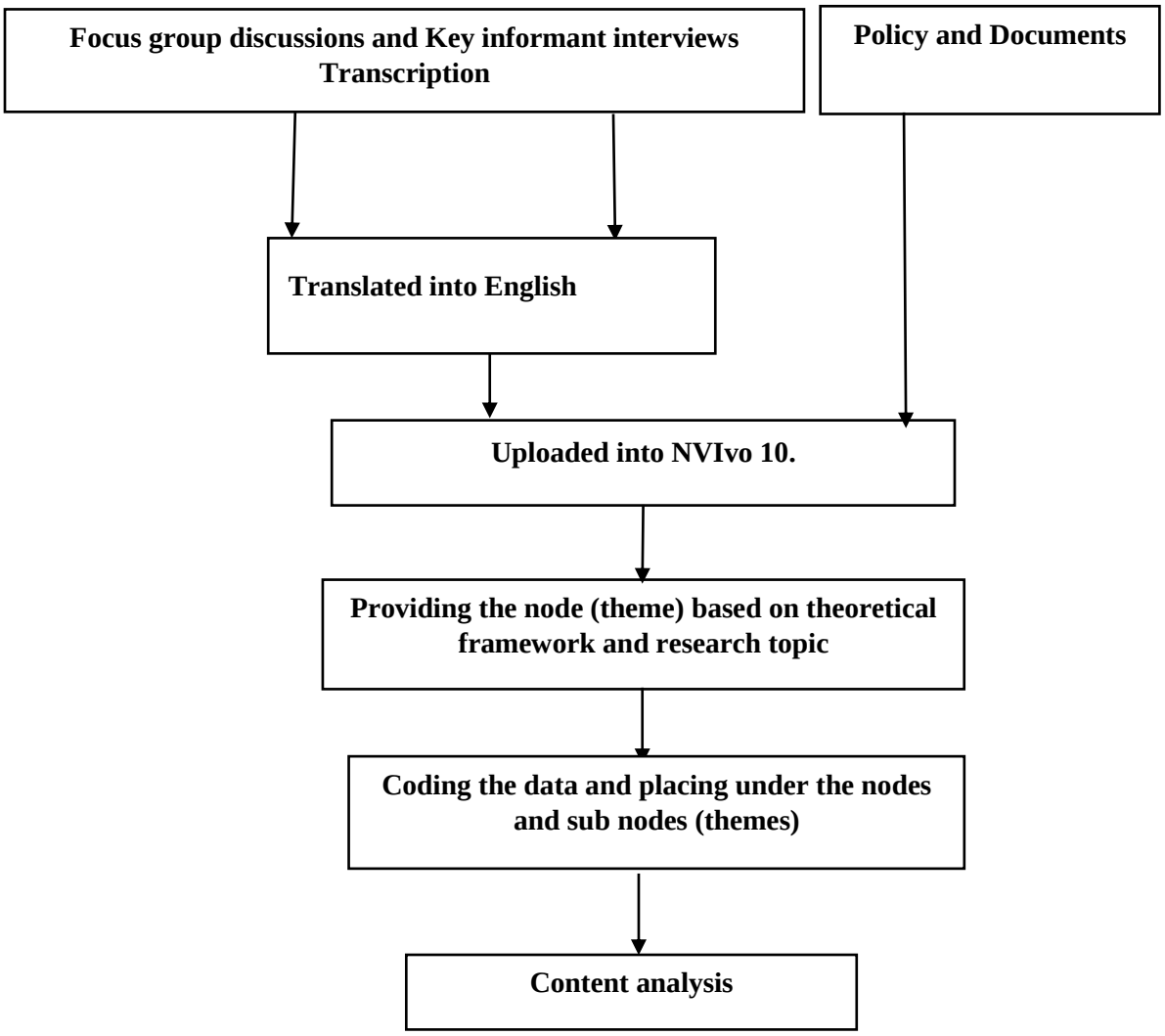



**Figure 4.2: Procedure for primary and secondary data analysis through NVivo**

Content analysis and evaluation of policy and other legislative measures, was used to analyse secondary data. This led to the emergence of themes. Following Spencer *et al.* (2006), such analysis contributes to exploring the contexts of different policies and programmes that provide space for the opportunities or challenges related to the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy, based on broader national and forestry specific policies and legislative context. Policy documents and implementation procedures were examined under this analytical procedure. The adequacy of policy, the context of policy and programs and the effectiveness of their implementation (Spencer *et al.*, 2006) were evaluated.

Content analysis is a common and popular analytical technique in qualitative research because of its usefulness in analysing the data from varieties of sources such as written documents, face to face conversation, transcripts, political speeches, computer based and online materials, communication in social media interviews (Neuendorf, 2016). In qualitative content analysis, the transcription is read thoroughly to extract the exact sense of the transcript and documents. This is often summarised or condensed (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The analysis therefore 'distils words into fewer content related categories' or themes in order to describe phenomena (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008:108). It helps to analyse the documents by describing the phenomena in fewer categories relating to theoretical issues. In such analyses, one should be careful about interpretation because of the possibility of categorising more or less of a particular kind of information so that a particular viewpoint is artificially reinforced; or interpreting meanings which are not present in the original material. Hence, Graneheim and Lundman (2004) emphasized that a 'balancing act' is required to analyse the text and to 'let the text talk'. In content analysis, both the content and the context of a document/text is analysed (Spencer *et al.*,

2006). Content analysis was applied in this research to interrelate the information drawn from policies and from interviews/focus group discussions (Patton, 2002a) in accordance with how the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy is understood. It also evaluated the opportunities and challenges perceived by the participants. Some interpretive approaches to understandings of views and cultures were also adopted to analyse the perceptions of participants (Spencer *et al.*, 2006). The document - participant interface was also considered during the analysis. Some of the facts and legal provisions mentioned by the participants during the discussions were analysed and cross referenced and vice versa. Furthermore, some cases related to the challenges faced by female forestry staff were also recorded in the form of direct quotations of statements made by research participants because of their significance in this research. During the whole analysis process the researcher tried to maintain the sense or the meaning of the transcripts.

## 4.6 Ethical considerations

The study involves data collection from people affiliated with various Government, Non-government, community organizations and free-lance forestry professions working in the forestry sector in Nepal. Signed letters of consent from individuals participating in focus group discussions and key informant interviews were obtained prior to beginning each discussion or interview. In addition, letters of permission to invite (voluntary) participation of staff members were also obtained from relevant organizations in accordance with the requirements of research ethics approval from Monash University. The basic thrust behind seeking such consent (from individuals and from organisations) is to respect the requirements for informed consent and voluntary participation (Harriss & Atkinson, 2015 (2013); Seidman, 2013). This procedure also increases the research benefits and minimizes the possible harm to the participants. Flyers advertising for participants (in Nepali language), guiding questions for focus group discussions

and key informant interviews; and the stepwise procedure for the data collection strategy were developed in the initial stages of the project and were submitted to the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). Approval was granted (project # CF14/1865 – 2014000955) in accordance with the standards of MUHREC prior to data collection. The principal investigator for this research holds a position within one of the participating organisations, hence, some 'insider researcher' perspectives are also included in the following section.

### *4.6.1 Insider researcher*

According to Robson (2002), 'insider researcher' is a term used to define a researcher who has a direct link or connection with the research setting. He has further added that a researcher can be classified as an insider in various ways. For instance, in collaborative action research, a researcher and the subject of the research may both be intensely involved in carrying out the study. Likewise, as a practitioner/insider, professionals may hold down an employment in some particular area and at the same time they carry out research within their work setting which may be relevant to their job. Insider research may also involve cases where the scholars have emotional, political and sexual associations with the subject of studies. Homosexuals can conduct gay research and feminists may carry out feminist research as insiders (DeVault, 1990, 2004; Leck, 1994). The research described in this thesis was carried out by a woman who was on study leave from her substantive position in Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation. In line with DeVault (2004) and Leck (1994), this study is therefore an example of feminist research focussed on the inclusion of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, carried out by female researcher who is in many respects an 'insider' in the sector of interest.

Researching from the inside has some drawbacks and benefits (Kerstetter, 2012). Insider researchers may be more able to accurately analyse subjects' views compared to outsiders because they truly understand the situation and a culture of which they are a part. Insiders also have an abundant knowledge of the context (e.g. working circumstances) compared to outsiders (Tedlock, 2000). Research participants may feel more relaxed and that they can talk openly with familiar persons (ie insider researchers) compared to outsiders in qualitative research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Research validity may also be higher due to the honesty, loyalty and authenticity of the insiders who can better understand the experience(s) of groups of which they are also members (Tedlock, 2000; Tierney & Gitlin, 1994). Costley and Workman (2007) has reported that insider research is useful to enhance and change both the researcher and the organisation by solving practical problems and by enabling the inquiry process.

Some scholars have pointed out the disadvantages of insider research. For example, (Bell, 2014) has indicated some ethical issues related to insider researchers. Being an insider, researchers may bias or dominate a study or its subject matter (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; van Heugten, 2004). Researchers themselves may also become a source of data which may compromise the validity of research (Rooney, 2005). Kanuha (2000) and Serrant-Green (2002) have raised questions about the transparency and honesty of insiders while conducting research in their own working areas. According to them, researchers may include their personal experiences in research rather than focusing on participants' perceptions. Researchers may also face confidentiality issues and their professional role may also prevent respondents for being honest while collecting information from their own colleagues about sensitive subjects.

Particular efforts were made in this research so that the beneficial aspects of insider research were recognised and utilised while the drawbacks and challenges were minimised.

Sensitivities around the subject matter were recognised and discussed and special care was taken to ensure that all participants understood that they were free to express and share their experiences, views and opinions, or not to answer any questions, or to withdraw from interviews at any time and any stage. The confidential nature of participants' contributions was also explained and confidentiality was strictly maintained, including the careful protection of recorded and transcribed data. Anonymity of the participants is preserved by not mentioning their individual identities anywhere in this study. Participants were also informed about the availability of research products (for example publications and this thesis) after the completion of the research. Such materials might be useful in terms of recognizing, admiring and respecting the roles and responsibilities of women in the organization. The researcher made every effort to develop trust and openness between herself and her interviewees to minimize the impact of her professional role in this study. Moreover, the researcher maintained a field diary (notes) to record the reactions and non-verbal expressions of the participants in order to inform the analysis of ideas and perceptions raised, articulated or discussed during interviews and discussions, without deviating from their original meaning.

## 4.7 Validation of data

Validation of data is important for maintaining the quality of research. The concept of validity differs among researchers. Creswell (2013:249) considered 'validation' as the measurement of the accuracy of findings based on research interpretation and participants' expression. Creswell further elaborated it as a process of research such as extensive time spent in the research, robustness of description and researcher -participant relationship instead of just verifying or checking the authenticity of findings in the study. Ritchie *et al.* (2013) argued that the concept of validation is developed in the natural science disciplines and may not be applicable in social

science. Others indicate that checking the correctness of qualitative research is of great concern for qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2013; Morse, 2015). The process of validation is to establish the 'trustworthiness' of the research, and various writers used different terms to denote this concept such as 'credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability and confirmability' (Creswell, 2013:246). Creswell (2013) suggested eight different strategies for validation of qualitative research, including checking for mutual trust between researcher and participants, triangulating the information from different sources, participants checking and external auditing. This research uses triangulation is used as a validation strategy.

In social research, triangulation involves triangulation of theories, triangulation of methods, triangulation of data from various sources and triangulation among analysis (Creswell, 2013; Golafshani, 2003). Triangulation in this research means, theoretical triangulation, methodological triangulation and triangulation of method used for data collection. Triangulation has been done carefully from the beginning of this research by consulting the literature widely to find the most relevant and useful theory (Feminist Institutionalism). A rigorous theoretical analysis (described in chapter two) was undertaken prior to data collection. Triangulation of the methods used for data collection processes was also carried out based on the theoretical framework used and the objectives of the study. Next, the information generated from different qualitative inquiries (key informant interviews, focus group discussions, policies and documents) was compared, providing ample opportunity for validation and substantiation of insights/conclusions. Field notes taken by the researcher during interviews and discussions also helped to triangulate the information, providing additional detail about participants' expressions, and mutual perceptions of the researcher and the participants at the time of analysis. Using

multiple analytical approaches is also considered another method of triangulation for this research.

## 4.8 Chapter conclusion

This research was carried out under the broad theoretical framework of Feminist Institutionalism. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, a qualitative methodological approach was used for data collection and analysis. Two types of data sources (primary and secondary) were obtained and analysis of this data was undertaken, drawing on constructivist and interpretivist techniques. Primary data were obtained through focus group discussions and key informant interviews while secondary data were obtained by accessing published and unpublished documents from various offices, university libraries and websites. The documents and transcriptions of focus groups discussion and key informant interviews were analysed using a computer-based software called NVivo 10 and themes drawn from Feminist Institutionalism. The qualitative approaches of policy and evaluation analysis and content analysis were adopted to analyse the secondary data. To maintain the validity of the research, careful consideration and application of theoretical and methodological perspectives was carried out. The next chapter describes the analysis of policies regarding the inclusion of women in Nepalese forest bureaucracy linking it with country's development perspectives.

# Chapter 5. Policy analysis

## 5.1 Introduction

Political changes together with changes in policy measures have significant potential to improve forestry governance across all management modalities, from state centric forest management to people centred forest management (see chapter 3). While legislative Acts and policies alone cannot fix the problem, the help that they do provide can be important. In Nepal's relatively recent democracy, some acts and policies are quite new and the outcome of these political instruments has not yet been seen.

This chapter presents the findings from a review of Nepalese government policies focused towards gender equality and women's inclusion. This chapter also provides an assessment of the effectiveness of policies and other interventions for women's inclusion from historical to current times over the last 65 years.

First, various government policies, strategies and legislative frameworks related to gender equality and the inclusion of women in the broader Nepalese context are analysed. The focus is then narrowed to focus on policies, strategies and frameworks for the inclusion of women, in the Nepalese civil service and particularly in the forestry sector. Examination of policies regarding the statistical representation of women in political bodies, security forces and the civil service, and of numbers of women participating in these categories, are of special interest. Conclusions from the analysis are presented at the end of the chapter.

## 5.2 Policy frameworks in Nepal for the inclusion of women

Nepal's development process has been guided by a series of five-year plans since the 1950s. These plans have influenced the formation of government policy and policy implementation

during this period. The importance of women's inclusion in Nepal's development process was acknowledged by the Nepalese government in the early 1980s, and some initiatives were introduced in the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1975-1980) (GoN, 1985). However, women's issues were addressed in policy documents, albeit on a token scale, as early as the 1950s.

Since the 1980s, the government has attempted to respond to gender inequality issues by focussing on how to increase women's participation in development, mainly by introducing and implementing policies recommended in the periodic development plans. Policy measures have developed gradually by changing government rules, regulations, guidelines and programmes. After the third decade of Nepal's periodic development plans, the lack of participation of women in the various structures of the country, from the grass roots right up to policy level was recognized as one of the impediments of the development process in Nepal (GoN, 2007b). The following subsection analyses some of the policy initiatives and institutional interventions which have attempted to address gender issues for the inclusion of women in the Nepalese context. However, there is a lack of resources with which to analyse the impact of such initiatives and interventions on women's inclusion.

### *5.2.1 Nepal's policy development trajectory for the inclusion of women*

After the end of the Rana autocracy in 1950, Nepal's first democratic government adopted the idea of periodic development plans to accelerate the social and economic development of Nepal. In the early five year development plans, activities were mainly gender neutral except for their consideration of the importance of women and women's welfare in terms of their reproductive and domestic roles (Bhadra, 2001). The activities guided by those plans included opportunities for women to participate in training programs related to nutrition, childcare, family planning, knitting, sewing and kitchen gardening. Such programs were designed to help women fulfil their

household duties more efficiently and effectively and improve their circumstances. Those plans considered women as passive beneficiaries of development rather than as stakeholders in the development of their country (Bhadra, 2001). These development approaches were criticized as adopting a women's 'welfare approach' (Bhadra, 2001; Bhadra & Thapa, 2007). None of the early five development plans, or the welfare approaches described under those plans, acknowledged existing or potential roles for women in broader policy formulation and implementation processes or within government and civil organizations and institutions.

In 1975, Nepal participated in the first World Conference on Women under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). A key outcome of the conference was the consensus that the exclusion of women from development processes was one of the root causes of the low status of women in any society (ADB, 2010); and participating countries were directed to strengthen the socio-economic status of women by including them in development programs. As a member of the UN, Nepal responded by amending some policies. As a result, the participation of women was emphasized in the sectoral development programs of various government and non-government organizations. The Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-1985) was the first policy document that established a foundation for focusing on women's issues in Nepal's periodic development planning process. This sixth plan encouraged women's participation in literacy, education, health and family planning (Acharya, 2003; Banjade, 2016). The plan also included a commitment to amend discriminatory laws and rules, in favour of women. The Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985/86-1990/1991) further acknowledged the role of women in the development process and expanded the thrust of previous plans by assigning a separate chapter; 'Women's Participation in

Development', which was in line with the global concept of Women in Development (WID) (Acharya, 2003; Bhadra & Thapa, 2007).

Formal and informal education and skills development training were recommended in order to empower women to address their own needs. This 'Women in Development' (WID) approach was more progressive than the women's welfare approach, because it acknowledged women's productive roles in the economic sector, rather than confining them to reproductive roles. However, the WID approach, also labelled the efficiency approach, was criticized because it required women to maintain their existing household roles as well as developing and practicing new skills in new roles (Ghale *et al.*, 2018). This approach also neglected to include women in decision making and did not address the need for improving their social status (Bhadra, 2001; Bhadra & Thapa, 2007; Ghale *et al.*, 2018). Also, the WID approach did not take into account the context of women and the different hierarchies that affect them such as caste, class, culture and religion (Boserup, 1970). Many Nepalese women were unable to access the benefits provided for them because of barriers associated with social hierarchies in the form of informal institutions. Some increments in the levels of women's involvement in activities and programs were achieved, but the overall economic empowerment of women remained unaddressed (Bhadra & Thapa, 2007; Ghale *et al.*, 2018). A summary of Nepal's major policies for the inclusion of women, and the focus area of each, is presented in table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Major Government policies for the inclusion of women in Nepal**

| Name of the Policy/ Document | Approach/Theme | Focus area |
|---|---|---|
| First five-year plan to fifth five-year plan (1956-1961, 1962-1965, 1965-1970, 1970-1975) | Welfare Approach | Considered women as beneficiaries of development<br><br>Focused on women's reproductive roles and household work, training was provided based to allow more effective and efficient approaches to regular household duties |
| Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plan (1975-1980/ 19-80-1985) | Efficiency Approach/ Participatory/ Women in Development (WID) | Recognized women's productive roles and considered women as development agents<br><br>Promoted women's active participation in development programs and projects through various training and education programs<br><br>Recognized the legal impediments for women and made commitments in favour of women<br><br>Did not recognise informal institutions which prevented some women from accessing programs and opportunities |
| Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1991 | Gender Equality | Made 'right of equality' a fundamental right- no sexual discrimination in the application of general law, equal pay for similar jobs, and special provisions for the protection and advancement of women<br><br>State policies emphasized the participation of women in national development through special provisions in education, health and employment<br><br>Required that at least five percent of candidates from each of the contesting parties should be female.<br><br>Required that at least three members (out of 35) for the National Assembly (elected through the house of representatives) should be women |
| Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-1997) | Equity Approach in line with Gender and Development (GAD) | Realized the need for gender- mainstreaming in development<br><br>Sought women's representation at decision making levels<br><br>Promoted self-reliant women's institutions |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Envisaged an appropriate organizational structure for co-ordination and monitoring activities |
| Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) | Women Empowerment/ Gender mainstreaming | Integrated women in mainstream development through gender equality and women's empowerment<br><br>Increased women's participation in every sector by taking gender equality into account in policy formulation, implementation, program planning and evaluation<br><br>Adopted positive measures to include women in administration such as special privileges and reservation for women candidates in government services |
| The Local Election Act 1997 | Inclusive Local government | Made mandatory provision for at least one female candidate in Ward Committees (lowest level of local government unit) |
| Tenth Five-Year Plan (2000-2007) | Gender Equality | Recognised gender issues as contributing to the causes and consequences of poverty<br><br>Looked for active participation of women, especially in policy decision making, planning, implementation and monitoring of local development<br><br>Made special efforts to increase women's participation in political, administrative and economic affairs from the central to local level<br><br>Established effective coordination among gender focal persons in the ministries for women development |
| The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 | Social Inclusion and Equity | Intended to abolish all forms of social discrimination for the country's prosperity<br><br>Provision of rights to social justice, freedom and fundamental right to Nepalese women<br><br>Visioned for inclusive state and 33% quota reserved for women in parliament |
| The Three-Year Interim Plan-(2007-2010), Twelfth Plan (2010-2013), | Social Inclusion/ Inclusion in state structures | 33% quota for women in state structure<br><br>Vision of ending all forms of discrimination such as legal, social, cultural, linguistic, religious, economic, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Thirteenth Plan (2013-2016), Fourteenth Plan (2016-2018) | | caste, gender, physical and geographical<br>Employment focused, inclusive and justifiable economic development<br>To establish just, secure and egalitarian society through gender equality and women empowerment |

The restoration of multiparty democracy followed by promulgation of the constitution in 1990 and ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in 1991, brought women's rights agendas to the forefront of political discussion in Nepal (GoN, 2017b; UNFPA, 2007). Those milestones opened the way for legal reform to bring gender equality strongly into policy and practice (GoN, 2017a). In the 1990s, a Gender Equity approach similar to the global 'Gender and Development' (GAD) initiative was adopted to address women's needs based on gendered roles; which was not included in the WID approach (Ghale *et al.*, 2018). Aimed at achieving women's empowerment on an equal footing with men, GAD was based on the analysis of gendered relationships between men and women in different social contexts and considering social hierarchies. International organizations such as the Department for International Development (DFID), the Danish International Development Agency DANIDA and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), working in the Nepalese development sector, also modified their working strategies from WID to GAD to increase all women's access to development benefits. However, the GAD approach failed to gain momentum due to a lack of common understanding of the approaches, the limited capacity of institutions and an absence of specific policies on gender empowerment and equality (UNFPA, 2007). Nonetheless, GAD recognized the importance of gender perspectives in the development sector. Under this approach, national and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations contributed significantly to

women-inclusive development processes. Moreover, such organizations adopted women-inclusive agendas and initiated a movement for change via their policies, programs and attitudes (Khadka, 2009; UN WOMEN, 2015).

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1991 brought further visible changes in securing space for women in the country's political sphere, based on the right to equality (see Table-5.1). Among the major policy achievements of the Constitution, was a requirement that any political party contesting a parliamentary election must be comprised of at least five percent of women members; and 20% of positions in local elections must be reserved for and held by women. Despite this policy, in the subsequent election, the representation of women in parliament did not increase, (remaining at 12 women out of 205). Although it failed to ensure immediate success for women candidates, this provision helped to increase awareness about the importance of women in politics and the political rights of women (Pradhan, 2005).

Meanwhile, the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992- 1997) adopted the concept of gender mainstreaming (inclusion of women) in the development processes, including representation of women at decision making levels in the government, non-government and community-based organizations (GoN, 1992). Participation of women in any training organized by the government or non-government sectors, became mandatory. The concept of women's farmers groups and community forest user groups (with mandatory participation of women), and labour training to involve women in physical and administrative jobs, were all introduced in the Eighth Five-Year Plan (Bhadra, 2001). Recruitment of some women to field level positions in the some development sectors was also initiated. These positions included assistants for micro-credit programs, health workers and volunteers, and group motivators. Such measures were focused on participation of women at local levels rather than on influencing policy.

The Local Election Act of 1997(GoN, 1997) prescribed some initiatives for women's political participation in local level political bodies. The Act made the inclusion of women mandatory across several political levels. At the Ward level (lowest level local government unit) the Act required at least one female candidate to contest local government elections. Female representation within Village Development Committees or Municipalities (middle level local government units) was also made mandatory under the act; as was female membership of District Development Committees (top level local government unit). As a result, thousands of women participated as candidates in the 1997 local election and more than 36,000 women from different political parties had the opportunity to be elected into local government bodies, with some women also being appointed as office bearers (Pradhan, 2005). Nonetheless, very few were elected to executive positions (Mahat, 2003). Despite the introduction of constitutional and legal provisions designed to facilitate women's inclusion, and huge increases in women's participation; which together brought about significant political change in the 1990's, women were still unable to access political power or positions in national politics (Pradhan, 2005).

The Ninth Five- Year Plan (1997-2002) re-emphasized the GAD approach to Nepal's development programs. It highlighted, explicitly, the need to integrate women into mainstream development agendas through gender equality and women's empowerment (Acharya, 2003). This plan also emphasised women's participation in every sector by incorporating the concept of gender in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of sectoral policies and programs. Adoption of some positive measures, such as special privileges and the reservation of some seats for women in the Public Service Commission (PSC) examination[3], was also the aim of the plan. Such provisions were not immediately effective due to the absence of necessary legal

[3] A pass in this examination is a pre-requisite for employment in the public service in Nepal

arrangements (i.e. the Civil Service Act was not fully revised immediately). In the Civil Service Act, some special arrangements favouring women were made, such as reduced requirements for work experience for women seeking promotion and reduced probation periods for women starting careers in the civil service. Although not prescribed by the Act, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare offered coaching classes to women undertaking the PSC examination by (GoN, 1997). All of these initiatives were intended to promote a women-inclusive civil service and to increase the number of women within government agencies. However, the integration of gender inclusion in sectoral programs remained selective and was largely confined to specific development sectors such as education, health, agriculture and forestry (Acharya, 2003). Within these sectors, gender inclusion was focused at project or programme implementation levels. As a result, the involvement of women was increased in community-based organizations, especially in agriculture and forestry; and in women-based micro credit groups.

The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-2007), also known as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), emphasized the role of women in poverty reduction. It also recognised gender issues as a cause and consequence of poverty in Nepal. Hence, gender inclusion strategies were used as a strategy for poverty reduction. The major focus of the plan was gender equality, mainstreaming and empowerment in sectoral policy making, program planning and implementation (Acharya, 2003). Among the eight priorities adopted by the PRSP, three of them revolved around women's issues (Acharya, 2003). The vision was about increasing women's roles through empowering representative women to participate actively in policy and program formulation, implementation and monitoring processes at local levels. This plan institutionalized networking among sectoral ministries to support and coordinate gender inclusion in

development. Specifically, the introduction of Gender Focal Persons (GFPs) in all government Ministries was made mandatory (UN WOMEN, 2015). The role of these individuals was to prioritize gender issues and strengthen gender auditing and budgeting systems within their respective ministries. The role of GFP was allocated as a special extra responsibility to a selected officer in each of the ministries and was promoted as an example of the mainstreaming of gender issues in each sector (UNFPA, 2007).

In September 2000, Nepal was involved in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, committing, along with other participating nations, to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of targets - with a deadline of 2015 - that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (GoN, 2016c, 2017a). Five years earlier, Nepal was also part of the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, organised by the Commission on the Status of Women. Twelve critical areas of concern were identified at this meeting. These were documented as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995); which was also reviewed in 2000 at the 23rd special session of the United Nations General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (also known as the “Beijing +5” meeting) (GoN, 2017b).

In order to meet its commitments under these two international agreements, Nepal accelerated gender mainstreaming interventions from 2000, through various interventions in the development sector. These interventions specifically addressed the quantifiable and time-bound targets of the MDGs (ADB, 2010). Among them a programme: ‘Amending Some Nepal Acts to Maintain Gender Equality, 2006’ was implemented, resulting in the removal of barriers to equal participation for women and ending legal discrimination.

Other mechanisms such as Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) (the allocation and implementation of budget in order to benefit both genders) were also introduced to address gender issues in the country's National Budgeting System by the end of this tenth periodic plan (GoN, 2010). In some sectors, specific targets and monitoring indicators were developed during the period of the tenth plan. However, due to a lack of integration of targets with monitoring indicators relating to poverty and inclusion, gender mainstreaming became a challenge (ADB, 2010). During this period, Nepal experienced an armed political conflict between Maoist insurgents and the Government of Nepal. This conflict brought further political changes in 2006 led to the creation of a new (interim) constitution for Nepal in 2007. The new constitution facilitated transformative change with respect to the rights of women and other disadvantaged communities (ADB, 2010) along with changes in other societal values. It was during this period that the Nepalese Royal Family was removed from power.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal was in place from 2007-2015. It identified social discrimination (on the basis of gender, caste and ethnic, linguistic, regional groups) as obstacles to the country's development, and made arrangements for the inclusion of such people in state structures, through legal and institutional measures. The interim constitution provided 'the right of equality', 'the right of women' and 'the right of social justice' as fundamental rights that directly affected women in Nepal. Those rights explicitly state that no one can discriminate against a person based on their gender, and that women have the right to take part in the state structure. Women's representation in the new constitution-making process was also ensured by the provision of quotas requiring that at least 33% of members of parliament were women; and by the introduction of the Proportional Representation Election System. The latter ensured that 240 of the 601 members of the Constitutional Assembly (CA) were elected by the public via a

direct voting system. This was also described as “Who gets the majority of the votes wins the election” and the “First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)” system. Of the remaining 361 CA members, 336 were elected via a Proportional Representation (PR) system (the number of candidates selected from each party based on the total votes obtained by that party) and 25 were to be nominated by the government from various professional streams of society. The proportion of women participating in the first Constitutional Assembly in 2008 was 32.8 per cent. It was a historic achievement of significant representation of women at such a high political level (Lama *et al.*, 2011; UN WOMEN, 2015).

The Interim Constitution also encouraged a minimum of 33% representation of women in all state structures including Constitutional Commissions such as Human Right Commissions. This provision placed pressure on each and every institution in Nepal, including non-governmental and community-based organizations, to be more women-inclusive (GoN, 2008, 2015a).

Following suit, the subsequent Three Years Interim Plan (TYIP) (2007-2010) acknowledged gender as a cross cutting issue and tried to address the implementation gaps in development programmes for marginalized people. The wider term ‘social inclusion’ was adopted and gender was blended into the concepts of social justice and inclusion (UN WOMEN, 2015).

The concept of social inclusion and good governance in the development process was introduced through the proportional representation of groups of people (including women) who had previously experienced negative social discrimination (GoN, 2015a, 2017b; UN WOMEN, 2015). Moreover, the plan acknowledged a rights-based approach and focused on the elimination of structural inequalities in governance systems.

