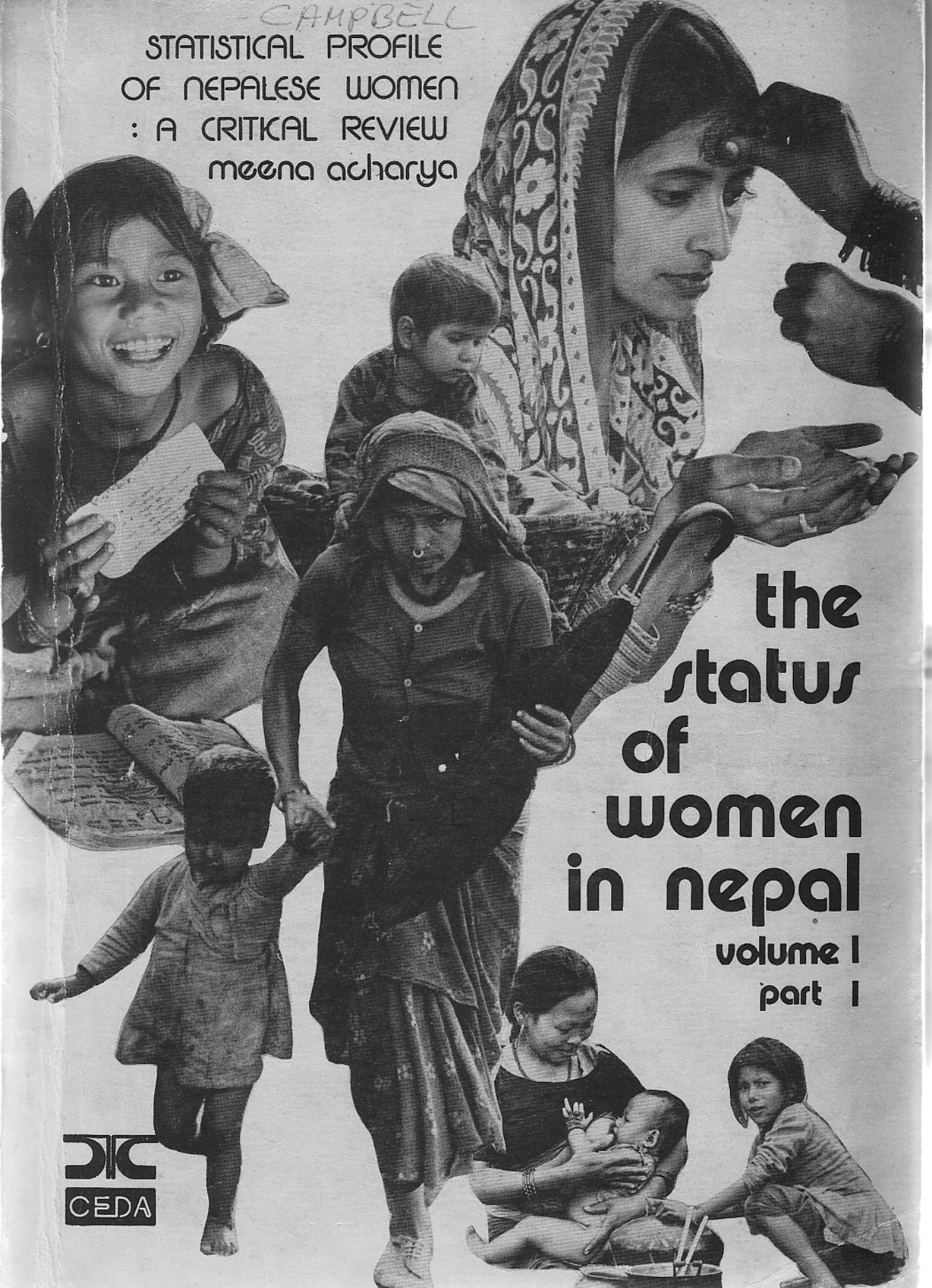


CAMPBELL  
STATISTICAL PROFILE  
OF NEPALESE WOMEN  
: A CRITICAL REVIEW  
meena acharya



the  
status  
of  
women  
in nepal

volume I  
part I

**DIC**  
CEDA

STATISTICAL PROFILE  
OF NEPALESE WOMEN  
: A CRITICAL REVIEW



The Status of Women in Nepal  
Volume I: Background Report  
Part I

STATISTICAL PROFILE  
OF NEPALESE WOMEN  
: A CRITICAL REVIEW

meena acharya



Centre for Economic Development  
and Administration  
Tribhuvan University  
Kathmandu, Nepal

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*Photo on opposite page:  
Although new roads bring indirect benefits through improved transporta-  
tion, they may cost these women their primary jobs.  
Photo by Ane Haaland.*





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## FOREWORD

An Introduction to the CEDA Status of Women Project: Its Scope and Purpose

This monograph is part of a series of studies comprising Volume I (Background Report on the Status of Women in Nepal), which itself is part of a broader research endeavour undertaken by the CEDA Status of Women Project. As stated in the formal language of the project agreement between HMG and USAID, the overall purpose of the Project is "to collect and generate information on the status and roles of a representative range of Nepalese women in order to support planning to facilitate the increased integration of women into the national development process." Towards achieving this broad goal three major consecutive phases of the project were envisioned. The present Volume I, containing five separate studies or monographs, represents the product of the first phase of the project which was devoted to the collection and analysis of available secondary data on Nepalese women in a number of specific areas.

The second phase of the project, which is still underway as Volume I goes to press, is intended "to develop methodologies and implement pilot socio-economic case studies of women ... in traditional rural communities." At present the five members of the project research team together with three co-operating anthropologists have just returned from extended field-work in eight different villages in various parts of Nepal. They have used both in-depth anthropological methods and quantitative survey techniques to gather comparative data on women's economic roles and their status, both within the family unit and in the wider social group. In addition to the combined use of anthropological and survey methods, each researcher has conducted an extensive observational Time Allocation Study of the daily activities of all household members within each village sample. The researchers now face the challenging task of analyzing and writing up both their quantitative survey data and their qualitative observational data into studies on the status and role of women in the eight communities where they worked. These village studies together with a comparative analysis and summary of the major development-related findings will comprise Volume II, the product of the project's second phase.

The third and final phase of the project will be to channel the findings of Volume I and II (along with information from the many other documents relevant to planning for women in Nepal) into a concrete and practical draft for a National Plan of Action for Women. Such a draft of course would need inputs from many other concerned bodies and agencies both at the centre and throughout the kingdom before reaching its final form. The CEDA draft will merely be the starting point for discussion and conceptualization by the concerned agencies prior to final endorsement of the National Plan of Action. In many ways the third phase will be the most important part of the project for it marks the crucial and often neglected transition point between research and action. From a more personal perspective for the project team it also represents the means through which we will at least begin to be able to return something to the generous yet practical village women and their families who made time in their busy workdays to patiently answer so many questions and to open us to the often hard economic and social realities of their lives. It is our hope that the Draft National Plan of Action when it is completed will serve as a stimulus for the formulation of a coherent national policy on women and provide a basis for the eventual development of specific action - programmes for rural Nepalese women such as those with whom we worked.

#### Volume I: An Overview

As mentioned above, the present Volume I is the product of the first phase of the project which was concerned with the collection and analysis of secondary data on women in Nepal. The five specific functional objectives which govern the nature and scope of this volume each appear as separate monographs. According to the project agreement, Objective A was "to prepare a national statistical profile of women in Nepal." This task was undertaken by Ms. Meena Acharya and appears as Volume I, Part 1, the first monograph in the series. Objective B which was "to prepare a summary of women's legal rights as set forth in the National Civil Code" was carried out by Dr. Lynn Bennett with assistance from Ms. Shilu Singh and appears as Volume I, Part 2.

Mrs. Bina Pradhan undertook to carry out Objective C which was "to prepare an inventory of Nepalese institutions concerned with women." Her work appears as Volume I, Part 3, the third work in the series. Objective D was "to compile a list of information resources on women in Nepal" as for this Ms. Indira Shrestha has prepared the annotated bibliography which appears as Volume I, Part 4. The final objective of the first phase was Objective E, "to gather information on the extent to which women's participation in agriculture, industry, trade and science and technology is reflected in Nepal's national plans and programs." This task was undertaken by Dr. Pushkar Raj Reejal and appears as Volume I, Part 5.

Volume I, Part 1: Statistical Profile of Nepalese Women:  
A Critical Review

The general purpose of Part 1 in this series of monographs is to present a national statistical profile of Nepalese women. Specifically, this involves drawing upon the available statistical data on women's economic, educational, and health status, and on their childbearing and childrearing roles then translating these data into a unified portrait of Nepalese women today.

The paucity of statistical information alone makes this task difficult. In Nepal, with its enormous diversity in ethnic and cultural groups, and its unequal regional distribution of income, wealth, and development benefits, it is precarious indeed for any researcher to draw firm, aggregative conclusions about the so-called "average Nepalese woman." To do so is to risk making generalizations which could impose the researcher's own set of values and biases at the cost of a realistic portrayal.

This is not to say, however, that there is no unity in Nepal. In fact, the social cohesion and harmony among the diverse peoples is historically unique. This strength has enabled Nepal to enjoy a proud history of uninterrupted independence from colonial onslaughts; a unity further strengthened by the Royal Family leadership, Hinduism, and one national language.

Using both quantitative and qualitative data, this monograph presents a profile of Nepalese women which reflects this "unity in diversity." The picture that emerges of the status of women, however, appears rather gloomy. Moreover, as the author explains in depth, women's active and vital role in Nepalese society has to date been statistically underestimated and in some instances completely unrecorded.

As the author demonstrates, available statistics show that women's lives are characterized by early marriage, high fertility (accompanied by an extremely high infant mortality rate), high death rate and low life expectancy. Their low literacy rate reflects their limited access to education. Their political awareness is almost nonexistent and their marketable job skills minimal. Women are generally found in low paying jobs, when they are able to find work at all, and they are displaced first and most severely by the introduction of mechanized, western technology. Employment trends over the past ten years show an alarming decrease in women's participation in industrial, transportation, and construction jobs. In overall terms, the statistics indicate a much lower economic activity rate for women than for men.

However, the author emphatically cautions the reader against taking all these statistics at their face value. Examining an issue pertinent to third world economies, she questions the relevancy of using G.N.P. as the sole economic measure of development since it concentrates only on the production of exchange-value. In a country such as Nepal, where 40 per cent of the economy is involved in the creation of use-value, outside the market place, a major economic sector is totally overlooked by taking a G.N.P. approach. Significantly, much of the use-value activity is performed by women. Hence, their true economic contribution is grossly underestimated. The author suggests that a better approach for assessing the totality of economic activity in a traditional subsistence economy such as Nepal's should focus on the creation of both exchange-value and

use-value. She also suggests, for example, a revision for the 1981 census methodology which would classify individuals into three more clearly defined categories: those producing marketable goods; those engaged in subsistence activities; and those performing domestic work. Measures such as this could result in a far more accurate assessment of economic activity.

Another glaring source of inaccuracy in the measurement of women's roles and contributions to Nepalese society is in the methodology of data collection itself. The author cites many reasons for the consistent underestimation of facts relevant to women—especially economic activity rates—and illustrates the discrepancy between statistics and reality through descriptions from anthropological studies of Nepal's ethnic groups. She points out that while such micro-level descriptive studies are inadequate for generating quantitative measures, they do point out the error of the statisticians' implicit assumptions about the "traditional division of labour." In many communities in Nepal this is a social myth since men and women share much of the work. Furthermore, the high incidence of male out-migration for long periods and the high incidence of widowhood would seem to imply that the conventional concept of all households as male-headed is statistically questionable.

Ms. Acharya emphasizes that more and better quantitative data are required for planning and that women must be made the explicit focus of future surveys. She warns us that available statistics tell us nothing about women's lifestyles, aspirations, nor their domestic roles as decision-makers, producers, or consumers. Indeed, there would appear to be significant areas meriting careful investigation if full integration of women into the development process is to be achieved.

Phase II of this study will provide data on some of these issues by concentrating on women in the dominant sector of the national economy—the rural household. Through long term, indepth qualitative and quantitative research, we hope the study will provide some understanding of the roles of various household members and specifically of women's contributions and needs.

Yet this is just a beginning. Other efforts can build upon the insights provided through Ms. Acharya's analysis and the forthcoming Phase II case studies (and others' efforts to date) to shape policies and new programmes addressing the problems and possibilities these studies present. For example, policy makers could:

- collect data on the incidence of overwork and investigate both technical and social service innovations to reduce the burden of domestic household chores
- review industrialization, public works and transportation sectoral policies and programmes to assess their displacement effect on women's economic status. This would seem especially significant since these sectors represent more than 40 per cent of the annual government budget
- build in a mechanism at the project level to assess women's needs and probable project impact on their traditional skills
- accord requisite social prestige to working women and take measures through training, adult literacy campaigns, provision of credit and marketing services, etc., to raise their productivity
- enhance the availability and quality of social services such as public health, education, drinking water and fuelwood
- continuously survey income-generating opportunities for women (especially female household heads, including widows, divorcees, and the landless) and assess local technological alternatives that may compete successfully with imported technology
- conduct a study to measure the impact of the New Education System Plan (1971) on girls' enrollment in schools and therefore on the female literacy rate; if the participation rate has fallen, a separate study should be undertaken to determine the causes

- train more women in research methodology and hire more women enumerators

In this last area, Tribhuvan University can contribute by upgrading the research skills among female teachers; providing suitable monetary and career incentives for them to undertake research; building up a Documentation Centre for Women's Studies. There is a need for a critical mass of data and analyses on women's topics for successful planning and Tribhuvan University has a vital role to play.

In conclusion, it should be underscored that in so far as statistical indicators on women's roles and status are concerned, there are problems of excessive generalizations and inaccuracies (current statistical methodologies) and excessive localization (anthropological studies). A proper balance must be struck for a unified, multi-disciplinary approach to the issues of women and development. One of the glaring shortcomings in available data and analyses is that they look at women mainly in terms of their locational (urban-rural) and ethnic compositions. Variables pertaining to their economic and social classes, even for the same location and ethnicity, are conspicuously absent. Phase II of this project should enable us to examine and understand more clearly some of these factors as they are present in the rural household setting, but further data is needed.

Not all changes and improvements will come to everyone at the same time. The urban elite women have benefited most from the development efforts to date and the recent advances in national legal provisions open new channels for their increasing self-reliance and political participation. Perhaps consolidation of the present institutional and legal gains effected by women for women towards raising the economic status of rural women would not only enhance their roles and status, but would also help to remove the shackles of poverty, and unemployment, maldistribution of power, prestige, and assets for Nepal as a whole.

The two movements must go side by side. As the recent gains begin to affect the lives of rural women, the urban elite will make even further advancements and will continue to serve as a model for rural



people. The challenge to the women's movement will be to maximize the benefits from the available concern and sympathy for women's emancipation among national leaders, policy makers, and the male population in general and avoid the risks inherent in demands for new institutional and legal changes that would pit the two halves of the population against each other.

Madhukar Shumshere J. B. Rana  
Project Director

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research is a product of the untiring endeavours of many people from within and without CEDA--some being more visible than others. We believe that this is a joint effort in which each person has contributed his or her best, whether professionally or administratively.

First, we owe a very special debt of gratitude to His Majesty's Government and to the United States Agency for International Development/ Mission to Nepal as well as to the Asia Bureau and Women in Development Office in AID/Washington for giving us the responsibility and also the material and moral support to execute this study. Particularly, we would like to thank Secretary, Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey and Joint Secretary, Mr. Hit Singh Shrestha of the Ministry of Finance; the Director of USAID/N, Mr. Samuel Butterfield and last, but by no means least, the Deputy Director, Mr. Julius Coles and the Chief of the Economic and Social Analysis Staff, Mr. John Babylon. These last two gentlemen without hesitation prodded us on our research timetable while always stressing the need for quality in our output. We sincerely hope that we have lived up to their expectations.

Many people from outside CEDA spared their valuable time to help us as commentators, advisors, and consultants. It is impossible to mention each and every one by name, but we sincerely thank Mr. Kul Shekhar Sharma, Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank and Dr. Parthiveswor Timilsina, Dean of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences for the secondment of staff to complete the research team.

We own a special debt of gratitude to the distinguished members of the Advisory Board to this study, namely Hon'ble Mrs. Kamal Rana, Chairperson, Women's Services Co-ordination Committee and Hon'ble Dr. Ratna Shumshere Rana, member, National Planning Commission. Also, the role played by Ms. Diane Stanley, Director, United States International Communication Agency should, we believe, not go unrecorded. Her

educational status is considered. As there is very little quantitative information on political expression, this aspect is touched upon only briefly. An analysis of statistical indicators of economic status and work opportunities forms the core of the monograph. The concluding section suggests certain lines of study which are necessary in order to gain true knowledge of the role and status of women in Nepalese society.

## GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

Nepal's population was 11.56 million in 1971. Since the population growth rate is estimated at around 2.2 percent for the decade of the seventies, the population in 1976 is estimated at 13.08 million (Rajbanshi and Gubaju, 1976). The population density was 81 persons sq. km. in 1971 (Table 1) with the heaviest pressure in the Kathmandu Valley. Of the geographical regions, the Terai seems to be the most heavily populated, but in relation to cultivable land, the Central Hills are the most heavily populated.

