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ارزیابی شمول‌گرایی جنسیتی در چارچوب کمک‌های خارجی و همکاری‌های توسعه‌ای نپال

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چکیده

در این مقاله، چارچوب سیاستی کمک‌های خارجی و همکاری‌های توسعه‌ای نپال بررسی شده است با این هدف که چگونگی توجه به جنسیت و شمول‌گرایی تقاطعی در این چارچوب تبیین شود. این پژوهش در چارچوب گفتمان گسترده‌تر «سیاست خارجی فمینیستی» و همکاری‌های توسعه‌ای پاسخگو به جنسیت، همچنین تعهدات داخلی و بین‌المللی نپال در زمینهٔ برابری جنسیتی و شمول اجتماعی انجام شده است. با بهره‌گیری از رویکرد کیفی مبتنی‌بر تحلیل اسناد، و بیشتر دو سند سیاستی محوری- یعنی سیاست کمک‌های خارجی نپال (۲۰۰۲) و سیاست همکاری‌های توسعه‌ای بین‌المللی (۲۰۱۹)- ارزیابی انجام شده است. افزون بر این، سایر اسناد حقوقی، سیاست خارجی و همکاری‌های توسعه‌ای نیز منابع زمینه‌ای و پشتیبان استفاده شد. محورهای اصلی تحلیل عبارت بود از میزان بازنمایی جنسیت، جریان‌سازی جنسیتی، بودجه‌ریزی و تأمین مالی پاسخگو به جنسیت، شمول‌گرایی تقاطعی، مسئولیت‌پذیری نهادی، و رابطهٔ میان تعهدات داخلی نپال در حوزهٔ جنسیت‌با رویه‌های سیاست خارجی آن. یافته‌های پژوهش نشان داد جنسیت به‌طورکامل از چارچوب کمک‌های خارجی و همکاری‌های توسعه‌ای نپال به دور نیست. با وجود ارجاع به جنسیت با هدف موضوعی فرابخشی یا ملاحظه‌ای در تبیین طرح‌ها، این مقوله اولویت اصلی سیاستی، همراه با تخصیص‌های بودجه‌ای مشخص و ساختارهای نهادی معین لحاظ نشده است. همچنین، به این یافته دست یافتیم که مقوله‌های تقاطعی نظیر کاست (نظام سلسله‌مراتبی و موروثی اجتماعی)، طبقهٔ اجتماعی، قومیت، منطقهٔ جغرافیایی، معلولیت، وضعیت افراد آسیب‌دیده از منازعه و وضعیت مهاجرت در دو سند سیاستی اصلی بررسی‌شده، به‌طور نظام‌مند و معنادار با جنسیت پیوند داده نشده است. به باور نویسندگان، این امر بیانگر شکاف میان انتقال تعهدات و اصول داخلی به عرصهٔ سیاست خارجی است. در مجموع، تعهدات نپال دربارهٔ برابری جنسیتی و شمول اجتماعی، در بهترین حالت، تنها به‌طور نامتوازن در متون سیاست‌های همکاری توسعه‌ای خارجی این کشور بازتاب یافته است. ازاین‌رو، توصیه می‌شود که در سیاست‌های کمک‌های خارجی و همکاری توسعه‌ای، از زبانی روشن‌تر و صریح‌تر در حمایت از برابری جنسیتی، همراه با توجه دقیق‌تر به ابعاد شمول‌گرایی تقاطعی همچنین، تقویت سازوکارهای پاسخگویی نهادی استفاده شود.

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Gender-inclusivity in Nepal's foreign aid and development cooperation framework: An assessment

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Abstract

This article examines Nepal's foreign aid and development cooperation policy framework to understand how gender and intersectional inclusion are addressed. It is in the backdrop of the wider discourse on 'feminist foreign policy' and gender-responsive development cooperation, and Nepal's own domestic and international commitments to gender equality and social inclusion. Adopting a qualitative document analysis approach, the article principally evaluates two core policy documents, Nepal's Foreign Aid Policy 2002 and the International Development Cooperation Policy 2019. Other legal, foreign policy and development cooperation documents are also used as contextual and supporting sources. Gender visibility, gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting and financing, intersectional inclusion, institutional responsibility, and the relationship between domestic gender commitments and external policy practice constitute the thematic core of the analysis. It finds that gender is not entirely absent from Nepal's foreign aid and development cooperation framework. References to gender as a cross-cutting or project-design concern notwithstanding, it is not treated as a key policy priority with clearly earmarked budgetary allocations and institutional structures. The article also finds that intersectional categories such as caste, class, ethnicity, region, disability, conflict-affected status and migration status are not, in any meaningful systematic manner, connected to gender in the two core policy documents studied. This, it is contended, betrays a gap in the translation of domestic commitments and principles to foreign policy. Nepal's commitments to gender equality and social inclusion are, at best, only unevenly supported in the language of its external development cooperation. The article recommends the inclusion of clearer policy language that is responsive to gender without qualification, along with more specific intersectional aspects and stronger institutional accountability in foreign aid and development cooperation policy.

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1. Introduction

Feminist scholars often argue that foreign policy is shaped by gendered assumptions about power, security, national interest and sovereignty. It is, therefore, more than a purely technical discipline shaped by the pursuit of an entirely objective state interest (D'Aoust & Châteauvert-Gagnon, 2012; Achilleos-Sarll, 2018; Aggestam et al., 2019). When states outline what they perceive as "national interest", the ideas that produce such determinations are often shaped by assumptions that are often defined by dominant political and social narratives and perceptions. That is to say, what states understand as security, development, and other vital interests may often fail to capture the reality of gendered experiences (Achilleos-Sarll, 2018; Aggestam et al., 2019). When foreign policy decisions are made in a variety of fields, such as security partnerships, development cooperation, aid, and political cooperation, they produce different effects for different individuals and communities based on their social position and gender. Within groups, not everyone is affected the same way. Thus, even among women, experiences may vary by class, region, caste, ethnicity, migration status, and other similar factors (Crenshaw, 1991). This means that for a foreign policy document to be gender inclusive, it must go beyond the mere mention of women or inclusion of women as beneficiaries. It may also need to acknowledge the existence of structural and intersectional inequalities that pose a challenge to the notion of inclusive foreign policy. While the mention of women and visibility for women in policy language is possibly a first step, it does not by itself establish gender responsiveness or inclusivity without clarity on how gender concerns will be acted upon. Therefore, it is important for any study that seeks to determine the gender responsiveness of foreign policy to analyse whether policy documents truly recognise gendered and intersectional inequalities, assign institutional responsibility, and spell out implementation mechanisms (Crenshaw, 1991; Achilleos-Sarll, 2018).