At the beginning of the tenure of the 2007-2010 plan, the 'Act to Amend Some Nepalese Acts to Maintain Gender Equality' (GoN, 2007a) was passed. The Gender Equality Act (2007) became the instrument by which various discriminatory laws against women were amended and progressive changes for gender equality were established in other laws (GoN, 2009b, 2015a). Such amendments resulted in the securing of property rights for married, widowed and divorced women along with some substantive and procedural women-friendly legal changes.

During the period of the TYIP and the Twelfth Plan (2010-2013) the translation of women-inclusive policies into practice was initiated through various interventions. The long-term vision was to end all forms of discrimination and inequality in Nepalese society in order to build a prosperous, modern and just Nepal within two decades (UN WOMEN, 2015). Some acts and policies were amended for recruiting, empowering and promoting women within government structures including the civil service, the Nepalese army and the police force. Many government ministries such as the Ministries for: Forests and Soil Conservation, Agriculture, Transport and Labour, Population and Health, Local Development and General Administration developed their own Gender and Social Inclusion Strategies (GESI) for their own sectoral programs.

The Thirteenth Plan (2013-2016) and The Fourteenth Plan (2016-2018) also followed the previous plans, promoting employment focused, inclusive and justifiable economic development for poverty alleviation (GoN, 2016c; UN WOMEN, 2015). A new Constitution was established during the period of the The Thirteenth Plan. The Constitution of Nepal 2015 (promulgated on September 20, 2015) adopted a federal government system (replacing the former centralized government system) to share the state political power across a three-tiered government system viz. State, Provincial and Local. This latest Constitution also made possible several progressive

changes for women's empowerment and inclusion as well as providing continuity of rights established by the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007. For example, the 2015 Constitution makes flexible provisions for the transfer of citizenship to children via either their father or their mother. |This provision is intended to make it easier for women and their children to obtain citizenship certificates (GoN, 2015a).

The 2015 Constitution failed to address direct or indirect gender-based discrimination in private or public spheres. Clause 24 clearly mentions that no person shall be discriminated against on the basis of caste, ethnicity, origin, community, occupation or physical ability, but gender is not specified. Since gender discrimination is widespread (GoN, 2009b, 2015a), this is a serious omission.

Nevertheless, Nepal has established some legal ground to address gender inequalities including ensuring for women: economic security, protection from gender-based violence and safeguarding of reproductive and sexual rights (UN WOMEN, 2015). Importantly, the inclusion of women in decision making processes is also supported under the present Constitution.

The political developments described above have continued to improve the environment for ongoing legal reform in favour of women in Nepal. However, many current policies and legislation remain discriminatory against women (Agarwal, 2009; GoN, 2015a, 2017b). A National Review on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) in 2014 (known as "Beijing+20") (GoN, 2017b) reported that 32 of Nepal's laws remained gender discriminatory and required amendment.

The influence and contribution of international development agencies (such as the Department for International Development (DFID), Care Nepal, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UN-Women) in the development of gender sensitive policies has been significant in Nepal, however, the transition from formal to substantive equality has been slow due to lack of internalization (ADB, 2010; GoN, 2009b, 2015a, 2017b; Khadka, 2009). The majority of Nepalese laws and policies are based on equality and treat all people equally regardless of their circumstances, assuming that all Nepalese people have the same entitlements, access and rights. But substantive equality is achieved through fairness in treatment (equity) rather equality in law. Organizational reform is also important to facilitate effective implementation of laws and policies. Along with policies and legal reforms, Nepal has been developing organizational reforms to ensure that policies are implemented in line with gender equality. The following section will discuss organizations and programs focused on gender issues in Nepal.

## 5.3 Organizational development and programs for women's inclusion

Various organisations have been networking informally in Nepal to support the effective implementation of policies, laws and programs to ensure Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Nepal. These organizations include Nepal's National Women's Commission (NWC), the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW) and its 75 district level offices, the Gender Responsive Budget Committee (GRBC) (coordinated by the Joint Secretary of the Budget Division), the Women and Children Service Centre of Nepal Police, the Social Welfare Council, the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Unit and the Gender Focal Persons of all Nepalese Government Ministries and departments (see details in figure 5.1.

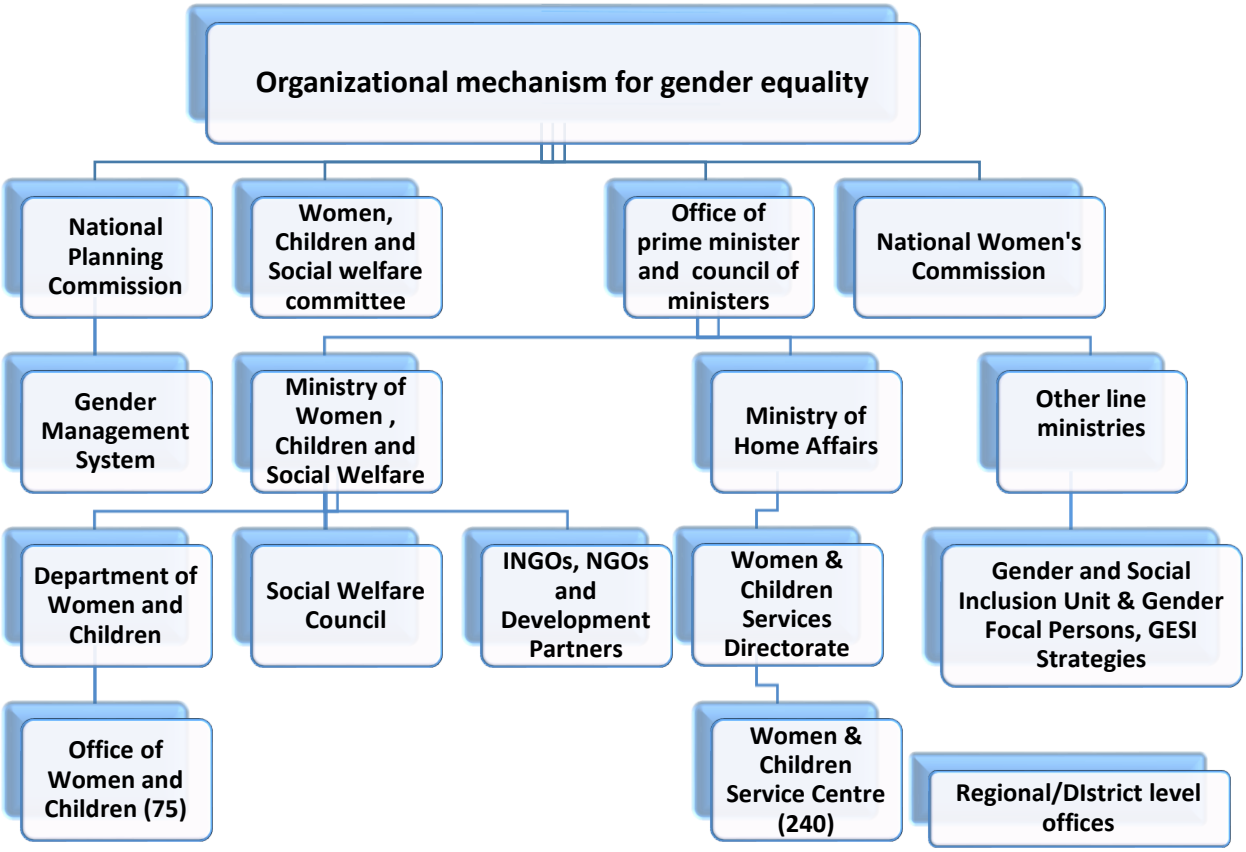



**Figure 5.1: Organizational mechanism for gender equality in Nepal**
adopted and modified from (UN WOMEN, 2015)

The MoWCSW is an agency vital to the formulation and facilitation of appropriate policies for women, children, elderly people and people with disabilities and also serves as national level Gender Focal Agency (GoN, 2009b, 2017a; UNFPA, 2007). This ministry works in close cooperation with national and international non-governmental organizations and UN agencies. The NWC also advocates for progressive changes in policies and laws and works against gender-based violence. The Department of Women and Children (and its 75 District Women's Development Offices) and the Social Welfare Council implement policies and

programmes focused on women (UNFPA, 2007). Other government Ministries also implement specific programmes related to women. For example, the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation implements women focused programs related to the forestry sector.

Each Ministry has a Gender Focal Person with responsibilities including coordinating, managing and reporting issues related to gender and social inclusion that are relevant to their organization (GoN, 2004a). The responsibility of the gender focal person has been allocated to one staff member in each Ministry and in each Department of each Ministry (UNFPA, 2007). In some ministries, gender equality and social inclusion units have also been established. For example, the Ministries of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Health and Population, Education and Local Development each have separate units to oversee gender and social inclusion.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) formulated the Gender Management System (GMS) to improve planning and programming from a gender perspective (ADB, 2010). A multi-tiered structure was formed with mechanisms for classifying programs using gender codes and coordinating and directing activities among the Ministries (UNFPA, 2007). While this structure is clearly formulated in policy (and described below), the researcher did not find any documentation regarding the actual on-ground functioning of these mechanisms.

The first tier, directly under the NPC, is named the Gender Management System Steering Committee. This committee is composed of representative members from the MoWSCSW, various ministries and concerned institutions, the Public Service Commission, the National Women's Commission, the Social Welfare Council, the Nepal Chamber of Commerce, the National Commissions of *Dalits* and *Janajati*, and representatives from business and professional women's organizations etcetera.

The second tier is the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee which is chaired by the Secretary of the MoWCSW. This committee is composed of participants from various ministries, representatives from the Nepal Rastra Bank, the Chair of the National Women's Commission and the Member Secretary of the Social Welfare Council.

The third tier is a Gender Management Team, located within each Ministry. Each team is chaired by the Joint Secretary of the Planning Division of the Ministry, with that Ministry's Gender Focal Persons as its member secretary (UNFPA, 2007).

At the district level, a Gender Management Team is under the leadership of the Chair of the District Development Committee with membership comprised of members of the district level government, representatives from the non-government sector, local experts. The Women's Development Officer in the district serves as the team's member secretary.

## 5.4 The inclusion of women in state institutions in Nepal

Statistics regarding the Nepalese labor force and employment in Nepal show significant disparities between males and females. Only 44.8 % of economically active females are engaged in employment outside the agricultural sector whereas male engagement in the same areas is 76.4% (GoN, 2016c). The majority of Nepalese women are involved in unpaid work related to family and subsistence farming. They have a very low time budget available for paid employment; or for the development of skills required for paid employment. The higher domestic workloads and household responsibilities borne by women also mean that they have less time and fewer opportunities to be involved in public affairs (Bennett, 2008; GoN, 2009b, 2017a). Despite these barriers, women's involvement in public life has been increasing in Nepal following the changes in the political environment described in the previous section. As a result,

women's participation has increased within various state structures including at the policy making level. Positive discrimination such as the allocation of quotas for women's positions in the civil service have ensured that competition for at least some positions or promotions happens only among female candidates. Provision for mandatory representation of at least 33% of positions by women in various institutions have been instrumental in successfully including women (along with representatives of other marginalized groups) in state structures including political bodies, security forces, and government bureaucracies (GoN, 1991, 2015a). These changes in the levels of women's representation are discussed in the following paragraph.

An electoral college comprising the Parliament of Nepal and the members of the provincial legislatures elected the first female Head of State (President) in Nepal in 2015. The first female Speaker of the Parliament was also elected in the same year. Notwithstanding that the President's powers are almost entirely ceremonial (convention dictates that the President will act on the advice of the prime minister and the government); and that the role of the Speaker is limited to the management of meetings of Parliamentary members, these positions have become matter of pride for Nepalese women and have encouraged more women to participate in politics (Pradhan, 2005; Yadav, 2018). This achievement has been deemed possible due to the strong commitment to women's inclusion in the Constitution, which dictates that either the President or Vice President must be from an ethnic minority and that the Speaker and the Vice Speaker should be of different genders. Despite these provisions in the Constitution, and the significant advances made in the involvement of women in Nepalese politics, the proportion of female members within the Legislature of Parliament is lower than it has been previously and lower than is provisioned in the Constitution, at 29.9% (172) of 601 members (UN WOMEN, 2015).

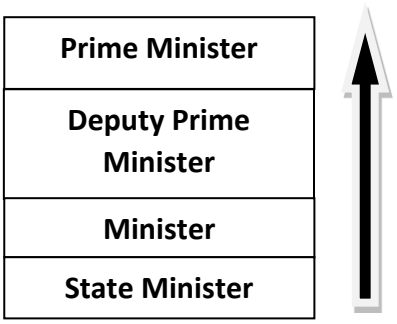



**Figure 5.2: The hierarchy in the council of Ministers**

At the time of writing, the government of Nepal has 25 ministries which are arranged into four hierarchies (figure 5.2). The Ministers within these four levels comprise the Council of Ministers, which currently includes 5 women members. These women occupy the portfolios of: the Minister of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, the Minister of Water Supply, the Minister of Land Management, Minister of Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation and the state Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development (GoN, 2018a). The Council of Ministers has no mandatory provision for inclusion of women.

Nepal adopted women-inclusive policies across all three of its security forces (the Nepal Army, the Nepal Armed Police Force and the Nepal Police). The Nepal Army has its own health service staff which began recruiting women as health workers (e.g. doctors, nurses and aviation personnel) in 1961 (GoN, 2018d). The Recruitment of females as soldiers and officers in the Nepal Army started in 2004 and 2005 respectively, during the Maoist insurgency. In 2010, a women's division was also established to look after women's issues within the army. The proportion of women employed in the Nepal Army is 3.2%; mostly in technical and lower ranking positions (GoN, 2018d; UN WOMEN, 2015). This is much lower than the proportion of

places for new recruits reserved for women. The army's 2014 recruitment policy reserved 45% of places for new recruits for minority groups, based on gender, caste, ethnicity and geography (GoN, 2014). Assuming that these 45% of places are allocated according to a representative formula, 20% of the reserved places should be available for female candidates.

The Armed Police Force and the Nepal Police have similar recruitment policies and 6.3% and 8.14%, respectively, of their employees at the end of 2017 were women (Bhattarai, 2018). None of the three security forces currently employ women in senior positions. The inclusion of women is comparatively higher in the Nepalese Civil Service; and includes some high-level representation.

Nepal's Civil Service is the government's bureaucratic agency, with the responsibility of executing government plans, policies and programs through its twelve distinct services. These are: the Economic Planning and Statistics Service, the Engineering Service, the Agricultural Service, the Judicial Service, the Foreign Service, the Administration Service, the Auditing Service, the Forestry Service, the Education service, the Health Service, the Parliament Service and the Miscellaneous Service (GoN, 1991). Currently, 87,582 staff comprise the Nepalese Civil Service, of which only 19,319 (22.05 %) are female (DoCPR, 2018). The Health Service has the highest representation of female staff (45.54 %) whereas other the other eleven categories composed only 13.02 % on average (DoCPR, 2018). Female representation is lower in the more technically-based services including the forestry service, the engineering service and the agriculture service compared to non-technical sectors.

The 22.05% proportion of women in Nepal's Civil Service in 2018 has increased dramatically from 11% in 2007 (DoCPR, 2018; UN WOMEN, 2015). This change has been driven by interventions in formal institutions such as the introduction of quota systems provided

by the first and second amendments of the Civil Service Act 1993 (Table, 5.2). The first amendment in 1998, increased the age limit for women to gain entry into the civil service and reduced the experience period required for promotion by one year for women. The second amendment in 2007 designated that one third of the 45 % quota available for employment of individuals from socially disadvantaged communities should be available for women. The major features of The Civil Service Act 1993 and its amendments in relation to women's inclusion are presented in table 5.4.

**Table 5.2: The features of Civil Service Act 1993 with its amendments**

| **Civil Service Act 1993** | **First amendment 1998** | **Second Amendment 2007** |
|---|---|---|
| Women are not legally excluded but there are no special arrangements for women's inclusion | • The upper age limit for candidates for the public service examination is set at 40 years for women (35 years for men)<br>• Minimum service periods required prior to promotion are reduced by one year for women civil employees (compared to their male counterparts) | • Forty-five percent of posts available to be filled by open are set aside for applicants from minority groups; and thirty three percent of these are available only to women candidates<br>• The Government of Nepal may, by a Notification in the Nepal Gazette, specify that any specific function or post is only available to women applicants.<br>• The upper age limit of 40 years for women applying for the public service examination will be waived for any female employee who has been previously temporarily appointed to any government post within the Government of Nepal; and who has served continuously for at least five years.<br>• A six months' probation period will be applied when a woman is appointed to a civil service post (compared to one year for males). |

Despite these achievements, the upper hierarchies of the civil service bureaucracy (figure 5.3) have a clear gender gap. For example, of the 69 civil servants acting at the Secretary Level, only one was female at the end of 2017; and there is no quota provided for the appointment of women at this level. Although quantitative change has been achieved, the qualitative aspect of women's inclusion is yet to be addressed. Moreover, except in the health service there is huge gap in women's representation in all civil service positions which require technical education. The Ministry of Forests and Soil conservation is one of the areas in which female representation is low.


**Figure 5.3: The hierarchy of Nepalese civil service bureaucracy (using the example of forest bureaucracy)**

## 5.5 Policy and legal framework for women's inclusion in forestry sector

The selection and recruitment of all civil servants including those within the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and its departments is the duty of the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission performs its duty under the prevailing Civil Service Act, Civil Service Rules, Public Service Commission's Act, Public Service Regulations and guidelines under such legal frameworks. Similarly, the posting and transfer of civil servants and other matters of human resources management within the Civil Service are performed under the Civil Service Act and it associated regulations. In addition, public sector has policies, plans, strategies, acts, rules and directives which are specially formulated to govern the sector. The next section describes these documents as they apply to the forestry sector, and focuses on aspects of these which are intended to increase women's inclusion and participation in forestry governance. As mentioned in chapter three, at the time of writing the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation oversees five departments and various regional, district and local level offices.

Currently, there are more than 65 policies, plans, strategies, acts, regulations, guidelines and directives which govern the Nepal's public forestry sector (Table 5.3). A content analysis of these documents revealed that several were sensitive to, and acknowledged, the gendered role of women, hence provided some space for their inclusion. Table 5.3 provides a list of these policies, strategies, directives, acts and regulatory frameworks to govern forestry sector Nepal. The major provisions for women's inclusion and related policies are described in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.3: List of guiding policies and legislative frameworks for forestry sector Nepal**

| |
|---|
| **Policies and Strategies** |
| Master Plan for Forestry Sector- 1989 (25-year plan) |
| Forestry Sector Policy 2000 |
| Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy, 2008 |
| Climate change Policy, 2008 |
| Foreign Aid Policy in the Forestry Sector, Nepal, 1999 |
| Human Resource Development Strategy |
| Nepal Wet-land Policy, 2012 |
| Nepal Biodiversity Strategy and Implementation Plan 2014 |
| Forest Policy 2015 |
| Forestry Sector Strategy 2015 |
| |
| Acts and Regulations |
| Forest Act, 1993 |
| Forest Rules, 1995 |
| Soil and Water Conservation Act, 1982 |
| Soil and Water Conservation Regulation, 1985 |
| Environment Protection Act, 1996 |
| Environment Protection Regulation, 1997 |
| National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973 |
| National Parks and Wildlife Protection Regulations, 1974 |
| Conservation Area Management Regulations, 1996 |
| Conservation Area Government Management Regulation, 1999 |
| Buffer-zone Management Regulations, 1996 |
| Private Forest Regulations, 2041 |

| |
|---|
| National Trust for Nature Conservation Act, 2039 |
| National Trust for Nature Conservation Regulations, 2041 |
| Aquatic Animal Protection Act, 1961 |
| Mines and Mineral Act, 1985 |
| Local Self-Governance Act, 1998 |
| Nepal Civil Service Act, 1991 |
| Nepal Civil Service Regulations, 1993 |
| Nepal Forest Service (Structure, Groups, Class division, Appointment and Promotion) Regulations, 2051 |
| <u>Guidelines</u> |
| Non-Government Service Provider Guidelines. 2003 |
| Buffer Zone Management guideline, 2056 |
| Conservation Area management Guidelines, 2056 |

The Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (MPFS) 1989 is the major umbrella policy for governance of the forestry sector in Nepal. This plan recognises the importance of community participation in forestry, including women's participation in forest management. It includes some initiatives to increase levels of women's involvement in community-based forest management. However, the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector is silent about the inclusion of women in state forestry institutions, in policy development and in decision-making. It fails to incorporate gender issues in its primary and secondary programmes of Master Plan for Forestry Sector 1989. Table 5.4 shows how forestry-specific policies have changed over time towards more women-inclusive forestry governance. The Interim Constitution 2007 and subsequent changes in policy measures have recognized women's inclusion a crucial part of forestry governance (GoN, 2008).

### *5.5.1 The inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy in particular*

There are five departments and two centres within the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation portfolio (see diagram in Chapter 3). The Ministry Office itself employs 66 staff, of which 13 are female (i.e. 20% female: 80% male) (GoN, 2018c). The Department of Forests (DoF) employs 4824 staff (consists majority of forest bureaucracy staff); and 315 of these are female (i.e. 6.5% female: 93.5% male (GoN, 2018c). The Department of Forests also consists around 1000-armed security foresters for forest patrolling, however none of these are female. Similarly, there are 51 female staff and 373 male staff in the Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management (DSCWM) (i.e. 12% female: 88% male). The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), the Department of Forest Research and Survey (DFRS), and the Department of Plant Resources (DoPR) have female staff comprising 4.71% (47 women), 5.77% (6 women) and 10.60% (37 women) of their respective workforces (GoN, 2018c).

**Table 5.4 Policies and legislative frameworks for women's inclusion in Nepal's forestry sector**

| **Policy document** | **Provision** |
|---|---|
| Master Plan for Forestry Sector (1989- 2014) | Acknowledges importance of women's participation in community forest management. Recommends that women should comprise one third of the executive committees of community forestry user groups |
| Community Forestry Guidelines, 2009 (revised) | Clearly recognizes gender issues, includes some mandatory clauses to include women in community forestry. For example, one woman and one man started to recognize as member of community forests from one household, at least 50% of executive committees of community forest user group should be women. |
| Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007/Constitution of Nepal 2015 | Adopted provision of affirmative action for marginalized groups of society such as women, *dalit*, indigenous community |
| Leasehold Forest User | Focused livelihood improvement of poor and marginalized, |

| | |
|---|---|
| Groups Guidelines | women empowerment |
| Buffer Zone Management Rules and guidelines- 1996 | Mandates for at least one woman in each Buffer Zone User groups |
| Collaborative Forest Management Guidelines | Gender and social inclusion is one of its objectives |
| Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy, 2008 | Overarching strategy for inclusion of women and socially disadvantageous community. Vision of gender inclusive and sensitive forestry governance<br>• Gender sensitive policy, rules and guidelines,<br>• gender sensitive institution,<br>• gender sensitive budgeting, programming and planning; and<br>• gender sensitive resources, decision and benefit sharing |
| Human Resource Development Strategy | Mentions affirmative actions for women in regards to recruitment, transfer, promotion and friendly office environment for women. |
| Nepal Biodiversity Strategy and Implementation Plan 2014 | Emphasizes need for women's participation in biodiversity conservation, |

(MSFP, 2014a, 2014b)

Fourteen of the 64 staff employed at the Central Forests Training and Extension Centre are women; and the REDD Implementation Centre, which employs five people has a single female employee. In total, only seven percent of staff members employed under the auspices of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation are women. The quantitative data suggests that more than 80 percent of female employees in the forest bureaucracy serve below the officer level within the hierarchy of the organization (DoCPR, 2018). The qualitative aspect of participation by women is described in the following chapter.

## 5.6 Chapter conclusion

Nepalese policies have changed gradually with respect to women's inclusion; and have become more inclusive. The importance of women's inclusion in Nepalese development is recognized in current policy and legal documents. Political changes in the country facilitated the introduction of major changes in policies and legal measures for inclusive change. The rapid growth in the numbers of women represented in Nepal's political and civil service realms has shown that policy measures have been effective to at least some extent. However some government and bureaucracy sectors continue to employ low proportions of women; and the engagement of women at higher bureaucratic and executive levels is still very low. There are few polices which ensure participation of women at these higher levels. Despite substantive changes in formal institutions, implementation of women-inclusive policies remains poor.

# Chapter 6. Results and analysis

## 6.1 Introduction

This Chapter analyses the findings of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions within the framework of Feminist Institutionalism (FI). First, a brief review of the methods for data collection and analysis, discussed in detail in Chapter 4, is presented. In the second section, the 'inclusion of women' in forest bureaucracy is reconceptualised through perceptual data from interviews. In the third section, the organizational culture of the forest bureaucracy in Nepal is described under seven sub-headings. In the fourth section, Nepal's forest bureaucracy is examined through several aspects of formal and informal institutions that support or hinder the inclusion of women in forestry organizations. The fifth section of this chapter presents the concept of structure and agency in forest bureaucracy; and examines this through the perspectives of the research participants. Next, the dynamics of power relations between male and female employees as 'gender actors' in Nepal's forest bureaucracy are explored. In the subsequent section, the researcher's reflections based on her observations, recorded in a daily journal during fieldwork, are briefly presented as a supplement to ideas generated from interviews and focus group discussions. The Chapter concludes with a summary of key points.

## 6.2 Recap of the methods of data collection and analysis

The design and approach of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions used in this research are described in Chapter 4. There were 56 interviews and 7 focus group discussions, involving a total of 102 participants. The discussions and interviews were recorded and then transcribed and translated into English. The contents of the transcripts were first processed through NVivo software, with the intention of grouping similar ideas into five themes: 1) Inclusion of Women 2) organizational culture, 3) formal and informal institutions, 4) structure

and agency, and 5) power relations. The first theme relates to the key idea of the thesis, while the other four are aspects of Feminist Institutionalism following Krook and Mackay (2011); Mackay *et al.* (2010) and Bacchi and Rönnblom (2014). In the technical terminology of NVivo, these five themes work as 'nodes' (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Some themes were further sub-divided into sub-themes (or 'sub-nodes' in NVivo language) in order to regroup ideas that were scattered in the transcripts within the themes. This arrangement of the transcribed data facilitated analysis of the rich data gathered from various sources such as interviews and focus group discussions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). A summary of results, categorised on the basis of themes and sub-themes is presented in table 6.1.

Direct quotations from the research participants are included in this chapter in order to retain the integrity and context of data (Labuschagne, 2003b; Lester, 1999; Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). Quotations have been minimally corrected (mostly adjusting the expression to suit the English language) for the purpose of easy reading. To assist the process of analysis, the researcher's field diary, kept during the period of data collection, was also used to assist with the interpretation of some of the quotes and discussions as described in Chapter 4. The field diary included notes made regarding facial expressions and body language of the participants in interviews and focus group discussions, as well as comments made during informal discussions before and after the formal sessions. These notes were helpful in the accurate interpretation of some quotes.

The participants' views and opinions around the concept of women's inclusion in Nepalese forest bureaucracy, as expressed during interviews and focus groups, were, reviewed and analysed along with four other key ideas based on the theoretical framework of FI. The

following section describes the reconceptualization of the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy based on the information gathered through focus group discussions and interviews.

**Table 6.1 Summary of findings**

| Themes | Sub-themes | Findings |
|---|---|---|
| **Inclusion of women** | Reconceptualization | • Concept of women's inclusion is changing over time<br>• Concepts of women's inclusion differ with gender, institutional affiliation and work experience<br>• Women's inclusion in forestry acknowledges their traditional (gendered) roles<br>• Traditionally women's role is associated with utilization of forest resources and included as an unpaid labor force<br>• Inclusion is more focused within community forest management<br>• Women's inclusion is lumped with gender and social inclusion |
| | Perception towards inclusion | • Women and men have different perceptions of inclusion<br>• Women perceives it as partial inclusion, inclusion is necessary but inadequate at all level<br>• Men perceive that inclusion is adequate in the forestry sector |
| **Organizational culture** | Office infrastructure, leave and other entitlements | • Male dominated culture<br>• Office infrastructure is not considered gender friendly<br>• Maternity leave is inadequate<br>• Other entitlements are also not gender friendly and biased towards male |
| | Social status | • Highly gendered social status<br>• Male staff considered more important than women<br>• Service seekers also undermine female employees |
| | Position in the organization | • Less women in higher level position<br>• Women receive less respect<br>• Men are addressed by position/title but women by relation |
| | Mentoring and Peer support | • No formal mechanisms for mentoring and peer support<br>• Women have less access to mentoring and peer support due to lack of female mentors<br>• Real or perceived possibilities of women being harassed while accepting support from male staff |
| | Bullying and sexual | • Women staff reported serious concerns about sexual harassment. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | harassment | • Bullying and sexual harassment common but not reported formally<br>• Issues of bullying and sexual harassment not often addressed in the Nepalese context in general, or in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy<br>• Most of the participants were unaware of existing anti-harassment laws<br>• Male participants denied the occurrence and extent of bullying and sexual harassment in forest bureaucracy |
| | Struggle for existence | • Forest bureaucracy is not facilitating women to develop dignified careers<br>• Women staff experienced isolation, social discrimination and stigma<br>• Women are struggling for their existence in the forest bureaucracy and it is hindering their empowerment<br>• Women have developed individual coping, confronting and compromising strategies to deal with harassment and bullying<br>• No proper mechanisms are in place to address such issues |
| | Movement against discrimination | • Women are slowly becoming organized to react against gender-based violence and discrimination<br>• Women in the forest bureaucracy have started to build collaborations with community based organizations, building strong networks for making change. |
| **Formal and informal institutions** | Formal Institution | • Formal institutions in the forestry sector were progressive in terms of written policies, laws and rules in favor of women<br>• Formal structures are male dominated<br>• Gender Focal Persons have no clear roles, responsibilities rights and access to resources<br>• Formal institutions reinforcing the existing power structure |
| | Informal Institution | • Women have less informal networking than male<br>• Formal rules are not fully implemented due to hindrance of informal rules (i.e. cultural norms, values, patriarchal mindsets) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Structure and agency** | Structure | • Forest bureaucracy is a hierarchical organization and high level positions are dominated by males<br>• The forest bureaucracy is a massive and rigid structure<br>• Structural complexity does not favor women's career advancement, access to opportunities to take part in various policy forums or in maintaining an appropriate work life balance. |
| | Agency | • Agency components were found only at a token scale in comparison with the structure of the forest bureaucracy that is massive, rigid and robust in its strength<br>• The women's agency component is gender sensitive and collectively working towards a more gender friendly working environment through various means |
| **Power relations** | Power relations | • The power structure is male dominated, 90% staff composed of male<br>• Unequal power relationships are reinforced by the rigid structure of the organization, formal institutions and work place/organizational culture. |

## 6.3 Reconceptualising the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy

Transcripts from both the focus group discussions and key informant interviews revealed that the issue of women's inclusion in forestry governance in Nepal was initially introduced to acknowledge the gendered roles in Nepal's forestry sector. Focus group participants contended that Nepalese women living in rural areas have specific roles in the household, and to perform those roles they need to be involved in various forestry activities more frequently than the male members of their households; in order to obtain a variety of forest resources. The participants pointed out that the role of women in collecting and directly utilizing forest resources at the household level, particularly, fuel-wood and fodder was the fundamental factor that first prompted the need to consider gender issues in the forestry sector. Having been engaged in forestry activities for centuries, the debate about whether women should continue their roles

simply as collectors or users of forest products, or whether they could also be in a position to make decisions about what forest resources to use, how and when to use them, and about management of forests generally, was crucial. Most of the research participants, particularly the female interviewees, maintained that the argument over whether women are included in forestry activities and institutions in rhetoric only; or whether they are truly included and take an active part in decision making, still continues. This argument makes the concept of 'women's inclusion' in forest bureaucracy even more important since the bureaucracy attempts to employ processes aimed towards including women in the forestry sector (including community and private sector institutions) by formulating, implementing and rolling out women-inclusive policies and programs at multiple levels. Different concepts, views and perceptions about the idea of what women's inclusion means, and why it has moved into the centre of political, bureaucratic and community institutions have evolved over time (Jacob *et al.*, 2014; Kenny, 2013; Krook, 2010; Mackay *et al.*, 2010; Verge & De la Fuente, 2014), and the perceptions of the participants from both interviews and focus groups were initially focused on the reconceptualization of the concept of 'women's inclusion' in the forest bureaucracy. Overall, the perceptions of this concept were found to differ based on the gender, institutional affiliation and working experience of the participants.

