1.1   Introduction

Education is a process of enlightenment an empowerment for the achievement of better and higher quality of life. Formally defined, education is the process by which society transmits knowledge, skills, and customs and values from generation to generation. Education can be defined as a means which ensures that the aims and habits of people are sustained from generation to generation. It is an experience which affects personal impressions of individuals, reasoning and the manner in which people act. Educational attainment is, without doubt, the most fundamental prerequisite for empowering women in all spheres of society. Education is a basic human right for all children, as recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Education is widely believed to be a key to the development of individuals, society, nation and the whole universe.

Education is a human right and is central to development, social progress and human freedom. Education of women is an important aspect for boosting the social and economic development of the country. *"...educating girls yields a higher rate of return than any other investment in the developing world "*(**Summers 1992**). Education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, protecting children from hazardous and exploitative labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and influencing population growth. Education is a path towards international peace and security. (**Kofi Anan, Secretary-General of the United Nations (Human Rights Watch, 2001).**

Although females represent half of the world's people, women and girls make up 70 percent of the world's poor and two-thirds of the world's illiterate population (**United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2011).** Worldwide nearly 1 billion people have had no schooling or left school after less than four years. Nearly two thirds are women and girls. An estimated 77 million children, 55% of whom are girls, are still denied any form of education (**UNESCO 2010**). Two thirds of the almost 800 million illiterate people worldwide are women (**UNESCO 2010**). There are still major obstacles in realising rights to education, in education and through education for millions. Gender inequalities are deeply entrenched in this denial of rights.

In the developing world, millions of girls still attend school for just a few years or have no access to education. With the recent drive for universal primary education, enrolments have risen dramatically since 2000: by roughly 20 percent in Africa, by about 15 percent in South Asia and by 10 percent in the Middle East and North Africa. Primary school enrolments of girls were already high in East Asia and in Latin America. Despite these gains, however, large shortfalls remain, especially in parts of South Asia and in parts of Africa. The shortfalls tend to be greatest where poverty is severe, in remote areas, and in areas where girls and women are more socially secluded or where conflict persists. Of the 100 million children still not enrolled in primary school, roughly 60 million are girls. Of course, enrolment does not automatically mean regular attendance. Moreover, reaching Universal Primary Education will not guarantee long-term educational success for girls. Millions more children, particularly girls, never reach or start secondary school, and transitioning girls to secondary school and keeping them there through graduation is a critical issue, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (**Herz, 2012).**

South Asian countries, where data is available, have made visible progress in the education of girls – as evident in the time series data of 1999 and 2004 on EFA indicators (**UNESCO, 2008).** Yet participation in basic education of children in general and girls in particular is still

unacceptably low. South Asia takes a fifth of the share (15.8 million) of the 77 million global children who were out of school in 2004, most of whom come from rural poor families having mothers with no schooling or literacy **(UNESCO, 2008).** Seventy per cent of these are girls. The figures on GER and NER in primary education and transition from primary to secondary general education are almost at par with those of the other developing nations but the gender parities do not compare evenly. Bangladesh, Nepal and India in particular have demonstrated the dividends of prioritized spending on girls' education and action-backed commitments to gender equality. The credit for the regionally competitive figures in those indicators goes largely to the outstanding progress made by these countries along with the historically maintained progress of Maldives and Sri Lanka. The table mentioned below presents clearer picture for this issue.

Table 1.1: Human Development Index (HDI) in South Asia (ranked from highest to lowest)

Country	Country HDI* (2012)	Inequality- adjusted HDI** (2012)	Gender Inequality Index*** (2012)
Sri Lanka	0.175	0.607	0.402
Maldives	0.688	0.515	0.375
India	0.554	0.392	0.610
Bhutan	0.538	0.430	0.464
Pakistan	0.515	0.374	0.518
Bangladesh	0.515	0.356	0.567
Nepal	0.463	0.304	0.485
Afghanistan	0.374	-------	0.712

Source: UNDP 2013, Human Development Report

Gender parities in primary education enrolment and transition to secondary general education too have improved since 1999 but are yet far from attaining full parity. This is also explained by the gender composition of the 15.8 million out-of-school primary school age children in South Asia with 11.5 million girls (70%) compared with 5 million boys belonging to this category. Availability of female teachers in schools, which is widely felt as one key factor to attract girls to school, is still very low with only 44 per cent of teachers being female. In South Asia as in Sub-Saharan Africa and West Asia, 'there are too few women teachers to attract girls to school and retain them' **(UNESCO, 2008).**

Education is central to developing a girl's capabilities, empowering her, promoting awareness and critical thinking, enabling her to claim all other human rights and make more informed decisions **(Sen, 1999).** Similarly in the word of **(Ghaida and Klasen, 2002)** *Educating girls is one of the most worthwhile investments available to governments* . Education enables girls and women to demand their right to health for themselves and their families, promotes development of legal and policy frameworks that are in tune with gender equity, and advances other policies that promote the fulfilment of all their other rights. It can also increase awareness of legal and judicial mechanisms to protect women from rights violations, including exploitation and domestic violence. It furthermore fosters women's participation in countries' democratic life, increasing their participation in decision making arenas and in formal power structures. Education can transform the unequal power relations which consistently play out in the home and public sphere in the lived experience of women's oppression. By providing the knowledge, skills and capabilities to make informed choices, protect and defend themselves from abuse and exploitation and achieve economic and social self-determination — education is an important catalyst to realize gender equality.

When a girl gets the opportunity to learn by accessing and remaining in good quality schooling it has a transformative effect not only on her own life chances and the realization of her human rights, but also on the wider social and economic environment (**Herz and Sperling, 2004; UNDP, 1995; The Girl Effect, 2010; ASPBAE, 2010**). Educating girls is the key to ensuring improved mother and child health, community development and economic growth.

Educating women and girls is often viewed in terms of the many positive benefits that education confers to them, their children and their societies. "Educate a girl and you educate a nation". This statement expressed by Kofi Anan clearly express the value of educating girls and women. Educated women can participate and contribute to a country's social, economic and political development. However, educating women and girls should, a priori, be viewed as a human rights imperative rather than one undertaken solely because of potential benefits to their children or to society. The right to education is an internationally recognized human right, to which women and girls are as much entitled as men and boys. **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948**) establishes every person's right to education. Inspired by the Universal Declaration, various international human rights conventions prohibit any discrimination based on sex or gender. Access to free, compulsory primary education is an inalienable right of every child — boys and girls alike — under all such conventions.

The right to education as an entitlement is inextricably linked with the right to education as empowerment. Women's right to education, both as entitlement and as empowerment, is established by the Convention on the **Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979**). The convention lays down the obligations of the states parties to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure them equal rights with men in the field of education" and "in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women" access to education at all levels and in all its forms. Every girl deserves equal opportunities in life; the opportunity to continue her education and live free from violence (**Save the Children, 2011**). The education of women and girls is essential not only to promoting gender equality, but also to addressing the full spectrum of 21st century challenges.

Although women are equal to males in number in Nepal, in social and economic terms this is certainly not the case. Gender discrimination against women is a profound factor that increases vulnerability to a range of socil, economical and psychosocial problems. Gender discrimination can be observed at all socio-economic levels and across all ethnic and religious groups. However, gender discrimination is most profound among conservative hindu groups and may be less severe in other ethnic groups. (**Kohrt et al., 2005; Tausig et al., 2004; Thapa & Hauff, 2005**).

In the past women were considered second grade citizens in most of countries including Nepal. The women of the third world are depriving themselves of their rights due to traditional beliefs, backward socio customs and superstition. And Nepal is no exception. It is true that due to the gender discrimination, the situation of women in developing country like Nepal is worse than in the developed ones, still at the beginning of 21st century the reasons are patriarchal attitude, conservatism, tradition, illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and superstitions women have been treated as second class citizens. They have also less prestige, power and privileges than their male counterparts in the society. (**Upreti: 1998**)

As a whole the socio-economic status of Nepalese women is generally lower than that of men. One tangible measure of woman's status is their educational attainment. Although, the female literacy rate has improved noticeably over the years, the level in the early 1990s full far short of the male level. In that period a direct correlation existed between the level of education and status. The Ninth five year plan states that in this competitive age on the eve of 21st century Nepalese women are still found suppressed exploited, neglected and forced to live insecure life because of illiteracy, ill health, poverty, orthodox, traditions and discriminatory legal system **(NCP, 1997).** Thus one of the objectives of the ninth five-year plan had been focused on women's empowerment for achieving its overall aim of poverty alleviation by ensuring women's share in decision making processes at all levels. However, despite the efforts of three decades seventy five percent of women are still illiterate, only two percent are first class officers **(Acharya, 1997).** Currently the overall literacy rate (for population aged 5 years and above) has increased from 54.1% in 2001 to 65.9% in 2011. Male literacy rate is 75.1% compared to female literacy rate of 57.4%. Equal opportunity in education for all is an important conviction which has been a symbol of our democratic society which means opportunity to obtain education should be equal to all. In spite of this education for women has lagged behind.