Nepal is also one of the exemplary countries in South Asia that has recognised women/girls' rights and is progressive, adopting inclusive laws for gender equality and gender promotion. According to the Supreme Court judge of Nepal, Sapana Pradhan Malla, "The 2015 constitution of Nepal is one of the most progressive in South Asia in terms of gender equality and women's rights implementation" (Raut, 2020: 3). Nepal leads South Asia in "women's political participation" (Pandey, 2021: 3). Likewise, at the international level, Nepal is a signatory to the major foundational human and women's rights treaties and conventions, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and political rights in 1991[1],

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), entered into force Mar. 23, 1976. Nepal acceded to the ICCPR on May 14, 1991.

the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1991[1], Nepal ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1992. Nepal is the first country in South Asia to adopt a National Action Plan for the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 twice in the region. In this regard, Nepal is well-placed to have a gender-inclusive foreign policy due to conducive domestic and international factors.

Nevertheless, the contradiction is that despite signatories of various gender-related global, national, and domestic policies, there are gender biases in Nepal's diplomacy, security, and politics (Pandey, 2021: 1). Nepal depicts a bleak picture and shows a huge gap in inclusivity in its foreign policy. Further, a vast section of literature on Nepal's foreign policy has been studied only from the geopolitical, security and developmental aspects. There is a gap in scholarship on the gender aspect of Nepal's foreign policy. This article tries to fill this lacuna and analyse Nepal's foreign policy through a feminist lens. It deals with the question of gender inclusivity in Nepal's foreign policy and, if at all, is inclusive, and examines in what ways. The principal focus of this article is Nepal's foreign aid acceptance and development cooperation. Material that pertains to bilateral or multilateral partner aid cooperation is treated as contextual material. The underlying conceptual lens used is one that centers gender and intersectionality, and the methodology adopted is primarily a qualitative document analysis approach.

It is not the objective of this work to assess Nepal's foreign policy as a whole. Rather, its scope is confined to Nepal's foreign aid acceptance and development cooperation because this is an area where the country's foreign relations intersect with its development goals. The narrow focus is useful because it allows the paper to examine how gender equality, mainstreaming, and intersectional inclusion, among other aspects, are treated in the country's official policies that determine the course of its development cooperation internationally.

This means that the primary research question is fairly limited in scope, yet valuable. That is, how do Nepal's foreign aid and development cooperation policy documents incorporate gender equality, gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting and intersectional inclusion? The answer to this question will also reveal how, if at all, Nepal's domestic gender commitments have translated into its foreign policy in this area.

The document analysis method employed in this paper will contribute to the rather limited scholarship on gender and Nepal's foreign policy by shedding light on Nepal's foreign aid and

1. Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, G.A. Res. 39/46, U.N. Doc. A/39/51, entered into force June 26, 1987. Nepal acceded to the Convention against Torture on May 14, 1991.

development cooperation framework. It argues that although Nepal has a wide range of commitments to gender equality and social inclusion at both the domestic and international levels, these commitments are not uniformly reflected in its policy language or implementation. What is revealed, therefore, is a translation gap between domestic and foreign policy when it comes to gender mainstreaming and intersectional inclusion. The methodology adopted is a qualitative document analysis of selected official policy documents and related development cooperation documents.

2. Literature review

Foreign policy is the set of established strategies formulated and implemented systematically by each nation-state to manage its relationship with other nations. It mainly entails international political dealings and is of an outward-oriented nature. Each nation's foreign policy is guided by values and a reflection of its beliefs, and "the way it is constructed can fully explain their stance on any policy matter" (Magan, 2022). Gambhir (2022: 1) notes that a country's domestic policies more or less influence how states pursue a foreign policy to achieve their national interests. Simply, it is an extension of national interest in international relations.

Gender is also a critical component of foreign policy (Shepherd, 2017). The gender bias of "security, power, and sovereignty and their concepts are made by men and are for men based on their experiences" (True, 2010; Scherer et al., 2001: 59-60), which is then reflected in national and foreign policies. Since foreign policy affects the ordinary and intersecting categories people most on the ground, the process (foreign policy decision-making), production mechanism, and resultant of foreign policy should involve everyone with a stake in social change and should "recenter intersectionality, restate the connected histories, and reconfigure the normative orders" (Achilleos-Sarll, 2018: 36) and in addition consider the "socio-political landscapes and lived experiences of each country" (Magan, 2022). Aggestam and True (2021: 151) write gendered practices of foreign policy must take into account gender policy where "gender intersects with social categories of inequality and identity such as race/ethnicity, sexuality, class, region, religion, and national status." Therefore, gender-inclusive foreign policy provides an alternative basis for foreign policy formulation and decision-making, which serves against inherent gender biases, improving the everyday people's lives, improving GDP and overall global development by combating inequalities, extremism, and radicalisation. Thus, seeks to prevent blind spots and shortsightedness in foreign policies.

Although there is no standard blueprint for formulating gender-inclusive foreign policies, several countries with differing histories, backgrounds, and politics formulate foreign policies based on their

understanding of gender and inclusion (UN Women, 2023: 1). These policies can take different forms, such as gender-inclusive foreign policy, feminist foreign policy, gender-sensitive or balanced foreign policy, gender-conscious foreign policy, and ethical foreign policy, and so on.

In case of Nepal's foreign policy, Mamta Siwakoti, a representative of the UNICEF Regional Office of South Asia, in the virtual conference shares, "there is a lack of understanding of the causal link between national interest and gender responsiveness in Nepal's foreign policy and poses a question on gender-inclusiveness, which comes into being without having women's participation and position in decision making" (NIICE, 2021). She adds that Nepal's foreign policy ensures the safeguarding of the rights of Nepalese people; however, it is not explicit in identifying exactly what and who counts in it, and it has gender exclusion in discourse. In addition, if we observe Nepal's bilateral and regional level engagements, Nepal has overemphasised its guiding principles of "mutual respect, territorial integrity and sovereignty", evident from the "Treaty of Peace and Friendship", "Land bridge" narrative between its neighbours India and China, which is directed towards "preserving autonomy and addressing domestic economic concerns" (Gambhir, 2022). There is no mention of preserving women's and gender rights.

