Starting point

in life

towards inclusive birth registration in Nepal

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The Starting Point in Life

Towards inclusive birth registration in Nepal

By Jiří Pasz

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Acknowledgements

"Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand."
Confucius

The research in Nepal was one of my most valuable work and life experiences. I was amazed by the beauty of Nepal and its people. Besides being amazed, I have learned many valuable lessons, many people have influenced my life and I believe I have influenced theirs too. We have become each other's guides and even friends during this academic adventure.

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I have reserved my special thanks to Eliška who has always understood me more than anyone else. And lastly I feel vast gratitude to my family for sharing my dreams.

Table of contents

List of abbreviations and acronyms

ADDCN	Association of District Development Committees of Nepal
BC	Birth Certificate
BR	Birth registration
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal
CCD	Child-centred Community Development
CEE/CIS	Central Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States
CIAA	Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, Nepal
CSG	Community Support Group, Badi organization, Nepal
DDC	District Development Committee, Nepal
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GLOF	Glacial Lake Outburst Floods
HDI	Human Development Index
IDA	International Development Agencies
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MLD	Ministry of Local Development, Nepal
MoPR	Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Nepal
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission of Nepal
INGO	International non-governmental organization
NR(s)	Nepalese Rupee(s)
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN
RBD	Rights-based approach to development
TI	Transparency International
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDRD	UN Declaration on the Right to Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
VDC	Village Development Committee, Nepal
VERS	Vital Events Registration System
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

Conversions

Currency: Euros to Nepali Rupees, April 15th 2011

(Nepal Rastra Bank – The Central Bank of Nepal)

1 € = 102,69 (buying); 103,56 NRs (selling)

1 € = 100,- NRs for the purposes of the research

List of boxes

List of figures

Executive summary

Research framework

Recent progress in the global development agenda manifests a shift from neo-liberal approach towards more socially and culturally sensitive and more complex approaches. One of the most important is the Rights-based approach to development which sets the achievement of human rights as an objective of development. This approach focuses on well-being achieved through access to human rights and services provided by governments and other institutions. The past has proven that economic growth should be accompanied by equity and social inclusion. Since social exclusion is still a problem in both developed and developing countries it has become one of the major international concerns. It is necessary to increase agency and social capital of excluded groups of population, to support participation and sustainability as well as decrease dependency and inequality in any form.

One of the major issues that the excluded people deal with is lack of recognition. The first step on a path leading to their recognition is their registration. Registration provides people with identity and legal personality to face governments, authorities and institutions they have to deal with during their lives. Registration is meant as a protection and increases linkages to rights and services people are entitled to. Birth registration is an important and yet omitted topic in the global development agenda. In academic circles only very few major studies have been produced. As studies show, the functioning registration system might be a major tool of development, not a goal of development. The agenda for birth registration has been adopted in the environment of international non-governmental organizations. Unicef together with Plan are two leading agencies and since 2005 they cooperate on Universal Birth Registration Campaign in 48 countries where birth registration rates are low.

Research context

One of the countries where majority of children are not registered according to official statistics is Nepal. Nepal is currently one of the poorest and yet one of the fastest developing countries in the world. After the end of civil war the country is facing major challenges such as finalizing constitution and implementing it, finishing the peace process, or stepping out of the vicious circle of caste system. All development tasks are even more difficult considering incredible diversity of Nepalese people and the geography of the country.

Poverty is still widespread in Nepal and some groups of population are excluded from political, social and economical participation in their society. Their exclusion is based on

caste, ethnicity or religion and is deeply rooted in history and tradition. The first step in their struggle for inclusion and participation is their recognition and registration. Birth registration is a crucial part of the process. Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities are among the most vulnerable groups of population in Nepal and prior to this study it was expected that these excluded communities would be excluded from the birth registration process as well. Therefore it was vital to design the research in order to asses the awareness on birth registration procedure, practice and registration in families, and influence of the birth registration on well-being. The research has also focused on patterns of communication and levels of trust inside families and communities. Media access was assessed in order to promote the best way of awareness raising in excluded communities. Last part of the study focuses on the delivery side of the birth registration system evaluating recent progress and mapping current challenges.

Main research findings

After combining the collected data, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, most of the revealed results are contrary to the research hypothesis. Awareness about birth registration in Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities is very high and the practice is established. The understanding of the procedure is clear and it is considered beneficial to register children and provide them with the Birth Certificate. Unfortunately in majority of cases children are registered late, mostly when the Birth Certificate is required by specific institution – especially for school enrolment and to obtain citizenship. The responsibility for registering is given to the male head of the household of the family. No obstructions have been found in terms of infrastructure, finance and time. People confirm that they are able to come to respective authorities, spend the necessary time to register their children and eventually pay the fine for late registration. Only very limited signs of corruption on the side of authorities were found. In terms of impacts on lives this research brings positive results. Majority of participants agree that birth registration has improved their life or lives of their children as it has increased not only their access to other rights and services, but also improved the protection of their identity. Out of 493 children in the participant households, 106 were without birth registration – this is slightly less than one quarter (21,5%). Households have established contact with authorities (Village Development Committees) and these serve also as an important source of information. In terms of access to media the most common is radio (77%), mobile phone (62%), and TV (57%). The levels of trust were found to be location-specific. In some communities leaders are highly appreciated while in others considered corrupted. In families the highest level of trust is assigned to the male head of the household. In general the birth registration was found to be highly inclusive and

serving excluded communities as well. No obstruction was discovered in families, community, authorities or in caste. Nevertheless participants expressed very intensive exclusion from the Nepalese society.

The research proves that the demand side of the service manifests satisfactory progress. The delivery side is not progressing accordingly. Registration and birth registration in Nepal is still not prioritized. Ministry of Local Development, District Development Committees and Village Development Committees are not properly linked and are not fully using the data for planning. Both Village and District Development Committees are struggling with overload of work, lack of resources and outdated record-keeping system. Some VDC secretaries are displaced because of violent threats.

Research conclusions

The study proves that awareness about birth registration is high and the practice is established. It is now vital to convince people for timely registration and promote the sustainability of the tradition of registration in families. The focus in future should be shifted from awareness raising to improving the delivery system in order to achieve universal birth registration. Especially computerization of the Vital Events Registration System accompanied by adequate training is crucial and will also improve use of the data for planning. In terms of law amendments, incentive for early registration instead of fine for late registration should be promoted.

Introduction

Acquiring an identity is one of the most important processes in our lives. In the most basic sense, there are two ways of creating it. The most important is the identity shaped by our *self* and our life, by our family, friends, community, and our actions. Sense of identity is what we struggle for and create during our whole lives. But we are also living in an organized society, the state. And in this mass of people, sharing the same space and resources which are governed by authorities, we need to be recognizable as unmistakably unique human beings. To be given an identity by the authorities might seem much less important than creating it, but the consequences of failing to obtain it for whatever reason might be as harsh as failing to develop our true self.

A child is refused to enrol to school. An orphan fails to prove he is the son of his parents and cannot inherit their property. A young girl is sexually abused but cannot take her case to court. Boys and girls under the legal age are married off against their will in arranged marriages. Youth reaching 18 years of age are refused the citizenship of their country because they do not bear a proof of being born in it. People are denied their right to travel because they cannot obtain passport. One of the most important key steps towards solving such situations is a Birth Certificate, which should be perceived as the first right of a child. What is a common procedure in developed countries is not a standard in those which are currently called developing. Millions of children all over the globe are not given their Birth Certificate and without it they cannot prove their identity and legal personality in dealing with authorities and institutions. These people might face severe consequences and hardly be able to claim the rights and services that governments grant their citizens. One of the countries with alarmingly low birth registration rate is Nepal, with estimated 40% of newborn children that are given the Birth Certificate.

While Nepal is an astonishingly beautiful country to visit – an amazing reservoir of nature and culture – it is also one of the least developed countries in Asia. Nepal is a country on cross-roads, in transition. Society in Nepal is facing gargantuous challenges such as finishing the constitution writing process and its implementation, completing the peace process after a decade of civil war, empowering people in a prevailing caste system, increasing gender equality, improving poor infrastructure, increasing school enrolment, enhancing access to health care, fighting widespread corruption etc. One of the biggest challenges is the state administration, extremely complicated in geographical conditions ranging from overheated dusty plains and jungles to the barrens of the Himalayan Mountains, in areas unreachable in certain seasons, in places which are still insecure and dangerous. The functioning administration is absolutely necessary for high rates of birth registration, but it is only one of the factors of success.

The key to success is motivation and understanding on both delivery and demand sides of this service. All the stakeholders in the birth registration process should be motivated to do their best for the common good even in such difficult and complex conditions and the presence of so many serious obstacles. Everyone should understand and execute their rights and responsibilities. On one side people should be aware of the benefits of the birth registration and possession of the Birth Certificate. The linkages of birth registration to other rights and services must be properly understood. The responsibility to register their children is theirs. People who come to register children must be welcome in the offices responsible for registration and such offices must be run by capable and accountable authorities. Civil servants must be aware that birth registration is their duty and a compulsory service to Nepalese citizens without any division based on caste, ethnicity, or religion. Civil servants are obliged not only to register children but to keep records which must be submitted to higher authorities. Nepalese government has established institutions with a task to gather data from vital events registration and produce statistics which are crucial for development planning on all levels. Such institutions must be properly linked and advanced in the use of gathered data. One of the most important stakeholders of birth registration is the civil society and its organizations, both large international and local. Organizations such as Plan Nepal and Unicef devoted their resources to enhancing the process and their work has already brought positive results in otherwise omitted field of birth registration. Many local organizations are protecting rights of various communities in the whole country. Many of them are also taking part in raising awareness about birth registration. There is nevertheless still a major mission ahead for all NGOs and INGOs as their campaigns and projects are failing to reach many locations and communities. Persistent problems call for more cooperation in order to increase impact of the organizations, especially if they have similar or identical goals.

The world is dealing with other major development issues, what is the cause for birth registration?

The field of birth registration is currently not a top priority on the development agenda. It is not a part of Millennium Development Goals although it is recognized as a facilitator of achieving some MDGs (e.g. eradicating poverty and hunger, universal primary education or reducing child mortality). Although governments, international and local organizations and institutions recognize the value of birth registration, it is not given appropriate significance. The exception is cooperation between Plan International, Unicef and several governments of developing countries on Universal Birth Registration campaign. This global awareness raising campaign was launched in 2005 with notion that in some areas

of the world overwhelming 90% of children remain unregistered. Plan itself claims it has facilitated registration of 40 million children in 32 countries. As Plan and Unicef are leading agencies, their data, analysis and practices remain unique in the field. This is also due to lack of studies originating in academic sphere. Only very few scholars have produced relevant papers on the topic.

After processing all available information gathered by institutions and academics, it is possible to state that birth registration appears as truly crucial institution of modern society and its proper addressing can lead to major progress. Effective planning is practically impossible without comprehensive and accurate data. The birth registration systems provide the foundation - information that is fundamental to local communities, nationwide strategies and, ultimately, global cooperation. Birth registration is a way for an individual to confirm his or her unique identity and legal personality which is an unambiguously proclaimed human right in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Nepal is one of the countries with poor performance in terms of birth registration and is therefore a target country of Universal Birth Registration campaign. In order to asses the impact of the campaign on communities traditionally excluded from society, research was conducted in four districts of Nepal from February to May 2011. Research took place in the southern region of Nepal called Terai, in its western part, where Plan has one of its Programme Units. Based on the previous experience of the organization and evaluations from previous years, it was expected that although Plan has achieved very high registration rates in its working areas, some groups of population might be still excluded from the process. Three groups were chosen in the region: Tharu people as an example of ethnic-based exclusion, Badi people as an example of caste-based exclusion, and Muslim population as an example of group being excluded because of the religion. Four districts along the Indian border in the Terai region were chosen, where some of the poorest among these groups reside in the most remote areas, some of which are completely inaccessible during the monsoon season. These districts are also among the most instable and insecure in Nepal. Armed groups, some with more or less political agendas, some with criminal intentions only, are still present in the area. The aim of the research was to find effective ways to improve inclusiveness of birth registration of disadvantaged population groups and communities in Nepal. In order to complete this task it was necessary to measure awareness about birth registration and its linkages, its impacts, information channels into communities and levels of inward and outward trust and to asses the delivery side of the service. The research is designed to provide academic analysis as well as practical information and findings supporting next steps in Universal Birth Registration campaign in terms of spreading awareness in excluded communities. The expectation prior the field research was that the

communities excluded from social life are also excluded from the birth registration process, that their awareness is low and they do not practice registration of children. In order to maximize the accuracy of gathered data both qualitative and quantitative methods were chosen.

This study is divided into several chapters starting with a contextual presentation of theories and themes most relevant to the subject (Chapters I. - III.). The following chapters provide the analysis of research results (Chapters IV.-VI.). Finally the conclusion including a discussion is presented.

Chapter one begins with an introduction to Rights-based approach to development as a base of the study. Attention is then given to social exclusion and inclusion in development, registration systems and development, awareness raising and Universal Birth Registration campaign. The research framework, including research questions and conceptual framework, is introduced at the end of the chapter. Second chapter provides analysis of regional context of the study. Starting with characteristics of Nepal it continues with examination of social exclusion, research areas and the host organization. The position of Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities within the Nepalese society is described subsequently in chapter three. The next chapters are dedicated to results of the research itself starting with evaluation of levels of awareness about different aspects of the birth registration procedure. The description of perception of linkages of BR and presentation of registration rates among chosen communities follow. Information channels, trust and access to media are the subject of chapter five, which is followed by the last chapter on the state of the delivery side of the service. In the conclusion, research results are confronted with previous theories, themes and expectations in a discussion.

I. THEORETICAL AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

The first chapter provides an analysis of theories and themes fundamental for the research. In the beginning, the Rights-based approach to development is introduced as a relatively new concept, nevertheless not free of controversy. Subsequently the influence of social inclusion and exclusion on development is discussed. The third section offers insight into a fairly unrecognized and seldom researched topic – the influence of registration systems on progress of nations. Awareness raising is examined as another relevant tool of development in the next sub-chapter. Finally, the Universal Birth Registration campaign and its influence are explored.

1.1 Rights-based approach to development

Initially in this sub-chapter the Rights-based approach is characterized with a short insight into its history in global development agenda. In addition, some of the controversial features are discussed in the last part.

1.1.1 Human rights discourse as a consequence of neo-liberalism

"A rights-based approach to development (RBD) sets the achievement of human rights as an objective of development. It uses thinking about human rights as the scaffolding of development policy. It invokes the international apparatus of human rights accountability in support of development action." (ODI, 1999, p.1).

The first step in modern history towards this particular approach has been Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. During the Cold War, the world was divided and discussion on human rights was used in the propaganda war. The west was promoting Civil and political rights (freedom of expression, association, or fair trial) while the Eastern Block emphasized economic and social rights (Manzo, 2002). Since the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development (UNDRD) this approach has been widely recognized by important institutions such as United Nations agencies, World Bank (WB) or International Development Agencies (IDAs) and included in their policy making and implementing.[1] The first government to endorse such approach was the British one in 2000 in its Department for International Development. After the neo-liberal period and its deteriorating effects on human rights (especially in

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[1] Declaration was approved by General Assembly of UN by a vote of 146 to 1. The only opponent was USA.

terms of elites monopolizing development processes), it is a part of the progress towards people-centered development by promoting well-being, freedom, dignity, equality and agency of all people (Manzo, 2002; OHCHR, 2006). It is crucial to note that UNDRD was also a major sign of support for new economical order as neo-liberalism was criticized for its *economism* – promotion of economic rationality and free-market led growth over the social or cultural agenda. The appeal on Governments was to ''realize their rights and fulfil their duties in such a manner as to promote a new international economic order'' (see UNHCHR, 2002, pp.2–3). International commitments have been made - Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. While economical globalization has negative influence in terms of promoting private interests, it has positive influence on the value of international human rights agreements, their enforcement and global communication regarding these issues.

Figure 1. The reciprocal relationship between rights holders and duty bearers

When it comes to the relationship between human rights and poverty reduction the UN states that "human rights violations are both a cause and a consequence of poverty" (OHCHR, 2006, p.9). and ''persistent poverty and widening inequality are now treated as a denial of human rights and thus emerge as continuing human rights challenges'' (UNDP, 2000, p. 42). In addition concepts of human rights and good governance are considered reci-

Source: UNFPA, The Human Rights-Based Approach (2011)

procally reinforcing. It is now also clear that economic growth should be accompanied by equity and social inclusion, where one of the instruments of equity is redistribution. The relationship between duty bearers (usually governments) and right holders is also reciprocal. Duty bearers are required to respect, protect and guarantee human rights. Right holders on the other hand are required to participate in the process and restrain from being merely passive recipients of their rights. The process is incomplete if people do realize only their rights but not responsibilities (see Figure 1.).

1.1.2 Controversies in the debate on RBD

However, the concept of RBD and its implementation is not free of controversy. Discussions evolve around ethical debates on social justice and meaning of terms such as rights, development or accountability. Manzo identifies three main problematic fields as: differences in perception of the concept itself, state-centrism, and lack of authentic empowerment (Manzo, 2002). The first issue can be illustrated by the division between UNDP and WB when the former declares that human rights are critical for achieving development and not a reward of it while the latter considers attainment of human rights a goal of the development. The second problem and the third problem are interconnected. After a period of rolling back the state, the same institutions that required it are now holding states responsible for the development, realization and promotion of human rights (especially by the UNDRD) – even in the current situation, when violations of human rights are also wide-spread among non-state actors and their neo-liberal policies. Different standards of accountability are applied for non-state actors and new conditions are imposed on states that clearly lack appropriate capacities. RBD can therefore result in another top-down concept of development failing to emancipate the intended beneficiaries – the people.

One of the most critical issues is connected with promotion of economic, social and cultural rights which are closely tied to basic services – "the growing trend among aid agencies and donor governments is to elevate the importance of economic, social and cultural rights." (Duffield, 2001, p.201). Political and civil rights which should be given equal concern are openly or secretly considered of lower priority as "luxury item to be consumed later" (Manzo, 2002, p.446).

1.2 Social exclusion/inclusion and development

Social exclusion and inclusion are not firmly defined as they are a subject of context explanations. Definitions can be derived from perceptions of levels of participation of individuals regarding key activities of society. Indicators of exclusion or inclusion can for example include wealth, land, income, mental and physical health, or access to education, employment and services (see box 1. for definition used in this thesis). To measure such phenomena is thus very complex and varies greatly. Piachaud offers these assets as signs of full participation of individuals in their respective society: financial assets, other assets (land, property, etc.), skills

(abilities, education, training), public infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals) and collective social resources – networks and shared values (Piachaud, 2002).

In what some critics call the 'aid industry', there is an inclination in the direction of rational targeting-oriented quality approach and large scale government interventions. This increases the risk of exclusion of groups of population that are not sufficiently interesting from the perspective of economic development (ICCO, 2010). Brohman summarizes elements of alternatives to such approach to development leading to increased agency and thus inclusion: direct redistributive mechanisms targeting especially poor segments of population, focus on small scale projects, stress on basic needs and human resource development, abandoning growth-oriented definitions of development towards human-oriented, increased local and community participation in implementation or emphasis on self-reliance, and reducing outside dependency as well as increasing sustainability (Brohman, 1996). One of the practical examples is increasing participation on development through the civil society which is based on the recognition of social capital potential (Bebbington, 1999; Fukuyama 2002).

Box 1: Definitions of Social Exclusion and Social Inclusion

Social exclusion is a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education and training opportunities, as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives.

Social inclusion is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have a greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights.

Definitions of Social Exclusion and Inclusion currently used by the EU. Source EU,2010.

Nevertheless there are potential problems to all approaches promoting increased participation, inclusion and empowerment. Local power relations and inequalities may not be recognized and may obstruct developmental activities (Mohan and Stokke, 2000). Local decision-making and implementation is no guarantee of more efficiency or justice (Purcell and Brown, 2005). When it comes to social-structural resources defining one's personal agency, it can be even a handicap

to be strongly tied to people who suffer from the same lack of resources, and obstruct social inclusion. It is important to be able to access the institutional capital as well (Desai and Potter, 2008).

1.3 Registration systems and development

Acknowledged existence is one of the most essential determinants of an individual's well-being. The right to identity registration at birth and the right to preserve identity is an unambiguously proclaimed human right in the Article 7 and 8 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (Unicef, 1989; Box 2.).[2]

Box 2. Article 7 and 8 of United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child
Article 7:
1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.
2. States Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless.

Article 8:
1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.
2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

Extract from United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, source: Unicef, 1989

In countries where functional registration system is missing, poor and vulnerable population groups are usually missing the "capacity to exercise and enjoy their human rights, their entitlements, functionings or capabilities." (Szreter, 2007, p.1). Szreter states that the lack of universal civil identity registration system is a fundamental development obstacle and its establishment should be a priority among international organizations. Delayed birth registration obstructs administration and long-term planning by national and local governments. In addition, it might result in lack of legal protection for concerned children, lack of access to their rights, to social welfare and basic services as was found in the Feldman, Li, and Zhang study in China (Feldman, Li, and Zhang, 2009).

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[2] Nepal has ratified this UN convention in 1990. (UN, 1990)

Szreter argues that this issue has been almost entirely overlooked in the past. One of the reasons is that The Human Rights Committee, which is the international body responsible for enforcement of UN conventions, has not been pressing states on their obligations in this respect because it is "considered unreasonable to demand that poor countries devote their scarce resources to the luxury of an identity registration system while they are trying to achieve economic development." (Szreter, 2007, p. 68) In reality, the truth might be quite contrary. There are three fundamental institutional developments providing market development: the emergence of property rights, emergence of modern state (in terms of protecting property rights), and emergence of appropriate ideology (in terms of justifying moral and ethical beliefs in an economy). An example can be found in the development of Britain since the 1600s. No other country before the 19th century had enjoyed the advantages of magistrates, poor law and accessible registration system working together. Possibly the most important fact to notice is that these institutions emerged in situation of massive illiteracy, far worse than in any country today, and worked well both in rural and urban areas. These institutions had major positive impact on labour and capital mobility, as well as on the health of population, thus significantly aiding development of the most powerful market economy and Britain's world dominance in the past.

While some advantages of the functioning registry system are obvious there are also some potential dangers. The most troubling is the misuse of collected data for unethical political or business purposes. Identity registration should be considered a category of private property and must be maintained in a way that excludes unauthorized state agencies and commercial organization from access. Breaching this access should result in sanctions, last instance on international level being the UN guarding violation of ratified conventions.

The common obstacles (see also Figure 2) of achieving large scale or even universal birth registration are listed in the study based on the experience of Plan International and Unicef who are now the leading institutions in the field (Plan Ltd., 2005). Awareness and motivation are crucial - in many countries parents do not consider birth certificate an important and valuable document and do not understand the possible impacts for individual's well being. Sometimes the value is understood too late, when authorities require the certificate for a certain transaction or service. Another factor is the fear of discrimination and persecution or lack of trust towards authorities and governments sources due to a bad experience or misunderstanding of how the information will be treated. For example, the Birth Certificate might also contain sensitive data such as information hinting at the caste

of the person. Traditional values or societal attitudes might get in the way of registering a child as well. Such clash might cause incompatibility of Birth registration with local realities. Registration might be associated with unbearable costs for the poorest such as transport fees or registration fees, inconvenient opening hours of the offices, shortages of material, or language barriers. One of the main causes on the delivery side of the service is lack of political will and despite their obligations, many governments do not consider birth registration a priority. Such lack of will might be caused by overall passivity, lack of cooperation, lack of responsibility, or even an effort to minimize representation of certain group or ethnics. Out-of-date or ineffective legislative systems and lack of connection between central authorities and citizens are among the major hinderers of birth registration. On the international level, lack of recognition, support and priority are still slowing down the progress and the issue is not adequately dealt with. Implementation and activity in the field is still inadequate in order to reach universal birth registration.