Within the past decade, many policy initiatives have led to great progress in the right of girls to education, guided by international frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 2 and 3) and the Education For All goals (EFA goals 2 and 5):

MDG 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Target: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Target: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

EFA goal 2: Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

EFA goal 5: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

These policy initiatives have been motivated and backed up by numerous studies showing that educating girls can make more dramatic positive changes than any other single intervention – both for the individual and for society as a whole. Former UN Secretary General **(Annan, 2004)** expressed that, "Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls and the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, or improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS."

Widening access to education has been a major policy goal in most developing countries for past few decades. In spite of, all the above mentioned policies and the great expansion of educational opportunities worldwide in modern time, girls and women in most developing countries still lag behind in educational attainment than men. Why, then, do girls and women in much of the developing world continue to lag behind men in measures of educational

attainment, including literacy, length of schooling, and educational achievement? To seek the answer of aforementioned question, the researcher was stimulated to conduct the present study.

1.2 Nepal at a Glance

Nepal is a multilingual, multi-cultural and multiethnic country. Located geographically between the most populous countries worldwide, China and India, Nepal is a small buffer state, covering 0.03% land in the world with a population of 26 million (**CBS, 2011**). Despite its small size, Nepal is an extremely diverse country. Nepal covers a land area of 147, 181 sq km, has an average length of 885 km and an average width of 193 km. Ecologically it is divided into three Zones, the Terai in the south covering about 23% of country, hills in the middle comprising 42% and High Mountains in the north covering 35% of the country land. Administratively it is divided into five development regions, 14 zones and 75 districts. A majority of people (85%) live in rural areas following the agriculture as their main occupation. Politically, it has been a democratic republic country after ten years of civil war between the army and a Maoist insurgency in 2006 (**Adhikari, 2013**). The altitudes in the country vary dramatically from a minimum of 60 m in the low lands to a maximum of 8,848 m in the Himalayas, including seven of the ten highest mountain peaks in the world.

The 2011 Census reports 125 caste/ethnic groups which socially segment the 26 million of people of Nepal as well as 123 different languages, with Nepali as its official language (**CBS, 2011**). The other minority languages are recognized by the constitution, but are not for official use (**Groot, 2007**). It is a Hindu country comprising 86% of the population. Similarly 8% people are Buddhists, 4% are Muslims and the remaining 2% people belong to the other religions. Likewise, about 90% people speak Nepali as the official language. All these factors presumably affect equity in education, particularly in a country of limited financial resources and relatively low levels of economic growth and overall development.

 Nepal is currently the poorest country in South Asia and the 13th poorest in the world with a Gross National Income of 540 USD per capita (**World Bank, 2011**). According to the **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Census, 2012,** more than half of the Nepalese population lives below the international poverty line. Moreover, the child mortality rate of 48 out of 1,000 under-five-year-olds is more than twice the East-Asian average (**World Bank, 2011**). Ranked 157th out of 186 countries, Nepal has the lowest Human Development Index in South Asia and the Asia Pacific region (**UNDP, 2012**). The Gender Inequality Index ranks Nepal 113th out of 141 countries (**UNDP, 2011**).

1.2.1 Education System in Nepal

Moreover, formal education in Nepal has only a short history (**Acharya, 2007**). As argued by (**Acharya, 2007**), "education has traditionally been seen more as a development tool than a right of an individual, reinforcing existing caste- and gender-based discrimination, rather than challenging them". Education in Nepal has only recently started to develop. The Rana regime (1847-1950) has suppressed education so much that it was never encouraged in the country. Thus the modern school in Nepal began after the establishment of the first school in 1853 which was open only for the ruling families and their courtiers. This did not change until 1970s (**CERID, 1997; Bista, 2001**). The schooling for the public started after 1951 when a popular movement ended the autocratic Rana regime and initiated a democratic system. Starting from about 300 schools and two colleges with about 10,000 students in 1951, there now are 49,000 schools, 415 colleges, six universities and two academies of higher studies (**Pandey, 2011**). After the popular revolution against the autocratic Rana regime in 1951, it

was attempted to establish a national education system. Then, in 1975, the primary education was made free and the government was responsible for providing school facilities, teacher and free educational materials, however the majority of the children, mainly the girls were out of school because the education for females was viewed unnecessary. And the education was mainly the urban based. Hence, the majority of schools were built only in urban areas. So, if families wanted to educate their children they had to send them away to city area which was very expensive. Today most programs seem to integrate a literacy component which represents that the gender gap in school enrolment has declined and literacy programs are widespread in the country **(Tuladhar, 2005).** A government report from Nepal showed that the rate of girls' dropouts has increased by 6 percent in the span on seven years, where the girls' dropout rate in 2001 was 6.5 percent while it rose to 12.5 percent in 2007.According to **(UNICEF, 2007),** the literacy rate in south Asia has increased where 74% of primary school age children are enrolled.

The education system in Nepal consists of primary, lower secondary, secondary and higher secondary education. Formal schooling starts at the age of five. Primary schools offer five years of education and are followed by lower secondary schools providing further three years of education. Secondary schools offer two more years of education and conclude with the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examination. Intermediate or higher secondary schools offer two more years of education after the SLC to prepare students for university. Since 2009, the government of Nepal has been implementing the School Sector Reform Plan, which aims to restructure the system to only comprise basic education (consisting of grades 1-8) and secondary education (consisting of grades 9-12) **(MoE, 2009).** Currently, a mixture of the old and the reformed model is operating, dependent on the individual school **(MoE, 2012b)**. Table 1.2 illustrates the formal education system in Nepal.

Table 1.2: Education system in Nepal

Age	Grade	Education System	
		Old System	New System
16	12	Higher Secondary Education/Intermediate Level (Grades 11-12)	Secondary Education (Grades 9-12)
15	11		
14	10	Secondary Education (Grades 9-10)	
13	9		
12	8	Lower Secondary Education (Grades 6-8)	Basic Education (Grades 1-8)
11	7		
10	6		
9	5	Primary Education (Grades 1-5)	
8	4		
7	3		
6	2		
5	1		

Table 1: The Nepalese Education System (MoE 2012b)

Similarly, higher education in Nepal consists of bachelor, master and Ph. D. levels. Some universities offer M. Phil and post-graduate diplomas. The higher education in the country like elsewhere is the sole responsibility of and administered by universities and institutions of higher learning. Currently, it has six universities where 5 are public and one is private.

Nepal has legally a dualistic school system with both public and private schools. Education in private schools is expensive and typically affordable only by the higher class family. Most private schools have English as the language of instruction and many also use computers in the curriculum. Private schools in general have better facilities and are better managed and have been showing a much better performance in the SLC examinations, however the quality in these schools are as well not consistent. 'A level' private school are well managed and run by charity organizations, companies and trusts, on the other hand, so- called private schools operated by business minded people in semi-furnished residential housed. Government (public) schools are directed, owned and funded by central government and private (institutional) are owned by individuals, religious organizations and non- government sources. The third type of school is a community school run (managed and supported) by the local people, which does not get the regular financial support from the government and also has no other sustainable financial sources. Over all, the government controls the system of

education and overview in all perspectives focusing on the quality. Thus, private schools, colleges, universities all have to be approved by the government. The system is carried out under the Ministry of Education and the Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB).

The Ministry of Education **(MOE)** is responsible for educational planning and management as well as in improving service delivery system across the country aiming to produce healthy citizens who are familiar with the national tradition, culture and social environment in daily life and aware of scientific issues creative, cooperative and able to contribute to economic development **(Tuladhar, 2004).** The ministry, as a part of government bureaucracy, providing the political leadership, is headed by the Secretary of Education and consists of the central offices, various functional offices and offices located at the regional and district levels. Also the ministry has established five regional directorates and 75 district education offices in five development regions and 75 district respectively which are responsible for overseeing non-formal and school level education activities in their respective areas, where as Regional Directorates are mainly responsible for coordinating and monitoring and evaluation of education activities and the district education offices are the main implementing agencies. In addition, NCED, an apex body for teacher training, has been running 34 Education Training Centres in order support the teachers in pedagogical areas by implementing Teacher Education Project to train the pre-service and in –service teachers all over the country. Women's education in the country is disappointing. However, the following table on literacy shows a positive development from 1991 to 2001.