On a global level, Nepal's commitments to laws and agreements regarding the women's agenda and gender equality are worth praising and show enormous potential for a gender-inclusive foreign policy. Nepal contributed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose fifth goal is to promote and ensure Gender equality; Nepal served as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) for the term 2018-2020, implementation of U.N. security council 1325, the second country in South- Asia to adopt National Action Plan (NAP), Nepal contribution to peace-keeping particularly regards to women sent is pretty impressive. Despite the global commitments and compliance with international laws and policies promoting gender parity, Nepal's foreign policy still holds the scope to conduct research in foreign policy positions and policymaking through a gender lens (Paul, 2020). A deeper inquiry into "gender" in foreign policy, not just in a quantitative number of female diplomats and delegates, but into gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, use of gender-inclusive language in mainstream policymaking along gendered lines is important considering Nepal's diversity across class, caste, religion, ethnicity, and region to capture the complexities of women's multilayered oppression and to avoid gender inequality in foreign policy.

3. Theoretical framework

For examining the gender inclusivity in Nepal's foreign policy, I am using Kimberle Crenshaw's ' Intersectional Feminism' as a conceptual

lens (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectional feminism is a normative lens coined by an American Law professor, Kimberle Crenshaw, in 1989 and draws scholarship on feminism and intersectionality. The main proposition of this theory is that "all inequality is not created equal" (Crenshaw, 1989; UN Women, 2020: 1). According to Crenshaw (1989), the inequality particular to people's social identity relating to geography, race, gender, class, sexuality, and migrant status can overlap and influence each other to compound multilayered and multiscale experiences of discrimination with time. Intersectional Feminism is a bottom-up approach and centres on the marginalised voices of those experiencing multilayer oppression. It tries to understand the intersectional inequalities within the feminist discourse of patriarchal and male-dominated structures. This framework also 'recognises the situated historical context'(UN Women, 2020: 2) of movements, campaigns, wars, and issues of systematic discrimination.

Several feminists like Charlotte Hopper, Cynthia Weber, and Kristin Hoganson's work have shown that masculinity/male domination guides foreign policy practices (Hooper, 2001; D'Aoust, 2017: 18). Theoretically, the intersectional feminism lens can be a unique lens for analysis of foreign policies as it offers broader opportunities to raise deeper questions about states' efforts to place issues of intersectional categories relevance on foreign policy. For a country like Nepal, which is diverse in socio-cultural aspects, intersectionality studies are pertinent to understanding the policy entirely. Intersectionality as the "matrix of domination" provides the analysis of how intersecting sections are excluded in various domains of power manifesting in policies (Collins, 2008; Giri, 2021: 3). An intersectional lens provides a solid critique of state-centric theories and how they invisibly reinforce the gendered boundaries and power hierarchies, and calls for an inclusive approach to root out all forms of discrimination. It provides a deeper and rich understanding of gender-based injustice, struggles, and violence by identifying the lack of inclusion and representation of women and other intersectional categories in key foreign policy processes (Aggestam et al., 2019: 34).

4. Methodology

Qualitative document analysis is the methodological approach taken in this article. The focus is squarely on examining how gender equality, gender mainstreaming[1], gender-responsive budgeting or financing, and intersectional inclusion are treated in Nepal's foreign aid and development cooperation policy framework. The study does not present interview-based, survey-based or ethnographic findings, and its contribution is in the systematic and transparent treatment it gives to the

[1]. Gender mainstreaming here means involving the gender equality perspectives in all the policies that affect people's condition, so all women, men, girls, and boys can live equal lives (Handbook Sweden's feminist foreign policy).

core documents that define Nepal's official policy in foreign aid and development cooperation. A deliberate choice to select these domains as the thematic area of study for this article was made because it is the space where Nepal's external relations meet its domestic development priorities and objectives. This allows the article to assess whether Nepal's publicly stated commitments to gender equality and social inclusion are indeed reflected in the official language and implementation priorities that shape its external relations through development cooperation. The review is organised around two core policy documents, viz. Nepal's Foreign Aid Policy, 2002, and the International Development Cooperation Policy 2019. These texts are central to any effort that aims at assessing the translation of Nepal's domestic and international commitments to its external relations. Other documents, including Nepal's foreign policy framework, the Constitution of Nepal, Women, Peace and Security commitments, development cooperation reports and partner profile documents, are used as contextual and supporting sources. The documents used in the review are listed in Table 1.

The two core policy documents were reviewed through six analytical categories, viz. gender visibility, gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting or financing, intersectional inclusion, institutional responsibility, and the linkage between domestic gender commitments and foreign policy practice. These categories were selected because of the article's theoretical focus on feminist foreign policy and intersectionality. These categories also guide the use of the contextual and supporting documents mentioned in Table 1, where relevant. The analytical categories used for reviewing the documents are presented in Table 2.

The two core policy documents were reviewed for the references they contained pertaining to gender, women, equality, inclusion, marginalised groups, gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting, caste, class, ethnicity, region, disability, conflict-affected status, implementation, monitoring and institutional responsibility. For transparency, the exact search term "gender" was applied to the searchable English text of both core policy documents. This check identified four uses of the term "gender" in the *Foreign Aid Policy 2002* and two uses in the *International Development Cooperation Policy 2019*. Rather than considering these occurrences as evidence in their own right, they were read in their immediate policy contexts. Related terms and categories were examined to identify their links to gender-specific or intersectional commitments.

Table 1. Documents used in the review

S. No	Document	Year	Issuing authority	Role in analysis	Source	Reason for Inclusion
1.	Foreign Aid Policy	2002	Ministry of Finance	Core policy document	Nepal Law Commission repository	Included because of its seminal role in Nepal's foreign aid mobilisation, management, donor coordination and priority allocation. This is a central document for the purposes of understanding whether gender, gender mainstreaming and intersectional inclusion are recognised.
2.	International Development Cooperation Policy (English Translation)	2019	Ministry of Finance	Core policy document	Ministry of Finance English translation	Included as the core 2019 policy document governing Nepal's international development cooperation framework. It is examined to determine whether Nepal's external development cooperation priorities reflect gender equality, gender-responsive budgeting or financing, and social inclusion.
3.	Foreign Policy of Nepal, 2077 (Nepal's official foreign policy framework)	2020	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Contextual foreign policy document	Official Ministry of Foreign Affairs page	This will help in evaluating the salience of foreign aid and development cooperation in light of Nepal's wider foreign policy priorities
4.	Constitution of Nepal	2015	Constituent Assembly	Contextual domestic legal baseline	Nepal Law Commission website	Domestic legal baseline for Nepal's commitments on equality, inclusion, representation and justice. This will be useful because it can help identify gaps, if any, in translation of domestic commitments to the external domain.
5.	National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820	2011–2016 (First NAP); 2022–2025 (Second	Government of Nepal (English translation of second	Contextual gender commitment	Official	NAPs on Women, Peace and Security contain formal gender-related commitments that are relevant to the question of whether domestic and international gender commitments translate into foreign policy practice