Figure 2. Common obstacles to birth registration
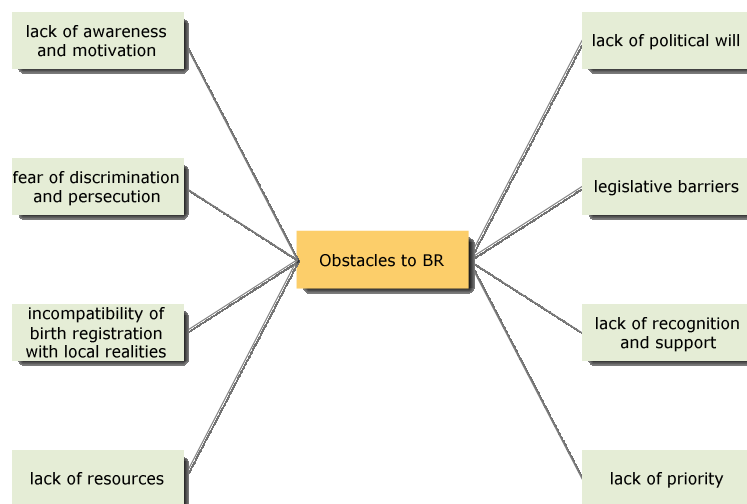
Source: Adapted from Cody (2009)

All obstacles have specific solutions. There are many current innovations and practices being applied to overcome such obstacles (Cody, 2009; see Figure 3.). Latest technology is one of the significant instruments – mobile phones, satellite kits or internet access are useful tools, especially in terms of reaching remote areas. Media such as radio, internet, film and cultural events are helping to convey the message to the people even in remote areas or those otherwise excluded from participation on political, economical or social life. Especially in such cases, it is important to harness local knowledge and systems – traditional and new practices are being combined to achieve

higher BR rates. Involving children and encouraging their participation proves to be one of the most successful steps as children themselves are becoming advocates and spokespeople for the cause of birth registration. Advocacy on all levels is crucial in terms of generating increased political will and thus persuading and supporting duty bearers to change the laws (for example allowing registration to be free of charge). Community members are provided with training in order to increase capacity and infrastructure on local level and similarly to increase understanding of the value of identity documents. Advancing of birth registration systems also focuses on challenging defunct technology, outdated administrative systems and social norms as outdated as those from the colonial times by creating mobile registration projects to reach out to the population, persuading governments to decentralize registration or promoting registration despite the fear of persecution (in countries such as Cambodia, remnants of the past regimes and conflicts can prevent registrations).

Figure 3. Latest innovations and practices in birth registration
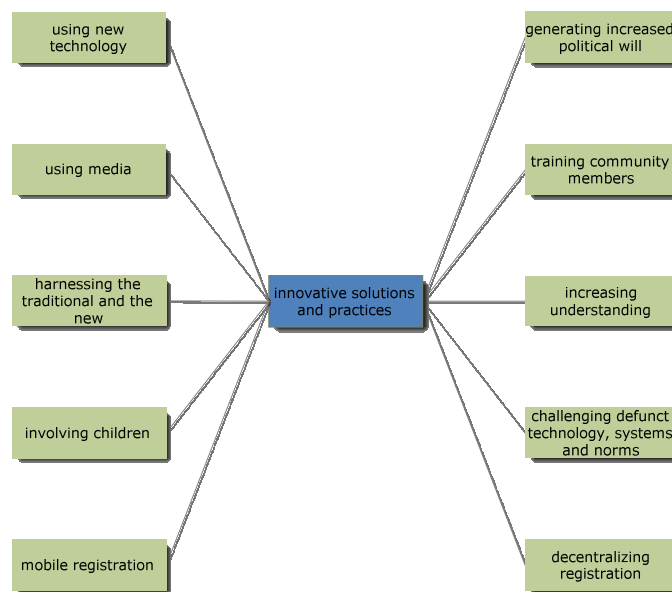
Source: *Adapted from Cody (2009)*

1.4   Awareness raising and development

Awareness and awareness raising are terms that are intuitively and widely understood rather than strictly defined. Awareness raising can be perceived as "a process which opens opportunities for information exchange in order to improve mutual understanding and to develop competencies and skills necessary to enable changes in social attitude and behaviour. To be effective, the process of awareness-raising must meet and maintain the mutual needs and interests of the actors

involved." (Sayers, 2006, p.7). As such, it concerns the whole human society. Awareness raising is an extensively used term in worldwide development agenda as well. As such, all activities applicable to the term should inform people and empower them, or stimulate discussion and innovations in the development field. By awareness raising attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of all stakeholders in the development process can be modified to achieve positive change and progress. One of the most recognized practical examples of awareness raising are the international days by UN such as Universal Children's Day or International Day of Peace.

Campaigning is one of the most effective and efficient ways of communicating information and most of the stakeholders in development understand the value of this tool. It is used widely to spread information and achieve positive change by governments, INGOs but also on the local level and by communities and individuals. Preferential ways of promoting good governance, for example, are political advocacy and campaigning (Manzo, 2002). Campaigning nevertheless does not automatically mean desired effect or behavioural change, it is a process. Oxfam identifies five stages of such change: *knowledge* (pre-contemplation), in which awareness of the desired behaviour is demonstrated, *approval* (contemplation), a phase when support and approval are expressed, *intention* (preparation), during which people are deciding to adopt the behaviour, *practice* (action), when people commit to the behaviour, and *advocacy* (maintenance), when they start encouraging others to adopt the same behaviour and practices (ECCP, 2007).

1.5   Universal Birth Registration campaign

The start of "Unregistered Children Project" of NGO Committee on Unicef[3] in 1996 was the initial step on the path towards Universal Birth Registration campaign. Plan International has started working in the field of birth registration in 1998 and after extending it to Africa and the Americas, Plan has also succeeded to introduce the project globally. Plan has launched this campaign in February 2005

Figure 4. Percentage of children under five who are registered
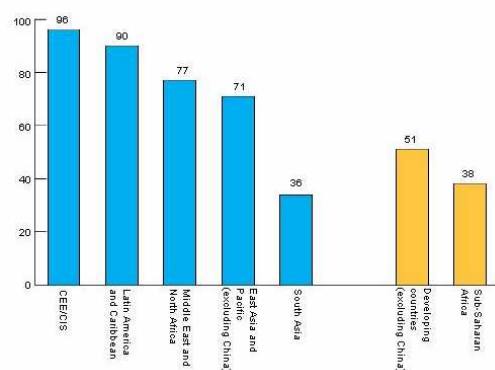
Source: Unicef (2011)

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[3] The NGO Committee on UNICEF was established in 1952. Currently it is a world wide network of over 80 international NGOs working on behalf of children in more than 138 countries.

and it is currently running in 48 countries, where the organization has already assisted in registering over 40 million children.[4] Nevertheless there are still many children who are currently not registered (see Figure 4.). The Universal Birth Registration campaign has focused on the process of recording a child's birth in a civil register to provide the child with legal recognition. Without this recognition, it can prove to be difficult for children to access basic services such as education or health services. Main aims of this project are: to catalyze for birth registration and ensure that more children and adults are registered, to promote BR at grassroots level to increase awareness and therefore demand for certificates, to directly support governments to increase numbers of registrations and certificates issued, to create innovative programmes for registration that are effective and sustainable while reaching reached even the most remote populations, and to explain the importance of registration as a child-rights issue to duty-bearers (Cody, 2009).

1.6   Research framework

After reviewing respective theories which are innermost related to the subject of the study, the research design is presented. Research questions are followed by hypothesis and the introduction of the conceptual model. In the last part the methodology and research limitations are revealed.

1.6.1   Research questions

In the eve of the second decade of the 21st century, the birth registration in Nepal is slowly becoming more of a priority for the authorities. The public awareness, as well as the demand for this service and right, are also rising. Numbers of registered children are increasing. It is essential now to keep the momentum in order to further improve the situation. One of the major challenges of the future might be increased inclusion of birth registration. The Nepalese society itself is still very exclusive due to high centralization of the country and power relations, poor infrastructure, prevailing caste system and extensive patrimonial hierarchy. It is important to improve the situation of all the population groups who are on any level increasingly excluded from political, social or economical life, such as Dalits, the so-called lowest caste. A good opportunity to start is by finding ways of increasing birth registration amongst these disadvantaged groups in order to increase their access to other rights and services,

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[4] The campaign was introduced in Nepal in 2005.

such as health care or education. Since the Nepalese society is extremely diverse, there is an urgent need to develop specific approaches towards communities and traditionally socially excluded groups. Taking into account all those facts, the central research question is formulated as advisory and the research investigates the means of improving inclusiveness of birth registration process.

Central Research question:

What are the effective ways to improve inclusiveness of birth registration of disadvantaged population groups and communities in Nepal?

Research questions:
1 – How accessible is the birth registration for excluded groups and communities?

It is crucial for the research to determine the current state of awareness about birth registration in these groups as well as the current state of understanding of the birth registration process. Similarly, it is vital to discover whether people perceive birth registration as beneficial and whether they understand the link between this service and other services and rights. This part of research also examines if families register their children and, if not, what are the obstacles.

2 – What are the patterns of communication regarding the rights and services in excluded communities?

This part of research is designed to explore what is the current state of basic communication between excluded families and communities and Nepalese authorities as well as international NGOs, local NGOs, doctors and teachers. To find out why information does or does not get to their recipients it is necessary to discover what are the information channels into communities and into families, as well as establishing who the trusted and the most informed people are. One of the sources of information is the media therefore the research also focuses on the types of media that households have access to and how could these be used for further awareness raising.

3 – What are the current issues faced by the Nepalese authorities in regards to the birth registration process?

The delivery side of the birth registration service is facing difficulties. The research will provide information on the current state of the birth registration service "in the field" and on the main obstacles hindering improvement of the birth registration service. It will map current government initiatives and efforts to register the birth of those who are the most deprived and determine how and where is the data of birth registration used.

1.6.2   Hypothesis

Legally, there are no obstructions for the registration of any Nepalese citizen regardless of their caste, ethnicity or other factors that usually cause social exclusion. These obstructions were removed in the latest amendments of the law. Nevertheless, the rates of registration in Nepal are still very low. After extensive study of literature, possible causes of exclusion from the registration process on the side of duty-bearer authorities were identified. The hypothesis is that exclusion can be caused by obstructions and, despite the legal commitment, authorities might obstruct the birth registration due to power relations, corruption, inactivity, or other reasons. Some population groups are traditionally excluded, discriminated and ostracized, and this might also apply for the birth registration process. Lack of capacities available to the authorities in terms of staff, equipment, skills (e.g. language) or time present a serious obstacle. Low awareness is to be expected as well – employees of VDCs, municipalities and DDCs might not be fully aware of their duties and responsibilities regarding the birth registration process. This is connected to fault decision making resulting in birth registration being attributed with only low or no priority. In some cases, the authorities might be inactive, or their activities might not be reaching the disadvantaged groups and remote areas.

The exclusion from birth registration process might be caused by individuals, families, or communities themselves. The demand side of the process can represent similar risk for successful improvement of the service. Individuals, family and community members or informal authorities might press on individuals not to register their children. In geographically complex countries, remote areas and poor infrastructure might be one of the most significant obstacles preventing the birth registration due to spatial inaccessibility. Information inaccessibility and low awareness about the concept of birth registration itself, about the linkages of the birth certificate and other rights and services, lack of practical information (e.g.

where are the relevant registrars located), or misinterpretation of the procedure may still be widespread among the considered groups. Illiteracy could prevent people from decoding the message even if it is delivered. Lack of funds to register (fees for the late registration, transport) might prevent many individuals and families from registering their children if their budget cannot cope with such expenses. Time factor is important too – people who are fully occupied by their daily struggle to support their families might not have enough time to register their children. Even if family has sufficient finances and time, the decision making regarding the birth registration is based on information and understanding of advantages and disadvantages of the service and possession of the birth certificate document. The balance diverged towards disadvantages might cause parental inactivity and the benefits of registration may not outweigh the costs.

There is a noticeable effort to develop and improve the system of birth registrations and to increase public awareness in Nepal (e.g. by declaring 14th May the Vital Events Registration Day). The Ministry of Local Development has also committed to achieving 100% registration. It is not clear whether the government is doing its maximum on central, district and local level in terms of increasing the inclusiveness of the process, thus leaving some groups of traditionally excluded groups of population behind. Some evidence exists about improvement of the linkage to other services and rights: verifying citizenship, entitling transformation, pensions. The government has also started to seek Birth Certificate as a proof of age and identity for those children (especially from Dalit and disabled children) who are eligible for Child grant (see Box 3.), which is a part of the government's social security allowance program. Some DDCs and VDCs actively cooperate with partners such as Plan Nepal and are successfully reaching even 90%+ registration in certain VDCs.

After the computerization of the registry system advances, the Ministry of Local Development, District Development Committees and Village Development Committees should have easier access to data that could be shared with other government departments for use in program planning, monitoring and implementation. The availability of accurate data will help in monitoring the achievement of MDG goals (which are focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable population groups) and other international, national and district, as well as local level goals.

Significant effort has been made in raising public awareness on all levels by cooperating partners (Plan, Unicef, Government bodies etc.). Some of the activities have included: TV drama, radio broadcast, newspapers and magazines advertisement and articles, wall painting, local festivals and fairs, hoarding boards, children's clubs

and street drama, IEC materials (Information, Education and Communication - vital event brochure, advertisement messages and booklets), mobile registration campaign (organizing registration camps, sometimes alongside immunization campaign), or awards for VDC secretaries who reach 90%+ of registration.

The reasons why certain population groups might still not be aware of or excluded from the birth registration are mentioned above. There is no doubt that one of the ways of reaching them is by increasing capacities of all participating government bodies on all levels. Another way is increasing inclusiveness of the whole population by constantly removing remnants of the caste system and all other forms of discrimination and raising awareness about rights and services.

Box 3. Child grant policy in Nepal

Child grant is a government policy introduced from mid-October 2009 in order to bring about improvement in the condition of child-care in poor and highly backward families, "Child Protection Grant" of 200 NRs per month per child under the age of 5 for up to 2 children of the each poor Dalit family and all families in Karnali Zone will is provided. Programme objectives were to inform and raise awareness through public out-reach campaign on the child grant and its benefits on child health and nutrition, to launch birth registration campaign which would facilitate in identifying eligible recipients and support registry system, to support base line survey on nutrition, to support monitoring, evaluation and ensure effective programme implementation and to provide training and develop institutional capacity of child grant stakeholders including the Ministry, District Development Committees and VDCs. Child grants programe was implemented by government authorities in cooperation with Unicef. Together they claim that grant have been distributed to a total of 72,842 (99.27%) out of the total targeted 73,377 children for grant distribution. The important lesson in terms of birth registration is that rates increased dramatically and DDC records shows that recorded birth registration in five districts of Karnali zone was only 20,882 previous to the program but now reaches 85,624 children. It is nevertheless not clear if government will be able to advance this program to the whole country.

Source: Unicef, Introduction of Child Grant in Karnali (2010)

1.6.3 Research conceptual model

The conceptual model is a translation of introduced research questions into a complex framework. To understand how the process of birth registration in Nepal can be improved and so have its inclusiveness increased it is important to map the environment from different angles. Visualization of the framework has vertical and horizontal dimensions. Vertical division is used to separate local, national and international commitments. Horizontal division describes sequence of steps leading to increased inclusion of birth registration process.

First of all, it is necessary to review the legal commitment of the government bodies attributed by ratified conventions and acts. On a national level it is the Birth,

Death and Personal Incidents Act that gives responsibility to the Ministry of Local Development and Ministry of Home Affairs to manage birth registration, to link birth registration to other services and rights granted by Nepalese government and to gather, process and provide data from registration to authorities and public. These commitments are supported and modified by international organizations led by Unicef and Plan. Nepal, as a signatary of United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, is obliged to provide its citizens fundamental rights included in this document. Important step in the decentralization process – the Self-governance Act – attributes the responsibility to register births and compile data on local level to Village Development Committees (VDCs) and municipalities. VDCs and municipalities are obliged to submit the gathered data monthly to District Development Committees (DDCs). DDCs have the task of compiling data on district level to use this data for development planning and to submit them monthly to Ministry of Local Development. This is the division of responsibilities on the supply side of the birth registration service. Secondly, it is important to examine the demand side of this public service, which is a complicated multi-stakeholder process. The aim of this process should be increased inclusion, until the registration reaches 100% of the population and the capacity of authorities is sustainable. Demand side is represented by interconnected children, families and communities who are engaged in interactive process of awareness raising, capacity building and advocacy with the supply side of the birth registration process. In case this interaction is successful, the birth registration process inclusiveness increases.
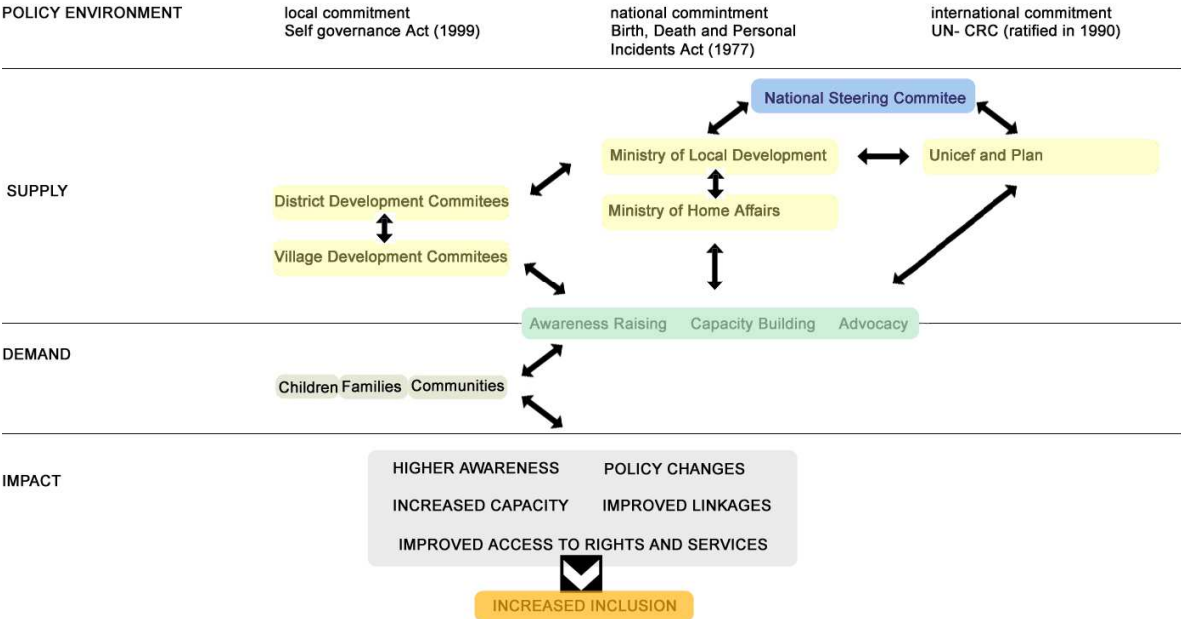
1.6.4 Research methodology

Preparation for the research started in January 2011 and comprised mainly of secondary data collection and dialogue with the host organization Plan Nepal. The field research had started in mid February and lasted until mid May 2011. The initial phase was focusing on key-informants interviews, observation and further specification of the research design. In the next phase both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the field in respective research districts where researched communities reside. The methods used included stakeholders-mapping, questionnaire survey, focus group discussions and case studies.

Key-informants interviews

Conducting key-informants interviews involved two phases: first in Kathmandu and second in the field. The purpose of interviews in Kathmandu was to acquire further information from high-profile stakeholders of the birth registration process such as Ministry of Local Development, Member of Parliament, Unicef and Plan country offices as well as from several influential organizations and experts such as those from the Tribhuvan University Central Department of Anthropology and Sociology or Forum for Women, Law and Development. These interviews provided extremely valuable information in the field and country where information is scarce. All of the Kathmandu interviews were held in English, recorded and reports were compiled out of their results. Since interviews held in the capital were focusing more on general information about BR, social exclusion and awareness about rights and services in Nepal, the second round of semi-structured interviews was conducted in the field, partly organized and partly opportunistic, for the purpose of further specification of information, especially on a local level. Significant effort was dedicated to identification of proper locations for the field research in chosen communities. For most of these interviews translators were needed regarding Nepalese, Tharu or Awadhi language. Meetings included state authorities (VDC secretaries and staff, DDC officials, National Human Rights Commission, etc.), local authorities such as Tharu Badghars, local journalists, local leaders and workers of local NGOs, local offices of INGOs such as UNDP, Unicef or ActionAid. Several members of research communities without any particular function or authority were interviewed as well.

Interviews provided crucial information specifying the functioning of the BR system in Nepal, roles of different stakeholders, social inclusion/exclusion, awareness of different communities, current governmental and non-governmental programmes

in the field of registration and social equality. Special effort was devoted to overall balance of sources of information, ideas and opinion.

Observation

Observations took place during most of the research and supplied additional dimension to provided information. During visits in government offices on all levels status of registration system and other equipment was observed and taken into account. Information provided by participants in the course of the survey were randomly checked and validated, for example the distance to nearest VDC/municipality office, access to media or claimed possession of Birth Certificate. In general, observation activities during the course of the research were aiming to increase insight into reality of birth registration process and acquiring independent notion.

Survey

A questionnaire survey took place in 14 VDCs and 2 municipalities in specifically targeted locations aiming to acquire accurate up-to-date quantitative data from all three chosen communities. It is obvious that households and families are important stakeholders in the birth registration process. Families do not only need to be aware of the BR process, they need to be motivated and to actually perform all necessary steps to register their children. Besides awareness and motivational factors the survey also focused on information about respective authorities in households, contact with some other entities traditionally providing information about human rights and services, access to media, channels of information into community and into households or possible causes of exclusion from the BR process.

The questionnaire was at first translated into Nepalese, Tharu and Awadhi languages, tested in Nepalgunj and updated. Overall, 138 questionnaires were filled – 45 in Badi community, 52 in Tharu community and 41 in Muslim community. Eight different trained translators collected the data by visiting all households in their residence plus whole survey was supervised by the author present on the spot.

To analyze the data provided by the survey SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used. To provide the majority of the results frequency tables were used. Statistical significance tests were compiled by comparing means. Major attention was given to potential influence of specific variables such as income on birth registration practice.

Focus Group Discussions

The vital method to supplement the quantitative survey was qualitative focus groups discussion (FGD). Overall, nine FGDs were held, three for each specific research group in Banke, Bardia, Dang and Kailali districts. To all of them the author was present as a supervisor. Participants were always chosen randomly out of their category (e.g. Tharu female, 15-25 years of age). All FGDs were facilitated by one trained translator and observed by another who also made reports. All sessions were recorded using dictaphone. Special effort was made to organize discussions in a friendly and cooperative manner, on neutral ground. All participants were given enough space to share their ideas and opinions and were actively encouraged to do so. All groups were properly introduced to the topic, anonymity agreement and were given the same 6 questions (plus related questions if convenient).

1) What do you know about the birth registration in your community?

2) Are there any benefits of it?

3) Where is this community getting information from? (if you would like to inform a lot of people in this community how would you do it?)

4) Who is the trusted person in this community and why? Does this person provide information to the members of this community?

5) What media do you have access to and what programmes do you prefer?

6) Do you feel excluded in Nepal? What are the reasons for exclusion of your community?