Age Structure

The population of a country can be divided into three age groups: (a) young (b) aging and (c) old. The median age, the age which divides a population in half, is the main indicator of a population's age structure. A population with a median age less than twenty years is considered as young; one with a median age between 20 to 30 years as aging; and with a median age above 30 years as old. Most developing countries fall in the first group, while the developed countries fall in the third group. Populations of countries at intermediate stage of economic development, such as Greece and most of Latin America, fall in the intermediate range of 20 to 30 years. Nepal, with its median age at 22.3, falls in this intermediate group. This, however, is accompanied by one of the highest infant mortality rates in the developing world and is a result of smaller proportion of children in the live population rather than a consequence of better health facilities and longer life expectancy.

Nepal's female population, according to 1971 census, was slightly older than the male population, the median age for females being 22.7 against 21.8 for males. Table 2 reveals in 1971, 40.91 percent of the male population was below fifteen years of age while 39.98 percent of the female population fell into that same age group. On the other side of the age curve, 5.35 percent of the male population was above 59 years of age compared to 5.88 percent of the female population. The Demographic Sample Survey of Nepal, 1976, reported that 41 percent of the male population was below 15 years of age at the end of the year 1976 while for females the corresponding figure was 40.2 percent.

Table 1

DENSITY OF POPULATION  
(Persons per sq. km.)

Regions	All Nepal	Eastern Development Region	Central Development Region	Western Development Region	Far Western Development Region
Hills	61	70	93	65	43
Terai	143	196	209	112	53
Inner Terai	63	46	65	-	75
Kathmandu Valley	814	-	814	-	-
All Regions	81	100	139	72	46

Source: Compiled from the Population Census, 1971: Table 1.

Table 2  
COMPOSITION OF POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX  
1971

Age Group	Number			Percentage		
	Male	Female	Total	Of Total Male Population	Of Total Female Population	Of Total Population
0 - 4	790,598	843,512	1,634,110	13.59	14.68	14.14
5 - 9	885,801	857,452	1,743,253	15.23	14.94	15.09
10 - 14	703,023	594,192	1,297,215	12.09	10.36	11.23
15 - 19	547,493	499,966	1,047,459	9.41	8.71	9.06
20 - 24	466,022	503,653	969,675	8.01	8.78	8.39
25 - 29	456,297	473,990	930,287	7.84	8.26	8.05
30 - 34	385,696	425,705	811,401	6.63	7.42	7.02
35 - 39	386,381	358,407	744,788	6.64	6.25	6.45
40 - 44	301,998	307,463	609,461	5.19	5.36	5.27
45 - 49	245,521	215,577	461,098	4.22	3.76	3.99
50 - 54	204,304	196,530	400,834	3.51	3.42	3.47
55 - 59	132,983	124,716	257,699	2.29	2.17	2.23
60 - 64	138,441	155,789	294,230	2.38	2.71	2.55
65 - 69	71,427	71,336	142,763	1.23	1.24	1.24
70 & Over	101,218	110,493	211,710	1.74	1.93	1.83
	5,817,203	5,738,780	11,555,983	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: The Population Census 1971.

### Sex Ratio

According to the 1971 census 5.7 million or 49.3 percent of the total population of 11.56 million were women. The male/female sex ratio for the adjusted population was 102.50 males per 100 females (Table 3).

An analysis of the population structure shows that the sex ratio was particularly high in the 10-14, 50-54 and 55-59 age groups. The number of males per female starts declining around the 15-19 age group and drops to 95.4 percent in the 45-59 group, rising sharply for the 50-59 age group. The explanation for this is the out-migration of individual Nepalese men in search of employment. Men who migrate usually do so sometime after the age of 15 and return to Nepal around the age of 50. Age-specific sex ratios thus reveal an excess of females in the working ages, 15-50.

Regionally, the sex ratio in favour of male is highest in the Terai with 106.67 men per 100 women. Kathmandu Valley follows closely with a sex ratio of 106.33 (Table 4). The Hills and Mountains have smaller male populations as compared to females due to several factors: such as recruitment of hillsmen to foreign and domestic armies, emigration of males to the Terai, Kathmandu Valley and India in search of employment opportunities.

Table 3  
AGE-SPECIFIC SEX RATIO<sup>1</sup>  
Males per 100 Females

Age	1961	1971
0 - 4	118.3	101.8
5 - 9	110.9	100.9
10 - 14	102.4	118.6
15 - 19	97.1	106.9
20 - 24	91.7	98.7
25 - 29	91.2	100.6
30 - 34	91.3	97.1
35 - 39	89.9	95.6
40 - 44	98.7	96.8
45 - 49	94.4	95.4
50 - 54	87.8	123.8
55 - 59	115.4	115.3
60 - 64	80.7	89.5
65 - 69	92.2	100.1
70 & Over	81.8	91.6
Total	100.1	102.5

Source: The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal 1977:  
Tables 3.6 and 3.7.

<sup>1</sup>Adjusted for misstatement of age and under-enumeration of age group 0-4.



Table 4  
 REGIONAL SEX RATIO<sup>1</sup>  
 (Males per 100 Females)

Regions	Eastern Development Region	Central Development Region	Western Development Region	Far Western Development Region	Total Regional
Hills	97.41	100.15	95.20	98.48	97.63
Terai	107.47	105.04	106.60	110.40	106.67
Inner Terai	98.25	103.07	-	102.41	101.98
Kathmandu Valley	-	106.33	-	-	106.33
All Nepal	102.31	103.37	97.83	100.74	101.36

Source: Compiled from the Population Census, 1971: Table 1.

<sup>1</sup>Unadjusted for misstatement of age and under-enumeration of age group 0-4.

#### Ethnic Composition

In attempting to draw a statistical profile of Nepalese women, it is important to note that Nepal's population is not of a homogeneous character. Although more than 78 percent of the population are Hindus or Hindu oriented with strong patriarchal ideologies, sex roles vary significantly, depending upon the environment and economic imperatives of the region. The many ethnic groups which comprise Nepal's population are presently at varied stages of economic development and have experienced different degrees of cultural contact with the dominant Hindu culture. Thus Nepal's population encompasses a number of different cultural and religious traditions which accord different social status to women. Unfortunately, statistics on ethnic groupings are not available. The existing statistics on language groups serve only as an approximate indicator of ethnic composition (Table 5). Breakdown of these groups by sex, however, is again not available.

Table 5  
COMPOSITION OF POPULATION BY MOTHER TONGUE  
1971

Language Groups	Population in Thousands	% of the Total
Nepali	6061	52.45
Maithali Dialects	1327	11.49
Bhojpuri	806	6.98
Tamang	555	4.80
Abadhi	317	2.74
Tharu	496	4.29
Newari	455	3.94
Magar	288	2.50
Rai	232	2.01
Gurung	172	1.48
Limbu	171	1.48
Others	675	5.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>11555</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal 1977: Table 2.7.

### Population Growth

Analyzing the dynamics and structure of population growth in Nepal is extremely difficult because of the paucity of materials on the subject (Kansakar, 1977). Systematic population statistics are available only for the last two decades. Earlier censuses have been very limited in scope and not strictly comparable to the recent ones. Nevertheless, some interesting trends can be observed.

In the 60 year period 1911-1971, the percentage of women in the total population has declined from 49.99 percent to 49.37 percent, resulting in an increased male/female sex ratio from one to one in 1911 to 102.50 males per 100 females in 1971. Although the change in the sex ratio seems erratic from census to census, a declining trend is evident in the number of women per thousand men. The population of Nepal declined in absolute numbers between 1911 and 1920 but the decline was sharper for females. The absolute decline in total population during that period has been attributed to the influenza epidemic and the high death toll of Gorkha soldiers in World War I. In view of the soldiers' deaths and under-enumeration of the male population, the larger decline in female population can only be explained in terms of a higher female death toll from influenza. While breakdowns of population by sex are not available in the 1930 census, the 1942 census showed an annual increase of 0.5 percent in female population between 1920-1942. The rate of growth for the male population during the same period was 0.7 percent. Thus the number of males per 100 females went up suddenly to 104.29 in 1942. This phenomenon is quite inexplicable—especially in view of the increased recruitment of Gorkhas in the Second World War and the probable under reporting of males due to fear of conscription.

The census of 1952/54, though defective in many ways, presented for the first time comprehensive statistics on various aspects of population structure. It showed a decline in sex ratio to 100.62 males per 100 females. In the following two decades, however, the ratio has again gone up to 102.50 males per 100 females. This can only be explained by the fact that males have been the first beneficiaries of improved medical facilities and health care measures. It has been estimated that the proportion of females in the total population has declined further,

Table 6  
POPULATION OF NEPAL (1911-1976)  
(In thousands)

Year	Male	Female	Total	Males per 100 Females
1911	2820	2819	5639	100.04
1920	2800	2775	5575	100.90
1930	-	-	5522	-
1942	3208	3076	6284	104.29
1952/54	4250	4223	8473	100.62
1961 <sup>1</sup>	4807	4802	9609	100.12
1971 <sup>1</sup>	5937	5789	11726	102.50
1976 <sup>2</sup>	6643	6437	13080	103.20

Sources: The Population Census 1952/54: 33.

The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal 1977:  
Tables 3.6 and 3.7.

<sup>1</sup>Adjusted for misstatement of age and underenumeration of age group 0-4. Excludes Nepalese residing abroad.

<sup>2</sup>Estimates of Rajbanshi and Gubaju 1976.

resulting in a sex ratio of 103.20 males per 100 females in 1975 (Table 6).

#### Death Rate and Life Expectancy

Actual figures on the death rate and life expectancy are not available. However, some estimates have been made by different experts. These estimates of crude death rate (Table 7) and life expectancy (Table 8) confirm the conclusion that men have been first to benefit from improvement in health facilities. Life expectancy has improved for both the sexes, but the gain has been larger for men between 1952-61 and 1961-71: men gained 20.4 years while women gained only 16.8 years. The infant mortality rate, although on the decline, is still very high, especially in the rural areas. The two demographic sample surveys 1975 and 1976 came out with contrary results on male and female infant mortality rates. According to the 1975 survey, the mortality rate was higher for male infants while the 1976 survey showed a higher mortality of female infants (Table 9).

Contrary to trends in many other countries, the crude death rate is higher for females than for males in Nepal. The adjusted age-specific death rates are higher for women in rural areas throughout life, except at the later stages (Table 10). During the reproductive ages of 15-34 as well as during the menopause period of 45-54, women in urban areas are subject to greater uncertainties of life than men. The death rate among urban girls of the age group 1-4 is more than double that for the boys of the same age-group. Consequently, the life expectancy until age 35 is lower for women than for men (Table 11). In most countries, the death rate is usually lower for females than for males and survival chances for women are better than for men. The opposite trend in Nepal could be explained in terms of traditional neglect of the female child, frequent pregnancies accompanied by nutritional deficiencies, lack of professional assistance at child birth or proper prenatal and post-partum care.

Table 7

CRUDE DEATH RATE (C.D.R.)  
(Per 1000 population)

Sources	Year	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Tuladhar, Gubaju and Stoeckel, 1977	1952/54	-	-	30-37
	1961	-	-	22-27
	1971	-	-	22
DSS, 1976	<u>1974/75</u>			
	Urban	8.7	9.4	9.0
	Rural	18.9	20.7	19.8
	Total	18.6	20.4	19.5
	<u>1976</u>			
	Urban	8.2	9.7	8.9
	Rural	21.9	23.2	22.6
Total	21.5	22.8	22.2	

Table 8

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH  
(In years)

Source	Year	Male	Female
Tuladhar, Gubaju and Stoeckel, 1977	1952/54	25.6	25.7
	1961/71	42.9	38.9
DSS, 1976	1974/75	46.0	42.5
	1976	43.4	41.1

Table 9

INFANT MORTALITY RATE (I.M.R.)  
(Per 1000 live births)

Sources	Year	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Tuladhar, Gubaju and Stoeckel, 1977	1952/54	260	250	-
	1961	200	186	-
	1971	-	-	172
DSS, 1976	<u>1974/75</u>			
	Urban	55.2	59.2	57.1
	Rural	143.9	124.9	134.8
	Total	141.2	123.0	132.5
Nepal Fertility Survey 1976	<u>1976</u>			
	Urban	55.3	50.2	52.8
	Rural	130.7	140.6	136.1
	Total	128.4	137.9	133.6
	1976	-	-	152

Table 10

ADJUSTED AGE-SPECIFIC DEATH RATES 1976  
(Per 1000 live births)

Age	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0	55.3	50.2	130.7	140.6
1 - 4	11.9	25.4	33.2	37.6
5 - 14	3.9	2.3	5.2	6.2
15 - 24	2.8	3.1	6.1	6.1
25 - 34	2.3	2.4	7.5	11.0
35 - 44	7.7	2.2	8.0	15.2
45 - 54	6.4	9.9	21.3	17.0
55 - 64	30.5	9.7	45.6	49.3
65 - 74	70.2	36.8	76.5	77.7
75 & Over	152.1	120.0	194.1	140.3
Total	8.2	9.7	21.9	23.2

Source: Demographic Sample Survey 1976, Table 7 and 8.



Table 11

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT SELECTED AGES 1976  
(In years)

Age	Male	Female
0	43.4	41.1
1	48.7	46.7
5	51.2	49.8
15	43.7	42.6
25	36.2	35.0
35	28.6	28.4
45	20.6	22.1
55	14.2	15.2
65	9.6	11.7
75 & Over	5.2	7.2

Source: Demographic Sample Survey 1976: Table 20 and 21.

Fertility

High fertility is not only one of the major causes of women's high death rate, but is also an important variable in limiting their life options. Women with higher fertility have less time for other types of activity besides child rearing. With the recent emphasis on population

control as a means to accelerate the rate of economic development, the study of fertility behaviour and its impact on other aspects of life has become very important. A comprehensive study on fertility behaviour was made in Nepal in 1976 as a part of the World Fertility Survey, sponsored jointly by the United Nations, the International Statistical Institute, and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population.

The 1976 Nepal Fertility Survey reports a very high cumulative fertility rate for currently married women of 6.1 children per female. By the time Nepalese women are 34, they have already borne 4.2 children (Table 12). The infant mortality rate of 152 per thousand live births is one of the highest in the whole Asian region.

Despite the high cumulative fertility rates of Nepalese women, they end up with a completed family size of only 4.0 children by the time they reach age 50 (Table 13).

Nation-wide regional comparisons show that the level of marital fertility is higher throughout all age groups in the Hills and Mountains than in the Terai, though the pattern of fertility is the same. The peak fertility is reached in all the regions at ages 25-29 (Table 14)

The Fertility Survey reported that seventy-seven percent of the women in the sample had never heard of family planning methods. Only 21.3 percent had heard of atleast one efficient method of family planning. The recent Social Network Survey (Vaidya, Dhungel, Carlaw, 1978), however, although not countrywide, reports that almost 70 percent of the sample claimed to have knowledge of family planning and over 60 percent knew the place for family planning services nearest their panchayat.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The wide discrepancy in the findings of these two studies may be due to the culturally sensitive nature of "knowledge and attitude" types of questions—especially in areas related to sexual behavior. The higher level of family planning awareness found by the Social Survey is probably due to the fact that the survey was delivered by women to respondents with whom they had been able to establish a fairly high degree of rapport and trust during repeated visits over a period of twenty one months. The difficulties of obtaining accurate data on family planning knowledge and attitude questions is discussed by Campbell, Shrestha and Stone in The Use and Misuse of Social Science Research Method in Nepal.

Table 12

MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN EVER BORN TO EVER MARRIED  
AND CURRENTLY MARRIED WOMEN

Age	Ever Married	Currently Married
15-19	0.3	0.3
20-24	1.4	1.4
25-29	2.9	2.9
30-34	4.1	4.2
35-39	5.1	5.2
40-44	5.5	5.7
45-49	5.7	6.1

Source: Nepal Fertility Survey 1976: Table 5.1

Table 13

MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN EVER BORN  
AND STILL ALIVE

Current Age	Ever Born	Still Alive
15-19	0.3	0.3
20-24	1.4	1.1
25-29	2.9	2.3
30-34	4.1	3.1
35-39	5.1	3.7
40-44	5.5	3.8
45-49	5.7	4.0
All	3.3	2.4

Source: Nepal Fertility Survey 1976: Table 5.9.

*Photo on opposite page:  
high fertility coupled with high infant mortality means that Nepalese  
women spend much of their energy during their productive years in  
bearing and raising children.  
Photo by Ane Haaland.*

Table 14

MARITAL AGE-SPECIFIC AND MARITAL TOTAL FERTILITY RATES  
BY REGION OF RESIDENCE  
(Children per woman)

Current Age	Hills & Mountains	Terai	Total
15-19	.126	.149	.138
20-24	.315	.296	.306
25-29	.316	.312	.314
30-34	.276	.245	.261
35-39	.233	.216	.226
40-44	.106	.075	.093
45-49	.036	.030	.033
Marital Total Fertility Rate	7.0	6.6	6.8

Source: Nepal Fertility Survey 1976: Table 5.7.

The Nepal Fertility Survey further reported that only 3.4 percent had used at least one efficient method while 95.9 percent of ever-married women had never used any method of family planning. The low level of use of family planning methods is also confirmed by the Social Network Survey. Although the Social Network Survey covered comparatively advanced areas, it reported that about 13 percent of the Brahmins and Newar women used contraceptives while Muslim and Tharu women in the sample had never used any contraceptives. Only 6.4 percent of the Chetri women, 4.9 percent of the Tamang women, and 2.9 percent of the untouchable women reported using family planning methods.

To sum up this section, Nepal is still at the early stage of development and its population is characterised by high fertility, high death rate, short life expectancy and a young population.

## SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

### Marital Status

Among the important characteristics of Nepal's female population are early marriage, high fertility rate and large family size. Nepalese women in general get married young and have 2.3 children by the time they are 30 years of age. The average size of the Nepalese family was 5.3 persons in 1961 and 5.53 persons in 1971. The mean age of marriage for Nepalese women in 1971 was 16.8 while for men it was 20.9, significantly lower for both sexes than in India or the Philippines (Table 15).

Table 15

#### MEAN AGE OF MARRIAGE

Country	Year	Males	Females
Nepal	1971	20.9	16.8
India	1961/71	22.2	17.2
Philippines	1973	25.7	23.7

Sources: The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal 1977.  
Government of India 1974.  
Alete, Silva and Eleazar 1977.

Marriage is almost universal. Ninety-two percent of the women are married by the time they reach the age of 20-24 (Table 16). The corresponding percentage for men in that age-group is 66.89. It is important to deal in detail with marital status because it is through marriage that women change from the status of daughter (chori) to that of daughter-in-law (buhari). These two roles in a Hindu society imply very different relationships between the woman and her social environment. Marriage also changes the role of a male from that of boy with limited responsibilities to an adult. But the transformation for men, who usually continue to live in their natal family and original place of residence,

is much more gradual than for women, who are thrust suddenly into a new family, a new place of residence as well as a demanding new social role.

A slow but perceptible change is, however, taking place in the social attitude towards early marriage. A comparative study of the 1961 and 1971 census statistics shows a perceptible decline in the number of ever-married males and females in the lower age-groups (i.e., 6-19). The change is quite sharp (more than 50 percent) for girls in the age-group 6-10 where the percentage of ever-married individuals dropped from 5.33 to 2.35 percent (Table 16).

Regionally, a higher proportion of females is married at an earlier age in the Terai than in the Hills and the Kathmandu Valley. Interestingly, the incidence of child marriage is reported to be higher in Kathmandu than in the Hills and Mountains (Table 17).

Besides being subject to early marriage, high fertility, high death rate and low life expectancy, Nepalese women from the culturally dominant highcaste Hindu groups are also burdened with the responsibility of preserving the purity of their husband's clan by remaining unmarried if they are widowed. Remarriage in Hindu culture is looked down upon and difficult. About 1.11 percent of the female population is widowed by age 24 (Table 18). By the time they reach age 44, 12.10 percent of the total female population in that age group are widowed. Regional patterns show a slightly higher rate of widowhood in the Kathmandu Valley and in the Terai, while divorce rates are highest in the Mountains, with Kathmandu following close behind. Women of the Terai have lowest rate of divorce at 0.14 percent (Table 19). The higher percentage of widowed females in the Terai and Kathmandu in upper age groups is probably due to a higher rate of remarriage for widows in the Mountains and Hills.

Table 16

AGE-SPECIFIC MARITAL STATUS  
(As percent of the total population of  
respective sex in the age group)

Age Group	1952/54		1961		1971			
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females		
6 - 9	2.53	5.19	2.99	5.33	1.22	2.35		
10 - 14	11.86	28.17	10.70	24.85	6.29	13.44		
15 - 19	51.78	80.82	36.60	73.85	26.98	60.67		
20 - 24			73.15	94.61	66.89	92.13		
25 - 29			89.65	98.08	87.74	97.41		
30 - 34			89.42	85.77	95.23	98.96	94.38	98.60
35 - 39					97.27	99.22	96.75	98.92
40 - 44			97.92	99.31	97.69	99.08		
45 - 49			98.39	99.42	98.40	99.23		
50 - 54	85.19	51.98	98.52	99.45	98.57	99.29		
55 - 59			98.73	99.49	98.78	99.32		
60 - 64			99.01*	99.54*	98.87	99.38		
65 & Over	66.21	23.88			98.97	99.39		
Unknown	40.51	55.97						
Total	54.69	57.99	61.93	74.53	59.00	70.16		

Sources: The Population Census 1952/54.

The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal 1977: Tables 4.1 & 4.2

\* Includes 60 and Over.

Table 17

PROPORTION OF EVER MARRIED POPULATION  
BY SELECTED GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS, AGE AND SEX IN 1971  
(In percent to total population in respective age/sex)

Age Group	Total		Mountains (1)		Hills (2)		Kathmandu Valley (3)		Terai (4)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
6-9	1.22	2.35	0.41	0.52	0.36	0.24	0.46	0.83	0.16	4.16
10-14	6.29	13.44	1.78	4.57	1.78	5.06	1.65	3.46	11.43	25.56
15-19	26.98	60.67	15.10	34.84	18.49	51.44	16.23	54.80	38.33	75.05
20-24	66.89	92.13	52.08	75.30	62.81	88.69	52.84	87.30	72.66	96.26
25-29	87.74	97.41	76.57	89.75	86.92	96.58	78.90	93.42	90.04	98.93
30-34	94.38	98.60	88.30	94.30	94.66	98.23	89.45	96.04	95.27	99.51
35-39	96.75	98.92	92.69	96.18	97.15	98.81	92.92	96.54	97.19	99.73
40-44	97.69	99.08	95.24	97.11	98.01	99.09	94.75	97.13	98.03	99.78
45-49	98.40	99.23	97.38	97.46	98.78	99.07	96.52	98.19	98.52	99.81
50-54	98.57	99.29	97.68	97.96	98.96	99.23	96.90	98.22	98.43	99.70
55-59	98.78	99.32	97.26	87.28	99.10	99.34	97.64	98.27	98.72	99.71
60-64	98.87	99.38	97.56	98.53	99.11	99.37	97.91	98.23	98.73	99.68
65 & Over	98.97	99.39	97.89	98.30	99.13	99.31	98.36	98.50	98.91	99.61
Total	59.00	70.16	51.37	63.30	54.94	66.89	54.89	67.03	62.71	74.40
Stan- dardized	59.00	70.16	53.19	62.09	57.74	67.21	53.64	72.19	61.90	74.27
15 Years & Over	80.71	92.24	72.24	82.50	77.69	89.72	73.15	86.96	85.40	95.91
Stan- dardized	80.71	92.24	73.69	83.18	80.05	90.08	74.33	96.99	83.78	95.40

(1) Taplejung, Solukhumbu, Rasuwa, Mustang and Humla Districts.

(2) Panchathar, Okhaldhunga, Tanahun, Baglung, Myagdi, Rukum and Doti Districts.

(3) Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur Districts.

(4) Sunsari, Mahottari, Nawal Parasi, Banke and Kailali Districts.

Source: The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal 1977: Table 4.2



ts. .40 .91 .27 .40 .61 .70 .81 .78 .73 .51 .93 .26 .05 .56 .16  
 (4) male

Table 18  
 AGE-SPECIFIC MARITAL STATUS OF FEMALE POPULATION 6 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER  
 1971

Age Group	Number				In Percent					
	Total 6 Years & Above	Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Total 6 Years & Above	Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
6 - 9	624,672	610,002	14,547	94	29	100.0	97.65	2.33	0.015	0.005
10 - 14	594,192	514,341	79,367	356	128	100.0	86.56	13.36	0.06	0.02
15 - 19	499,966	196,627	300,947	1,481	911	100.0	39.33	60.19	0.30	0.18
20 - 24	503,653	39,615	458,700	3,656	1,682	100.0	7.87	91.07	0.73	0.33
25 - 29	473,990	12,284	452,277	7,784	1,645	100.0	2.59	95.42	1.64	0.35
30 - 34	425,705	5,969	404,374	13,951	1,411	100.0	1.40	94.99	3.28	0.33
35 - 39	358,407	3,859	329,572	23,715	1,261	100.0	1.08	91.95	6.62	0.35
40 - 44	307,463	2,821	266,377	37,197	1,068	100.0	0.92	86.64	12.10	0.34
45 - 49	215,577	1,663	173,695	39,455	764	100.0	0.77	80.57	18.30	0.36
50 - 54	196,530	1,390	139,183	55,293	664	100.0	0.71	70.82	28.13	0.34
55 - 59	124,716	849	83,085	40,391	391	100.0	0.68	66.62	32.39	0.31
60 - 64	155,789	973	78,339	75,880	597	100.0	0.62	50.29	48.71	0.38
65 & Over	181,828	1,111	71,482	108,627	608	100.0	0.61	39.31	59.74	0.34
Total	4,662,488	1,391,504	2,851,945	407,880	11,159	100.0	29.84	61.17	8.75	0.24

Source: The Population Census 1971: Table 15.

Table 19  
 PROPORTION OF DIVORCED AND WIDOWED FEMALE POPULATION  
 BY SELECTED GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS\*  
 (1971)  
 (In percent to total female population in respective age groups/regions)

Age Group	Mountains			Hills			Terai			Kathmandu Valley		
	Total	Divorced	Widowed	Total	Divorced	Widowed	Total	Divorced	Widowed	Total	Divorced	Widowed
6 - 9	100.0	-	0.01	100.0	0.01	0.01	100.0	0.01	0.01	100.0	-	-
10 - 14	100.0	-	0.05	100.0	0.01	0.03	100.0	0.02	0.07	100.0	0.02	0.02
15 - 19	100.0	0.09	0.16	100.0	0.18	0.31	100.0	0.13	0.31	100.0	0.21	0.15
20 - 24	100.0	0.50	0.80	100.0	0.51	0.70	100.0	0.17	0.40	100.0	0.37	0.69
25 - 29	100.0	0.49	1.98	100.0	0.51	1.72	100.0	0.18	1.54	100.0	0.49	1.68
30 - 34	100.0	0.64	3.55	100.0	0.39	3.50	100.0	0.22	2.96	100.0	0.54	3.40
35 - 39	100.0	0.63	5.92	100.0	0.37	7.02	100.0	0.23	6.44	100.0	0.62	6.33
40 - 44	100.0	0.74	10.39	100.0	0.32	12.78	100.0	0.26	12.18	100.0	0.58	12.79
45 - 49	100.0	0.52	13.34	100.0	0.31	16.72	100.0	0.21	20.31	100.0	0.60	17.92
50 - 54	100.0	0.42	21.40	100.0	0.34	26.59	100.0	0.19	31.91	100.0	0.35	27.89
55 - 59	100.0	0.60	24.43	100.0	0.22	30.70	100.0	0.16	35.66	100.0	0.33	32.70
60 - 64	100.0	0.33	36.46	100.0	0.36	47.11	100.0	0.15	56.59	100.0	0.54	48.07
65 & Above	100.0	0.29	48.33	100.0	0.19	56.53	100.0	0.18	66.67	100.0	0.18	62.41
Total	100.0	0.38	7.95	100.0	0.26	8.69	100.0	0.14	9.16	100.0	0.33	9.37

Source: The Population Census 1971 2(2): Table 15.

\* Includes same districts as Table 17

### Education

The correlation between literacy and the status of women is controversial. Often illiterate women whose poverty forces them out of domestic confines in search of employment seem to have better control over their own lives than literate women belonging to higher socio-economic groups. About Indian women, a recent report comments: "... in certain senses women whose fortune it was to be poor enjoyed higher status than those who are rich." (Government of India, 1974).

Nevertheless, literacy is an indication of exposure to modern ideas and is therefore crucial for an overall analysis of women's status. In Nepal, as in most other developing countries, there is a large disparity between male and female literacy rates. According to the 1971 census, 24.72 percent of the male population of 10 years and above were literate while only 3.66 percent of the female population in the same age-group could read and write (Table 20).

The literacy rate has tripled for males in the last two decades (1952/54-1971). The rate of increase in literacy during the same period is higher for females. This is, however, due to the fact that the percentage of literate females in 1952/54 was very low. Even with this higher rate of increase, the proportion of literate females reached only 3.66 percent which is very low compared to the male literacy rate of 24.72 percent. According to the National Education Committee estimates for 1975, the literacy rate among females has reached 5.2 percent and among male, 33.2 percent.

Table 20

## LITERACY RATES

(Among the Population of 10 years and above in percent)

	1952/54	1961 <sup>1</sup>		1971 <sup>1</sup>			1975 <sup>2</sup>	
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural		
Male	8.3	57.10	14.62	16.36	61.57	22.94	24.72	33.2
Female	0.7	19.28	1.14	1.76	26.41	2.71	3.66	5.2
Overall	4.0	39.73	7.68	8.92	45.85	12.91	14.32	19.2

Sources: Population Census 1952/54: 50.  
The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal 1977.  
 Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

<sup>1</sup>Standardised.

<sup>2</sup>Estimates of National Education Committee, December 1977.

These figures, however, should be taken with caution because the method of estimation<sup>1</sup> seems to take many things for granted. For example, it assumes that literacy gained is equal to literacy retained. In addition, there seems to have been some double counting in the procedure since school children of 6 and 7 years who were counted as literate in 1971 would have been counted again as third graders in 1975. The adult literacy reports also cannot be taken at face value to the

<sup>1</sup>Formula used for estimation is:

Number of literates in 1971 (of six years and above, 1971 census) plus the number of students in the third grade (of primary school) from 1972 to 1975 plus the number of persons educated under adult literacy programmes minus the death rate in the population of eight years and above multiplied by 4 multiplied by population of eight years and above.

Table 21

LITERACY RATE BY REGIONS  
(As percent to the population of 6 years and above)

Regions	Male	Female	Both Sexes
<u>All Nepal</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>23.59</u>	<u>3.91</u>	<u>13.89</u>
<u>Eastern Development Region</u>	<u>25.47</u>	<u>4.65</u>	<u>15.25</u>
Mountains	23.47	3.23	13.29
Hills	23.88	3.18	13.40
Terai	27.12	6.28	17.21
<u>Central Development Region</u>	<u>23.11</u>	<u>4.82</u>	<u>14.19</u>
Mountains	15.60	1.66	8.66
Hills	27.88	6.89	17.58
Terai	19.91	3.39	11.94
<u>Western Development Region</u>	<u>29.46</u>	<u>3.93</u>	<u>16.57</u>
Mountains	19.53	5.04	12.42
Hills	31.70	3.78	17.36
Terai	23.96	4.32	14.54
<u>Far Western Development Region</u>	<u>16.27</u>	<u>1.61</u>	<u>9.05</u>
Mountains	14.80	1.14	8.15
Hills	17.23	1.18	9.15
Terai	15.14	3.09	9.48

Source: The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal 1977: Table 5.4

<sup>1</sup>Does not tally with Table 20 because of the difference in age groups.

Table 22  
SOME INDICATORS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT  
(In hundred persons)

Particulars	1952/54		1961		1971	
	(5 years and above)		(6 years and above)		(6 years and above)	
	Male	Female	Per 100 Males	Per 100 Females	Male	Female
I. Illiterates	34,299	36,282	105.7	122.5	36,612	44,800
II. Literates	809	71	8.7	11.2	11,302	1,825
a. Finished						
Primary School	111	9	8.1	21.1	1,312	136
b.S.L.C.	58	3	5.7	10.7	555	65
c. Graduates	25*	1*	4.0	6.3	128	13

Source: Acharya 1978.

\* Persons with higher education, level not stated.

Table 23

ENROLLMENT LEVELS  
(In hundred persons)

Level of Education	1965		1971		1976	
	Total Number	Girls Percentage of Total	Total Number	Girls Percentage of Total	Total Number	Girls Percentage of Total
Primary	3,861	549 14.2	4,025	730 18.1	6,438	1,293 20.0
Lower Secondary			1,090	175 16.1	1,887	334 17.7
Higher Secondary	574	84 14.6	639	104 16.3	741	125 16.9
<u>University Level</u>	81	14 <sup>1</sup> 17.3	268	49 18.3	214	45 21.0

Source: Acharya 1978.

<sup>1</sup>Only for 29 colleges out of 34.





extent that the formula seems to have done (Shrestha 1977). Figures on female literacy in particular should be confirmed by more intensive studies since two recent surveys covering this aspect have reported lower female literacy rates. The Nepal Fertility Survey reported a 5 percent female literacy rate and the Social Network Survey reports only 3.8 percent. Female literates are much more concentrated in urban areas than their male counterparts and both male and female literacy rates in the Terai are surpassed only by the Central Development Region which includes the Bagmati Zone and Kathmandu Valley (Table 21).

Although the sexwise difference in literacy rates is diminishing, the absolute difference in the number of literate males and females is still enormous (Table 22). Women still lag far behind in formal education. The percentage of females in the population of 5 years and above who finished at least primary schooling increased from 0.04 in 1951 to 0.61 in 1961 although in the next decade the increase was less significant with the percentage reaching only 0.65 in 1971. In the case of males, the improvement has been steady. The percentage of males with at least primary schooling increased from 0.52 in 1951 to 3.81 in 1961 and to 5.48 in 1971. Moreover, while the absolute number of both male and female illiterates declined between 1952/54 and 1961, it actually increased between 1961 and 1971 (Table 22).

Not only is the number of females with higher educational status low, but the female enrollment situation is no better (Table 23). By combining primary and secondary enrollment figures, it is found that girls constituted 19.4 percent of the pupils in 1976 compared to 14.2 percent in 1965. This indicates an increase rate of one percentage point every two years.