S. No	Document	Year	Issuing authority	Role in analysis	Source	Reason for Inclusion
		NAP)	NAP supported by UN women)			
6.	Development Cooperation Report 2020/2021	2021	Ministry of Finance	Supporting reporting document	Official Ministry of Finance PDF	Supporting document that helps connect policy language with reported facts.
7.	Nepal Development Partner Profile Book	2022	Ministry of Finance	Supporting partner profile document	Official Ministry of Finance PDF	This document discusses Nepal's bilateral, regional, and multilateral development partners.

Table 2. Analytical categories used for document review

S.No.	Analytical category	Search terms or indicators	What was recorded	Purpose in review
1.	Gender visibility	Gender; women; woman; girls; female; equality; empowerment	Number of mentions, page locations, and the context in which gender-related terms appear	Assessing whether gender is visibly present in the policy text.
2.	Gender mainstreaming	Mainstreaming; integration; cross-cutting; inclusion; participation; empowerment	Whether gender is treated as a cross-cutting issue, a policy priority, or only a general development concern	Examining whether gender is integrated into policy design, implementation and monitoring.
3.	Gender-responsive budgeting/financing	Gender budget; gender-responsive budgeting; budget; allocation; financing;	Whether the document links budgeting, financing	To determine if gender commitments are linked to financial and implementation

S.No.	Analytical category	Search terms or indicators	What was recorded	Purpose in review
		resources; funding	or resource commitments to gender or inclusion	mechanisms.
4.	Intersectional inclusion	Caste; class; ethnicity; region; rural; urban; disability; marginalised; marginalized; vulnerable; excluded; indigenous; Dalit; Madhesi; Janajati; conflict-affected; migrant; refugee; backward areas; backward communities	Whether these categories appear, whether they are defined, and whether they are linked to gender	To understand the policy framework's recognition (if at all) of intersecting forms of disadvantage. Alternatively, to determine whether policies treat women as homogenous groups.
5.	Institutional responsibility	Ministry; department; committee; focal point; coordination; monitoring; reporting; accountability; implementation; indicator	Whether the document assigns responsibility to specific institutions and includes monitoring, reporting, or accountability processes in any form	To determine whether gender and inclusion commitments are merely declaratory, or, alternatively, if they are backed by implementation.
6.	Translation of domestic policy into external action	Constitution; GESI; CEDAW; UNSCR 1325; UNSCR 1820; SDGs; foreign policy; aid; development cooperation; donor; bilateral; multilateral	Whether domestic or international gender commitments are reflected in foreign aid and development cooperation policy language	Assess whether Nepal's domestic gender equality and social inclusion commitments are translated into external policy practice.

The analysis focuses on the two main policy documents and comprises textual analysis supplemented by the relevant documentary evidence they contain. Direct quotations will be given in conjunction with page and/or section references to show what, if anything, is mentioned with regard to gender and the other intersectional categories in the core documents. The context and supporting documents have been used more selectively to place the findings in the scope of the wider commitments given by Nepal's domestic and foreign policies.

The study is limited to documentary analysis and it does not seek to examine internal policymaking processes through interviews with officials, development partners or civil society actors. Also worth mentioning is that the detailed analytical review is confined to the two policy documents identified as core or central to the analysis. Therefore, this work does not claim to assess the entirety of Nepal's foreign policy practice. These limitations are dealt with by keeping the article's claims focused on what is visible in the selected policy texts.

5. Findings and Discussions

5.1. Nepal's foreign policy

Nepal's foreign policy abides by the 2015 Constitution of Nepal. Part four of the 2015 Constitution of Nepal directs the nation to carry out its international relations on "sovereign equality, safeguarding the freedom, territorial integrity, independence, and preserving the national interest of Nepal" (Article 50(4)). Sub-article 1 of Article 50 directs Nepal to conduct independent foreign policies based on "The Charter of the United Nations, principle of Panchasheel, international law and norms of world peace" (Baral, 2022). Further, the 2015 Constitution of Nepal declared all citizens are equal in internal and external policies and provided a mandate for "Gender equality and social inclusion to bring the women, persons with disabilities, marginalised, vulnerable and excluded communities into the mainstream of development" (Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy, 2021: 2-15). After the formulation of the new Constitution of Nepal in 2015, Nepal's foreign policy has undergone significant changes. The country transitioned from a unitary system to a federal system. Economic blockade by neighbouring state India in 2015, the devastating earthquake in the same year, border disputes, state aspiration to graduate to a middle-income earning country, and the COVID pandemic are some factors that have impacted Nepal's foreign policy.

Further, Nepal's foreign policy can be understood through key policy documents, including Pararastra Niti 2077, Foreign Aid Policy 2002, International Development Cooperation Policy 2019 and foreign policy practices as described below:

Table 3 presents the key findings drawn from the two core policy documents examined in this article. By setting out the analytical category, documentary evidence, page or section reference and corresponding interpretation, it provides a clear basis for the discussion that follows.

Table 3. Key findings from the core policy documents

S.No.	Analytical category	Document	What the document Shows	Evidence	Page or section	Interpretation
1.	Analysis of term occurrence	Foreign Aid Policy 2002	The exact term "gender" appears four times in the searchable policy text	References to gender occur in discussions of cross-cutting issues, aid objectives, project/ programme design and project sensitivity	p. 11, section 3.1; p. 19, section 4.5(iii); p. 24, section 6.4; p. 41, section 8.5(ix)	Gender is present in the policy, but its occurrences are in the context of wider development and project design concerns
2.	Gender visibility and mainstreaming	Foreign Aid Policy 2002	Gender is described as one among several cross-cutting issues relevant to poverty patterns and project design	"Cross-cutting issues which impinge largely on current poverty patterns-gender, environment, and efficient forms of governance and management"	p. 24, section 6.4	Gender is framed as a cross-cutting concern rather than as a standalone aid-policy priority.
3.	Targeted intervention	Foreign Aid Policy 2002	The policy does not prohibit targeted interventions for cross-cutting issues, but does not itself specify gender targets or differentiated beneficiary categories	However, this will not preclude targeted programmes and specific "interventions to address the cross-cutting issues."	p. 24, section 6.4	The policy leaves scope for targeted action, but does not operationalise intersectional or gender-specific intervention.

