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# EDUCATING DALIT WOMEN: BEYOND A ONE-DIMENSIONAL POLICY FORMULATION

While the global failure to improve the conditions of the most disadvantaged groups in developing countries has many roots, the continued domination of traditional, one-dimensional policy approaches is one of them. The intersectionality perspective, focusing on the simultaneous operation of gender, racial, class and/or caste inequalities, has been recognized as an important tool for policymakers and scholars committed to addressing inequalities, especially as they are experienced by women. Despite the need to include intersectionality in formulating, implementing, and evaluating development policies, no significant progress has been made in this area. In this paper, we advance the application of an intersectional approach to one particular area of policy analysis, policy formulation, by 1) providing a practical guide that can be used to conduct intersectional analyses of development policies; 2) presenting a case study illustrating the how of an intersectional policy formulation analysis; and 3) demonstrating the advantages of an intersectional analysis and discussing its challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

The global failure to achieve discrimination-free societies can be attributed to many structural, social, and economic factors, among which is that development policies are yet to systematically adopt an alternative paradigm for analyzing social issues and developing policies effectively addressing them. This is especially the case with regard to developing and evaluating policies concerned with inequalities experienced by women (Wilkinson, 2003). The intersectionality perspective addressing how people's experiences are shaped by a simultaneous interaction of gender, racial/ethnic, class and/or caste inequalities has been recognized as an important policy tool (see, Patel, 2001; Schmidt, 2006; Shrestha, 2006). In fact, various organizations and agencies operating under the United Nations (UN) umbrella issued calls for a systematic integration of intersectionality in development research and policies. For instance, a paper presented to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2001) states that "[t]his [need of employing intersectional approach] applies to a spectrum of mechanisms including human rights documentation, reporting to human rights treaty bodies, fact finding missions,

policy recommendations, and in making and implementing commitments under platforms and plans of action adopted at world conferences" (Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, 2001).

Despite the growing advocacy to systematically include intersectionality in formulating, implementing, and evaluating development policies, no significant progress has been made in this area (Patel, 2001; Wilkinson, 2003). George (2001) states that even when specific recommendations to include an intersectional approach in policy development are made, the programmatic documents defining the long-term organizational goals still tend to espouse one-dimensional approaches. In fact, although various bodies within the UN system have recognized the idea of intersectionality, as of today specific policies have yet to be developed at the UN level to address the issue of intersectional inequalities in the lives of poor and otherwise disadvantaged women (Center for Women's Global Leadership, 2006). In a different context, Weber (2006) arrives at similar conclusion. She notes that although over the past thirty years intersectionality has become integrated within several disciplines (e.g., women's studies, gender studies, and

ethnic studies) it still “remains largely marginalized in the academy and public policy” (Weber 2006: 22). If governing bodies, both national and international, as well as different non-governmental organizations have a vested interest in developing social policies leading to inclusion of the most marginalized groups, they must integrate intersectionality at all phases of policymaking process.

The dearth of intersectional policies in development work may be due to several factors, including the novelty of this perspective and its complexity. In mirroring the complexity of human experiences, intersectionality raises new and complex analytical and methodological challenges (McCall, 2005) that must be addressed at the policy formulation, implementation, and evaluations stages. Given this, the integration of intersectionality into development work requires the creation of practical guidelines as to how one can formulate or evaluate policies using this approach.

In this paper, we address one aspect of this challenge and provide a practical guide to conducting an intersectional analysis of a critical stage in the policy-making process, the policy formulation stage. Importantly, since policy formulation is inextricably related to problem/issue definition our discussion also includes this dimension of policy making. We first discuss the main principles of intersectionality. Next, we use a case study of recent policies developed in Nepal to illustrate the steps involved in an intersectional evaluation of problem definition and policy formulation. We selected Nepal for our case study because despite the fact that its development planning is half a century old, a large percentage of the nation’s population (Dalit people, and Dalit women, in particular) experiences considerable socio-political and economic exclusion (World Bank, 2006). Our case study focuses on the intersectional analysis of Nepal’s education policies. Here, we limit our case analysis only to the problem definition and policy formulation. We conclude by examining the benefits and challenges of such an approach to the policy-making process. We hope our analysis will not only contribute to the further development of intersectional policy scholarship but also to the creation of actual policies designed to better target the most deserving groups.

## REVIEW OF INTERSECTIONALITY PERSPECTIVE

Intersectionality, a perspective developed to account for the complexity of social relations, sensitizes us to the importance of examining how the interactions of various dimensions of social inequalities, such as race/ethnicity, gender, and social class, shape people’s experiences (Collins, 2000). Intersectionality can be defined as an “integrated” approach identifying and analyzing the simultaneous operation of multiple forms of inequality and privilege. At the most basic level, intersectionality perspectives “trace the consequences of class, gender, race, affectional preferences, global location for lived experience, group standpoints and relations among women [and men]” (Lengermann & Niebrugge Brantley,

2004: 349). Instead of focusing on the characteristics of individuals, intersectionality provides a relational and contextualized approach to social inequalities.