*Photo on opposite page:  
After years of limited access to education the enrollment of girls in  
school is now increasing.  
Photo by Ane Harland, courtesy of UNICEF.*

## POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Political expression for women, as defined by Giele (Giele and Smock 1977: 4-5), is the right "to join in community decisions, to vote, to hold property or public office on an equal basis with men." In addition, Giele suggests an evaluation of whether "important sections of the female population show clear signs of dissatisfaction or sense of injustice compared with men" and whether there is any significant "social movement for women's rights in progress" as two other important indicators. This analysis, however, will deal only with available statistical evidence of political expression.<sup>1</sup>

If we take political expression to mean participation in the running of the state by voting and holding public office, the political participation of Nepalese women would appear to be very marginal. There are as yet no statistics on female voting habits so it is hard to talk about political participation at the grass roots level. In the National Panchayat, the legislature of the country, there are only three women out of a total of 135 members. There is not a single minister of the female sex. The results of the newly completed election indicate that only 2005, i.e., about 9 percent of the 22,395 village and town panchayat members are women. Of the 575 district panchayat members, forty-one, or 7 percent are women. These figures, however, include two groups of village panchayats where the former law requiring the presence of at least one woman (either elected or nominated) in the village panchayat executive body was still in effect at the time of the last election. If we exclude these panchayats, we find that female representation is only 0.3 percent at the village level and 0.7 percent at the district level. Moreover, there is not a single woman chairperson or vice-chairperson in all the district panchayats while at the village level, females occupy only 0.2 percent of the presiding positions. They constitute 0.8 percent of the vice-chairpersons. Although some political participation through the Nepal Women's Organisation is reported, it is extremely limited.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The issue of women's property rights is dealt with in Part 2 of this Volume (Tradition and Change in the Legal Status of Nepalese Women), while an analysis of women's participation in community decisions, voting, etc. must await the results of village case studies presently being carried out by the Status of Women Project team members.

<sup>2</sup>See Part 3 of this Volume (Institutions Concerning Women in Nepal).

Table 24

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL PANCHAYATS<sup>1</sup>  
(In number of persons)

	Village or Town Panchayat Center			District Panchayats	
	Members	Chairpersons	Vice-Chairpersons	Members	Chairpersons & Vice-Chairpersons
Men	20,390	2,172	2,159	534	110
Women	<u>2,005</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>-</u>
<u>Total</u>	22,395	2,177	2,177	575	110
Women as percent of <u>Total</u>	9.95	0.23	0.83	7.13	-

Source: Election Commission Secretariat, personal communication.

<sup>1</sup>Includes Panchayats of Sagarmatha, Lumbini, Seti, Mechi, Bagmati, Gandaki, Bheri, Janakpur, Karnali and Mahakali Zones.

Table 25

LEVEL OF POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE  
(In numbers of persons)

Number of National Personalities Known	Respondents Familiar With Names	Respondents Familiar With Jobs
5	1	1
4	1	-
3	2	1
2	-	1
1	15	9
0	1,398	1,405
Total Sample	1,417	1,417

Source: The Social Network Survey 1978.

Some interesting information is provided by the Social Network Survey (Vaidya, Dhungel, and Carlow 1978) which covered three districts - one each in the Terai, the Hills and Kathmandu Valley. Of the sample of 1417 women, only 7.6 percent reported that they knew the panchayat representative for the Women's Organization, while only 0.6 percent reported membership in the Women's Organization. Only 0.1 percent of women interviewed claimed regular attendance at meetings of the Women's Organization while 0.6 percent had never attended. Ninety-nine percent did not respond to the question at all.

As an index of general knowledge, women were also asked if they could name five leading figures in Nepal, apart from His Majesty the King. Answers to this question could also be interpreted to signify the degree of politicization of the village women. Only about 1.5 percent could name even one and only four women could name more than one leading figure. Of those who named at least one leading person, only 12 could describe the job of the person named. Hence, the results of the Social Network Survey indicate very low level of political consciousness among rural Nepalese women (Table 25).

## ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Economic Activity Rates

In the view of many writers economic status is crucial to the overall status of women in the society (Boserup 1970; Martin and Vorties 1970; Stoler 1975; Derre 1975). Others maintain participation in political activity to be the main determinant of overall status of women in a society (Murphy and Murphy, 1974). Evaluating economic status is a complex process involving analyses of work opportunities and participation rates, rights to ownership and disposal of property, and roles in economic decision-making. Statistics on most of these variables in Nepal are non-existent. Those that are available, such as economic activity rates, do not reflect the true situation. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this chapter to go beyond the existing statistics and to draw as accurate a picture of women's economic activities in Nepal as possible from indirect evidence.

Women form almost half of the potential labour force (Table 26). This group is a basic human resource, proper use of which is vital to accelerating development process in labour surplus countries like Nepal. An effective plan to maximize this basic resource for development implies a proper knowledge of existing labour use patterns.

The most relevant category from a conventional economic point of view is that of "economically active population." The economically active population is defined as "all persons of either sex who furnish the supply of labour for the production of economic goods and services during the time reference period." (UNO, 1968). This category includes employed, unemployed and those in the armed forces. The employed are defined as "all persons, including family workers, who worked during the time reference period established for data on economic characteristics" or who were temporarily out of a job. The unemployed include those who were seeking work as well as those who had never worked before. The following categories are defined as economically inactive:

Table 26

POTENTIAL LABOUR FORCE IN TOTAL POPULATION

Years	Total Population in Thousand		Population of Ages 15-59 = Potential Labour Force (In Thousand)				In Percent of Total Population		Composition of Potential Labour Force in Percent			
	Both Sexes	Male	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Both Sexes				
								Female	Male	Female		
1952/54	8235	4051	4184	4622	2239	2383	56.1	55.3	57.0	100	48.44	51.56
1961	9413	4636	4777	5156	2498	2658	54.8	53.9	55.7	100	48.45	51.55
1971	11556	5817	5739	6233	3127	3106	53.9	53.8	54.1	100	50.17	49.83
1976 <sup>1</sup>	13080	6643	6437	6886	3476	3410	52.6	52.3	53.0	100	50.48	49.52

Source: The Population Census 1952/54, 1961, 1971..

<sup>1</sup> Estimates of Rajbanshi and Gubaju 1976.

1. Homemakers: persons of either sex, not economically active, who are engaged in household duties in their own home; for example, housework and other related responsibilities for the care of the home and children.
2. Students
3. Pensioners
4. Others, e.g., children not attending school, the permanently disabled, etc.

In the Nepalese censuses of 1961 and 1971,

"the economic activity of a person referred to the gainful activity during a period of eight months in the course of the year preceding the census. If the person fulfilled this requirement, his occupation, industry and economic status, whether as an employer or employee, own account worker or unpaid family worker, had to be stated. All persons seeking work for the first time and those who had worked for a period of less than eight months and were out of work at the time of enumeration were classified as inactive." (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1976: 150-157).

This definition of economic activity is incomplete in many ways and this problem will be taken up later. At this point, however, it will be interesting to analyze these conventional statistics, however incomplete, in some detail.

On the total economically active population of 4.9 million in 1971, 1.4 million, i.e., 29 percent, were women (Table 27).

Table 27  
ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION BY SEX  
(In thousands)

	1952/54		1961		1971	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	2,460	59.2	2,564	59.5	3,434	70.8
Female	1,693	40.8	1,743	40.5	1,418	29.2
Total	4,153	100.0	4,307	100.0	4,852	100.0

Source: The Population Census 1952/54, 1961, 1971.

The overall rate of female participation in the labour force has declined from 52.9 percent in 1952/54 to 35.1 percent in 1971 (Table 28). This rate was, however, 59.4 percent in 1961. The apparent inconsistency in these statistics is usually explained by the fact that a stricter definition of labour force was used in the 1971 census than in 1961 or in 1952/54. Yet comparative statistics show an increased participation rate for men with a sharply decreased participation rate for women in the 1971 census.

According to the above logic, the definitions for male participation seem to have been relaxed, while those for female participation have been made stricter. It is more probable that the apparent decline in female participation rates reflects an actual decline in female participation rates in those activities which are conventionally included in economic activity. It has been found elsewhere that women are losing job opportunities in the modernization process and being transformed from economically active members of the household production unit to economically dependent housewives (Boserup, 1970: 167). On this Irene Tinker (1976:22) writes:

In virtually all countries and among all classes, women have lost ground relative to men; development, by widening the gap between incomes of men and women, has not helped improve women's lives, but rather has had an adverse effect on them.

To quote another authority (Durand, 1975: 123-146) on population:

... the cross-sectional mean levels of female activity rate form a U-shaped pattern in relation to levels of economic development, suggesting that a typical trend in countries in the process of economic development might be one of decreasing participation by women in labour force during early stages and increasing again during later stages of development.

Studies made by OECD (Darling 1975) and Singhi (1968) also indicate ~~towards~~ similar trends.



Table 28

AGE-SPECIFIC PARTICIPATION RATES BY SEX AND MODE OF LIVING  
(In percent to total population in respective age/sex)

Age Group	1952/54			1961			1971		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
10 - 14	22.7(a)	25.3(a)	20.1(a)	-	-	-	50.5	59.2	40.1
15 - 19	84.2	96.1	72.8	83.4	94.1	73.3	61.6	75.7	46.2
20 - 24							63.5	89.8	39.2
25 - 29	79.5	99.1	61.4	79.9	98.5	63.1	65.3	95.1	36.6
30 - 34							63.7	96.6	33.9
35 - 39							66.9	97.4	34.0
40 - 44							64.7	97.2	32.9
45 - 49	76.0	98.1	52.9	73.9	97.4	51.1	66.7	96.8	32.5
50 - 54							62.9	94.0	30.5
55 - 59							60.0	93.3	27.7
60 - 64	39.9	61.4	22.6	43.6	65.2	25.7	39.7	64.1	17.9
65 & Over							25.1	40.5	10.0
Total Nepal	66.9	81.7	52.9	76.1	94.1	59.4	59.3	82.9	35.1
Urban(b)				55.5	79.5	27.8	42.3	66.8	12.3
Rural(b)				76.9	94.8	60.5	60.1	83.7	36.0

Source: The Analysis of Population Statistics of Nepal 1977: Table 6.1

(a) Active population under 15 years of age were divided by population 10-14.

(b) Including population 10-14 years of age in 1971.

Considered in the light of this general trend which has been noted in developing and developed countries the decline in female economic activity rate in Nepal in 1971 as compared to 1952/54 reveals something more than usually presumed. Women's decreased economic participation may be due to the contraction of family enterprise, the decline of traditional cottage and village industries etc. These explanations, however, can be confirmed only by further studies.

The recorded economic activity rate for Nepalese women, although low compared to that of men, is fairly high when compared to that of other developing countries, as is the percentage of the economically active population in general. The common factor among all these countries including Nepal is the higher percentage of children labourers and the extension of working life beyond the retirement age.

The contrast between female participation rates in Nepal and those in other developing countries of the region is striking (Table 29). The reasons for this could be one or all of the following:

1. Nepal may have adopted a more liberal definition of activity rate than other countries of the region cited.
2. The relative backwardness of the Nepalese economy and the hardship of mountain life require maximum effort by all members of the household to maintain the family at subsistence level—men going to earn cash income while female members keep the family agricultural enterprise going. This point is supported by the substantially higher activity rate of hill women (Table 30). In 1971, the female activity rate in the Hill regions varied from 39 to 58 percent while in Terai corresponding figures were between 6 and 22 percent.
3. It has been often noted that hill women are more assertive and behave more freely than women in the Terai. Census reporting in the Terai was probably done largely by men while in the Hills the opposite could be true. In a social context like that of the Terai, where female seclusion is a strong cultural ideal and where men lose prestige if their wives must work outside the home, men may have

Table 6.2

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RATES  
(In Percent)

Country	Census Year	Male		Female		Total	
		Of Total Male Population	Of 15 Years & Above	Of Total Female Population	Of 15 Years & Above	Of Total	Of 15 Years & Above
Nepal	1961	55.3	94.1	36.5	59.4	45.8	76.1
	1971	59.0	87.8	24.7	34.3	42.0	61.0
Bangladesh	1961	56.2	93.0	10.8	18.1	34.3	57.2
India	1970	52.5	85.5	11.9	18.6	32.9	54.4
Philippines	1970	46.0	78.3	21.3	34.1	33.6	55.5
Sri Lanka	1963	49.8	82.0	14.1	23.5	32.7	54.4
Czechoslovakia	1970	53.3	72.9	42.3	54.1	48.7	63.1
Sweden	1970	54.7	69.4	29.9	37.3	42.3	53.2
United Kingdom	1966	63.0	83.8	32.6	41.9	47.3	61.9

Source: The Analysis of Population Statistics of Nepal 1977: Table 6.2

Table 30

REGIONAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RATES OF POPULATION OF  
10 YEARS AND ABOVE  
(In percent)

	Male			Female			Both Sexes								
	EDR	CDR	Total	EDR	CDR	Total	EDR	CDR	Total						
Hills	81.3	88.3	83.9	39.1	55.6	41.2	59.9	72.0	68.0	62.5	65.6				
Terai	83.3	86.3	84.4	16.9	6.6	22.4	51.7	47.7	54.8	53.9	50.8				
Inner															
Terai	89.7	83.5	87.5	38.5	31.5	-	34.3	64.1	58.0	-	62.7	60.6			
Kathmandu															
Valley	-	70.4	-	70.4	-	23.3	-	23.3	-	47.8	-	47.8			
All															
Nepal	82.6	84.1	79.9	84.4	82.9	28.6	28.6	50.2	36.8	35.1	56.1	57.0	64.8	61.1	59.3

Source: Compiled from Population Census, 1971.

EDR = Eastern Development Region  
 CDR = Central Development Region  
 WDR = Western Development Region  
 FDWR = Far Western Development Region

tended to give incorrect information about women's participation in the economic activities of the household. In the Hills, women and men are less influenced by the orthodox Hindu standards of female behavior. Another factor in this context might be the absence of many male family members in Hill households. This tends to increase the activity rate of hill women in two ways: first by increasing their participation in agricultural work and second by making them the reporting agents. The absence of male members of the family makes female work visible while the presence of male members tends to make it invisible.

Although female activity rate recorded in the Nepalese census is comparatively high, it still underestimates the actual economic activity rate of the female population in Nepal. The definition of non-economic activity is ambiguous. Only those who professed to have worked seven to eight months within a year preceeding the date of census were asked to report their profession. The census manual for 1971 is not available. However, in a personal interview the census authorities confirmed that definitions and categories for 1961 and 1971 census were identical. In 1961 census booklet (CBS, 1961), economic activity is defined as working in agriculture, trade, industry (weaving, oil pressing, sewing and manufacture of domestic utensils and weapons), and services (teaching, working as porters and servants) and receiving cash or kind income in the form of wage, salary or profit. It stated that "economically active" category should include all those who had worked 7-8 months in the year preceding the census date even though they worked just as household members without any direct payments. According to the instruction, those working in the fields not less than 4 months a year in the busy agricultural season and "working mornings and evenings in other occupations" were to be included in the category of "helpers."

The booklet further specified that "domestic work should not be included in earning activity, that is to say economic activity." Domestic work, however, was nowhere defined. People who were receiving some income had a high chance of being automatically included in the economically active labour force while those working without direct payment had a fairly high chance of being excluded. Women were much

more likely to be excluded from the active labour force because if they were working within the household economy, they did not consider themselves to be receiving any income. This is confirmed by the fact that only 7.16 percent of the active female population declared themselves as helpers in the family enterprise. This is also confirmed by the fact that 57.1 percent of the women declared themselves inactive because they were housewives (Table 31). Activities such as post-harvesting operations which are performed in the field or in the courtyard are usually included in agricultural work. The rest of the work involving food processing, from cleaning the grain to cooking is included in the category of domestic work. This is not justifiable because there is no reason to consider rice pounding an economic activity when performed for others or carried out in a rice mill and a domestic activity when performed in the home for family consumption.

Similarly the census manual, for example, did not say whether production of clothes and weaving of baskets for home consumption were economic activities. Those helping in agricultural work for more than four months a year were included in the active population while those tending the farm animals were not. Again, kitchen gardening does not seem to have been covered by the census definition of economic activity.

In a subsistence economy, production of the "use value"<sup>1</sup> within the domestic unit is the main economic activity of the majority of the population. To consider those engaged in these activities as not in the labour force greatly limits the usefulness of labour force statistics for planning purposes. In modern industrial economies, only a small portion of economic needs are satisfied directly by the production of goods for "use value." In Nepal, however, it is estimated that almost 40 percent of the economy is non-monetized and a major portion of this 40 percent is produced for home consumption rather than for exchange. In these conditions, to classify the population engaged in the production of "use value" as not active is extremely misleading.

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<sup>1</sup>A commodity has two values 'use value' and 'exchange value.' 'Use value' is the capacity of a commodity to satisfy human wants while 'exchange value' is the amount of goods it commands in the market. Goods may or may not have 'exchange value' while all goods have 'use value.' Objects manufactured or collected for the household carry 'use value' and work done within the household creates this 'use value.' These goods never enter the market, so they have no 'exchange value.'

Table 31  
 ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE FEMALES & HOUSEWIVES  
 OF 10 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE  
 (In percent)

Regions	Particulars	EDR	CDR	WDR	FWDR	Total
<u>Hills</u>	Economically Active	39.1	55.6	58.4	41.2	49.0
	Housewives	53.2	38.3	33.5	53.3	44.2
<u>Terai</u>	Economically Active	16.9	6.6	22.4	15.6	13.4
	Housewives	74.3	85.9	69.1	77.6	78.5
<u>Inner Terai</u>	Economically Active	38.5	31.5	-	-	34.3
	Housewives	53.7	61.5	-	57.0	58.7
<u>Kathmandu Valley</u>	Economically Active	-	23.3	-	-	23.3
	Housewives	-	60.1	-	-	60.1
<u>All Nepal</u>	Economically Active	28.6	28.6	50.2	36.8	35.1
	Housewives	63.1	63.0	41.6	57.5	57.1

Source: The Population Census 1971: Table 26 & 31 .