S.No.	Analytical category	Document	What the document Shows	Evidence	Page or section	Interpretation
4.	Gender-responsive budgeting/ financing	Foreign Aid Policy 2002	The policy discusses budget allocation, project ranking and resource management, but does not expressly link these mechanisms to gender	"Budget allocations will follow clearly defined priorities and ranking of projects in terms of their potential for achieving sectoral and national development targets"	p. 43, section 9.2(ii)	Budgeting is treated as part of aid management, yet the policy does not spell out a specific mechanism for gender-responsive budgeting or financing.
5.	Analysis of term occurrence	International Development Cooperation Policy 2019	The actual word "gender" appears twice in the searchable policy text, only in the context of "gender equality"	The two references appear in the provisions dealing with alignment with national priorities and the modalities for mobilising aid.	p. 8, section 3.1.6; p. 11, section 3.2.10.	This offers a clear basis for arguing that gender has only limited textual visibility in the 2019 policy.
6.	Development priorities	International Development Cooperation Policy 2019	The policy identifies eight priority areas for development cooperation, yet gender equality does not appear as a distinct priority in its own right.	Priority areas include physical infrastructure; education, health, drinking water and sanitation; productivity; employment and poverty alleviation; science and technology; environment and climate	pp. 4–5, section 3	Gender equality does not feature as a separate priority within the policy's main priority framework.

S.No.	Analytical category	Document	What the document Shows	Evidence	Page or section	Interpretation
				change; and disaster management; areas identified as appropriate by the Government of Nepal for obtaining foreign assistance.		
7.	Gender visibility and social inclusion	International Development Cooperation Policy 2019	Gender equality is addressed as a cross-cutting issue in projects and programmes financed through international funding.	"...social inclusion, improving the quality of life of marginalised communities, gender equality..."	p. 8, section 3.1.6	The policy recognises gender, but largely treats it as a cross-cutting concern within development projects and programmes.
8.	Gender and project design	International Development Cooperation Policy 2019	The policy requires consideration of gender equality and social inclusion while developing internationally funded projects	"Gender equality and social inclusion will be taken into consideration, and relevant activities will be incorporated to the extent possible"	p. 11, section 3.2.10	Gender is brought into the project-development stage, although the qualified language used does not set out any detailed mechanism for implementation.

S.No.	Analytical category	Document	What the document Shows	Evidence	Page or section	Interpretation
9.	Intersectional inclusion	International Development Cooperation Policy 2019	The policy recognises differences of region, class and community, as well as the particular position of marginalised communities and socially or economically backward areas. However, it does not explicitly relate these differences to the varied experiences of women.	"Balanced development of all regions, classes and communities" and "marginalized communities"	p. 6, section 2.4(b); p. 8, section 3.1.6	The policy uses the language of inclusion, but does not adequately explain how gender intersects with other forms of disadvantage.
10	Institutional responsibility and monitoring	International Development Cooperation Policy 2019	The policy provides for coordination and monitoring of development cooperation in general, but does not set out any gender-specific accountability	"The Ministry of Finance shall be responsible for the mobilization of development cooperation" and Joint Sectoral Reviews cover "implementation, monitoring, evaluation	p. 24, section 5.2.1; p. 25, section 5.4	The policy establishes institutional and monitoring mechanisms for aid management, but these are not expressly designed to address gender

S.No.	Analytical category	Document	What the document Shows	Evidence	Page or section	Interpretation
			mechanism or indicators disaggregated by gender.	and coordination"		concerns.
11.	Overall comparison	Foreign Aid Policy 2002 and International Development Cooperation Policy 2019	Both documents acknowledge gender or social inclusion, but neither sets out a detailed framework for intersectional or gender-responsive financing in foreign aid and development cooperation.	The 2002 policy addresses gender as a cross-cutting issue, while the 2019 policy refers to gender equality in sections 3.1.6 and 3.2.10.	Foreign Aid Policy 2002, pp. 11, 19, 24, 41, 43; International Development Cooperation Policy 2019, pp. 4–11, 24–25	The two core documents support the central finding that, although gender is recognised in the policy framework, it is insufficiently operationalised in the framework itself. Similarly, intersectional inclusion remains broadly framed and insufficiently developed.

Table 3 shows that gender is not absent from the two core policy documents. However, it is addressed primarily as a cross-cutting or project-design concern, rather than as a central policy commitment supported by clear institutional, budgetary and monitoring mechanisms. The Foreign Aid Policy 2002 places gender within a broader development and project-design framework, while the International Development Cooperation Policy 2019 refers to gender equality and social inclusion in the context of internationally funded projects and programmes. Neither document, however, develops a detailed intersectional framework that links gender to disadvantages arising from caste, class, ethnicity, region, disability, conflict-affected status or migration status. This supports the article's argument that Nepal's foreign aid and development cooperation framework engages with gender and inclusion unevenly, giving greater operational attention to aid management and development priorities than to gender-specific or intersectional commitments.

5.2. Pararastra Niti-2077

Pararastra Niti-2077 was formulated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2020 and is based on the principle of "Amity to all, enmity to no one" (Khanal, 2020). The policy highlights the constitutional provisions and directive principles for achieving the state objectives. It emphasises the importance of existing laws of the country, national security policies, plans and programs, international law, and bilateral and multilateral commitments directly influencing Nepal's foreign policy.

The foreign policy 2077 is characterised by both continuity and change. The continuity is in following the same guiding principles, in which Sovereign equality and Panchasheel are two key elements. About sovereign equality, the Constitution of Nepal 2015 directs foreign policy to be conducted independently without foreign influence. Panchasheel directs the country to adhere to the five principles of peaceful coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (MOFA, 2022).