Table 1.3 Literacy Rate in Nepal in Different Census Years

Sex	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Male	9.5	16.3	24.7	34.9	54.8	63.85
Female	0.7	1.8	3.7	11.5	25.0	38.7
Total	5.3	8.9	14.3	23.5	39.6	51.27

 (Census Reports, Bureau of Statistics, 2002-Kathmandu, Nepal)

According to **UNESCO Institute for statistics (2002),** literacy in the population from 15 years and above is 63% in 2005 and 67% in 2007. Similarly, **Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS-III, 2010-11)**, shows that most recently Nepal has an adult literacy rate of 56.6% with a disparity between males and females, where the male literacy is 71.6% and female is only 44.5% with a Gender Parity Index (GPI) at 0.62 women lagging behind men by whopping 27%. In a sense, this is an impressive achievement However, in Nepal, women's low participation in educational activities whether in the formal sector or in the non- formal sector is still striking. Also, the participation of girls in vocational, higher and technical education is very low where most of the dropouts occur during middle and high school level. According to the census report (2001), the literacy rate of 6 years and above is 53.7 % (65.0 % for male and 42.5% for female).The literacy rate of 15 years and above is 48.8 % (62.7% for male and 34.9% for female).

To sum up, the literacy rate in Nepal varies significantly according to gender. Thus, the female literacy rate in the country is 42.8% whereas male literacy rate is 65% **(Tuladhar, 2004).** As education levels increase, women school attendance decreases while 77 women had primary education per hundred men with similar level of education in 2001, only 43 had SLC certificate. In addition, as education is a key in the continued economic and social development of the country, Nepal has been making efforts to provide access to primary as well as secondary school to children through various programs in order to achieve the goal of

Education for All **(EFA)**. Despite efforts such as literacy campaigns and free education for children, education is not accessible to all due to its indirect cost (ibid). Therefore, even basic education is still a privilege enjoyed only by a segment of population regardless of cost. Almost 14% of children of primary school age are still not enrolled **(GoN, 2006)**.Thus the country is still facing the challenge to achieve EFA.

Fig No. 1.1: Map of Nepal

1.3   PROFILE OF STUDY AREA

1.3.1   Geo-physical Settings

Siraha is the smallest district in area of the Sagarmatha – Zone which comes under the eastern development region of Nepal. Siraha district lies between Latitude 260 33' to 260 55' due North and Longitude 86.06' to 86.26' due East. Its elevation from the sea level ranges from 76 to 885 meters. The average length and breadth of the district is 29.9km (East-West) and 42.4km (North-South) respectively. With Siraha Bazaar as its district headquarters, the district covers an area of 1,228km2 and caters for a population of 637,328 **(DDO, 2014).** There are 106 Village Development Committee, two municipalities and six election constituencies. Above all VDCs are located at a longitude of 84'E latitude 0'N. The district is surrounded by Saptari in east, Udaypur in north, Sindhuli and Dhanusha in west and India in south. The total agricultural land of this district is 76878.5 hectare of which only 34.78 percent lands have irrigation facility **(CBS, 2013)**. The population ethnically diverse, although the majorities 85.02 percent are Madheshi speaking indigenous Terai people. The dominant caste is Yadav i.e. 24.15 percent. Out of total population, 90.88 percent people are Hindu and 7.18 percent caste is Muslim and 1.74 percent is Budhist. Various types of ethnic/caste groups like Yadav, Musahar, Muslim, Koiri, Chamars, Teli, Sudi and Tharu etc are residing in this district . The village development committees are not so, easily accessible by means of physical infrastructure such as road, water supply, primary health, electricity, communication etc. The VDCs comprises many types of indigenous castes which are dominated by Yadav, Teli, koiri, Sudi, Brahmin (hill).

Table No. 1.4 Population Description

Total Population	637,328
Male	310101
Female	337227
Population Growth Rate (Per Year)	1.134%
Total Number of Household	117962
Members Per Family	5.4
Sex Ratio	94.77
Population Density (Per Square Km.)	536.4

Source: Distict Development Office (2014)

The Siraha - District lies in Terai which has tropical and sub-tropical climate. The maximum recorded temperature is 400 C in the month of May and June, and the minimum recorded temperature is 200 C in the month of January. Rainfall, mostly starts from the end of May and lasts for three or four months till August and sometimes till September in accordance with extent of monsoon. Study sites receive approximately 1,467 mm rainfall annually **(District Weather Record, 2006).**

1.3.2.   Configuration of Social Fabric

As per the Census of 2013, the total population of Siraha was 637,328. Out of the total population, 310,101 are men and 337,227 are women with population having an annual growth rate of 1.134% **(DDO, 2014).** The population density is 536.4 per sq. km **(DDO, 2014).** The literacy rate of men and women is 55.5% and 44.5 % respectively.

1.3.3.   Background of the People of the Study Site

Before 1920, Terai (Siraha) District was considered the Kalapani due to prevalence of deadly malaria disease (**Gaige, 2009 & Shah, 2007**). The settlement in the area had been avoided by the hill people because of the presence of the malaria. Only the Terai ethnic group Tharu existed mainly much longer as they have developed strong natural immunity against malaria. The launching of "Malaria Eradication Programme" in the late 1950s had encouraged a heavy migration of hill people to the Terai. Hence with arrival of hill people who brought new culture and technology of intensive farming, trade and business have changed a lot in the nature of the entire socio-cultural and economic activity of the area.

Caste Hierarchy in the Study Site

Caste hierarchy is quite unique in Hindu society of Nepal. In general, Nepalese society is based on caste hierarchy where people are divided into different caste groups. The caste structure of the society is characterized by hierarchy on system of subordination held together by relation of superiority and inferiority at the apex of which are Brahmins and at the lowest rank are Sudras.

Population/ Ethnic Composition

Siraha is known as heterogeneous district in terms of the caste ethnic composition. The total population of Siraha – District is 5,69,880 (male: 3,10,101, female: 3,37,227). The caste/ethnic groups : Yadav, Muslim, Musahar, Koiri, Teli, Tharu and Chamar are larger in number respectively but the dominant caste/ethnic groups are Yadav, Muslim, Teli, Tharu, Chhetri, Brahman-Hill, Brahman-Terai, Newar and Koiri (**DDO, 2014**).

Language and Dialect

The study site is more heterogeneous in the nature of language. The major languages spoken in the Siraha district, on the basis of Population Census, 2013 is given in the following figure.

Fig No. 1.2: Percentage of Population by Major Spoken Languages
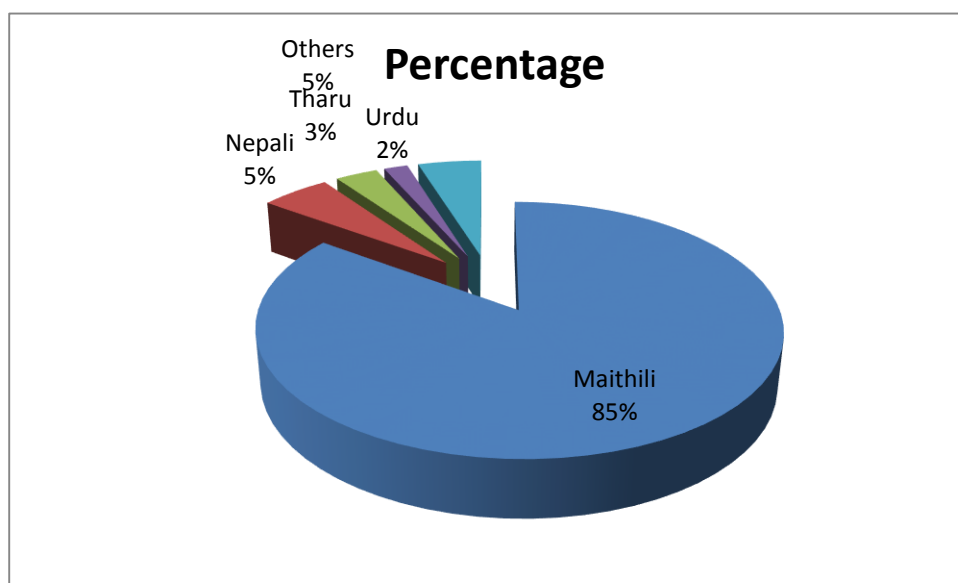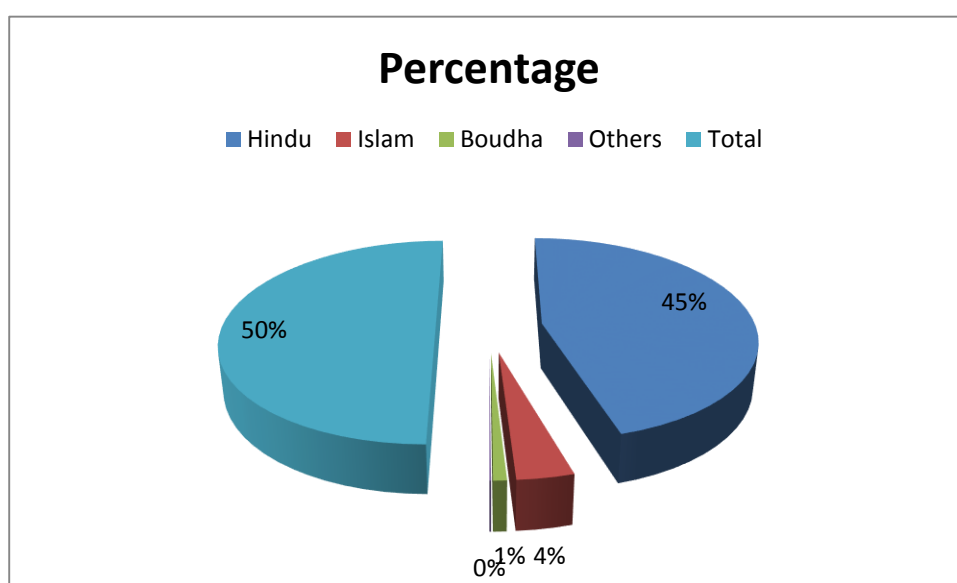

Source: CBS, 2013.