Most of the participants, regardless of gender, understood that the concept of women's inclusion first emerged through Nepal's community based forestry program; and has involved the hand-over of the protection, management and utilization of forests from the government to local communities. Many participants described the Community Forestry (CF) program as a movement for the advocacy of the concept of women's inclusion. Participants clearly portrayed

this association by giving references and examples of CF programs during discussions and interviews.

Participants in the interviews and focus group discussion recalled that, during the early days of the CF program, protection of forest resources was initially a major concern. Although each community forest user group prepared an operational plan and a Constitution to regulate forest management, the illegal collection of forest products continued in many community forests. Women were considered to be frequent rule breakers and illegal collectors of forest products because they did not have any information or awareness about newly introduced rules and codes of behaviour associated with community forests. The forestry staff (all of whom were males) consulted only the male members of the participating households during the formation of community forest user groups, resulting in the exclusion of women in the governance of community forests as a whole. Government officers working for community forestry and forestry project staff reported during interviews and discussions that decisions about, and attitudes towards, informing and involving women about and in the community forestry process were made, not in recognition of their roles and potential contributions in forest management, but rather to make them aware that collecting forest products outside of the rules agreed by their community forestry user group was illegal.

A senior male forest officer from the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) emphasized that

> *It was only in the late 1980s that the authorities in some donor-funded forestry projects felt the need to include women staff in forest offices. Women were among the rule-violators when community forests were handed over to the local people. If they were brought into the community forestry process and made aware of the rules that would be*

*helpful for further protection. It would be easier for the projects to use women staff to pass community forestry messages on to local women than the male staff.*

*Interview 7 (Table 4.1: Chapter 4)*

Joint Secretary male (MoFSC): with more than 20 years of experience in the forestry sector

While the male officers attributed the initial inclusion of women in forest institutions to the intention of decreasing the illegal activities of women harvesting forest resources, those with an interest in community rights rather than forest resources argued that the role of the women as the primary carers of the forests was the key factor in the initiation of their inclusion.

An interviewee from Federation of Community Forest User Groups, Nepal (FECOFUN) central executive committee mentioned:

*Women's inclusion in forestry is guided by the traditional role of women and the linkage of those roles to forest management activities. Women are the primary users of forestry resources and their participation is necessary for better forestry governance. This is the basic concept of women's inclusion in forestry but having said that I cannot say the concept is fully adopted by government forestry organizations.*

*Interview 45, (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Executive Committee member (FECOFUN) female: with more than 15 years in the forestry sector

Another participant who worked for various government forestry offices in a senior role at the district level emphasized that the recruitment of women in forestry was essential to the success of community forestry programs. According to this participant, females were targeted for

recruitment into two types of jobs: forest Rangers and local motivators/social mobilisers. This occurred in the mid-1980s, during the early implementation of community forestry projects. The intention behind the appointment of women to some of these positions was to encourage a smooth transition from government to community management of forests and to facilitate implementation of the new community forest user group constitutions. Forest Rangers, including women appointed to these positions, had two years of forestry education following completion of grade 10. Their roles included supporting local community forestry groups to develop and implement operational plans for forest management. The motivators or social mobilizers, on the other hand, were local women with only a junior secondary level education. Their role was to train people from community forestry user groups about how to hold general assemblies, conduct meetings and make decisions about forestry activities. Thus, the Rangers would show the direction for forest management through operational plans, while the motivators would mobilize the groups towards achieving group governance and forest management. In addition to the general roles of forest Rangers, the female Rangers were tasked with extra duties around motivating local women to be engaged in the business of community forestry user groups, such as taking part in executive committees, their meeting and general assemblies. Therefore, female Rangers played the roles of forest Rangers as well as that of motivators. In other words, while the male forest Rangers in general mostly focused on management of forest resources, the female Rangers also undertook duties related to management of both the forest resources and the social dimensions of community forestry.

> *When we started the formation of community forestry user groups, we were instructed to make household visits to convince female household members to participate in community forestry activities. Culturally it was difficult for male staff to approach local*

*women but at that time there were no female staff in the forestry sector. In this situation the need for female staff was strongly felt in forest bureaucracy and forestry projects. That is why recruitment of female fieldworkers such as local motivators and female forest Rangers started in this sector.*

*Interview-12 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Joint Secretary male (Department of Forests): with more than 25 years of experience in the forestry sector and a former District Forest Officer

The analysis of the above arguments indicate that the concept of the inclusion of women in forestry was not introduced broadly across the whole forestry sector; and was not driven by a view of women as equal players in forest management. Rather, it was conceptualized only at the grass-roots section of the forestry program and, at its core, had a pragmatic approach to the successful implementation of community forestry operations; focussed mainly on ensuring that female forest users would comply with the new regulations. One senior female officer (among the three most senior female Rangers participating in the research) argued:

*The motive for recruiting female Rangers and Motivators in the 1980s was not to make the whole forestry sector inclusive but to promote women's participation and address the gender issues in order to ensure the success of community forestry.*

*Interview-28 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Under Secretary female (MoFSC): with more than 10 years of experience in the forestry sector; also served as a Gender Focal Point for more than three years

A senior female forester who worked for various International Non-government Organizations (INGOs) in Forestry as well as outside the forestry sector expressed her opinion that the women were already informally included in the forestry sector by the nature of their household responsibilities. From this participant's point of view, an important question was how women could gain access to formal forestry institutions. A different female senior official, also working in an NGO felt that the government's inclusion of women in community forestry was "cunning". She said that

> *The concept of women's inclusion in forestry was a reinvented idea. Women had been included in forestry activities for ages. Nepalese society has some social norms which compel women to depend upon forest resources to fulfil their gender roles. When there were no local level formal institutions to manage the forest resources, women had easier access to those resources. When the community forestry program was introduced, women felt restricted in their use of such resources, and there were chances of them violating the rules. To avoid conflict within the community, it was felt necessary to include women in the community forestry process to make them aware about the new rules so that they could comply with them.*

*Interview- 37 (Table 4.2: Chapter 4-1)*

Senior Official female (INGO): with more than 15 years of experience in the forestry sector

There was, to some extent, consensus among the respondents from both interviews and focus groups that it was community forestry that provided space for the initiation of the formal inclusion of women in professional forestry in Nepal. At the beginning, the involvement of women was not associated with respect for women's knowledge or experience in forestry matters

but was used as a tool to achieve the goals of forestry projects. Half of community forestry users were women; but they were not equally involved in decisions regarding community forestry practices. It was difficult for both government authorities and donor-funded projects to achieve their community forestry goals without local women's compliance with the management plans, since they had been the primary collectors of forest products, particularly fuel-wood and fodder, for centuries.

> *Male staff members were reluctant to extend community forestry messages and programs to female household members partly because they did not think women were important enough to be engaged in political institutions, such as community forestry user groups and partly and more importantly, because the male members of the community did not like their female household members to communicate with unfamiliar male forestry staff. To overcome the situation, authorities needed female forestry staff members to take a lead in forestry extension and awareness raising at the local level.*

*Interview 18 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Joint Secretary male (Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation): with more than 20 years of experience in the forestry sector

Initially, recruiting sufficient women foresters was a problem since there were no women with forestry training. To address this, a two-pronged strategy was introduced into forestry projects after the 1980s. On the one hand, the forestry projects hired local women or girls with junior high school education as motivators. On the other hand, forestry projects provided scholarships for young female students to pursue forestry training. Despite the fact that women were simply used as tools to propagate community forestry, these strategies had at least four

unintended consequences that later contributed to the further formal inclusion of women in the Nepalese forestry sector as a whole. First, some of the local girls and women, who were recruited as motivators for community forestry, grew as leaders of community forestry networks and started advocating the need for women's inclusion not only in community forestry user groups, but also in all spheres of decision making for forestry. Second, local women, who were initially disinterested in community forestry in the beginning and were reluctant to, or were denied opportunities to, participate in decision making forums (such as community forestry executive committees), later became activists for the advocacy of women's rights in local forest management. They also encouraged their daughters to pursue a forestry education. Third, more and more women who were encouraged to become engaged in community forestry user groups became aware of the roles women could play in the development of Nepal's forestry sector. Finally, female Rangers worked as extension workers not only for the inclusion of women in community forestry user groups, but also in propagating the message of forestry training for girls. They also grew to become eligible for officer level positions by pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in forestry.

Participants of the interviews and the focus group discussions clarified and extended the concept of women's inclusion, confirming that it stemmed, historically and conceptually, from women's involvement in the CF program. From the analysis of participants' perspectives, it could be said that it began only as the 'involvement of women' or the 'use of women' in the forestry programme rather than the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy. The actual inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy could have been both the outcome of and process for women's active and influential participation in not only the implementation of forestry activities but also in decision making in government forestry institutions. In other words, it had the

potential to improve the number, position, roles, dignity and power of women staff members in forest bureaucracy not only in policies and structures but also in social norms, work place environments, employee's relationships, programmes, activities and practices.

> *By women's inclusion in ideal conditions, we mean equal number, position and power of female officers on a par with their male counterparts at every level of the hierarchy in forest bureaucracy.*

*Interview 52 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Senior Official female (INGO/Donor Agency): with more than 20 years of working experience in gender and social inclusion in the forestry sector

> *If there are 20 joint secretaries in the forest bureaucracy, there must be at least 10 women joint secretaries out of them in order to really mean women's inclusion in forestry.*

*Interview 27 (Table 4.1: Chapter 4)*

Forest Officer female (Department of Forests): with five years of working experiences in the forestry sector

Three decades after the introduction of community forest management in Nepal, the leaders of community forestry groups are now in a position to challenge the government to develop forestry programs which are truly women-inclusive. Participants in this research expressed their concerns that although the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation has improved community forestry guidelines and required that at least fifty per cent of the committee members in a community forestry user group are women (including either the chairperson or the

Secretary position of the committee where the other posts being vice-chair, Joint Secretary, treasurer and executive members), the government has failed to apply the same principles in its own forest bureaucracy.

> *We are happy that the Department of Forests made it mandatory for the community forestry user groups to include equal number of male and female members in both user groups and executive committee. If there are 13 members in an executive committee, there must be at least 7 female members. But it is ironic that the same Department does not initiate any steps towards making equal numbers of male and female staff members in its organization.*

*Interview 39 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Chairperson Female (Non-governmental Organization working for Natural Resource management): with more than 20 years of working experience in the forestry as well as other resource governance sector

Some participants argued strongly that the forestry sector should not be confined by the wider civil service codes of the government with regard to the recruitment of its employees. Nepal adopts a participatory approach to forest resource management in which the role of women employees is considered significant in order to mobilize local women towards better forest management and fair sharing of forest benefits.

> *The current Civil Service Act of Nepal applies to all the Ministries except the Ministry of Health, where a special Health Service Act works for recruiting staff. The Civil Service Act does not differentiate between the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and other Ministries to hire their employees. But the Ministry of Forests means to include*

*more and more women in its programs for which it needs more women officials in line with the guidelines of community forestry. The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation can use the community forestry guidelines as evidence and request the government to pass a special forest service law (like the Health Ministry) that mandates it to recruit at least 50 per cent women employees at all levels of forest bureaucracy.*

*Interview 51 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Senior Official (INGO/Donor Agency): with more than 25 years of experience and formerly served as government Forest Officer for more than 10 years

An alternative argument, that all government departments should adopt women-inclusive policies and practices was also raised. The root of the need for women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy lies in the community forestry program. However, the current concept of inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy needs to be examined from a number of different angles, including, but not limited to, the wider political movement for eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, activism of women's chapters in political parties, actions of women caucus in the parliament, improvement of civil service laws towards the reservation of positions for women employees, national and regional networks of community forestry groups, women activists' NGOs, National Women Commission formed by the government and activism of National Human Rights Commissions (Agarwal, 2010a, 2015; Aguirre & Pietropaoli, 2008; Bennett, 2008; Falch, 2010; GoN, 2008, 2015a; Government of Nepal, 1992, 2011; Manchanda, 2010; Norris, 2006; Pant & Standing, 2011; Pathak, 2005; Sullivan, 1994; Tamang, 2009; Timsina, 2003).

*We should not look at the voices for women's inclusion in forest bureaucracy in isolation. The idea receives credit from the parliament at the top to the community forestry user groups at the grass-root level. A movement is underway for a gender inclusive situation in every walk of life. But the forest bureaucracy should be more women-inclusive than other sectors, given its history of including women in community-based organizations.*

*Interview 12 (Table 4.1: Chapter 4)*

Joint Secretary male (Department of Forests): with more than 20 years of working experience in the forestry sector

Having an equal number of male and female employees was considered a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy. While many participants focussed their arguments on the need for quotas and equal numbers of men and women, others considered that access to executive positions and the associated power is necessary to add value for inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy.

*Every time the district Forest Officers (DFO), chief wardens and regional directorate of forests are posted or transferred, there must be the proportionate quota for women Officers in each position out of the total number of employees. For example, if the number of women foresters eligible for DFOs are 10 per cent of the total number of employees, at least one woman DFO out of 10 should be ensured.*

*Interview 11 (Table 4.1.: Chapter 4)*

District Forest Officer male: with 10 years of experiences in the forestry sector

Taking into account the ideas shared by the participants, the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is ideally expected to be an institution which is inclusive of women in terms of number, position, power, dignity, roles and opportunities of and for women employees at all levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy. To what stage the inclusion of women in the forest bureaucracy has evolved, and what spaces are available for a forest bureaucracy which is more women-inclusive, are examined below, within the framework of Feminist Institutionalism.

## 6.4 Feminist Institutionalism as an approach to Nepal's forest bureaucracy

The ideas in the transcripts of key informant interviews and focus group discussions were analysed within the framework of Feminist Institutionalism (FI). Following a review of the literature, and influenced particularly by Krook and Mackay (2015); Mackay *et al.* (2010) and Bacchi and Rönnblom (2014), the outcomes of the interviews and discussions were first categorised into four themes, drawn from the FI framework: organizational culture; formal and informal institutions; structure and agency; and power relations. As discussed in Chapter 4 and re-introduced above in this Chapter, NVivo software was used to analyse the transcripts. These four concepts of FI were used as 'nodes' within NVivo. In this research the term 'theme' is used in preference to the NVivo terminology. Key points that could explain or elaborate on each theme were created as sub-themes. The sub-themes represent new ideas generated in this research which can be seen as extensions of FI.

### *6.4.1 Organizational culture*

The organizational culture of the forest bureaucracy in Nepal is understood in this study as a set of norms and practices that have been adopted within formal forestry structures over time; and this was explained to participants of the interviews and focus discussion groups. Thus

organizational culture was understood by participants as an abstract or complex concept and discussions resulted in an agreement among participants that it is manifested in the behaviour of staff members and clients in workplaces. Hence, organisational culture could be interchangeably described as workplace culture in the context of this research, focusing on the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

Organizational culture is usually understood as a combination of vision, values, norms, beliefs, assumptions and environment that shape and are shaped by the behaviour of an individual and groups within an organization (Needle, 2004). The size and span of control of an organization, however, varies. In this research, pursuant to Hawkins (2008), forest bureaucracy is taken as a case of single organization instead of a complex body of numerous entities and groups in order to describe a unique set of dominant masculine behaviour within it. The forest bureaucracy, which is a set of all hierarchical structures comprising of forestry staff members, represents a single organization when gender character is taken into consideration.

Generally the research participants formed the consensus that the work-places of government forestry organizations are largely dominated by male staff and hence the importance, needs and voices of women employees are often overlooked or neglected. Participants observed that women in the forest bureaucracy experience various forms of discrimination. The female participants currently working within the forest bureaucracy reported that discriminatory treatment between male and female staff members is exhibited not only by the staff members within their organizations but also from clients who visit forest offices seeking services. Traditionally, formal employment in forestry was offered only to males, partly due to the overall domination of male staff in all sectors and partly and more importantly due to the social dogma that forestry was a physical job and hence by nature masculine (Brandth & Haugen, 2005;

Gurung, 2002; Reed, 2003). This masculine notion of forestry still prevails in workplaces (Coutinho-Sledge, 2015; Gurung, 2002; Lidestav & Sjölander, 2007; Varghese & Reed, 2011; Wagle *et al.*, 2017b), although substantial reforms have been made, including co-education efforts in forestry academia, women's participation in community-based forestry and more recently a quota system which ensures the inclusion of women in public employment and the parliament (Christie & Giri, 2011; GoN, 2008, 2015a; Government of Nepal, 1992; MSFP, 2014a). However, a number of challenges in the working environment of female employees were identified by the interviewees and the participants of group discussions. Various views on the organizational culture of forest bureaucracy derived in this research were categorised into 7 subthemes: office infrastructure and other facilities; social status; position in the organization; mentoring and peer support; bullying and sexual harassment; struggle for existence and movement against discrimination. Feminist Institutionalism examines the culture of an organization by examining whether women are treated with at least the same respect as their male counterparts (Krook and Mackay, 2011). The following analysis examines how men and women are treated within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy and allows conclusions to be drawn about the culture of the organization.

## Office infrastructure, leave and other entitlements

The participants, especially the female participants, were not satisfied with basic office infrastructure and facilities in and around their office environments. The following paragraph discusses the ways in which a gender biased culture (Kenny, 2013) is reflected in the access of female staff members to office infrastructure and other facilities. Inherent inequalities are

reflected through the examples of lack of access to female friendly toilets, vehicles and the lack of maternity leave provisions and facilities for mothers.

Based on the experiences reported by female staff, this research found that office infrastructure within Nepal's forest bureaucracy is not women-friendly. One of the strong examples of this is the nature of toilet facilities provided in the workplace. These are often unisex and female employees hesitate to use them, claiming that the toilets are poorly cleaned, raising serious health concerns. One female interviewee reported that she developed frequent urinary tract infections when she joined her new office which has a common toilet for male and female staff. While it was beyond the scope of this research to ascertain the causes of her infections, this participant's clear perception was that the lack of access to a clean and separate toilet for women was linked to her ill health. Female employees also reported that they felt embarrassed and experienced sexual harassment when encountering men using the toilets. Women participants also explained that challenges regarding the use of toilets increased when they had to use these facilities during their menstruation period.

Male participants in interviews and focus groups discussions also acknowledged that toilet facilities were problematic. They also emphasized that some field offices lack even male toilets, asking how separate toilets for male and female can be imagined when basic infrastructure is so poor. In such situation, female staff may suffer more than male staff according to the male participants. A female-only group discussion of staff of the Ministry and Department of Forests revealed that they have separate toilets in the office but basic sanitation facilities are lacking such as regular cleaning and water supply, bins for waste disposal, etcetera They reported that they had made requests to senior management, during several staff meetings, for the provision of such facilities, but in each case, the discussion ended without further action.

The women expressed frustration that they do not have access and control over the office budget; and said, if they had, they would solve the problem by themselves.

> *We cannot expect any changes in our department when it comes to need of resources. Changing someone's behaviour to treat women staff equally like their male colleague doesn't cost anything. But we are not able to change even that. You can imagine how they will change things that involves cost.*

*Focus Group Discussion 3 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Female Officers (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

All focus groups discussions (women only and mixed groups) emphasized that there is negative discrimination towards female employees due to male domination in the organization. Some males in the mixed focus group discussions argued that negative biases towards female staff may not be intentional, pointing to the gender insensitive culture of the organization. The male members of the mixed focus group discussions revealed that due to the male domination and the semi-military nature of forestry organizations in the past, most of the office structure, procedures and languages are still not women friendly and are positively biased towards males.

Female participants in both female only and mixed focus groups provided some examples of discrimination which has particularly manifested into differences in facilities, such as vehicles, provided to staff. Females in mixed focus groups explained that they do not have access to office vehicles (used for in-town commuting), whereas their male counterparts do; and they expressed their disappointment with their managers in relation to this matter. They further explained that where the office has an annual budget for vehicles, the preference is to buy motorcycles rather

than scooters. Firstly, motorcycles are not considered women friendly due to the heaviness and height of such vehicles, so that women are often excluded from accessing office vehicles. Secondly, this practice has made female staff feel that their need for vehicle access is not considered a priority. Thirdly, the person who is responsible for the planning and procurement generally (by design or default) is male; and he may not consider purchasing a women friendly vehicle. Female participants from the interviews and women only focus groups also revealed that this is just a single example but there are many such types of practices create an environment of exclusion for women with regard to access to office facilities. This seems to be an unconscious practice of gender bias in the institution and also developed as a culture. Chappell (2006) describes such phenomena as being driven by a 'logic of appropriateness'.

On the other hand, males from the same mixed focus group provided a justification for preferring the purchase of motorcycles rather than scooters. The justification was based on the understanding that males perform the majority of the field work; such as patrolling the forests, measuring trees, dealing with forest entrepreneurs, marking the trees etcetera. They therefore reasoned that their need for access to vehicles was greater than that of their female colleagues. The biased availability of resources (such as vehicles) for staff is creating a gendered work pattern in the forestry offices. The job descriptions of male and female government-employed foresters are same. However, the group discussions revealed that female and male foresters actually perform different types of work. Interviews with female foresters revealed that their supervisors generally did not assign them field-based activities; these were predominantly assigned to their male counterparts. They also said that even if they were given responsibilities, their lack of access to vehicles prevented them from fulfilling their responsibilities and

demonstrating their capacities. This shows that gendered culture is deeply embedded and perpetuated within forest bureaucracy.

Members of female-only focus groups also described difficulties that they experienced at times when they or their female colleagues were breastfeeding or caring for young children. An absence of child care facilities and breast-feeding rooms at the office premises were noted. These women felt that the 98 days paid maternity leave available to them is not enough even though it has recently increased from 60 days. While they are eligible for a further six months unpaid leave following the paid leave, they expressed dissatisfaction with this provision because of extra financial pressure during the period of unpaid leave. The male participants also accepted that the duration of paid maternity leave is insufficient and agreed that facilities for staff who are also mothers should be available in the office. In summary, both male and female participants in the focus group discussions voiced the necessity of child care facilities, flexible working hours during the maternity period; and their preference for a longer period of paid maternity leave. However, none of the participants raise the issue of paternity leave and flexible hours for males acting as carers. This situation revealed that, among the participants, child care is still considered to the responsibility of women.

Historical perspectives within forestry institutions are considered to be the foundation of discriminatory practice in current workplaces. The effect of formal and informal rules on the availability of office infrastructure, leave and other entitlements has promoted and perpetuated gender based discrimination, either deliberately or ‘as a logic of appropriateness’.

## Social status

The social status of a staff member contributes towards the organizational culture of the workplace. Status is given to an individual based on the power he/she can exercise in an

organization. The power, in turn, is partly based on the position or rank held by the individual and partly based on his/her skills (including leadership skills). The social status of an employee in Nepal's forest bureaucracy was found to be highly gendered. The participants of the female-only-focus-groups asserted that a male staff member is considered more important than a female staff member with the same rank and position when it comes to any important decision-making in forest bureaucracy. They also observed that clients of forest bureaucracy often prefer to deal with a male staff member when they need certain strong recommendations or decisions, such as for felling trees or taking action within a contract.

> *When I worked in a range post as a Ranger, a timber contractor came and asked me where the other Ranger (a male) had gone. I told him that I was also a Ranger and asked him if I could be of any help. He replied that I did not know about how logs are auctioned. He elaborated that in case something went wrong in his file, he would incur a loss and therefore he would like to get his business done by the male Ranger.*

*Interview-30 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Ranger female (District Forest Office): with more than 15 years of working experiences in various District Forest Offices

A similar experience was faced by another female Officer working in the district forest office, when the District Forest Officer was away for the day, and she was the next highest-ranking officer in the workplace. She explained

> *A client came to my office and asked me to prepare a letter immediately. I asked him to wait for a day because the Officer in-charge was out that day. I had no authority to issue that kind of letter as he was requesting me to. The man became furious and threatened*

*me that he would have beaten me had I not been a female staff. It seems I was more privileged being a female than a male staff. But actually I am pretty sure that he wouldn't have acted like that if I were a male Officer in that position.*

*Interview-8 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Officer female (District Forest Office): with more than 20 years of working experiences in various District Forest Offices

The perception of social status is also manifested in the way in which someone is addressed. In Nepalese society there are usually four terms of respect used to address a second person depending on their social status as perceived by the speaker. These are: *hajur*, *tapai*, *timi* and *ta*, all meaning 'you' in English. '*Hajur*' is used for a highly respected person, such as a parent, a teacher, an older person with high social status, an Officer with a higher rank and others who are considered to be highly respected. *'Tapai*' is also formal, but is considered a little less polite than '*hajur*'. '*Timi*' is informal and used for a peer or younger person. It can be used affectionately or derogatorily, depending on who is addressing whom. For example, if a person uses *'timi'* when addressing his partner, friend, wife or child, it would be considered affectionate. But if a person uses '*timi*' to address an unfamiliar person or someone who holds a higher social position, such as a higher rank in an organisation, this would be considered derogatory. '*Ta*' is derogatory unless it is used for one's own younger brother, sister or a child. Female staff members working in the forest bureaucracy explained that the terminology used by peers and colleagues provides examples of ways in which they are not treated equally to male staff of a similar rank to themselves.

*An elderly office helper (male) in the Department of Forests uses 'hajur' and 'sir' to address all the male Officers, even the ones who hold lower positions than we do, regardless of how old they are. But he calls us by our name and uses 'timi' when addressing us. If a junior staff feels confident to treats us like that, how will our senior officials address us?*

*Interview-16, (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Officer female (Department of Forests): with more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

There are some married couples employed at the same rank in the forest bureaucracy. Almost all the research participants (regardless of their gender) in the interviews and focus group discussions agreed that in such cases, the wife typically addresses her husband with '*hajur*' or 'tapai' in the workplace, while the husband addresses his wife with *'timi'* or *'ta'* without any hesitation, not only at home but also in the workplace. More interestingly, participants reported that some of these couples undertook their forestry education together and they used to address each other using '*timi'* or '*tapai*' before getting married, but after marriage, the men started to calling their wives either '*timi'* or *'ta',* while the women started calling their husbands ' *tapai'* or *'hajur'*.

*I wanted to call him 'timi' even after our marriage as I used to address him when we were in the college. I also wanted him to continue calling me 'timi'. We hold the same position in the organization. But he told me that his parents and even our boss did not like me to call him 'timi'. Thus I was compelled to call him 'tapai' or 'hajur' just to maintain his*

*'social status' both in the workplace and at home, but he has continued calling me 'timi' in the workplace and when at home, he even calls me 'ta' these days.*

*Interview-10 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Officer female (District Forest Office): with more than 15 years working together with her husband in the same office

When it comes to the social status of the employee, the organizational culture in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy was found to be highly biased against women. This is partly because of the wider male dominated society at large, but in comparison with other bureaucratic organizations (see chapter 3 and chapter 5), the male dominated organizational culture within the forest bureaucracy also ensures that women employees are treated as less important than their male colleagues; irrespective of their formal rank. Female employees are regarded as inferior to male staff members, not only when the males hold a higher rank, but also when they (males) hold an equal or lower rank than women (Christie & Giri, 2011).

## Position in the organization

In regard to their capacity to influence decision-making in an organization, the position of an individual employee matters. Organizational culture, which is an important component of Feminist Institutionalism, affects the ways in which positions are offered or assigned to certain individuals in the organization. In understanding the concept of 'position in the organization', the respondents identified the official post of the employee with some defined rights and responsibilities under his/her job description. This is a description of the employee's formal role and status in the office and is understood as an authority of the employee to take some actions or carry out certain activities to deliver services to the clients. By definition, the higher the position,

the more authority the employee holds to make decisions and to get things done by the subordinate staff members. In the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, the Secretary of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation is considered the highest-ranking position (see chapter 5 for the hierarchy), while just below the Secretary are the Joint Secretary positions. In the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, there is only one Secretary position, and 27 Joint Secretary positions. Just below the Joint secretaries are around 150 Under-Secretaries. Below the Under-Secretaries, there are more than 1000 Officers who supervise Rangers, Forest Guards and Office Assistants. To date, there have not been any female Secretaries in the history of the forest bureaucracy; and the first female Joint Secretary was appointed only in 2015. At the time of data collection, there were only seven female Under-Secretaries and 35 female Officers working in the forest service (MSFP, 2014a). Positions of higher authority are more often held by males, while the majority of females work as subordinates to the male officials.