The practice of measuring economic activity in terms of production of "exchange value" is suitable only for those economies where the production of "use value" is negligible for survival. In many parts of Nepal, the household is still a unit of

*Photo on following page:  
 Using the GwP approach, work doesn't count as work in the economic statistics unless it passes through the marketplace. Like so many other women, this Tharu woman's labour will probably go unrecorded if the mat she is weaving is for her family's use.  
 Photo by Lynn Bennett.*





production unlike developed countries: Wood is collected for home consumption; nuts and fruits are gathered to feed family members; wool, cotton and hemp cloth are woven; and ropes, baskets and many other goods are manufactured at home to fulfill consumption needs of the household members. Neglect of such production in the household unit leaves a substantial part of Nepal's economy outside the system.

This issue has recently drawn the attention of many scholars around the world. Questions have been raised as to what "market" activities are internalized within households in low income countries (Tray 1977). What could be the explanation for the more complex set of activities performed in traditional households? What activities are shifted out of the household and into the market with different kinds of development, and why? For a proper channelization of the process of modernization it is important to know what kind of activities are shifted and how.

Boserup (1970: 161) has discussed the contribution of African women in Bantuland and has shown that as much as 55 percent of the income in that subsistence economy is not recorded in conventional GNP statistics since tasks which produce this 55 percent are not defined as economic activities at all. Most of these activities are performed by women.

In many parts of Nepal, the role of the non-monitized sector may well be as important as it is in Bantuland in Africa. No definite statements can be made about this without further study. Nevertheless, some attempts can be made towards revealing the actual extent to which women, especially rural women, contribute to the economic productivity of Nepal.

The statistics on the cost of production, taken together with the division of labour between the sexes described in many anthropological works, would be useful in deriving indirect measures of female activity rates. These measures could then be compared with census activity rates. The comparisons attempted below show that women are much more heavily engaged in providing subsistence to the household than is statistically reported. The observed community work patterns and the census statistics on economic activity rates present quite contrasting pictures.

The Nepalese population is composed of people of various religions and ethnic origins. Thus, work patterns vary between different communities

and also between different parts of the country. Much more information is available on work patterns of the Tibeto-Burman speaking groups of the Hills and Mountains than on the people of the Terai. The female economic activity rates for these regions are reportedly higher than in the Terai, yet the census statistics still underestimate the agricultural contribution of Hill and Mountain women compared to the men.

A paper by the Schroeders (1978) gives interesting insights into the division of labour in a middle Hills village in Western Nepal and concludes that in much of Hindu Nepal, women do more agriculture work than men, even though ploughing in most of Nepal is a male job. The village referred to in the study, Batulechaur, is in Kaski district, near Pokhara. Yet, as Table 34 indicates, the 1971 census reports only 49.3 percent of the females aged ten and above as economically active in Kaski district while the comparative figure for males is 70.6 percent.

According to the Schroeders, there are no landlords per se in the village of Batulechaur since members of all village households take part in the actual physical work in agriculture. The majority of the inhabitants in the village are high caste Hindus (Brahmins and Chetris). Seventeen percent of the households are landless while 37 percent are poor families who supplement what they produce on their own land by working as labourers as well. The data presented in Tables 32 and 33, taken from Schroeders' article, indicate that women are heavily involved in farming activities.

As the quotations and tables cited on the following pages indicate, women of the Magar and Gurung communities are involved equally if not more in subsistence activities than are the men. Census statistics have recorded higher percentages of working women in Tanahun and Palpa districts, which have large Magar populations, yet these figures are lower than for males. For Manang, populated by Gurungs and Sherpas, the census reported an economic activity rate of only 45.3 for females while 74 percent was reported for males. A contrasting picture is presented by the following passages, taken from several intensive studies about these communities.

John T. Hitchcock, who studied the Magars near Pokhara, on the southern slopes of Annapurna (Palpa or Tanahun), found no strict compartmentalization of work between the sexes. (Hitchcock 1966: 45). He writes:

Table 32

## AGRICULTURAL TASKS BY SEX

(In a Middle Hill Brahmin-Chetri Community)

	Almost Always Done by Men Only	Usually Done by Men	Done by Either Sex	Usually Done by Women	Almost Always Done by Women Only
1. Ploughing -----	X				
2. Sowing Grain -----	X				
3. Transporting Seedlings -----	X				
4. Maintaining Dikes, Irrigation System -----	X				
5. Making Rope -----	X				
6. Threshing Grain -----	X				
7. Smashing Clods-----			X		
8. Raising Goats -----			X		
9. Raising Chickens -----			X		
10. Harvesting Rice -----			X		
11. Hauling Rice Harvest -----			X		
12. Growing Vegetables -----				X	
13. Shucking corn -----				X	
14. Planting Seeds -----					X
15. Transplanting Rice and Millet -----					X
16. Weeding -----					X
17. Hauling Manure -----					X
18. Spreading Manure -----					X
19. Threshing Millet -----					X
20. Harvesting Corn -----					X
21. Hauling Corn and Millet Harvest -----					X

Source: Schroeder and Schroeder 1978.

Table 33

## DOMESTIC TASKS BY SEX

(In a Middle Hill Brahmin-Chetri Community)

	Almost Always Done by Men Only	Usually Done by Men	Done by Either Sex	Usually Done by Women	Almost Always Done by Women Only
<u>Daily Tasks</u>					
1. Sweeping Courtyard and Floors -----					X
2. Applying Cowdung to Floors -----					X
3. Hauling Water -----					X
4. Grinding Grain -----					X
5. Cooking Food -----					X
6. Cleaning Cookware -----					X
7. Feeding Animals -----		X			
8. Milking Animals -----		X			
9. Caring for Children -----				X	
<u>Seasonal Tasks</u>					
10. Building House -----	X				
11. Thatching House -----	X				
12. Building Cowshed -----	X				
13. Erecting Fences -----	X				
14. Cutting Bamboo -----			X		
15. Making Mats, Baskets -----			X		
16. Cutting Fire- wood Nearby -----				X	
17. Hauling Ocre -----					X
18. Painting House -----					X
19. Cutting Fire- wood in Jungle -----					X

Source: Schroeder and Schroeder 1978.

Table 34

LANGUAGE GROUPS AND ACTIVITY RATES IN SELECTED DISTRICTS  
(For population of 10 years and above)

District	Major Population Groups (In Thousands)				Total	Activity Rates in Percent	
						Male	Female
Taplejung	Nepali 36	Gurung & Rai 37	Sherpa & Tamang 7	Others 5	85	84.5	56.8
Panchthar	Nepali 65	Limbu 67	Tamang 8	Others 6	146	84.7	52.7
Solokhumbu	Nepali 53	Rai 26	Sherpa 18	Others 8	105	79.2	53.1
Manang	Gurung 4	Sherpa 1	-	Others 2	7	74.1	45.3
Lamjung	Nepali 96	Gurung 37	Tamang 5	Others 2	140	75.9	42.8
Tanahu	Nepali 104	Magar 29	Gurung 13	Others 12	158	80.7	58.6
Kaski	Nepali 118	Gurung 26	Newar 4	Others 4	152	70.6	49.3
Palpa	Nepali 134	Magar 69	Newar 7	Others 2	212	77.8	60.0
Kailali	Tharu 104	Nepali 23	-	Others 2	129	88.5	23.5

Source: The Population Census 1971 3(1): Table 19.  
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting 2031 (1974).

There are some tasks such as plowing that are strictly reserved for men. But there are many other tasks that can be done by either men women and often are done by men and women together. Husbands and wives join groups that go fishing together. Women mostly work the foot operated rice huller, but men frequently are seen doing it while the wife sits at the hole dropping in more rice and taking out the chaff. Men without daughters cook when their wives are menstruating, and a man has to learn tasks normally reserved for the women because he travels. When a group of men go on a trek to a border town for trading, they carry their food and do their own cooking.

Macfarlane (1976), in his study of another Tibeto-Burman group, the Gurungs, has also given an interesting account of the labour allocation. Table 35 presents his statistics on labour allocation in two Gurung households, one very poor and the other from the middle income group. In Macfarlane's definition "field work" includes not only working directly for crop production but also food processing tasks such as grinding. "Other work" includes domestic work, herding and animal care, etc., while "other activities" include travel to Pokhara, rest, ritual, sickness, etc.

Table 40 reveals that if both field work and other work are combined, the total working hours for females, are higher than for male adults in this Gurung community. In both households, the number of days spent by males and females in field work are similar, underscoring the point that if males are considered as "economically active" females should also be.

Another study on the Gurungs of Nepal (Andors 1976), which sketches the daily work routine of household members, confirms the conclusions of Macfarlane's study that Gurung women are very busy with field as well as domestic work. It is perhaps worth quoting at length Andors's detailed description of the work day of a senior Gurung woman:

The average day starts at approximately five or five-thirty when the mother or senior female in the house gets up and starts the fire to prepare the morning meal... She makes a hot drink of tea if the family can afford this luxury... the mother is preparing the meal—washing and cooking the rice, the dal (lentils) and curry, grinding spices and cleaning vegetables. If the family has servants or hired workers for that day, they must also be fed. This involves extra cooking ... While the food is cooking, either the mother or another adult household member goes out to milk the buffalo. (pp.93-94).

Table 35

WORK UNDERTAKEN IN TWO GURUNG HOUSEHOLDS 1969  
(In 6 hour work days)

	Age	Household No. 1			Age	Household No. 2		
		5 Apr.-3 July Field Work	(Excl. 14-26 May) Other Work	Other Activities		Field Work	Other Work	Other Activities
Father	55	45	15	17	59	65	57	62
Mother	49	42	22	13	42	66	92	23
Son	18	44	14	19	21	34 <sup>1</sup>	45	13
Daughter	16	29	24	24 <sup>2</sup>	18	102	69	13
Daughter	14	3	58	16	-	-	-	-
Son	9	0	26	51	15	97	123	46
Daughter	7	0	0	77	12	A little baby minding		

Source: MacFarlane 1976: Tables 7.14 and 7.15.

<sup>1</sup>Went to army in the middle of observation period.

<sup>2</sup>She had to go for ritual Sherpa dance for eight days.

During certain heavy work reasons, some family members sleep in the fields. Members of the family who are not staying in the fields already leave the house very early before eating, and food is sent down to them. When rice is being transplanted, for example, the younger females in the family who are seventeen and over sometimes leave at 6:30. By 9:00 they have picked enough rice seedlings for the whole day's planting and they can work steadily as the terraces are being plowed and flooded by the men. (pp. 94-95).

By about nine o'clock, the dishes and pots from the morning meals are cleaned with the help of some of the younger children... A senior female, whose labor may not be needed in the fields at this time will then roll out large mats in the courtyard and spread out baskets full of unhusked rice, corn or millet on the mat to dry them out thoroughly. The drying grains have to be guarded so that the chickens do not eat them...

People often combine this activity with other chores that need to be done, such as repairing the clothes, weaving, baby sitting or replastering the floor. (pp. 95-96)

If the woman has time and the rice husking machine in the neighborhood is not being used, she will go and process the grains. This chore is often left until later, if she must leave to do some work in the field. (p. 96)

If there are enough able bodied workers in the house, a woman over forty-five or fifty usually will not go to the fields every day. She spends more of her time in the village carrying out domestic chores and watching often younger children. If she must leave for a while older children, usually eight to twelve year old girls, may be put in charge of a small child of two or three.

In some households the mother prepares a mid-afternoon snack for members of the family who are around the house... Preparations for the evening meal begins around 5:30 or 6:00. (pp. 96-97)

The meal is usually over at around eight o'clock but a woman often spends up to another hour storing leftover food, cleaning the dishes and sweeping around the eating place ... The adults sit around for a while, men weaving baskets, the women spinning wool thread, discussing the next few days' work plans. The adults in the family may go to sleep around 10:30 or 11:00. The adolescent and pre-adolescent children are usually out participating in youth activities at this time. (pp. 97-98)

In the face of these studies, the large disparities in male and female economic activity rates in Kaski, Tanahun and Lamjung areas as reported by the census seem open to question. (Table 32).



Limbus are another important community in Nepal's Hill population. A study (Jones and Jones 1976) covering Limbus of Eastern Hills reveals that Limbu women are comparatively free in the choice of life options. The division of labour, though elaborate, does not seem to confine the women within the household and is free of many social rigidities. About division of labour, the authors of the above study write:

During planting, cultivating and harvesting, men, women and children work side by side in the fields. At other times men work mostly at building, repairing roofs, erecting racks to store grain, making baskets, constructing frames for looms and pens for animals. Women serve as errand runners—carrying wood, bamboo, earth, rocks, water and other materials needed by the men in construction or repair work. In cultivation, men prepare the earth and work with oxen teams; women supplement their work by using hoes to smooth out the earth, tidying up the field, repairing terraces, planting seed, and transplanting rice. Only men work with oxen. They also plant, but only after the work with the oxen teams is finished. Maintaining crops is a joint effort involving entire families.

Spinning and weaving cloth is traditionally Limbu women's occupation, and although men sometimes weave baskets, only women weave mats...

Within a home, cooking is women's work, but on the trail men do most of the cooking and claim that women tire too easily after long hiking. Women actually carry most of the load on trail, especially if accompanied by infants. Men also help prepare food at festivals, when there is a large crowd to be fed.

Most of the routine work inside the home falls to the Limbu woman. It is she who cleans, cooks, and prepares the meals, cares for the young children, and often feeds and cares for the animals. In addition, it is she who keeps the home constantly furnished with water for drinking and cooking and, since cooking is done on wood fires, makes sure a ready supply of chopped wood is always available. During the dry season she is occupied with spinning, weaving, and cutting wood to be stored for the rest of the year. Odd jobs, such as making mustard seed oil, polishing rice, husking grain, or distilling liquor for sale, are also done during this season. She is further occupied with intricate preparations for the numerous festivals and weddings which take place in these months.

Men meanwhile repair houses or make the implements for weaving—spinning wheels, looms, ropes. Many take odd jobs portering for the Newar-owned shops during the dry season. Others travel to the Terai near India to buy salt, cotton or

thread for later sale in the weekly markets; few men find seasonal work in those regions. (pp. 25, 30)

Once again female activity rates for Limbu districts of Taplejung and Pachthar were reported at 56.8 and 52.7 percent respectively by census reports as against male activity rates of 84.5 and 84.7 percent respectively. While relatively high compared to female activity rates in other parts of the country, these rates still seem too low in the context of the above description of sexual division of labour among the Limbus. These statistics showing a much higher economic activity rate for men than for women may well reflect the bias of the enumerators rather than the actual situation.

A passage from Aziz's study (1978: 108-109) of a village in Nepal-Tibet border on the Tibetan side gives some idea of the work patterns which prevail in the Sherpa and Tibetan speaking Buddhist communities in Nepal's mountain regions:

In D'ing-ri the household is the primary economic unit. It is the unit of production, the unit of taxation, the land-holding unit and the unit for political representation. Co-operation within the household is therefore a primary factor in its productivity.

Work is distributed among the members of a house, with each adult managing a different task. Therefore is only an occasional regard for sexual division of labour. For example, males in the village are assigned to one of the three main productive concerns: farming, herding or trading. Senior men attend to tax payments and represent the household in local councils, etc. The most senior person, man or woman, usually becomes custodian of the household shrine. If there are insufficient men in the unit, then women assume responsibility for herds. Although this task requires a woman to live in the meadow annexe near the cattle the herdresses do not find that a problem village women also undertake a large part of the cultivation...

Commercial transactions though they may be outside the sphere of village women, are very much the concern of those in / the bazaar / town. The urban women of D'ing-ri are active participants in commerce and trade and they occasionally travel into Zhi-ka-tre and Lha-sa in the course of that work. It is usually senior women who do this, with the younger ones confined to domestic matters and minor local trade. The young women probably work under the supervision of their mother or mother-in-law until they are ready for more ambitious enterprises.

*Photo on opposite page:  
A Tibetan-speaking Nepalese woman from Kagberi weaves wool into cloth while her children sleep nearby.  
Photo by Ane Haaland.*



On the whole there is considerable overlapping between men and women as regards work. It is very important that a household diversify its economic interests, and labour is organised to that end. Individuals in the house therefore become specialists in one area or another, each one's niche is determined according to personal temperament as well as to communal needs. No task is ever so exclusive that others can not learn it, or that roles can not change. That the sexes can interchange so readily in various economic roles is a key to the economic success of the D'ing-ri household.

In Terai, the census reported female economic activities rate is just 13 percent. No study such as the Schroeders' has been done on Terai women from the Abadhi, Maithali and Bhojpuri speaking groups or on the Tharu women. For the Hindus of the Nepal Terai, however, much of what Srinivas (1976) has written about North Indian women is applicable. He writes that "both in intra-and extra-mural work whether agricultural or non-agricultural, there are clear and minute rules governing the division of labour between the sexes." (p. 10)

One sex alone cannot carry out the work without the other. In his analysis of the role of women, Srinivas (1976: 8) has divided households into the following four categories:

1. Big landlords who only supervise the work of others and do not themselves engage in manual labour
2. Small land holders who work on their own or on tenanted land, employing wage labourers as well
3. Tenants, who farm tenanted land, but work for others as wage labourers also
4. Landless labourers

He writes that in all classes described above, the wife cooks and serves food at least twice a day to all members of the household and that cooking in rural India usually involves the processing of the grain which the family has either grown or bought. She also performs many extra-mural farm chores. "Weeding, like transplanting, is exclusively women's work, while harvesting involves a more complicated division of labour between the sexes." (Srinivas 1976: 9)

During the post-harvest season, landless labourers, both men and women, are employed by contractors on road and canal repair work and occasionally are also hired for special tasks by a wealthy patron. Since working for wages carries low status for both men and women, landowners and others who can avoid it prefer not to do wage labor for others. Therefore economic and landholding status varies inversely with participation in manual labour. In addition the women is responsible for the feeding, disciplining and socialisation of young children unless she has a grown daughter who then assists in the latter tasks.