Generally, Maithili is the main language in the study sites. However, different castes of this area use Nepali language as lingua franca despite their own native language/dialects in their households.

Religion

The study site is more religious. Hinduism is the main religion followed by different caste/ethnic groups. However, they follow their different cultural practices.

Fig No. 1.3: Percentage of Population by their Major Religion


Source: CBS, 2013.

The above figure reveals that there are four types of major religions in the study site. Hindu is the main religion of the study sites.

Occupation

The people of the district are involved in different occupations. The major occupations are agriculture, business and government services. The majority of the people are involved in agriculture. The average household farm size in the district is 1.09 hectares **(CBS, 2013).** Most of the VDCs' household farm size is small (less than 2 ha). Bishnupurkatti VDC has a majority household farm size of more than 3 hectares. The density of the population relying upon agriculture is higher in the VDCs which have smaller farm sizes. This means that the larger population depends on the smallest division of agricultural land in the district. The irrigation facilities in the district are good compared to the other districts. The irrigated land in the district is 38.13 % of the total agricultural land **(CBS, 2013).**

Agriculture is the main occupation of the study sites. A vast majority of the people have to supplement in with either caste based occupational work or wage labour or both.

Fig. No. 1.4: Percentage of Population by their Main Occupation
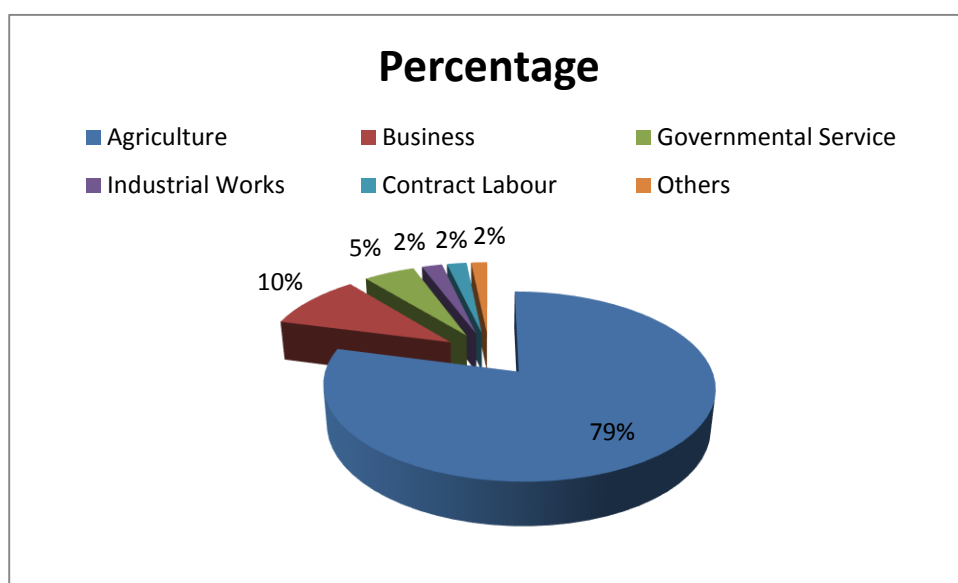
Source: District Profile, 2014.

The above figure shows that agriculture is the main occupation of the study sites. Similarly, business, industrial works, governmental service and contract labour are other means of occupation respectively.

In the past two decades, the percentage of people going to Arab and other Asian countries for employment has been increasing. With regard to the foreign employment statistics, the trend has been more prominent in Siraha with approximately 18% of young people migrating for foreign employment since 1996.

Household-level Capabilities

The literacy rate in the district is still low compared to the hilly districts. As of the 2001 census, the district had a literacy rate for men and women of 43.5 and 13.3% respectively. The gender ratio of the district was found to have increased to 106 in the census of 2001 from that of 1991 when the gender ratio was 105.

In spite of that, one of the growing strengths of the district is reflected in the educational attainment which is rapidly progressing, as seen in the following table

Table No. 1.5: Trend in Sex Ratio and Literacy Rate (DoE 2009)

Particulars	1981 census	1991 census	2001 census	2009 projection
Sex ratio	108	105	106	132
Literacy rate %	17.6	29	40.31	47

Table No. 1.6: Educational Facilities in Siraha (DoE 2009)

SN	School	Community	Private	Total
1	Primary	282	41	323
2	Lower Secondary	37	6	43
3	Secondary	47	15	62
4	Higher Secondary	4	3	7
	Total	370	65	435

The infrastructure of road network is one of the most important indicators of the capacity in linking the district to the outside world. The district has a total of 195 km of black-topped, gravelled and earthen road network. The status of the major roads in the district as of 2009 is shown in the following table.

Table No. 1.7: Motor-able transportation network in Siraha

SN	Road Network	Span (km)	Status	Remarks
1	East West Highway	40	Black topped	
2	Choharwa-Siraha-Madar	234	Partial BT	Black topped only up to Siraha
3	Siraha-Kalyanpur-Mirchaiyya	23	Gravel	
4	Kamala-Balan (Hulaki road)	29	Gravel	Need culvert (bridge)
5	Zero Mile-Bariyarpatti	18	Gravel	
6	Lahan-Bhagwanpur	18	BT andGravel	
7	Goal Bazaar-Langdi Gadiyani	26	Earthen	
8	Dhangarhi-Maheshpur pattari	18	Gravel	

The major commercial centres in the district are: Mirchaiyya, Goal Bazaar, Lahan, Siraha, Bhagwanpur, Thadi, Bariyaratti, Sukhipur and Kalyanpur. On average, the district is food sufficient and people enjoy comparative comfort in terms of economic gains. There are a total of 1,090 industries functioning in the district **(DDO, 2009).** The recently expanding Maruti cement industry and many other agricultural processing plants are indicators of growing options for economic opportunities in the district.

The nearest airport is at Janakpur, near the Indian border in Dhanusha District, a two hour drive from Lahan. There are no railways. Public transport is by bus or truck. Private transport is by jeep and automobile on the paved roads and on some side roads during the dry season. The district is bisected by the Mahendra Highway (Mahendra Rajmarg; sometimes called the "East-West Highway"), a mostly paved roadway which serves for transport of local products traded in and out of the district, and for incoming commercial and industrial items. Most inhabitants walk, bicycle or use bullock carts. The public bus system is used for travelling long distances.

1.4 Madhesh and Madheshi

1.4.1 Madhesh

The term Madhes implies to the Gangetic plain and the Vitri Madhesh area bordering India on the southern side and spreading north up to the foothill of Siwalik range. The word Madhesh is derived from Sanskrit word 'Madhyadesh' which extends from the foothill of the Himalayan region in the north to the Vidhyachal Mountain in the south situated in central India. Though the terms Madhesh and Tarai are used synonymously, it is important to note that Madhesh does not cover all parts of Tarai districts; it excludes Siwalik and mid mountain areas. Madhesh is a well defined ecological region, which is approximately 885 km long from its western boundary, the Mahakali River, to its eastern boundary, the Mechi River while its average width along its entire east-west axis is only 26 km varying from 4 km to 52 km.

1.4.2 Madheshi

Madheshis are the non-hill origin people living in Madhesh region. The Madheshi community is composed of the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Baisya and Dalits, and indigenous Janjati ethnic groups, other native tribes and Muslims. **Gaige (2009)** used the terms 'hill people' and 'plains people' living in Tarai districts, and defined a) "plains people are those who speak plains languages as their mother tongues or first language, whether they were born or live in the plains or hills"; the plains languages being Maithili, Bjojpuri, Awadhi, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali, and dialects of these languages used by Janjati groups, and b) "hill people whose mother tongue or first language is one that predominates in the hill region of Nepal such as Nepali, Newari, Magar, Gurung, Rai and others. Sociologically, hill people belong to Hindu caste groups, hill Janjati groups and Newars. The hill people are also called 'Pahadi' or 'Pahadiya'. **Dahal (1996)** divided Madheshi community into four groups a) Indigenous Janjati ethnic people living in Madhesh for generations, b) people belonging to traditional Hindu caste hierarchy, c) businessmen of Indian origin e.g. Marwadi, Sikh and others, and d) Muslims.