The views of male and female participants differed regarding the reasons behind the lack of female employees at the upper levels. Two major reasons for this pattern were claimed by mainly male interviewees and members of focus group discussions. Firstly, females were not permitted to get forestry degree at Nepalese University at prior to the 1980s. Since the 1980s, forestry education was made available for women and a quota of ten percent of places were set aside for female forestry students. The lack of availably of suitably qualified women for higher level positions is often given as a reason for the dearth of female appointments at these levels. Secondly, female graduates were reported to be more attracted to non-governmental organizations because of their better working conditions including salaries and women-friendly facilities. Participants from female focus groups also argued that those female students who graduated with forestry degrees and entered government jobs were not promoted to higher

positions as rapidly as their male counterparts, despite their academic qualifications and performance in the job. A female Under Secretary claimed that

> *I was good at my studies while I was at the university. I was among the top five percent of students in every exam but I had to get enrolled through the women's quota in forestry education. Upon graduation, I joined the forest bureaucracy as an assistant forest Officer. Male colleagues who joined the forest bureaucracy with me had lower grades than me. During the promotion, I passed the written test and appeared in the interview, but I was not selected. Male colleagues who did not even pass the written test were promoted instead. There is also a performance evaluation system for promotion which is mostly based on accumulated marks given by the supervisors annually. Male colleagues who had less marks in their university degree and who did not pass the written test for promotion, were promoted ahead of me. I do not think my working performance was worse than theirs. That late promotion ruined my career and prevented me from being a Joint Secretary. This is not an isolated story for women. I think there is a big problem in forest bureaucracy in looking at women employees and their performances in comparison with their male counterparts.*

*Interview-16, (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forester Officer female (Department of Forests): with more than 20 years of experience in the forestry sector

Many female Rangers explained that they did not have an opportunity to continue their Bachelor degree studies in forestry due to family responsibilities, so that they did not have the academic qualification required for promotion to an Officer role. However, even those who

managed to achieve Masters by Research degrees in forestry said that they were still not promoted to positions that they felt that they deserved. Moreover, some female Officers who wished to return to study to gain higher qualifications found that they were no longer eligible for the required study leave due to their age. The current Civil Service Act allows the granting of study leave only to employees under the age of 45; even though most people work until the retirement age of 58. This legal framework acts as a serious barrier for the promotion of women.

Many male participants accepted that women experience more barriers to promotion than male employees. They stated that female employees may have extra responsibilities as a wife, mother and as a daughter-in-law after marriage. In addition, both married and unmarried women typically have daily household responsibilities in addition to the responsibilities of the workplace. Male participants from focus group discussion further elaborated that all of these additional roles and duties mean, amongst other things, that women struggle to allocate sufficient time to prepare for the competitive exams which are necessary to be eligible for promotion in the Nepalese public service, including the forest bureaucracy.

Female participants in group discussions and interviews also expressed that they have less access to the necessary documents for the preparation of public service exams compared to the male employees because the females have a smaller circle of peers among their fellow foresters and they experience difficulties while socialising with male colleagues in a male dominant organization. They reported that they are deprived of opportunities to participate in many formal and informal programs due to time clashes between household duties and official programs. They felt that missing such opportunities excluded them from gaining the broader contextual knowledge, issues and skills which are important for a successful examination performance which requires applicants to answer analytically and build logics.

It became apparent, from statements made during the interviews and focus group discussions, that women are also prevented from attaining higher level positions in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy due to the over subjective evaluation system that favours male employees over female ones. Participants explained that even where women overcame barriers and were able to enter the forest bureaucracy or gain promotion, these achievements are rarely recognised by their male colleagues. Some females who entered the bureaucracy as Forest Officers, through the female quota, felt discriminated against by their co-worker and managers, who tried to belittle them. These women also reported that they received sarcastic comments from their co-workers such as: "women have no need to study hard to be promoted now a days"; and "being women is a privilege these days".

Women in the forestry bureaucracy are rarely addressed by their position titles. Although the informal way of addressing female staff has already discussed under the sub-theme of social status, this issue is also included here to explain how position-based discrimination is perceived by male and female staff, and what its impact is among the female staff.

Women are either addressed by their names or by a term implying a social relationship, unlike their male counterparts, who are mostly addressed by their position title. For example, most of the female participants in the interviews and focus groups revealed that male staff are addressed as '*Ranger Sap', 'Officer* Sap' or by their name followed by sir (such as Adam sir). However, female staff, are often addressed as '*baini*' or '*nani*' (younger sister) if she looks younger and '*didi*' (older sister) if she looks older than the person who is addressing her. Female staff who recently joined the bureaucracy face this problem more than older staff members because '*baini*' and '*nani*' is considered more derogatory than '*didi*'. Even though '*didi*' is not derogatory, it is not considered formal in an office environment.

A female interviewee described an example of this:

> *Me and my male colleague joined the office on the same day in the same position but he is addressed as sir or 'Adhikrit Sap' by the junior staff but I was addressed as 'baini' even from the office helper and drivers. I often feel humiliated in front of other staff and clients.*

*Interview-24, (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forester Officer female (Department of Forests): with more than 2 years of experiences in the forestry sector

The older female staff (more than 15 years of experience) participating in the focus groups and interviews explained that terms used to refer to them have changed with their age. They reported that they are now commonly addressed as '*didi*', which they felt was more respectful than alternative terms used when they were younger. They felt that this indicated a certain level of respect for them as older women, but they also felt that it was not an appropriate form of address in the workplace. They expressed a clear preference to be addressed in the same way as their male colleagues and counterparts are addressed.

In contrast, male participants did not accept the use of these terms as an example of gender discrimination. Many male foresters in the interviews and focus groups discussion considered this practice as a tradition derived from the forestry school. They concluded that

> *We all graduated from the same forestry school. In the school, we address seniors as a 'dai' (elder brother) for boys and 'didi' for girl. Junior colleagues were referred to as 'bhai' (younger brother) for males and 'baini' for females. We lived together in the hostel during our study period and worked together in the field therefore we know each*

*other so closely. That closeness makes us feel as though we belong to the same family. We cannot say that is discrimination against females. But if any non-forester in the bureaucracy behaves such a way that is a discrimination.*

*Male focus group discussions-Table 4.3: chapter 4*

Officer and Ranger mix (District Forest Offices) with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

The participants in the mixed male and female group discussions engaged in discussions about this matter. Some male participants claimed that

*We don't think addressing someone as 'baini' or 'nani' is a discrimination. If someone says 'baini' to his colleagues that is showing his respect and love towards that girl and is not an insult.*

*Mixed focus group discussion- (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Male Officer- Male/female Officer and Ranger (District Forest Offices) with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

However some females from the same focus group discussions did not agree with the above statement because of their observations that the same practice did not apply for male colleagues in the same position.

Similarly, most of the female participants from focus groups and interviews strongly argued that they want respect from colleagues rather than indications of such types of love. They stressed that others (non-foresters) in the workplace, such office staff and clients follow the example of male foresters who address their female colleagues as '*baini*', for example. Some female

interviewees from outside of the forest bureaucracy also revealed that they also faced such discrimination from District Forest Office staff (DFO) while working closely with DFOs. Most of the female, and some of the male, participants concluded that addressing both male and female staff professionally, based on a positional title, is better than using informal terms of address.

## Mentoring and peer support

A lack of mentoring and peer support has long been a part of the organizational culture in Nepal's forest bureaucracy. The research participants were not aware of any formal or informal mentoring programs for newly appointed employees in forestry organizations. The recollections of the majority of female interviewees and focus group participants confirmed that they felt some level of anxiety while joining the organisation and becoming familiar with the job; although those of the male participants were different.

Female participants recalled difficulties in becoming familiar with their job descriptions and in coping with psychological and practical problems associated with their career. Some female participants considered that the situation is worse for female staff compared to their male counterparts since the latter have more opportunities to easily intermingle with and be informally coached by more experienced staff members. Female staff hesitate to ask for mentoring.

> *The male staff can stay together with the experienced staff, have dinner and drink together and get ample opportunities to learn from them since those experienced staff are often males. But if the female staff members follow suit, that is stay together with the experienced staff (who are males) and have dinner and drink together, they (female staff) are viewed as having a bad character, not only by the other staff members but also the*

*wider social circle and clients. People do not like a female staff having closeness with a male staff for peer support in her job regardless of age or positions, unless the male staff member is her husband, brother or father.*

*Focus Group Discussion 3 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Female Officers (in the focus group discussion of MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with more than 10 years of experience in the forestry sector

The research participants reported that where female staff members are bold enough to approach an experienced male colleague for peer support, the latter may either hesitate to provide such support due to fears about what others will think, or tries to misinterpret or even misuse the relationship for his own (often sexual) interests.

Female participants reported that they thought the situation worse in the forest bureaucracy than in other sectors since staff members are required to undertake field visits and often stay overnight in the field. One female Ranger who was appointed District Forest Office (DFO) reported that she experienced job- related, psychological problems at the beginning of her career. When she first started her job, she was the only female staff employed at the office. She needed to work alongside her male colleagues and sometimes she was required to stay overnight in a village with other male colleagues. She needed much information, guidance and support while working in the office as well as in the field. She felt hesitated to interact with the male senior staff in the beginning, but later she found a colleague who wanted to help her and provide the guidance she needed.  However, later on, she found that this seemingly helpful male colleague had some inappropriate intentions towards her, which she found unprofessional and unethical. He started to sexually harass her in person and by phone call as well. She did not feel

that she could complain, indeed she was unaware of any institution or procedure that she could use to do so. She found that everybody including her boss was aware of the situation, but no one took action against the male colleague. Finally, she requested a transfer to another district in order to avoid the problem.

> *If we had had some sort of formal mechanism for coaching or mentoring newly appointed staff, I would not have faced such job-related psychological problems. I could have taken some precautions to avoid such incidents. The situation became so traumatic that I requested the Department to transfer me; even though I wanted to stay longer in the remote areas so that I could empower the local women.*

*Interview-24 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Ranger female (District Forest Office); with three years of working experiences in the forestry sector

There were strong arguments made, in the focus groups comprised of senior female Officers and female Rangers, that the lack of mentoring for beginning staff is the very first challenge for female foresters when they join the profession. They felt that working in the forestry professions is challenging because of nature of their job: as a community facilitator, as a forest protector (policing), as forest patroller and as a forestry worker, they need to deal with and face various types of persons within and outside their offices sometimes 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. They felt that if they had initially been provided with opportunities to understand more about the nature of their job in particular situations, they would have been more effectively prepared for some of the challenges. Some senior females expressed that while they had hesitated to ask something of their male colleagues at the initial stage of their job due to cultural

reasons, after some time they felt comfortable working with male colleagues. The group of senior female foresters accepts that it depends upon the nature of supervisors, associate staff and the female staff themselves. If either the supervisors or the associate staff are gender sensitive and helpful, the supervisors might encourage and support the female staff. Similarly, if the female staff member is enthusiastic and prepared to do challenging work, she is likely to receive support and opportunities; however if the opposite is true then the results will also be opposite.

The experience of joining the forestry sector, reported by male research participants was very different. Male-only focus groups held the consensus view that they were excited to join and work in a new office irrespective of the geographic location when they first joined the job. They added that they did not feel any difficulties in coping with the new situation and their family members were unconcerned about them relocating to a new area for work.

> *When I joined my job as a forest Ranger, I was posted in one of the districts in the far west region. I took a night coach and travelled overnight to reach my new office. I attended the office the following day and my supervisor asked me to stay at his residence for a couple days. I was excited to join the job, but a bit nervous about how to work as a Ranger since I did not have a practical experience as a Ranger. In few days, I rented a room in the village for my accommodation. I asked my supervisor to describe my duties and whenever I was confused, I used to ask him without hesitation. But I can imagine, how difficult it would have been if I had been a female Ranger.*

*Interview 2 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Officer male (District Forest Office): with 15 years working experiences in the forestry sector

While the experience of starting a new job described by interviewee two above was common among male participants, his acknowledgement of the possibility of a different experience for his female colleagues was not typical of the male participants. The majority of the male foresters interviewed emphasised similarities in both training and opportunities for males and females, pointing out that the course in the university, the syllabus in the public service examination and the working environment are the same for males and females; and arguing that opportunities for males and females are similar. They did not express the idea that females need separate mentoring support. One male DFO said:

> *Girls who join the forestry [profession] are always stronger and smarter than others. I think they do not have problem to settle into their work in the office*

*Interview-22 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Officer male (District Forest Office): with more than 20 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

Another senior (male) Officer stated

> *That might be the problem of the older generation of female foresters but now that is not a problem.*

*Interview-21 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Under Secretary male (MoFSC): with more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

In contrast, one newly appointed female Ranger (appointed within 3 years of her participation in this research) reported some bitter experiences that she associated with a lack of

mentoring. She was transferred from her position due to the lack of a supportive environment and finally she left the government Ranger job.

> *I was posted in a range post of Terai Region, but I had no idea about my duties in the office. I had sound theoretical knowledge of forestry and I was good at study as well. The problem was that I was unfamiliar with my work at a range post in-charge, so I resigned from the job.*

*Interview- 56 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Former Ranger female (District Forest Office); with two years working experiences in forestry sector and now a student

## Bullying and Sexual harassment

The terms 'bullying', 'harassment', 'victimization' and 'mobbing' have been used synonymously in the literature (Branch *et al.*, 2013; Einarsen, 2000) to describe situations in which one or more persons receive negative treatments or actions from one or more persons, such as abusing, provoking, pressurising, frightening or intimidating, such that the person or people receiving such treatment is/are not able to defend themselves or cope with the situation (Adams & Bray, 1992; Bjorkqvist *et al.*, 1994; Branch *et al.*, 2013; Einarsen, 2000).

The responses of participants in this research indicated that bullying and harassment are pervasive in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, particularly perpetrated by officials holding higher rank on those with lower ranks in the organizational hierarchy. When considering relationships between male staff members and female staff members in the organization, bullying can become sexual harassment. In the context of this study, the term: bullying is applied to the organizational culture of the forest bureaucracy irrespective of gender, while sexual harassment is a particular

aspect of culture that contributes to creating challenges for women to enter, remain and grow in the workplace; because sexual harassment is not only related to sexuality but also power and position of the women in the organization (Ateffakhr, 2016; Kunwar *et al.*, 2014; McLaughlin, 2012).

Female interviewees understood sexual harassment as someone else's behaviour with sexual intention that makes them feel embarrassed or humiliated. Both male and female participants recognised that sexual harassment is manifested in different forms including verbal, gestural, physical, written or pictorial. They also recognised that internet and social media further contributed to the sexual harassment.

Most female participants in the focus group discussions and interviews mentioned sexual harassment in workplaces as a serious concern. They argued that it has been widespread across the forest bureaucracy and was hence the 'rule' rather than an 'exception'. Even when some female employees did not understand the concept of sexual harassment in the beginning of interviews or focus group discussions and denied any such cases, they ultimately accepted it following an explanation about the concept from the researcher, or from another participant. This issue of sexual harassment is generally underexplored in the Nepalese context, including in the forest bureaucracy. In the majority of cases in Nepal, as elsewhere, men are the perpetrators, while women employees are the victims (Barling *et al.*, 1996; Chrysafi *et al.*, 2017; De Haas *et al.*, 2009; Kunwar *et al.*, 2014; Studzinska & Hilton, 2017). The majority of female participants from the interviews and focus groups discussion reported that they had experienced various forms of sexual harassment. One female Office Assistant stated that;

> *My supervisor once asked me to visit the field with him. I knew that he had sexually abused a girl who worked in the forest nursery. So, I refused to go since I was based in*

*the office and I was not directly involved in the field activities. Previously, the supervisor used to favour me at every step, such as nominating me for training, providing allowances and approving leave. I thought it was simply professional. But since I refused to go to the field with him, his behaviour was completely opposite. It meant that he was favouring me just for sexual intention before. When he thought he was not successful, he started acting against me.*

*Interview 1 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Office Assistant female (Regional Forest Office): with more than five years of experiences in the administration in forestry offices

The participants of a female-only focus group also shared their perceptions about sexual harassment by (male) supervisors in the forest bureaucracy and favours they did for the women employees, which were related to sexually motivated intentions.

*It is hard to show concrete evidence, but it is well understood that the supervisors and other senior staff members, particularly the male ones, seem to support or help women employees in most cases. When the women employees just confine themselves to their professional work and do not follow their (male supervisors/staff) personal interests, we have observed that they [the male supervisors] start a hostile relationship with their female employees. Some female employees are obliged to compromise their stand by which the situation becomes a conducive environment for male staff to sexually harass the women employees. Their support and help in the beginning and their hostile attitude in the long run imply that sexual harassment or attempt to sexually harass women employees is rampant in forest bureaucracy.*

*Focus Group Discussion 4 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Officer female (District Forest Offices): having 2 years to 20 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

In contrast with the perceptions of women employees, most of the male participants in the interviews and focus groups denied that sexual harassment is rampant in forest bureaucracy. Rather, one male interviewee indicated that in many cases it is women employees who try to take advantage of being women and exploit male supervisors for their personal benefits. He expressed that it is a women employee's choice whether she wants to be exploited sexually or not to get something in return.

> *In many cases, I have seen women employees keep special relationship with the male supervisors and get advantage out of it. Therefore, women are more privileged than male employees. We cannot say the women employees are sexually harassed, it is their choice.*

*Interview 9 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Officer male (District Forest Office): with more than 10 years of working experiences

A few members of male only focus group discussions also expressed similar views in the discussion.

> *When there is a male supervisor, he often favours women employees in opportunities, such as nomination for training, choice of responsibilities and allowances. As a result, we male staff members are less benefitted from office facilities and opportunities in comparison with female staff members. Whether they are sexually harassed or not*

*completely depends on women employees' choice rather than the intention or behaviour of the male supervisors or co-workers.*

*Focus Group Discussion 2 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Rangers and Officers male (Department of Forests): with two years to more than 20 years of working experiences

However some male participants from the same group challenged this view. They expressed their suspicions that women might have some difficulties in opposing or going against the will of their supervisor. They also stressed that it is socio-culturally very hard to expose cases of sexual harassment, especially when the alleged harassment is perpetrated by a supervisor, due to the power relationships involved. In male-female mixed focus groups, after some discussion about the recently introduced legal definition of sexual harassment in the work place in the Nepalese context, some males concluded that they themselves were also involved in some cases of sexual harassment, although it had not been their intention. They accepted that, although illegal, such incidents were linked with wider cultural norms of Nepalese society.

Culturally, Nepalese people, particularly women, feel uncomfortable discussing matters relating to sex, including sexual harassment. Some female interviewees wanted to avoid the question. Even mature female foresters who had worked for more than 20 years did not feel comfortable talking about it. Focus group discussions were particularly useful in exploring this issue as participants became more comfortable with the discussion after the researcher explained the meaning of the term. Many participants initially answered the question as though they had never encountered such type of harassment themselves but had heard about the experiences of

others. During initial discussions about sexual harassment in a focus group, some senior forestry officers from the Ministry expressed that

> *I have never experienced that in my life but I have heard that it happens in our profession.*

*Interview 16 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Under Secretary female (Department of Forests): with more than 20 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

> *I do not like that type of behaviour and I do not even like to discuss it.*

*Interview 5 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Ranger female (Regional Forestry Directorate): with one year of experience in the forestry sector

> *I am very strong in this case and I am pretty much confident that no one dare attempt it with me.*

*Interview 25 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Officer female (MoFSC): with more than 10 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

After further clarification about the definition of sexual harassment by the researcher, each of the female employees realized that they had personally faced sexual harassment sometimes from their boss or colleagues, or sometimes even from the clients who visited in their workplaces.

Despite the disagreement of some male interviewees, almost all female interviews and some male participants had a consensus that sexual harassment is widespread in the forest bureaucracy. The male participants, who argued that sexual harassment was the choice of female employees (since it had been happening to female colleagues who neither reported nor tried to address it), did not assert that there is no sexual harassment, rather they justified the behaviour as acceptable. It seems likely that this is a serious issue which might impact women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy. Fear of being sexually harassed may prevent some women from joining the forest bureaucracy; and direct experience of sexual harassment may lead to attrition of women from the profession.

Unlike the female interviewees working in the forest bureaucracy, the women working in International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) were more aware of the issue of sexual harassment in the work place. Most of them expressed that INGOs have a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment. Yet, some of them reported that they faced sexual harassment from higher level officials working in forest bureaucracy. They stated that government officials are outside of their organisations so that the rules and norms of their own workplace do not extend to government officials. They said that they avoided complaining against such behaviour from government officials, due to either fear of rumour or possible further assault from culprits.

> *While I was collecting data for my Master degree dissertation, I consulted a Joint Secretary (male) under the MoFSC for an interview. He asked me to see him in his office chamber after 5 O'clock (immediately after office hours). When I went there, no one else was there. He offered me to sit in the same sofa as he was sitting in since I was using a voice recorder. During the interview, he repeatedly touched my body right from the beginning. I thought he was doing it un-deliberately in the beginning, but when he did it*

*again and again, I felt uncomfortable. I tried to avoid his touching, but he repeated it even aggressively. I was sure he was trying to sexually harass me. Finally, I stopped the interview without completing it and left his chamber. I shared this bitter experience with some of my friends (both male and female) who were working in government forestry offices but I did not make a formal complaint. This was partially due to lack of policies to address such assaults in Nepalese government offices and partially due to fear of unnecessary rumour against me and further hostile behaviour from the culprit in the future.*

*Interview 35 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Forest Officer Female (INGO): working closely with the government forestry officers for more than 15 years

Similarly, one women interviewee from a forestry users' network described a similar incident that happened in an international conference in Kathmandu. A senior male Officer from the MoFSC tried to harass her while he was drunk.

*I was in a dinner program with some colleagues from MoFSC. One of the senior Forest Officer tried to harass me in front of some other staff from the Ministry. I was embarrassed and confused about what to do. I complained to the other staff who were present in the venue and also to his supervisor. They tried to appease me saying that he was drunk and that was not his intention. They also requested me not to complain formally against him. They assured that they would warn him not to repeat the same in future.*

*Interview 45 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Executive member female (Forest Users' Network): with more than 10 years of experience in the forestry sector

Interviewee 45 explained that she was one of the leaders working in this sector. If someone in a leadership position within an activist organisation suffers sexual harassment at a high level function in the capital city, it can be imagined how difficult some situations may be for women employees working in remote forest offices. The experience of Interviewee 45 also raises a question about security issues for females working in the forestry sector.

## Struggle for existence

Female employees in the forest bureaucracy were found to have aspirations to develop their careers with professional dignity. Their experience of the organizational culture of the forest bureaucracy was described as an obstacle rather than as a tool for the development of a dignified professional life. As a result, they found they were struggling for their existence, within the organizational culture, a component of Feminist Institutionalism. Women's struggle for existence differs from sexual harassment in the fact that in their struggle for existence the employees try to retain their job by compromising or confronting, whereas when sexually harassed they feel humiliated, embarrassed or tortured. Women's struggle for existence in the profession was found to be part of their everyday life in the forest bureaucracy.

The struggle of male staff for existence in the forest bureaucracy was also explored. Their experiences with respect to this issue were different from those of women staff. The struggle experienced by male staff varied with their positions in the organizational hierarchy. The higher the position, the easier it was for them to create environment that fosters their dignity, leadership and career growth.

*The male staff have more freedom to move wherever they like, make friends and social networks, join professional societies, stay overnight wherever they like, enjoy opportunities of trainings and workshops and challenge their supervisors in an organized way. The women, on the other hand, struggle both within and outside the organizational structure irrespective of their education, training and position in the organization.*

*Interview 7(Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Joint Secretary male (MoFSC): with more than 20 years of experience in the forestry sector

In general, male staff in the forest bureaucracy were found to be more empowered by joining a government office; and they generally enjoy the organizational culture. For women, it is more challenging to enter and stay in the bureaucracy compared to other workplaces.

Female employees in the forest bureaucracy were found to be oppressed, not only in terms of discrimination, sexual harassment and social stigma, but also in their need to struggle to maintain their professional dignity and career development. The struggles of women were found to be embedded in the organizational culture of forest bureaucracy. Examples of struggles described by participants included compromise and confrontation on the part of the women and comprise job dissatisfaction related to the need to retaliate against male domination, perceived to permeate every aspect of the workplace. The interviewees stated that in most cases, female employees tend to compromise their ambition to grow in their career in order to avoid unpleasant outcomes in their social/personal life.

*I started my job as a forest Ranger. I wanted to develop my career to higher positions. My parents wanted me to get married as soon as I got the job. The reason behind it was that a girl would be considered 'spoilt' and nobody would like to marry her if she stayed*

*by herself away from her parental home. But I knew that I would not be able to promote myself in the job if I got married. Once my boss tried to harass me sexually but I protested it privately. I did not disclose the case since I thought my parents would not let me continue my job nor would my other colleagues and clients sympathize with me if they heard it. I struggled within myself to cope with the psychological stress rather sharing with others.*

*Interview-30 (Table 4.1: Chapter 4)*

Former forest Ranger female (District Forest Office): with 15 years experiences in the forestry sector, now a BSc student at forestry college

A male interviewee recalled an event that occurred in his workplace involving a male colleague who patted a female Ranger on her back during a staff meeting.

*She slapped the person in retaliation saying that he used to do the same thing time and again. Later on, the person organized a gang of local youths and harassed the female Ranger publicly. She reported the case to her senior Officer, but he did not take any action against the person. Finally, she apologized to the person and continued her job. I know she was decent type of girl but she was sexually harassed by that man. She tried to do tit for tat but she was compelled to apologize for her fault but the man did not.*

*Interview-22 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Under Secretary (Department of Forests): with more than 20 years of experience in the forestry sector

These two cases illustrate how women struggled to exist in their jobs alone, with little or no support from colleagues or managers.

The cases of women's struggles in the forest bureaucracy were discussed in a focus group discussion of male forest Officers/Rangers. These male participants argued that female employees in the forestry profession, particularly in the government service, do not experience bias against them, but rather are in a privileged position; able to take more opportunities than their male counterparts because they (the women) are closer to their bosses, who are often males who favour female employees. However, the participants from the female-only focus group discussions contended that male employees are always closer to the bosses and they 'backbite' female employees over dinner or drinks, events from which female staff are typically absent. They further elaborated that the female employees hesitate to participate in such social events with male officers since they are stigmatized if they do so, unless it is organized for a wider social circle.

A female staff working in a Non-Government Organization (NGO) reported that she found women foresters heavily compromising their behaviour in order to fit into the organizational culture of forest bureaucracy.

> *I noticed a female forest Ranger swearing just like a male Ranger usually does. But it is very impolite for a female to swear in Nepalese communities. I later found that she wanted to mingle with her boss and other employees so that she would not be excluded from the major tasks and opportunities provided to staff members.*

*Interview-47 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Officer female (FECOFUN): working for Gender and Social inclusion in the forestry sector for than 10 years

Many female participants from the focus group discussions and interviews acknowledged that some women foresters in the bureaucracy try to socialize with male foresters to avoid isolation. They adopt the habits of their male colleagues including habits relating to the adoption of language, including swearing, clothing/uniforms, and eating/drinking habits. Women who employ such strategies may find that it helps with regard to a particular situation but the adoption of male behaviours can be counterproductive in the long term due to negative comments and rumours about their character, made by male colleagues or people outside of the workplace.

The above instances provide examples of cases of women employees struggling or compromising to 'survive' in the job. It has become a part of the organizational/workplace culture in Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

## Movement against discrimination

Female employees were not simply passive recipients of unwanted behaviour, such as sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination, but at times were aggressive reactors to unwanted activities, which they perceived as negatively affecting their professional life in the organization. It is through their reactive behaviour that women employees seek to resolve gender-based violence and discrimination. This kind of movement was found to be an increasing trend, and is also becoming a part of the organizational culture in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Research participants stated that there were cases of women employees involved in protests to challenge unwanted behaviour in the workplace. One interviewee noted that there had been many instances when women employees in the forest bureaucracy participated in several protest activities (organized by women activists outside the forestry sector) against violent and discriminatory

behaviour, such as rape and sexual harassment. Female employees in the forest bureaucracy also took part in actions for equal rights over inherited property and equal education for male and female members of households. Whenever a case of crime or discrimination against women takes place in society at large, women employees in the forest bureaucracy are concerned about it and raise their voices in alignment with the protesting groups. A female staff member recalled:

> *When a series of rape cases were reported in the newspapers and on television in 2012, I approached other women employees in our Ministry and asked them to join me in attending a meeting called by an NGO to protest against the cases. The reason to join the NGO was that we did not have as many women as needed to demonstrate at a rally and pressurize the authorities to arrest and take stringent actions against the culprits.*

*Interview 25 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Forest Officer female (MoFSC): with more than 10 years of experience in the forestry sector

There was evidence of mutual cooperation between the female staff in the bureaucracy and the women activists in NGOs or Community Based Organizations when one needed support from the other. A women foresters' focus group shared that there was a case when a female Ranger, who had a young child whom she was breastfeeding, was transferred from a range post nearby her home to a remote district without any apparent reason. A group of local women involved in community forestry in the area called on the Director General of the Department of Forests and asked him to cancel her transfer.

Most participants felt that such kinds of movements for the dignity of women in bureaucracy or in wider society are more effective when the women from government organizations and outside the government joined together to form an allegiance. When they

worked together, they felt they had a stronger force than that of only their own group within the bureaucracy, and the authorities would more often listen to their collective voices. This kind of interactive action or movement to challenge any situation or action against women was found to be a growing trend and was becoming part of the organizational culture in forest bureaucracy, irrespective of whether the leadership in the bureaucracy accepted it as legitimate or not.

### *6.4.2 Formal and informal institutions*

Participants discussed various factors that could either constrain or facilitate the inclusion of women in the forest bureaucracy. These factors included organizational entities, rules and practices that have been formally or informally institutionalized over time. The narratives of the research participants pointing to entities, rules and practices were put together and categorized as either formal or informal institutions. Mackay *et al.* (2010:576) define formal institutions as 'rules-in-form' and informal institutions as 'rules-in-use'.

#### Formal institutions

Defining formal and informal institutions was a difficult task during the interviews and focus group discussions. Nonetheless, the research participants from the government forestry organizations understood formal institutions as the policies, laws and rules as well as the organizations constituted by the government under certain law or decision. When asked to elaborate, a female forest Officer listed a number of organizations under the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation.

> *When we talk about the formal institutions, we understand it to mean: the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, its six divisions, five departments, 75 district forest*

*offices, 61 district soil conservation offices, 20 protected area offices and their subsidiaries.*

*Interview-16 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Under Secretary female (Department of Forests): with more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

The elaboration above was not exhaustive. Another woman interviewee added three parastatal organizations of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation as well as Community Forestry User Groups in the list of formal institutions. Another interviewee argued that there are three professional society organizations, namely the Nepal Foresters' Association (NFA), the Forest Technicians Association of Nepal (NEFTA) and the Nepal Junior Foresters' Association (NJFA) that should also be considered formal forest institutions. A male interviewee included institutes of forestry and colleges as formal institutions, in addition to the government organizations. Following Mackay *et al.* (2010), these can actually be considered structures rather than formal institutions. Nonetheless, the participants emphasized that these organizations or structures operated on certain "rules of the game" that particularly hinder female members from entering or controlling the organizations. Certain rules are reinforced that concretize the roles of male or female members as more important than the other in these organizations.