As an approach concerned with the complexity of social relations, intersectionality presents researchers with a set of unique advantages and challenges. With regard to its advantages, this perspective allows “a conceptualization of [social inequalities] that attempts to capture both structure and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more axes of subordination” (Crenshaw, 2000: 8). Second, it also allows us to view people’s identities as multi-faceted and context-specific, where the meaning of people’s locations and identities as well as their salience are the product of history, culture, and society. At the same time, by stressing the importance of gender, race, and class power systems, intersectionality goes “beyond the mere recognition of diversity and difference among women to examine structures of domination” (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1997: 27). Third, depending on our social location in a given society, certain aspects of our identity, like race, gender, or sexuality, may protect us from discrimination while its other dimensions may lead to discrimination and other human right violations (Crooms, 1997). Fourth, our social location not only affects our identities and positions in a power structure, it also shapes our perspectives on the social reality. Fifth, intersectional scholars emphasize the importance of the local articulation of social relations. Sixth, from this perspective, oppressive social relations mutually constitute one another, meaning that “Each [oppressive relation] develops in the context of the other” (Glenn, 1992: 33).

One of the most salient challenges for the intersectional researcher is how to manage the complexity of an intersectional analysis. Addressing this challenge, McCall (2005) discusses three methodological approaches to managing the complexity of intersectional analyses. The first approach is called “anti-categorical complexity.” Scholars using this approach focus on deconstructing existing systems of categorization in order to expose their arbitrary nature. Essentially, scholars using this approach bring to light the multiple dimensions of a single homogenous category, such as women, and in doing so expose the fact that this category was developed from the experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual women living in developed countries. The second approach is the intra-categorical complexity. Scholars using this approach place subjects at the intersection of multiple dimensions of social relations (race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality) and then examine them in depth as a single social group whose experiences are defined by the intersection of these relations (McCall, 2005: 5).

The third approach, inter-categorical, focuses on “the complexity of relationship among multiple social groups within and across analytical categories and not on complexities within single groups, single categories, or both” (McCall, 2005: 16). This approach involves comparing and contrasting the selected social groups across multiple

dimensions of inequality. A comparison of poverty rates of social groups defined by gender and race at the same time (Black women and men and white women and men) is an example of such approach. In sum, the inter-categorical method of intersectionality studies the intersection of the sets of dimensions of multiple categories, thereby exposing complex matrices of advantage and disadvantage (McCall, 2005).

## THE POLICY PROCESS

In the broadest sense, the policy-making process is composed of stages whereby problems or issues are defined, acted upon through policies, and evaluated. A general understanding of the policy-making process is essential to assessing governmental action or inaction relative to a particular policy. This assessment involves contributions from many disciplines in an effort to produce informed and ultimately responsive policy development.

Problem definition is a precursor to the policy process (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994). Problem definition can be conceptualized as a way in which a given social condition is represented in a public discourse. How a given condition is represented or viewed sets important limits to the ways in which policies will address this condition (Bacchi, 1999). For example, if the issue of low literacy rates among Nepali women is perceived or defined as a problem of gender inequality, the solution will involve policies to increase *women's* (as opposed to men) access to educational opportunities. On the other hand, if the problem is defined as low literacy rates among women in the lower caste (Dalits), the policies should be designed to increase educational opportunities for Dalit women. By adding the factor of caste, we not only highlight the critical importance of who is present at the agenda stage and/or what event has occurred in order for the issue to gain the attention necessary to demand a policy or governmental remedy, but also increases the potential to develop policies targeting the intersection of gender and caste. Of course, when it comes to social policies we must recognize that some representations or views of social problems dominate the policy process while other representations remain marginalized (Bacchi, 1999).

The policy process begins with a definition of policy. Friedrich defines policy as “a proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or realize an objective or a purpose” (1963: 21). In focusing on action itself rather than proposed or intended action, Anderson (1998:9) defines a public policy as “a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern.” Next, a perceived problem rises to the level of a policy problem as a result of the actions of stakeholders and involves movement through a number of stages. This process too has a number of different definitions (see, for example, Weimer & Vining, 1999). In our discussion

of the activities involved in the policy process, we recognize its complexity as grasped by the conceptual framework developed by Dunn (1994:16):<sup>1</sup>

1. Agenda setting (Problem Structuring): problem definitional stage wherein the policy makers learn about a set of problems/issues that require governmental action—the problems then morph into policy issues.
2. Policy Formulation (Alternatives and Recommendation): official proposals or alternatives are developed for dealing with policy issues and a policy proposal or alternative is adopted by a form of government (legislative majority, agency directors, or court decisions).
3. Policy Implementation (Monitoring): an adopted policy is carried out by an administration unit(s) through mobilization of finances and resources in compliance with the policy.<sup>2</sup>
4. Policy Assessment (Evaluation): governmental units determine whether all relevant policy actions are in compliance with the statutory requirements of the policy and whether policy objectives have been achieved.<sup>3</sup>

Given the complexity of the policy process and the fact the policy formulation has implications for the other stages in the policy process, for the purpose of this paper, we limit our discussion to the policy formulation stage. Specifically, this stage is critical as it is when legislators, planners, or other decision makers write laws or regulations to address the policy problem. A roundtable of staff, consultants, leaders, public members or representatives, and policy experts come together and discuss information necessary to create a framework for how the policy problem will be addressed. It is at this stage, where the viability (in terms of financial and responsive potential) of policy solutions is discussed and hammered out (Rushesky, 1990). Solution size and scope are at the heart of this stage. That is, the fundamental questions here are: what kind of program/policy is envisioned? What are the desired or intended results? In all, in what follows, we focus on problem definition and the policy formulation dimensions of policy development.