1.4.3. Historical Background

Madhesh has a long historical background dating back to the kingdom of Videha or Mithila established in eastern to central Madhesh and a part of the present day north Bihar, India **(Malangia, 1997).** In the mid western Madhesh, Shakya kings ruled in 600 BC, the Buddha belonging to the Shakya dynasty was born in 563 BC. Similarly, kingdoms were established in Simraun Garh in the present day Bara district. In Madhesh, several kingdoms were established and ruled by many dynasties **(Thakur, 1956),** which all perished with time and were abandoned and the land converted into forests. **Gaige (2009)** concluded: "the ancient and medieval history of this region is a cyclic one in which men and forests have dominated in terms". Many ruins which are still to be identified and properly studied would tell the ancient history of this region. The history of Kathmandu Valley and some hill regions have been studied and reported by Pahadi scholars and historians in much detail while they ignored Madhesh region. Again, there are very few Madheshi historians and scholars who due to lack of resources have not yet studied in detail the complex ancient history of Madhesh. In recent decades, Lumbini area in Madhesh, the birth place of Buddh, received worldwide recognition and support for meaningful excavation, detail study and renovation of key sites.

The Madhesh region was annexed to Nepal during the Nepal unification period beginning the mid 1770s by Prithivi Naarayan Shah, however, much of the ancient Madhesh areas ruled by various kings and principalities for centuries are now in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh states of

India. Again, the Anglo-Nepalese war between 1814 and 1816, and the resulting Treaty of Sugauli and subsequent treaties with British India reduced the Madhesh region (**Gaige, 2009**). The outer Madhesh areas south of Dang and Chitwan valleys are under the Indian Territory.

1.4.4. Exclusion of Madhesh and Madheshi Community

1.4.4.1 Exclusion of Madhesh

Nepal has become to a greater extent an unequal society in which some people or community and geographical area have prospered while many other communities and districts have not. There is strong conceptual debate around the notions that exclusion either social, economic, political or geographical have been the main causes of unequal society (**Shah, 2007**). Exclusion results in poverty, unequal distribution of resources and development initiatives, and inability of certain community or geographical area to participate in socio-economic and political development processes.

Social exclusion is defined as "the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society and the tendency to push vulnerable and difficult individuals in the least popular places". Education, skills, social behaviour, social network and groups, social contact, welfare, health, child poverty and isolation and vulnerability are the key social exclusion indicators (**Lawoti, 2010**). Children living in poverty may enter a cycle of poor educational achievement, unmanageable behaviour, unemployment and homelessness.

Economic exclusion would primarily include unemployment, income, economic opportunity, social and support services such as health and drinking water and basic infrastructure. There is positive relation between social exclusion and economic exclusion; illiterate and poor individuals are even more excluded because their low ability to read and write prevents their adaptation, professional conversion and their social mobility (**Layachi, 2001**)**.**

Political exclusion inhibits basic citizenship rights and when done on a large scale, it prevents communities and even geographical areas from participating in political arena, which inhibits democratic process. The key variables are basic citizenship rights, participation in political life, making public policies, decision-making process and representation.

Geographical Exclusion

In Nepal, there exist strong geographical inequalities in developing basic socio-economic infrastructures and facilities and providing development opportunity. In recent years, few researchers have linked the results of geographical exclusion such as wide spread poverty, inequality in resource distribution, increasing vulnerability and marginalizing the local inhabitants particularly in the mid-western and far-western region of Nepal with the Maoist insurgency (**Nayak, 1998; Panday, 1999; Kumar, 2000; Upreti, 2002; and others**)**.**

There are examples of geographical disparity in other parts of the world e.g. Sri Lanka, Ireland, Bhutan and many other countries; in most of these countries the disparity is between the northern and the southern parts of the country. Tarai districts are located in the southern part of Nepal where 95.5% of the total Madheshi people (7.435 million) live (**USAID, 2007**). There are 20 districts in Tarai administrative area and 55 districts are located in hills and mountains where 82.2% of the Pahadi people live (**Shah, 2007**). Resource Endowment Ranking Index values are used to measure geographical disparity in the country.

Social Exclusion

Poverty

Worst poverty prevails in the Tarai districts. About 45% of the 20 Tarai districts have worst poverty rankings and only 25% are ranked as 'best' compared to 35% districts in hills and mountains are ranked as 'best' and 29% are ranked as 'worst' (**Shah, 2007**). The Tarai districts having good access to transportation and marketing systems are also reported to have rich natural resources endowment rankings particularly the cultivated land.

There appears to have ethnicity and poverty interaction. Rauthat, Siraha, Mahotari, Dhanusha and Sarlahi districts, where about 78-94% of the total population is Madhesi people, are ranked as having worst poverty cases; the poverty ranking index ranges from the lowest 4 in Rautahat to 13 in Sarlahi district. The poverty level is reported to be very low in Jhapa, Chitwan and Morang districts where majority of the people are of hill origin (**Rakesh, 2007**).

Table No. 1.8 Poverty and Natural Resources Ranking Index

(No of District)

		Terai District	H/M District	Terai District	H/M District
Ranking 1-25	Worst	9	16	0	25
Ranking 25-50	Intermediate	6	20	3	19
Ranking 51-75	Best	5	19	17	11
TOTAL		20	55	20	55

Source: Sharma and Shah (2002), ICIMOD (1997)

Education

About 90% of the Tarai districts have a large number of educationally deprived populations compared to only about 13% in hills and mountain districts. Siraha, Bardia, Dhanusha, Mahotari, Rauthat and Sarlahi have the largest number of educationally deprived people (**Shah, 2007**).

Table No 1.9. Educationally Deprived Population and Child Literacy Rates

Index Ranking	Group	Educationally deprived population		Child literacy rates	
		Tarai districts	H/M districts	Tarai districts	H/M districts
Ranking 1-25	Worst	18	7	10	16
Ranking 25-50	Intermediate	1	25	7	17
Ranking 51-75	Best	1	23	3	22
TOTAL		20	55	20	55

Source: Sharma and Shah (2002)- New ERA, ICIMOD (1997)

Fifty percent of the Tarai districts have 'worst ranking' for child literacy rates compared to 29$ in hills and mountain districts. Rauthat, Sarlahi and Mahotari are the worst in child literacy index values. Again, 40% of Tarai districts have lower overall literacy rates compared to 31% in hill districts.

Economic Exclusion

There is disparity in per capita budget allocation between Tarai and hill districts; 10 out of the 20 Tarai districts have 'worst' index values compared to about 17% of the hill districts (**Shah, 2007 & Rakesh, 2007**). Similarly, more number of Tarai districts has lower primary sector development compared to hill districts.

Table 1.10. Per Capita Budget Allocation and Primary Sector Development Index

(Number of Districts)

Index Ranking	Group	Per Cappita budget allocation		Primary sector development	
		Tarai districts	H/M districts	Tarai districts	H/M districts
Ranking 1-25	Worst	10	9	8	16
Ranking 25-50	Intermediate	5	18	8	14
Ranking 51-5	Best	5	28	4	25
TOTAL		20	55	20	55

Source: Sharma and Shah (2002)- New ERA, ICIMOD (1997)

The data and information so far available indicate that the Tarai districts having higher proportion of Madheshi population have much lower socio-economic index values compared to districts where hill people are in dominance. However, there are no information and data available for comparing hill people and plains people living in the same district; the hill people generally live in the northern part of the district, along the highways and in growth centres whereas plains people mostly live in the rural areas with less accessibility to education, health and other development parameters.

Government and political organisations have been advocating and focusing poverty reduction programme mostly in the hills and mountains, and they have been advocating the donors that only the hills and mountains have large number of poor people. It appears that the politicians, policy makers, decision makers and national planners who are mostly of hill origin ignored the socio-economic development issues of Madhesh and the Madheshi community. The fact is that the Madheshi people are not in the right place and their voices are not heard or considered.

Political Exclusion

Electoral Constituencies

The average population per constituency is considerably higher in Tarai districts (127,414) than in the mountain (73,026) and 109,081 in the hill districts **(Rakesh, 2007)**. This reduces the number of parliamentarians representing Tarai region where about 96% of the country's total Madheshi people live while increases their number from hills and mountains where 82% of the country's total Pahadi people live.