Like other Nepalese Ministries, the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, the Head of the Planning Division serves as the Gender Focal Point of the Ministry. This position has been assigned by the government in order to enhance gender sensitive policies, structures, programmes, practices and behaviour in workplaces under each Ministry. Since this is a Joint Secretary position, unless there is a female Joint Secretary in the forest bureaucracy who also

holds the position of Head of the Planning Division, a male becomes the Gender Focal Point by design or default. Until 2015 there had never been a female Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation. The current (only) female Joint Secretary is not the Head of the Planning Division. A woman Officer is appointed as an assistant to the Focal Point, but she remains an assistant and has no leading or decisive role for the Gender Focal Unit.

> *Some three years ago, a female researcher from a donor funded project wanted to analyse the problems faced by the female Officer-level staff in the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and its subsidiaries. She had invited all those women staff including the assistant to the Gender Focal Point for a one-hour discussion in the Ministry. I was one of the participants. However, the assistant to the Gender Focal Point did not attend the meeting. Later I asked her why she could not participate. She replied that the Gender Focal Point, to whom she was assistant, did not allow her to attend the meeting. The Gender Focal Point explained to her that he was the only one who had authority to talk about women's issues in forest bureaucracy and that the researcher had not asked him to release her for the discussion.*

*Interview-28 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Under Secretary female (MoFSC): with more than 15 years of experiences in the forestry sector

The formal rules surrounding the Gender Focal Point position indirectly made the male bureaucrats more authoritative in decision making about women's issues than female staff members. The Gender Focal Point or unit is a formal institution that appears to be promoting the rights of women staff members. However, female interviewees were concerned that the formal institutions in forest bureaucracy have reinforced the existing power relations that favour male

staff over female staff, particularly when it comes to the authority about who has access to decision making and resources of the organization in question. Participants, mostly the females, highlighted that some formal rules are being or have been reformed to make the forest bureaucracy women-inclusive however the informal rules or the 'rules-in-use' in and around forest bureaucracy are hindering the effective implementation of the reforms.

Participants from focus groups with both males and females also provided an example of a formal institutions which may also disempower women involved in community forestry user groups. The Community Forestry Development Guidelines of 2009 state that either the chairperson or Secretary of the executive committee of each Community Forest User Group (CFUG) must be a woman, but participants in this research noted that this provision is often overlooked. Sometimes, the District Forest Office intervenes in the committee formation process and provides external pressure for women to be elected in the roles of either the chairperson or the Secretary. Despite this, decisions of the committees are often made by males, especially if the elected female is passive by nature. In many cases the husband or father or other members from the committee speak and act on behalf of women who hold such positions and they have no real role other than to sign off on decisions made by others. Similarly, it was reported that women members of these committees were often offered the treasurer's position. However, the decision to spend money is often made by the chair or Secretary as per the Constitution of the CFUG; thus the treasurer has no role other than only to sign the cheque and record the transaction. In many cases, such females were caught up in faulty decision making and penalised by the authorities. Such examples disempower women to stand for election as a member or Office-bearer of CFUG executive committees because of fear of having to wear the consequences of other's poor decisions.

Research participants were not only interested in forest organizations, but also the policies, strategies, laws, rules, and regulations that make up the formal institutions (Rezina & Mahmood, 2016; Syed & Ali, 2017). Those interested in policies, strategies, laws and rules argued that the formal institutions are conducive for the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy (Focus Group Discussion 2 and 3). They asserted that the provision of Women Right in Constitution and quota for women in recruiting civil servants are the examples of formal institutions that support women inclusion in forest bureaucracy.

## Informal institutions

The researcher asked about any rules that were not written but practiced in forest bureaucracy in favour of or against women, the participants enumerated a series of such practices. They also recalled some groups in forest institutions that are not officially constituted. Hence, the research participants understood informal institutions as some groups not officially constituted or some practices that are prevalent in forest bureaucracy without any legal or policy linkages. Male participants were rather sarcastic about such concept as informal institutions. A senior Officer rhetorically asked:

> *I can see women staff often sit together in a room and talk and laugh. I don't really know what they talk about. When any male staff enters, they keep quiet or look serious. Is this an informal institution?*

*Interview 13(Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Joint Secretary male (MoFSC): with more than 20 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

The participant denied the existence of informal groups among male staff members. He further added that they (male staff) sit together for only office business or staff meetings when in the office. He agreed that certain male staff have a closer affinity than others, and sit together for drinks or dinner in a restaurant or cafe outside the office. He reported that he does not consider such groups as informal institutions. However, in a focus group discussion among female foresters, participants developed divergent views on informal institutions. The majority of them argued that the female staff are not properly organized and hence they have no formal or informal groups.

> *One female staff member 'backbites' another instead of getting organized in the search for common solutions to female problems. I can remember an event in a staff meeting of the Department of Forests a year ago; one female forest Officer raised an issue about female toilets in the office. I noticed another female staff member raise her eyebrows and whisper to a male staff close to her, saying that 'she was talking nonsense'.*

*One participant from Focus Group Discussion 3 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Female Officers (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): having 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

Interviewees and focus group discussion participants went on to describe some other groups that they considered were informal institutions. They reported that female Nepalese foresters have formed a 'women foresters' network', which has not been registered anywhere but is still functional in bringing women foresters together to discuss their professional issues.

In some community forestry user groups, separate sub-committees consisting of only women have been formed so that they may communicate and discuss their needs.

For example, during the formation of community forestry user groups, separate gatherings of women ('interest groups') were facilitated in order to bring forth the concerns of women in community forestry.

The formal institutions in forestry sector were progressive in terms of written policies, laws and rules in favour of women, while their implementation was constrained by informal rules prevalent in forest bureaucracy.

Research participants recalled a number of informal rules that are expressed in the forest bureaucracy. The participants pointed out these rules, regardless of they agree with these rules, for example:

*Women are not as capable as men to work in forests. They are fit for professions such as banking and teaching.*

*A participant from Focus Group Discussion 5 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Male Rangers and Officers (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

Many males for the group agreed with this statement. They expressed their opinion that the technical matter is tough for female. Similarly, some other expressed;

W*omen foresters cannot go to the field because they are physically weak*

*A participant from Focus Group Discussion 5 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Male Rangers and Officers (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

One participant added in the same focus group discussion;

*Forestry work includes mostly physical activities, such as patrolling in the jungle, felling trees, and arresting culprits, which are beyond the capacity of women. That is not their kind of job.*

*A participant from Focus Group Discussion 5 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Male Rangers and Officers (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

One interviewee from the forestry NGO is expressed that;

*'if women are sent to the fieldwork with male colleagues, they are harassed by their colleagues and clients. It puts the management in trouble, so they should not be sent to the fieldwork'*

*Interview 50 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Freelance Forester male (MoFSC): with more than 10 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

Many males in the male only and mixed focus group discussions believed that women have security issues in forestry field work and that is why field work is not appropriate for females.

Some males from the focus groups and interviews pointed to traditional roles, cultural factors and beliefs as a proof that the forestry profession is not good for women. Such as;

*Women have to take care of her family members, so they cannot be sent to remote areas*.

*A male participant from Focus Group Discussion 5 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Male Rangers and Officers (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

One participant added in the same focus group discussion;

*Nobody marries a woman if she works in forest organizations*.

*A participant from Focus Group Discussion 5 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Male Rangers and Officers (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

One participant added in the same focus group discussion;

A *family is disintegrated if a woman leaves her home and works in faraway forests.*

*A male participant from Focus Group Discussion 3 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Mixed gendered Ranger and Officer (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

One participant added in the same focus group discussion;

A male participant from the Focus group discussions also expressed that, domestic elephants and wild animals are more dangerous for females than males. This person believed that some animals are aggressive towards females during their menstrual period.

*Women should not go to forests when she is during menstrual period since the wild animals attack them during this time. I am so surprised some female recruited as elephant care taker as well for forest patrolling these days, how they can work? Elephant might attack them while the care taker has her period. Therefore, women better forget about joining a forest workforce*.

*A male participant from Focus Group Discussion 4 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Mixed gendered Forest guard (MOFSC and the Department of Forests): with 2 years to more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

In summary the informal institutions of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy can be categorised as interest groups, pressure groups, meetings between colleagues outside of workplaces and business hours, women's networks, women's groups within the organizations and the women foresters' association. In addition, there are also norms, beliefs, values and cultures that are practiced without any supporting evidence or any legal or policy backing. These informal institutions play vital roles in challenging the formal institutions. These informal rules or institutions often try to constrain the progressive formal institutions that favour women. Some informal institutions created by women, however, contribute to challenging both formal and informal rules that favour male dominance in forest bureaucracy.

### *6.4.3 Structure and agency*

Following Mackay *et al.* (2010), the structure is a formal organization, whereas the agency is an individual working within that organizational structure. In other words, the structure is an objective or mechanical part, whereas the agency is the subjective aspect of an organization (Mackay, 2011). To borrow metaphors from computer technology, the structure is the hardware of an organization, while the agency resembles the software that runs or crashes the computer.

The structure of forest bureaucracy is characterized by a hierarchical organization, with a top-down communication pathway, upward accountability, an opaque performance evaluation system, rigidity and male domination in upper positions in the hierarchical pyramid. The agency component of forest bureaucracy in terms of 'Feminist Institutionalism' is characterised by the

presence of a few vocal female employees who challenge discrimination against women, by the collective actions of women aimed at improving their welfare, by a collective gender voice, and by women's engagement in professional societies. The agency components in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy were found only at a token scale in comparison with the structure of the forest bureaucracy that is massive, rigid and robust in its strength.

The research participants identified the concepts of structure and agency in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy and in other community and private sector organizations related to forestry. They highlighted that women working in the forest bureaucracy and those working in community forestry user groups and networks have dual roles - one role is as a staff member in general irrespective of gender and the other is as a female staff member. The latter role includes a responsibility to advocate the importance of women's participation in resource management as well as decision making. This second role of female staff members have made individual women agents for change in forestry institutions including in the forest bureaucracy.

The research participants further reported rigid structures within the forest bureaucracy and more flexible structures in community and private sector organizations. The majority of the interviewees understood the structures of the forest bureaucracy as the set of organizations, rules, code of conducts, hierarchy of positions and differences in status between Officers and non-officers. Similarly, the structures in community and private sector forestry organizations were understood as the set of the charters of the organizations, portfolios of different positions, code of conducts and executive committees.

Most of the participants from interviews and focus group discussions held the consensus that it is easier to change the structure of community level organizations (compared to government agencies). They had observed or experienced significant changes made to

community level organizations in order to balance the number and positions of women and men. However, they observed that similar changes rarely take place in government organizations and said that this was due to structural rigidity. This was the reason given by participants to explain why the government forest bureaucracy is far less inclusive of women than community-based or private sector organizations in Nepal.

> *Although we are able to bring changes in community level structures for women's inclusion and empowerment, we have not been able to bring the changes in forest bureaucracy due to the rigidness of government structures. I think the forest bureaucracy is the least influential in the government system in terms of transforming the organization towards more gender inclusiveness. Women's inclusion has not been a priority agenda in the forest bureaucracy solely because its structure is so inert that it can only be changed by external forces.*

*Interview 21 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Under Secretary male (MoFSC): with more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

Participants considered that the rigid structure of the forest bureaucracy did not allow higher level forestry officials to favour female staff even if they wanted to. Many interviewees, including higher level managers and female staff, reported that they had been prevented, as supervisors, from being gender sensitive toward female staff. Participants felt that the structures of the forest bureaucracy were similar to other government organizations in theory, but that the nature of the job, including the geographical requirements, was different and more difficult in the forest bureaucracy than in other sectors.

*One of the newly recruited female staff members was working in a remote area under my supervision. She had a baby but her husband was working in another district. She wanted to transfer to the district where her husband worked. I was fully sympathetic and sensitive to her, but was unable to approve her transfer because of the civil service rules that did not allow her transfer before completing two years of service following her recruitment.*

*Interview 31 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Joint Secretary (Regional Forestry Directorate): with more than 20 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

A focus group composed of both male and female forest guards (the lowest ranking in the hierarchy of foresters) argued that the structure of the forest bureaucracy, including its physical facilities, were not female friendly. They accepted that the Government has adopted a flexible structure for recruiting female forest guards. But when it comes to the work place, women are expected to carry out a similar job in a similar environment to their male colleagues, even if the working environment is not female-friendly. One newly recruited (male) Forest Guard argued that there are several structural barriers for women working in field level offices.

*Why the government is recruiting female forest guards and elephant care takers? It is difficult for women to work for forest and wildlife staying in a Range Post (the smallest unit of a District forest office) and take care of elephants when there is a threat of attack from timber smugglers and poachers and of being attacked by an uncontrolled elephant. Sometimes I feel conflicted about whether I should I take care of the female staff or perform my duty?*

*Focus group discussion one (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Forest Guard male (District Forest Office): with six months to two years of working experiences in the forestry sector

One senior government official observed that the government has adopted some structural reforms within the civil service in response to political requirements; and contended that this explained the increase in numbers of female foresters recruited into the forest bureaucracy. However, he expressed that the job is not suitable for women. He argued that the government requirement to employ women should not apply, at least for the forestry profession. Since the forestry profession is different from other professions there should be some structural differences compared to other civil services.

Participants from international organizations also observed the slower process of change in women's inclusion in the forestry sector compared to other government organisations.

> *I have been working for more than 20 years for women's empowerment in the forestry sector. Due to structural barriers, less success has been achieved in government institutions compared to community and political institutions. I think this is one of the major barriers to bring the change in women's participation in forest bureaucracy.*

*Interview 51 (Table 4.2: chapter 4)*

Senior male Officer (INGO): with more than 20 years of working in the forestry sector and former Forest Officer for more than 10 years

Female foresters within Nepal's forestry organizations experienced serious structural hurdles in developing their careers, accessing opportunities to take part in various policy forums

and in maintaining an appropriate work life balance. Focus group discussions among female foresters illustrated how they had been deprived of opportunities to take part in most of the policy forums due to the structural complexity of the Ministry. They reported that the membership of many of the policy forums and task forces was composed of higher-level officials such as joint secretaries or undersecretaries. Women's participation in such discussions were lacking, partly because a very insignificant number of women are appointed to higher level positions and partly because the people in positions of authority do not think women can or should work in such committees. As a result, the outcomes of such policy processes are often gender blind or biased against women,

One female Officer who was over forty five years old complained that she could not take the opportunity for further study immediately after joining the job because of family obligations. Family obligations meant that she could not consider taking study leave until she was forty-five years old; an age at which she was no longer eligible for study leave. Some other female interviewees also reported similar problems.

> *If some females were in the position where rules for study leave were made, they would have considered the family obligations of women employees and made some provisions for their education irrespective of their age.*

*Interview 19 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Officer female (Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management): with more than 20 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

Some male Officers and colleagues argued that women employees receive the same salaries and perks that their male counterparts receive. Therefore, they felt that there should not

be any discrimination between male and female staff under the pretext of positive discrimination when it comes to performing tasks and responsibilities. However, as discussed earlier, the female participants noted that the structure of the forest bureaucracy makes it difficult for women to enter forestry institutions and to retain their professional positions and grow their careers within those forestry institutions. Those female employees who considered that they had managed to survive in the forestry sector were found to have achieved this success by challenging the existing structure and by gradually adapting to unfavourable circumstances via a struggle for existence.

The agency component of the male and female employees who are gender sensitive is weak in comparison with the rigid structures of the forest bureaucracy. Women foresters have been organized informally but their number is so small that their voices are often unheard by the higher authorities.

> *When some vocal female employees try to confront gender insensitive activities and practices in the work place, they are teased, bullied and sexually harassed.*

*Interview 1 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Administrative Assistant female (Regional Forestry Training Centre): with one year experience in forestry offices and more than 3 years experiences in administrative office

Some female employees were found to have joined a professional society or organization through which they could put pressure on higher authorities, which they cannot do from their position in the job due to the structural code of conduct, such as 'the staff in the lower rank should show due respect to their higher level staff and heed their order' (GoN 1992).

*Women employees are always in the lower rank. It means they always need to heed the higher level officials who are often male. They join some professional society, organization or trade unions so that they can speak out against the gender-insensitive and offensive behaviour of the higher level officials.*

*Interview 24 (Table 4.1: chapter 4I)*

Forest Ranger female (District Forest Office): with three years experiences in the forestry sector

During focus group discussions and interviews, it became clear that some women employees were also working voluntarily in some NGOs or community networks. These women reported that they could discuss the problems they were facing in the work place in the context of the NGO or networks. They could use their agency through these NGOs to put pressure on the authorities in their workplace to establish gender sensitive behaviour and respect for women.

*I was sexually harassed by a male staff member in my work place. My boss did not listen to me when I complained. I was involved in a mothers' group in my village. So, I talked to my women friends in the mothers' group about the issue. They came in a delegation to my boss. Finally, the boss called the male staff member and asked him to apologize to me for his misconduct.*

*Interview 30 (Table 4.1: chapter 4)*

Ranger female (Regional Forestry Directorate): with more than 20 years experiences in the forestry sector

*My supervisor did not listen to me about my transfer to my village when I approached him individually in his office. But I was a member of an employees' trade union. When I*

*led a delegation of trade union members to him for the same issue, he agreed to my request and approved my transfer immediately.*

*Interview 23 (Table 4.1; Chapter 4)*

Officer female (MoFSC): with more than 20 years of experiences in the forestry sector

Thus the structure of forest bureaucracy was found to be rigid, inert and gender insensitive. It did not appear to favour women over men and would tend to be gender blind. When fighting as individuals for their rights or opportunities, female employees were often not heard by higher level officials or supervisors. However, they could use their 'agency' in order to influence the authorities by raising their voices collectively in the organization or by aligning with NGOs, professional societies or networks. Conflicts between the structure and agency were apparent in the forest bureaucracy.

### *6.4.4 Power relations*

Power relations form one of the pillars of Feminist Institutionalism (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). The concept alludes to the equal or unequal power balance between male and female staff members in an organization, in this case the forest bureaucracy. Power is the legitimate or informal authority by which an individual or group exercises control over other individuals, groups, entities or resources. In the forest bureaucracy, the balance of power in the work place often tilts towards the male employees by design or default, since more than 90 percent of the employees are males, including more than 95 per cent in higher level positions such as under-secretaries and joint secretaries. As a result, a patron-client relationship persists between male and female employees working in the Nepalese forestry bureaucracy.

It was found that the power associated with any particular rank within the forest bureaucracy hierarchy differs when the holder of that rank is either male or female. When a woman holds a lower position than a male in the organization, the power imbalance is exacerbated considerably. A woman Officer was posted as chief of a district forest office under the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation. In each district, the government assigns a 'Chief District Officer' in order to oversee all the other district level government offices and to maintain law and order in the district. In the district where the female staff member was put in charge of the forestry related office, the Chief District Officer (CDO) wrote a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs mentioning that the woman Officer was incompetent to perform the duty as a 'district chief".

> *Actually the CDO wanted to borrow her official car for one day. She told him that she had fixed a schedule to meet farmers in the field that day, so, she was unable to lend the car to him. That was the reason, but the CDO misused his authority and described the issue differently. Had the forest Officer been a male, the CDO would not have done this.*

*Focus group discussion 3 (Table 4.3: chapter 4)*

Forest Officers female (MoFSC and Departments of Forests); with more than 2 years to 20 years of working experiences in the forestry sector

The respondents stated that most of the time when a female becomes the official in charge of a district, either the CDO or her own staff do not cooperate with her. Another female Officer was called by her department when her subordinate staff members (who were all males) complained about her. In such a situation, female employees were found to always be less powerful than their male colleagues, irrespective of their rank.

Unequal power relationships were found to be reinforced by the rigid structure of the organization, formal institutions and work place/organizational culture. Wherever the balance of power between male and female staff shifted, it happened due to informal institutions and agential efforts of the female employees rather than due to any formal institutions or organizational structures. Even female friendly policies were not effective without the agential efforts of women employees. For example, the Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation was in place at the time of the interviews and focus group discussions, but it was not being implemented due to the lack of action plans or annual programmes in line with it.

## 6.5 Personal reflections of the researcher

A personal reflection diary was maintained by the researcher throughout the period of data collection. The researcher was keen to avoid imposing her own views, perceptions and experiences; and was aware of the importance of minimizing her own voice while encouraging the participants' voices. Thus, following some researchers who used ethnographic methods, in similar study contexts (e.g Rangan, 2000; Shah, 2010), the journal was used to record, rather than verbalise, these thoughts during interviews and discussions. There were two reasons for the researcher to listen more and note down the information rather than to share her own stories with the participants. First, it was considered more likely that the researcher would obtain information derived from the world views of the research participants than would have been the case should the researcher have tried to move the participants toward a certain direction. Second, the researcher wanted to minimize the effects of unequal power relation between the researcher (a higher level Officer within the forest bureaucracy) and the participants (often lower level staff)

by listening (to them) more than speaking. The researcher's perceptions about the participants' personal reactions and opinions were noted and separated from the data.

Participants with a range of experience, including some with 30 years of experience in the sector and some who are current students in forestry, were consulted during the interviews and discussions. Although efforts were made to ensure a gender balance between male and female participants, about 60 per cent of the participants were female, while 40 per cent were male. The personal reflection record clearly showed that male staff from the government were reluctant to volunteer to participate in the research. Many senior Officers from the government forestry offices were not happy about the research topic. They frankly said that it was a 'female' type of research, which did not suit the researcher since she was bold and had a lot of experiences in the forestry sector. They even added that the researcher was not supposed to carry out 'such a type of research because 'gender' was one of the disciplines of sociology, not of forestry. They suggested to her that she should have focused on a technical subject, such as forest management, wildlife conservation or climate change, which would, according to them, make a significant contribution to the country. Therefore, it was somewhat difficult for the researcher to enrol male participants from the government forestry institutions into the research; and manage their focus group discussions and interview times. By contrast, most of the female participants from the government forestry service and many male participants from the non-government sector were keen to participate in the research. They accepted the gender issue as a cross-cutting theme which was as important in the forestry sector and in other sectors.

During field work, the researcher repeatedly visited a canteen over several days in the 'forestry complex' located in Babarmahal in Kathmandu, and noticed that a group of the same women would visit the canteen together and talk over snacks and tea at almost the same time

every office day. She observed similar groups of male staff eating and talking together. She rarely saw a mixed group of male and female staff coming together from the office and having tea together.

A female interviewee from an NGO noted that women foresters get together in order to discuss some women related issues in the forestry sector. She considered such a get-together as an informal institution from a feminist perspective. Thus, the researcher's personal reflections based on the daily journal helped analyse the interviews and focus group discussions in terms of Feminist Institutionalism. The researcher, herself a female staff member of the forest bureaucracy, had rich experiences over more than 15 years in the profession. These experiences also helped to understand the gender (in) sensitivity in work places and the emotions felt and expressed by the female employees.

## 6.6 Chapter conclusion

Nepal's forestry sector has manifested special characteristics from the perspectives of women's inclusion. During the period of government-led forest management in Nepal (before 1990s), that is before the emergence of the community forestry programme (but after the cessation of traditional management of forests), only males were recognized as the guardians of forests and men represented the decisive force driving forestry activities not only in central offices government administration but also in the rural communities (Gilmour & Fisher, 1991). During the 18th and 19th century, the Nepalese government extracted logs from the forests and sold them to the British rulers in India. Only male labourers were used in this endeavour (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002). In order to run the nation's forestry businesses systematically, the Nepalese government established the Department of Forests in 1942 with the support of British foresters

(Tiwari, 1990). The idea of women employees within this Department was not considered (Gurung, 2002).

Nepal's private forests were nationalized in 1956 and all patches of forest in the country were declared government property (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2002). The role and power of the Department of Forests were enhanced and strengthened in order to regulate the 'nationalized forests' across the country. The Officers, Rangers and Forest Guards were required to patrol forests in the remote areas on elephants, horses or on foot and had to stay several nights in and around the jungles. It reinforced the 'male only' nature of the forestry profession since women or girls were not supposed to travel in the forest areas away from their homes and stay overnight.

Women have been the 'primary users' of the forests in rural areas for centuries. Traditionally, they collect fodder, fuel-wood, leaf-litter and medicinal herbs from the forests. They would also take cattle to the forests to graze every day.

The severe depletion of Nepal's forests, recognised in the 1970s and early 1980s and ascribed to multiple causes, resulted in the initiation of 'community forestry' in collaboration with some donor-funded projects. The aim was to involve local people in protecting and managing forest resources (Hobley, 1996; Mackay *et al.* 2010; Mackay 2011). In the early days of the community forestry program, only males were engaged since forestry was not deemed 'suitable' for women. The all-male forest user groups would make rules for protecting and managing forests, but the women would 'violate' the rules, either because they did not know the rules or they were compelled to break the rules in order to collect fodder and fuel-wood and graze their cattle in the forests – activities which seemed (and in many cases were) necessary in order to maintain their way of life. The participation of women in community forestry was encouraged in order to increase compliance among female forest users; motivating them to abide

by the rules and regulate their behaviour, particularly with regard to the collection of forest products.

The community level forestry institutions in Nepal first recognized the importance of the 'inclusion of women' in the forestry sector not in acknowledgement of their 'positive roles' or potential to contribute to forest management, but to control their 'negative roles', particularly with respect to their violation of the community forestry rules. The need for the inclusion of women in community forestry also demanded the inclusion of women in the forest bureaucracy and in non-government donor-funded projects. The forestry projects needed women employees to motivate other women to become engaged in community forestry. Higher level forestry education was opened to women in 1980s. The government and community institutions had to undergo changes from 'male only' to 'women-inclusive' not to respect women but as a strategy to promote certain projects, such as community-based forest management. But as the political commitment for the inclusion of women in every sphere of public life grew through affirmative or positive actions, internal and external pressures grew to expand the inclusion of women in forestry sector institutions including the forest bureaucracy.

Organizational cultures, formal and informal institutions, structures and agency and power relations in forest bureaucracy were assessed and analysed in this chapter through the world views of research participants. Historically, the forestry sector including rural institutions and government bureaucracy have been largely male dominated. But the recent paradigm shift from male only to 'women-inclusive' forest bureaucracy also faces challenges in attracting and retaining women employees despite the fact that political commitment in the form of formal institutions exists. The organizational cultures of forest bureaucracy favour male employees and clients. Formal institutions are complex. The laws, policies and rules seem 'women friendly' and

even 'positively biased' for women in the forestry sector, but decision-making forums lack the true involvement of women. The informal institutions are also complex in a sense that the norms, values and expected behaviour of employees and clients in forest bureaucracy favour males over females, but the informal institutions created by women employees and activists favour women. The structures of the forest bureaucracy are rigid and tend to persist as they are, but the agency component, particularly the agency of women employees, acts to transform the structures so that they are more inclusive of women. The power relations in forest bureaucracy by and large favours male domination and belittle women employees in the workplace, excluding them from opportunities and decision-making processes.

Mackay et al., (2010) and Mackay (2011) argue that institutions, once created, have intended and unintended outcomes for individual actors, collectives and the institutions themselves. The institutions, on the one hand, have a tendency to persist or continue as they are. On the other hand, they can be changed when they fall short in addressing the needs of the actors. Building on Mackay *et al.* (2010) and the arguments generated from interviews and focus group discussions, it is contended that while the formal rules of the game and the formal institutions of the Nepalese forestry bureaucracy seem positive towards women's inclusion on the surface, male domination still persists since mainstream informal institutions reinforce male domination. However, the informal institutions created and developed by women employees are tending to break the continuity of male domination in the bureaucracy. In this research, the informal rules or institutions crafted by the women themselves were found to be challenging the existing power relation that supports the patriarchal domination in forest bureaucracy.

This study has presented employees as actors in the forest bureaucracy. When the rules of the game in Nepal's forest bureaucracy are manipulated or 'utilized' by male or female

employees based on their gender roles, the employees become no longer simply employees but 'actors' who contribute either to continuing or confronting the institutions for the sake of their gender interests. The concept of 'actor' in this argument follows the institutional approach to feminism in which 'actor' is sometimes qualified as 'social actors', 'masculine/feminine actors' or 'institutional actors' (Chappell, 2006:223-225). Feminist Institutionalism provides the lens not only for explaining why unequal power relations between male and female employees persist, but also for empowering female employees as actors to transform the institutions (Krook & Mackay, 2015). The participants acknowledged that the forest bureaucracy has not yet meaningfully included women or allowed them to develop their professional power and a dignified working life. These problems as well as some ways forward are explored more fully in Chapter 7.

# Chapter 7: Discussion

## 7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present detailed discussions of the findings in Chapter 6, which were based on key informant interviews and focus group discussions within the framework of Feminist Institutionalism (FI). Discussion of these findings is presented under the same five major themes that were explored in Chapter 6, however the discussion here provides more in depth analysis and compares the results of the current study with other research. The five major themes are: 1) the concept of women's inclusion, 2) organizational culture, 3) formal and informal institutions, 4) structure and agency and 5) power relations. These five themes and where relevant, their sub-themes are further explored and discussed in the light of the existing literature and the policy-practice context of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Sections 7.2 and 7.3 discuss women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy by comparing and contrasting the idea with women's social inclusion, gender and women's empowerment. Section 7.4 discusses the nature of organizational culture in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy by considering the prevailing practices and struggles of female employees, as documented in Chapter 6, in the light of theoretical contexts. Section 7.5 discusses the complexities of formal and informal institutions in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. The emerging feminist movement in the forest bureaucracy is discussed in Section 7.6, emphasizing the concept of structure and agency in institutions. Finally, persistence and change in power relations between males and females are examined in Section 7.7 followed by a chapter conclusion (Section 7.8).

## 7.2 Inclusion of women as a contested idea

'Inclusion' means the act of including someone or something within a group or structure (Oxford Doctionery, 2018). The concept of inclusion is understood in relation to a particular context ( e.g.

where someone or something was previously excluded from a group or structure) (Gurung, 2010). According to Asante (1996), the former leader of New African Voices in Philadelphia, in the United States of America:

> The Inclusion is recognizing our universal "oneness" and interdependence. Inclusion is recognizing that we are "one" even though we are not the "same". The act of inclusion means fighting against exclusion and all of the social diseases exclusion gives birth to - that is racism, sexism, handicapism, etcetera (Asante,1996:2)

The term 'inclusion' is also used in contrast to, or to mean the opposite of, 'exclusion', which alludes to the situation where certain groups of people are excluded or marginalized from the mainstream society (Australian Government, 2012). The inclusion of women, therefore, means mainstreaming women into the social system in such a way that they have a status equal to their male counterparts. However, the meaning of women's inclusion is not universal or uncontested, rather it is contextual, often associated with 'gender inclusion', 'women's empowerment' and 'social inclusion' (Australian Government, 2009, 2012; Kabeer, 2012).