## THE METHOD OF INTERSECTIONAL PROBLEM-DEFINITION AND POLICY FORMULATION ANALYSIS

The concepts of intersectionality discussed above underlie the method of intersectional problem definition and policy formulation analysis. First, based on our earlier discussion, we define intersectionality as a theory and methodology that attempt to capture the interaction between two or more forms of inequality. At a theoretical level, intersectionality assumes that the simultaneous operation of racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create inequalities that structure the relative positions of various social groups. As a method of analysis, intersectionality

attempts to empirically examine the consequences of interacting inequalities on people occupying different social locations as well as address the way that specific acts and policies address the inequalities experienced by various social groups.

The analysis of problem definition and policy formulation included three basic goals: “(1) to grasp the meaning or significance of contemporary problems as they are experienced, adapted to, and struggled against by reasonably purposive agents, who are members of the political community; (2) to clarify the meaning of those problems so that strategically located political agents (public officials or policy makers) will be able to devise a set of efficacious and just solutions to them; and (3) to guide the selection of one preferred policy from a range of possible options based on a general vision of the good of the community as a whole” (Jennings, 1993:103).

In the proposed framework or model, an intersectional analysis includes the examination of the problem definition and policy formulation to determine the extent (if any) to which the intersectional approach is needed, and if it is, is it included?<sup>4</sup> Specifically, this means first establishing whether the problem is experienced differently by various social groups, and therefore, requiring an intersectional approach to problem definition. Second, if the answer to the first query is positive, we must determine if the official policy formulation proposals address the problem through an intersectional perspective. In doing so, we need to assess whether intersectionality is systematically integrated in relevant policy formulations and measures. When intersectionality is integrated in the formulation of relevant policies as well as relevant policy measures, we can conclude that intersectionality is central to this stage of policy process. In contrast, the concept of *missed opportunities* reveals that intersectionality was included only in some aspects of policy formulation, including the relevant policy measures, but other policy formulations and measures process failed to incorporate it.

The importance of recognizing a missed opportunity is two-fold. First, during the problem definition process, the problem could have been defined across various dimensions of intersectionality, such as gender and caste, but the policies formulated focused on gender only. If we find this to be the case we can attempt to revise or reformulate the policy to include dimensions that were initially missed, in this case, the interaction of caste with gender. Second, when the disconnect between problem definition and policy formulation is noticed, one can inquire about the reasons behind this disconnect as well as assess how this disconnect could have affected different segments of the population.

In what follows, we discuss and provide examples of the intersectional analysis of problem definition and policy formulation stages. Towards this end, we first provide an empirical justification for addressing the issue of education in terms of the interaction of gender and caste (agenda setting equivalent). Second, we assess the intersectional nature of policy formulation.

## AN ILLUSTRATION OF AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

Nepal has been undergoing the processes of transitioning from absolute monarchy to a multiparty democracy since the fall of the Ranas in 1951. Despite the many attempts to create a democratic government, the monarchy has survived for almost 239 years. In the 1950s, Nepal experienced a short-lasting “democratic experiment,” wherein one of Nepal’s political parties, the Nepali Congress Party, assumed leadership in the newly established government. Soon after, in the context of conflicts between the king and government, Nepal went back to the “partyless” government. In 1990, a pro-democracy movement forced the monarchy to establish a democratically elected, multiparty parliament. Soon after the reestablishment of democracy in 1990, it suffered acute political unrest led by Maoists insurgents. In 2001, the monarchy assumed the power again by dissolving the democratic government. In 2006, a popular movement led by all political parties and various civil society organizations including the Maoists ousted the king from power and reinstated a multiparty democratic government.

Very few policies inherited from the monarchy were appropriate for the budding democracy. After the transformation, the new government agencies as well as NGOs engaged in the process of creating and implementing new policies. Thus, in recent years, the policy-making process has proceeded in several areas, including health, development issues, and education. The Tenth Development Plan, which covers the period of 2002-2007, is the latest policy instrument of the Nepalese government. However, the Tenth Plan suffered significantly from political turmoil amidst the power struggle between the monarchy and pro-democratic forces during the period from 2001 to 2003, as well as from the civil war with the Maoists. With the reestablishment of multiparty democratic system in 2006, a new three years [2007-2010] development plan called the interim plan was developed instead of the five year development plan.

Most of the data for our case study came out of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP 2002-2007), which is a short version of the Tenth Development Plan (2002-2007). Since the question of educational opportunities for various excluded groups, especially Dalits, appears to be one of the most pressing issues, we decided to focus on education-related policies. The PRSP is not only a source of educational policies, but also provides additional information about the government’s policies and strategies concerning other relevant pro-Dalit policy components. In addition, we also relied on the Constitution of Nepal to determine the nature of existing anti-discrimination measures. Other data sources included various education-related government acts, regulations, and program activities. We also relied on the Annual Human Development Report, as well as reports published by the United Nations and the World Bank. Finally, we analyzed a range of documents published by government agencies as

well as NGOs, such as priority program papers and statements made by relevant ministries, particularly by the ministry of local development and education.

## INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS: A CASE OF EDUCATION POLICY IN NEPAL

### Stage-I: Defining the Problem

*Historical Perspective:* Although the Nepalese educational system has improved since its inception, it is still not serving its citizens equally. In 1853, the Durbar High School opened in Kathmandu. This school, however, was opened only for the “Rana” families ruling the country at that time. The Rana regime did not encourage educational opportunities for average citizens (Sharma, 1998). The anti-education attitude of this regime is reflected in the comments of Chandra Samsher Jung Bahadur Rana, the then Rana Prime Minister of Nepal, who, at the inaugural ceremony of Nepal’s first public college in 1918, said “with the opening of this college, I have hacked my own leg” ([www.geocities.com/dineshgajurel/TU.html](http://www.geocities.com/dineshgajurel/TU.html), 2006).