TableNo. 1.11. Political Constituency Delineation in Nepal

	Mountain	Hills	Tarai	Total
District	16	39	20	75
Population (000)	4,141	10,398	8,644	23,183
Constituencies	23	94	88	205
Population/Constituency	73,026	109,081	127,414	103,174
Population/Constituency Range	9,587 to 121,996	67,434 to 154,549	114,056 to 157,349	

Source: District Demographic profile of Nepal, Informal Sector Research & Study Centre, 2002, Kathmandu, Nepal

1.4.4.2 Exclusion of Madheshi Community

About 96% of the Madheshi community lives in 20 Tarai districts and 15 of these districts have intermediate to worst poverty situation **(Gaige, 2009)**. Although there is no authentic data available, the general observation indicate that the Madheshi people living in traditional settlements in rural areas have nominal access to social infrastructure and facilities and, moreover, the induced economic opportunities are practically non-existent in their habitats. Many of the modern day basic facilities have not yet reached Madhesh villages. Nearly 40% of the Madheshi population is Dalits and indigenous Janjati who are inherently disadvantaged in many social and economic aspects **(Shah, 2007)**. Again, poverty is very high among the Muslim population living in rural areas; they have average low rate of literacy and their socio-economic development voices have reached nowhere; they share 13% of the total Madheshi Population.

Madheshi population

In fact, the Madheshi community has never been fully integrated in the overall political, socio-economic and human resource development agenda of the country. They have been excluded from the national mainstream. There is widespread feeling among the Madheshi community that they have been strongly discriminated and are not given proper opportunity in the country. They lack proper share in development activities and are not represented in politics or decision-making processes. Education facilities and job opportunities either in government or international organisations functioning in the country are not easily available for Madheshi people. They are not allowed to work in military service and very few people work in police service.

Social Exclusion

Poverty

Poverty line in Nepal is currently estimated to be 31%. However, about 46% of Dalits, 41% of Muslims and 33% of indigenous Janjati population are below the poverty line (**World Bank, 2006).** Together these three major ethnic groups have 52.6% of the total Madheshi population. The rest 47.4% of the Madheshi people have lower poverty level (**Rakesh, 2007).** The above poverty data indicates that a large proportion of Madheshi households are excluded from the mainstream development. Poverty itself is the main factor of exclusion; the poor people could not afford basic education, primary health care, sanitation practices and decent housing.

Land Assets

Landlessness has become a major problem among Madheshi community. The recent report indicates a grave situation particularly in Dalit, Janjati and Muslim ethnic community; about 37% of Dalits, and 32% of Janjati households do not own agricultural land while 41% of Muslims are landless. About 79% of Mushar, a Dalit community, do not own land; they have the lowest literacy rate of 7.3% (**Shah, 2007).**

Education

About 79% Dalits, 68% Muslims, 54% indigenous Janjati and 42% mid caste population are illiterate. The female literacy is very low, below 11%, among Dalits and Muslim (**USAID, 2007 & Shah, 2007**). A large Madheshi population has been excluded from basic education. Again, the level of education in rural Madhesh is of much lower grade.

Economic Exclusion

Employment

Three castes/ethnic groups namely Brahmins, Chhetri and Newars have dominated the civil service in the country. In 1991 these three castes constituted 36% of total population in Nepal but occupied 89.2 percent of position in civil service, while Madheshi community accounted for 32% of population but occupied only 8.4% of position in civil service (**Rakesh, 2007**). This indicates that Madheshi people have highly discriminated in government services. It is interesting to note that in 1971 these three castes had occupied 89% of posts in civil services (**Shah, 2007**). Thus the pattern of civil service had not much changed over the past twenty years having these Brahmin, Chhetris and Newars dominating the civil service over the years and it is very unlikely that this trend will change in near future.

Table No. 1.12. Representation of different Caste/Ethnic groups in Civil Service

Caste/Ethnic Group	% of Population in 1991	Share in Civil Service (in Percent)	
		1971*	1991**
Brahmins	12.9	32.0	41.3
Chhetri & Thakuri	17.6	21.0	14.7
Newar	5.6	36.0	33.2
Tarai (Madheshi)	32.0	7.0	8.4
Hill Social Group	22.4	4.2	2.4
Others	8.3		

Manpower involved

Manpower involved in International organisations in Nepal and projects implemented under different organisations is given in Table 1.13. About 81% of the total manpower involved in the 30 multilateral agencies working in Nepal and 61 projects funded by these agencies are from Pahadi community, 14.1% are foreigners and the rest 5.2% are Madheshi people.

Table No. 1.13. Manpower Involved in International Organisations in Nepal

Organisations/ Agencies	No.	Manpower Ivolved, 2001			
		Foreigner	Pahadi	Madhesi	Total
International (Multilateral)	30	121 (15.8%)	608 (79.2%)	38 (5.0%)	767
Projected implemented by Multilateral Agencies	61	21 (8.6%)	209 (85.3%)	15 (6.1%)	245
TOTAL	91	142 (14.1 %)	817 (80.7%)	53 (5.2%)	1,012

Judiciary

Just over 8% of the total judges in the country are from Madheshi community, while the rest92% are from Pahadi community. Participation of judges from Madheshi community at the Appeal Court is about 13.0%, which could be considered a 'high level of participation' compared to 6.1% at the District Courts **(Rakesh, 2007)**. The lower number of judges could probably be due to a) discrimination of Madheshi community to enter into the judiciary agencies, b) low number of law graduates from Madheshi community, and c) unwillingness to join the judiciary services for various reasons.

Table 1.14. Man Power Distribution in Judiciary, 2001

Type of Judiciary	Pahadi	Madhise	Total	% Madhise
Chief Justice & Supreme Court Justices	18	2	20	10.0
Chief Justices of Appeal Court	10	2	12	16.7
Judges of Appeal Court	64	9	73	12.3
Judges of District Court	123	8	131	6.1
First class officers in judicial services	18	0	18	0
TOTAL 233 21 254 8.3	233	21	254	8.3
Percentage 91.7 8.3	91.7	8.3		

Employment in Higher Posts

The Pahadi people particularly the Brahmins and Chhetris control most of the positions of power and influence the government, other governing institutions in their action. They consider Madheshi people as 'non-Nepali' or 'less Nepali' and the later gets excluded from a higher post unless a Madheshi person is in their high level of confidence. The Table 13 shows a very low level of involvement of Madheshi people in constitutional bodies and in higher posts – these people make national policies, and are the key decision makers and policy implementers.

Table 1.15 Madheshi Representation in Cabinet, Constitutional Bodies and High Official Posts

Post and Organisations	Posts	Pahadi	Madheshi	% Madheshi
Ministers	24	21	4	16.7
Royal Standing Committee	8	7	1	12.5
Judges in Supreme Court	21	12	2	9.5
Chiefs of the Constitutional bodies	7	7	0	0
Members of Constitutional bodies	19	17	2	10.5
National Human Rights Commission	5	4	1	20.0
National Planning	6	5	1	16.7
Ambassadors/Consulate Generals	23	22	1	4.3
Secretary/regional administrators	37	36	1	2.7
Vice-Chancellors	5	5	0	0
Vice-Chancellor RONAST, Royal Nepal Academy	2	2	0	0
Chief of Security forces	3	3	0	0
Dept. heads of HMG'	47	43	4	8.5
Chief of Govt. Corporations and committies	56	52	4	7.1
Chief of Govt. Information and Communication Agencies	4	4	0	0
Heads of Parliamentary bodies & committees	15	12	3	20.0

Source: Singh, A. (2003) Restructuring of Nepali State: A Madheshi Perspective

Note: Number of Minister is of Girija Prasad Kiorala cabinet in 2001, all the other data are before October 2002.

Political Exclusion

In the two houses of parliament composed after the 1991 election, Brahmins held 38.1% of the seats and Newars 8.3%, the highest proportion in all four legislatures which were the products of adult franchise (**Shah, 2007**). Similarly, they continued to retain their numbers even in the election of 1999 where Brahmins and Newars held 39.6% and 8.3% respectively. Brahmins, Chhetri and Newar dominated the seats in combined upper and lower houses of parliament constituting 65.2% of seats while they represent 36% of population. On the other hand, Madhesh community constituted only 17.4% of seats while representing 32.0% of population (**Rakesh, 2007**). Thus one finds a serious imbalance in the representation in our law-making body so called national legislature.

Table 1.16 Representation of Various Caste and Ethnic Groups in National Legislature

(In per cent)

Caste/Ethnic Groups 1959 1981* 1991 1999 1991	National Legislature				Population
	1959	1981	1991	1999	1991
Brahmins	27.5	13.3	38.1	39.6	12.9
Chhetri/Thakuri	31.2	36.3	18.2	17.3	17.6
Newar	3.7	8.1	8.3	8.3	5.6
Subtotal	62.4	57.7	64.4	65.2	36.1
Madheshi	22.0	18.5	19.6	17.4	32.2
Hill SocialGroups	15.6	23.0	14.7	14.7	22.4
Others	---	0.7	1.2	1.5	8.3

Source: Pashupati Rana's Article "The Evolution of Nepalese Nationalism" in Contemporary Nepal, pp 83 IIDS, The Fourth Parliamentary Election.