'Social inclusion' is a comprehensive term that encompasses the inclusion of previously excluded or marginalized groups into the mainstream society at large (Australian Government, 2009, 2012). Universally these groups include, but are not limited to, women, indigenous/aboriginal peoples, ethnic minorities and sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) (Addis *et al.*, 2009; Cochran *et al.*, 2002; Weber, 1998). Since social inclusion is understood as opposite to social exclusion, a corollary way to understand social inclusion would be to understand social exclusion first. The Australian Government (2009) identifies four aspects of social inclusion:

- Exclusion from civil society: disconnection through legal sanctions, institutional mechanisms or systemic discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation and religion;
- Exclusion from social goods: failure of society to provide for the needs of particular groups, such as housing for the homeless, language services for immigrants, and sanctions to deter discrimination;
- Exclusion from social production: denial of opportunities to contribute to and participate actively in society; and
- Economic exclusion: unequal or lack of access to normal forms of livelihood.

(Australian Government, 2009)

In another instance, the Australian Government (2012) equates social inclusion to the actions by which people (previously deprived of inclusion) can acquire resources, opportunities and capabilities to facilitate access to and participation in education, employment, socio-cultural activities and decision making. In this sense, 'social inclusion' is a systematic phenomenon ranging from 'a goal' through 'a process' to 'an outcome' for bringing 'excluded' people into a mainstream social system by means of political actions (Dugarova, 2015; Kabeer, 2012). Dugarova (2015) argues:

> [I] refer to social inclusion as a goal, process and outcome. As a universal goal, it aims to achieve an inclusive society that entails respect for human rights, cultural diversity and democratic governance, and upholds principles of equality and equity. As a process, it enables citizen's participation in decision-making activities that affect their lives, allowing all groups to take part in this process, especially marginalized groups. As an

outcome, it ensures the reduction of inequalities, elimination of any forms of exclusion and discrimination, and achievement of social justice and cohesion (pp. 2).

As social inclusion alludes to the inclusion of marginalized groups, it is context-specific since one group excluded from one society may not necessarily be excluded from another society. The formal rules or institutions in Nepal, such as policies and legal frameworks recognize 'social inclusion' as both the principle and practice of mainstreaming groups previously disadvantaged or marginalized on the basis of gender, class or race into the society at large (GoN, 1991, 2008, 2015a). The previous chapter demonstrated that women are considered as formerly, and to some extent currently, 'excluded' from the forest bureaucracy in Nepal, implying that women fall into the marginalized or excluded group in this context.

From the perspectives of women's inclusion, the term 'social inclusion' is problematic. While social inclusion is considered important, women are treated as 'one of the marginalized groups' of the society and their issues are diluted into the wider context of marginalization. Social inclusion infers that women are not the only category of people who are oppressed or disadvantaged - rather they are considered part of a normal process of exclusion. Within the Nepalese context, Bennett (2008) argue that women, *Dalits* (lower caste community), *Janajatis* (Indigenous peoples), *Madheshis* (people living in areas of the Terai plains, with similar languages and cultures to neighbouring Indian territories), and *Muslims*, are all marginalized.

The lumping of the above five groups into a single super group has meant that proper attention was not paid to the particular problems of women as a single group. The new Constitution of Nepal (2015) puts marginalized groups into six categories - women, *Adivasis-Janajatis* (indigenous peoples), *Madhesis*, *Dalits*, the disabled (differently able) and people from remote areas - and prescribes for 'social inclusion'. The government offers the principle of

proportionate representation of these groups and a quota system as the solution to address 'social exclusion' or to acquire 'social inclusion' (GoN, 2015a). By this principle, representation of the various marginalized groups is ensured in proportion to the size of their respective populations in the society (GoN, 2015a). While the action of the government towards social inclusion of all marginalized groups into Nepalese society is a progressive step, this is not sufficient from the perspective of women's inclusion. Issues relating to women's inclusion are diluted in the broader context of including all marginalized groups into the system.

Drucza (2016) argues that any programs under the purview of social inclusion in Nepal are problematic and are overly manipulated or misused by political elites and aid agencies, resulting in the persistence of inequalities for members of disadvantaged groups, including women. In Nepalese institutions, including the forest bureaucracy, the overall packaging of the inclusion agenda as a social whole, does not properly address the issues of women. The problem is more prominent in forestry institutions, particularly in rural areas, where women are considered the primary users of forest resources and are key stakeholders in forest management, largely due to their knowledge of forest resources (Focus group 1,2; ,3,4,7). If they are lumped together with other marginalized groups such as indigenous peoples, who may have different relationships with forests and the forest bureaucracy, there is a likelihood that the issues of women will become side-tracked (Focus group 1,2,3, 4; Interview-3,33,37,45,55,56). The same applies where women employees of the forest bureaucracy experience special problems, which cannot be addressed directly from a 'social inclusion' approach without pinpointing the specific needs and issues of women (Focus group 1,2; interview, 3,33,37,45). Taking other marginalized groups into consideration is not problematic, but an over emphasis on broader social inclusion

without proper specific attention to women's inclusion means that the issues of women are often overlooked.

'Gender inclusion' is another concept which is confounded with that of 'inclusion of women' (Biggs *et al.*, 2005; GoN, 2003b). Gender inclusion means the inclusion of women and men in the social system (Cerise, 2008). Gender inclusion describes the need to include both men and women but does not dive deeply into the typical issues faced by women as counterparts to males in society (Massey, 2015). Yet, the term 'gender inclusion' rather than women's inclusion is often used in the literature or in policy documents (ADB, 2011; GoN, 2008, 2015a; MSFP, 2014b; UK aid, 2014). Since 'gender' often refers to a scale of masculinity and femininity (Krook & Mackay, 2015), use of this term without an emphasis on women is problematic for several reasons. For example, there is an implicit assumption that both males and females have similar requirements for gender equity and ignores the unequal power relations between males and females, which this study clearly demonstrated to occur in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. The term 'gender' is often utilized or misused in order to sustain male-dominated organizational cultures by emphasising the empowerment of both males and females without considering current power imbalances.

Some of the participants in this research, particularly the males, thought of women's inclusion as a subset of gender inclusion. The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation issued a policy document entitled Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (GoN, 2008), which can be interpreted to mean that it is 'gender inclusion' rather than 'women's inclusion' that matters in forestry governance. This interpretation subscribes to the idea that both males and females need to be included in the organization. Such interpretations exacerbate the situation of unequal power relations by side-tracking the major issues of women within the forest bureaucracy since males

are already included and enjoy a dominant position. Women are not equal to men in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, in terms of either the numbers or positions of employees. Emphasizing women's inclusion does not necessarily mean exclusion of men, rather it focuses more attention towards women for their effective inclusion.

The concept of the inclusion of women is also confounded with that of empowerment of women. Women's empowerment is usually understood as the process by which the capacity of women to make choices and to achieve their desired goals is enhanced (Beteta, 2006). In this view, when women are empowered, the power that they gain enables them to make decisions or exert pressure to influence or change decisions. It is by empowerment that women gain control over their own lives (Page & Czuba, 1999). The empowerment of women is directly related to their access to resources that enhance their social status, and empowerment becomes a process for women to achieve equal rights, resources and power (Mayoux, 2009). Empowered women fight against disempowering forces in their society via unified or collective mobilization of women (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). But there is a question about the relationship between 'women's empowerment' and 'women's inclusion'.

From the above discussion it can be argued that social inclusion and gender inclusion may be unhelpful terms from a feminist perspective. The former dilutes the issues of women in the larger context of 'marginalized groups', while the latter ignores the issues of women by treating both males and females equally in the presence of an unequal power relation. The concepts of 'social inclusion' and 'gender inclusion' cannot usefully address the issues of women in institutions such as the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Similarly, it can be contended that the concept of 'women's empowerment' is also incomplete unless women's inclusion in the system is also considered important and achieved.

Instead of arguing which term or concept is more useful, this research reconceptualised women's inclusion as a tool to challenge unequal power relations within a male dominated organizational culture; the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

In this study, research participants discussed women's inclusion as the processes and outcomes associated with enhancing the active and influential participation of women at both the policy and implementation levels of forestry institutions (Interviews 12, 45, 37). In the minds of some of the participants, inclusion was seen as one of the tools that would improve the number, position, roles, dignity and power of female staff members in the forest bureaucracy by changing social norms, work place environments, employee's relationships, programs, activities and practices (Interviews 51, 52, 27, and 39). In line with Agarwal (2010b), women's inclusion in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy was, therefore, understood as making the presence of women employees in forestry sector institutions significant, so that their voices are heard and they can contribute to organizational decisions. Thus, the process of women's inclusion was understood as more than participation in forestry programs and activities (Interview 7; 12; 28; 37; 45).

Female participants in this research articulated that their effective inclusion was a step toward to their empowerment. Women's inclusion in institutions is prescribed as the remedy for reducing the gaps between the status of men and women in those institutions (Rutherford, 2011). Women's empowerment is the ultimate aim of female employees within Nepal's forest bureaucracy; and of those women who are considering entering forestry organizations as employees. Although women's inclusion and empowerment are politically two different concepts (Alsop *et al.*, 2007), the issues for women in Nepalese forestry institutions is whether they are empowered enough to influence decisions whilst taking into account their inclusion in forestry governance. One research participant argues that women's inclusion, refers to the right of

women to actively participate and be engaged in all aspects of their daily life in a way that they achieve equitable status with their male counterparts (Interview 52).

The Government of Nepal embraces the concept of 'inclusion' as a forward-looking agenda (GoN, 2016b), but is silent about women's empowerment. Women are said to be 'excluded' from their access to rights and resources and hence their inclusion in the social transformation process is considered important. Inclusion in this context is viewed as requiring a top-down approach for women to be included in forestry organizations (Alsop *et al.*, 2007). However, women's inclusion in a literal sense sounds neutral in terms of changing unequal power relations between males and females in organizations unless it results in the empowerment of women. The inclusion of women without their empowerment does not consider the extent to which women need to be included in order that they may meaningfully influence social transformation. Inclusion does not seem a sufficient condition for women to exert pressure to change the current structure of forest bureaucracy. Unlike women's inclusion, women's empowerment refers to increasing the power of women 'from below' or 'from within' (Alsop *et al.*, 2007). However, empowerment is also not sufficient to remove unequal power relations in the absence of women's inclusion.

The empowerment of women enhances the capacity of female staff members in institutions, whereas women's inclusion seems to be the aim of the political and administrative organizations/institutions, including the forest bureaucracy (Andersen & Siim, 2004). The aim of inclusion is an entry point on the part of institutions, while empowerment is the entry point on the part of individual women who are seeking power and further inclusion (Andersen & Siim, 2004). Empowerment of women adds value to women's inclusion by promoting self-driven activism of women who are already included in the organization. Inclusion is a broader political

process from outside or above, while empowerment is a multi-dimensional process within an institution. Both complement each other and reinforce the feminist movement in an institution.

Thus, having said that the 'inclusion of women' is the central theme of this research, the role of 'the empowerment of women' in making the Nepalese forest bureaucracy 'women-inclusive' is not denied. The inclusion of women in the forest bureaucracy, therefore, does not simply refer to the participation of women in forestry, but to the processes and outcomes whereby the participation of women is increased; vis-a-vis the capacity and power of all individual women is enhanced for social transformation.

The contested meaning of terms such as 'women's inclusion', 'social inclusion', 'gender inclusion' and 'women's empowerment' have implications in discussing Nepal's forest bureaucracy in terms of Feminist Institutionalism. The focus of the discussion in this thesis is the examination of 'women's inclusion' in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy through four facets of FI--organizational culture, formal and informal institutions, structure and agency and power relations. How these four facets of the forest bureaucracy as an institution facilitate or hinder the inclusion of women is the major objective of this discussion. It is the 'inclusion of women' concept that embraces the quantitative (increase in number) as well as qualitative (empowerment) aspect of women's inclusion in forest bureaucracy by discarding the complexities associated with 'social inclusion' and 'gender inclusion'.

Inclusion of women in the forest bureaucracy is a process better understood through the lens of Feminist Institutionalism, which deals with the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in gendered institutions (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). The following section discusses the findings presented in chapter six under four major themes within the theoretical framework of Feminist Institutionalism. These themes are interlinked because organizational culture has impact on

formal and informal institutions, structure and agency and power relations and vice versa. Therefore there is some overlap in some of the discussions and results.

## 7.3 Organizational culture as a challenge

Feminist Institutionalism is concerned with the ‘rules of the game’ within organizations. These rules are often impacted by organizational culture and vice versa (Robson *et al.*, 2016). The term, organizational culture is borrowed from anthropology and is frequently used in management literature. Barney (1986) defines organizational culture as a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that define the ways in which an organization operates its business and shape the ways in which its employees and customers behave with one another. Hogan and Coote (2014) explain organizational culture in terms of values and norms, artefacts and behaviours that determine the identity and performance of the organization. Organizational culture is so embedded in organizations that a new employee often considers it as comprising of legend. It is then adopted by the new employee as his or her ‘norm’ and is reflected in his or her behaviour (O’Donnell & Boyle, 2008). These definitions of organizational culture, however, are gender-neutral.

Rutherford’s (2011) conceptualisation of organizational culture considers gender and sexuality as one of its components. According to Rutherford (2011: 28) organizational culture is 'expressed in the management style, work ideologies, language and communication, physical artefacts, informal socializing and temporal structuring of work, and in gender awareness and the expression of sexuality’. She elaborates that the patriarchal/masculine culture, which consists of a male gender role based on power, assertiveness, dominance and material wealth, is found to be

one of the most observed hurdles for women's progress in an organization. Rutherford's conceptualization offers a useful insight for this study to discuss the ways in which women staff behave and are treated in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy from Feminist Institutionalist perspectives.

Pursuant to Rutherford's conceptualization, the organizational culture of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy was explored in a number of ways in Chapter 6 in this research. The ideas generated under the theme of organizational culture were sub-categorized into office infrastructure and workplace entitlements, social status, position in the organization, mentoring and peer support, bullying and sexual harassment, the struggle for existence, and the movement against discrimination, based on feminist perspectives. From the point of view of Feminist Institutionalism, such attributes are largely influenced by a male dominated culture; and affect the inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy. These were presented as concrete examples of an exclusionary culture and are considered to underlie the key challenges experienced by women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

### *7.3.1 Office infrastructure and workplace entitlements*

Office infrastructure, other amenities and the environment of the workplace play crucial roles in forming an enabling or a disabling environment for women to enter and remain within an organization (Hossain, 2016). According to Gherardi (1995), an organization gives certain impressions of masculinity or femininity through its physical environment, artefacts, layout and design of buildings and rooms; which are elements of the material-based organizational culture. For example, a study in Bangladesh revealed that the lack of separate toilets and separate prayer rooms for women was one of the main reasons why women were reluctant to work in public offices (Rezina & Mahmood, 2016). Similar to Gherardi's finding, the participants in this

research articulated that the buildings and structures, and the purchase of vehicles, equipment, furniture and other materials are often suitable for male staff members and not for female staff members; and hence women staff are disadvantaged. In this research, most of the offices, even in buildings occupied by national level organisations (e.g. the Ministry and its Departments) lacked separate toilets for female staff. Both female and male staff participants pointed out the necessity for separate female toilets in the offices. The organization is still functioning within a patriarchal mind set, with the decision-makers not even aware of the discomfort of female staff or clients in the office.

The Government of Nepal has endorsed a 'building code' for government offices (GoN, 2009a). The building code clearly mandates the construction of separate toilets for males and females in each office building, but nearly ten years after its endorsement, the interviewees in this research reported that separate toilets for women were not included in the construction of many newly built offices. Female staff also reported concerns around personal hygiene, privacy and security in unisex toilets. Although in some western countries, such as in Europe, unisex toilets are increasingly preferred over traditional sex segregated toilets (Bih, 2014; Sanders & Stryker, 2016), this is not the case in the developing world such as in Nepal. The establishment of unisex toilets in western countries is motivated by the need for the privacy of transgender people (Bih, 2014), whereas the need of sex segregated toilets in developing countries is based on the requirement of women's safety and privacy (Jeffreys, 2014).

The purchase of motor cycles for office purposes was another example raised by women participants to illustrate inequities in the work place. It is well recognized in South Asia that while men prefer motorcycles, women commuters prefer scooters for a number of reasons including the weight of the vehicle and driver comfort, especially given traditional expectations

around dress (Mundu *et al.*, 2011). This pattern was also reflected by participants in this research. Women perceived that their male colleagues were benefited by the practice of purchasing motor cycles rather than scooters as pool vehicles. Such purchasing practices have implications for the mobility of the women staff in the field and affect the capacity of women to carry out some duties efficiently and effectively. Physical and financial resources (budgets) are often controlled by male staff. Female staff are rarely included in discussions and decision making relating to the budget and are not generally involved in the procurement process, or other matters relating to the purchase of resources. Their inability to acquire resources necessary to their work affects their motivation and efficiency, and sometimes brings frustration. Jahan (2007), has also observed that women are discouraged from entering the civil service in Bangladesh due to the lack of appropriate transportation to and from their offices.

The location of some remote forest field offices is another factor that affects women's entry to, and retention in, the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Most of the field offices are located close to forests and therefore far from settlements. Female research participants stated that, due to gender-insensitive behaviour of their male co-workers and clients, such office locations are not appropriate for their safety and security. This creates extra fear and stress for female staff who work in the district forest offices, which in turn impacts on their management of their family life, and their children. Similarly, lack of access to child care facilities also hinders the performance of women forestry staff. Proper attention is not paid to these factors by decision makers, but these are the factors that adversely affect women's performance in the forest bureaucracy (Hussain, 2016).

### *7.3.2 Social status and ways of communication as bases for discrimination*

Institutional theorists suggest that the 'hidden life of institutions' increases their complexity (Chappell & Waylen, 2013). The social status assigned to female staff in the forest bureaucracy, illustrated by the language used in communication and forms of address, create a feeling of discrimination among those women when these are evaluated using feminists perspectives. Such experiences impact on various aspects of the organization such as motivation, power, dignity and respect for women staff.

The social status of women generally in Nepal is considered to be lower than that of male members of the society. Gurung (2002), found that this lower social status ascribed to women is created, maintained and replicated within the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and its subsidiary departments. Findings from the current research also indicate that the status of a female employee within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is considered lower than that of a male even if both are employed at the same rank and in a similar position. These cultural views are characteristic of the wider Nepalese society rather than being an exception. This view of unequal status is imposed and reinforced by colleagues from within the bureaucracy as well as by clients.

Actions which demonstrate that male staff are held to be more important than, or superior to, female staff working in positions of the same rank undermine the working capacity of female staff (ILO, 2007). Even though women are capable of performing their tasks, they are prevented from working effectively where interaction with male colleagues and clients is required. Christie and Giri (2011) also reported that, in forestry courses in academic institutions, the status of women is eroded through biased practices. In the same study, Christie and Giri (2011) also reported that female foresters were treated differently to male foresters by the wider society. Female foresters were not considered to be legitimate foresters and were not accorded the respect

that males were given without question. The underestimation of the capability and capacity of female staff as a result of a perceived lower social status for women is not limited to the Nepalese culture. Rezina and Mahmood (2016) reported that female staff in the civil bureaucracy of Bangladesh felt undermined due to prejudiced social norms among male staff. In Pakistan, female employees in the banking sector were found to be treated disrespectfully by both male colleagues and customers, due to their lower social status (Syed & Ali, 2017). Syed and Ali (2017) further asserted that these female staff members perceived that they were treated like personal servants by their male colleagues and clients.

Findings from this study also indicate that female staff were unhappy about the language and forms of address used toward them by their male colleagues and clients, which they felt was derogatory and belittling. This form of discrimination against women is pervasive throughout the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. The older male staff held themselves as superior to female staff, even when in positions equal or subordinate to their female colleagues. Irrespective of their ranks or positions, women have to wait until they are older in order to be respected by their male colleagues, while males are considered superior by default. New male staff do not struggle to gain respect or credibility. In cases where a husband and wife work together in the same office, it was usual for husband to address his wife using language which indicted he thought of himself as superior and his wife as inferior. This occurred even where wife held a higher position in the workplace, and even when her position required her to supervise her husband.

### *7.3.3 Mentoring and peer support*

When new employees first enter an organization; mentoring and peer support is often important; facilitating familiarization with the job and socialization within the organisation. Such support is

drawn from colleagues who have been employed at the workplace for some time (Kanter, 1977c). Hossain (2016) contends that mentoring and peer support is particularly important for female staff entering a workplace within a patriarchal culture. However, this study found that the organizational culture of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy was not supportive of such mentoring and peer support, especially for women staff. New staff are sent directly to work in field offices, sometimes in remote locations, where they are expected to immediately take up their responsibilities. In such situations, females are disadvantaged more than males, since newly recruited male staff can develop networks and friendship in various informal ways. This informal mentoring makes it easier for new male recruits to understand and deliver their responsibilities. Female staff are prevented from developing similar networks, particularly with males, since it is considered improper for women to develop close relationship with males outside their family, even if it is simply professional. Thus, neither formal nor informal mentoring and peer support was available for newly recruited women staff of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Male employees were either reluctant to mentor a female staff or they sought some form of sexual favour from the recruit in return for such support. Lack of genuine support for a new women employee can hamper career advancement (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Rutherford & Rutherford, 2011). The existing informal network of female foresters does not actively initiate any professional support and mentoring programs.

Mentoring is linked with informal networks rather than with formal ways of teaching and learning (Rutherford & Rutherford, 2011). Kanter (1977c) also argues that women are often deprived from networking, mentoring and peer support opportunities in male dominant organizations. Some other studies also revealed that male staff may hesitate to approach and support women when they enter the organization because of fear of their wives' disapproval and

rumour-mongering from their colleagues (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Rutherford & Rutherford, 2011). They are also constrained by cultural expectations around gender relations. They fear rumour because of misinterpretation of their relationship and closeness with female staff. On the other hand, some female staff, who approached male staff, were given support but it came with an overly patronizing manner or sexual harassment from the male peer. Likewise, some female staff who were active and bold enough to approach their male colleagues sometimes become the subjects of rumour amongst other staff and clients. So both male and female employees are discouraged from developing informal mentoring relationships because of cultural beliefs and expectations. Views expressed by participants in interviews and focus group discussion substantiate these findings.

When mentoring and peer support is available to women, the literature suggests that it can positively and significantly impact women's career advancement (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Rutherford & Rutherford, 2011; Schmidt & Faber, 2016). This research also found that there were some female staff who experienced a positive impact on their career advancement which they ascribed to mentoring support from gender sensitive males. This study does not show any evidence of career advancement of women foresters through active support from their families, however, even passive family support can be instrumental to women's retention in their jobs.

Because of a lack of mentoring, women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy are struggling to understand the requirements of their jobs, and/or or to perform according to the expectations of their supervisors. They experience anxiety and fear about their responsibilities and about the standard of their work. In such situations, female staff may become further isolated and excluded by their male peers and managers. Those with management responsibilities have not recognised that a lack of mentoring and peer support are key factors in women's exclusion from the

workplace. Instead of addressing this, in some offices women are seen as a burden to their managers. Some male managers thought that women who are working in the forestry sector are already trained to work in the field and they should not face such problems, but the empirical evidence shows that this not the case.

Furthermore, due to the nature of forestry work, a female who works in the forest bureaucracy faces huge challenges right from the beginning. She may be working in remote forest areas, staying alone with one or more male colleague(s). Foresters must engage with various types of people such as timber smugglers, poachers, contractors and community forestry users, and need to play multiple roles, such as policing, managing or facilitating. Performing these roles successfully without practical coaching is very difficult for women. Some female interviewees in this research reported that they left their job due to the lack of guidance and mentoring support available within their organization. Mentoring and peer support as a part of social support are important to encourage women employees to overcome several social, professional and emotional challenges they face in their workplaces and to encourage them to retain in the job. Social support in an organization is not simply a process, but a principle of organizational management (Day and Livingstone, 2003; Taylor et al. 2004).

Social support theory explains the importance of mentoring and peer support to employees or individuals in a social network. Social support is considered to include the provision of material or emotional support to someone. The experience or the perception of the recipient is that she is cared for, esteemed or valued in their social networks, such as in the forest bureaucracy (Day and Livingstone, 2003; Taylor et al. 2004). Social support is instrumental in dealing with stress and is considered a coping strategy (Day and Livingstone, 2003). Social support theories discuss a number of social support typologies, including but not limited to,

information support (providing information about how to deal with stressful situation), instrumental support (providing financial or material assistance) and emotional support (assuring the person that he or she is valued in the social network) (Taylor et al. 2004). In the forest bureaucracy, women employees were found to seek information or emotional support rather than material or instrumental support.

### *7.3.4 Bullying and sexual harassment*

Workplace related bullying and sexual harassment are experienced worldwide in various organizational settings, and women are often victimized (McDonald, 2012; McDonald *et al.*, 2015; McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017). This study also found that bullying and sexual harassment of women was a 'cultural norm' and part of the organizational culture in the Nepalese forestry bureaucracy. Female staff from the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and its subsidiary organizations, female clients working in the forestry sector, and females from community-based organizations in the forestry sector all reported that they had experienced various forms of sexual harassment while working within or close to the forest bureaucracy.

Similar results were reported by other studies carried out in Nepal. A study by International Labour Organization (2004) stated that 53.84 percent of women employees/workers (out of 90 women) have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. The participants of the research by ILO (2004) were from parliament, civil society, trade unions, government ministries, media, human right commissions, lawyers, women activists, NGO and INGOs, police, students of the women studies program of the University and workers from industries, airlines, schools, hotels and restaurants. A study carried out in a Nepalese carpet factory reported that 52% of workers faced problems of sexual harassment (Dhakal, 2009). Another study carried out in the Dhangadi Municipality of Nepal revealed that 77.2% (out of 92 female participants) of females

working in public and private sector offices were victims of various categories of sexual harassment (Kunwar *et al.*, 2014).

Generally, sexual harassment in workplaces can be considered across two broad categories: ‘hostile working environment’ and ‘quid pro quo’, literally 'this for that' (Bala, 2016; Berdahl, 2007; Dillon *et al.*, 2015; Salin, 2003). Harassment of the first kind is often driven by sexual intention which does not involve any employment benefits to the victim (McDonald, 2012). The second category describes incidents of sexual coercion, or demands regarding sexual favours in return for some promised benefit (Mellon, 2013); which may include examples such as employment benefits such as pay increments, extra allowances, promotion, favourable transfer and retention. This study confirms the existence of both categories of sexual harassment in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

According to McDonald (2012) , sexual harassment includes touching, brushing, pushing, patting; proposals for dates and outings; offensive comments; repeated comments about body, dress and make up, offensive gestures, teasing, staring, telling vulgar jokes and displaying pornographic photographs (either in hard copy or electronically). This research confirmed the widespread existence of all those forms of sexual harassment within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Moreover, this research also established that the recent development of social media, internet and mobile communication has provided a new avenue for sexual harassment of women through texts, posts, comments and calls. This is also reported in a review article about sexual harassment by Mainiero and Jones (2013).

Feminist theory suggests that sexual harassment is associated with asymmetrical power relations between males and females in any institution (McDonald, 2012; McDonald *et al.*, 2015; McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017; Samuels, 2003). Men are generally considered economically more

powerful than women and in many societies may oppress or exploit women sexually (Bargh & Raymond, 1995). However, even when men and women are co-workers, men sexually harass women because of an imprinted ideology of power in men's minds (Samuels, 2003). In such situations, a senior female may be harassed by a sub-ordinate male or a client (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017). One study even reported that women are sexually harassed more by their male peers or juniors than by their supervisors or seniors (McDonald *et al.*, 2015). Women holding powerful positions in male-dominated workplaces in Nepal have also experienced sexual harassment (ILO, 2004); the current research shows that it is common within the forest bureaucracy, which is criticized for being insensitive to the issues of women staff.

Sexual harassment is reported to lead to several significant negative consequences (McDonald, 2012) relating to physical and mental health and to job-related problems (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017). Psychological problems reported to be associated with sexual harassment include increased irritation, anger, nervousness, powerlessness, depression, humiliation, and fear of losing job opportunities, whereas job related issues include absenteeism, low motivation, conflicts, and low productivity (Chan *et al.*, 2008; McDonald, 2012; McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017). Several female forestry professionals participating in the current research also reported that their experiences of sexual harassment resulted in psychological pressure, which adversely affected their working performance and career progression. They explain that one of their main fears is of being sexually harassed by male colleagues while in the field. This fear prevents them from accepting opportunities to work in particular situations or in particular places.

Despite its prevalence in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, female staff rarely complain against perpetrators of sexual harassment. Other authors report that, in such situations, women

may feel insecure, fearing gossip and defamation in their communities, and they may fear questioning from their own family, who sometimes suggested that the incident was invited by the victim (Coyle *et al.*, 2014; ILO, 2004). Lack of awareness about sexual harassment was also reported by participants in this study as one of the reasons for not complaining against the perpetrators. Often female employees share stories of incidents of sexual harassment with their female colleagues, but they keep it secret from their family members, fearing that she may be prohibited, by her family members, from continuing in the job.

This research found a lack of understanding among both male and female forestry professionals about what constitutes sexual harassment; and a lack of awareness about relevant laws and legal procedures. Many women (including in this study) are reluctant to talk openly about incidents of sexual harassment; and this may be due, at least partly, to their limited understanding of their rights and opportunities to do so (Dhakal, 2009; Kunwar *et al.*, 2014). This study revealed that some participants' definitions of sexual harassment were limited to rape and attempted rape. However, during the interviews and discussions the understanding became clearer and males realized they have been harassing female colleagues unintentionally and females have been tolerating and struggling with the consequences of this aspect of working in a male-dominated culture.

Before 2015, Nepal did not have any specific laws to deal with sexual harassment in the work place. Currently there is a law that identifies five major categories of workplace sexual harassment that are considered unlawful (touching with sexual intention; demonstrating vulgar or sexual materials; speaking, writing or making gestures with sexual intention; proposals for sex, teasing or bothering co-workers with sexual intentions) (GoN, 2015). However, the law is seldom applied in Nepal. None of the survey participants involved in this study were aware of it.

This type of workplace behaviour is considered normal by female staff. They perceive that they do not have the capacity to oppose the behaviour, especially in front of a group of males. Moreover, they fear that drawing attention to it will make it a bigger issue, so they try to ignore and avoid it. Managers within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy are not fulfilling their responsibility to uphold this law, and victims are unaware that legal protection is available to them.