1.6.5 Sampling

For the purposes of the research non-random/purposive sampling was selected. Chosen communities are officially recognized and represented in accessible statistics, but these are nevertheless very inaccurate, outdated and in practice unusable. Quota and snow-ball sampling were found the most appropriate. Research can not be generalized to whole Nepal since the situation in the country is too diverse and research communities are very specific. Research communities were chosen to represent people whose exclusion is based on ethnicity, religion and caste. In this sense research can be used for other communities with higher chances of generalization and avoiding biases in case it proves to be plausible for such purpose. Extensive effort was dedicated to locating proper places for the survey and FGDs. During the research key-informants interviews provided additional and more accurate data, which were combined with those of INGOs and government authorities. Especially local NGOs which are working with research communities

provided valuable specification of their residences. The purpose was to represent people on three levels of all communities: most excluded, in transition and least excluded in order to investigate possible causes of exclusion or inclusion as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Recommended research locations by local Badi organization Community Support group

Most excluded and vulnerable	Transition	Least excluded and vulnerable
Rajapur	Satti	Dhikpur
Thalard	Mura	Niubukheda
Thalura	Chisapani	Bank
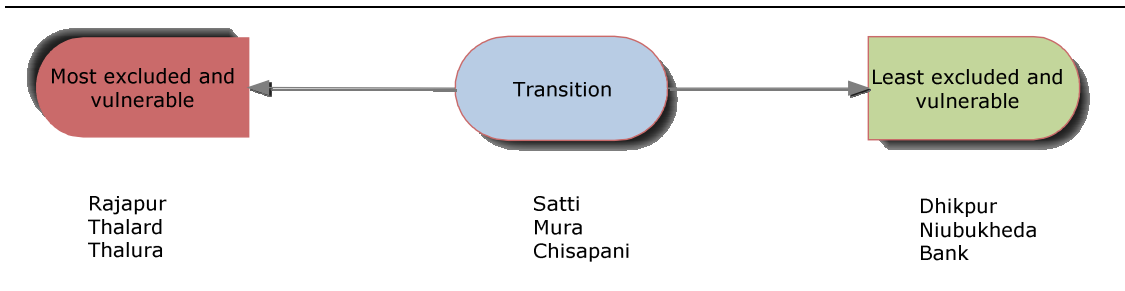
1.6.6 Research limitations and ethical considerations

Difficulties are faced by every researcher and this research was not an exception. Fortunately main problem expectations proved to be false and encountered ones can be considered only minor with minimum impact on the research results.

The number of key-informants interviews in Kathmandu had to be reduced simply because the infrastructure of the capital is too chaotic: streets have no names and numbers, roads are constantly jammed with traffic, phones and electricity do not work most of the time. Organizing meetings in such condition took extensive efforts. The choice of three research communities speaking three different languages proved to be very challenging. Presence of Tribhuvan University in research base town Nepalgunj did not prove to be a guarantee of quality translators. Choice, translation and training of translators took much more energy and was more time consuming than expected. Physical conditions and infrastructure of Terai region presented tremendous challenge. Heat, disease, roads in poor condition, absence of bridges and constant threat of strikes blocking any transport had to be taken into consideration before every field visit. Fortunately the major apprehension of being denied access to female members of households proved to wrong and data were collected in gender-balanced manner.

Although researched topic is not particularly sensitive some aspects such as prostitution widespread in Badi community could be considered more problematic. All participants of the research were informed about their rights and about anonymity of their participation. Informed consent was obtained from all

participants. One of the limitations is connected to Nepalese culture – it is perceived as impolite to say no, people rather say yes. While this is obvious advantage in arranging meetings, it can be a significant drawback in terms of provided information. Although people are more open now than in the past, many questions had to be repeated and verified. Although measures were taken to double-check problematic parts of the survey or during FGDs, it is possible that this cultural phenomenon had small influence on general results.

Facilities of the host organization were used only for specific logistic purposes and thus Plan Nepal had no influence on actual choice of research locations and participants and thus on provided data.

1.7   Conclusion

The Rights-based approach to development is a step towards more inclusive and multi-dimensional paradigm for the development of societies all around the world. It is a reaction to the economism of neo-liberal period. It is now widely accepted on both international and national level. However, it is crucial to focus on authentic empowerment and inclusion of people through increasing their social capital, agency and access to institutional capital, as was stressed by Brohman (1996) and Manzo (2002). One of the vital steps towards improved access to granted rights (and services as well) are functioning registration systems as argued by Szreter (2007) and Feldman, Li and Zhang (2009). Birth registration is acknowledged as the first right of a child but it is problematic due to a number of reasons on both delivery and demand sides of the service. Among the most common obstacles according to two leading agencies in the field (Plan and Unicef) are lack of priority and political will, lack of awareness and lack of motivation. Awareness raising and campaigning are important tools of development. It must reflect mutual needs of involved actors as stated by Sayers (2007). To improve the birth registration situation, Universal Birth Registration campaign has been launched in 2005. This campaign is running in Nepal as well as it is a country with very low birth registration rates.

The main research question was designed to find effective ways of improving inclusiveness of birth registration of disadvantaged population groups and communities in Nepal. First of all the study determines out how accessible is birth registration is to the excluded communities. Examination of the patterns of communication about rights in these communities is the second step. Assessment of the functioning of the delivery side of the system (authorities) is the final one. Hypothetically there is low awareness about birth registration and the practice is not

established. The functioning of the delivery side of the system is expected to be dealing with multiple serious issues. At the end of this chapter the research conceptual model, research methodology, sampling and limitations and ethical considerations were introduced, all reflecting previously stated facts.

II. REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

The second chapter examines the regional context of the research. Initially, the physical and socio-economic characteristics of Nepal are presented. Afterwards, the state of human rights is discussed and subsequently the social exclusion and the caste system in Nepal are analyzed. Administrative division and decentralization process description is followed by an overview of the Civil Registration in Nepal. Next the study shifts focus on the research areas: Banke, Bardyia, Dang and Kailali districts. In the end of this chapter the host organization Plan is introduced.

2.1 National Context: Nepal

Nepal is a country often described as one of the most diverse in the world. This characteristic applies especially to its geography and demography, but also to the political and economical situation of its society. In National Context section these characteristics are analyzed to provide structured overview for better understanding of complex Nepalese reality.

2.1.1 Geographic and demographic diversity

Located in the lap of the Himalayas, Nepal or officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, is a landlocked country situated in South Asia (Map 1.). Nepal has only two neighbouring countries: to the north, the People's Republic of China, and to the south, east, and west, India. It is therefore called a *"yam between two rocks"*. The length

Map 1. Geografic location of Nepal
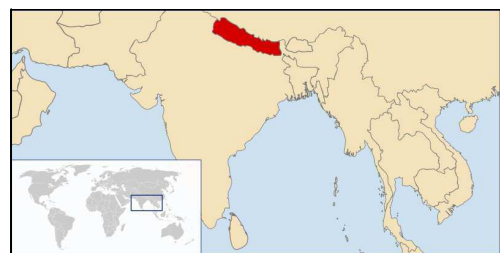
Source: CIA, TheWorld Factbook (2011)

of borders with China is 1,236 km and 1,690 km with India. With an area of 147,181 square kilometres (Government of Nepal, N.D.) it is comparable to the size of Greece. The country measures about 885 kilometres in length from East to West and 193 kilometres in width from North to South. Eight of the world's highest peaks, including Mount Everest or Annapurna, are situated in Nepal. Although the first thought about Nepal is usually given to the Himalayas, the topography of this country is extremely varied. Three parallel regions are distinct in their characteristics: Terai, the flat river

plains of the Ganges in the south, central Hill region and the Mountains in rugged Himalayas in the north (see Map 2).

Map 2. Topography of Nepal
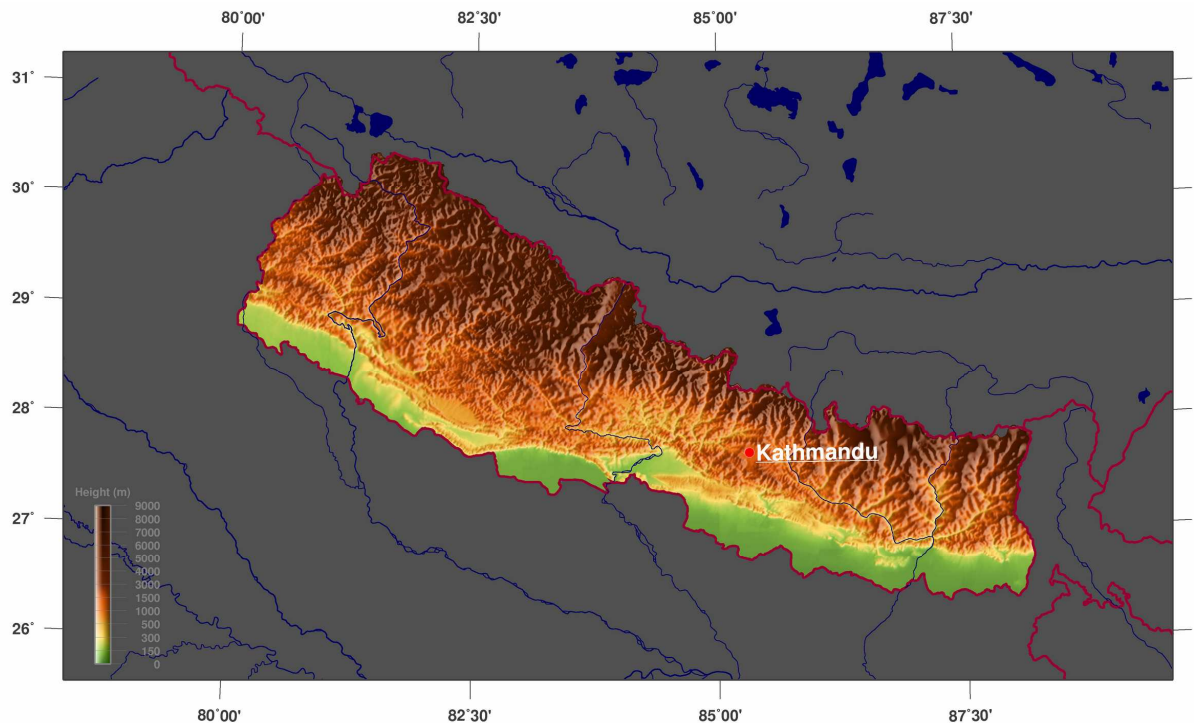
Source: Ginkgo Maps Project (2011)

The Terai, originally meaning wetlands, refers the lowest outer foothills of the Himalaya that used to be marshy grasslands, savannas, and forests. The Terai plains are largely deforested, drained and cultivated at present. The climate is more continental, with monsoon periods. Terai is the most densely populated region in Nepal with more than 50% of Nepalese living there (see Map 3). The popularity of this region is caused by highly fertile soils. Nevertheless the conditions for living could be rather challenging since temperatures can reach 45°C and an average of precipitation 560mm per month. Urban areas are usually situated on the borderline with India and are thriving with trade. Terai remains the most insecure area of Nepal where bombings, killings, abductions, and blackmail are mostly criminally and rarely politically motivated.

The Hills, parallel to both Mountains and Terai regions, is an area from approximately 800 to 4000 meters in altitude. The climate ranges from subtropical to alpine. Estimated 45% of all population resides in the Hills. The most significant location is the Kathmandu Valley where the national capital is situated (estimated population over 3,5 million). There are a few other urban centers, but otherwise this

region is characterized with remote rural settlements. Building infrastructure gets more complicated and costly due to terrain and some locations remain practically unreachable during certain parts of the year.

The Mountains, region on Tibetan Border in Himalayas, contain seven out of fourteen of the world's highest peaks, including Mount Everest. The Himalaya blocks cold winds from Central Asia and forms the northern limit of the monsoon wind patterns. The Mountain region is populated by approximately 5% of the Nepalese population. Deforestation is a major problem, resulting in erosion and degradation of ecosystems. The access to this region is very problematic and its economical output is only negligible. One of the major income sources for local population is tourism, which is nevertheless causing increased degradation of regional biotopes.

Map 3. Population distribution in Nepal

. 1 Dot <=1000 Population
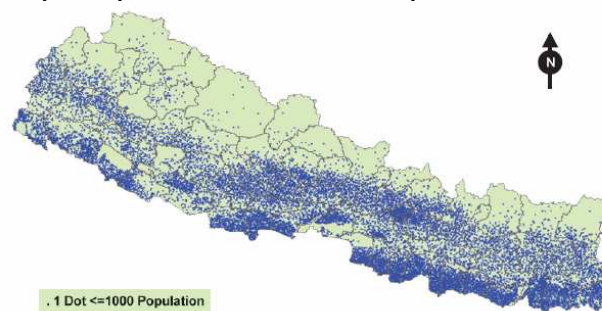
Source: CBS (2001)

Nepal is also an enormous reservoir of water – many rivers that practically billions of people throughout Asia are dependent on have their sources in Nepal. Unfortunately the country is among those highly vulnerable to natural disasters and also climate change. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF), flash floods, monsoon floods and cloudbursts, receding glaciers, fires, earthquakes, landslides and epidemics are threatening not only lives of humans and their livelihoods but also wildlife diversity, which is a unique feature of Nepal. The biggest threat to the wildlife, however, is human activity – 783,000 hectares were deforested between 1990 and 2000. 59 animal and 6 plant species are imminently threatened and endangered.

The population estimate in 2010 was 29,852,700 people; 12,712,000 were under 18 of age. Population annual growth rate between 2000-2009 was 2,3%. Life expectancy at birth rose from 54 years in 1990 to 67,5 in 2009. Under-5 mortality rank is 59. Total adult literacy rate is 58%, current primary school net enrolment/attendance is 84%. One of the notorious problems of Nepal remains malnutrition – up to 45% of under-fives are suffering from moderate or severe underweight by the definition of WHO. While usage of improved drinking-water

sources rose to current 88%, only 31% of the population are using improved sanitation facilities. HIV/AIDS prevalence among people between 15-49 remains low - 0,4% – estimated 51-80 thousand people are infected (UNDP, 2010).

Nepal is flourishing with religion and culture. Currently 103 castes or ethnicities are officially acknowledged by the government (CBS, 2001; see Table 2. for basic overview). Two major groups can be classified: the Tibeto-Burman, populating mostly the mid-hills and mountains, and the Indo-Aryan, living in the Terai plains and the mid-hills. Although there are approximately 92 languages identified in Nepal, Nepalese language is spoken by the majority of its citizens and is also widely understood by other ethnicities. Nepal was the only constitutionally declared Hindu monarchy until 2006 when Nepali Parliament proclaimed the country a secular state. One of the world's oldest living religions – Hinduism, is still practiced by vast majority of its citizens and it is the central point of life in Nepal. In central southern village of Lumbini lord Buddha was born and at present around 11% of people claim to be Buddhists. Nevertheless it may be intricate to distinguish Hindus and Buddhists as they perform the same rituals and celebrate the same festivals. The exception is Tibetan minority escaping prosecution in China which is practicing Tibetan forms of Buddhism.

Table 2. Ethnicity, Religion and Language in Nepal

Ethnic groups/Castes	Chhetri 15,8%, Brahmin 12,74%, Magar 7,14%, Tharu 6,75%, Tamang 5,64%, Newar 5,48%, Muslim 4,27%, Kami 3,94%, Yadav 3,94%, Rai 2,79, other 30.49%, unspecified 1,02%
Religions	Hindu 80.6%, Buddhist 10.7%, Muslim 4.27%, Kirant 3.6%, other 0.9%
Languages	Nepali 47.8%, Maithali 12.1%, Bhojpuri 7.4%, Tharu (Dagaura/Rana) 5.8%, Tamang 5.1%, Newar 3.6%, Magar 3.3%, Awadhi 2.4%, other 10%, unspecified 2.5%

Source: CBS*,*National Population Census, 2001

2.1.2 Political context

The ancient history of Nepal is a narrative of rise and fall of small kingdoms with many dynasties trying to enforce their rule upon them and unify the territory. In late 15th century the realm was divided into three kingdoms: *Kathmandu*, *Patan*, and *Bhaktapur*. The rivalry between the kingdoms was ended in the mid-18th century by Gorkha king Prithvi Narayan Shah, who set out to unify the kingdoms with brute force. In coming years the dynasty of Shahs expanded their dominion into Tibet and northern India. Early in the 19th century Nepal clashes for the first time with the

interests of British East India Company. War was waged between 1814 and 1815. In the beginning, the British troops were badly defeated by Ghorka soldiers. The victory is a source of great of pride in Nepal until today. Nepal succeeded in defending itself and remained relatively autonomous. In 1846 the Kot massacre meant the end of the Shahs and established the Rana dynasty. Ranas were pro-British and assisted in the empire's military involvement in India and later in both world wars. Full independence of the country was subsequently recognized by the British in 1923. In 1950s, after China's invasion to Tibet, India had started increasing its influence in Nepal. Until the 1950s the country remained extremely isolated in international terms by the decision of Ranas (Dastider, 2007; Burbank, 1992; Guneratne, 2002).

The word that best describes politics in Nepal in the past decades is instability. A brief experiment with democracy between 1958 and 1960 was ended by king Mahendra. The king introduced *panchyat* – partyless system of governance. This autocratic rule was challenged in 1989 by the People's Movement, which forced king Birendra to accept constitutional reforms. Multiparty parliament held its first session in 1991. Nevertheless, in 1996 the unsatisfied Maoist Party started an armed insurgency against the government in order to overthrow it. One of the events that significantly aided their efforts was the massacre in the royal palace which took place in 2001. King, queen, crown prince and several other members of the ruling family were killed.[5] In 2005, king Gyanendra assumed all executive powers in order to crush the Maoist rebellion. Soon it became clear that he would not succeed and ceasefire was negotiated. Democracy movement in Nepal took its momentum and the king was forced to re-establish House of Representatives in April 2006, which first declared Nepal a secular state and later also federal republic. In 2008 the times of Hindu monarchy have definitively ended. The proclaimed goals of highest priority were to establish interim government, to re-write the constitution and hold democratic elections. However, political tensions and power-sharing battles have continued ever since and up to date none of these promises were fully upheld. This has caused many problems for the new Asian democracy and has not only restrained trust of citizens into their politicians, but has also kept away investors, who consider the business and political environment in Nepal to be very unstable. According to Transparency International, Nepal is one of the thirty most corrupted countries in the world (TI, 2010).[6]

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[5] Officially the massacre is attributed to crown prince Dipendra, but most of the Nepalese public tends to think that this was Coup d'état attempt staged by Gyanendra, Dipendra's brother.
[6] Ranked 146th out of 178 considered countries with score 2,2 in scale from 0 (highly corrupted) to 10 (very clean).

2.1.3 Economic and poverty status

Figure 5. HDI: Health, Education and Income
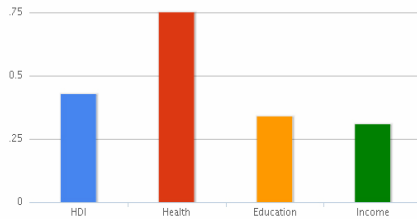
Source: UNDP (2010)

According to currently most widely accepted measure of a nation's progress – Human Development Index (HDI) – Nepal is one of the least developed countries in Asia and ranks 138th out of 169 world's considered countries. The overall HDI score is 0,428 while some regions remain below 0,400 (UNDP, 2010, p.145; see also Figure 5.). It is crucial to add that Nepal is also one of the most progressive countries and UNDP is considering it to be the "top mover". Since 1970 the HDI of Nepal has been growing with one of the highest speed in the world and the progress in this respect is comparable to the country's two fast developing neighbours China and India (UNDP, 2010).

Gross National Income (GNI) per capita was 1,201 dollars in 2010. The GDP was estimated to be 12,5 billion dollars in 2009 by the World Bank and rose by 2,8%. Debt of the state was 29,4% of GDP. Inflation (in consumer prices) was relatively high in the same year at 13,2% (see Figure 6.). While agriculture comprises around one third of the whole economy (33,8% of GDP in 2009) it employs around 80% of population; industry provides only 15,9% of economical output. The largest part is attributed to the service sector, which comprises slightly more than a half (50,2% of GDP, WB 2011). Nepal is largely dependent on foreign aid which constituted approximately 4,7% of GDP in 2009 according to World Bank (WB,2010). Remittances sent home by migrants are becoming more and more important for Nepalese economy as they rose from about

Figure 6. Inflation in percent (2003-2009)
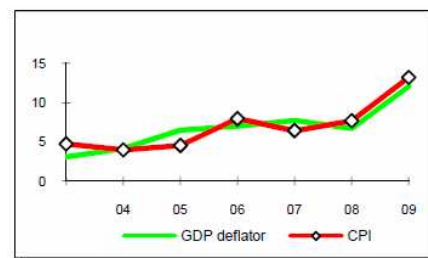
Source: WB (2011)

13.8% of GDP in 2007 to 22% of GDP in 2009. Dependency on remittances nevertheless increases country's vulnerability to international events such as the financial crisis in 2008 or the Arab Awakening in 2011.

Although there has been a significant progress in some areas of development, some remain largely unsatisfactory. The caste system officially abolished in 1962 is still prevalent in Nepalese society and the so-called *Dalits* or Untouchables are still being discriminated against or exploited. The inequality between men and women is ever-present in the society and Nepal has GINI coefficient 47,3 (UNDP, 2010, p.154).

Unemployment rate could be reaching a devastating 50% and estimated 400,000 jobseekers enter the labour market every year (Kathmandu Post, 2011b). Poverty in Nepal is widespread – Unicef estimates that 55% of Nepalese live below the poverty line of 1,25 USD a day. Although with growing population the food demand is rising, food insecurity is still a major problem and around 40% of people are undernourished. Unfavorable weather conditions lead to poor agriculture performance and there are low investments in farming as well. The real estate boom encouraged people to use existing lands for housing. Climate change, slow improvement in technological adaptation and innovation in farm practices, low mechanization rates, lack of ability to produce on a mass scale, limited knowledge of the quality aspects of production and limited knowledge about distribution and marketing or floods and landslides are among the key reasons for the low agricultural productivity.

2.1.4 Human rights in Nepal

The recent years have seen some dramatic changes in Nepal. The end of war and the switch from monarchy to republic are undoubtedly good signs of progress. Despite a few minor successes in the field of human rights and development, tremendous challenges remain. The main challenge crucially influencing the future of the country and Human Rights in Nepal is the new constitution formulation. The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal (NHRC) was established in 2000 but the situation in the field of human rights kept deteriorating. In 2005, international pressure resulted in signature of Memorandum of Understanding with Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) to establish a large field office in Nepal (UNMIN), which resulted in increased monitoring and reporting on human rights. Significant change came in 2007 along with the Interim Constitution - NHRC was made an independent and autonomous constitutional body. NHCR is stressing the importance of human rights friendly constitution, the judicial independence, rule of law and ideals pertaining to equality and justice. Influence of NHCR on the new constitution is possibly crucial in terms of moving onto the right track of RBD. Needles to say that functional cooperation of NHCR, international community and agencies, NGOs, Nepalese civil society and independent media could bring immense results.

Although many proclamations and recommendations exist, situation in the field is far from satisfying. One of the biggest concerns is the prolonged impunity of those who committed crimes against humanity during the war or during their duty in

the army or police. Although the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) in cooperation with UNMIN was gathering data on combatants, not a single person has been brought to a civil trial yet. In addition, some notorious as well as unknown armed groups continue to kill, abduct, torture and blackmail usually claiming these criminal acts to be a political campaign. Some 1000 people are still missing and there are hardly any satisfying signs of progress in the investigation. Provision of independent media information is highly risky. Journalists are threatened, tortured or even killed. Police often does little to investigate these cases as well as it hesitantly investigates other violations of rights committed especially against disadvantaged population groups.

2.1.5   Administrative division and decentralization process

Local authority is operating in a two-tier system in Nepal. The lower level is represented by municipalities and Village Development Committees (VDCs). The second tier are District Development Committees (DDCs). There are altogether 58 municipalities, 3915 VDCs and 75 DDCs (see also Map4.). Citizens vote their representatives in municipalities and VDCs in direct popular elections, while DDC committees are created in the course of indirect voting. DDC electorates consist of representatives of VDCs and municipalities - DDCs are aggregate institutions of Village and Municipal Governments on district levels. (ADDCN, N.D.) DDCs central function is the coordination of development activities of entire district as district governments.

Kathmandu is the nation's capital and the country's administrative and business center. Although the country was highly centralized for centuries the trend of decentralization is represented in current policies. The process is significantly slowed down by lack of funds, unstable political environment and poor infrastructure.