The changes are in terms of its focus on soft power and multidimensional connectivity with neighbouring countries, views on revision of bilateral treaties, utilising the Nepali diaspora as a valuable resource, resolving the border disputes, track two diplomacy, public diplomacy, labour diplomacy, and climate change (The Government of Nepal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

On the gender aspect, the Constitution of Nepal, 2015, upholds the GESI[1] framework and acknowledges the importance of ensuring the

1. Gender equality and Social inclusion (GESI) is the framework put forward by the United Nations through adopting and recognising the importance of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all individuals regardless of gender, race, class, religion, or status.

representation and participation of women, marginalised groups, and people with disabilities in all areas of the policy and decision-making process. GESI commitments are reflected in the Nepal government sectoral policies (INHURED International, n.d.: 12). In addition, Nepal is a party to GESI-related International treaties and conventions like the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women(CEDAW), the Convention Against All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and 1820, the ILO convention on indigenous and Tribal people convention, 1989 (No.169), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which also shapes foreign policy. Though committed to various GESI-related international treaties, Pararastra Niti- 2077, guided by the 2015 Constitution of Nepal, considers gender only as a cross-cutting issue in foreign policy implementation, not as a major priority, unlike pioneer countries in feminist foreign policy. With the history of conflict and the vast displaced population, there is no section on refugees, displaced or stateless persons (INHURED International, n.d.: XV).

Nepal adopted the United Nations Security Council 1325 and implemented the National Action Plan twice along the GESI framework lines. However, it lacks the 'intersectional and bottom-up-localisation of WPS and NAPs' (K.C. & Whetstone, 2022), excluding the lived experiences of marginalised women (such as conflict-affected women ex-combatants, war widows, Dalit women, Muslim women, poor women from the marginalised region) that are critical for achieving the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Further, as part of foreign policy, Nepal, a founding member, adheres to the policies and institutional framework of SAARC. Under this framework, Nepal abides by Social Affairs, where SAARC promotes social development through cooperation in the SAARC Social Charter on gender-related issues (SAARC, 2020). The social development targets poverty eradication, population stabilisation, empowerment of women, youth mobilisation, and more. Also, the Gender Policy Advocacy Group (GPAG-SAARC) drives for gender equality, women's empowerment, and regional and international commitments. However, all these frameworks are not efficient in delivering due to the inefficiency of the overall SAARC, the mother body.

In practice, insecurities (powerful and influential neighbours) (Gambhir, 2022) and Nepal's aspirations to economic development rather than social development shape the foreign policy of Nepal, creating "gender biases in diplomacy, security, and politics" (Pandey, 2021: 1).

5.3. Foreign aid policy 2002

Perhaps one of Nepal's earliest articulations of a policy concerning how

it receives, manages, organises and coordinates foreign aid is the Nepal Foreign Aid Policy 2002. Gender is not a central theme of the policy, and primacy is given to aid effectiveness, wider national priorities, fighting poverty, coordination with donors, managing resources and selecting the right projects (Government of Nepal, 2002: 11, 17–19, 40–43). The evidence presented in Table 3 demonstrates that while gender is present in the document, it is by no means a central organising principle or theme of the policy.

An analysis of the searchable text shows that the term "gender" occurs four times (Government of Nepal, 2002: 11, 19, 24, 41). The first mention of gender lists it with other cross-cutting issues, such as decentralisation, governance, and transparency, and the context is the need for development policy thinking to change (ibid: 11). Later on, the policy links poverty reduction and gender with the effectiveness of aid and governance (ibid: 19). Section 6.4 spells out the important principle regarding gender when it suggests that gender, among other aspects such as the environment, governance and management issues, should be a consideration in the design of projects and programmes (ibid: 24). In essence, the policy, while recognising gender as a relevant consideration, nevertheless lumps it together with cross-cutting project design issues. This is not the same as treating gender as a standalone foreign aid priority.

Notwithstanding the reference to gender as one among multiple cross-cutting aspects, the policy does leave scope for targeted action and interventions on gender. Section 6.4, for instance, while reiterating the government's preference for programmes that integrate cross-cutting issues, leaves space open by noting that this does not prevent or preclude targeted actions or specific interventions (Government of Nepal, 2002: 24). This does not, however, go further. The policy does not specify gender targets, gender-disaggregated indicators or categories of women. It also does little to attribute institutional responsibility for policy implementation on gender issues. While the policy document alludes to aspects such as the allocation of budgets, prioritisation and project ranking in the management of funds and resources, it fails to address gender-responsive budgeting or financing (ibid: 41-43). Thus, suffice it to say that although the Nepal Foreign Aid Policy 2002 takes note of and leaves some space for gender, it fails to be a comprehensive framework for gender equality and intersectional inclusion in the broader sense.

5.4. International Development Cooperation Policy 2019

The International Development Cooperation Policy 2019 is the more recent core policy document on international development cooperation. It transitions from the notion of simply managing foreign aid to one that entails a broader cooperation framework. In other words, it includes mobilisation, coordination and the monitoring of foreign aid. The

policy names eight priority areas, viz. physical infrastructure; education, health, drinking water and sanitation; enhancement of national production and productivity; employment generation and poverty alleviation; science and technology development and transfer; environmental protection and climate change; disaster management; and "other areas identified as appropriate by the Government of Nepal for obtaining foreign assistance" (Government of Nepal, 2019: 4-5).

Table 3 shows that gender equality is not named as a standalone area of priority in the document. The exact term "gender" appears twice in the searchable English text. In both instances, it was mentioned as part of the phrase "gender equality" (Government of Nepal, 2019: 8, 11). Section 3.1.6 mentions gender equality as one among multiple cross-cutting concerns, such as improving the quality of life of marginalised communities, the development of backward areas and communities, and social inclusion overall (ibid: 8). Section 3.2.10 deals with project development and links gender equality and social inclusion as considerations. It states that relevant activities connected to these considerations can be included as far as possible (ibid: 11). It can therefore be observed that the 2019 policy recognises gender equality and social inclusion primarily as cross-cutting concerns when questions of project development arise.

Beyond gender, the 2019 policy contains broad inclusion language. This includes a focus on the balanced development of regions, classes, and communities, including marginalised or backward regions and communities (Government of Nepal, 2019: 6, 8). Despite the breadth of the inclusion vocabulary, the policy falls short of being a completely intersectional framework on gender. It fails to connect the wide range of social categories listed to women's experiences that may be different for women belonging to different categories. The policy fails to disaggregate women by caste, ethnicity, class, disability, region, migration, or conflict-affected status. The broad treatment of intersectionality in the policy suffers from the defect of under-specification.