As is the case for laws against sexual harassment in many other jurisdictions, the contents of the Nepalese laws are not crafted from feminist perspectives. Conaghan (1996) observes that, in general, the content of laws seems traditionally crafted:

> "…women suffer in ways distinct from men translates into a legal critique which evaluates law in terms of its ability to redress harms endured by women. In this context, it is contended that the harms which law recognizes and redresses, whether through tort or other legal mechanisms, are harms suffered, by and large, by men (Conaghan, 1996:407).

Analysis of Nepal's Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (elimination) Act, 2015 found ambiguity and some difficulties in its proper implementation, however, the awareness about what is sexual harassment and existence of an institutional framework is a necessary starting point.

### *7.3.5 Coping, compromising and confrontation*

The organizational culture of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy includes both disabling and enabling factors for its women employees. In addition to the formal rules that encourage women to participate in the civil service (including the forest bureaucracy), women themselves also make compromises, cope and confront in order to enter the forest bureaucracy and grow their professional roles and personas within the organization.  They make compromises in order to

progress or even to exist within their jobs, cope with challenges; and at times confront their colleagues or the institution. These strategies of coping, compromising and confrontation demonstrate that women within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy find themselves in situations where they need to struggle further for their existence within the organization. In such circumstances, women can craft their own informal rules to challenge the disabling aspects of the organizational culture. In this context women within the organization use their agency to create informal rules.

In general, sexually harassed women seek and apply various coping strategies (Cortina & Wasti, 2005; Malamut & Offermann, 2001). Some women tend to hide their experiences, neither reporting nor confronting the perpetrators due to their fears of social stigma after the case is exposed (Hossain, 2016; Syed & Ali, 2017). Several authors have explained that in such circumstances, formal complaints are more likely to be initiated by some women employees when the incidents are repeated; or where there is a safe social environment in which victims are not held responsible for the incidents (Cortina & Wasti, 2005). Some women confront the perpetrator directly at the time of the incident (Malamut & Offermann, 2001).

Ignoring and avoiding less serious forms of sexual harassment is a common coping mechanism, as if harassment were an accepted part of the culture of the workplace (Hossain, 2016). In this research, very few females said that they verbally confronted or become physically violent against their perpetrators. Women who became physically violent were prone to further assault from the perpetrators, and finally, they were the ones who were punished. Some women reported that they sought personal help from senior female officials, but in many cases their issues were not resolved.

The current study also found that some women tried to avoid being close to male colleagues in order to avoid the possibility or perception of sexual harassment in the workplace. This was a strategy used especially used when they had to work in the field, away from office premises, where they had to stay overnight. Women forestry staff described trying to avoid fieldwork altogether or trying to avoid the requirement to stay overnight during periods of fieldwork. Where such overnight stays were necessary, they sometimes asked a male member of their family to accompany them; as a protection strategy. This finding is also consistent with Syed and Ali (2017) who reported that women usually try to keep their distance from male colleagues to protect themselves from sexual abuse, and to save themselves from becoming the targets of rumour and innuendo.

It is not only females who struggle in the bureaucracy; males struggle too, but the nature of their struggle is different from that of females. For example; no family members ask male employees about where they go and where they sleep, but Nepalese women need to provide answers to such questions from their close family members, and sometimes to their relatives and the wider society. If they become victims of sexual harassment, they cannot share their experiences with their family and relatives as they fear they will be forced to quit their job. In some cultures, including in Nepal, sexual harassment is often considered to be a woman's fault (Coyle *et al.*, 2014; Syed & Ali, 2017). Hence, the families usually try to save their dignity by not placing their daughters in such situations. A victim therefore tends to keeps her secret troubles to herself, and struggles privately to cope with them. Analysis of all the research evidence shows that women associated with the forest bureaucracy are double victims of sexual harassment, first by the harassment itself, and then by not being able to access support. Sexual harassment wreaks havoc in the forest bureaucracy; as a result, women are struggling to survive

in the job. A feminist perspective applied within the institutions may provide a means to address this.

### *7.3.6 A collective movement for change*

A collective movement is defined as a collective action generated through consciousness-raising towards securing the rights of people with common interests (Kaplan, 1982). Such rights have impacts on the lives of the affected people. Gendered division of labour or gender discrimination in the wider society provide examples of circumstances in which the rights of women are sought and which may lead women toward the formation of a collective movement. The link between collective movements and gender has long been established in the natural resource governance sector, where such movements have brought about changes in institutions and institutional outcomes in favour of women (Agarwal, 2010b; Fischer & Qaim, 2012; Kabeer, 2012). Nepal's community-level resource management programs and practices are collective movements which are renowned and admired throughout the world (Agarwal, 2010b). Women have performed significant roles in these programs and practices, working within and for Community Forest User groups, Leasehold Forest User Groups, the Federation of Community Forests User Groups, the Himalayan Grass Root Women Network for Natural Resource Management (HIMAWANTI), and government and non-government organizations. A study by the Multistakeholder Forestry Program, Nepal revealed that women working in the natural resource management sector including forestry professionals, activists, community representatives and gender champions are typically networking within, but not between, their institutions (MSFP, 2014a). The study recommended that women with shared interests and a shared gender identity could work towards building better collaboration amongst their groups, arguing that this could lead women to play a vital role in bringing about changes in natural resource governance (MSFP, 2014a).

Collective action is highly voluntary in nature and depends upon people's willingness to participate (Pandolfelli *et al.*, 2008). Motivation, time and effort are need to initiate leadership. This study found that despite being motivated, women have little time available to initiate or participate in collective action. Also, the few female officials perceived to have the skills required to initiate collectives to question or challenge existing gender perspectives in the forest bureaucracy were reluctant to accept leadership roles. However, strong coordination and cooperation among participants from government, non-government, International Nongovernmental Organizations and community organization levels was clearly evident. This study found a lack of unity among female professionals working in the Ministry; rather women were reported as undermining their female peers, instead of offering mutual support.

## 7.4 Formal and informal institutions

Formal institutions such as policies, strategies, laws, rules, and regulations are important interventions to reform the status of disadvantaged communities, such as women, in any organization (Rezina & Mahmood, 2016; Syed & Ali, 2017). This study found that one of the positive implications of formal institutional reform in the Nepalese civil service was around access for, and entry of, women into the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. A quota system effectively increased women's representation at the lower levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy, but not at the higher levels because of limited vacancies for women at those higher levels. Narratives from the participants of this study revealed that recruitment, appointment, transfer, and leave entitlements are based on equality, not equity, and hence women experience discrimination more than their male counterparts. Similar findings were observed from studies from other developing countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh (Rezina & Mahmood, 2016; Syed & Ali, 2017). Syed and Ali (2017) noted that there is huge gap between policies and practices in relation to women's

representation in government organization due to low levels of organizational commitment and broader social norms.

Formal institutions have tried to address the social, cultural, biological and geographical barriers for women to enter forest bureaucracy through the provision of women friendly clauses in the Constitution, Laws and policies. These positive clauses in favour of women are also reflected in forestry sector documents as well, such as the Human Resource Development Strategy, the Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (GESI), the Civil Service Act and Regulation and Community Forestry User Groups guidelines. However such policies or formal rules are not adequately implemented in Nepal and other developing countries (Khadka, 2009; Syed & Ali, 2017; WOCAN, 2012). Such positive policies for women are created by external factors, such as international donor communities or wider social activities, and hence it is difficult to internalize the policy reform in forest bureaucracy. Research participants reported that they were not aware of the prevalence of the Law related to Sexual Harassment in Workplaces in the country, and emphasized that they would have known about it had it been implemented to punish culprits. Similarly, female research participants also did not know about the Building Code for Government Offices that requires separate male and female rest rooms. They argued that they did not know about the Code because it was not implemented in practice. This finding is in line with a study by the Multi-Stakeholder Forestry Program (2014) which was conducted in order to assess the implementation of GESI strategy. MSFP (2014a) reported that there was a lack of internalization of GESI strategy and Human Resource Development Strategy, and found a huge gap between policy and practices from feminist perspectives. Some formal measures are crafted on a gender equality basis, and visible formal discrimination is in place against female employees, including salary, allowances, and restrictions on specific types of responsibilities

(MSFP, 2014a). As Feminist Institutionalism suggests, the informal institutions (rules-in-use) were found to be more powerful than the formal institutions (rules-in-form) and resulted in a large gap between intended outcome and actual outcome.

This study revealed how some formal rules crafted for women empowerment are side-tracked by existing organizational structure by default. For instance, the Planning Division Chief is assigned the responsibility of ex officio Gender Focal Point for each Ministry in Nepal. However, during the study, out of 26 Ministries, there was only one female Planning Division Chief in the country. The Chief of Planning Division is considered a very influential position, contributing to the formation of policies, programs and the budget of the Ministry and male joint secretaries are preferred. As a Gender Focal Point, the Chief of Planning Division is responsible for addressing gender issues in policies, plans, programs, budget and behaviour of staff members in their Ministry. The effectiveness of this role was found to be dependent on the gender sensitivity of whoever holds the position. The empirical evidence showed (interview-assistant gender focal person) that the role of the Gender Focal Point is often delegated to the Assistant Gender Focal Point (often a female Officer), however the assistant is not supported, empowered or allowed to work freely on gender related issues (MSFP, 2014a). Hence, the formal rules regarding the Gender Focal Point also reinforce the existing unequal power relations, making the male more authoritative and powerful than the female staff; even with respect to a position which is intended to facilitate the incorporation of women's perspectives. MSFP (2014a) also reported the poor institutionalization of gender focal points (GFPs) in the Ministry and its subsidiaries. Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of GFPs and their linkage with other institutions were unclear even to people holding these roles. They have no authoritative power and there are no

Terms of Reference (ToR) for their positions, therefore, the GFP role has become a formality and has little agency to influence institutional structures (MSFP, 2014a; WOCAN, 2017).

Sufficient internalization of formal rules or institutions is often constrained by informal rules of the game, such as behaviours, values and mindsets prevalent in organizations, which are collectively called 'informal institutions' (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). This study found two types of informal institutions, one prevailing broadly in the organization and one crafted by female staff in the forest bureaucracy. The prevailing informal institutions, including male dominant values and patriarchal mindsets, often constrained the implementation of formal rules that favour women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy. The informal institutions crafted by women staff, such as female networks and coalitions within and across the forest bureaucracy, were found to be useful tools, conducive to challenge the male dominant organizational culture, structure and unequal power relations in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

Formal and informal institutions have played a crucial role in perpetuating and changing the gendered nature of the forest bureaucracy in Nepal. Formal rules, by and large, are supportive of the women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy, but these rules have been constrained by informal and heritable rules. Some informal institutions that are created by women are also emerging, albeit at a token scale.

## 7.5 Structure and agency

Feminist Institutionalism claims that continuity or change within institutions depends on the interplay between structure and agency (Hay & Wincott, 1998; Mackay *et al.*, 2010). The mutual influence of structure and agency in an organization has the important role of bringing organizational changes from feminist perspectives. The structure of the forest bureaucracy of

Nepal is characterized by a hierarchical organization, with a top-down communication pathway, upward accountability, an opaque performance evaluation system, rigidity and male domination in higher hierarchical positions (Jamil & Dangal, 2009; Ojha, 2006). Bureaucracy seeks legitimate procedures and follows formal rules, regulations, and systems (Yolles, 2019) hence bureaucracies are less influenced by agency.

In terms of 'Feminist Institutionalism', the agency component of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is characterised by the presence of a few vocal female employees who challenge the existing paradigm via their collective actions, which aim to improve their welfare. Such actions are aided by a collective gender voice, and by women's engagement in professional societies.

Women's agency within the Nepalese forestry bureaucracy is influenced by both organizational and social structures. This study found that the structure of the forest bureaucracy was too rigid to be female-friendly; and the social structure was also highly gendered. The structure of the forest bureaucracy excluded women from decision making and prevented advocacy for women's mutual benefits. Females working in the forest bureaucracy, have realized that discrimination exists, and are aware of their agential role, but they are still not formally organized to act collectively to bring about positive changes. Some vocal women are trying to organize and apply their agential role to initiate a collective approach by joining other networks and organizations. However, the effect is minimal and such females are in the minority.

The agential women in the forest bureaucracy are often teased, bullied and harassed for being vocal and challenging. Other authors have established that women who show boldness and agential behaviour may experience negative treatment more than men who do the same (Chappell & Waylen, 2013; Rudman & Glick, 2001). The phenomenon is often described as a

backlash against agential women (Williams & Tiedens, 2015). Such a backlash is based on stereotypic presumptions about how gender norms should be expressed. The backlash is a kind of counteractive and coercive behaviour against women who violate perceived stereotypical behavioural norms (Williams & Tiedens, 2015).

Society (as a stereotypic belief) generally accepts that males should be dominant and competent; and women should be kind, nice and soft, or in corollary, women should not be dominant and men should not be kind and soft (Rudman, 2012). A study of Rutgers University, USA found that agential women experienced a backlash because of stereotypical community beliefs about assertive females, compared to other women (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

In the Nepalese Forest Bureaucracy, the contribution of gender sensitive males, often known as gender champions, was found to be beneficial for achieving gender equality (MSFP, 2014a). ‘Gender champion' is a popular term, used to describe the leadership behaviour of men and women who work towards achieving gender equality in any institution (de Vries, 2015). Anne de Vries (2015) found that both male and female gender champions can be effective in creating transformative change. However, there are an insufficient number of women employed at the higher levels of the forest bureaucracy who are available or willing to accept leadership roles. The few women who do hold leadership positions and work as gender champions experience several challenges such as needing to: prove their capacity to work at (their appointed) higher level positions; maintain their feminine identity, be careful to avoid mistakes because of being seen as inadequate or undeserving (Christie & Giri, 2011; de Vries, 2015). The relative absence of female gender champions within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy amplifies the importance of the role of male gender champions in the organisation.

The bureaucratic structure of the Nepalese forestry bureaucracy portrays the ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon where female representation at higher level positions is significantly lower. The term, ‘glass ceiling’, was popularized in the 1980s, to describe a deficit in women’s representation at the decision-making level (Dreher, 2003). The ‘glass ceiling’ is generally used as a metaphor to refer to an invisible upper limit in any organization, above which it seems difficult or impossible for women to get promotions, pay increases and other opportunities (Pande & Ford, 2011). The ‘glass ceiling’ concept is also frequently used to describe barriers that prevent women accessing higher salary levels and senior positions in any organisations or in their working fields (Ismail, 2010).

The glass ceiling phenomena in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy affects women’s agential roles in both policy making and community level practices. Our study found visible structural exclusion associated with the glass ceiling, because the formation of various policy level structures such as task forces, committees, and councils structurally exclude female participation by design or default. For example, the policy level bodies of Ministry such as the Tiger Conservation Council, Environment Council, Working Group, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, National Biodiversity Coordination Committee and so on all have male members by default. Unless these bodies reserve a quota for female members, previous experience shows that no women will be represented. High level positions such as these are typically filled rapidly by males. Similarly, within the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, regular meetings of the Senior Management Teams include Joint Secretaries and are the forum for making major decisions regarding the forestry sector; this team also excludes female participation by default due to the lack of female staff employed at that level.

This structural exclusion of women is consistent throughout Nepal's forestry sector. It is evident in the professional organizations of foresters and trade unions, and within the bureaucracy and student organizations of forestry schools. None of these organisations provide a quota for women or otherwise ensure female participation in their executive committees.

Therefore, most policies affecting Nepal's forests and forestry activities are made by, and according to the requirements of, male members of the institutions. On the other hand, male gender champions are prevented by the structural rigidity of the organization (existing laws, rules, regulations and system) from supporting female staff, for example in requests for transfers, appointments and leave. Such structures hinder the agency component and prevent women-friendly changes which, in turn, weakens the agency component. Furthermore, women experience further barriers to entry into higher level positions due to the lack of female predecessors who can role model success.

The few vocal agential women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy have tried to align themselves with other non-governmental networks to pressurise the structure to bring change. Their efforts have been less successful in creating changes within bureaucratic organizations in comparison to community level organizations. This situation is not isolated to the forest bureaucracy; and it is likely that changes to the wider civil service environment in Nepal will facilitate changes within each of the ministries. Existing agential efforts are not capable of influencing the entire bureaucracy since there is currently no any formal or informal feminists' agential collaboration in the Nepalese civil service.

## 7.6 Power relations, persistence and progression

Power relations between male and female members of an organization is one of the key interests of FI (Mackay *et al.*, 2010). It is the power relations between the two sexes that create gender bias within an organization, challenging the assumption that organizations are gender neutral (Acker, 1990). Indeed, Acker (1990) argues that organizational structure is not gender neutral, but helps to reflect, create, develop and maintain the gendered nature within an organization. Other feminist theorists take this idea further, explaining that the gendered nature of any organization creates gender discrimination (often to the advantage of males) and reinforces further power disparities between males and females (Acker, 2006; Britton, 2000; Britton & Logan, 2008). Gender discrimination in an organization is therefore considered a process and an outcome of power imbalance. Acker (1990) further contends that organizational practices, processes and pressures maintain gender segregation in organizations. Such practices, processes and pressures may include: both invented and perpetuated gender disparity, such as inequalities in pay and status, hierarchy, power and dominance, gendered cultural images, gender identity (masculinity and femininity).

This research demonstrates that this theoretical connection is actually present in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, which is a gendered organization that produces, reproduces and continues gender discrimination; and where male staff become powerful by subordinating female staff. Although the formal institutions have not provided specific power to the male staff, the existing informal rules, organizational culture, official processes, opportunities for specific types of work, perks and fringe benefits, decision making, and socialization processes all contribute to the dominance of males and male power over females.

Lewis and Simpson (2011) mentioned that masculine practice in organizations is an invisible phenomenon but plays a pivotal role in reproducing gender dynamics. The forest bureaucracy in Nepal evolved from a paramilitary organisation and was historically highly masculine and male dominant (Gurung, 2002). The current forest bureaucracy has retained these characteristics; which are the sources of power for male staff.

The research findings provide examples of other practices, such as a lack of formal and official identity among female staff; along with a lack of dignity and respect based on their position. The feelings associated with a loss or lack of identity, dignity and respect leads towards perceived powerlessness among the female staff and reinforces the views of male colleagues and clients. The masculine hegemony among the male staff and clients has played a crucial role in creating such a situation by humiliating women Connell (1987). Connell (2014) contends that masculine hegemony is rooted in the interaction of institutional power and cultural norms, which depends upon individual or collective behaviour. Christie and Giri (2011) suggested that masculine hegemony created through the patriarchal culture of the Nepalese society and its academic institutions is perpetuated in the broader forestry sector. The current study also confirms that the phenomenon of masculine hegemony borrowed from wider Nepalese society, family and academic institutions is further intensified due to the hierarchical organizational structure and segregational nature of the job within forest bureaucracy. Female employees are regarded as inferior to male staff members, not only when the males hold a higher rank, but also when they (males) hold an equal or lower rank compared to women (Christe and Giri, 2011).

### *7.6.1 Gendered power structure in the organization*

In 2018, only 22 % of the 87,582 staff within the Nepalese civil service, were women (DoCPR, 2018) (see chapter 5 for detail). Of the 9,586 employees within the Nepalese Government's Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and its subsidiaries, only 5.71% are female (DoCPR, 2018). The over representation of males in the forestry organization has promoted the gender disparity more than in other bureaucratic organizations in Nepal. The figure clearly illustrates that the forest bureaucracy lacks a critical mass of women, which hinders the generation of power in line with critical mass theory.

Critical mass theory is central to the debate for women's representation in political organizations (Beckwith, 2007; Childs & Krook, 2006; Krook, 2015; Mendelberg *et al.*, 2014; Studlar & McAllister, 2002). The 'critical mass theory' claims that if the representation of females in an organization is less than 15 percent, their representation functions as a token only, and males become dominant (Kanter, 1977a). This situation invites the exclusion of women from decision making while making the men more dominant and powerful. Where the proportion of women increases to a threshold of 35 percent, their capacity to influence the culture of the organization becomes effective. A critical mass is argued to be necessary to facilitate equal treatment for women and to improve the power dynamics. The hard core of critical mass theory is that raising females' representation increases the women's coalition, and the resulting female alliances can provide greater input into feminist oriented changes (Kanter, 1977a; Mendelberg *et al.*, 2014). Thus, critical mass theory argues that there is a strong relationship between the proportion of females in the workplace and organizational outcomes (Beckwith, 2007; Studlar & McAllister, 2002).

Based upon the correlation of critical mass with organizational outcomes, feminist activists have embraced the gender quota as a tool for organizational change from feminist perspectives (Childs & Krook, 2006; Krook, 2015; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014). The United Nations employed such an approach for its member countries in 1995, declaring a 30 percent requirement for female participation (Mendelberg *et al.*, 2014). The government of Nepal also adopted a 33 percent quota for the recruitment of women in any political and bureaucratic organization (GoN, 2015a). However, although substantive representation of females has been increased through the quota system (in both the forest bureaucracy, and in Nepal's civil service overall), the desired proportion is far from being achieved in the forestry sector (GoN, 2016c, 2017a).

This research demonstrates that the number of female staff in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is not sufficient to bring about the change described by critical mass theory, and that the small number of women employees are highly visible (Kanter, 1977a) (both in terms of their work performance and their attempts to improve women's inclusion and empowerment) and are suffering from their token status. Kanter (1977a, 1977b, 1977c) suggests that a higher level of performance is demanded from women, compared to men, in order that they are valued as equal to their male counterparts. This study also found that the power of a female staff member is highly based upon her performance and hard work rather than on her position, whereas the same criteria does not apply to their male counterparts. Christie & Giri (2011) also observed that females in the Nepalese forestry sector needed to work doubly as hard (or even more) than men to gain respect for their performance and capacity.

Taylor (2010) observed that when women were in the minority in an organization, they were unable to develop strong social and professional networks, which play an important role in

power dynamics. The few female staff within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy reported a lack of professional networking within and beyond the organization. Women staff in the forest bureaucracy are scattered geographically across the country; some districts have no female staff at all and some have a few, but not in numbers strong enough to align in any substantial formal or informal female networks. As a result, women have neither the opportunity to act in decisive roles in their own organization, nor to act in any influential role in professional organizations such as the Nepal Foresters association, the Nepal Forest Technicians' Association, the Nepal Junior Forest Technicians' Association and other Civil Service trade unions (MSFP, 2014a).

### *7.6.2 Gendered power relations in bureaucratic hierarchy*

Acker (1990) portrayed hierarchy as an important attribute of organizations, arguing that hierarchy serves as a source of power disparity, and as a mechanism to further reinforce existing disparities. Hierarchy defines the power of individual staff within an organization, that is the lower the hierarchy, the less significant the power (Stainback *et al.*, 2011).

The Nepalese Civil Service, including the forest bureaucracy, is a well-defined hierarchical organisation (see chapter 3 and chapter 5). Delegation of the legal, financial, and other managerial powers such as the signing of documents, control over budget, and direction of staff are associated with hierarchy. Among the upper hierarchies of the Nepalese Civil Service (Chief Secretary, 1 position; Secretary, 59 positions) only two Secretary positions is occupied by a female (DoCPR, 2018). Most of the women staff are working at much lower levels.

In the forest bureaucracy, these lower level positions include those of Officers, Rangers/Office Assistants and Forest Guards. Employees appointed to these positions do not have any role in policy formation or decision making. Office records show that out of six Divisions, five Departments, two entities equivalent to the Department level and five Regional

Offices of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, only one entity is headed by a female. Out of 75 District Forest Offices, only two females are working as District Forest Officers (Managers) under the Department of Forests. Among more than 70 offices (under other four departments) under the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, no female is serving as a District (or equivalent) Level Manager. The under representation of females in the higher strata is also apparent in other countries; for instance, in the Korean Government, 6% of females reached managerial level positions out of 47.2% of female employees in 2010 (Choi & Park, 2014). In Ghana, out of 36 chief director (of ministries) positions, only six positions were occupied by females in 2011 (Kwaku Ohemeng & Adusah-Karikari, 2015).

A study in Europe found that organizations with substantial female representation in managerial, executive and board of director positions have positive outcomes in addressing workplace related gender disparity (Stainback & Kwon, 2012). A reduced gender disparity at higher levels also minimizes the power asymmetry among the lower hierarchy of the organization. (Stainback & Kwon, 2012; Stainback *et al.*, 2011) also revealed that the more women were represented in managerial positions, corporate boards and executive positions, the less gender discrimination there was in the organization, whereas lack of women's representation at the same positions was associated with higher levels of gender discrimination in the workplace. That study further concluded that the presence of women with organizational power (power of hiring, firing and promoting) may contribute to undoing the gendered nature of organizations, and contended that women who do hold positions of influence within an organization act as a 'change agents' across the hierarchy.

The persistent under-representation of women in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is more prominent than in the context of other countries both in the overall civil service and the forest

bureaucracy. The findings in this study revealed that female staff in the forest bureaucracy have no hierarchical power base, therefore they have no influence over policy level decisions; and have no legal, financial or other managerial power. Forest bureaucrats who hold higher level positions within the hierarchies are, either intentionally or unintentionally, reproducing and maintaining the power disparity through culturally-learned gendered practice. These powerful men, themselves acting within the hierarchy, further reinforce power asymmetries through gender insensitive practices, formal and informal decisions, and ignorance of societal power dynamics.

On the other hand, in this study the handful of women in managerial positions were not valued to the same extent as their male counterparts, regardless of how hard they worked. Some incidents presented in the results indicate that the experience of female managers within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is of being less powerful than their male counterparts because of disrespectful treatment from colleagues within the organization and from others outside of the organization, including from other government organizations. Such power disparity is not only generated within the organization but it is interwoven with the wider culture of Nepalese society, other organizations and other institutional dynamics within the forest bureaucracy from Feminist Institutionalists perspectives.

### *7.6.3 Gendered practice and power in wider society*

Institutional theory suggests that institutions shape an individual's assets, inheritance, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and other behavioural aspects (Bennett, 2008; Rutherford & Rutherford, 2011). A Nepalese family is a basic unit of institution responsible for producing and shaping the different attributes of men and women. Gendered practices across Nepalese society are an accumulation and interaction of such practices which vary among and within people of different

castes, religions, sexes, geographies and classes. Being historically a patriarchal society, both formal and informal institutions in Nepalese society favour males over females, hence, men in Nepal have better access to economic, public and social opportunities. The traditional roles of women (i.e. caring for the young and the elderly, cooking, cleaning, rearing animals, performing menial agricultural and forestry related tasks) are mostly unpaid and further segregate and exclude them from the economic and public spheres (Upadhyay, 2005).

In Nepal only males have the right of genetic inheritance (*bamsa*), that is to receive family inheritance, such as property or wealth from their parents (Mishra & Sam, 2016). Such institutional regimes have developed males as powerful actors in society, at the same time making females less powerful and of lower social status. Therefore, feminists suggest that organizational power dynamics be analysed in relation to wider society (Rutherford & Rutherford, 2011).

Participants in a previous study of the Nepalese forestry sector mentioned that when men and women work together as colleagues, or when women lead a team of males, people often assumed that the women were the subordinates (Christie & Giri, 2011). In such situations, people may ignore the authority of female staff and confer importance to the males. This study also discovered the existence of a two-way influential relationship between the society and the organization which maintains male dominance and power. The forest bureaucracy borrows Nepalese society's terms of address that refer to a woman as an elder sister, younger sister, wife or relative of someone, based on her age and relationship. However, men in the bureaucracy are given extra titles such as 'sir' or *'sap'* (title for being an official). In this way, society and the organization are both playing complementary roles in the maintenance of gender power imbalance. Bullying and sexual harassment; and violence against women are a very common

consequence of the dominance of male power in Nepalese society which is widely replicated in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy (described earlier in this chapter).

### *7.6.4 Persistence of unequal power relations*

Despite formal interventions through legal and policy measures, the power asymmetry between males and females is still a significant characteristic of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Some policy measures are positively biased towards females, but gender-neutral legislative measures and organizational structures, culture and practices are acting against positive discrimination. The power asymmetry itself becomes both a cause and an effect of male dominance and power, with the interaction of a highly gendered broader society and gendered organizational practices. Wherever the balance of power between male and female staff was observed to have shifted in this study, it happened due to informal institutions and agential efforts of the female employees rather than due to any formal institutions or organizational structures. Even female friendly policies were not effective without the agential efforts of the women employees. For example, the Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy 2008 of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation was in place at the time of this research, but it was not being properly implemented due to the lack of action plans or annual programmes for its implementation. This study suggests that there is a serious lack of mainstreaming, adoption and implementation of such polices (MSFP, 2014a, 2014b).

As a result, female staff are deprived of opportunities and excluded from forestry mainstreaming despite their physical presence in the organization. The phenomena of the ‘glass ceiling’ which describes the underrepresentation of women in powerful position in the organization is prevalent in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. The absence of females in policy

and managerial positions means there is little opportunity to influence the current power dynamics through women agencies. The lack of power held by females also means that they are vulnerable to mistreatment by their supervisors, who may appraise their performance more negatively than men working at a comparable standard. Some male supervisors were compelling lower level female staff to work in the office outside the usual office hours. Some staff were affected by grievance procedures, threats to job security and sexual harassment related to the hierarchical power relations. Female staff employed on temporary contracts are particularly vulnerable to power dynamics because of their reliance on positive performance evaluations for their ongoing employment.

The persistence of male dominance in the forest bureaucracy is both a process and an outcome of the interactions between formal and informal institutions, organizational culture, rigid organizational structure, low agential influence and the broader Nepalese society.

## 7.7 Chapter conclusion

The idea of women's inclusion in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy alludes to a complex set of concepts, policies, programs and practices that illuminate and shape the roles, responsibilities and status of women in forestry governance. Women's inclusion is a complex idea and hence encompasses a number of interactive components and factors that contribute to continuing or changing the scale of masculinity and femininity in institutions and organizations. In other words, 'women's inclusion' is a complex system with interconnecting parts and processes that need to be analysed in context. In this study, the discussions took women and men employees in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy as gender actors who would either try to defend/perpetuate the existing male-dominated organizational culture and power relations or resist them by discourse as well as actions.

The discussions of the experiences and perceptions of actors in Nepal's forest bureaucracy raises several puzzles. First, the policies and programs of gender and social inclusion as a single entity are controversial and principally overshadow the issues of women's inclusion, but these measures have sensitized women to lobby for a women-inclusive forest bureaucracy. The introduction of Gender Equity and Social Inclusion policies by aid agencies and the government does not adopt a feminist approach to the inclusion of women, but it has widened the scope for increased number of women in government institutions in Nepal including in the forest bureaucracy. Second, women's empowerment was found to be the aim of women employees within the forest bureaucracy, but the attainment of this aim was mainly constrained by institutional factors such as organizational culture, formal and informal rules of the game and power relations within forest bureaucracy, rather than the willingness of women *per se*. The process of women's empowerment was considered problematic unless institutional barriers were overcome and unless it was linked with the process of the inclusion of women. Third, the process of women's inclusion in forest bureaucracy was also found to be challenging without a combined intervention of women's empowerment (at individual level) and organizational reform (at institutional level).