In 1959, the Tribhuvan University, the first public university was founded. Currently, Nepal has five universities, one public and four private. Recent statistics shows that there are 25,194 schools (1st to 10th grade) in Nepal. The average number of students per school is 212 and the average number of students per teacher is 37 ([www.moe.gov](http://www.moe.gov), 2006).<sup>5</sup> Of note, some 10,900 schools do not have a single woman teacher (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2003).

*Situation Analysis:* Although education is a key factor in social development, Dalits have not yet fully recognized its importance. In addition to economic constraints, the lack of awareness regarding the value of education also plays a significant role in hindering Dalits’ educational pursuits. The educational status of the Dalit community is considerably below that of non-Dalits.

A picture of Dalit literacy can be discerned by examining Dalit literacy rates by caste and gender. Table 1 shows that only 33.8% Dalits are literate in comparison to 68% of high caste people. In addition, a huge gap exists even among Dalit men and women, as only 24% of Dalit women are literate as

compared to 44% of men.<sup>6</sup>

The educational attainment of the entire Dalit population is also minimal. The latest data from the 2001 census shows that although the overall literacy rate of the country is 53.74, women’s literacy is only 42.49 (CBS, 2001a). Dalit literacy increased from 22.8% in 1991 to 33.8% in 2001. For Dalit girls and women, it increased by almost 100%, while for Dalit men it increased by only 10% (to 44% from 39.9% in 1991) in 2001. Literacy among the upper castes increased by 10 percentage points over the last ten years (from 58% in 1991 to 68% in 2001). Despite the hundred percent increase in the literacy rate among Dalit women, they still lag behind other social groups.

The 2001 census shows that only 0.8% of the Dalit population acquired education equal to or beyond an undergraduate degree (CBS, 2001). Among a total of two million Dalits, there are hardly two dozen Dalit women holding bachelor’s degrees (Sob, 2002:2). Dalits, particularly from the Tarai region, are the most disadvantaged in education. Table 2 shows the disparity in educational attainment between high castes and Dalits in Nepal, including the fact that educational attainment of Tarai Dalits decreases as they move from grades 1-4 to 5-10 (from 15% to 7%). In total, only 1.5% of Dalit students are able to pursue their education beyond the SLC (School Leaving Certificate equivalent to tenth grade) (World Bank, 2006).

In recognition of the disparity in literacy rates across different populations, in its Ninth Development Plan (1996-2001) the Nepali government delineated a set of educational policy reforms and activities. The government claimed to recognize multidimensional features of development in its Ninth Development Plan, and it considered education as one of the important dimensions for development (National Planning Commission, 1998). From the intersectionality perspective however, it is important to study the multidimensionality of the policy itself. Therefore, this paper analyzes the case of education policy in Nepal.

Nepal decided to provide free primary education in 1951. Compulsory primary education was started as a pilot project only for five districts during the ninth development plan, with

Table 1: Literacy in Nepal by Caste and Gender in 2001<sup>7</sup>

Particular	Lower caste (Dalit)			Upper Caste (non-Dalits)			National
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Literacy Rate	43.7	24.2	33.8%	79.5	55.9	67.5%	54

Table 2: Education Attainment Rate by Caste and Ethnicity in Nepal, 2001/2

Caste/Ethnic Group	Never Attended	Grades 1-4	Grades 5-10	SLC and Above
Hill B/C	31.6	24.6	33.7	10.1
Terai B/C	26.6	25.6	29.6	18.2
Terai Middle Caste	56.8	22	17.4	3.8
Hill Dalits	43.3	31.9	23.1	1.7
Terai Dalits	76.4	14.9	7.5	1.2
Newars	28.5	20.8	27.6	23.0
Hill Janajatis	44.6	27.2	25.2	3.0
Terai Janajatis	47.2	24.1	24.2	4.5
Muslims	62.4	24.9	11.0	1.7
Nepal	44	24.7	24.6	6.7

Source: NLSSII, tabulated by Gajurel, cited in World Bank (2006)

plans to extend it to other districts. What was a noticeable policy introduction in the Eighth Plan was to provide scholarships for Dalits for the 10 months of the school year to motivate the children and parents of lower caste and ethnic background to attend school. The provisions of scholarships started in 1996. However, under the Eight Plan, the number of available scholarships was very limited and the scholarships available were likely used by the upper castes, with 84% of scholarships provided for girls going to high castes and only 16% to lower castes (Parajuli, 1995, p. 18).

In 2000, with the introduction of the universal education policy, the number of available scholarships was increased to 440,000 (National Planning Commission, 1998). The Ninth Plan also provides that scholarships would be made available on a quota basis to girl students of 65 districts. Moreover, there is a provision in the Plan to provide scholarships to all girl students of 10 remote districts (National Planning Commission, 1998). However, the fair distribution of scholarships to students in need (who are mostly Dalit girls and boys and ethnic children) is questionable (Parajuli, 1995).

Specifically, the Ninth Development Plan includes the following education-related provisions:

- Free education up to the tenth grade for all girls and for boys coming from oppressed castes, marginalized communities, and/or living below the poverty line;
- Education in native languages up to the primary level;
- Regulation of private schools' fees to ensure that children from oppressed and marginalized communities could afford to attend them;
- Provision of scholarships to private schools to students from "oppressed and marginalized communities";
- Creation of the Rural Education Development Fund financed by a 1.5% tax on the revenue of private schools. This fund is earmarked for expanding educational opportunities for marginalized communities (National

Planning Commission, 2003).