Among landless labourers, during the transplantation season women get up as early as 4 A.M. and cook the food before leaving the house for the fields. The rice transplantation in these parts is tough work, requiring women to stand in about six inches of water bending over and moving backwards as they transplant the seedling one by one for eight hours a day. Even after a full day of such labour, women must still prepare the evening meal for their families.

The picture of the hard working Northern Bihar woman is confirmed by the study of Olivia Stokes (1975: 219). Stokes interviewed a married woman with two children from a landless family in Bihar about her typical work day. Her day, as she described it, begins at 4 o'clock in the morning. To quote her reply:

'First', she said, 'I must wash the pots and sweep. Then I go to collect wood and cow dung for fuel and grass and for the bullock. If there is food I cook a mid-day meal. If not, I just sit or sleep. It is easier just to sleep. Then I do not grow anxious when my children cry because they are hungry. In the afternoon I must go again to collect grass for the bullocks, and then if there is food I prepare the evening meal. If I am needed I work in the fields too. I must plant the paddy, spread the fertilizer, turn over the earth around the maize and help in the harvest.'

Stokes writes that the woman interviewed used to work for the landlord as well. But now with the children and no one else to look after them, she has had to give it up. The woman interviewed expressed the view that though men tackle the heavier jobs, the women do more work.

As in Northern Bihar, the women from the landed gentry of the Nepal Terai do not work in the fields, nor do their husbands engage in manual

labour. Men oversee the agricultural work and business matters while women manage the household, cook for and feed household members as well as hired labourers. This wealthy class, however, is very small (Table 36). Sixty-seven percent of the households in the Terai own extremely small holdings and very few can afford not to work. Therefore, the census report of a 13 percent female activity rate in the Terai is highly questionable.

Again it is interesting to compare the reported activity rate of just 23.5 percent for Kailali district, a Tharu dominated area of far western Nepal, with the description of female work patterns amongst Tharus in neighbouring India (Srivastava 1958). This study covers six districts near the hill town of Simla in North-West India and presents data which show a heavy work load for the females in this community. The Tharus of Nepal are of the same stock and their customs, traditions and work patterns are very similar to those of Tharus studies by Srivastava. For both communities, agriculture is the major source of livelihood.

Table 36

LANDHOLDINGS IN THE TERAI

Households with Landholdings	Percent
Below 0.67 (ha.)	24.0
0.67 - 1.69	22.8
1.69 - 3.39	21.0
3.39 - 5.08	9.8
5.08 - 6.77	6.8
6.77 -10.16	7.1
10.11 -13.54	4.1
Above -13.54	4.4
All Terai Strata	100.0

Source: Agricultural Sector Survey 1974, 1 (Appendix): 5.

Information presented in Table 37 on the division of labour reveals that men and women participate equally in the Tharu economy. Is the division of labour among Tharus across the Border in Nepal's Kailali district so different from that of the neighbouring Tharu communities in India that while 88.5 percent of the Nepali Tharu males aged 10 years and above are reported economically active, only 23.5 percent of the females in the same age group are classified in that category?

Although Rajaure's study on Tharus of Dang Valley (Rajaure 1978) does not describe detailed division of labour between the sexes, the scattered remarks about the work patterns suggest that the contribution of Tharu women in Nepal's Terai towards the maintenance and reproduction of the household economy is at least as substantial as that made by the Tharu women of India.

Thus in most communities throughout Nepal much of the agricultural work and in many cases much of the trading and many of the cottage industries are carried out by women. Rice, maize, millet, barley and potatoes are major crops in Nepal. All these crops require intensive care and weeding and these are mostly the responsibility of women. For example, statistics on cost of rice production in selected places in the Terai show that for the entire production process from land preparation to harvesting about 87 to 93 percent of the labour involved is spent on planting, weeding and harvesting (Table 38). Likewise the labour required for weeding and harvesting of maize and potato (an almost exclusive female undertaking), constitutes the bulk of the total labour requirement for these crops. Kitchen gardening, which supplies the most necessary vitamins to the family, is another exclusively female undertaking. Yet women who work in these essential subsistence activities are consistently under reported in the economically active population.

To sum up, the anthropological studies indicate that the census reported economic activity rates for women are gross underestimations of actuality. The anthropological studies, however, are only micro-level descriptive studies and very inadequate for deriving quantitative measures of activity patterns and time allocation. They can provide only tentative guidelines for future comprehensive statistical surveys.

Table 37

DIVISION OF LABOUR BETWEEN SEXES  
IN A THARU COMMUNITY

	Men	Women	Both
1. Agriculture	Spading and ploughing fields Sowing Watching over the crop at night and storing crop	Preparing seeds for sowing; weeding the fields Taking meals to men-folk in the fields Storing, husking and grinding corn	Carrying seeds for sowing to the fields and sometimes helping to sow Harvesting, bundling the ears, loading and winnowing; corn gardening
2. Hunting Gathering & Fishing		Gathering wild fruits and roots from the forests	Fishing
3. Animal Care and Poultry	Rearing and grazing of the cattle; bringing of fuel from the forests	Preparing curd and ghee	Milking the buffaloes and cows; poultry farming
4. Industry and Handicraft	Making ropes, nets, traps and musical instruments Carpentry and smithy	Basket making Pottery	
5. Food Processing		Grinding and pounding of all grains and other food products	
6. Domestic Work		Cooking food and fetching water from the wells Stitching own and children's clothes Plastering walls and making artistic designs and figures on them.	
	Building new houses and repairing old ones Performance of magical rites and rituals Working for wage labour and services		

Source: Srivastava, 1958.

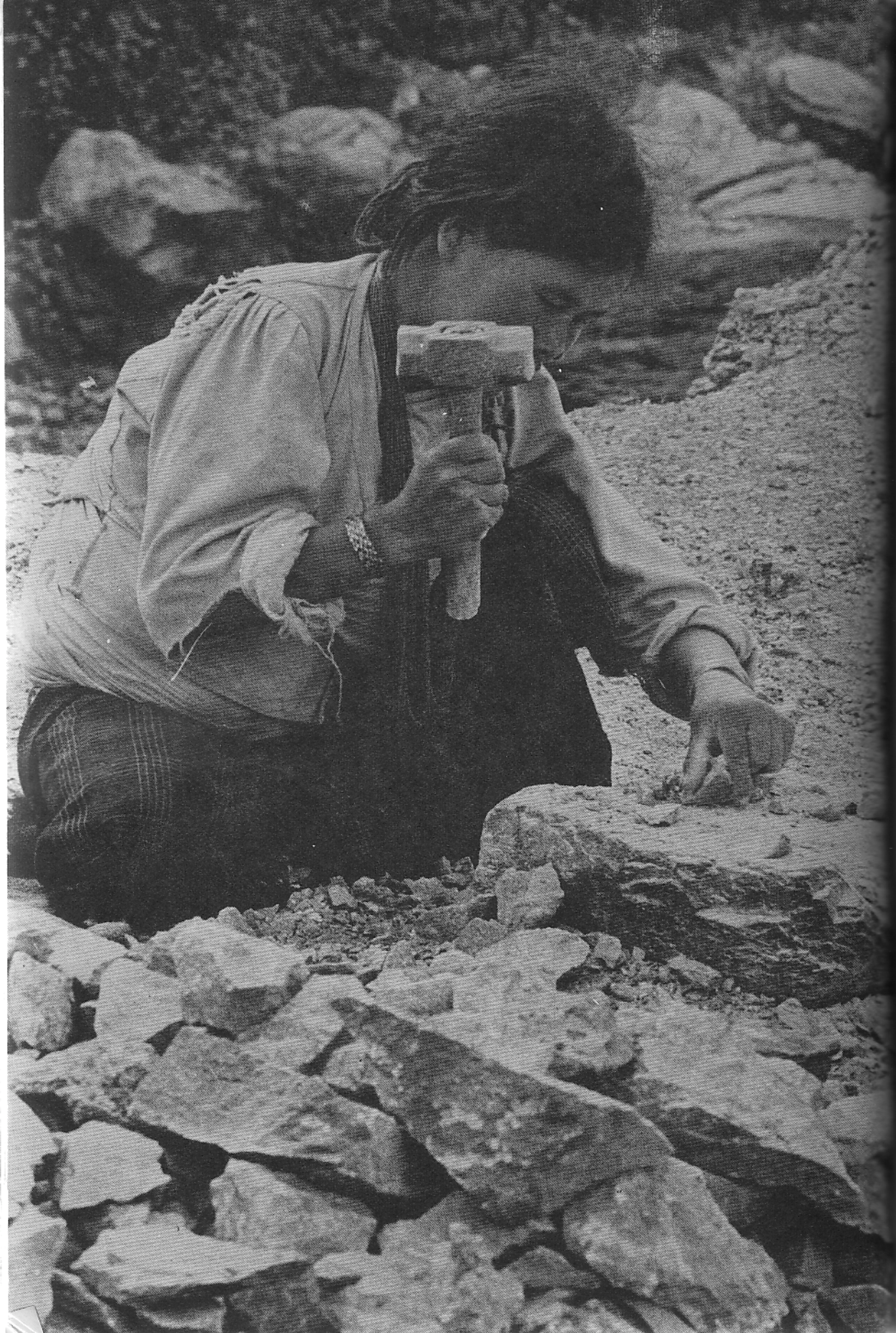


Table 38

STRUCTURE OF LABOUR INPUTS IN PADDY  
(Cost in rupees per bigha)

Paddy (Local)	EASTERN NEPAL		CENTRAL NEPAL		WESTERN NEPAL		FAR WESTERN NEPAL				
	Jhapa	Morang	Saptari	Dhanusha	Bara	Chitwan	Rupandehi	Kapilvastu	Dang	Banke	Bardia
A. Total Cost of Human Labour	245.50	435.88	602.14	470.51	553.97	595.43	483.76	436.94	460.30	467.45	424.99
a. Plantation	86.80	130.75	150.65	174.25	143.75	186.80	131.09	152.75	159.13	190.30	113.33
b. Weeding	6.00	41.25	127.90	97.19	172.50	81.93	69.21	-	40.40	13.00	-
c. Harvesting	124.70	205.13	274.88	166.06	199.15	278.77	233.57	228.94	253.17	235.30	283.22
B. Total (a + b + c)	217.50	377.13	553.43	437.50	515.40	547.50	433.87	381.69	452.70	438.60	396.55
B as percent of A	88.6	86.52	91.91	92.98	93.04	91.95	89.69	87.36	98.35	93.83	93.31

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank, Agricultural Credit Division 1977.



### Industrial and Occupational Classification

Among the economically active population, only a tiny segment is engaged in sectors other than agriculture. But even here there is a significant difference between the sectoral employment patterns of men and women. While more than 98 percent of the active female population is engaged in agriculture, the percentage drops to 93 percent in case of males (Table 39). Of those in the non-agricultural sector, the majority are employed in personal and community services. The commerce and manufacturing sectors together employ about one percent of the active population while the importance of other sectors as employers of female labour is negligible.

Table 39 reveals that the percentage of women employed in the non-agricultural sector has declined from 3.75 percent of total economically active women in 1952/54 to 1.83 percent in 1971.

Of the non-agricultural sectors, construction absorbed about 56 percent of the public investment (Acharya 1978) during the late fifties and sixties. The number of workers engaged in construction, however, seems to have declined from the 1952/54 level and the number of female workers has declined faster than that of male workers. The percentage of female workers in the construction business has fallen from 14 percent in 1952/54 to 3 percent in 1971 (Table 40). This sharp decline may be due to a stricter definition of work in 1971 census than the definition used in the 1952/54 census. However, the declining trend is confirmed by comparison of the same data from 1961 and 1971 censuses in which definitions and categories remained the same.

*Photo on preceding page:  
Although the construction industry is growing, the percentage of female workers has fallen from 14% in 1954 to only 3% in 1971.*

*Most of the women employed in the construction industry work at low wages as unskilled labourers like this woman stone breaker who is making gravel by hand.  
Photo by Ane Haalanul.*

Table 39

DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION BY INDUSTRY  
(In percent to total Economically Active Population)

	1952/54			1961			1971		
	(15 years and above)			(15 years and above)			(10 Years and above)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
I. <u>Agriculture and Forestry</u>	<u>93.48</u>	<u>91.71</u>	<u>96.05</u>	<u>93.82</u>	<u>91.74</u>	<u>96.87</u>	<u>94.37</u>	<u>92.81</u>	<u>98.17</u>
II. <u>Non-Agriculture</u>	<u>6.32</u>	<u>8.09</u>	<u>3.75</u>	<u>5.42</u>	<u>8.28</u>	<u>3.13</u>	<u>5.63</u>	<u>7.19</u>	<u>1.83</u>
1. Manufacturing	1.94	2.17	1.60	1.88	2.31	1.24	1.07	1.32	0.46
2. Electricity, Gas and Water	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.02	0.03	0.05	-
3. Construction	0.19	0.28	0.06	0.13	0.21	0.01	0.11	0.14	0.01
4. Commerce	1.39	1.80	0.80	1.10	1.51	0.49	1.31	1.62	0.55
5. Transport and Communication	0.47	0.54	0.38	0.38	0.51	0.19	0.20	0.27	0.02
6. Financial and Business Services							0.07	0.10	0.01
7. Personal and Community Services	2.31	3.28	0.90	1.90	2.81	0.55			
7. Personal and Community Services							2.84	3.69	0.78
III. <u>Activities Not Adequately Described</u>	<u>0.20</u>	<u>0.20</u>	<u>0.20</u>	<u>0.76</u>	<u>0.86</u>	<u>0.63</u>	-	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: The Population Census 1952/54: Table 12'A'.  
The Population Census 1961: Fourth Vol., Table 7.  
The Population Census 1971: Third Vol., Part I, Table 21.

Table 40

## WOMEN EMPLOYED IN INFRASTRUCTURE RELATED SECTORS

Industry	1952/54		1961		1971	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>I. Construction</u>						
Total	7,855	100	5,588	100	5,016	100
Male	6,776	86	5,345	96	4,876	97
Female	1,079	14	243	4	140	3
<u>II. Transport &amp; Communication</u>						
Total	19,694	100	16,371	100	9,637	100
Male	13,316	68	13,072	80	9,322	97
Female	6,378	32	3,299	20	315	3
<u>III. Electricity, Gas and Water</u>						
Total	726	100	1,453	100	1,596	100
Male	556	77	1,159	80	1,570	98
Female	170	23	294	20	26	2
<u>IV. Mining, Quarrying and Manufacturing</u>						
Total	80,580	100	80,922	100	51,938	100
Male	53,473	66	59,353	73	45,422	87
Female	27,107	34	21,569	27	6,516	13

Source: Acharya 1978.

Similarly, the number of women engaged in transport has also declined significantly. Construction of roads has disrupted the traditional goods-portering business in which large groups of hill women were engaged. Road transport has no doubt generated new types of employment in transport and allied services, such as drivers, conductors and mechanics, but none of these professions have women in their ranks. Thus, while women may have reaped certain indirect benefits in terms of increased mobility and the opening up of their areas to new markets and services, the development of modern transport has had an adverse effect on female employment in that sector. The percentage of women in workers employed in the electricity, gas and water works has also declined.

The decline in the number of women employed in the industrial sector is even more glaring. While in 1952/54, 34 percent of the industrial workers were women, in 1971 women represented a mere 13 percent. The decline in the absolute number of industrial workers is striking, but the decline has been sharper in the case of female workers (Table 40).

Thus, there are about 1.4 million women in the agricultural labour force and only 26 thousand women in the non-agricultural sector (Table 41). The sectoral composition of the labour force (Table 42) indicates that while 30.40 percent of the agricultural labour force are females, only 9.52 percent of the workers in non-agricultural sector are women. In view of the lower status of agricultural workers as compared to workers in other sectors, this heavy concentration of women in the agricultural sector indicates that the economic status of the female work force is lower than that of the male work force.

Occupationally women are concentrated in the farm and fish workers group (Table 43-44). Of the non-agricultural occupations, women workers mostly fell in the categories of ordinary labourers and sales and service workers. They occupied some positions as professional and technical workers but their roles in these fields were minor. Very few women were reported in administration in 1971 census. As defined by the ILO (1968: 11), administration:

Table 41  
 NUMBER OF LABOURERS BY MAJOR SECTORS  
 (In thousands)

	1952/54	1961	1971
<u>I. Agriculture</u>			
Male	2,261	2,351	3,187
Female	1,629	1,688	1,392
Total	3,890	4,039	4,579
<u>II. Non-Agriculture</u>			
Male	199	190	247
Female	64	43	26
Total	263	233	273

Source: The Population Censuses of Nepal 1952/54, 1961 and 1971.