• Gurung, Harkha, The Sociology of Election in Nepal: 1959-81, Asian Survey, Vol XXII, March 1982, p.313

The structure in the political parties is mostly centralized and is largely non-inclusive. Again, the major leaders in any political party are the hill Brahmins and Chhetris and normally they discriminate the Madheshi people in most actions. Central Committee of any political party is vital for formulating policies and the members make collective decision for important action. It appears that the Pahadi leaders do not have confidence over the Madheshi people and they tend to exclude the latter in policy formulation and decision-making jobs. Nepali Congress and the UML are the major democratic parties in the country but they have included only few Madheshi as members in their Central Committees **(Rakesh, 2007)**. They advocate the proportional representation but in action it does not happen. Again, representation of Madheshi politicians in both Upper House and Lower House is considerably low **(Shah, 2007)**. This could greatly inhibit the democratization process in the country. The findings clearly indicate that Madheshi people are highly ignored and are underrepresented in the current political arena, which may, in long run, create vulnerable situation in the country.

Table 1.17 Central Committee Members in Major Political Parties

Political Parties	Total	Pahadi	Madheshi	% Madheshi
Nepali Congress	38	35	3	7.9
Communist Party of Nepal (UML)	69	65	4	5.8
Nepali Congress Democratic	30	25	5	16.7
Jan Morcha Nepal	44	43	1	2.3

Source: Madhesh Vani, January 2006.

Table 1.18 Number of Madheshi Member of Parliament in 1999

Political Parties	Total MPs		Lower House		Upper House	
	Lower House	Upper House	Pahadi	Madheshi	Pahadi	Madheshi
Nepali Congress	**113**	**24**	**90**	**23**	**21**	**3**
Communist Party of Nepal (UML)	**69**	**20**	**59**	**10**	**19**	**1**

Rashtriya Prajatantra Party	11	5	7	4	5	0
Nepal Sadbhavna Party	5	1	1	4	0	1
Rashtriya Jana Morcha	5	0	5	0	0	0
Nepal Majdoor Kishan Party	1	0	1	0	0	0
United People's Front	1	0	1	0	0	0
King's Nominees	0	10	0	0	9	1
Total	205	60	164	41	54	6
% Madheshi				20.0		11.1

Source: Parliament Secretariat Records, Singha Durbar, Nepal, 1999.

1.4.5 Emerging Issues of Madheshi Community

Madheshi community in general has been marginalized and the people suffer from a combination of linked problems such as illiteracy, poverty, poor skills, unemployment in public sector and the average low incomes. Undoubtedly, there is affluent society in Madhesh community such as Brahmin, Kshatriya and Kayastha who are relatively educated, well off, prosperous and lead a comfortable life, but they are in minority in number – just 3.1% of the total Madheshi population (**Gaige, 2009; Rakesh, 2007 & shah, 2007**). The majority of the population belonging to Dalits, Janjati, Muslims and other caste groups living in rural areas are facing acute hardship. Poor investment, unplanned management of already deteriorating land resources, poor socioeconomic infrastructures and facilities and lack of socio-economic planning have adversely affected the majority of the Madheshi people.

There have been little efforts to prevent social, economic and political exclusion and to reintegrate those who have become excluded through unemployment, landlessness, homelessness and so on. The past discriminatory public policies and the general unhealthy attitudes of the hill people who are in governance towards the average Madheshi have been detrimental to national integration. Their problems have not been solved or rather ignored by the State. The major emerging social, economic and political issues which need immediate to short term action are briefly described here.

1.4.5.1 Social Issues

Identity and Recognition

Most of the Madheshi people are losing their identity since they are treated as 'less Nepali' or 'non-Nepali' by Pahadi people. One of the main reasons could be attributed to their socio-cultural, linguistic and physical affinity with the communities living immediately on the other side of the border in India, which historically was a part of Madhesh (**Shah, 2007**). Culture, tradition, practices and language have great influence on 'identity' of a person e.g. a Nepali or hill language speaking person from Darjeeling or Sikkim, who have been living there for generations, is readily accepted in Nepal as a Nepali and he or she enjoys all the socio-political benefits (**Rakesh, 2007**). Whereas a Madheshi who does not speak Nepali or any

other hill language and who does not follow hill tradition and practices is not easily accepted as Nepali by hill Nepalese.

Illiteracy and Poor Skills

There is mass illiteracy among the Dalits, Janjati, Muslims, and the other caste people living in villages. Female education is practically non-existent among many communities living outside the urban centres. The traditional society has very little changed in the last fifty years or so and doe to the non-migratory nature they have little interaction with other community. Again, the level and quality of secondary or higher secondary education in Madhesh region is quite inferior compared to education in hill areas **(USAID, 2007)**. Consequently, the Madheshi people getting all their education in Madhesh could not compete with Pahadi people having their education in hills where it is comparatively superior; they loose opportunities.

Poverty and Vulnerability

There is widespread poverty (45% of the Madhesh districts) among Madheshi community particularly Dalits, Muslims, Janjatis and other caste people living in traditional settlements who are nearly landless **(Shah, 2007; Rakesh, 2007 & Gaige, 2009)**. They lack assets for economic production and the lack of food security has many widespread effects influencing health and nutritional standards as well as child education. It also forces them to have less concern for environmental considerations. Poverty and illiteracy increases vulnerability and in vulnerable society democratic values and democratization have very little meaning.

1.4.5.2 Economic Issues

Unemployment and Under Employment

In the absence of off-farm economic opportunities in villages, most of the people are under employed. In recent years, uneducated teenagers and the young people have temporarily migrated to India for economic opportunity – this has unbalanced labour supply to farming in many parts of Madhesh region. Again, there is unemployment for the educated Madheshi people in government or non-government organizations or in INGOs or international organizations working in Nepal primarily due to the exclusion behaviour of these institutions towards Madheshi **(Rakesh, 2007)**. This is a serious issue to tackle.

Weak Social Organizations and Support Services

In the past two decades, social institutions advocating and working on social, economic and political development in Madhesh region have been formed by Madheshi community. Such entities are of varied natures and are based on castes and ethnicity, language, research and studies, human rights and advocacy, political rights, and socio-economic works **(Shah, 2007)**. These organizations find hard to get financial and working support from the State as well as from the donor communities. In general, most of these organizations are committed to the cause of Madheshi community, but lack of coordination among them, missing unified vision, divided opinions, and unfocused objectives have made them inadequate in yielding desired results. Again, the government support services are dwindling and have not yet reached in many villages where most of the households are Madheshi. Most of the project implementers at the district level are of hill origin and they tend to implement their programme in areas dominated by hill people due to various reasons such as good communication, high level of programme adaptation and so on.

Low Level of Investment and Lack of Economic Opportunity

Although government collects most of its revenue from Madhesh region, there is very little return in the form of investment in rural areas where majority of the Madhesi people live. Investment both from the government and the donor community in rural Madhesh appears to be very low **(Shah, 2007 & Rakesh, 2007)**. Most of the industries are located in urban centres and they could not much help the local rural people. Again, the agro-based industries established in the Madhesh region are not tied up with agriculture farming; they import raw materials from other countries which could be technically produced in Madhesh. The issue of renovation and reconstruction of the Hulaki Road has been raised on many occasions. This road was constructed in early 20th century and connects the inner part of Madhesh region from Jhapa in the east to Kanchanpur in the west.

1.4.5.3 Political Issues

Basic Citizenship Rights

This is the major political issue still unresolved by the State or the political parties. Many of the Madheshi people who are landless or homeless – a large number of Dalits, Janjatis, Muslims and other caste people are landless- are denied of citizenship certificates **(Shah, 2007; Rahesh, 2007 & Gaige, 2009)**. The government law and the public policies are not very clear and positive, and moreover, the persons at district level authorized to give citizenship certificates that are mostly high caste or affluent hill people usually show negative tendencies while granting citizenship. Denial of citizenship means no rights to get job in government, corporations or even private companies, can not get government support or loan from the bank or purchase land for housing or farming. Many Madheshi people have lost right to vote and it prevents them to participate in political life even at the village level. This is humiliating for the Madheshi people who are denied of their natural right.

Demarcation of Madhesh Districts

The current demarcation of Tarai districts does not follow any scientific, ecological or social basis. Amendment is required and a new demarcation needs to be done, which would include only the outer and Vitri Madhesh region for efficient socio-economic planning for holistic development **(Shah, 2007)**. This would increase participation of Madheshi community decision-making process.

Participation in Political Arena

Low level of participation in policy and decision-making body of political parties such as central committees and lack of proportional representation in parliament are the emerging issues. The political parties have so far ignored emerging issues of Madhesh and Madheshi people and the under representation prohibits advocacy for betterment **(Shah, 2007 & Rakesh, 2007)**.

Census Mechanism

Many people believe that the results of the past census are not satisfactory; the data on Madhesh population and the resources they use do not seem to be accurate **(Shah, 2007)**. Some sample survey done in the Madhesh area indicates much higher Madheshi population than shown in the last census.