Map 4. Administrative division of Nepal

Source: University of Cambridge, Yale University: Digital Himalaya (2011)

2.1.6 Civil Registration in Nepal

In Nepal, Civil Registration including Birth Registration program was introduced in 1977 in accordance with the first ever "Birth, Death and Personal Incidents Act 1976".[7] In the beginning, the program was piloted in 10 districts of Nepal, in mid-April 1990 eventually expanded to all 75 districts. Officially and legally there is no discrimination against any person living in diverse situation in the country regardless of geography, ethnicity, culture and language and everyone has to follow the same legal provisions in civil registration. There are five important life events that are now registered in Nepal: birth, death, marriage, migration

Figure 7. Civil Registration System
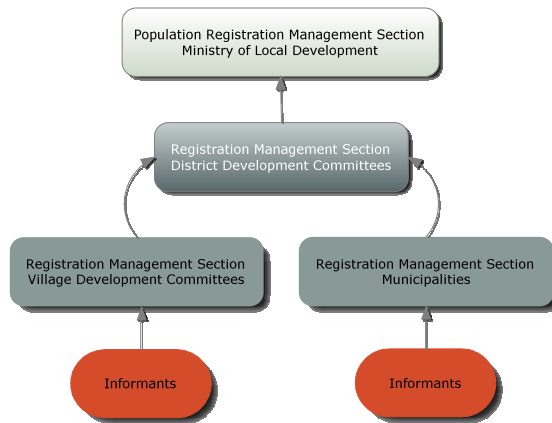
Source: : Ministry of Local Development, Nepal

and divorce (MLD, 2007). The Vital Events Registration System (VERS) maintenance is divided between the Ministry of Local Development, DDCs, municipalities and VDCs (see Figure 7.). Data gathered in VDCs and municipalities are monthly submitted to their respective DDCs where they should be analyzed and used for further planning. This accumulative data is collected and later sent every month to MLD, which is responsible for the national registrar and data provision to other authorities,

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[7] The Act was amended in 1981, 1992 and 1999.

organizations and the public. The objectives of the VERS system are summarized in Box 4.

<div style="background-color:orange; padding:10px;">

Box 4. Objectives of the Vital Events Registration System (VERS)

- To maintain the legality of various vital events including the deaths.
- To develop and updating of the household list by registering the vital events.
- To develop a reliable basis for the management and distribution of citizenship.
- To provide reliable information on population statistics.
- To facilitate on the availability of various demographic statistics on yearly basis instead of having a census to be carried out every ten years.
- To support an individual's right such as education, health and other social services through developing the national population policies and strategies.

Source: Ministry of Local Development, Nepal

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No registration fees are charged for the event registered within 35 days from its occurrence. 8,- NRs are charged for the period between 35 and 70 days except for the conditions beyond one's control. Citizens who come to register vital events after 70 days from occurrence of the vital event can be fined by the local registrar up to 50,- NRs.

In general, the system is improving, the progress being nevertheless very slow as it is currently not a government priority. Nepal lacks a firmly set statistical plan and clear division of competencies among state agencies when it comes to data collection and its use for planning. Urgent need to further improve the vital registration system and its use as an important resource for statistics is visible throughout the country. To generate the crucial indicators such as: Infant Mortality Rate, Child Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Rate, Age Specific Maternal Mortality Rate, Crude Birth Rate, Crude Death Rate, marriage statistics, migration and death statistics the data collection must be improved on all levels. These indicators would provide more precise figures for policy formulation and for health planning.

2.2   Social exclusion in Nepal

Social exclusion of any population group is an immense threat to the democratic and peaceful nation building process and to progress of any state (see Box 1.). Despite all the initiatives by the Nepalese state, international organizations, local civic organizations and individuals, social exclusion remains deeply embedded in Nepalese society. While such discrimination takes many various forms, the most significant manifestations in Nepal are the caste discrimination and gender bias. After

the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in 1990s, reforms begun to emerge and institutional prohibitions were removed. But deeply rooted codes of behaviour and social attitudes are hard to eradicate in short time periods. Nepalese society is to a large extent still operating within the complex universe of strictly fixed social hierarchy and norms and many vulnerable people still face discrimination, exclusion division and social conflict on a daily basis (Burbank, 1992; Kathmandu Post, 2011a,c).

2.2.1 Caste system

Caste system is extremely complicated hierarchy scheme based on Hindu religious beliefs. Hindus are born into defined position in the society and usually remain in that position for the rest of their lives. This position is determined by *Karma* - any kind of intentional action, whether mental, verbal, or physical; Karma is a concept of causality. At the time of re-birth the state of one's Karma determines into which caste the person is born. According to original beliefs it is not possible to change caste during one's earthly life – it is a destiny. One's caste is mostly also one's occupation: people are born priests, rulers, or blacksmiths. One of the significant attributes of the caste system are names. Each caste has its own name which usually also means a specific occupation, which is recognizable to others. The Nepalese caste system differs from the Indian and was codified in 1854 in *Muluki Ain*, system of law introduced by Maharaja Jung Bahadur Rana (for basic division of castes see table 3.).

Table 3. Caste hierarchy of the Muluki Ain

1. tāgādhari, caste group of the „Wearers of the Holy Cord"
Upadhyaya Brahman
Rajput (Thakuri) ("warrior")
Jaisi Brahman
Chhetri ("warrior")
Newar Brahman
Indian Brahman
Ascetic sects
Various Newar castes
2. namasinyā matwāli, caste group of the non-enslavable alcohol drinkers
Magar
Gurung
Sunuwar
Some other Newar castes
3. masinyā matwāli, caste group of enslavable alcohol drinkers
Bhote (people of Tibetan origin)
Chepang
Kumal (potters)
Tharu
Gharti (descendands of freed slaves)
4. pāni nachalnyā choi chito hālnu naparnyā, impure but „touchable" castes
Kasai (Newar butchers)
Kusle (Newar musicians)
Hindu Dhobi (Newar washerman)
Musulman
Mlecch (Europeans)
5. pāni nachalnyā choi chito hālnu parnyā, untouchable castes
Kami (blacksmiths) and Sarki (tanners)
Kadara
Demai (tailors and musicians)
Gaine (minstrel)
Badi (musicians and prostitutes)
Cyame (newar scavengers)

Source: modified after Guneratne,(2002, p. 75)

2.2.2 Caste-based exclusion

Caste-based exclusion is a form of discrimination within the caste system in which people are firmly relegated into social positions. Different positions are not attributed with same rights and responsibilities. The lower the caste stands in the system, the lower the access to social, economic, political and legal resources. The distribution of wealth is disproportionate and in favor of higher castes. Social mobility is hindered by many rules. The lowest caste people are called *Untouchables* which refers to original Hindi *Shudra*. Gandhi renamed this group as *Dalit* - meaning "oppressed". Dalits are bound to perform the hardest dirty and menial work and are therefore considered unclean and untouchable by higher castes. One of the examples of the practice is the ban of sharing water sources with Dalits. Although the

traditional explanation is religious and ritual, many authors argue that Caste system is set to keep the dominant groups in power (Guneratne, 2002). There is a development in case of Dalits in Nepal. They are increasingly organizing themselves and standing up for their rights. Recent legal provisions have banned untouchability and granted all rights equally to all citizens. Nevertheless the exclusion still exists despite the fact that the practice of caste discrimination is illegal and punishable by law. One significant example is the wide public resistance towards inter-caste marriages.

Dalits account for approximately one fifth of Nepalese population. (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, 2005). Literacy of Terai Dalits was as low as 21% compared to 74% of Terai upper caste groups in 2001. Dalits represent 80% of the poorest people in Nepal and they own only 1% of land in the country. Their life expectancy is significantly lower; in 2002 it was only 42 years in average. It is necessary to mention that exclusion exists even within Dalit caste as it is divided into many sub-castes of which some have higher status than others.

2.2.3 Religion-based exclusion

As Nepal was a Hindu kingdom (or kingdoms) for centuries, it is only logical that the ruling classes were promoting Hindu religious, social and cultural practices. Recent development has made Nepal officially a secular state and the interim constitution from 2007 has established freedom of religion; however, it specifically obstructs proselytizing. In general Hindus are very tolerant towards other religions and Hinduism's natural tendency is to recognize the divine origin of other faiths. Occasionally societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice are reported. Individuals who have converted to another religion or religious group infrequently face violence and at times they are ostracized socially.

The most significant relationship of the predominant Hindus is with the Buddhists. Between these two religions there is a close tie and many practices and festivals are shared. It could even be intricate to distinguish Hindus and Buddhists as they themselves might not perceive any distinction. Their relationships had been, and still are quite harmonic. In 2010, the authorities dissolved Tibetan Buddhist religious gatherings, especially those with supposed political agendas, and arrested some participants. Such actions, however, are a direct result of the pressure by the Chinese government, not of a religious tension (Embassy of the United States in Nepal, 2011).

Muslims and Hindus have more of a problematic relationship. In Nepal, Muslims are mostly Sunni, 97% live in Terai region and have strong ties to their communities in India (some of which are ties to radical Islamic groups). Although

Muslims account for only 4% of Nepalese population, they constitute a majority in some districts. In the past, Muslims were allowed to practice their faith under certain restrictions, such as ban of propagation of Islam or following the code of *Sharia*. They speak Nepalese but also Urdu, Awadhi and Bhojpuri languages. There are significant differences between Hindu and Muslim religions which complicate mutual dialog and symbiosis. Monotheistic Islam is an iconoclastic belief and is strongly opposed to the worship of idols, which is predominant in polytheistic Hinduism. Muslims believe that the followers of other religions are *Kafir* (nonbelievers). Islam does not recognize re-birth. One of the frequent sources of tensions between Muslims and Hindus is the practice of eating beef. The separation of schooling systems is one of the causes of exclusion since it increases interaction within Muslim communities and decreases interaction with general public. Muslim religious schools, locally known as *Madrasah*, which, besides teaching the Holy Koran, Muslim religion, and language (Urdu), provide education in line with the regular school curriculum, are at present given official recognition by the Government, but were not acknowledged and supported in the past. This excluded many Muslim children from the formal education system. At present there are around 600 Madrasahs in Nepal, but only few also provide education to female Muslims (Siddiqui, 2002; Dastider, 2007).

Few Christian communities have reported abuses of their rights and increase in Hindu extremism towards them since 2006. There are rare news about humiliation, beating, threats and extortion or, in the most radical cases, bombings of churches and schools. Hindu population is reportedly concerned about the growing numbers of Christians. Christianity is a growing religion in Nepal as it is perceived by low-caste Hindus as a way of escaping the rigid caste system. In Hindu society Christians face some practical problems such as absence of burial grounds.

2.2.4 Ethnic – based exclusion

The aim of the government to integrate different ethnic groups towards a common goal of nation building and development is not an easy one. Although it is difficult to distinguish caste and ethnicity (as it is to large extent only western concept), Nepal has astonishing 103 caste/ethnicities and more than 90 languages. Nepalization had been associated with higher castes in the past, but nowadays the trend is shaped more towards cultural commonality. Ever since the 1990s the long-suppressed ethnic aspirations have flourished as the numerous ethnic groups were marginalized and prevented from partaking. In 1996 Task Force for the Establishment of the Foundation for the Upliftment of Nationalities submitted a report

distinguishing 61 different ethnicities falling under a common cathegory *Janajati*, which can be loosely translated as "tribal". Such community by definition has its own mother tongue and traditional culture and yet does not fall under the conventional Hindu hierarchical caste structure (Pradhan and Shrestha, 2005). All indigenous people to Nepal such as Tharu also fall under this category. Krämer in his study identifies numerous forms of injustice committed on Janajatis in the past (Krämer, 1998). Many Janajatis were deprived of their ethnic territories by the Nepali state and many of these territories were allocated in favour of members of high Hindu castes. Once autonomous indigenous people were subsequently subject to enslavement, subjugation and indebtedness. Their ethnic areas were systematically disintegrated by the settlement of members of high Hindu castes. These ethnic areas were often deliberately sectioned by arbitrary drawing up of administrative borders. There was social and judicial incapacitation of ethnic groups by the discriminating law code of the Muluki Ain as well, which also led to introduction of caste values and prejudices into ethnic communities, which – with the sole exception of the Newars – had casteless societies before. Janajatis were excluded from every form of education and from government offices, thus remaining unable to participate in the politics and administration of the country. The ethnic cultures of Janajatis in the past were destroyed by perpetual state politics of Hinduization.

Currently the situation is improving. Janajatis are increasingly organizing themselves, for example in Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, a platform of 54 organizations lobbying for an end to marginalization based on ethnicity and obtaining equal rights.

2.3   Research areas

The research area was located in Mid-western and Far-Western regions of Nepal as all three research communities, Badi, Muslim and Tharu, are present there sharing same living space. Most valuable research locations were identified in Banke, Bardyia, Dang and Kailali districts (for detailed maps of research VDCs see Annex 1). The presence of Programme Unit of Plan Nepal in Banke district, its information database and support played important role in the decision as well.

As shown in Map 5. the four districts neighbour each other as well as India along their south territory. The border with India is open and for Nepalese and Indian citizens no visa is required for travelling on either side. Since these districts have highly fertile soil the migration trends towards them increases constantly over the years. However, Mid and far west regions of the country are considered among the

least developed regions, with 20% higher poverty than the central region and are in the bottom range of the human development index. All four of these districts have similar geographical, economical and social conditions with the exception of Banke (see also Table 4.).

Estimated half a million people inhabit the Banke region which covers an area of 2,337 km². Altitude varies from 127.5 m to 1290 m and the district is one of the hottest locations in Nepal. Temperature ranges from 5.4° Celsius in winter to 46° in summer and annual rainfall is between 1000-1484mm. Total population of Banke in 2001 was

Map 5. Research areas

Source: Modified after Reliefweb.int (2004)

385,840 (48.62% female) and population density was 165.1/km2 (CBS, 2001). Literacy rate of Banke district was on average 57.36% in 2001 (73% in projection for 2009). Although Banke is an industrial corridor, the main occupation of Banke district is agriculture. There is one municipality in the district (Nepalgunj) and 46 VDCs. The town of Nepalganj is considered the unofficial capital of western Nepal. It is the district headquarters, an important trade post and a gate to India - this prevails much diversity, prospects, but also problems. Nepalganj is also home to Nepal's largest Muslim community. Overall estimated 75-100,000 Muslim live in Banke and majority of them in Nepalganj (Siddiqui, 2001). Muslims comprise 22% of total population of Banke and Tharu population of Banke is 15% of total. Banke HDI is 0.479.

Bardiya, with geographical area of 2025 km², is neighbouring Banke on the west and it has similar topography and the same climatic features. Bardyia is a home to Bardyia National Park established in 1988 which covers almost half of the district: 966 km². This important nature preservation project includes small population of one-horned rhinoceros and Bengal tigers. The DDC headquarters is in town of Gularia. Population of Bardyia was reaching 382,649 (49.65% female) in 2001. More than 50% of people in the district are of Tharu origin. Literacy rate in Bardyia was only 45.41% in 2001 (56% in projection for 2009). Reported 40,000 – 75,000 Muslims inhabit Bardyia. Bardyia has HDI score of 0.429. Dang district is located east of Banke, its headquarters is situated in Ghorahi. 219,404 people inhabited this area in 2001. 40,000 – 75,000 Muslims. Dang HDI is 0.409. Kailali district is located west of Bardyia, with Dhangadhi as headquarters, covers an area of 3,235 square kilometres.

Population in 2001 reached 616,697 people, with population density 190,63 people per km². Literacy rate in Kailali district reached 52,06% (male 63,21%; female 40,41%). In 2003, the population growth rates in many Terai districts exceeded the national rate of 2.25 percent, e.g., 3.89 percent for Kailali District. Approximately 10,000-15,000 Muslims live in this DDC.

Table 4. Basic statistics of Banke, Bardyia, Dang and Kailali districts (2001)

District	Area (km²)	Headquarters	HDI	Population	Population density	Literacy (%)
Banke	2,337	Nepalgunj	0,479	385,840	161	57,36
Bardia	2,025	Gularia	0,429	382,649	189	45,41
Dang	2,955	Ghorahi	0,409	462,380	156	58,10
Kailali	3,235	Dhangadhi	0,442	616,697	191	52,06

Source: Adapted from CBS(2001)

2.4   Host organization: Plan International and Plan Nepal

2.4.1   Plan International

Originally founded in Spain in 1937, Plan International is currently involved in projects in 48 different countries where it works with more than 3,500,000 families and their communities. In 2002 Plan started implementing new approach to development called Child-Centered Community Development (CCCD). CCCD "relies on the collective action of civil society to generate the empowerment of children to realise their potential, and on the actions of states to live up to their obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child." (Plan, 2010, p.17) This approach is intended as long-term as it includes developing lasting relationships with local communities.

Plan declares to be independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations. The funds come from several sources, the most important being the sponsors - nearly 1,100,000 people in eighteen different donor countries support development projects by sponsoring a child. An average 80 percent of donations go directly to support programmes benefiting children and families. Plan's income was €468,000,000 in 2008-2009 of which €452,000,000 was spent. More than 7,000 people work for Plan around the globe.

2.4.2 Plan Nepal Country Office

The organization established its branch in Nepal in 1978. It is aiming to help poor children to access their rights to health, education, economic security and protection. The organization works in hundreds of communities, often vulnerable and impoverished, to improve access to adequate health care and sanitation. Currently, Plan's work in Nepal covers six core areas, all of which are rooted in the rights of the child: health and nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, child development and learning, household economic security, child protection and participation, and building relationships. One of the priorities is supporting early childhood care and development centers to secure young children's right to good education - more than 30,000 children are benefiting from the programme. Plan Nepal is also working with local organizations and government agencies to ensure that policies to protect child rights are central in the new constitution. Plan working areas are depicted in Map 6.

Map 6. Plan working areas

Source: Plan-international.org

2.4.3 Plan Banke Program Unit

Banke Programme Unit (PU) and its working districts are located in the mid and far west development regions of the country. Plan Nepal Banke PU priorities are advocacy, capacity building and service delivery. PU has been implementing its programme and projects in Dang, Banke, Surkhet, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts. Among the six districts except Surkhet (a hill district) all the other are in the Terai plains. In 1995 Plan programmes started in Banke; Bardiya and Dang followed in 2005, Surkhet in 2009 and programes expanded to Kailali and Kanchanpur in 2010. Banke and Bardiya are Plan working districts where child sponsorship and comparatively extensive projects are implemented; the other four districts have programmes only from grant funding. Banke PU is located in Nepalgunj city – a hub of commercial activities and of several international development agencies, including many UN agencies.

Plan Nepal Banke PU has been implementing child centred community development programme working together with children, their families, communities and other stakeholders. In Banke Plan works in 28 VDCs out of 46 and in Bardia in all 31 VDCs. The projects are based on sponsorship and a grant (EC funded Freed

Kamaiya Livelihood Development project). The EC-funded grant is to assist the ex-bonded labourers of Tharu community (called *Kamaiya*) to retain their freedom enabling them through the micro-finance and livelihood interventions. Similarly, a special project (Kamlari Abolition Project) to eliminate the Kamlari (bonded girl child labour, especially from Tharu communities) system by rescuing and empowering the girls by providing educational support is implemented in Dang, Kailali and Kanchanpur district, with Plan Germany support. This project directly contributes to the women's empowerment campaign "Because I Am a Girl". Universal Birth Registration campaign is another priority programme of the PU, with support from Plan Norway grant and its sponsorship resources. Likewise, Learn With-out Fear, the global educational campaign of Plan, is a priority activity of the PU, working together with government education offices, school management committees, teachers and students.

2.5   Conclusion

The second chapter was focused on a regional context of the research. It was stressed that Nepal is a country characterized by extreme diversity in terms of geography and demography. Such diversity has always been a source of wealth as well as problems. In the past Nepalese kingdom survived Tibetan, Indian and Chinese pressure. In the 20th century Nepal has opened to the world which has eventually led to the end of the monarchy after a decade of civil war. The new republic is nevertheless facing major problems which divert priority from other issues. For example the situation in the field of human rights has been and still is so alarming that it required establishing UN mission (UNMIN).

Major step towards good governance is the decentralization of the country. Nepal is now divided to District and Village Development Committees which enhance coordination of development activities. The division is promising in terms of improved focus and addressing of development problems on local level. One of the responsibilities of the decentralized government is the maintenance of the Vital Events Registration System. The functioning of the system is critical both for improved access to rights and services (and thus to social inclusion) of Nepalese citizens and for advance in government planning on central as well as local level.

Social exclusion in Nepal has many manifestations. This chapter focused foremost on three causes of exclusion – caste, ethnicity and religion. Although the caste system was abolished it still prevails among the majority of the society. The caste system is both ritual and religious but also serves to keep dominant groups of

population in power as argued by Guneratne (2002). The most affected by the caste-based discrimination are so-called Dalits. Considering Hindu society, it is traditionally very respectful towards other religions. There is, however, a problematic relationship with Muslims in the country since their beliefs are fundamentally opposite to Hindu religion. Exclusion based on ethnicity has been and still is a source of great deprivation of many communities in Nepal. This chapter provided the list of the most important forms of injustice revealed by Krämer (1998). Indigenous people (Janajatis) have lost their territories, were enslaved and their way of life was disintegrated.

Subsequently the chapter continued with the introduction of the research areas. In these areas some of the most excluded communities of Nepal reside: Badi, Muslim and Tharu people. The research districts are Banke, Bardiya, Dang and Kailali. All of these four districts are located on Indian border which brings many opportunities but also causes many problems especially with security. In the end Plan was introduced as the host organization. Plan is one of the important international NGOs and has a branch also in Nepal. For this research especially the country office and Banke Programme Unit were significant.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH COMMUNITIES AND OF BIRTH REGISTRATION PROCESS IN NEPAL

In this chapter the research communities are introduced in wider context. Their position in society is analyzed to explain problems they have faced or are still facing despite progress in their empowerment. In second part Birth Registration process is presented in detail, focusing on past and current challenges. In addition the profile of survey participants is presented.

3.1   Research communities

3.1.1   Badi people in Nepalese society

The Badi are members of an untouchable Hindu caste who live in scattered settlements mostly in Terai region. They migrated to Nepal from India in the 14th century. Until 1950s their livelihood was entertainment. Badi families travelled to different communities amusing them with dance and story-telling. Until 1950s Badi were supported by three principalities which provided them with basic needs in exchange for entertainment and sex. Badi women limited prostitution only to patrons and their relatives. In 1950s, these patrons lost their power and were unable to continue their support to Badi. Badi women consequently started prostituting themselves in order to cover income losses. In 1960s income decrease worsened as live entertainment begun to be substituted with technology (e.g. radio, movies, tape-players). On the other hand, at the same time of Malaria eradication in Terai, deforestation and major settlement waves, new major markets opened for sex workers. All these factors contributed to Badi being more dependent on prostitution as their livelihood. In 1990s the demand for commercial sex started to shrink with HIV/AIDS awareness. Badi standard of living lowered significantly, sometimes to subsistence level. According to Thomas Cox, roughly two thirds of Badi women were prostitutes in early 1990s. The current numbers of Badi are matter of speculations and vary between 7-8,000 (Cox, 1992; Cox, 2000) Government estimate 8,348 (CBS,2001), 10,000 (Shahi, 2011) and 40,000 (The Telegraph, 2010). Estimated Badi population in research districts is shown in Table 5.

Badi men fish and engage in making musical instruments (drums *Madal*) and pipes, earning minimal income. They also attract customers for women. Major breadwinners of Badi are women who are prostituting themselves. They usually start

as early as 13 or 14. Government estimates that 400 women are involved in forced prostitution. The overall number of prostituting women is unknown – some families keep their sources of income in secret, many families migrate (even to India) and are therefore excluded from surveys.