Table 42

SEX COMPOSITION OF LABOUR FORCE BY INDUSTRY  
(In percent)

	1952/54 (15 years and above)			1961 (15 years and above)			1971 (10 years and above)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
I. <u>Agriculture and Forestry</u>	100.0	58.12	41.88	100.0	58.21	41.79	100.0	69.60	30.40
II. <u>Non-Agriculture</u>	100.0	75.76	24.24	100.0	81.63	18.37	100.0	90.48	9.52
1. Mining and Quarrying	100.0	100.0	-	100.0	81.82	18.18	100.0	86.11	13.89
2. Manufacturing	100.0	66.36	33.64	100.0	73.33	26.67	100.0	87.46	12.54
3. Electricity, Gas & Water	100.0	76.58	23.42	100.0	79.77	20.23	100.0	98.37	1.63
4. Construction	100.0	86.26	13.74	100.0	95.65	4.35	100.0	97.21	2.79
5. Commerce	100.0	76.35	23.65	100.0	81.86	18.14	100.0	87.65	12.35
6. Transport & Communication	100.0	67.61	32.39	100.0	79.85	20.15	100.0	96.73	3.27
7. Finance & Business Services	100.0	84.11	15.89	100.0	88.23	11.77	100.0	96.10	3.90
Total	100.0	59.24	40.76	100.0	59.53	40.47	100.0	70.77	29.23

Sources: The Population Census of Nepal 1952/54: Table 12 'A'.  
The Population Census of Nepal 1961: Fourth Vol., Table 7.  
The Population Census of Nepal 1971: Third Vol., Part I, Table 21.



Table 43

DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION BY  
BROAD OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS  
(In percent)

Occupations	1961			1971		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Farm/Fish Worker	93.78	91.68	96.87	94.37	92.80	98.17
Production/Labour Worker	2.26	2.81	1.44	2.18	2.80	0.67
Sales Worker	1.08	1.48	0.50	1.24	1.54	0.51
Clerical Worker	0.41	0.69	0.01	0.96	1.31	0.13
Administrative Worker				0.02	0.03	-
Service Worker	1.26	1.77	0.50	0.71	0.84	0.38
Professor/Teacher	0.47	0.75	0.06	0.52	0.68	0.14
Unknown	0.74	0.82	0.62	-	-	-
Total Economically Active	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Sources: The Population Census of Nepal 1961: Table 5.  
The Population Census of Nepal 1971: Table 20.

Table 44  
COMPOSITION OF BROAD OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS  
(In percent)

Occupations	1961			1971		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Farm/Fish Worker	100.00	58.20	41.80	100.00	69.60	30.40
Production/Labour Worker	100.00	74.20	25.80	100.00	91.04	8.96
Sales Worker	100.00	81.42	18.58	100.00	87.95	12.05
Clerical Worker	100.00	98.99	1.01	100.00	96.08	3.92
Administrative Worker				100.00	95.80	4.20
Service Worker	100.00	84.00	16.00	100.00	84.33	15.67
Unknown	100.00	65.97	34.03	-	-	-
Total	100.00	59.53	40.47	100.00	70.77	29.23

Sources: The Population Census 1961: Table 5.  
The Population Census 1971: Table 20.

Table 45  
PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR<sup>1</sup>, JULY 1978

	Administrative			Technical			Total		
	Number		Percent of Women in Total	Number		Percent of Women in Total	Number		Percent of Women in Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
<u>Gazetted</u>	2,298	42	1.83	3,801	155	4.08	6,099	197	3.23
Special	45	-	-	-	-	-	45	-	-
First Class	128	-	-	225	4	1.78	333	4	1.13
Second Class	625	10	1.60	701	23	3.28	1,326	33	2.49
Third Class	1,500	32	2.13	2,875	123	4.45	4,375	160	3.66
<u>Non-Gazetted (Clerical)</u>	18,306	334	1.86	15,222	485	3.19	34,530	819	2.37
First Class	3,133	112	3.57	3,902	155	3.97	7,037	267	3.79
Second Class	7,135	108	1.51	4,705	261	5.55	11,840	369	3.12
Third Class	5,512	90	1.63	3,594	67	1.86	9,106	157	1.72
Fourth Class	2,526	24	0.95	3,021	2	0.07	5,547	26	0.47
<u>Lower Support Staff</u>	16,104	444	2.76	-	-	-	16,104	444	2.76
<u>Total</u>	36,710	820	2.23	19,023	640	3.36	55,733	1,460	2.62

Source: HMG, Department of Administrative Management.

<sup>1</sup>Only permanent employees as of Mid-July, 1978.

Table 46

PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN SELECTED GOVERNMENT AND  
SEMI-GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS  
(July 1978)

Insti- tutions	Financial <sup>1</sup>		Trading <sup>2</sup>		Industries <sup>3</sup>		Public Services <sup>4</sup>		Cultural <sup>5</sup>		Total for Selected Institutions	
	Number Total Women	Percent of Women to Total	Number Total Women	Percent of Women to Total	Number Total Women	Percent of Women to Total	Number Total Women	Percent of Women to Total	Number Total Women	Percent of Women to Total	Number Total Women	Percent of Women to Total
Gazetted	1,308	88 6.73	246	13 5.28	75	7 9.33	520	23 4.42	40	5 12.50	2,189	136 6.21
Non-gazetted	7,396	967 13.07	1,668	98 5.88	541	64 11.83	2,833	219 7.73	163	32 19.63	12,601	1,380 10.95
Lower Support- ive Staff	2,249	111 4.94	244	11 4.51	201	12 5.97	1,354	30 2.22	40	2 5.00	4,088	166 4.06
Total	10,953	1,166 10.65	2,158	122 5.65	817	83 10.16	4,707	272 5.78	243	39 16.05	18,878	1,682 8.91

Sources: Respective Corporations:

<sup>1</sup> Includes: Nepal Rastra Bank, Two Commercial Banks, Life Insurance Company, Provident Fund Corporation, Industrial Development Corporation, Agricultural Development Bank and Credit Guarantee Corporation.

<sup>2</sup> Includes: National Trading Ltd.'s Central Office, Agricultural Inputs Corporation, Nepal Food Corporation, Dairy Development Corporation.

<sup>3</sup> Includes: Banshbari Shoe Factory, Royal Drug Ltd., and Himal Cement Company.

<sup>4</sup> Includes: Electricity Corporation, Tele-Communication Corporation of Nepal, Oil Corporation and Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> Includes: Cultural Corporation and Royal Nepal Film Corporation.

consists of occupations primarily concerned with the formulation of policy or laws and public regulations (legislation) and interpretation of government policy, combined with important decision making in government and non-government, organisations and with the direction and management of organisations and enterprise to ensure that the desired policies and objectives are followed.

Thus, there were no women working at policy levels in 1971. The situation does not seem to have changed much. The number of women in the government services was reported as only 2.62 percent in mid-July 1978 (Table 45). Moreover, at the top policy making level there were no women employees in general administration. Only four women had achieved the rank of first class officers in the technical group (Table 45).

The situation is slightly better in government and semi-government corporations (Table 46). Figures for selected government institutions show that proportion of women employees is largest in cultural institutions, followed by financial institutions and industrial enterprises.

Women in government services as well as government institutions seem to be concentrated at lower levels in the gazetted posts and at higher levels in non-gazetted posts. These women generally come from the urban middle class and usually have middle level or higher education. So they enter the government service at higher clerical and lower gazetted (or officer) levels. There are a number of factors related to women's expected social role such as household and child care responsibilities, limitations on mobility and late entry into service, all of which limit women's opportunities to improve their qualifications and hence diminish their prospects for promotion usually freezing them at the lower levels.

Women in general hold only a minute percentage of prestigious high paying professional job. In 1971, while women comprised 17 percent of the doctors, they formed 28 percent of the remaining medical professionals including nurses. They comprised 8.89 percent of wholesalers and 12

Table 47

## COMPOSITION OF SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, 1971

Occupations	Total Number	Number of Women	Women as Per-cent of Total
1. Doctors	225	39	17.33
2. Compounders and Nurses	345	97	28.12
3. Civil Engineers	177	2	11.30
4. Lecturers and Professors	444	71	15.99
5. School Teachers	11,197	737	6.58
6. Wholesalers	371	33	8.89
7. Retailers	57,564	6,869	11.93
8. Hotel Proprietors	578	79	13.67
9. Managers in Agriculture	3,946	172	4.36
10. Farmers and Hunters	4,387,169	1,364,490	31.10
11. Technicians <sup>1</sup>	39,234	4,888	12.46
12. Ordinary Labourers	19,876	2,377	11.96

Source: The Population Census 1971.

<sup>1</sup>Includes: technicians in manufacturing and construction; tailors, shoe repairers, drivers etc.

Table 48

COMPOSITION OF PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL MAN POWER BY SPECIALIZATION  
(Persons in number)

Specialization	Male	Female		Total
		Number	% to Total Man-Power in the Area	
I. <u>Agriculture</u>	<u>468</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>1.89</u>	<u>477</u>
1. Specialised <sup>1</sup>	21	-	-	21
2. General	447	9	1.97	456
II. <u>Engineering</u>	<u>732</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>0.95</u>	<u>739</u>
1. Agriculture	35	1	2.78	36
2. Architecture	19	1	5.00	20
3. Chemical	12	1	7.69	13
4. Civil	343	3	0.87	346
5. Mechanical	96	1	1.03	97
6. All Other <sup>2</sup>	227	-	-	227
III. <u>Forestry</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>155</u>
IV. <u>Medical Science</u>	<u>404</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>17.88</u>	<u>492</u>
1. Anesthesia	5	3	37.50	8
2. Gynecology	1	4	80.00	5
3. Nursing	2	6	75.00	8
4. Physician	65	10	13.33	75
5. Public Health	19	5	20.83	24
6. Surgery	20	3	13.04	23
7. Others <sup>3</sup>	68	-	-	68
8. General	224	57	20.28	281

Contd. ...

<sup>1</sup>Includes: Agronomy, Animal Husbandry, Dairy, Horticulture, Poultry, Parasitology, Pathology and Soil Science.

<sup>2</sup>Includes: Aeronautics and Aircraft, Electrical, Electronics, Food, Geology, Mechanical, Metallurgy, Meteorology, Mining, Radio, Silicare, Survey and Tele-communication.

<sup>3</sup>Includes: Psychiatrists, Radiology, Veterinary Science etc.

Table 48 contd. ...

V. <u>Natural Science</u>	<u>363</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>19.33</u>	<u>450</u>
1. Bio-chemistry	6	2	25.00	8
2. Botany	52	39	42.86	91
3. Chemistry	82	26	24.07	108
4. Home Science	-	5	100.00	5
5. Mathematics	54	1	1.82	55
6. Physics	62	3	4.62	65
7. Statistics	16	2	11.11	18
8. Zoology	42	9	17.65	51
9. Others	49	-	-	49
VI. <u>Technology</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>64</u>
Total	2186	191	8.04	2377

Source: Directory: Scientists and Technologists of Nepal 1977.



percent of retailers. Women held only 4.4 percent of managerial jobs in agriculture while they formed 31 percent of the "farmers and hunters" (Table 47). Although the combined category of lecturers and professors showed 15.99 percent women among its ranks in 1971, Dr. Rana (Rana 1977: 19) has aptly remarked that "although about 19 percent of the total faculty members (in the Tribhuvan University) are women, none holds any professional rank." 1977 survey (Table 48) conducted by the National Council for Science and Technology, reveals that women comprise roughly 8 percent of the total scientific and technical manpower in the country. The proportion of women is highest in the medical profession (21.78 percent). In the field of natural sciences women represent 19.33 percent of the manpower. The proportion of women is lowest in the field of engineering (0.95 percent) and agricultural sciences (1.84 percent). As aptly noted by Dr. Rana there is no woman veterinarian in the country, (Table 48) neither are there women technologists.

Some further information on industrial and occupational classification in urban areas is provided by the Household Budget Survey conducted by Nepal Rastra Bank in 1973/74 which covered eighteen towns. The total number of estimated households in these towns was 74,000 and the number of households covered by the survey was 6,624 i.e., about 9 percent. Table 49 is based on that survey.<sup>1</sup> The categories specified in Table 49 conform to the broad international occupational classification, (ILO 1968). For example, farmers are those conducting mixed farms to produce a particular type of agricultural or animal husbandry product, on their own, on behalf of or in partnership. "Farm workers and helpers" on the other hand are those performing the same type of work, but as "helpers" or "wage labourers." The category "other production workers" includes all workers under international codes 81 to 94, e.g., cabinet makers and wood-workers, tobacco product workers, etc.

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<sup>1</sup>These statistics are compiled from unpublished records of Nepal Rastra Bank.

Table 49  
SEX COMPOSITION OF LABOUR FORCE IN SELECTED ECONOMIC SECTORS  
(In percent to respective occupation groups in different cities)

	Sales Workers				Service Workers				Agricultural Workers				Production Workers				Construction Workers	
	Manager and Working Prop.)		Other Sales Workers		Tea Sellers		Other Service Workers		Farmers		Farm Workers and Helpers		Textile Workers		Food and Beverage Workers		Common Labourers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Terai</b>																		
Bhadrapur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Biratnagar	84.4	15.6	87.0	13.0	75.0	25.0	85.7	14.3	-	-	-	-	89.3	10.7	-	-	-	-
Janakpur	-	-	90.0	9.1	-	-	80.6	19.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79.0	25.0
Birgunj	-	-	76.2	23.8	-	-	88.0	12.0	-	-	75.0	25.0	-	-	71.4	28.6	50.0	50.0
Bhairnawa	90.2	9.8	-	-	61.9	38.1	86.5	13.5	89.2	10.8	61.5	38.5	94.4	5.6	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0
Nepalgunj	58.1	41.9	71.4	28.6	-	-	77.7	22.3	88.9	11.1	-	-	-	-	83.3	16.7	86.7	13.3
Mahendranagar	-	-	-	-	75.0	25.0	-	-	-	-	83.3	16.7	-	-	-	-	75.0	25.0
<b>Hills</b>																		
Ilim	73.7	26.3	33.3	66.7	71.4	28.6	78.3	21.7	86.1	13.9	33.3	66.7	83.3	16.7	66.7	33.3	47.4	52.6
Okhaidhunga	70.0	30.0	-	-	53.8	46.2	-	-	66.1	33.9	35.2	64.8	90.9	9.1	-	-	42.9	57.1
Dhankuta	74.2	25.8	72.7	27.3	73.3	26.7	50.0	50.0	84.9	15.1	20.5	79.5	-	-	80.0	20.0	30.0	70.0
Hetauda	85.7	14.3	-	-	-	-	86.4	13.6	-	-	50.0	50.0	-	-	-	-	66.7	33.3
Pokhara	85.0	15.0	80.0	20.0	54.8	45.2	83.3	16.7	72.3	27.7	47.8	52.2	-	-	-	-	45.8	54.2
Baglung	87.8	12.2	75.0	25.0	55.0	45.0	92.9	7.1	78.8	21.2	25.0	75.0	-	-	66.7	33.3	30.1	69.9
Dang	97.4	2.6	-	-	69.2	30.8	53.3	46.7	77.2	22.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	50.0	50.0
Surkhet	-	-	-	-	75.0	25.0	-	-	79.2	20.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	54.4	45.8
<b>Kathmandu</b>																		
Kathmandu	98.7	1.3	90.2	9.8	-	-	66.7	33.3	84.4	15.6	57.1	42.9	62.5	37.5	66.7	33.3	80.0	20.0
Bhaktapur	96.6	3.4	-	-	85.7	14.3	66.7	33.3	-	-	-	-	41.7	58.3	-	-	69.6	30.4
Lalitpur	87.5	12.5	92.3	7.7	80.0	20.0	76.5	23.5	81.4	18.6	82.3	17.7	76.2	23.8	80.0	20.0	66.7	33.3

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank, Household Budget Survey, 1973/74, Unpublished Records.

Of the production workers, only the textile and the food and beverage industries reported female labourers in substantial numbers. Other specific industries such as mining and quarrying, metal and chemical works, wood and pulp, and leather seem to have no female labour involved. There were no female production supervisors. No women were recorded in the category of technical and trained workers. Sales and service managers and working proprietors have been grouped in one category while the rest, except tea sellers, are included as other sales, and other service workers. The service sector showed no female managers while even in the sales sector there were only a few women managers compared to the number of men.

Women were clearly a minority among those reporting as "farmers" (i.e., own account or self-employed workers in agriculture), the percentage ranging from 10.8 for Bhairahwa to 33.9 percent for Okhaldhunga. In the hill towns, females formed more than two thirds of farm workers and helpers. The construction sector seems to recruit only ordinary labourers from amongst the female population as no females are reported in supervisory positions in this sector.

It was noted earlier that the activity rate of the female population declined sharply in 1971 as compared to the 1952/54 and 1961 rates. Not only did the activity rate decline, but the female labour force seems to have shrunk in absolute numbers. The sectoral composition of this trend shows that the greatest decline in the female labour force occurred in the non-agriculture sector. In the non-agricultural sector, women's participation fell by 59.38 percent from the 1952/54 level and by 39.53 percent from the 1961 level. The decline in the agricultural sector was 14.55 percent compared to 1952/54 rates and 17.54 percent compared to 1961.

The decline in female economic activity rates can be only partly attributed to the stricter definitions employed in the 1971 census. This redefinition has probably affected participation rates in agriculture more than in other sectors. The sharper decline of the female labour force in the non-agricultural sector could be due to the erosion of the base of female economic participation—the domestic unit of production. The introduction of modern industries has adversely affected many

cottage and village industries which has most likely had a negative impact on female participation rates. Boserup (1971: 162) theorises that modernization and monevization reduce female participation rates (as conventionally defined) in economic life and the available data suggest that the process may have already begun in Nepal.<sup>1</sup>

#### Employment Status and Working Conditions

Information on working conditions and comparative employment opportunities, wage levels and distribution of female workers within the manufacturing sector, is very scanty. The population census of Nepal provides information only on the employment status of the labour force. The 1976 industrial census of Nepal which contains information on many aspects of industrial employment gives no male/female breakdown. Therefore an attempt has been made in this section to utilize some indirect indicators of working conditions and employment opportunities.