1.5   Existing Knowledge and Knowledge Gap

Khobragagd(1985), **Lal(1985), Kumar(1978), Raghavkumari(1986), Sabmis and Mahurarkar(1985), Bardly(2000), Basyenge(2011), Chitrakar(2009), USAID(2013), Stri Shakti(2013) and Actionaid(2012)** surveyed on impediments of girls education and discovered economic backwardness, cultural, family background and psychological factors as major impediment. Similarly **Bokil(1987), Adhikari(2013), Walker(2006), Rihani(2006), Qureshi(2004), Pirzado(2006), Nahar(2008) and Niepa(1986)** conducted research on women education. Their main aim was to find out the factors that adversely affected the education of women and concluded economic factor as the main factor to affect women education. **Ilon(1992), Herz(1991), Langfrad(2012), Hatleback(2007) Groot(2007), Lall(2004), Huxley(2008) and Shakya (2009)** explained facts about deprived child and education, their right and social exclusion in Nepal. Similarly **Lifanda(2005), Acharya(1996) and Kan(2004)** described facts about education and training of women and girls. **Bennet(2006), Dahal(2009) and Rana(2012)** studied on ethnicity, gender and regional identity in Nepal. **Annaraja(1993), Joshi(1997), Gyani and Gupta (1996), Kar(1969), Devi (1985), Singh(1986), Duman(2010), DFID(2006), Bosch(2001), Ahmad(2012), Basnet(2013) and Akhter(2013)** attempted to discover psycho-socio factors which cause educational backwardness of female. They concluded poor economic condition, negligency of parents in girls' education, lack of interest of girls in study, preference of parents to make girls trained in household works, inadequate educational facility in school and untrained teachers were the main factors.

Many researches related to problems faced by girls' in their educational development have been conducted in general but no studies related to Madheshi girls' have been conducted in particular. Therefore the researcher planned to study the impediments and impetuses of education of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

1.6   Need of the Study

People need education as a means for their adjustment in society and to overcome the problems of life. At the highest and most idealistic plane, learning entails becoming a whole and complete man, physically, mentally and spiritually. We need education to create a pathway to knowledge which continues to evolve throughout the course of one's life. We need education to develop our innate powers, for self-realization and self-expression, to develop our vocational aims and to develop our theoretical as well as practical area of knowledge. All these above mentioned aspects are very important for the complete and all-round development of an individual which help him/her to lead progressive and prosperous life, to make them a responsible citizen of their nation and to develop their country and as well as the whole universe.

The issue of equal opportunity in education is the subject of global concern since decades. However, limited studies have been conducted in this area and the Terai is the least studied, least researched and least known major region of Nepal **(Gaige, 2009)**. This is striking when one considers its importance in the affairs of Nepal, and the ease it access it enjoy in comparisons with almost every other regions of the country outside Kathmandu valley. The Terai deserves better; it is the most important part of Nepal outside the valley, and the politics of modern Nepal cannot be understood without understanding the politics of this region and the complex cultural and social forms that shape that politics **(Rakesh, 2007 & Gaige, 2009)**. Furthermore, the issue of social inclusion has become one of the major topics of Nepal government in present situation. Since Madheshi cover a large portion of national population

and are behind in almost all development sectors **(Shah, 2007; Rakesh, 2007 & Gaige, 2009)**, it is quite significant to conduct scheduled caste/ethnic and social group specific research which, finally contributes greatly in policy formulation of government as well as non-government programmes. These all matters stimulated the researcher to conduct this proposed study in the Eastern Terai of Nepal.

1.7   Antecedents of Research Questions

Determining the goal of study which represent the first step of mixed method research process, involves making decision about what the overall, long term aim of the study is. Here, *Newman et al's (2003)* framework has been used to determine the goal of the research has the personal, social, institutional and organizational impact. The research goal naturally leads to the research objective, the second step of the mixed method research process. In this, *Johnson and Cristensen (2004*) directed objective pertinent for the quantitative and qualitative phase has been used. 'Exploration' has been used as a research objective as it involves using primarily inductive method to explore the construct in order to develop the tentative hypothesis. The third step is to determine the research mixing process. Here the frame suggested by *Collins et al (2006)* has been used. The purpose is for instrument fidelity (to maximize the utility of the instrument used in the study) and significant enhancement (mixing quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to maximize the researcher's interpretations of data). Alongside determining the research mixing rational the researcher should identify the purpose for mixing. In this study, the framework suggested by *Grand et al. (1989)* has been used and the purpose has been justified as triangulation (seeking convergence and corroboration of findings from different methods that study the same phenomenon.

1.8   Research Questions

Research questions help narrow the focus of a study *(Cresswell and Clark, 2007)*, they provide a framework, set boundaries and give rise to the data that will be collected *(Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2006).* Resaerch questions held a very important place for mixed research because they help determine wheather a problem should be studied with a mixed framework. Moreover *(Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2006)* point out that research questions dictate the type of research design used the sample size and sampling scheme employed, and the type of instruments administered as well as the data analysis techniques". The researcher in this study sought to answer the following questions:

1   What are the impediments of education of Madheshi girls in Nepal?
2   What are the impetuses of education of Madheshi girls in Nepal?

1.9   Statement of Problem

To seek answers to the above research questions, the researcher entitled the research work as: *An Investigation into Impediments and Impetuses of Education of Madhesi Girls in Nepal*

1.10   Operational Definition of the Keywords

The key terms related to this study have been defined as follows-

Impediments

'Impediments' means obstacles, impediments and hinderances which are stumbling the pace of development of Madhehi girls' education. The Webster's Dictionary gives the meaning of the word impediment as" a hinderance to hinder, impede or impeding, or being impeded".Similarly, The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary explains impediment as" hinderance to obstruct,an obstruction". The Longman Concise English Dictionary defines Impediment as"that impede or a hinderance".

Impediments in this present study refer to socio-cultural, economic, psychological and institutional obstacles and barriers which are stumbling the pace of educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

Socio-cultural Impediments

Socio-cultural impediments means patriarchy, early marriage, religion and caste based discrimination, illiteracy of parents, dowry system, gender based discrimination, lack of security etc.

Economic Impediments

Economic impediments include poverty, low income, high cost of education, child labour etc.

Psychological Impediments

Psychological impediments include lack of motivation, inferiority complex, lack of girl friendly environment etc.

Institutional Impediment

Institutional impediments include school accessibility, facilities available at school, language of instruction, lack of female teachers, untrained teachers, irrelevant curriculum etc.

Impetuses

The Webster's dictionary gives the meaning of the term impetus as" anything that stimulates activity: driving force or motive; incentive; impulse" Similarly, The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines impetus as" force with which a body moves impulse driving force". The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary explains impetus as" the force with which a body moves and overcome resistance, impulse, moving force, stimulus".

Impetuses in this study refer to impulse or stimulus which motivates the education of Madheshi girls as perceived by them, in Nepal.

Madheshi Girls

Madheshi girls in this study refer to the girls who are residing in the Siraha district of eastern Terai of Nepal.

1.11   Objectives

The study covers the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the present status of education of Madheshi girl.
2. To find out whether the following major impediments are affecting educational development of Madhesi girls:
   *Socio-cultural Impediments
   *Economic Impediments
   *Psychological Impediments
   *Institutional Impediments

   3. To explore impetuses which will help to reduce the above mentioned impediments and improve the education of Madheshi girls.

1.12   Hypotheses:

Research Hypotheses

H2.1. Socio-cultural Impediment is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.1.1 Early marriage is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.1.2 Patriarchy is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.1.3 Illiteracy of parents is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.1.4 Dowry system is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.1.5 Gender based discrimination is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.1.6 Lack of social security is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.2. Economic Impediment is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.2.1 Poverty is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.2.2 Child labour is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.3. Institutional Impediment is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.3.1 School's accessibility is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
H2.3.2 Facility available in school is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.3.3 Language of instruction is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.3.4 Lack of female teacher is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.3.5 Untrained teachers are an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.3.6 Irrelevant curriculum is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.4. Psychological impediment is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.4.1 Lack of motivation is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.4.2 Inferiority complex is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

H2.4.3 Lack of girl friendly environment is an impediment in educational development of Madheshi girls in Nepal.

1.13 Concomitant Objectives

- ➢ To develop an opinionnaire to explore impediments of education of madhesi girls in Nepal.
- ➢ To construct an interview schedule to explore the impetuses to reduce the impediments of girls education and to establish the findings through the data obtained from the opinionnaire.

1.14 Delimitations

Keeping in mind the time, cost and resources, the study was delimited to the following points:

- This study was limited only to find out the impediments and impetuses of education of Madheshi girls in Nepal.
- The present study has been confined only in Siraha district of Nepal.
- The present study has been confined only to government aided schools in Siraha district of Nepal.
- Only eight secondary schools of Siraha district and class IX girl students were selected for this study.
- The tool was constructed in English and Nepali languages.