While these policies were initiated to improve the education of children from marginalized communities, they do not appear to recognize that, when it comes to education, the needs and educational achievement of young people not only vary by gender, but also depend on their caste and geographic location. For instance, the provision that scholarships be provided to students from oppressed and marginalized communities so that they can attend private schools does not address the specific needs of Dalit girls. Girls are assigned to take care of their siblings and help the family in household chores. Dalit girls in particular, because of their poverty and their family's lack of awareness, are not encouraged to go to school. Research conducted by CERID Nepal (1998d) points out that scholarship programs may not necessarily help children, in particular girls, from lower caste and ethnic backgrounds. This research also notes that many children drop out of school even after receiving scholarships (UNESCO, 2005). Dalit girls from Tarai areas (Madhesi Dalit girls) are particularly disadvantaged because of the intersection of caste, gender, language, and patriarchal ideologies (Acharya, 2003). For example, literacy rate among Tarai Dalit women is only 11% in comparison to Tarai Dalit men (30%) (CBS, 2001).

The requirement to speak Nepali language is a problem for many ethnic groups for whom Nepali is not their own mother tongue. Providing education in the native language is, thus, one of the prominent demands of the indigenous ethnic groups of Nepal (Bhattachan, 2003). Several studies conducted over the years also suggest that children taught in their mother tongue learn better and faster than those taught in a non-native language (UNESCO, 2003). Introduction of the policy that requires schools to teach ethnic children in their mother tongue is an encouraging development. Moreover, Dalit communities of the Tarai, who have their own tribal language, could also benefit from this arrangement, but most Dalits who

do not have their own language (Gurung et al, 2006) do not appear to support this particular policy. Similarly, this policy may not ensure schooling of girls, primarily Tarai Dalit girls and/or Tarai ethnic girls, who are born in a culture where they are already treated as an asset for their future husband's house (CERID, 1997a and 1997b). Although innovative in certain areas, the Ninth Plan lacks comprehensive policies addressing the unique problem experienced by Dalit girls.

The report evaluating the Ninth Development Plan shows that 5,183 students from oppressed communities received assistance to pursue primary education, and 513 received scholarships to pursue higher education (National Planning Commission, 2003). Importantly, the report does not specifically state how many of these scholarships supported children by caste, and especially children from oppressed communities. Even the most recent education promotion project of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOE) does not include the number of female children from Dalit communities receiving assistance through the Ninth Development Plan implementation.

Even with these policy reforms, the adult literacy rate achieved at the end of Ninth Development Plan was only 49.2% (compared to the 70% target) with women's overall literacy rate at just 35.6%. The net primary school enrollment/graduation rate (total enrollment minus total number of dropouts prior to graduation) was projected to increase from 68.4% in 1997 to 90% in 2001. Although an increase was achieved, the rate reached in 2001 was 80.4%. Overall, the literacy rate among Dalits (both women and men) increased by only 10% during almost the entire timeframe of both the Eighth and Ninth Development Plans (1991 to 2001) (UNDP, 2004:60). Given the Ninth Development Plan's objective of educational inclusiveness (ostensibly for all oppressed communities), the data available regarding the targeted and actual educational achievement of Dalit children (National Planning Commission, 2003:12) is disturbing. In all, although the available data suggest that the situation of Dalit females and males is not the same, the traditional approach to defining a problem in terms of either gender (female) or caste (Dalits) appears to dominate even during the Ninth Development Plan.

In the next section, we conduct an intersectional analysis of policies formulated in the Tenth Development Plan using the educational policies described in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper as our case.

## Stage II: Policy formulation

### *Policies:*

In the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (the Tenth Development Plan), the authors, including the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOE), state that special measures will be undertaken to increase the access of disadvantaged and targeted groups to programs like education, health,

and sanitation (National Planning Commission, 2003). The educational policy objectives, strategies, and activities appearing in the Tenth Development Plan include:

### Objectives:

- To raise the standards of living of disadvantaged communities and women by implementing literacy, post-literacy, income generating and functional education programs, and
- To make special arrangements to increase educational opportunities for women and the disabled in the context of "Education For All."

### Strategy:

- To implement additional programs to increase the access of women, Dalits and other disadvantaged groups to quality education, and
- To develop an inclusive and integrated education system for special needs population, including disabled persons to increase educational opportunities in the context of the "Education For All" initiative

### Policy Actions:

- To provide access to educational programmes at all levels based on the social and economic conditions of communities defined by region, caste-group, gender and other disadvantages, and,
- To provide scholarships to increase the access of women, Dalits and disadvantaged community to education (p.12). (Nepal Planning Commission, 2002)

The education policies of the Tenth Development Plan seem to give special importance to gender and disability of children. Incorporation of disability in particular in the education policy is a commendable new initiative of the plan. Interestingly, the stated policies/strategies/policy actions address gender, caste, disability, and region specific disadvantages separately, which is an anti-categorical approach to addressing the problem (McCall, 2005). The inclusion of each of these social dimensions in education policy reflects different movements that women, lower caste, and ethnic communities have waged over the years.