Badi community is currently in transformation. With the empowerment of Dalits, their empowerment has increased as well. Although Badi are now more aware of their rights, they are in extremely difficult position when it comes to their livelihoods. There is a pressure from government, authorities and society to change their occupation, but incentives are low or not effective in practice. Land provisions and grants proved to be controversial, because some families who received them still continue prostituting. Also Badi sexual services are still bought by men throughout the society and members of all castes. Although Badi women have babies with their customers inter-caste marriages are opposed from both sides – Badi families see marriage as an obstacle to prostitution, other castes view marriage with Badi as an embarrassment. Some INGOs such as ActionAid have implemented projects in Badi communities and supported local organizations such as Community Support Group (CSG). In some locations, most of the people have given up the flesh trade and are undergoing various skill trainings. Some communities started business cooperatives, e.g. chocolate making and selling. The numbers of pupils and students are increasing. In at least two places hostels were built as a safe heaven for young Badi ladies endangered by prostitution. Overall it is possible to state that the situation of Badi is slowly improving and it is also occasionally monitored by Nepalese media. Typical life story of a Badi prostitute is provided in Box 5. in order to illustrate the current situation.

Table 5. Distribution of Badi Population by Gender and Citizenship status

District	No.of House-holds	No. of population without citizenship			Total population		
		M	F	T	M	F	T
Banke	46	12	26	38	108	120	228
Bardia	122	98	127	225	340	422	762
Dang	186	9	21	30	517	551	1068
Kailali	159	57	115	172	498	524	1022

Source: Adapted from ActionAid(2000): A Marginalized Group: Listening to Badi Community

Box 5. Interview with Mar Maya Badi (34), Chisapani VDC, Banke DDC, 9.5.2011

I was born in Bardiya Futa in 1977, we were all together five sisters and 2 younger brothers in the family. We never studied; our parents never took interest in it. Our origin was Jarkot and we are from Bi Ka family (lower cast – Dalit group). I do not need to lie about this. Everybody shall know me as Bi ka's daughter. I use the surname Nepali, but in the citizenship documents I have the surname Badi. We neglected the Birth Registration. My step mom did not treat me well. I ran away with this guy (husband). He (husband) later brought another wife and gave a lot of trouble. I heard that my husband was in Kathmandu, now some people say he is in Hasinpur. I do not know where he is now. Sometimes he comes over and beats me. He left me and after his departure, my in-laws are threatening me, not to live in this house. I feel unsecured, I look at the kids and I feel stressed. My future is already ruined. The question is how to make their future bright, but the answer is difficult because I do not have anything at the moment. I have no skills, no profession, no education. I hope if the kids can study further, they will be responsible and help me in my daily routines, but this is the only hope I have. May be at the time they are responsible I am already dead.

I work in a hotel (as a prostitute). I ultimately came to this situation. In current conditions some people just might kill me. There is a real chance of that. As an option I can raise goats, but there is nobody to help me. If there is someone to earn money it could have been easier to raise my kids and goats. Even if I raise goats, it will take minimum six months and what I am going to do in the mean time. So now if I go around (means working as a prostitute) and earn money, there is some hope, kids will grow up. This is how I perceive things, but the people say otherwise. The land I have is just 2 Kattha (776 m2). Who is going to plough the land? It is very difficult; the tractor costs 4-5 hundred (NRs). Even if we want to farm this land, I do not see a possibility. Nobody gives a helping hand. Nobody counts a Raadi (outcast widow) as a human being. Even if I go to the small shops, they do not give me things on credit; they simply do not trust me. People say, stay at home, do something else, do not go out (to prostitute), feed your family, but where does the money come from? Look how difficult it is. The kids are not getting my love and I am not getting their love. Just think about it, how painful it is. We do not even have time to stay close to each other and discuss about family matters. I know I have ruined my life, but it is for them. Going on further like this, there might be many diseases that might come along and my life will be in danger. I started doing it a year ago (prostitution). At first I was in Dasbigha, I was working in the college. Sometimes they used to give me little money, sometimes not. There was pure urge of raising my kids. Then after quitting at the college, I had no decent job. Then I start thinking - 4 days at home, 4 days outside. It depends it can be a day, a week, a month. It is not fixed. If I stay for ten days and my money runs out, I must go outside and bring back some money. The same as birds and doves. Go fetch something and bring it back. My income is almost nothing, just 4 to 5 hundred Rupees and then I go back home. It is not that I am busy all the time. When I am out I ask my villagers to take care about my children. I give them fixed date to come back and I must return by then.

I do not have contacts, not at all. I have seen many lives ruined by these contacts (pimps). Sometimes they send you here, sometimes they send you there and people are killed by drug addicts. I go by myself. If someone asks then the rate is not fixed. Some say 20 NRs and some say 50 NRs (20 NRs equals 0,20 and 50 NRs equals 0,50 Euro). Sometimes I agree to work for money, but they cannot force me to come to a certain hotel and do it. Now they know that I am not this type of woman. I rather go and work, washing dishes. It is the hardest part to give up. We told many times to some organizations to ask the VDCs for help, to give some money for this category of women. For example, there was a donation to school for Badi children. It was 25,000 NRs for each kid as a scholarship, but we have never received that. I know there is a lot of gossip between villagers, but they do not say anything bad against me. I do not bring my business inside the house because I have kids and the villagers know about it.

People from Badi community near Kohalpur are also facing the same problems. Their daughters are out (prostituting). Some young girls are in New Delhi. It is more of the profession than compulsion because their mothers do it and made them do it. I cannot even think about the fact that mothers can do it (force daughter to prostitute). I will never ever do it. This is still going on, but more in disguise way. relatives find the clients for their daughters and then live from their money... , it is going on... they are dancing with money of their daughters, but they do not know that the lives of daughters have been already ruined. Normally parents think about their kids before themselves. Tomorrow they will be dead, but they do not know the future of their daughters.

3.1.2 Muslims in Nepalese society

Although precise history of relationships between what is now Nepal and the world of Muslims is unknown, it seems that first followers of Islam settled in Nepal in the 14th century (Dastider, 2007). Nepalese Muslims are of four origins: Indian, Kashmiri, Nepalese and Tibetan. All these groups have a slightly different sense of their identity and do not represent homogenous group in terms of their dispersal, language and lifestyle. Kashmiri might be the oldest Muslims settlers in Nepal and were mostly traders. Nowadays they are educated and belong to business class, some have even joined government services or have become politicians. The original high status is a source of a superiority feeling among Kashmiri Muslims. Indian Muslims migrated to Nepal on different occasions and were mostly courtiers or businessmen too. Tibetan Muslim were also migrating to Nepal for centuries, the last big wave came with Tibetan refugees after Chinese invasion in 1950s. By Nepalese Muslims we mean mostly those with Terai origins. Districts Kailali, Kanchanpur, Bardia and Banke were annexed to Nepal after failed Indian Freedom Struggle in 1857 as a reward from Britain. These areas were or still are populated by Muslim majority therefore these Muslims should not be considered immigrants. Open border with India is still a source of continuous and fluent migration in both ways. This is the major explanation why 97% of Muslims live in the Terai region alongside the border.

Government estimates that Muslims make up 4,2% of population (around 1 million people) but this figure is often challenged by Muslims themselves; the Muslim population in Nepal could be reaching up to 8-10% (Siddique, 2001). In an otherwise astoundingly ethnically diverse country Dastider considers Muslims the most distinct and well defined minority in predominantly Hindu-Animist-Buddhist society (Dastider, 2007). Nepalese Muslims are one of the poorest groups in Nepal (SNV, 2009). The average income of Muslims in 2004 was 11,015 NRs per capita which is almost half of the national average of 20,689 NRs. Probably the most significant cause of their deprivation is their impure and inferior status within Hindu caste system. In the past decade increased

> **Box 6. Maulana, Hafiz and Imam**
> In Muslim communities in Nepal three positions within their society are given high status. Arabic word Maulana literally means "our lord" or "our master". It refers to respected leaders of community usually graduated from religious institutions. The term Hafiz is used for people who memorized the whole Koran and thus acquired respected status in society. There are around ten million of such persons around the world currently. Imam is a term for spiritual leader of the community who is usually leading the mosque as well.
> *Source: Dastider (2007)*

interaction within the Muslim community in Nepal has lead to increased empowerment and organization. There is concern about Islamization of liberal Muslims, particularly in areas with higher concentration of Muslims.

3.1.3 Tharu people in Nepalese society

Map 7. Tharu population in Nepal
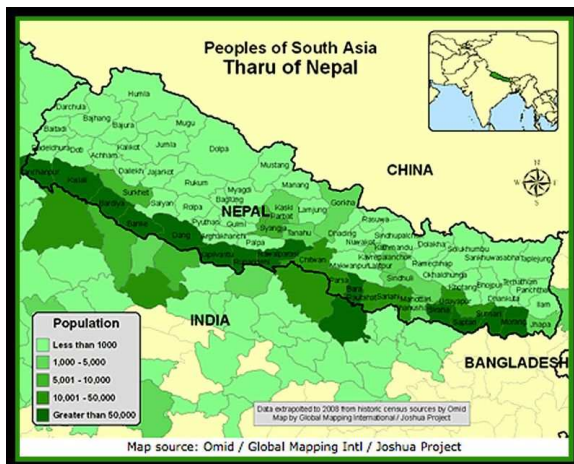
Source: Omid, 2011

Indigenous inhabitants of Nepal are called *Janajati* and Tharu are one of the major groups in such terms. The estimate of their numbers in 2001 was around 1,6 million which is 6,75% of Nepalese population (CBS,2001, see also Map 7.). Tharu speak their own *Tharu* language and they are a community of various ethnic groups defined by an associated way of life and attachment to particular region – Terai – where they claim to be the original inhabitants (Guneratne, 2002). Terai was a region of forests, flooding and Malaria and these factors discouraged any significant migration to the area. Tharu have developed relative immunity to Malaria – genetically determined resistance factor to Plasmodium – which helped them to survive in region that was inhabitable for others. The status of Tharu was formalized for the first time in Muluki Ain in 1854 (see table 3.) and their interest have been marginal to centers of power ever since. The situation notably worsened in 1950s with the introduction of Malaria Eradication Project when discrimination and exploitation of Tharu increased dramatically. As massive and subsidized immigration to Terai started, unprepared and unaware of modern civilization, Tharu began loosing their land on a great scale. Many ended up completely landless and trapped in *Kamayia* - bonded labour ties with their new landlords which are close to slavery. Their main occupation is farming.

Tharu currently belong to the most impoverished communities in Nepal around 40,6% live below poverty line (Lama, 2010). One of the social phenomenon illustrating situation of Tharu are the so-called *Kamlari* (see Box 7). Families, often unable to feed all of their children, are selling girls as young as six for servitude to wealthier households. The price they receive is usually around 4-5,000 NRs annually (equivalent of 40-50 Euro). Tharu were also hit tragically by Maoist insurgency. Threats, abductions, arrests, forced recruitment and killings were committed by both

sides in the conflict. For example, in Bardyia district 85% of all the disappeared are Tharu.

Tharu have their traditional local governing system called *Khyala,* which is highly democratic and participatory, designed to avoid social injustice (Bellamy, 2009). When a meeting is called, each household must send its leader or face a fine. The most important meeting *Maghi* is held around 15th of January, the new year of Tharu calendar. During Maghi progress of the community as well as individuals is discussed and new plans are made. The leadership is evaluated and in case of dissatisfaction new leaders – *Badghar* – are elected. Decision making is based on common consensus reached after intensive discussions. Different members of Tharu community are given specific roles – taking care of irrigation system, acting as a messenger or a priest. For this study, the most important role is *Guruwa* – traditional herbalist and faith healer, and *Sorinnya,* who assist women in maternal matters (Shrestha, 2010).

The situation of Tharu community is slowly improving after the 2006 peace. Tharu movement is one of the largest in Nepal and there is a significant progress in organization in non-governmental sector, as well as in politics which is helping in rights-claiming. Government together with INGOs are trying to improve Tharu communities, especially by freeing Kamayia and providing them with land.

Box 7. Kamlari phenomenon in Nepal

Urmila was taken from her family and enslaved as a young child – she was six years old. "My family did not have enough money for food, so I became a servant in rich family. Every day I had to clean a huge pile of plates, pots, and clothes. While the family ate from table, I ate on the ground in front of the kitchen their leftovers. I was beaten and humiliated. One day I was burned on my arm by boiling water. I often cried myself to sleep because I felt so alone. I have spent years in isolation without my family."

Urmila was saved after 12 years of being servant. Nowadays she is finishing her high school studies and she helps to create awareness about the Kamlari problem as well as aids other girls escape this form of slavery. Since 2000 around 11,000 girls were saved. But without opportunities and support many of these girls have no where to go and some even return back to their masters. Nepalese government dedicated 2,3 million dollars for Kamlari girls, but activists report that most of the budget remains unspent.

Source: Interview with Urmila Chaudhary, Chaulahi VDC, Dang DDC, 7.5.2011

3.2. Birth Registration in Nepal

Although there has been some progress in the field of birth certification since its introduction in the 1970s, due to number of reasons such as low capacity of administration, low awareness, low demand, prevailing caste system or a decade long

recent conflict, the situation remains largely unsatisfactory. 37 percent of the national population was registered in 2004, by 2008 registration reached estimated 40 percent of the population. An improvement or deterioration of the situation might be revealed after the data from population census 2011 are processed.

Rules of birth registration in Nepal are given by the same act which establishes framework for all other vital registrations: Birth, Death and Personal Incidents Act 1976 (which has been amended few times). The act gives responsibility to the eldest member of the family to register the child within 35 days free of charge. Between 35 and 70 days fee is set to 8,- NRs (except for the conditions beyond one's control). Birth registration after 70 days is fined up to 50,- NRs. The registration is performed at the VDC/municipality office with secretary who issues the respective Birth Certificate. The secretary notes down data about the birth of the child and submits them monthly to the respective DDC office, where it should be used for further planning. DDC office submits data about births to MLD which serves as the main registrar in Nepal. Nepal also ratified the UN Convention on Rights of the Child in 1990. Despite the fact that Nepal has committed to several international, regional and national human rights acts to protect and promote children's rights, and the government's positive approach towards adopting laws and regulations, and despite formulating national policies and implementing programs to address children's issues, many Nepali children are still deprived of their fundamental rights - including right to identity - due to inadequate and improper investing on children's issues.

> **Box 8. The National Steering Committee**
>
> The National Steering Committee on Birth Registration is a Committee of Government and non-Government bodies comprising of the Ministry of Local Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Central Bureau of Statistics, UNICEF, Plan Nepal, Save the Children and ActionAid. Since the UBR project ended, the meetings of the finished in January 2011. This Committee was formed to oversee the implementation of birth registration activities. The last meeting approved the VERS software for further implementation. All other activities of the commission are now on hold.
>
> Source: *Plan Nepal*

Services need to be both delivered and used. While awareness raising activities on the birth registration process were successful, capacity building and advocacy-related activities did not reach all goals (Mitra, 2008). Although awareness of and demand for BR raised significantly, especially in areas where Plan works, there seemed to be minimal level of understanding of birth registration as the "right to identity" and the "first right of the child". There is also a notion that some traditionally socially excluded groups such as Dalits and Janajatis are excluded from BR process as well. Specific population groups were not provided specific

intervention. The late fee charged for the birth registration has represented a problem for people who cannot afford to pay. It is not clear whether the most marginalized groups perceive birth registration as beneficial – if the costs outweigh the benefits, families or individuals will not naturally be motivated to register. If benefits outweigh the costs, then registration will be desirable.

Last amendments of the Act are implemented into practice on local level only with difficulties. On VDC and DDC level there is a lack of resources to provide services and create demand for birth registration. VDCs performances are hindered by work overload and newly emerged political unrests in different parts of country. Record keeping systems are outdated and unreliable. Updated and recorded birth registration data are not properly used, and if so, then only minimally utilized; the cumulative data of birth registration has not been used for planning purpose across all levels: local, district, and national. In conclusion Mitra report states that birth registration did not receive any higher priority, its priority rather deteriorated by 2008.

3.3   Profile of survey participants

During the qualitative survey 137 households provided relevant data. For the purpose of the research a household was defined as: "all inhabitants of one house including all those who are migrating for work but are contributing to household budget, except those who are not living on premises unceasingly for more than one year". All household members were given equal chance to participate on providing data. Special attention was paid to equal participation of men and women – gender distribution of interviewed participants was 95 males to 107 females, therefore both sexes were properly represented.

Most of the participants live in very basic houses – 79,7% have mud floor, 57,2% mud walls and 34,1% grass roof. 68,8% of households reside in rural areas, 27,5% in semi-rural and 3,6% in purely urban environment. To evaluate financial access to birth registration data on household incomes and expenses per month were gathered.[8] The average income of household is 8,560 NRs and median 6,500 NRs, while minimum value was 500 NRs and maximum 50,000 NRs in one household. Household expenses according to participants are higher than incomes: 9,277 NRs

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[8] As financial situation of households was not a priority to this research the gathered data has only orientation value.

average per month, median being 7,938 NRs.[9] Average number of reported children in one household is 3,57. This number includes all children below 18 years living in the household, not only those born to one couple.

3.4   Conclusion

In chapter three the fact that Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities are among the most excluded in Nepal was proven. Badi are directs victims of the caste system as they are given the role of carnal servants. Their numbers, as well as numbers of prostituting women, are a matter of speculation as shown by Cox (1993, 2000) or Shahi (2011). Badi people are currently in transition. The major issue they are facing is how to replace prostitution as a source of income with other means of financing their families.

Muslims in Nepal have a long tradition of settlement. According to SNV (2009) they are among the poorest groups in the country. Although they are the most distinct minority their numbers are uncertain which hinders their social exclusion as they are not properly represented.

Tharu people are one of the Janajati (indigenous) groups. This community used to live in relative isolation and was seriously distracted in the recent past. Tharu were tragically influenced by land-grabbing and the civil war. Guneratne (2002), Bellamy (2009) and Lama (2010) confirmed that Tharu are among the most impoverished in Nepal.

In addition this chapter has examined the current state of birth registration in Nepal. Although there has been progress recently, still not even half of Nepalese children are registered. The prior evaluation by Mitra (2008) showed that birth registration is not properly prioritized, the system has many problems with functioning and collected data are not accordingly used for planning.

Last part was dedicated to provide the profile of survey participants. Households included in this survey are manifesting signs of poverty – low income and poor housing.

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[9] Unmatching income and expenses show that participants might have exaggerated expenses or have limited knowledge about overall income per month.

IV. AWARENESS, IMPACTS AND INCLUSSION OF BIRTH REGISTRATION

The first part of the research analyses how accessible is the birth registration for excluded groups and communities. In the beginning attention is given to results in terms of awareness about BR and the procedure. In the second part impacts of birth registration are assessed as important motivational factors. Lastly the inclusion of the birth registration is examined.

4.1 Awareness

On the demand side of the birth registration service the awareness among beneficiaries (families, parents, children etc.) is essential. Without knowledge about this process, its benefits and linkages to other rights and services, high percentage of registration can not be achieved. Three traditionally socially excluded groups of population were chosen to measure the level of awareness about BR and its understanding among the most deprived people in Nepal. During the research their awareness about BR was examined as well as the knowledge of registration procedure.

4.1.1 Awareness and the birth registration process

"Birth Certificate helps with identification of our child." (Respondent Paraspur)

Expectations of very low awareness among research groups proved to be completely false and the research has shown otherwise. Absolute majority (98,6%) of all households participants have heard about BR. In nine out of ten households participants understand what BR is and can describe the process correctly while 80,4% understand what Birth Certificate is and can describe its role in the BR process. Such high numbers are far beyond original expectations and confirm that awareness raising campaigns were successful and have also influenced the most excluded groups of population. Almost all households also consider BR useful; participants of the survey disagreed with the statement "I do not want to register my children because there is no practical use." Statistically significant correlation exists between understanding the BR process and the practice of BR, therefore the awareness is one of the most crucial causes of registering children in research communities (see annex 6.). Only small differences in terms of awareness were found in Badi, Muslim and

Tharu communities as shown in Figure 8. Very high level of awareness and understanding found in Muslim community is to large extent caused by the citizenship issue which is generally a sensitive topic in Nepal. Muslims are struggling with distrust of authorities as in many cases it is not clear if they were born in India or in Nepal.

Figure 8: Awareness about the birth registration process
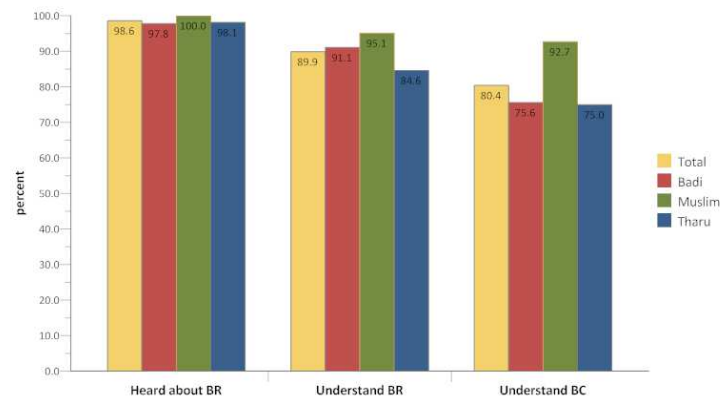
4.1.2 Registration procedure

"I have to go to VDC office within 35 days after the child is born and bring my citizenship card along." (Respondent Puraina)

prove

92% of households have demonstrated knowledge about the registration procedure and know how to register in VDC/municipality office. This proves that there is personal experience with birth registration in most of them. Household relation to VDC/municipality offices is of much higher level than previously expected. Practically all households (99,3%) know what such office is and are also aware of its location. When asked who is responsible for BR in the office 82,6% of all participants can identify that it is the secretary (see Figure 9.). 56,5% could also tell who is currently serving as the secretary in VDC/municipality office. According to these results people in Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities realize how important is their access to authorities and that they are used to deal with them.

Figure 9: Awareness about the registration procedure
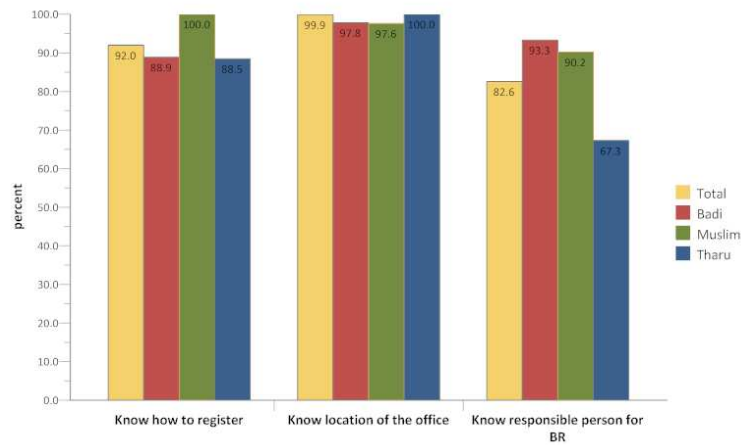
In Nepalese society the males are traditionally dominant in households and reportedly have supreme power in decision-making; males take care of the "family business". This fact also manifests itself in choice of the person who is thought responsible and sent for the registration: overall 61,6% consider the head of the household to be the person to register all children born in the house, 16,7% households would trust also his female counterpart (mostly wife of the head of the household). Head of the household is traditionally the oldest male in the house and in many cases it is also the father of the child or children. Households in general realize that it is actually a responsibility of parents and that both males and females have a right to register their children, but the head of the household is the person with attributed responsibility. In 5,1% of households participants did not know who can register births. Figure 10 shows small differences of results in research communities.

Figure 10: Person considered responsible for birth registration – Badi, Muslim and Tharu
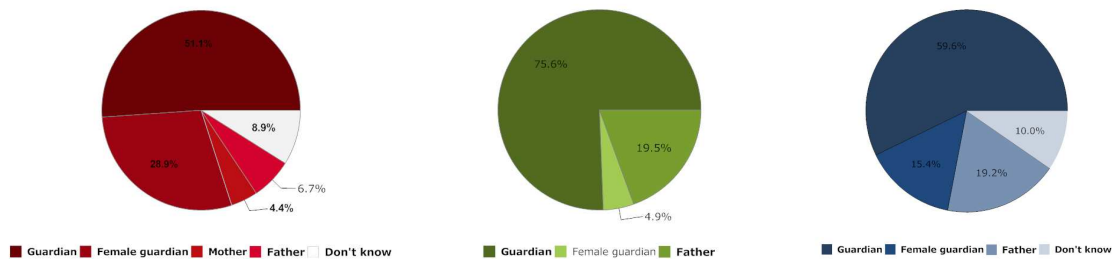
4.1.3 Infrastructure, time and finance

"We can reach the VDC office in 30 minutes by foot. And the registration is free of charge." (Respondent Dansinhapur)

One of the concerns prior to the research was a low accessibility of VDC/municipality offices due to lack of time, money or insufficient infrastructure. Conditions in Terai region proved to be much better than expected.[10] Majority of respondents (93,5%) confirm that it is possible to reach nearest VDC/municipality office within one hour by foot or by bicycle, which is a free transport (see Figure 11.). Situation might be different in some locations during monsoon rains and seasonal flooding, but overall accessibility of VDC/municipality offices is very high.