At a general level, the policy establishes umbrella institutional and monitoring arrangements for development cooperation. This includes the central role of the Ministry of Finance and Joint Sectoral Reviews (Government of Nepal, 2019: 24-25). This system is suited for management, aid coordination, and monitoring. There is little evidence to show that these mechanisms have been designed for gender accountability. In fact, the policy does not establish a budgeting or financing mechanism that is gender-responsive. Multiple mentions of gender equality and social inclusion notwithstanding, the policy fails to establish institutional guardrails that can ensure financing, monitoring or accountability that is responsive to gendered realities.

This absence is noteworthy in light of the fact that Nepal does have a domestic gender-responsive budgeting framework. Rana and Koirala (2021) show that gender-responsive budgeting has been a well-

established practice in Nepal since FY 2007-08. They also demonstrate that direct gender-responsive budgeting increased from 11.03% in 2007/08 to 38.17% in 2019-20 (Rana & Koirala, 2021: 196-197). Thus, Nepal's domestic gender policy tools have not clearly found utterance in its foreign aid and development cooperation regime.

5.5. Foreign Aid Development Agreements

Nepal receives development aid from bilateral and multilateral sources through either loans or grants. The aid structure is mainly in three forms: loan, grant, and technical assistance, varying depending on projects and donors. The patterns of development aid depend upon the policy of donor countries and organisations. For instance, IMF loans and development projects like the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) of the USA and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China, where Nepal has to abide by certain conditions to receive the aid. In this regard, Nepali citizens believe that Nepal hasn't been able to assert itself in its foreign policies and play a leadership role.

5.5.1. Bilateral sources and policies

Nepal has a significant number of bilateral development partners which fund various development activities in Nepal, including infrastructure, health, education, irrigation and many others. Some of the crucial ones include India, the UK, Japan, China, Germany, Korea, Norway, Finland and Switzerland. With Australia, the Government of Nepal has the Development Cooperation Strategy signed in 2003 and is committed to "strengthening governance and enhancing the emergency preparedness with its prime focus on supporting local communities and those most vulnerable" (Government of Nepal, 2022). With respect to the neighbouring countries, India and Nepal still follow the major Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950, the Neighbourhood First Policy and major bilateral cooperation have manifested in the significantly large infrastructure projects, trade, energy, and petroleum pipeline and connectivity (Government of India, 2026). With another neighbour, China, Nepal has the Sino-Nepalese Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in 1960, while crucial developmental projects include the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Another important bilateral partner of Nepal is Japan. Japan has a "Country Development Cooperation Policy for cooperation with Nepal." The priority areas include 'recovery work and disaster-resilient nation-building in both structural and non-structural building, social and economic structure and mechanism development, which are directly linked to economic growth and the national livelihoods improvement, poverty reduction and quality of life improvement, governance enhancement and basic framework for democracy (MOFA, 2022). The historical development partner for Nepal is the United Kingdom. The UK's development cooperation strategy includes the

aspects of economic growth and economic inclusion to help increase income and access to finance for 65,000 rural people by 2021. Within these priority areas of bilateral relations, there is no specific section of policies on gender and related dimensions. Norway's Development strategy includes the contribution of social and energy development. It includes the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP), committed to increasing education access for girls and children with disabilities (Government of Nepal, 2022; MOFA, 2022). Its priorities include human rights and gender equality. Nepal's other Bilateral development aid sources include countries such as Germany, which have a cooperation strategy on top sectors of health and energy, promoting sustainable access to electrification through community management and ownership in rural areas of Nepal. Finland's strategy includes local development followed by the education sector, which aims to achieve universal access to livelihood promotion. The Republic of Korea's development strategy is focused on poverty reduction and economic growth through integrated rural development and empowering rural communities. Meanwhile, Switzerland, with a long history of humanitarian aid assistance to Nepal, has the guiding policy Swiss Cooperation Strategy Nepal (2018-2022), which prioritises 'all the people at the sub-national level, explicitly women and men, especially disadvantaged groups, migrant and their families' (Government of Nepal, 2022; MOFA, 2022).

Therefore, Nepal only has gender-related policies, with a handful of countries like Finland and Norway, where they themselves, on their agreement, include the gender element, and with some countries like Australia, the U.K., and Japan have intersectional language in their policies, which target the most vulnerable, rural people in cooperation policies and projects with Nepal.

5.5.2. Multilateral sources and policies

One of the significant multilateral development partners of Nepal is the Asian Development Bank. Both countries started their partnership in 1966. The assistance to Nepal from the ADB comes from 'the ADB provision charter, regulations, and operational policies for ordinary operation' (MOFA, 2022). ADB conducts annual country review exercises to discuss the sector priorities and revise its policies. However, its top five sectors of assistance, including education, energy, urban development, drinking water, and transportation, do not include targeted gender or gender equality policies. The ongoing Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) 2020-2024 has three declared objectives: improved infrastructures for private-sector-led growth, improved access to devolved services, and environmental sustainability and resilience (MOFA, 2022). Reflecting on these stated objectives, CPS does not have targeted gender language to promote gender equality or gender empowerment.

For a country like Nepal, which calls for social inclusion for economic development, ADB indeed incorporates gender mainstreaming into its development initiatives and projects, supporting Nepal's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) strategy. However, it lacks particular policies that contain specific gender language, have targeted gender budgeting, and development of gender institutions within the development sector strategy.

The World Bank is one of the largest multilateral financial sources of funding in Nepal. In 2018, the country partnership framework was agreed upon between the World Bank and Nepal for five years, 2019-2023. It includes three priority areas for development: public institutions, private sector-led jobs and growth, and inclusion and resilience (Government of Nepal, 2022; MOFA, 2022). Policies are general in nature, aiming to promote economic growth and reduce poverty of the overall country; however, there is no clear-cut mention of policies on gender in its cooperation strategy with Nepal. Nevertheless, WB has a "gender equality as smart economies" policy formulated, and the cross-cutting issues across the World Bank project in Nepal include gender, citizen engagement, and climate change.

Another financial institution that finances the infrastructure project in Nepal is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which aims to improve Nepal's social and economic status. Nepal signed the Articles of Agreement on 29 June 2015 with AIIB; nevertheless, this development cooperation approach only speaks of the 'economic development of the Asia region focusing on infrastructure investment and energy development' (Government of Nepal, 2022; MOFA, 2022) rather than any social development that would stress intersectional categories, job creation or other social benefits targeting the marginalised of marginalised categories.

Another significant regional multilateral development partner is SAARC and its Development Fund. The objectives of the SAARC South Asian Development Fund (SADF) are "to support poverty alleviation, industrial development, protection of the environment, institutional/human resource development, and promotion of infrastructure and social development projects in the SAARC region" (MOFA, 2022).