Social inclusion, gender inclusion, women's empowerment and women's inclusion are related concepts, but whether one reinforces another in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy depends largely on how actors within the bureaucracy interact. The policies of the forest bureaucracy and the actions of its employees affect and are affected by the organizational culture, formal and informal rules, structure and agency and power relations; themes which make up Feminist Institutionalism.

This Feminist Institutionalist approach to the analysis of women's inclusion in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy has provided insights into how various aspects of women's inclusion can be identified as both obstacles and opportunities for reforming governance within the forestry sector. The study demonstrates that the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is a gendered institution and that this affects the inclusion (or exclusion) of women in forestry governance.

The organizational culture of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy provides a stereotype that is seemingly gender neutral but contributes to the continuing 'masculine' characteristic of forest institutions in Nepal. This masculine notion of forestry dismisses the roles that women can contribute to better forestry governance and belittles women employees. The dominant bureaucratic structure of the government forestry organization is 'masculine' in the sense that even women employees are subsumed by the male-dominated hierarchy. The 'agency' component of female employees or male 'gender champions' really matters in breaking the continuity of male-dominance. The formal institutions or rules of the games are seemingly 'women-inclusive' but the informal institutions that are culturally ingrained in the mindsets and practices of actors in forest bureaucracy pose threats to women inclusion. But the informal rules created by women and male champions favour women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy. The power relations in the forest bureaucracy were found to be continually changing, yet the overarching equilibrium favours male-supremacy and downgrades the scope for women-inclusive forest bureaucracy.

Feminist Institutionalism questions why and how seemingly neutral institutions (such as parliaments, courts and bureaucracies) continue to affect the daily lives of women and men, differently. Many researchers using the FI approach have found, as shown in this research, that such institutions often reproduce or exacerbate patterns of disadvantage and discrimination, even

when formally espousing ideals of equality. This chapter has exposed and explored some of the rules, norms and practices through which the Nepalese forest bureaucracy produces gendered outcomes and limits gender equality and the inclusion and empowerment of women within the organization.

The Nepalese forest bureaucracy was found to have serious limitations, but also some windows of hope in terms of women's inclusion. The continuation of “business as usual” within organizational culture, structure, informal practices and power relations indicate a pessimistic scenario for the forest bureaucracy. Formal institutions, agency and female-crafted informal practices indicate an optimistic scenario for radical change in the forest bureaucracy for meaningful women's inclusion.

# Chapter 8: Conclusion

## 8.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have highlighted that the 'inclusion of women' in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy has been largely rhetorical; and that further efforts are required to make government forestry institutions more women-inclusive. The literature on gender approaches to forestry and Feminist Institutionalism was critically reviewed in Chapter 2, which concluded that male domination in the forestry profession occurs and prevails at the expense of women, who are marginalized within the forest bureaucracy in Nepal as well as in a more global context. Chapter 3 reviewed a subset of the literature, focussing on governance of the Nepalese forestry sector. It showed that, in Nepal, entry of women into the forestry profession began in community forestry as an attempt to regulate women's behaviour. Chapter 4 described the methods applied in this research. The legal and policy frameworks for women's inclusion in Nepal including forest bureaucracy were reviewed in Chapter 5. The policy review concluded that the formal rules for women's inclusion in forestry are positive, though there are failures in their implementation. In Chapter 6, results of the research derived from the transcription of interviews and focus group discussions were presented. The results showed that, despite the formal rules which support women's inclusion, women experience challenges in starting, continuing and growing their careers in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. Chapter 6 also showed that the formal rules relating to women's inclusion are ineffective due to the presence and influence of informal rules. These results were further discussed in Chapter 7 in the light of literature and broader social context. Drawing on all these preceding Chapters, this Chapter 8 concludes the study and discusses the opportunities for change in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy, from a Feminist Institutionalist perspective.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, the space for structural change within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy is highlighted in section 8.2. Second, the opportunities and the scope for agential influence on forestry institutions, toward a more women-inclusive bureaucracy is discussed in section 8.3. Third, the opportunities for women activists to make networks within and beyond government institutions are presented in 8.4. Fourth, the concept of the 'collective feminist voice' is discussed as a potential tool to challenge existing power relations and facilitate the transformation of the forest bureaucracy in section 8.5. The role of gender sensitive males in developing a women-inclusive forest bureaucracy is highlighted section 8.6. Scope for further research is discussed in the light of forestry sector governance, Feminist Institutionalism and geographical boundaries in section 8.7. The final section concludes the thesis.

## 8.2 Scope for structural changes

This research has shown that the existing structures of forestry organizations, particularly in the public domain, are problematic in creating a women-inclusive forest bureaucracy in Nepal. Sustaining existing structural components within the bureaucracy are likely to simply reinforce the male-dominant power relation. New structural arrangements are required to bring about real inclusion of women.

The Gender Focal Point or Unit in the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation is the only structure that is designed to protect women employees and promote their dignity and rights (refer chapter 5). The existing structures do not entertain Gender Focal Points or Units at any level other than at the level of the Ministry. Assigning Gender Focal Units at lower hierarchical levels, and especially at implementing levels, might be useful for addressing gender issues while working 'on the ground'. Gender Units at each departmental level within the Ministry; and in each office/work place within the forest bureaucracy could be an important structural change,

providing a mechanism to address women's issues and grievances at both policy and implementation levels within the forest bureaucracy.

The Department of Forests, which forms part of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, functions as the custodian of national forests across the country. Its employees are responsible for protecting and managing forest resources. Protection occurs mainly through applying forces such as armed forest guards, patrolling and other security mechanisms. Management of forest resources involves the application of silvicultural practices such as management planning, planting and harvesting. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, on the other hand, which is also a Department within the Ministry, relies on military barracks to stop wildlife and forest crimes in and around protected areas. About 90 per cent of the human resources under the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation are allocated in these two departments which make up the principal identity of the forest bureaucracy (see chapter 5). To date, these structures have demanded male employees who can work irrespective of day or night, in towns or villages and in office-based or field-based jobs.

In comparison with the above two Departments of the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, community-based forest institutions are more women-inclusive. Community forestry user groups are required to have one male and one female from each household as members of the group, while at least fifty percent of their executive committee should be women. Moreover, either the chairperson or secretary (or both) of each executive committee should be a woman. Another group of community-based forestry institutions, buffer zone community forest user groups, are also more women-inclusive than the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, which oversee them.

Forestry institutions which exist outside the government bureaucracy, particularly community forestry user groups and their meso and macro level networks are exemplars of effective inclusion of women in Nepal. There are ample reports and insights showing that community-based or participatory programmes, embrace women employees and activists as vital for effective and equitable forestry governance.

Unlike the community forestry programme, the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation recruits and promotes its employees according to the general civil service laws. All Ministries are required to follow these laws when recruiting staff; however this approach has not helped to build an inclusive forest bureaucracy to date. While the Ministry has succeeded in building community-based forestry institutions which are gender balanced and inclusive of women, it has ironically failed to implement, nurture and promote women's inclusion and gender balance within the forest bureaucracy. Special forest service laws regarding the recruitment and promotion of staff would allow the forest bureaucracy to develop its own policies to employ and upgrade women in order to provide gender balance within the forest bureaucracy

Embracing a women-inclusive approach to forestry governance may require the adoption of special forest service laws to recruit forestry employees and setting up Gender Units in workplaces at all levels within the forest bureaucracy hierarchy. Such changes will provide the space for the structural changes necessary for a women-inclusive forest bureaucracy. Full adoption of women-inclusive approaches in Nepal's forest bureaucracy, including work units responsible for the management of protected areas and production forests, biodiversity conservation and watershed management, necessitates the recruitment and mobilization of as many women staff members as possible within the forestry sector as a whole. This will ensure women's participation in resource management.

## 8.3 Opportunities for agential influence

Chapter 5 illustrated that substantial changes towards establishing appropriate gender ratios have been made in political spheres, laws, policies and government development programmes in Nepal. These changes are all aimed at establishing equitable social structures within political-administrative entities and community-based organizations. These efforts have created positive change to support women-inclusive political processes and institutions. Nonetheless, political entities, laws and policies are formal institutions operating in the existing politico-bureaucratic structures. The structures are relatively more static and rigid than the formal institutions. It is from the space between the formal institutions and the structures that the agency component of forest bureaucracy can emerge and play roles in shaping the structures and formal institutions toward governance which is more women-inclusive. In other words, the formal institutions, such as the new Constitution of Nepal 2015 and women-inclusive policies of the government, encourage women employees positively to enter, stay and grow in the forest bureaucracy. But the structures, which are rigid and male-dominated, either frustrate them or incite them to rebel within the organization. This contradiction between the progressive formal institutions and resistant structures provide a space for the female employees and gender sensitive male employees alike to activate their agency component in order to transform forest bureaucracy.

In the absence of effective agential movement, formal institutions such as progressive laws, policies and programmes remain as rhetoric, while the structure component of forest bureaucracy sustains the existing unequal power balance between male staff and female staff. A Feminist Institutionalist perspective could be used to develop an approach to creating and enhancing the agency component in order to bring forth a positive change in forest bureaucracy.

The agency component, as discussed in preceding chapters, is the human component of any organization. Unlike the pre-determined roles and responsibilities assigned to employees or staff members in an organization irrespective of gender, the agency component (through the lens of Feminist Institution Feminist Institutionalism) includes the roles, responsibilities and activism of individuals or groups which may challenge existing gender-blind or anti-women structures, power relations, political processes and institutional outcomes. Agential influence in this context is justified because of the gap between the rhetoric (formal institutions, such as laws and policies) and the reality (how women are structurally prevented from taking part in politico-administrative processes despite the pro-women laws and policies). On the one hand, formal institutions are not sufficient or wherever they seem appropriate, remain as rhetoric. On the other hand, agential movement seems necessary to pressurize political entities for more progressive formal institutions and for effective implementation of progressive laws and policies already promulgated.

How agency is created and effectively moved is a challenge. But it is also an opportunity for women employees in forest bureaucracy to raise their agential power in the light of existing formal institutions that invoke the concept of gender equality in broader society. It is from the gap between the rhetoric (that supports women's inclusion) and reality (that resists women's inclusion) that agential activism for women-inclusive forestry governance can be created and moved forward.

Creating and developing the agency component of Feminist Institution Feminist Institutionalism in The Nepalese forest bureaucracy are possible by empowering the employees (especially the women, community leaders and activists) through sensitization, education, training and capacity building. The focus should be laid on the individuals as existing and

potential activists for positive change in the organization. The structure is strong, rigid and relatively inert, while the agency is malleable which, in turn, contributes to challenging and reshaping the structure in the organization. The data from interviews and focus groups presented in Chapter 6 indicates that a change in the forest bureaucracy in terms of women's inclusion for gender equality is desirable and could begin with the empowerment of each individual woman in the forestry sector, including public organizations, community-based organizations and private sector institutions. The capacity of individual women in these organizations needs to be built in terms of not only their professional roles and responsibilities, but also their rights to progress within the profession, maintaining their identity and their dignity.

The agency component creates women employees and their supporters as activists or actors in the organization; raising women above the existing power relation that favours male members over female members in the organization and in the wider community. While women employees in the forest bureaucracy can work as prime agencies for change, other individuals irrespective of gender and organizations, can contribute as supportive agencies in the creation of a women-inclusive forest bureaucracy. In enhancing the agency component, vocal women are not discouraged under the pretext of social norms, but are encouraged to challenge policies, practices, norms, attitude and behaviour that reinforce unequal power relation between male and female individuals in the organization.

Grievance handling mechanisms and procedures are developed and enforced in order to encourage agential consciousness and activism in forest bureaucracy. The Gender Focal Point or Unit in the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation can play a vital role in developing and implementing a capacity building plan for each woman employee in and under the organization in a systemic way, facilitating for example, higher education, training, exposure visits,

conferences and workshops. An individual action plan for each woman employee participating in capacity building programmes can build agential capacity to influence the whole organization for positive change.

## 8.4 Networking beyond the structures

The structures of Nepal's forest bureaucracy were found to be differentiated at three structural levels or tiers: central or macro level (the Ministry and Departments), meso level (Regional Directorates, District offices and Protected Area headquarters) and micro level (Sectors and Area offices) (Chapter 3). Functionally, the macro level develops and issues policies, while the micro levels operationalize or implement these policies. The meso level connects the flow of policies and their implementation between the macro and micro levels. Existing structures of forest bureaucracy were found to be problematic for women's inclusion at all levels (macro, meso and micro). The macro level is largely dominated by male bureaucrats, who were reported to be either gender neutral (not recognising problems in bureaucracy from a gender perspective) or gender insensansitive (chapter 6). The macro level lacks effective direct linkages with forestry communities outside the bureaucracy, depending largely depends on its subsidiary meso and micro organizations for this function. The micro level organizations are also generally dominated by male employees, but they have functional linkages with forestry communities outside the bureaucracy, such as community forestry user groups and NGOs, which are often more inclusive of women than the bureaucracy. Women employees within the forest bureaucracy can learn from and align with organizations outside of the bureaucracy for more effective inclusion of women in overall forestry governance.

There are several opportunities for creating female networks within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy and beyond in order to challenge the existing male-dominated power balance and

structures. First, a network among the Gender Focal Points of all Ministries can be formed. Such a network could help exert collective efforts of the individuals employed in these roles on each Ministry in turn in order to develop women-inclusive policies, gender sensitive codes of conduct, gender budgeting and women-friendly work places. Second, a network of women employees working within the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and its subsidiaries can be created. Working together, these women could form a support network, cooperating with one another, collectively putting forward their workplace-related grievances (in order to protect individuals), providing a supporting authority to settle their grievances, maximizing performances of female staff members and advocating together for their capacity enhancement. Third, a network between the female staff members in the forest bureaucracy and women forestry professionals in NGOs, INGO's, donor agencies and academic institutions is possible. This network will bring together women foresters from across the sector to raise their issues collectively, sensitize them to realize the roles and challenges of women in the forestry sector, participate in capacity building forums and make them accountable to their job related responsibilities.

Fourth, women employees of the forest bureaucracy can acquire membership of professional societies, such as Nepal Foresters' Association. These networks provide forums for women employees to seek the support of professionals, irrespective of gender, to pressurize authorities for progressive policy change, advocate for their professional dignity, and develop their leadership capabilities. Fifth, there is an avenue for networking of women forestry employees with community-based organizations and their federations, such as Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) and The Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI). Taking into account the examples of women-inclusive structures in community-based organizations and federations, these networks

can constructively pressurize the government to progressively realise a more inclusive forest bureaucracy.

While the forest bureaucracy is, by and large, a formal institution, the networks beyond the bureaucracy are informal institutions in terms of Feminist Institutionalism. When the existing structures of the forest bureaucracy tend to maintain the unequal power relations between male and female employees, formal institutions are necessary but not sufficient to change the status quo. It is by informal institutions, such as women's networks within and beyond the forest bureaucracy, that progressive formal institutions can be enhanced in order to change the existing structures for women inclusive forest bureaucracy. The FI approach therefore provides the environment for a gender sensitive workplace and structure.

## 8.5 Collective gender voice

Chapter 6 revealed that women employees in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy are largely unorganized for their collective welfare and dignity. Their voices are fragmented and often unheard by those in power. In order to challenge the situation, the networks or informal institutions discussed in Section 8.4 can support women employees not only to be organized, but also to articulate their issues and rights collectively. This research has identified a space in which a 'collective gender voice' can be generated. Within such space, the individuals and groups that believe in women-inclusive institutions can collaborate and articulate, with a common voice, for the sake of the welfare, dignity and professional enhancement of all women individuals across Nepal’s forestry governance sector. In this movement, individual women working in forestry governance jointly speak for women's roles, rights and responsibilities across the forestry sector including community organizations, forestry enterprises and the forest bureaucracy.

A collective gender voice is an idea generated in this research by findings presented in Chapter 6 and by discussion of these findings in Chapter 7. The interviewees and the participants of focus groups argued that women employees in forest bureaucracy neither experience women-friendly workplaces and structures nor are they effectively unified to advocate their rights jointly. They struggle for existence in their workplaces, but their struggles are at individual levels. Women reported that they had complained individually about gender blind or anti-women policies, structures, programmes, behaviour and attitudes, but said that their complaints were often overlooked. Wherever they made alliances with other women or associations and spoke, they found that they were more successful for their cause. Thus a practice of speaking jointly, instead of individually, to change policies and practices is considered to be more successful in enhancing the dignity and careers of women employees in the forest bureaucracy.

A collective gender voice serves as both a process and an outcome of informal institutions in forest bureaucracy. It also instigates and is instigated by the agency component of female employees. This is the space where women employees can together stake their claim for women-inclusive policies, programmes, activities, and codes of conduct. It will also highlight the importance of gender-sensitive 'codes of conduct' and enforce these within forestry organizations in order to create respectful work place environments for women employees to enter, stay and grow in the forest bureaucracy in a dignified way.

The importance of a collective gender voice also lies in organizational culture in the Nepalese civil service in general and in the forest bureaucracy specifically. It was noted in chapter 7 that, in most cases, women employees compete with other female employees instead of collaborating and cooperating with one another. The divided mind-sets and actions of female employees weakens 'women inclusion movement' and thereby strengthens the patriarchal legacy

of forestry organizational culture, ultimately resulting in a 'lose - lose' situation for women employees. A collective gender voice will help women employees analyse how and why male-dominated organizational culture persists in the forest bureaucracy and how a more women-inclusive organization can be created. It also places pressure on officials and forestry clients alike to be gender sensitive in programmes, activities, behaviours and attitudes.

Since voice is also power (Taylor & Robinson, 2009), a collective gender voice empowers women employees such that it can be used as a tool to create a more conducive environment for women in forest bureaucracy. At a time when formal institutions are not sufficient or effective for women-inclusive bureaucracy in essence, a collective gender voice as an informal institution exerts pressures to activate women-friendly institutions.

## 8.6 Support of gender sensitive champions

The Nepalese forest bureaucracy is largely dominated by male bureaucrats, who influence and regulate policies, budgets, programmes and administration across the forestry sector. The Feminist Feminist Institutionalist theory does not deny the support of male actors to create and sustain women-inclusive institutions. In this connection, it is in the best interest of women employees in the forest bureaucracy to seek support, not only from female individuals and networks, but also male individuals and their networks, in order to bring about change. Perceptual data from the interviews (chapter 6 and 7) suggest that the roles of male officials were crucial when the Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy for the Forestry Sector was formulated and rolled out to both government and non-government institutions. Forestry Training Centres in Nepal were found to have delivered several gender related training courses, in which most of the trainers or resource persons were males. Female participants in this research stated that these kinds of training provided opportunities for effective understanding and internalization of the

roles, responsibilities, professionalism, importance and dignity of women employees in the forestry sector. People who act as trainers and resource people in such courses should be gender sensitive, familiar with issues relating to the gender-biased nature of current structures within the Nepalese forest bureaucracy and champions for women's inclusion and participation.

As discussed earlier, a structural requirement of the Gender Focal Unit in the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation is that the position should be held by a person at the level of Joint Secretary. Since there are no women at this high level in the Ministry, the position is held by a male official who may not be sensitive to gender issues. Introducing Feminist Institutionalist perspectives in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy would be further challenged if women activists in the forest bureaucracy are not supported by the head of their respective Gender Focal Unit and other male staff members. Some male individuals in work places are likely to resist change toward a more women-inclusive forest bureaucracy and it is perhaps naïve to expect support from all male staff in this connection. However, it is reasonable to envisage that more male officials (and other individuals in power who, for example, issue policies) can be influenced to increase their gender sensitivity and to work towards women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy.

## 8.7 Implications of findings and avenues for further research

The findings described in this thesis will have theoretical, methodological and practical implications for Nepal's forest bureaucracy.

In theoretical terms, the forest bureaucracy, which was, hitherto, seen as either gender-neutral or male-dominated, has been characterised here as an institution revolving around gender issues, particularly those of power relations between male and female employees. The findings also challenged the concepts of gender and social inclusion, which have to date been considered as

appropriate and even recommended approaches to supporting women. The findings presented these concepts as problematic in terms of achieving either gender equality or women's empowerment.

In terms of methodology, this research has applied Feminist Institutionalism to a gender study in the context of a forest bureaucracy in a developing country. Such an approach is a novel application of the theory and the qualitative approach taken here has allowed a deeper consideration of the issues experienced by female and male employees in the forest bureaucracy compared to the results of quantitative studies.

In practice, the findings will sensitize policy makers, forest bureaucrats and development activists to recognize, respect and address the issues of women employees in the forestry sector in general and in the forest bureaucracy in particular.

Building on the research presented in this thesis, prospects for further research in forestry from a Feminist Institutionalist angle can be explored across three broad areas: scope of forestry sector governance, scope of Feminist Institutionalism and scope of spatial or geographical boundaries.

Forestry sector governance broadly includes forest bureaucracy (government institutions), community-based forestry groups or civil societies (community institutions), Nongovernmental organization (NGOs) working in the forestry sector and forest-based enterprises (private sector institutions) (see chapter 3). This research has focused on the 'forest bureaucracy' as a part of the overall forestry sector governance in Nepal, largely leaving aside the other two, that is community-based forestry institutions and private forestry institutions. The study of community-based and/or private forestry institutions from the Feminist Institutionalist

approach would be rich areas for further research. Or else, a holistic approach covering all the three sub-sectors of the forestry sector could also be an area for future studies.

New Institutionalism has emerged as a combination of different strands of institutionalism: historical, organizational or sociological and rational choice institutionalisms (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Mackay & Meier, 2003). Feminist Institutionalism arose as a combination of New Institutionalism and feminist theories (Krook & Mackay, 2015; Mackay *et al.*, 2010). This research has adopted a historical and organizational or sociological approach to Feminist Institutionalism in order to study Nepal's forest bureaucracy. The forest bureaucracy, or forestry sector governance as a whole, could also be studied from the perspectives of rational choice, and discursive Feminist Institutionalism. The detail about these four approaches of Feminist Institutionalism have been reviewed in Chapter 2. The rational choice and discursive Feminist Institutionalism might provide further and different discourses and rationales of women forestry professionals.

Finally, any social research is carried out in a spatial or in a comparative spatial context. As Feminist Institutionalism is founded on feminist political science, comparative studies between different spatial, political or geographical contexts of forestry governance is logical (Chappell, 2006; Krook & Mackay, 2015). This research has been undertaken in the context of Nepal's forest bureaucracy. Comparative studies on women's inclusion in forest bureaucracy or forestry sector governance between Nepal and elsewhere at an institutional, regional, continental or global scales are recommended for further research; for example a comparative study of the inclusion of women in forestry versus non-forestry sectors, developing counties versus developed countries, government sector versus private sector etcetera

## 8.8 Conclusion: Towards a feminist institutionalist model

Forest bureaucracy in Nepal was found to be largely male-dominated. The forest bureaucracy is maintaining gender discrimination and workplace inequality via to psychological, sociological and legal means. Male domination is embedded in the history of the bureaucracy and is demonstrated in the behaviour, knowledge, values, beliefs and practices of its employees. Women's inclusion in the forestry bureaucracy is an agenda initiated by broader political institutions, such as the Parliament and donor-funded projects. Community forestry organizations have also brought this agenda to the government forestry sector, demonstrating effective inclusion of women despite dubious initial incentives for such inclusion. Despite the advancement of women's leadership in community forestry at local levels, women's inclusion in forestry governance within the forest bureaucracy has been difficult to achieve, and existing structures are resistant to change.

This research has identified a space from which Feminist Institutionalism as a movement can emerge to create change towards a more women-inclusive forest bureaucracy in Nepal. These areas for change can be found within the Feminist Institutionalist model, particularly from the components of structure, agency and formal/informal institutions.

The current structures comprising the forest bureaucracy in Nepal are not inclusive of women. They depend largely on the roles, responsibilities and importance of male employees and decision makers and often prevent, by default or design, women from taking part in the forest bureaucracy. Formal institutions, such as the Parliament, the Constitution of Nepal and the broader civil service code of Nepal, direct each public sector, including the forest bureaucracy, to embrace women as employees as well as decision makers. However, forest administration structures were found to better fit male employees and decision makers (see chapter 6/chapter 5).

This was found to be the case particularly for the Department of Forests and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation; the two departments that make up the principal identity of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy. The structures of community-based organizations, such as community forestry user groups are, by comparison much more inclusive of women, at least in terms of their organizational structures. This research recommends building on the successes of community forestry, carrying some of structures which facilitate the effective inclusion of women in community forestry into the forest bureaucracy. The research also recommends the extension or replication of Gender Focal Units so that their influence is effective across various structural levels and geographical locations. These suggested changes to structures can help improve women's inclusion in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

Since structures are often rigid and inert, it is important to recognise the role of agency components in transforming structure. The agency component of the Nepalese forest bureaucracy was discussed as an extra attribute of employees who contribute positively to changing the unequal power relation and structure. These employees adopt this important role in addition to their roles and responsibilities as assigned by their organization. This research identified opportunities for the influence of agency in improving women's inclusion in the forest bureaucracy. It is by building capacity in women employees and sensitizing male employees and decision makers that the agency component can be created and enhanced to shift structures toward more women-inclusive governance. Supports of gender sensitive males (gender champions) in influential positions were also acknowledged as vital for women's inclusion.

The forest bureaucracy has addressed the issue of women employees simply, from a 'gender and social inclusion' perspective, which has lumped women's importance and problems within the broader framework of social inclusion/exclusion. It did not articulate the need for

women's inclusion in forest bureaucracy from new institutionalist or Feminist Institutionalist perspective. Application of the Feminist Intuitionalist model, to investigate why and how women have not been effectively included in the forest bureaucracy to the extent that the broader political institutions, such as the Constitution and the Parliament envisaged, has provided useful insights. In scrutinizing the problem from perspectives of the four components of Feminist Institutionalism, (i.e.: organizational culture, structure/agency, formal/informal institutions and power relations) a robust understanding of why women have been excluded, and how they can be better included, in Nepal's forest bureaucracy is provided.

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# Appendix 1: Guiding questions for key informant interviews and focus groups discussions

## A. Guiding questions for key informant interviews

***For participants from Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) and its subsidiaries***

- How do you find the selection, recruitment, and appointment systems? For example, the examination and interview processes? Are they gender friendly?
- What are the motivating factors for women to join the government forestry sector? What are the discouraging factors?
- Are you aware of any acts, policies or regulations which create a barrier for women working in the government forestry sector? (Prompts: transfer, promotion, further study etcetera?)
- Do you have any experiences of bias (positive or negative) while working as a woman (or with women)?
- Do women employees have access to other networks such as donor organizations, civil society organizations etc.? If no, why not? If yes, why and how? What is the area of collaboration, how supportive are they?
- Do you think reservation of quota and other affirmative actions are necessary?

***Additional questions (only for female interviewees)***

- Have you ever had the opportunity to take part in a decision-making process? Have you ever put forward any ideas in a decision-making process? If no, why? If yes, do you feel your input was addressed or considered? If not, why do you think this is the case?

- Have you ever encountered any bias as a female employee? Have you complained about biasness? Are there any mechanisms to handle such problems?
- What types of barriers do you face while working in this profession? How are you coping? What is motivating you to retain this job?

***For participants from non-government agencies***

- Have you ever cooperated with, or been opposed by government staff of the MoFSC while working for women's issues? If yes, could you tell me about it?
- How gender sensitive are the staff of the MoFSC? Have you ever felt that staff of the MoFSC prefer to work either with males or females?
- Have you found any differences while working with either male or female staff of the MoFSC in terms of service delivery?
- Do you think it is necessary to have policies which include women in order to increase women's participation in the MoFSC ?
- Why there are no females in Secretary and Joint Secretary level positions in forest bureaucracy in Nepal? What might be the reason? Is it necessary, why?
- Do you think the government selection, recruitment, and appointment systems in the MoFSC are gender friendly? (Prompts: the examination and interview processes?)

## B. Guiding questions for focus group discussions

- What are the policies (Strategies, Acts, Regulations and Guidelines) adopted by the government to include women in the forest bureaucracy? (Recruitment, promotion, human resource development, transfer, leaves etc.)

- Are these policies adequate enough to promote the representation of women's views in forest bureaucracy? If not what types of amendments are necessary?
- Are there any difficulties in implementing gender friendly policies due to the culture of the government forestry institutions?
- Is there any legal provision for a gender friendly working environment in Government forestry organizations? (Maternity, childcare, sanitary, security, safe accommodation, flexible working hours etc?)
- What are the differences regarding the inclusion of women in the forestry sector compared to other public service sectors? Are there more or less opportunities for women in the forestry sector compared to other areas?
- How difficult or easy is it for women to work in the forestry bureaucracy in comparison to other civil service sectors?
- Are there any obstacles or challenges for women wishing to join the forestry profession, either via the University courses, or directly into the workforce? And/or if so what are those difficulties and challenges?
- Are opportunities for individual development in the workplace equally available to women and men? (For example, training, promotion, responsibilities, membership of commissions and task forces). If not, why and how?
- How decisions are made? Is there any mechanism to ensure the inclusion of women's voices in any policy process and decision making?
- Do power relations related to the hierarchical structure of the department, and/or to gendered norms, affects or influence decisions made in the institution?

- Are there any professional networks or strategic actions (either inside or outside government forestry institutions) which advocate for gender issues in forestry?
- Can we now discuss who will participate in the individual interview?

## Appendix 2: Journal articles published during candidature

Wagle, R., Oli, D., Sapkota, B., Aryal, S. and Prajapati, S.M. (2017). Feminist Institutionalist Interpretation of Forest Tenure Regimes in Nepal. *Journal of Forests and Livelihood, 15(1): 131-142*

Wagle, R., Pillay, S., and Wright, W. (2017). Examining Nepalese Forestry Governance from Gender Perspectives, *International Journal of Public Administration, 40(3):205-225*

Bhattarai, B.R., Wright, W., Poudel, B.S., Aryal, A, Yadav, B.P. and Wagle, R. (2017). Shifting paradigms for Nepal's protected areas: history, challenges and relationships, *Journal of Mountain Science, 14(5): 964-979*

Dhungana, S.P. and Wagle, R. (2013). How Climate Change Discourses are Negotiated at Meso Level: Revisiting Annual Development Planning in Nepal, *Journal of Forests and Livelihood, 11(1): 29-42*