The employment status of an individual as recorded in census statistics refers to the "individual's position in relation to other workers, if any, in the enterprise." For example, an employee has a lower economic status than an employer.

In the 1971 census in Nepal, 0.45 percent of total active male population were reported as employers, while only 0.21 percent of the active female population were reported in this category. Women seem to be concentrated more than men in the categories of own account (self employed) worker and unpaid family worker (Table 50).

Age-specific employment status figures show that most male unpaid family workers are below 20 years old. With the increase in age, men move on to paid employment and attain higher employment status. In higher age groups, less than one percent of the economically active males were unpaid family workers in 1971 (Table 50).

There was a general decline in the number of people classified as employers between 1952/54 & 1971, but the decline in the case of females

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<sup>1</sup>For a more detail account of historical trends and policy questions see Acharya (1978).

Table 50

AGE SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT STATUS 1971  
(In percent)

Age	Male				Female					
	Employer	Employee	Own Account Workers	Unpaid Family Worker	Total	Employer	Employee	Own Account Workers	Unpaid Family Worker	Total
10-14	0.48	7.18	83.25	9.09	100.0	-	2.52	84.87	12.61	100.0
15-19	0.24	10.65	83.05	6.06	100.0	0.43	3.02	87.50	9.05	100.0
20-24	0.48	14.87	80.58	4.07	100.0	0.50	3.54	88.89	7.07	100.0
25-29	0.46	15.24	81.76	2.54	100.0	0.57	4.02	89.66	5.75	100.0
30-34	0.54	13.40	84.45	1.61	100.0	-	4.20	90.91	4.89	100.0
35-39	0.53	12.77	85.64	1.06	100.0	-	4.13	90.91	4.96	100.0
40-44	0.68	11.61	87.03	0.68	100.0	-	4.95	90.10	4.95	100.0
45-49	0.84	11.29	87.45	0.42	100.0	-	4.28	91.43	4.29	100.0
50-54	0.52	9.38	89.58	0.52	100.0	-	3.33	91.67	5.00	100.0
60-64	1.11	8.89	88.89	1.11	100.0	-	3.57	92.86	3.57	100.0
65 & Above	1.43	7.14	91.43	-	100.0	-	5.26	89.48	5.26	100.0
Total	0.55	11.70	84.63	3.12	100.0	0.21	3.66	88.94	7.19	100.0

Source: The Population Census 1971 3(2): Table 25.

Table 51  
 EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION  
 (In percent)

Status	1952/54		1961		1971	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employers	1.06	0.65	0.92	0.40	0.55	0.21
Own Account Workers	78.01	84.27	75.65	77.34	84.66	88.98
Employees	20.65	14.78	20.15	10.36	11.69	3.65
Family Workers	-	-	2.80	11.35	3.10	7.16
Not Stated	0.28	0.30	0.48	0.55	-	-
Total Active <sup>1</sup>	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: The Population Censuses 1952/54, 1961, 1971.

<sup>1</sup>For 1952/54 it also includes unemployed.

was much sharper. The percentage of the own account or self employed workers declined in 1961 but increased in 1971 compared to 1952/54 (Table 51). This is contrary to trends in other countries where, with modernization, this category of workers declines. The increase in self employed workers may be due to the inclusion of many unpaid family workers in this category. This is more likely to be the case for women. An indicator of this is the fact that while the percentage of female unpaid family workers went down from 11.35 in 1961 to 7.16 in 1971, that of female self employed or own account workers went up from 77.34 to 88.98 percent.

Some information on the working hours of female workers employed outside the household and their earnings was collected during the Household Budget Survey completed by Nepal Rastra Bank in 1973/74 (Table 52-53).<sup>1</sup> The categories are similar to those in Table 49. According to the survey findings, women in the agricultural sector spent as much time in field work as men. Moreover it should be noted that Household Budget Survey statistics pertain to only urban areas and include only those households which received more than fifty percent of their income in cash. For rural and less monetized households the pattern of working hours is probably even more heavily weighted in favour of females. Findings on the unorganized sector, i.e., sales and service workers indicate that females work as many hours as males in these professions. Female workers in the industrial sector seem to work less than males only if average daily working hours for the year is taken. However this is more likely to be the effect of unavailability of employment opportunities for women rather than easier working conditions for them.

The Household Family Budget Survey provides some statistics on the earnings of working women (Table 53). Usually the total income accruing to the household from the entire household enterprise is assigned to the household head without any reference to who worked to earn the income. Therefore, in many towns, income accruing to women household workers were not recorded. Only monetary income earned by females outside the household economy were recorded as women's earnings. With

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<sup>1</sup>These statistics, however, were not related directly to the purpose of the family budget survey and so were neither processed nor published. They were processed directly from the field returns for this report.





Table 53

AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS IN SELECTED SECTORS/PROFESSIONS  
(In Nepalese rupees)

	Sales Workers				Service Workers				Agricultural Workers				Construction Workers				Production Workers			
	Managers		Other Sales Workers		Tea Sellers		Other Services Workers		Farmers		Farm Workers and Helpers		Common Labourers		Food and Beverage Workers		Other Workers		Textile Workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Teral</b>																				
Bhadrapur	-	194	-	785	-	166	60	-	-	152	-	152	121	-	-	167	-	-	-	324
Biratnagar	561	175	345	599	117	202	83	232	-	68	-	68	-	-	817	167	224	165	226	113
Janakpur	600	-	314	50	300	-	133	58	250	-	-	185	159	264	-	380	-	-	-	295
Birgunj	1013	-	223	133	-	135	75	103	-	133	77	77	99	217	90	234	-	-	-	258
Bhairaha	354	79	294	305	244	197	167	110	120	114	47	129	95	170	125	449	70	-	-	351
Nepalgunj	463	329	218	397	-	298	83	101	260	30	298	153	136	241	70	227	-	-	-	295
Mahendranagar	462	-	140	274	300	167	-	118	-	110	45	183	138	309	-	224	-	-	-	307
<b>Hills</b>																				
Liam	620	180	130	430	212	244	109	113	49	60	55	120	92	197	50	400	200	284	-	-
Okhaldhunga	780	490	249	586	162	245	-	100	71	79	63	129	91	-	-	246	50	151	-	-
Dhanakuta	320	115	132	339	150	165	148	100	43	151	62	93	62	219	40	282	-	121	-	-
Hetauda	342	57	160	318	-	119	109	109	-	100	56	104	63	-	-	150	-	180	98	-
Pokhara	415	220	132	368	138	252	85	96	65	82	101	122	75	242	-	283	-	244	-	-
Baglung	379	161	300	293	224	166	220	139	56	51	61	71	69	175	80	139	-	84	150	-
Dang	357	100	-	292	300	188	36	91	57	45	44	109	66	-	90	280	-	209	100	-
Surkhet	276	-	277	220	170	155	-	104	162	-	-	116	80	309	-	190	-	-	-	-
<b>Kathmandu</b>																				
Kathmandu	565	150	224	1063	-	236	95	298	72	105	73	156	71	312	109	244	170	415	100	-
Bhaktapur	288	300	174	216	200	100	62	99	-	77	-	119	76	237	-	213	67	187	121	-
Lalitpur	605	350	187	425	150	160	68	113	86	117	86	-	-	425	55	245	83	274	-	-

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank, Household Budget Survey, 1973/74. Unpublished Records.

a few exceptions in agriculture, the recorded earnings of men seem significantly higher than those of women. Thus women earned far less than men in spite of equal working hours.

Some insight into work opportunities available to women is also provided by the recent National Planning Commission Survey on Unemployment and Income Distribution (HMC 1977). It is reported that 69 percent of the available female work-time, i.e., work-time of the economically active women (defined in conventional terms) in the households surveyed was unutilized while the corresponding figure for male work-time was 58 percent. Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify the women's contribution to the total household income from the survey results, because the survey forms have recorded only total household incomes.

Poorer employment opportunities for women as compared to men is also indicated by the lower educational status of female labour force. The bulk, i.e., 98.96 percent, of the female work force had no schooling according to the 1971 census while the comparable figure for males was 91.61 percent. Of the 1.04 percent of the female labour force with education, 0.64 percent had only primary schooling and 0.32 percent secondary schooling. Thus the percentage of female work force with more than secondary school education was only 0.08 (Table 54).

Table 54

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF LABOUR FORCE

Years of Education Completed

(In percentage of the total population aged ten years and above)

	No Schooling	Primary 1-5	Secondary 6-10	Intermediate 11-12	Graduate +
Male	91.61	4.42	3.24	0.37	0.37
Female	98.96	0.64	0.32	0.03	0.05
All	93.96	3.31	3.99	0.27	0.27

Source: The Population Census 1971.

The marital status of the female labour force shows another peculiarity of Nepal. Unlike many developing and non-socialist developed countries the 1971 census revealed that sixty-seven percent of the economically active females in Nepal were married, while about eight percent were widowed or divorced. In most developed countries of the free world, economic activity is considered as an alternative to marriage. The percentage of married women in the total female labour force in many countries of the Asian region is also lower. For example, only 47.4 percent of the female labour force in Philippines was reported married in 1975 (Alete, Silva and Eleazar: 1977).

A regional comparison within Nepal reveals that percentage of married women among the economically active female population is highest in the Terai. The Kathmandu Valley (Table 55) reported lowest percentage of its working female population as married.

The higher percentage of married women in the labour force is a consequence of various factors such as the social unacceptability of divorce among the culturally dominant high caste Hindu groups, and the need for greater female work input for family survival. The higher percentage of married women in Nepal's labour force compared to other countries indicates that the role of household production in the Nepalese economy is comparatively greater and that a larger proportion of women combine domestic work with economic activity. On the other hand, the higher percentage of married women in the labour force in Nepal's Terai areas compared to the Hills could be an indicator of greater rigidity of marriage codes and the pattern of earlier marriage in the predominantly Hindu Terai.

Thus the statistics analysed above, though inadequate for further conclusions, indicate that: (a) women are concentrated in low-paid occupations; (b) their contribution to the agricultural sector is not recognised in national statistical recordings; (c) employment opportunities for females are worse than for males; and (d) percentage of married women in economically active female population is higher for Nepal than in most other countries - developed as well as developing.



Table 55

MARITAL STATUS OF ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE FEMALE POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

(In percent to economically active females in the respective regions)

	Eastern Devt. Region		Central Devt. Region		Western Devt. Region		Far Western Devt. Region		All Nepal							
	NMd.	WD&Dd.	NMd.	WD&Dd.	NMd.	WD&Dd.	NMd.	WD&Dd.	NMd.	WD&Dd.						
Hills	33.6	58.7	7.7	27.2	66.6	6.2	25.5	67.2	7.3	22.9	69.9	7.2	26.6	66.3	7.1	
Terai	16.3	71.0	12.7	11.6	72.0	16.5	9.7	79.5	10.8	17.3	76.3	6.4	13.8	74.0	12.2	
Inner Terai	22.5	68.3	10.2	26.8	66.0	7.2	-	-	-	23.7	70.4	5.9	24.9	67.8	7.3	
Kathmandu Valley	-	-	-	24.6	65.5	9.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24.6	65.5	9.9
Total	28.2	62.6	9.2	25.4	67.0	7.7	23.8	68.5	7.7	22.6	70.3	7.1	24.8	67.3	7.9	

Source: The Population Census 1971: Table 19 and 29.

Note: NMd. = Never Married

Md. = Married

WD&Dd. = Widowed plus Divorced

<sup>1</sup>Of ten years of age and above.

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Available statistics show that as of 1971, 49.3 percent of Nepal's population, i.e., 5.7 million were females. Of these, 39.98 percent were below 15 years of age and 5.88 percent above 59 years. Nepalese women are married early, overburdened with children and have lower life expectancy than men. They also bear greater risk of early widowhood due to poor health facilities and the practice of early marriage. The female literacy rate is very low. Women have been able to attain higher educational status only on very limited scale. Women's participation in political as well as administrative affairs is marginal with very few women employed at decision making levels in the government or organised sector.

Acknowledgement of women's contribution to national economy is limited and the majority of them are left out of the labour force statistics. Of those recorded as economically active, only an insignificant minority is engaged in professions other than agriculture. Moreover even this tiny minority is concentrated in low-paid and low-status jobs. In manufacturing and construction sectors, there are no skilled female workers. In sales and service sectors only a small percentage of those reporting managers are women. Besides their domestic work women spend almost equal hours outside the household in gainful economic activity in agriculture while their income goes largely unrecorded.

Data on employment status illustrated that 89 percent of the economically active population were own account or self-employed workers and only 7.16 percent were family workers. Since the vast majority of Nepal's rural women do in fact work as "family workers" for the household enterprise the low percentage of women reported in this category is highly questionable and is probably related to the general statistical misrepresentation of actual female participation in the active labour force. The educational status of the labour force in general and of the female labour force in particular is very low. In 1971 only 1.04 percent of the female labour force had completed at least primary schooling compared to 8.39 percent of the male work force.

As most activities involving women in the subsistence sector are not recorded, it has been necessary to look beyond the available statistic for a more realistic evaluation of existing situation. The female work pattern depicted in anthropological literature presents a sharp contrast to the picture revealed by statistics. Women are found as active as men in all walks of life in the subsistence sector. This reveals the urgent need to develop new statistical measures which will reflect more realistically the economic activities of all those who participate in the subsistence sector.

The shortcomings of statistics on economic characteristics have been discussed in various international workshops and publications. The following passage (UN 1968) clearly reveals this dilemma:

Even where the concepts, definitions and classifications are formally the same or closely similar, they may be interpreted very differently by census field workers and respondents. This is especially important in developing countries where a large share of all economic activities is carried on in the family enterprise, in which housewives and school children, play a more or less important part.

Thus far, however, no definite work-measures have been developed. These questions have been discussed from the point of view of international comparisons rather than with a view to measuring work patterns in developing countries. In the absence of reliable knowledge of work-patterns and sex-specific division of labour in developing countries, most of the programs for rural development have been ineffective.

Another aspect of the basic theoretical inadequacy of conventional definitions of economic activity has to do with the fundamental concept of the reproduction process which consist of two distinct parts: reproduction of material wealth and reproduction of the labour force. The whole notion of the distinction between economic activity and non-activity is based on the assumption that while reproduction of material wealth is reproduction of the an economic activity, labour force is not. But this is difficult to justify. A teacher in a nursing school is considered to be performing economic activity while a mother doing the same job is classified as economically inactive.

In modern industrial societies, where labour power itself is a commodity, it is not clear why reproduction of labourers embodying the labour power is not an economic activity. One reason for this may be the fact that unlike the reproduction of material wealth which in industrialized societies takes place largely in a collective place of work (e.g., factory), the reproduction of the labour force takes place within the domestic unit. It is generally argued that housewives should not be included in the economically active population because "the goods and services which they produce are not considered as 'economic' just as the value of their products is excluded from the measure of income in national account." (U.N. 1968).

The paradox of a professor marrying his secretary and hence reducing the national income is famous. Economists have long wondered how to solve this problem in national accounts and labour force statistics. Ralph Thomlinson (1976: 391) writes that the concepts of manpower and labour force "are fuzzy and hard to define partly because they are based not on the amount of effort a person expends but rather than on the criteria whether pay or profit is involved."

This paradox underscores the defect in current definitions of economic activity and labour force which are based on the assumption that only production of "exchange value" is economic while that of "use value" is not. In Nepal for example, about forty percent of the economy is non-monetized and outside the market mechanism. In a subsistence economy like that of Nepal, if only market oriented activities are defined as economic activity, a large portion of the population - both men and women - would seem to be idle while actually they are working very hard for the survival of the family. Therefore, it seems necessary to revise the census methodology. For example, in the 1981 census, it would be more realistic to classify the women in three categories: (1) those who produce marketable goods, (2) those who are engaged in subsistence activities and (3) those who perform just domestic work. Most women would be doing all three or the latter two and thus the complex question of categorization of individuals would arise. It would also be necessary to provide a definition of domestic work and subsistence activities rather than leave the enumerators or the respondents to define them.



The development of a new theoretical framework for national accounting and population censuses is clearly beyond the scope of the present study. Nevertheless, an attempt will be made in the second phase of the present study to develop some realistic measures of activity rates for Nepalese women at the micro-level, to look at the actual work patterns and to locate the sensitive points in the labour allocation patterns of rural households so that more effective programmes can be evolved to increase the productivity of the existing labour resources within the household.

As revealed by foregoing sections of this monograph, there are many aspects of female life for which no statistics are available. In the economic field, statistics are lacking not only on the female employment situation in un-organised sectors but also in organised sectors. In the political field, the situation is worse. Information on marriage options and social life patterns are inadequate and often unreliable. Thus, there is a need for intensive study of all aspects of women's lives. Without a proper study of the multifaceted role of women and appropriate amendments in policy measures, the development process cannot be accelerated.

To cover the whole spectrum of the life patterns of Nepalese women in a single study, with the statistics presently available, is not possible. However, the second part of the present study will concentrate on women in the rural household sector. Since the rural sector dominates the national economy, it is only appropriate to accord first priority to this sector. A working paper based on the two seminars on household economics held in New Delhi and Philippines (Ford Foundation 1977) also stressed that the study of the rural household sector should be the first concern of researchers in developing countries at present. Therefore, the second part of the present study will concentrate on answering the following questions:

1. What are Nepalese women actually doing? How do they spend their time? What part of it is available for other uses and at what conditions? For example, who can look after the children if girls go to school?

2. How does women's work affect the household as a production unit rather than just as an unit of consumption?
3. What is the role of the household as a production unit in the total productive activity of the family? How does it function?
4. What is the process of decision-making within the household in different communities and what are the crucial points in decision-making process?

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