Acharya (2003) maintains that gender mainstreaming was initiated in policies and programs since the Ninth Development Plan. World women's summit -- Beijing Platform for Action (1995) opened a new discourse -- of transforming policies and programs from women in development (WID) to mainstreaming gender (GID) into development policies and programs. The WID concept, which elaborates the notion that women are not outside the development process, but rather are in exploitative relations within the development process, was recognized when public policies and programs started to mainstream gender after the ninth development plan (Acharya, 2003). Mainstreaming gender in development policies is considered to be a multidimensional approach, which is at the core of the idea of intersectionality. Thus, policies that mainstream gender were supposedly more sensitive to the power relations between women and men. The



Tenth Development Plan (2002-2007) was widely believed to continue the principle of gender mainstreaming from the ninth development plan (Acharya, 2003).

Similarly, the anti-caste movement as well as the ethnic movements have been underway for decades. However, it was only after the 1990s that the intensity of these movements increased. Similarly, the disability movement also emerged after the restoration of democracy in 1990. A Danish NGO - the Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People - helped to write a policy paper for Nepalese people with disabilities that was included in the Tenth Plan (Devkota, 2003). With both national and international support, each of the socially disadvantaged groups – Dalits, indigenous, women, and people with disabilities-- was able to influence, at least to some extent, the Tenth five year development plan. However, what we found to be missing in education policy, in particular, is the recognition of intersecting relationship of some or all of these dimensions. For instance, a large number of children (20% of total population) have no access to schools and the majority are girls from disadvantaged communities (MOE et al., 2003). The problem here is not only the lack of schools but also the fact that lower caste girls and girls from disadvantaged ethnic groups are also generally poorer than other social groups. Similarly, education policies (in Tenth Plan and in the Universal Education Plan-2003) do not take into consideration other intersectional inequalities, such as these experienced by disabled Dalit girls of the Tarai region.

In addition, with regard to elementary and secondary education, two additional factors appear to hinder these policies from accomplishing their stated objectives. First, it appears that local schools are typically managed by the members of the higher castes (UNDP, 2004: 35). Members of higher-castes are not interested in empowering the lower castes. Second, the educational policy measures failed to address the effects of acute poverty among Dalits, especially in rural areas, on the family's ability and willingness to send children to schools. Specifically, in the most impoverished families, children are an important source of family income and are often discouraged by their parents from going to school (Tuladhar, 2004).

In addition to formal education, non-formal education has also been important in education in Nepal (National Planning Commission, 1998). Thus, the inclusion of literacy, post-literacy, functional education, and income generating programs in the Tenth Plan is not very surprising. What is important from the intersectional perspective is how literacy training is provided across caste, ethnicity, geographic location, and class. Between 1987 and 1996, non-formal education (literacy/training) has been provided to 110,389 people. Since 1991 NGOs/INGOs have been providing literacy training on a large scale. However, it is difficult to assess how many literacy programs had been provided by 1991 across the different social groups (CERID, 1997a).

The incorporation of the Universal Education policy (EFA) in the Ninth Policy reflects Nepal's commitment to the

millennium goal set forth by the United Nations. According to this goal, Nepal aims to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (UNDP, 2005). Similarly, Nepal established a long-term goal to achieve 100% adult literacy by the end of 2017 (Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists, 2004). This aim, however, is already falling short of its target (UNDP, 2005). The UNDP report maintains that attaining the education goals for Dalit girls, particularly from rural Tarai areas, is the most challenging. Since the Tenth Plan policies did not pay adequate attention to the situation of Tarai Dalit girls, it created a space for planners to avoid or ignore programs aimed specifically at the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Hence, an intersectional analysis of the problem identification stage (stage-I) helps policy makers and planners view the existing situation critically, and facilitates formulation of new policies and programs that can realistically address the core problems. Of course, some critics of intersectionality might argue that national policies cannot be written to include every group. However, the question then becomes, how would these standardized policies address the specific consequences of oppression for different groups of "disadvantaged" people? Specifically, if the policy document does not identify Dalits, Dalit girls, and/or Tarai Dalit girls and women as separate oppressed groups and, therefore, does not include group-specific solutions, how could the programs formulated under such a policy be effective in addressing Dalit women's issues?

In the following section, we examine the existing education policy measures developed within the Tenth Development Plan and their effectiveness in addressing exclusion of Dalit women, and Dalits in general, through the lens of the intersection of caste and gender.

### Policy Measures

In the Tenth Development Plan, several measures under the education policy framework have targeted disadvantaged communities. At the same time, several specific education-related policies have been introduced under the framework of the Tenth Development Plan by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The MOE developed its specific policies after dividing the targeted community into four main groups – poor, ethnic class, oppressed, and women (National Planning Commission, 2003). For the first five-year period (2002-2007), the Tenth Development Plan projects a total budget of Nepali Rupees 1,300,000,000<sup>8</sup> for Dalit students' scholarship fund and Rupees 8,400,000,000 for women's education programs (National Planning Commission, 2003: Chapter 23). So substantive an allocation for Dalit students' scholarships and for women's education is unprecedented. However, no specific attention was given to Dalits (girls/women and boys/men) while designing this budget. Thus, the MOE missed an opportunity to address the unique educational needs of Dalits when allocating its budget and planning the program.