SDF focuses on the welfare of people on the margin and has Women, Children, and Social welfare as its topmost priority sectors. The country partnership strategy includes rural development, education, and child welfare as the cooperation areas, showcasing regional institutions and their policies being responsive and inclusive.

Another grant aid provider for Nepal since 1992 is the European Union. The country partnership strategy of the EU with Nepal focuses on three areas: sustainable rural development, education, and strengthening democracy and decentralisation. The EU is committed to supporting Nepal's social development and funding programs

supporting women's rights and empowerment. But the challenge is that there's a lack of a specific policy book to which both sides bind.

Analysing Nepal's bilateral and multilateral development aid policies with different stakeholders has been limited to being the recipient of aid and project implementation, rather than carefully formulating policies for addressing the social demands of citizens, considering the intersectionality. The lack of a concrete gender perspective in developmental aid policies can be examined in several ways. As a small state conscious about its territorial integrity and sovereignty, Nepal hasn't yet been confident and assertive in formulating policies according to its people's interests. And the other is the state priority of achieving economic growth and development over inclusive development.

Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of each development partner's cooperation projects mainstream gender (women benefited from the projects) at the domestic implementation level, with the gender markers formulated by AMIS (Aid Management Information System), Nepal.

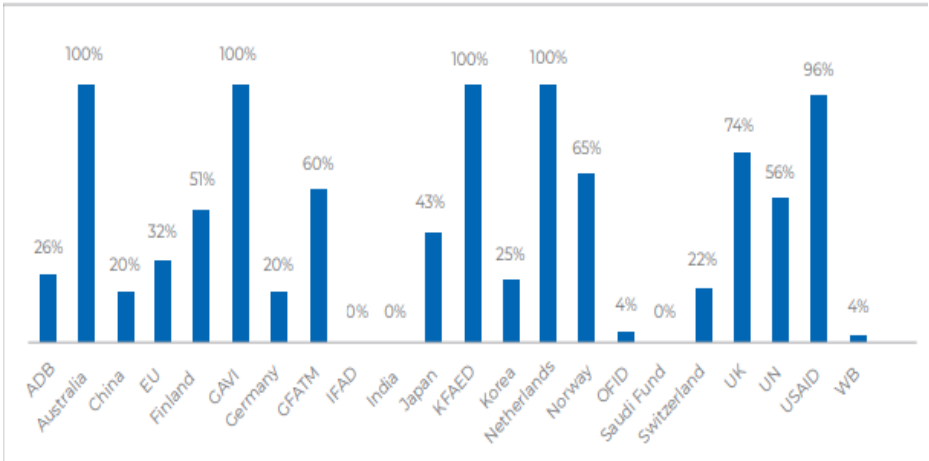


Figure 1. Gender mainstreaming by development partners, FY 2020/2021 (Source: Government of Nepal, 2021; MOFA, 2022: 38)

5.6. Deliberations and Practices of Nepal's Foreign Policy

Though Nepal's foreign policy-2077 reiterates the strengthening and promotion of regionalism and multilateralism toward its social-economic development, Nepal's foreign policy, to some extent, has been limited to prioritising its relations with two regional powers in its neighbourhood, India and China. In practice, insecurities (powerful and influential neighbours) (Gambhir, 2022) and Nepal's aspirations for economic rather than social development shape Nepal's foreign policy.

The practices of Nepal's foreign policy showcase its aim to maintain neutrality, balance, and non-alignment with external and regional forces and to ensure Nepal's domestic stability and economic development.

Examining the dynamics of military diplomacy from 2008-2018, Rawal (2019: v) writes Nepal's foreign policy has been on "balancing one neighbour against each other, practising the non-alignment, internationalism with the United Nations (UN) and maintaining the equi-proximity with both neighbours." After the 2015 economic blockade, Nepal also pursued the "policy of hedging" (Mainali, 2022) to have a closer relationship with China for sustenance. Overall, Nepal's foreign policy practices have been understood as protecting the country's sovereignty and national security against external threats and promoting economic interests through its foreign policies. Within this state-centric approach, thinking of intersectionality and feminist concerns looks challenging, where the nation's focus is on a conventional understanding of geopolitics and is limited to state survival, addressing the security dilemma and promoting economic development.

6. Conclusion

Nepal has made strong commitments, both domestically and internationally, regarding women's rights, social inclusion and gender equality. The fact that such commitments exist is, in itself, sufficient to expect that they are also reflected in Nepal's foreign aid and development cooperation framework, given that this field stands at the crossroads of Nepal's international engagement and its domestic objectives. However, as argued in this analysis, the translation of commitments to policy frameworks is uneven at best.

The Foreign Aid Policy 2002 recognises gender as one of many cross-cutting issues that are important to the attainment of goals such as poverty reduction and aid effectiveness. It is also highlighted as a consideration in project design. It also creates space for targeted programmes and specific interventions to address cross-cutting concerns. However, the policy does not set out gender-specific targets, differentiated beneficiary categories, gender-disaggregated indicators, or a clear system or mechanism for accountability in implementing gender-responsive aid policy. Its treatment of gender is therefore visible, but limited.

The International Development Cooperation Policy 2019 also refers to gender equality, but only in limited parts of the text. It treats gender equality and social inclusion as cross-cutting concerns in internationally funded projects and programmes, and requires them to be considered when such projects are developed. However, gender equality is not identified as a standalone priority area, nor does the policy expressly create a gender-responsive budgeting, financing or monitoring mechanism. Its references to marginalised communities, backward areas, regions, classes and communities show that inclusion forms part of the policy language, but these categories are not systematically linked to the differentiated experiences of women.

What exists is a translation gap between the gender-related commitments made by multiple Nepali governments over the years and the external aid and development policies pursued by the State. Shadows of Nepal's domestic and international commitments to gender equality and social inclusion are visible in the broader policy environment. However, the challenge remains that they are rather weakly operationalised in the core foreign aid and development cooperation documents. Future policy revisions should use clearer gender-responsive language, include specific intersectional indicators, link financing and monitoring to gender outcomes, and strengthen institutional accountability. These changes would help Nepal move beyond broad recognition of gender and inclusion towards a more practical and meaningful approach to gender-responsive development cooperation.

Conflict of interest

The author declared no conflicts of interest.

Ethical considerations

The author has completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc. This article was not authored by artificial intelligence.

Data availability

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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