Figure 11. Time needed to reach the VDC/municipality office
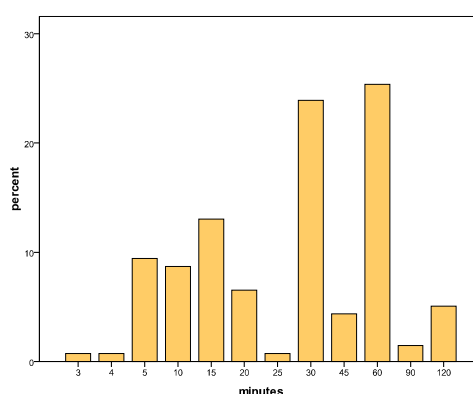
Lack of time to register was thought to be another issue preventing the practice of BR. Many people in research communities are living on subsistence level. Their time is very precious and usually dedicated to earn living and feed family. Nevertheless more than 90% of households agreed with the statement "We have enough time to register the children in our family." as presented in Figure 12. Therefore it is possible to state that BR is given higher priority than previously expected and worth of the time investment.

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[10] Infrastructure in Terai region is of much higher standard than in hills or mountains of Nepal, where reaching respective VDC/municipality offices might be long, costly and even dangerous venture.

Figure 12. Enough time to register

52.9%

0.7% 1.4%

7.2%

37.7%

◼ Strongly agree ◼ Agree Neutral ◼ Disagree ◼ Strongly disagree
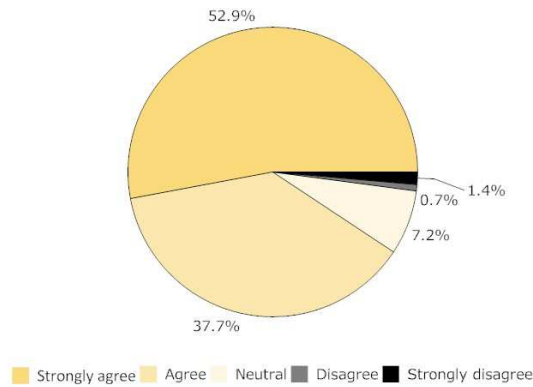
Absolute majority of people register children late after the 35-day limit and are therefore subject to fine. The fine is from 35 to 70 days 8,- NRs (0,08 Euro) and, after 70 days, up to 50,- NRs (0,50 Euro). The expectation was that the majority of the poorest families will be discouraged by such fine since their budgets might be on survival level. Participants were confronted with statement "We do not want to register our children because we can not afford to pay for it." Surprisingly, more than 90% disagreed. This result shows that even poor families are willing to spend finance on BR since they recognize its value. No statistically significant correlation was found between income and the practice of BR (see annex 6.). This suggests that the value of acquiring the Birth Certificate outweighs the financial costs. Respondents were also asked about the estimated cost of BR and have given costs in range from 0 to 250,- NRs (for details see Figure 13.)

Figure 13. Estimated BR costs

15.2%

22.5%

37.6%

15.3%

8.6%

0.8%

◼ 0 NRs ◼ 1-25 NRs ◼ 26-50 NRs 51-100 NRs ◼ 101-250 NRs Don't know
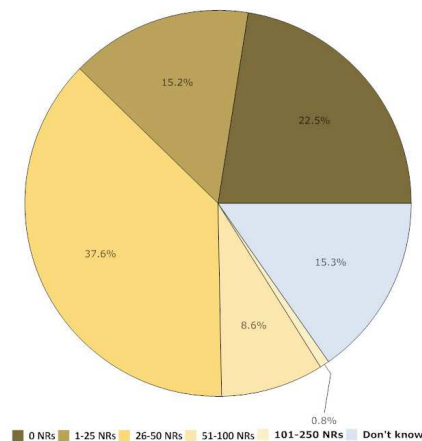
As Nepal belongs to 30 of the most corrupted states in the world (TI, 2010) there is an apprehension about corruption in VDC/municipality offices which could discourage people from birth registration. As only 11,1% of participants mention fees above 50,- NRs it seems that corruption is only negligible. The numbers mentioned above are also influenced by time span since last registration – hardly anyone remembers exactly the fee paid for example 6 years ago. In general, the opinion of respondents is that BR is not corrupt since it provides only small opportunity for acquiring insignificant amounts of money and that corrupt government officials are focusing on different sources of illegal finance. Still some petty corruption can be expected and officials are also more likely to charge highest possible amount of fee (see box 9.).

Box 9. Corruption in VDC/municipality offices

Corruption in Nepal is a widely discussed topic. Corruption – from petty to grand – affects the whole society. Since 2002 the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has brought around 600 cases against corrupt politicians, officials and businessmen. According to Transparency International the most corrupt sector is the Police with almost half of the service users reporting experience with corruption. Police is followed by Judiciary sector, land administration and customs. One of the concerns prior to this research was that corruption in VDC/municipality offices might discourage people from registering their children. The survey has disapproved such expectation. Nevertheless some petty corruption was revealed during both quantitative and qualitative part of the research.

"If we register within time limit VDC charges 20 Rupees, if we register after time limit we pay 50 Rupees." (Respondent Puraina)
"The VDC will not give us any receipt regarding 50 Rupees which were for the registration." (Respondent Puraina)
"They (VDC) ask for 100 Rupees, if we fight they will ask for 50."(Respondent Chisapani)
"The VDC staff asked for bribe when we went there for birth registration."
(Respondent Gola)

Qualitative part of the research confirms results gathered in the survey. Badi and Tharu communities are aware of the BR and they practice it. There are no obstacles to BR in terms of infrastructure, time or finance. In Badi community problems with registration might occur for mothers involved in prostitution as some participants testified.

"Yes we know about BR. We have to go to the VDC office. The cost is 20 Rupees we think. The VDC can be reached easily by walking. VDC secretary is treating us very nice. We are keeping our certificates in good place, safe, to protect it from

rats and water, in box or cupboard. Nobody has lost the document so far, because we have kept in safe place."(Participants of FGD in Mudha, Badi community)

Situation in Muslim community seems to be more complicated. Although the survey shows high percentage in terms of awareness, FGDs suggest that the situation is probably worse in specific locations. Whereas in Nepalgunj all Muslim participants know about BR and practice it, in other locations awareness was significantly lower and practice not so common.

"I have not registered my children yet because women can't go to VDC in Muslim community."(Participant of FGD in Gangapur)

4.2 Impacts of birth registration

Positive impacts of birth registration are crucial to reinforcing the motivation and devotion to register children. Citizens of Nepal must be convinced that this right and service granted and provided by the government is meant to improve their lives. On the other hand, if BR has no visible effect it can discourage people from the practice of registering child births. In such case people who are occupied by the daily struggle and survival might assign BR with a very low priority. Therefore it is important not only to examine awareness about the BR process but also perception of BR benefits and impacts.

4.2.1 Benefits and links of birth registration

"It provides me with evidence that I am a dweller of my country and helps me in getting the citizenship certificate."(Respondent Naubasta)

It was expected that the poorest people on the edge of society will not attribute birth registration with high priority due to many pressing concerns of their daily lives. It seemed that they would rather perceive BR as unnecessary bureaucratic procedure without real impact on well-being of their families. On the contrary, 95% of respondents agree that birth registration is beneficial for their family (see Figure 14.). Statistically significant correlation was found between perception of benefits of BR and the practice of BR (see annex 6.). People who perceive BR as beneficial also register their children. This proves that benefits and links are very strong motivation.

When it comes to specifying such benefits 48,6% of respondents state that BR is helpful for acquiring citizenship and 56,5% state that it is beneficial for school enrolment. 5,8% received some form of grant after BR, for 6,5% it is a confirmation of identity and 2,2% connects BR to acquiring passport. Most of participants are satisfied with benefits linked to BR and expects none more (88,1%). Among other expectations (sometimes unrealistic) are, for instance, that birth registration should be connected with acquiring a job (9,4%), help families to some form of grant (6,5%) or tackle land problems (2,9%).

Figure 14. BR considered beneficial – Badi, Muslim and Tharu
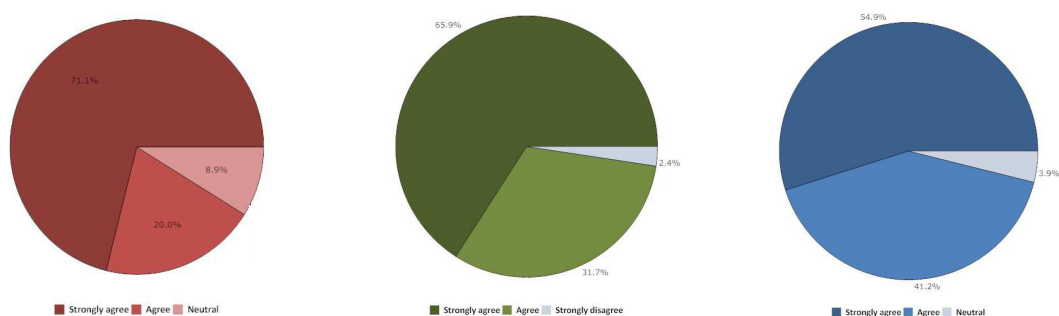
Positive attitude in the communities was verified as well: 73,2% of households know someone else in their vicinity who registers their children and majority (70%) thinks that BR was beneficial for these people as well. Acquiring birth certificate through birth registration is an important step in terms of accessing other rights and services. Although the service sector in Nepal is not highly developed and many linkages might yet not be fully functional, it is important to explore perception of Nepalese citizens and their understanding of such linkages, especially in socially excluded groups of population which are the most vulnerable in terms of rights abuse and access to services. Participants of the survey were given 12 options and circled those which they perceive as linked to BR: identity, legal personality, food, passport, health care, voting in elections, school enrolment, government development planning, citizenship, vaccination, inheriting property, child grant. Some of these links are strong (identity, legal personality, citizenship) and some are more loose (vaccination, passport, school enrolment). It is important to examine if participants identify such linkages and thus connect BR with improvement in well-being of families and their protection. The option of "food" was included to test true understanding of the question. Detail results are presented in Figure 15.

Figure 15. BR linkages to other rights and services
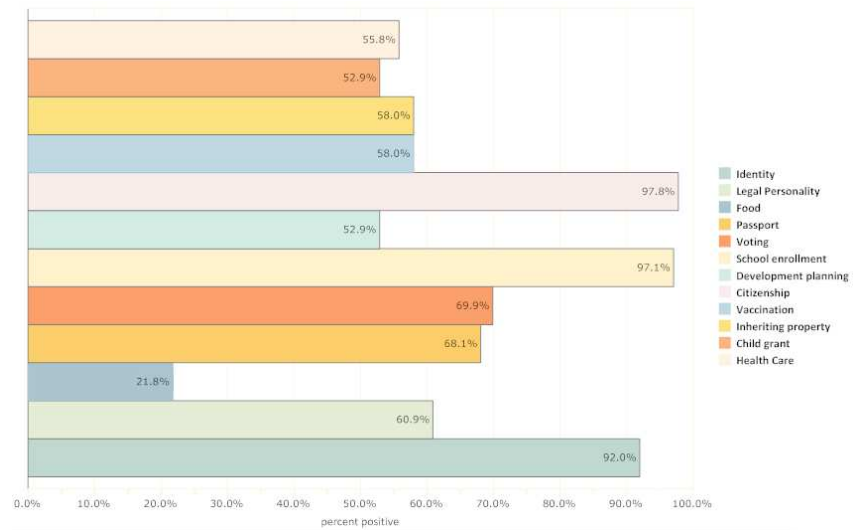
4.2.2 Registration rates

"If we have certification then we feel proud." (Respondent Gola)

Average number of reported children for one households was 3,57 out of which on average 1,48 boys and 1,33 girls were provided birth registration. This proves that there is no or very little gender bias in BR, but also shows that number of children were not registered (see Figure 16.). Out of 493 children, 106 were without birth registration – this is slightly less than one quarter (21,5%). This result suggests that the percentage of birth registration is much higher than estimated 35-40% of national average. The estimate for western Terai after this research would be around 70-80% for 2011. This number would correlate with the estimate of Banke DDC Planning and Administration office (80% in Banke district). Situation in Terai probably differs from Hill and Mountain regions of Nepal where lower percentage of registered children can be expected. Absolute majority of children are born home which means that parent's ability and will to register their children is essential. In Terai no correlation between the location (rural, semi-rural or urban) and birth registration practice was found (see annex 6.). People register their children regardless the location type.

Figure 16: Numbers of children in households and their registration
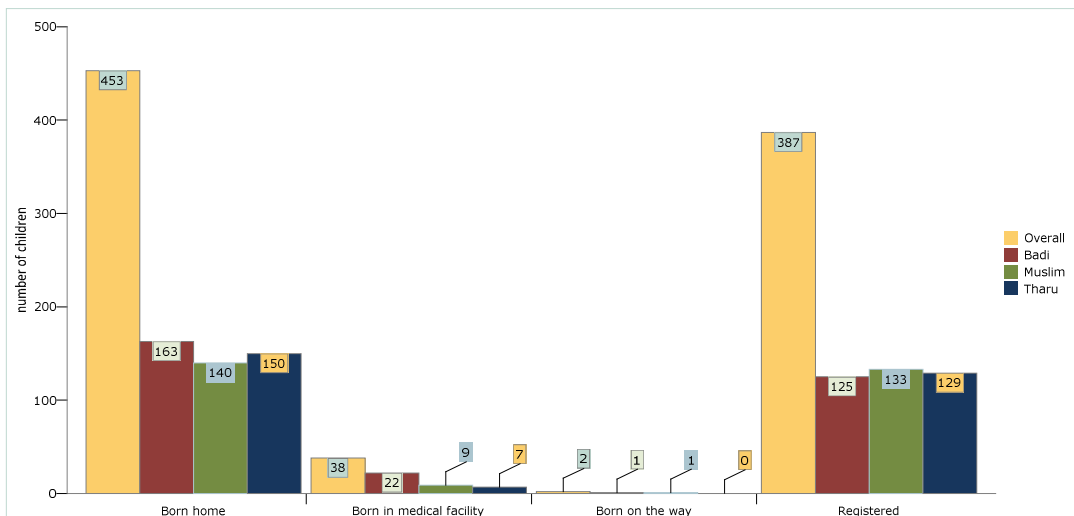
"It is modern and we should all do it." (Participant of FGD in Tikapur)

After extensive discussions during FGDs there is a common agreement among participants that BR is beneficial and crucial in terms of identity and access to other rights and services. The most common reason for obtaining Birth Certificates is because it was required by particular institution (school, VDC, NGO or INGO). The positive effect of such fact is that people do understand how BR is linked to other rights and services, the negative lies in reinforcement of the notion that timely BR is not important. In Badi community there is strong urge to register due to accessibility of certain grants designed for Badi people or Dalits, in Tharu community similar urge because many schools require BC for enrolment. Muslim community constantly deals with the citizenship issue and in general obtaining BC and citizenship is assigned with very high priority.

"I could not register my shop as I have no birth certificate or citizenship." (Participant of FGD in Rajapur)

4.3   Inclusion of the birth registration process

Exclusion in society can be a cause of exclusion from the birth registration process too. Expected causes of exclusion could be outer or inner. First of all the refusal of BR can be caused by fault dynamics and interactions in families themselves – either by decision-makers obstructing the process or by lack of action or tradition. Same dynamics might apply to communities. Some communities might be against

birth registration, prohibiting it. Some communities might be just neglecting the process attributing it with very low priority. Major cause of exclusion could be related to the authorities and respondent's fears of rejection by them. And lastly one of the significant causes of exclusion prior to the research was the caste system – people can simply consider their caste an obstruction of birth registration.

4.3.1 Sources of exclusion from birth registration process

In the section of the survey exploring possible causes of exclusion from the BR process respondents were confronted with series of statements with which they agreed or disagreed. The research has proven that feeling of exclusion from the BR process is low among otherwise socially excluded communities in Terai (see table 6.). Neither families nor communities are obstructing registration and there is already a tradition of BR in both. Reportedly there is no rejection on side of VDC/municipality offices. People from research communities also do not consider their caste an obstacle for registration of their children.

Table 6. Forms of exclusion from BR process (in %)

Form of exclusion	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
Obstruction in family	0,7	0,0	1,4	26,1	71,7
Lack of tradition in family	0,0	1,4	1,4	21,0	76,1
Obstruction in community	0,7	0,0	0,0	23,2	76,1
Lack of tradition in community	0,0	1,4	1,4	24,6	72,2
Fear of rejection by authorities	0,0	2,2	0,7	34,8	62,3
Fear of rejection because of caste	0,7	1,4	0,0	26,1	71,7

4.3.2 Exclusion from the society

After analyzing results of both qualitative and quantitative research it is possible to state that people from Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities feel

extremely excluded from Nepalese society but they do not feel excluded from the BR process. Although there are no or minimal obstructions for BR in families, communities or on the side of authorities, there is extensive testimony of prevailing caste system and exclusive traditions or behaviour in the everyday life (see Box 10.).

Exclusion as a widespread phenomenon in Nepalese society was confirmed by key-informants as well. Increasing social inclusion is one of the major development challenges in the country. High rate of birth registration among excluded segments of population, such as Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities, is one of the ways of attributing more recognition and improving advocacy position to them.

Raising awareness not only about birth registration, but also about the linkages to other rights and services, is the first step toward a sustainable way of dealing with current issues of minorities in Nepal. People must understand that birth registration is a way of protecting themselves. For Badi community it is a way of reaching social grants and thus increasing their ability to give up livelihood of prostitution. For Muslims it is a way of proving they are citizens of Nepal. For Tharu is is one of the tools of solving their land-grabbing issues.

Box 10. Exclusion in Nepalese society – testimonies of research participants

"I was chased away from the village well." (Participant of FGD in Daulatpur)
        ***

"We are feeling excluded in Nepal. We are hard working force for other people. We have low status in the society but the problem is also that we Tharu are afraid to communicate more with the society." (Participant of FGD in Tikapur)
        ***

"Yes we feel excluded. We are illiterate. We have conservative thinking. We are poor. We don't have wisdom. Government has given facilities to us, but our corrupt leaders have alone enjoyed those facilities, reservations and quotas." (Participants of FGD in Gangapur)
        ***

„If we want to discuss social exclusion in Nepal, we have to consider religion especially. The caste structure is important characteristic of Hindu society. The problem lies in social structure itself. The inferiority structure is very hard to uproot from society. " (Interview in NEFAS)
        ***

„The exclusion has roots in Hindu caste society and also in language. Indigenous people are forced to speak Nepali to avoid exclusion for example in education. It is one of the major causes of exclusion for Janajatis and Muslims. Another cause is the religion - the government has no provision resources for all the religious groups. (Interview at Tribhuvan University, Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology)
        ***

"Motivation for change should be internal, not only external. And although on national level legal provision is now inclusive, on VDC and DDC level sometimes there are cases of people who are not treated according to law. "
(Interview in Forum for Women, Law & Development)

4.4   Conclusion

Awareness about birth registration and specific steps of the process is high among the research communities as was proven by the survey and FGDs as well. People from Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities also consider BR useful for their families. Infrastructure, time and finance has not been found to obstruct birth registration even in poorest households. Absolute majority of people register their children late – just when it is required by another institution (usually for school enrolment or to acquire citizenship). People therefore have to pay a fine for late registration. There seems to be no or only petty corruption in VDC offices regarding BR. People confirm that birth registration has had positive influence on their lives and do realize that it is connected to other rights and services. Therefore they are motivated to register children – the research has shown that around 80% of children are already registered. Although participants of the research verified that they are feeling highly excluded in Nepalese society, no exclusion from the BR process was discovered.

V. INFORMATION CHANNELS AND TRUST

Information shape societies, cultures, even families and individuals. Information which we have at our disposal have tremendous influence on our lives and decisions. Part of the research was focusing on channels through which information flow into research communities and who are the people attributed with trust. Such focus has two reasons – to find out why UBR campaign was successful or unsuccessful in the most excluded communities, and which channels or media could be used in future to provide information to people ostracized by society. It is also crucial to examine if provided information were helpful to the people.

5.1   Information about birth registration

"We have heard about birth registration from a child club." (Respondent Chisapani)

Participants were at first describing where they have learned about birth registration (see Figure 17.a,b). Afterwards the contact of households with "outside" world in a broader sense was examined. This contact concerned subjects which could have had influence on awareness about birth registration or about human rights in general. Participants of the survey confirmed that 63% of households are in some form of contact with VDC/municipality office, 62% have been in contact with local NGO(s), 43,4% have been in contact with INGO(s), 98,6% visit doctors and 76,1% are in some form of contact with teachers.

Figure 17.a: Information channels of BR into households
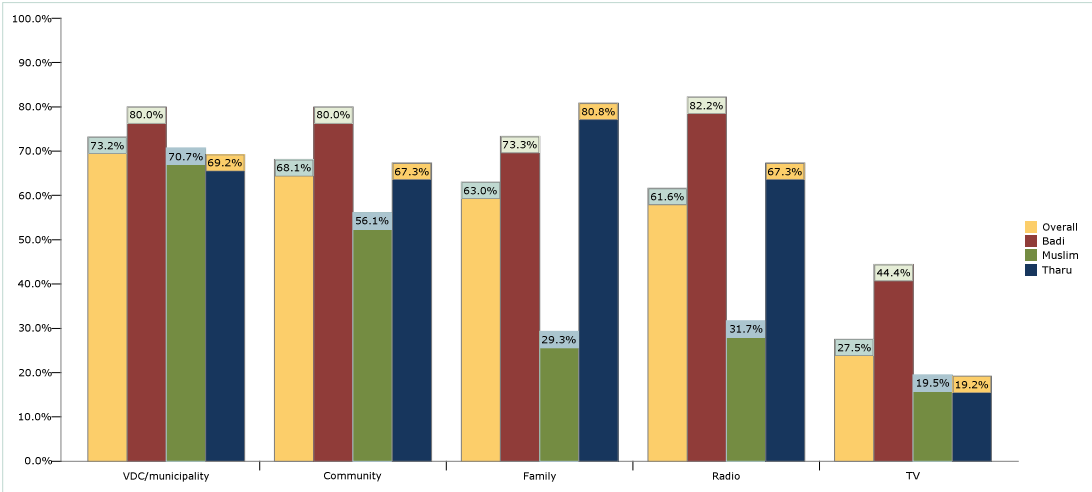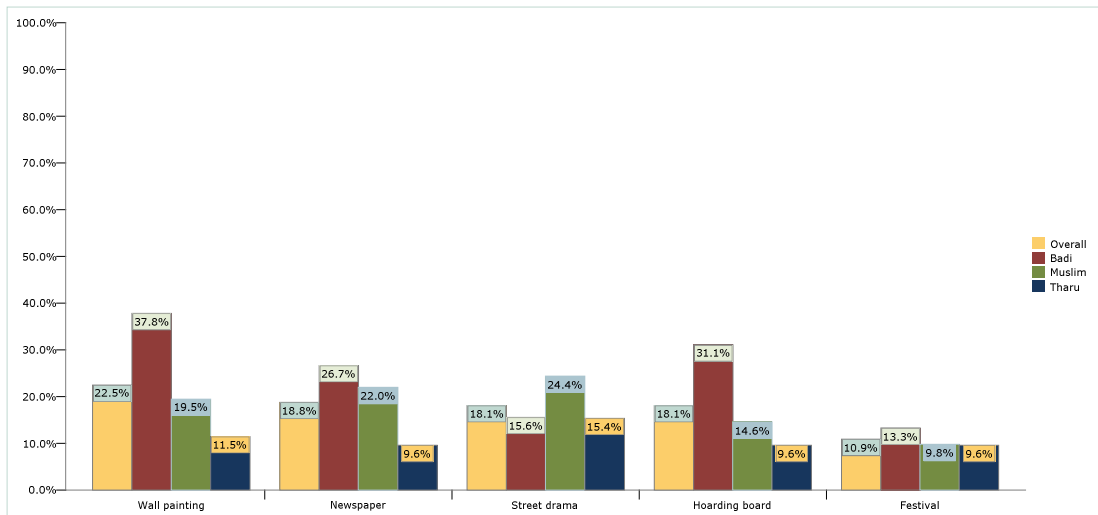
Figure 17.b: Information channels of BR into households

Such contacts are no doubt of high importance, for excluded people in particular. Similarly important is the fact if these contacts increase levels of awareness in respective communities and if previously provided information are considered important and useful by their recipients. 45,7% of households strongly agree and 38,4% agree with the statement "Information about rights are helpful to our family in any way." 11,6% were neutral and only 4,3% disagree, which proves that majority of households have very positive attitude towards learning about their rights.