The Tenth Plan's education programs rely on a policy measure known as the Universal Education Policy or Education For All (EFA<sup>9</sup>). EFA had special significance for Nepal as it is the first policy measure to make a comprehensive plan for the education of Dalits, ethnic, and other minorities' education (MOE et al., 2003). While some EFA policies were also included in the Ninth Plan, they were expanded in the Tenth Development Plan with some new programs focusing on Dalits and Janajatis. Some of the important measures adopted to achieve EFA goals, particularly for Dalits and disadvantaged children, are: i) special arrangements such as scholarships programs though it started in eighth development plan) for Dalit children and girls; ii) improvement and expansion of schools to increase enrollment rates and prevent dropout; and iii) provision of meals in schools located in poor areas or communities. Similarly, other measures of the EFA include alternative schooling programs for children who are in difficult circumstances, including children living in remote areas or who are school dropouts. Other policies stated in the national framework of EFA are: i) the provision of life-relevant course materials particularly for Dalit children; and ii) the guaranteed quality education for all children regardless of class and ethnicity (MOE et al., 2003).

Other educational policy measures appearing in Tenth Development Plan include (1) free education for Dalits and girls until grade X (National Planning Commission, 2003); (2) the provision of cooking oil (to the student's family) and midday meals (for students during school) free of charge; and (3) a statement regarding the need to encourage Dalit girls to attend school.<sup>10</sup> The government also issued scholarship rule-2003, which, in terms of providing scholarship to Dalits and women, states that "ten to twenty percent ... of college-level scholarships shall be reserved for ... Dalits and women candidates" (National Planning Commission, 2003: 6). Given the educational disadvantages of women and Dalits, and their consequences for later educational achievement, scholarship rule-2003 states, "that, when it comes to women or Dalits... one may become a candidate [for scholarship] if he/she had secured a high-school overall grade (called "mark" in Nepal) of 50% or better on the qualifying academic degree as opposed to 60% required for non-Dalits" (National Planning Commission, 2003: 7). For instance, if a Dalit wants to apply for a scholarship to study medicine (MBBS), the applicant must have a high school degree in science with a minimum grade of 50% or above. In case of non-Dalit men, it would be 60%.

Interestingly, among other Tenth Development Plan/PSRP policy measures we found some that appear to target Dalit women, specifically: 1) increasing the participation of Dalit communities in the educational centers/institutions, and 2) appointing Dalit women to school teaching posts. The policy measure also states that in the event Dalit women/girls are not available, then male Dalits will be appointed to these posts. One policy is broadly written to make access to higher education, particularly technical and vocational institutions,

easier for Dalit communities and also to increase scholarship stipends for school going Dalit girls and women (National Planning Commission, 2003). Thus, although the main policies do not appear to recognize the complexity of Dalit women's social location, it seems that some basic awareness of the uniqueness of their situation informs some of the approaches taken.

However, ambiguous or broadly stated government policies and measures often operate to undermine the objectives of the Tenth Development Plan. For example, the government passed legislation stating that, in recruiting students, all government-sponsored universities must recruit women (20%) and Dalits (10%). Yet, the legislation does not explicitly indicate how many Dalit women students should be recruited among the 20% of women and the 10% of Dalits (Jagaran Media Center, 2005). Again, one of the barriers to mainstreaming Dalit women into the higher education system appears to be the existence of an undifferentiated perspective on female status.<sup>11</sup>

In all, some of Tenth Development Plan's policies targeting the poor, the oppressed, and women appear to be designed to specifically target groups whose locations are defined by the intersections of gender and caste (Dalit girls and women). However, most policies missed an opportunity to specifically address the needs of Dalit girls and women across the different geographic regions and cultures. Many policy measures developed for women are very general (not specifically addressing Dalit women's issues such as education, health, and governance) and, therefore they neither recognize nor address the core problems that Dalit women face. For example, the MOE emphasizes functional and informal education (literacy and awareness trainings provided in non-traditional settings) to poor adult women, particularly in those areas where the literacy rate is less than 15 percent (National Planning Commission, 2003). Although the MOE's plan seeks to address gender disparity in education (Asian Development Bank, 2005), we found the plan did not present adequate policy measures to effectively address the high illiteracy rates among Dalit women. Similarly, the provisions regarding post-secondary education, such as college scholarships, may not help Dalit women. Since these provisions define the target groups as women or Dalits, Dalit women find themselves competing with Dalit men, who are privileged by gender, and higher caste women, who are privileged by caste. Thus, as in the past, Dalit girls and women may fall through the cracks of existing policies and policy-measures because they have not been formulated using an intersectional approach.

## CONCLUSION

Societies throughout the world are struggling to eradicate inequalities of class, caste, gender, race and ethnicity. The frameworks for these efforts are established by various policy initiatives. However, despite the fact that there is a growing world-wide recognition of the intersecting nature of

inequalities, relatively few problem definitions and policies conceptualize inequalities to reflect this fact. Our goal here was to show the need for and foster the actual application of intersectional policy process analysis. Hence, this intersectional case-study of problem definition and policy formulation is the first step towards the development of a practical framework for intersectional policy analysis, which can be used to conduct an intersectional analysis of the entire policy-making process.

We acknowledge that our analysis has some important limitations. For instance, we could not provide more specific or more recent data describing the gender and caste differences in educational achievement. Also, in several places we refer to Dalit girls/women and boys/men. From an intersectional perspective, we cannot assume that the educational needs of, for instance, Dalit girls and Dalit women, are the same, regardless of the age factor. However, we were not able to access data distinguishing between Dalit girls and women. Moreover, our study does not cover all stages of the policy processes. Thus, we would like to encourage other scholars interested in this topic to expand our analysis to other policy context-relevant aspects of the policy process. Although our study is limited to a case of one policy in one country, our goal was not to assert something about policy formulation in general, or even the dynamics of policy formulations in Nepal. Instead, since our goal was to illustrate the integration of intersectionality into problem definition and policy formulation analysis, the use of a case study to illustrate an intersectional analysis appears appropriate.

Despite these limitations, we believe that we have shown the relevance and importance of incorporating intersectionality in problem definition and policy formulation, if the goal is to reduce and eventually eliminate the educational disparities between Dalit women and Dalit men and other social groups. In other words, a systematic incorporation of intersectionality in these as well as other relevant policy development stages will better ensure the accomplishment of policy objectives among the target groups, such as Dalit women. In fact, even if appropriate implementation mechanisms are in place, the situation of Dalit women will not change as long as policies are not formulated intersectionally.

In the rest of this conclusion, we would like to summarize some of the benefits as well as challenges of conducting an intersectional analysis in general, and policy formulation analysis in particular. With regard to benefits, since this perspective's goal is to account for the complexity of human experiences, it requires an examination of the simultaneous operation of various dimensions of inequality. Specifically, as an integrated, holistic, and dynamic approach, it identifies and analyzes the existence of multiple forms of inequality and privilege as well as their consequences. Second, intersectionality centers the experiences of marginalized social groups. Third, it views people's locations and identities as multifaceted and context specific, in which their meaning as well as their salience are the product of history, culture,

and society. Finally, intersectionality moves beyond the recognition of difference among various social groups to examine how these differences are actually organized into matrices of domination.

Among the challenges, one major obstacle to conducting an intersectional analysis is that this approach goes beyond the confines of either/or, one-dimensional thinking to a more complex view of social reality. Another challenge is posed by the complexity of intersectional analysis. In some cases, intersectional analysis may require that we examine social locations or differential access to resources of not two, but four, eight, or even sixteen different social groups (see Landry 2006). Although, as we noted earlier, such detailed analysis has many benefits, too much complexity can certainly obscure more dominant patterns. Since intersectionality represents a relatively new perspective, there is a lack of empirical data showing the operation of intersectional inequalities. In fact, as apparent from our discussion of educational inequalities in Nepal, we experienced this challenge in collecting data for this project. Thus, first documenting and then managing the level of complexity associated with an intersectional perspective presents another set of challenges. Importantly, from our perspective, instead of hindering intersectional analyzes, these challenges point to the need for a wider integration of intersectionality, especially with regard to collecting and presenting intersectional data.

With regard to problem definition and policy-formulation challenges, two appear to be most significant. First, since policy formulation is a political process and intersectionality points to the existence of not two (women and men) but multiple groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries, this perspective presents a challenge of creating complex alliances across intersecting inequalities. Second, by shedding light on the existence of specific needs of poor women, as opposed to women or poor people, the application of this perspective may create resistance from the groups who are beneficiaries of current policy initiatives. Despite these challenges, intersectional analysis is a worthwhile pursuit because, as Patricia Collins puts it, [t]he very notion of intersections of race, class, gender as an area worthy of study emerged from the recognition of practitioners of each distinctive theoretical tradition that inequality could not be explained, let alone challenged, via a race-only, class-only, or gender-only frameworks" (1995: 492).

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## ENDNOTES

1. It is important to note that Dunn's framework is based on the experiences of developed countries and their policy contexts. As such, this and other similar frameworks have been critiqued for their limited application to other policy contexts (see, for instance, Yoo, 1986; Roux, 2002; Arce, 2003; Collins, 2006).

2. The question of who is responsible for the administration of the program(s) designed to address the policy problem is addressed in the implementation stage. Typically, the overarching governing

body (Congress in the U.S. and House of Representatives in Nepal) authorizes, and hopefully appropriates the necessary resources to, a particular agency or department to implement the public policy. With this authorization, the program administrator will either have strict, clear guidelines or, as occurs in the typical case, wide discretion to carry out the mandates of the agency or department (Kerwin, 1999).

3. Whether through internal and/or external means, evaluation involves a review of the program processes and outcomes to ascertain whether it is in accord with the intent (see the policy formulation stage) of the authorizing legislation (Weiss, 1998). Besides examining the fit between the results and intent, evaluations may also be used to consider the following questions: How well has a particular policy or program been implemented? Or, how appropriate is the policy approach itself? This final question is addressed by reviewing, among other things, underlying or original policy assumptions, and considering whether another approach may be more appropriate (Patton, 1997). Evaluation is also the bridge between the policy cycles, wherein the end of the process informs the beginning of the next policy process cycle.

4. Similar principles can be applied to other stages of policy process as these are defined in a context-sensitive and relevant manner.

5. The government cap on the student-teacher ratio is 45:1 (www.moe.gov, 2006).

6. For an extensive discussion of the problems faced by Dalit women see Bennett (2006a), Bishwakarma (2006), Shrestha (2006), Rajwat (2005), Sob (2000), and Cameron (1998).

7. Source: CBS (2001). Population Census.

8. (equivalent to US \$17,300,000 @Rupees 75/1 US\$)

9. Education for All (EFA) is a United Nations led worldwide education campaign which was first signed by 155 countries in Jomtein, Thailand in 1990 ([http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all)).

10. Importantly, the document does not include a statement of actual "strategy" formulated to encourage Dalit girls to go to school.

11. Realizing the inadequate educational status of Dalit women and its consequences for their socio-economic advancement, the Tribhuvan University set aside 10% of its higher education scholarships for qualified Dalit women. However, this policy was never implemented because it was nullified by the Supreme Court.

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