5.2   Access to media

"We like to listen to songs on radio and watch news on TV, but the newspaper is not available here. Besides we can not read."(Respondent Rajapur)

Media are one the most important channels of information for every community. Within framework of this research the access to media means not only the presence of the particular media in the vicinity, but a confirmation that the household feels as a user of the media. For example, the specific household might be without electricity and therefore not in possession of radio or TV, nevertheless household members are able to listen to radio or watch TV elsewhere – in a neighbour's house or in TV hall. Same concept applies to hoarding boards – which might be nearby the household but is not used as an information source (e.g. because inhabitants of the household are illiterate). In this sense, 76,8% of households confirm access to radio, which is therefore the most widespread medium.

Even though families included in the survey are low-income households, the access to mobile phone reaches 62,3%. Slightly more than a half of the households watch TV (56,5%). 34,8% of respondents use hoarding boards as a source of information and 29% also newspaper. Very high percentage of households confirm that they have access to information through VDC/municipality offices (79%). Festivals are a common medium used to spread information in Nepal and almost all research participants (99,3%) confirmed that they celebrate and visit festivals. Figure 18. shows differences among the research communities.

Figure 18. Household access to information sources
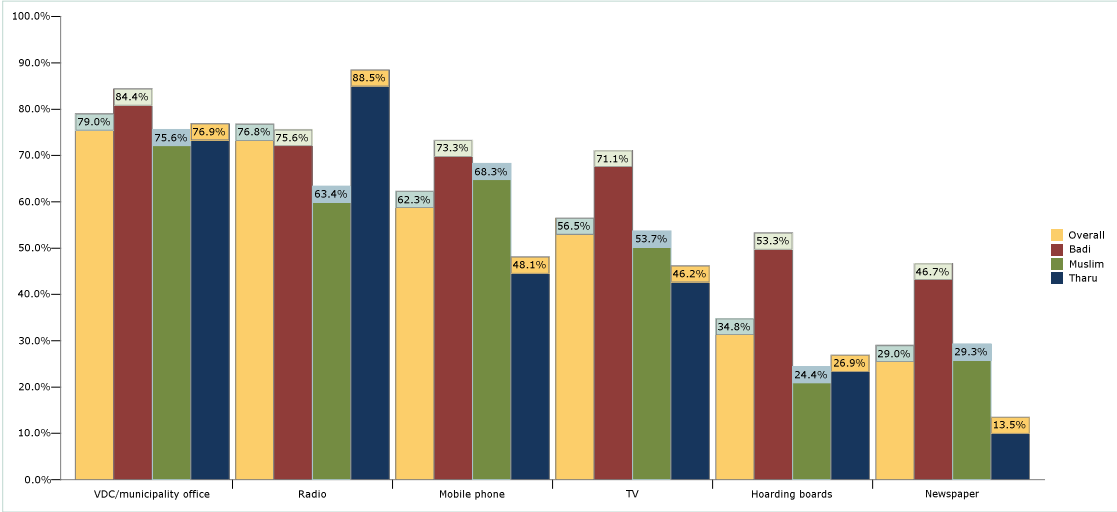
5.3   Trust and information channels into community and family

"The head of the household has the best information in this family, because he is THE household." (Respondent Tikapur)

The purpose of this part of research was to understand the patterns of information flow into communities and families. The data helps to explain why awareness about BR is high or low and also to design more advanced campaigns in future when working with excluded communities. Since social structure of each community is relatively different, the results must be taken into account separately and cannot be generalized. In Badi community the highest trust is put in community leaders and half of the households consider them the most trusted. Nevertheless it is important to stress that other 40% of households trust more other community members who might not be recognized as community leaders. Small number of

households do not trust anyone in their community and only negligible percentage of people trust the most the local badghar or the local politician.

The data shows that the trust in leaders in Muslim community is relatively low (17,5%), almost one third of all households prefer to trust other community member. Unexpectedly Maulanas and Imams were also not assigned with high trust. Relatively high number of people do not trust anyone in the community, which might be a sign of bad experience with leaders as well as with other community members in the past. There is also very little evidence of trust in local politician and VDC secretary. In small amount of households trust is put into own family. In few families the highest trust is given to Allah.

Tharu is the only among research communities with highly sophisticated indigenous system of governance which could be perceived as an advanced form of democracy (see sub-chapter 3.1.3). This system has major influence on information channels and levels of trust in Tharu community. Nevertheless since Tharu society was highly distracted by the "invasion" of civilization in past 50 years, it was necessary to validate prior expectations by the research. Surprisingly the research shows that badghars might not be the most trusted persons in the community – around one third of households identify them as the most trusted. Most respondents trust other community member (40,4%). Slightly over one in ten households trust the most the community leader. Similar amount of households do no trust anyone. Also Tharu community manifests very small trust into local politicians. Detailed result are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Trusted person in community (in %)

	Badi	Muslim	Tharu
community leader	51,1	17,5	13,5
other community member	40	30	40,4
no one	4,4	12,5	9,6
Badghar	2,2	2,5	30,8
local polititian	2,2	5	3,8
Imam	0	2,5	0
Maulana	0	12,5	0
VDC secretary	0	2,5	0
our family	0	5	0
cannot specify	0	7,5	1,9
Allah	0	2,5	0

Community leaders were identified as best informed persons in Badi community by approximately half of households. Around one quarter of participants suggest it is some other community member. Slightly more than one in ten households believe that is the local politician and almost the same amount of households think that it is one of the family members. Only in very few families badghars were specifically mentioned.

Over one third of respondents in Muslim community consider some other community member the person with the best information while only 17,1% think it is the community leader. One tenth of families identify head of the household or local politician as the most informed. Few think it is Maulana and only very few it is a member of the family other than head of the household. Relatively high number of households could not specify.

Same percentage of Tharu households consider either community leader or other community member as the best informed person (29,4%). Only around one quarter identify badghars as best informed. There is only small number of families who suggest that it is one of local politicians or the head of the household of the family. Exact results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Best informed person in community (in %)

	Badi	Muslim	Tharu
community leader	46,7	17,1	29,4
Head of the household	2,2	9,8	3,9
other community member	26,7	36,6	29,4
Badghar	4,4	,0	23,5
local polititian	13,3	9,8	5,9
member of family	6,7	4,9	,0
Maulana	0	7,3	,0
can not specify	0	14,6	7,8

The best information in Badi families is attributed to the head of the household or his female counterpart. Badi community is gender equal in terms of trust, possibly because women are the breadwinners. In slightly less than one tenth of households the highest trust is given to other male family member and in very few to other female family member.

Muslim households believe that the best informed persons in family are male: over 50% assign it to the head of the household and 17,5% to other male family member. In around every fifth household female counterparts of heads of the household are considered the most informed persons.

Tharu community manifests very strong belief that male members of families are the best informed persons, especially the head of the household (76,9%). Comparatively very small amount of households identify female counterpart of head of the household as the best informed person in the family (see Table 9.).

Table 9. Best informed person in family (in %)

	Badi	Muslim	Tharu
head of the household	44,4	52,5	76,9
female counterpart	42,2	22,2	15,4
other family member male	8,9	17,5	7,7
other family member female	4,4	2,5	0
cannot specify	0	5	0

Box 11. Information channels and community dynamics

Qualitative research confirms that information on BR originates from multiple sources. Especially significant sources are within families, among relatives, friends, from local leaders (formal or informal), teachers and VDC offices. Certain locations were influenced by campaigning. When it comes to media radio is the most common and most popular source of awareness. Mobile phones are widespread and there is also some access to TV – households without them often visit other places in possession of TV. Access to radio is obviously decreasing in locations without electricity. Access to newspaper is problematic since it is not available at many places or where people are illiterate.

"Our community gets information from the community leader. Radio is also very popular and we listen to it. Two people from our community are sometimes reading newspaper in the town of Lumki and they share the info they have learned with us afterwards. Another source of information are NGOs and INGOs such as SAFE, ActionAid or CSG. We share ideas to community leaders, we also listen to them when they have new ideas. If we want to say something to others, first we have to consult the leader. We would like to get more info from newspaper, but our access is quite low." *(Participants of FGD in Lamki)*

Dynamics in communities are more problematic and site-specific. Leaders are usually the most informed and most trusted persons in the community, but in certain cases some leaders were not popular, considered corrupt or simply not the most informed.

"We had a community leader - chairman - who was good but now he is corrupt. We now trust the most vice chairman and secretary. Everyone trusts these two. Why? They have struggled a lot for us. They equally give us information." (Participants of FGD in Lamki)
***

"Here we do not have any leader and trusted persons, who could raise our voice. All our leaders are bad and corrupt. They have done nothing for us and do nothing still. We feel we need a good leader. If we have a problem we directly take it to the respective authorities. We also do not believe any of our organizations, they are only making money, they do nothing for us. Neither will they in future."
(Participants of FGD in Nepalgunj)
***

"The Badghar is the most trusted person in the community. He is elected to provide information flow. Badghar is not very educated but he is experienced. One Tharu headmaster is also very trusted, he participates on meetings and takes lead when organizations approach the community. There is also one female teacher highly trusted. (Participants of FGD in Tikapur)

5.4   Communication patterns

The figure 19 represents the access of households to media and contact with different institutions in research communities. These findings suggest ways of approaching excluded communities during awareness raising campaign. For example, the absolute majority of households are in contact with health workers but deny receiving information on birth registration from them. The same applies to teachers. More than half of households have already encountered NGOs and INGOs in their vicinity and these contacts could be used instead of establishing new ones. An interesting position towards households is the one of the VDC. VDCs are highly appreciated as a source of information and many households are in contact with their offices. Such outcome suggests positive development of the relationship between the research communities and the authorities in the recent past and is definitively worth of receiving a further attention.

Figure 19. Access and contacts of households

When approaching communities directly, this study suggests that certain patterns of communication have better chances to succeed in raising awareness. It is crucial to find out who is the most trusted and informed person in the community. This is location specific and it is not always the community leader. Passing information to such a person should result in spreading it to majority of households, as suggested in figure 20. based on the results of the research.

Figure 20. Patterns of communication in community
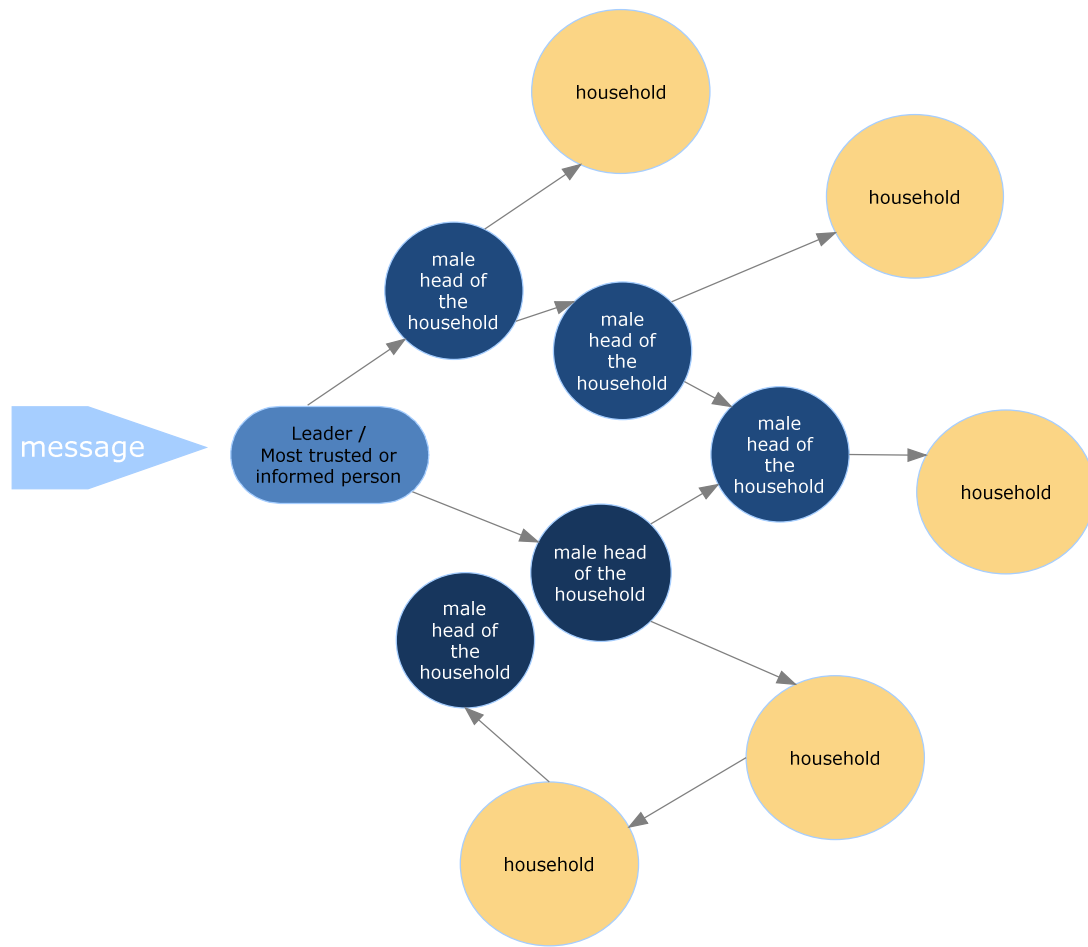
5.5   Conclusion

This chapter provided results showing how information on rights and services flow into communities. Surprisingly VDC/municipality offices are one of the most significant sources. Information is also, to large extent, shared in families and communities. The most significant media source of information is radio. Mobile phones are becoming incresingly widespread. Other media is less important for spreading information due to lack of electricity and finance or illiteracy.

The issue of trust in communities is location-specific. Community leaders are given relatively high trust, but in some locations they are considered corrupted or simply disliked. In such cases there is usually a more significant person in the community in terms of raising awareness about rights and services. In families the most trusted and best informed person is the male head of the household. This originates in traditional division of roles in Nepalese society. Communication patterns

in communities and families revealed by this study show that research communities have extensive contact with health workers and teachers but do not receive a lot of information from them regarding birth registration. Such contacts could be in future used for awareness raising with high chance of success. If specific information is passed to community leaders or most trusted and best informed person in the community, there is high chance that it will be passed to most of the households through the chain of contacts – the leader, head of the household and households themselves.

VI. DELIVERY SIDE OF THE BIRTH REGISTRATION SYSTEM

Last evaluation of birth registration system in Terai proves that delivery side of the system is one of the major obstacles in reaching higher rates of BR. Key research conducted in 2008 by MITRA, Ltd. (28 VDCs of 11 districts) shows that on VDC level secretaries are overloaded with work and suffer from lack of resources, record keeping systems at VDC level were insufficient, there is lack of disaggregated data on birth registration, some secretaries were absent due to security situation, old forms were used. DDCs are not utilizing provided support properly, e.g. logistics supports provided to few DDC registration units for updating and recording birth registration data are either not properly used, or only minimally utilized. The cumulative data of birth registration has not been used for planning purpose across all levels: local, district, and national. Overall the capacity required to deliver the birth registration services was still relatively low. Priority assigned to BR was very none or low. Part of this research was dedicated to asses any improvements in the delivery side after three years of further support and practice.

1.   Village Development Committees

"Incentive for coming early would be better than fining people for being late."

(VDC secretary, Chaulahi)

Observation shows that situation in VDCs is very location-specific. It is nevertheless possible to declare that state of offices is unsatisfactory. Most of visited

Photo 1. VDC office in Paraspur

offices were in working but bad condition, lacking any modern equipment which would improve their effectiveness. Data keeping system is based on paper documents and old filling systems which seem to be more or less in chaotic state. VDC secretaries were nevertheless able to provide books with data about BR and appropriate currently used forms upon request. Understanding of the process among secretaries is high as well as recognition of the value of BR for people. According to the conducted interviews there is some confusion about deadlines of registration and also about fees which VDCs are authorized to charge, but any investigation about corruption in VDCs was beyond

framework of this research. Secretaries in general still complain about work overload and suggest hiring an extra person who would be dealing only with vital registrations including BR. One of the major problems is still late registration – secretaries complain that majority of people come late just when birth certificate is required by another institution – to acquire citizenship, enrol child to school or to apply for some form of a grant. This phenomenon is causing distraction of data – it shows how many registrations there were in one month rather than how many children were actually born. Probably the most successful incentive for early registration has been the Child grant. Another problem is loss of certificates although it is not possible to say how many of them people lose. When BC is lost people come to VDC office and register again instead of requesting renewal of BC according to data in VDC registry. One of the secretaries was interviewed in DDC office where he resides when there is a threat to VDC staff.

In general all VDC secretaries confirmed that situation is improving and in excluded communities as well. The awareness raising campaign was a significant project to improve the situation and support provided by organization such as Plan extremely valuable. Secretaries also claim that they provide required date to their respective DDC offices.

2.   District Development Committee Banke

"VERS should be spread to the whole country."

(Planning and Administration department of Banke DDC)

DDC office and its Planning and Administration department as higher rank institutions are better equipped and of higher standard than VDCs. According to the interview there is a progress in the implementation of BR service in past three years and system has improved its functioning - especially when DDC, VDC and Plan has worked together on awareness raising and system support. Presence of Plan is very significant and without its support hardly anything would be improved. DDC realizes that situation in Terai is more favourable than in hills where bad infrastructure and poverty keeps birth registration rates low.

Photo 3. DDC office in Banke

DDC presumes that the major causes for low BR rates are illiteracy and poverty. People are aware about BR but assign it with very low

priority. DDC authorities confirmed that late registration and duplicating of BC and thus BR data is still a problem. DDCs therefore have to operate with distracted statistics which is provided to CBS and MLD as well. DDC does not perceive cancelling fees for registration as a solution for late registration since people would lose motivation to come to VDCs early enough. DDC staff desires more training in project writing to be able to fundraise more finance to improve DDC effectiveness also in terms of BR. Sharing of information with other DDC offices should also improve – there is hardly any communication now as DDCs simply report to relevant Ministries. VERS software has a lot of potential to improve the system, but in Banke it is not operational although it is one of the trial districts due to security threats. If VERS is expanded into Nepal there must be appropriate training provided to VDC and DDC staff. The data are provided by VDCs and in case they do not arrive DDC immediately requests them. DDC claims that data is used for budget allocation within district planning procedures.

3.   Ministry of Local Development

„The link to Child grant has increased the birth registration rates significantly."
(Bishnu Prashad Gauli, Chief Registrar of Population and
Vital Registration Events Department of MLD)

The building of the Ministry is an old colonial house in unsound condition. During the visit it seemed to be without electricity, there was hardly any security and no receptionist to guide visitors to desired departments. According to chief registrar there is a progress in BR system implementation in past three years but some major challenges still remain. The inclusiveness of BR is now satisfactory since exclusion factors were removed from relevant acts – same registration rules apply for all Nepalese citizens and gender equality was achieved as well. According to the Ministry the rates of BR are increasing. But BR has not been given appropriate priority even until now, there are simply more pressing matters in politics such as the peace process and constitution making. MLD claims that it is now creating linkages to other services provided by the government – such as the Child grant or Social Security Allowances for endangered groups. Among the problems recognized by the ministry are remoteness, the fee (which might be an obstruction for poor people) and lack of awareness. There are still many tasks to make the system more effective. Vital event registration is not included in the curriculum. MLD shall advocate that at least into the secondary level. The law is to be amended this or next fiscal year – it is still in the

original form (1976) – after consultation with the Ministry of Home, Ministry of Law and Justice and other stakeholders. Although the Vital registration system is working, the data are not sufficiently used enough for the planning process. MLD is convincing the DDCs to store the data and use them for planning and providing training in this field. In promotion DDCs, VDCs and municipalities organize rallies, some organize mobile registrations camps, broadcasting on local FM radio (in 73 districts) sometimes also about BR. According to the Ministry the best way of accessing the people is to establish the linkage between services and BR. Other ways are only means, they can raise awareness, but without the linkages the campaigning will not be as effective as the government desires. There must be motivation, people must be promised some advantages for registration. VDCs are considered the service delivery points, if they are functioning in this sense, the rates of BR will also increase.

6.4   Conclusion

The research has shown that the demand side of the birth registration service is satisfactory with minor problems in the practice itself. Assessment of the delivery side in this chapter revealed that in order to progress further towards universal birth registration in Nepal, the attention should be given to the registry system and its computerization. Vital Events Registration System is still not given appropriate priority as there is a lack of political will due to other developmental challenges. Especially on the VDC/municipality level offices are lacking proper registration tools and secretaries are overloaded with work. There is an improvement in terms of data collection. Nevertheless the data to a large extent fails to reflect the reality as people register their children late or even twice. Banke DDC office claims to use the data for planning but it confirms that it is problematic since the data is not accurate. The Ministry of Local Development confirmed that linkages between the birth registration and other rights and services are crucial for high registration rates. MLD is therefore focusing on improving these linkages, which is nevertheless very challenging.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The research confirms the basic paradigm of the Rights-based approach. Equal access to birth registration as a right and service is progressive in terms of development defined as improving people's lives, well-being, freedom, dignity, equality and agency (Manzo, 2002; OHCHR, 2006). People from research communities testified that birth registration is useful, it provides them with recognition and it links them to other rights and services provided by the state, even though they are among the most economically deprived population groups which are traditionally socially excluded. Research participants feel their lives have improved and that birth registration was a step forward in their struggle for empowerment. The research also validates that birth registration increases social inclusion, provides access to assets and increases participation within society. It increases sustainability of social development as it decreases dependency and grants more control of one's life (Brohman, 1996). It is a recognition of one's own social capital and it also boosts access to institutional capital (Desai and Potter, 2008). Local power relations and local decision-making has not obstructed development in case of birth registration as it sometimes may (Mohan and Stokke, 2000; Purcell and Brown, 2005).

Birth registration is an unambiguously proclaimed human right in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child and as such it should be implemented by all signatory states, including Nepal. In order to do that there is clear need of a functioning modern registration system. Research confirms that Nepalese authorities and institutions perceive malfunctioning registration system and lack of data as a major obstacle for development planning. The need of Vital Registration System is recognized not only for providing statistics and aid planning but as a tool of increasing inclusion and protection of Nepalese citizens. However, there is still a lack of political will and therefore a lack of resources, confirming Manzo's concerns that a fully operational registration system is seen rather as a luxury item following economical development and not as a *mean* of development encouraging overall progress in the society as argued by Manzo and Szreter (Manzo, 2002; Szreter, 2007).

In terms of awareness raising this research verifies its significance. Universal Birth Registration Campaign in Nepal proved to be an extremely valuable step forward on both delivery and demand sides of the service. There is now an improved knowledge and recognition of rights and responsibilities within the process and the campaign influenced also the most excluded groups in the Terai region of Nepal. It is crucial to stress that UBR in Nepal was highly participative and all the stakeholders were included in its execution. If we consider the research communities, we can state

that they have achieved all the five steps of adapting information: *knowledge*, *approval, intention*, *practice* and *advocacy* (ECCP, 2007)*.* People have knowledge about BR, they approve of it, they have adapted required behaviour, they now practice BR and also advocate its benefits further on. The only significant flaw in the process is the late registration within the practice.

The field research has brought results contrasting with the preliminary expectations, sometimes even completely opposite results. The first research question "How accessible is the birth registration for excluded groups and communities?" can be answered with confidence. Birth registration is highly accessible for excluded communities. Awareness is very high: almost all of the households have heard about BR, more than three quarters understand the process and Birth certificate correctly, and also consider BR useful. The orientation in the process and the relationship with authorities is also better than was expected. Almost all of the households know where to register and who has the authority to do so. Most of families understand that registration is a responsibility of parents, but as the decision-making in households is traditionally given to the male head of the household, he would be usually send to register children born or living in the house. Women in Nepalese society are currently given with more responsibility, gender equality is slowly raising and therefore change in this practice can be expected in the future.

Time, infrastructure and finance are among the major obstacles in birth registration in many developing countries (Cody, 2009). People from excluded communities in the region of Terai do not perceive these factors as problematic and obstructing birth registration. The absolute majority are able to reach respective offices without having to spent excessive amount of time or money on the registration. There is only petty corruption involved in the process and it has discouraged only a negligible percentage of participants.

The motivation to register is crucial for sustainability of registration in families and communities – positive motivation creates tradition. Poor and excluded people might not ascribe a high priority to birth registration with due to their daily struggle and soaring amount of pressing matters. Respondents on the contrary have very positive approach towards BR and consider it beneficial – it improves the well-being of their families. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents registered children late whenever it was required by another institution, for example a school. This fact has a positive and negative outcome. It is critical that people clearly realize linkages of birth registration to other rights and services and they confirm that BR has improved their

life in such sense. On the other hand, the practice to register children within given time limits has not developed. Unfortunately, BR is still not perceived as a primary procedure essentially following birth of a child but rather as a secondary one, after some other registration is required. Timely registration thus still remains a challenge among Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities. As the absolute majority of children in these communities are born at home, it is crucial to convince parents to perform early registration.

When it comes to rates of registration among these communities, the results again are surprising. Although the official estimate for the whole of Nepal is 35-40% of all children, the research shows that among Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities in Terai, the percentage is around 80%. Such result matches some official estimates and could be confirmed when the results of Population Census 2011 will be published. As Terai region has better infrastructure, it is clear that the situation in hills and mountains will be worse.

Very interesting result was revealed when inclusiveness of birth registration was examined. All Badi, Muslim and Tharu communities have a very strong feeling of exclusion in Nepalese society but do not feel any exclusion from the birth registration process. According to the participants, the service is highly inclusive on both the delivery and the demand side. This means that there are no obstacles in families, communities or the society and that BR is not restrained by the authorities either. The research thus proves that there is an improvement in empowerment of excluded people in Nepal but the inferior feeling of their own status is still very pressing.

The second research question "What are the patterns of communication regarding the rights and services in excluded communities?" has revealed that the Terai region is also more accessible in terms of information. Cooperation on the Universal Birth Registration campaign between Nepalese authorities, civil society and international institutions have proved to be successful and it has also raised awareness in traditionally excluded communities. Badi, Muslim and Tharu have better access to information than was previously estimated. According to participants of this research, information comes from multiple sources: authorities, media, local and international organizations, schools, etc. Radio and mobile phones are the two most accessible media. During this study, several patterns of communication and trust in communities and families has been discovered and these are possible to use for spreading information.

The last research question "What are the current issues faced by the Nepalese authorities in regards to the birth registration process?" was aiming to asses the delivery side of the birth registration. Although it is possible to state that the

awareness about rights and responsibilities in the birth registration process on the demand side has risen significantly, on the delivery side the progress was comparatively minimal. Both Village and District Development Committees are struggling with work overload, lack of resources, outdated record-keeping system. Research nevertheless also provides positive outcomes. VDC secretaries do consider birth registration their duty and they perform it principally in accordance with the law (although sometimes their information does not strictly match it). VDC secretaries confirm the fact that people in general register late and also cause duplicity in the data by registering again after a loss of Birth certificate. Therefore there is an element of inaccuracy present in the data which makes its usage problematic. VDCs nevertheless claim to provide required data to DDCs. The security situation within Terai region is very complex and some VDCs are not fully operational due to threats. Banke DDC confirms that it gathers data from VDCs regularly and submits them to the Ministry of Local Development. There is some improvement in the functioning of the system but it is not satisfactory. DDC office admits that without the strong presence of Plan in the region the progress would be none or very little. The MLD and DDC agree that VERS software has major potential to improve functioning and linkages of the registration system including birth registration. MLD however acknowledges that in the current political struggle it is too difficult to increase the priority of BR.

Recommendations

General

- Awareness of the service is high and the practice is established. Concentrate on improving the delivery system in order to achieve universal birth registration.

Demand side

- Promote understanding of benefits of early registration. Majority of children in excluded communities are born at home, therefore parents must be held accountable.
- Promote gender equality in terms of understanding who is the person responsible for BR.
- Promote good relationships between the citizens and their VDCs. Promote understanding of VDC as an institution that serves people.

Delivery side

- Focus on improving the system on all levels.
- Promote further computerization of the registration system and use of the VERS software. Provide more training on the system on all levels.
- Promote use of data for planning on all levels.
- Promote incentives for early registration instead of fines for late registration.
- Promote further improvement of linkages between birth registration and other rights and services in Nepal.
- Promote inclusion of birth registration into curriculum.
- Promote corruption-free VDCs.
- Merge activities and campaigns with more local, national and international institutions. Linking birth registration to vaccinations or Child grant is highly recommended.
- Most of the people have access to health facilities and use them, but almost none receive information about birth registration there. Promote spreading awareness by health workers, especially among those who assist with births (either at the facilities or in homes)
- Use primarily radio for awareness raising among excluded groups of population. Consider using text messages sent by phone directly to individuals.
- Use informal and entertaining techniques of awareness raising (song, popular TV series, comics for children etc.)

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Annexes

Annex 1. Maps of research VDCs

BANKE DISTRICT

Legend
Boundaries
Constituency
District
VDC
District HQ
Municipalities
1 Constituency Number

Map Locator

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
United Nations, Nepal

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

Map Created
4 March 2008

BARDIYA DISTRICT

Legend
Boundaries
Constituency
District
VDC
District HQ
Municipalities
1 Constituency Number

Map Locator

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
United Nations, Nepal

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

Map Created
4 March 2008

DANG DISTRICT

Legend

Boundaries
- Constituency
- District
- VDC
- District HQ
- Municipalities
- Constituency Number

Map Created
4 March 2008

5   2.5   0   5   10   15 Km

KAILALI DISTRICT
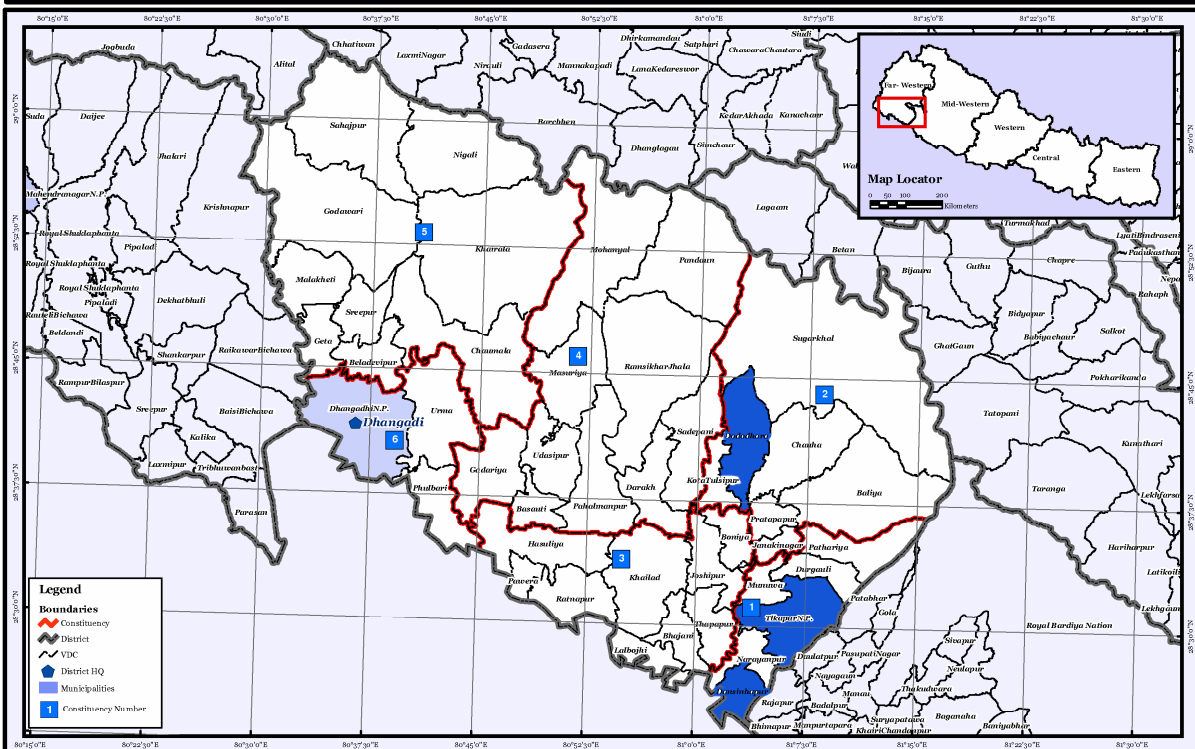
Legend

Boundaries
- Constituency
- District
- VDC
- District HQ
- Municipalities
- Constituency Number

Map Created
4 March 2008

5   2.5   0   5   10   15 Km

Annex 2. Structure of the Research

Overall research districts	**4**

Overall research VDCs/municipalities	**16**
VDCs	14
Municipalities	2

Survey - overall questionnaires	**138**
Badi	45
Tharu	52
Muslim	41
Gender distribution of informants	**male/female** **95/107**

FGDs	**9**	**Age**	**Location**
Muslim	men	15-25	Rajapur
	women	15-25	Gangapur
	men	25-45	Nepalgunj
Tharu	mixed	15-25	Tikapur
	women	25-45	Kohalpur
	men	25-45	Sonpur
Badi	mixed	25-45	Daulatpur
	women	15-25	Mudha
	men	15-25	Lamki

Key-informants interviews	**35**
Kathmandu	10
Nepalgunj	18
Field research	7

Annex 3. Structure of the survey

VDC/Munic.	No. of Q.	Male/Female		Community
Naubasta	4	3	5	Badi
Chisapani	14	7	15	Tharu
	3	2	4	Badi
Puraini	7	4	4	Muslim
Puraina	7	6	2	Muslim
Nepalgunj	2	2	3	Muslim
	2	1	2	Badi
Dansinhapur	6	4	6	Badi
Tikapur	9	4	8	Tharu
Gola	2	2	0	Tharu
	5	2	5	Badi
Patabhar	4	6	4	Badi
	2	4	0	Muslim
	7	3	5	Tharu
Rajapur	13	5	16	Badi
	3	3	1	Muslim
	13	9	8	Tharu
Kohalpur	7	2	6	Tharu
Dododhara	8	9	7	Badi
Gangapur	11	9	5	Muslim
Paraspur	9	8	1	Muslim

Household questionnaire

-Inclusive Birth Registration-

This questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous. It only gathers information about the Birth Registration. Honest and truthful information is crucial for the success of this research. The collected information will only be used for awareness raising about benefits of birth registration. The information you provide will be used only by Plan Nepal and University of Utrecht. There is no financial or other immediate benefit from this meeting, we are only students. Nevertheless in future this research can help international and local organizations to reach your community. Are you willing to spend half an hour with us, can we ask you some questions?

Household info (data filled by the researcher)
Location of the household:
Type of the house:
Location of the nearest VDC/municipality office:
Possible means of transport there:
Type of infrastructure:
Distance to VDC/municipality office in km:
Time to travel there:
Estimated costs of traveling:
Other estimated costs:

Household structure

	Name	Sex	Age	Relationship HH	education	main occupation		incomes
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								
16								
17								
18								
19								
20								

1) Have you heard about the birth registration?	Yes	No
2) Do you know what birth registration is? Describe in few words:	Yes	No
3) Do you know what birth certificate is? Describe in few words:	Yes	No

4) Where have you heard the message about birth registrations?

VDC/Municipality office	Children/Family/Relatives
Radio	Community/Friends
TV	Wall painting
Newspaper	Hoarding Board
Magazine	Feast or Fair
Street drama	Somewhere else:

5) Registration is beneficial for your family.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

6) What benefits of birth registration for your family were there in the past?

7) What benefits for your family you would expect from birth registration?

8) Do you think there is a link between birth registration and: (circle)

Identity	Health care	Citizenship
Legal personality	Voting in elections	Vaccinations
Food	School enrolment	Inheriting property
Passport	Government dev. planning	Child grant

9) Do you know how to register your children?
     Who in the family would do it?
     How would he or she or you do it?
	Yes	No

10) Do you know anyone in this community who registered their children?	Yes	No

11) It had benefits for these people

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

12) Do you know what is a VDC/Municipality building?	Yes	No

13) Do you know where your own VDC office/Municipality building is located?	Yes	No
14) Do you know who is responsible for birth registration in the VDC office/ Municipality building?		
	Yes	No
15) Do you know who is the VDC secretary?	Yes	No
Do you know who is the municipality registrar?	Yes	No
Name:		
16) Have you ever been contacted by any workers from VDC office/municipality?	Yes	No
Who:		
17) Have the municipality/VDC workers given you any information about your rights?	Yes	No
Which rights?		
18) Have you had any contact with international NGO?	Yes	No
Name:		
19) Have the INGO given you any information about your rights?	Yes	No
Which rights?		
20) Have you had any contact with local NGOs?	Yes	No
Name?		
21) Have the local NGO given you any information about your rights?	Yes	No
Which rights?		
22) Do you visit doctors or health workers?	Yes	No
23) Have any of these doctors or health workers given you any information about your rights?		
	Yes	No
Which rights?		
24) Have any member of your family learned any information about your rights from schools?		
	Yes	No
Which rights?		
25) Is your family in contact with any teacher from any school?	Yes	No
Which school? Name of the teacher:		
26) If you got any information about your rights, these information were helpful to your family in any way. strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree Explain:		

27) Who is the person in your community that you trust the most? Why?
28) Who is the person in your community that usually has the best information? Why?
29) Who is the person in your family that usually has the best information? Why?
30) Our household has access to: Radio   TV   Newspaper   Mobile phone   Hoarding board   VDC/Municipality office On radio we prefer to listen to: On TV we like to watch: In Newspaper we like to read:
31) We celebrate or visit festivals: Yes   No   Which:
32) How long would it take you to travel to nearest VDC/Municipality building?   Hours: Days:
33) We have enough time to register our children in our family. strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree
34) How would you travel? walk   bicycle   rickshaw   car   bus   taxi   other:
35) What are your daily activities?
36) How many hours do you spend everyday with your daily activities? 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   12   13   more
37) How many rupees would it cost you to register one child? Estimate: Travel: Accommodation: Food: Registration:
38) What are your monthly expenses?

Food:	School:	School:
Water:	Traveling:	Around the house:
Electricity:	Clothes:	Other:

I will now tell you a sentence and you will tell me if you agree or disagree. I want to find out if you feel there is some problem with the birth registration.

39) I can not register my children because my family does not want me to.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

40) I do not register my children because in my family we never do so.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

41) I can not register my children because my community does not want me to.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

42) I do not register my children because in my community we never do so.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

43) I can not register my children because I fear I would be rejected by the VDC/Municipality workers.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

44) I can not register my children because of my caste.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

45) I do not want to register my children because I can not afford to pay for it.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

46) I do not want to register my children because there is no practical use.

strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree

Personal Data										
Community:	Badi	Tharu		Muslim			Other:			
Location:	rural	urban		specifically:						
Type of family:										
Number of children:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Registered boys:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Registered girls:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Born at home:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Born at medical fac.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Born on "the way"	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Literacy:	Man/Husband		-reading		-writing					
	Woman/Wife		-reading		-writing					
Languages:	English		Nepalese	Tharu		Hindi		Awadi		other:
Participation in any organization:				Yes		No				
Which:										
Participation in any children club:				Yes		No				
Which:										

Annex 5. The structure of FGDs

FGDs
-Translator is given thorough instruction about the meeting.
-Location of the meeting is chosen – neutral ground if possible.
-The organizer provides food and drinks for the group.
-Preparation for data analysis: every member of the group is given a number. The -numbers are sequentially noted as different people speak for the purpose of later -transcription.
-The whole meeting is recorded.

Objectives:

1) to learn about community feelings about BR
2) to find out more about their motivation to register
3) to find out what is the best source of information for the community
4) to find out the best way of communication with this group

Community Data:

Households
Location of the households:
Location of the nearest VDC:
Possible means of transport there:
Type of infrastructure:
Distance to VDC in km:
Time to travel there:
Estimated costs of traveling:
Other estimated costs:
Community: Badi   Tharu   Muslim   Other:
Location: rural   urban   specifically:
Type of households:
Type of families:
Average children: 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9
Registered boys: 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9
Registered girls: 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9
Born at home: 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9
Born at medical fac.   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Born on "the way"	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Literacy:	Man/Husband		-reading		-writing					
	Woman/Wife		-reading		-writing					
Languages:	English	Nepalese	Tharu		Hindi		Awadi			
	other:									
Participation in any organization:			Yes		No					
	Which:									
Participation in any children club:			Yes		No					
	Which:									

1) Introduction of the researcher and purpose of the meeting. Informed consent.

This discussion is voluntary and anonymous. It only gathers information about the Birth Registration. Honest and truthful information is crucial for the success of this research. The collected information will only be used for awareness raising about benefits of birth registration. The information you provide will be used only by Plan Nepal and University of Utrecht. There is no straight and immediate benefit from this meeting, nevertheless in future this research can help international and local organizations to reach your community. There is no false opinion here. Everyone is encouraged to speak freely and to express your opinion. Everyone's opinion counts! We are here to learn about YOUR ideas.

2) Introduction of the participants

3) Questions:

1) What do you know about the birth registration in your community?
2) Are there any benefits of it?
3) Where is this community getting information from? (if you would like to inform a lot of people in this community how would you do it?)
4) Who is the trusted person in this community and why? Does this person provide information to the members of this community?
5) What media do you have access to and what programmes do you like?
6) Do you feel excluded in Nepal? What are the reasons for exclusion of this community? (if they feel excluded)

Notes:

Planning the Session

1. **Scheduling** - Plan meetings to be one to 1.5 hours long. Over lunch seems to be a very good time for other to find time to attend.
2. **Setting and Refreshments** - Hold sessions in a setting with adequate air flow and lighting. Configure chairs so that all members can see each other. Provide name tags for members, as well. Provide refreshments, especially box lunches if the session is held over lunch.
3. **Ground Rules** - It's critical that all members participate as much as possible, yet the session move along while generating useful information. Because the session is often a one-time occurrence, it's useful to have a few, short ground rules that sustain participation, yet do so with focus. Consider the following three ground rules: a) keep focused, b) maintain momentum and c) get closure on questions.
4. **Agenda** - Consider the following agenda: welcome, review of agenda, review of goal of the meeting, review of ground rules, introductions, questions and answers, wrap up.
5. **Membership** - Focus groups are usually conducted with 6-10 members who have some similar nature, e.g., similar age group, status in a program, etc. Select members who are likely to be participative and reflective. Attempt to select members who don't know each other.
6. **Plan to record the session with either an audio or audio-video recorder.** Don't count on your memory. If this isn't practical, involve a co-facilitator who is there to take notes.

Facilitating the Session

1. **Major goal of facilitation is collecting useful information to meet goal of meeting.**
2. **Introduce yourself and the co-facilitator, if used.**
3. **Explain the means to record the session.**
4. **Carry out the agenda** - (See "agenda" above).
5. **Carefully word each question** before that question is addressed by the group. Allow the group a few minutes for each member to carefully record their answers. Then, facilitate discussion around the answers to each question, one at a time.
6. **After each question is answered, carefully reflect back a summary of what you heard (the note taker may do this).**
7. **Ensure even participation.** If one or two people are dominating the meeting, then call on others. Consider using a round- table approach, including going in one direction around the table, giving each person a minute to answer the question. If the domination persists, note it to the group and ask for ideas about how the participation can be increased.
8. **Closing the session** - Tell members that they will receive a copy of the report generated from their answers, thank them for coming, and adjourn the meeting.

Immediately After Session

1. **Verify if the tape recorder, if used, worked throughout the session.**
2. **Make any notes on your written notes**, e.g., to clarify any scratching, ensure pages are numbered, fill out any notes that don't make senses, eta.
3. **Write down any observations made during the session.** For example, where did the

session occur and when, what was the nature of participation in the group? Were there any surprises during the session? Did the tape recorder break?

Annex 6. Statistical significance of specific variables

I. Correlation between household income and birth registration

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BR in households * income	Between Groups	(Combined)	,174	5	,035	,293	,916
		Linearity	,061	1	,061	,511	,476
		Deviation from Linearity	,113	4	,028	,238	,916
	Within Groups		15,561	131	,119		
	Total		15,735	136			

II. Correlation between location (rural, semi-rural, urban) and birth registration

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BR in households * location type	Between Groups	(Combined)	,006	2	,003	,026	,974
		Linearity	,006	1	,006	,050	,823
		Deviation from Linearity	,000	1	,000	,001	,970
	Within Groups		15,729	134	,117		
	Total		15,735	136			

III. Correlation between opinion on BR benefits and birth registration

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BR in households * br benefitial	Between Groups	(Combined)	2,325	3	,775	8,029	,000
		Linearity	1,004	1	1,004	10,403	,002
		Deviation from Linearity	1,321	2	,660	6,842	,001
	Within Groups		12,743	132	,097		

ANOVA Table

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	(Combined)	2,325	3	,775	8,029	,000
	Linearity	1,004	1	1,004	10,403	,002
	Deviation from Linearity	1,321	2	,660	6,842	,001
Within Groups		12,743	132	,097		
Total		15,068	135			

IV. Correlation between birth registration and understanding the BR procedure

ANOVA Table[a]

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BR in households * understand br	Between Groups	(Combined)	1,926	1	1,926	18,833	,000
	Within Groups		13,808	135	,102		
	Total		15,735	136			

Annex 7. Photos documenting the research

FGD with Muslim women in Gangapur VDC

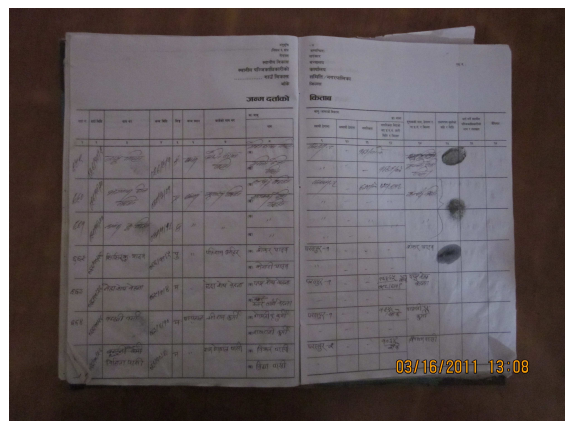Interview in Badi community in Lamki

FGD with Badi women in Mudha

FGD with Badi men in Lamki

Interview with Paraspur VDC secrretary

Records of BR in Paraspur VDC

Youngl Badi saved from pro-
stitution

Young Muslim girl with BC

Survey in Paraspur VDC

Reaching field research locations I.

Reaching field research locations II.

Tharu woman with traditional tatoo

Interview with Dinesh Pahadi, Chairman of
Parliamentary commission for Badi
community