UN Women worked to increase the representation of women based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1320 and 1825 in three districts of Bajhang, Doti and Kailali of far-west Nepal from 2012 to 2016. Search for Common Ground prepared this document based on the study of women, peace and security during the first and last year of the UN Women project “Strengthening Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Nepal (SIWPSAN): Towards Implementation of NAP on UNSCRs 1325 and 1820.”
Influences as women take up key decision making positions

Mandatory provision for women to be president, secretary, or treasurer in organizations has been set by the constitution. Empowerment, capacity building, and engagement led to changing behavior with more women fulfilling their roles in key decision making positions.

More women from marginalized communities are participating in meetings, public events, asking for details of gender responsive budgets and proposing ideas and programs. 18% said that they had taken up decision making positions and 35% had a say in arriving at key decisions.

Perception of women's leadership. Women from project village development committees were aware of their rights and were in decision making positions. For example, Sundari Nepali is president of Jana Jagaran Sangh, Doti.

Increased comfort levels, greater confidence in products and services, better flow of information and improved sense of identity took place among women when women came into decision-making positions. There was increase of 20% in women’s activity during meetings.

Reasons for increased participation of women. Greater knowledge of legal, social, and financial provisions at the national, district and grassroots level helped women achieve key decision making positions. Increase from 23% in 2012 to 74% in 2016. Representation of women in groups increased from 20% to 74%.

Changing patriarchal norms. Participation of women in decision-making has been changing. Men were impressed by women and their interactions during meetings. A mixed gender discussion in Doti had excellent interaction, an evidence of women breaking out of set social patterns. Men are becoming more accepting of the changed roles of women.

Social, political, and financial impacts. Support and encouragement from family and the community; political party affiliation and awareness of rights; economic ability to cover cost of participation; and psychological strength that allows women to stand and speak in front of people determine their participation. SIWPSAN helped women’s economic empowerment through skill based training and seed grants that helped start enterprises.

Areas of opportunity

Men’s roles as women seek key decision making positions. Women are encouraged to take on positions such as president and secretary by men and families. However, men are reluctant to completely open up the space for women because they do not believe women who were limited to household work can become effective leaders straight away.

Men’s fear of losing their space and control. Men emphasize education as crucial for key decision making. Very few women are eligible under this standard. 11% men said a limited number of women are qualified while women challenged this perception saying that if given a chance, they could actively participate in key decision making positions.

Focused interventions. Well-to-do women have access to resources, connections with decision makers, and have more of an opportunity to take up key positions in comparison to disadvantaged women, especially those that are marginalized, such as the Dalit.

Fostering leadership capability. Quotas are being fulfilled using women as figureheads. Women in position of leadership need training and empowerment. Dalit and other marginalized women need to be involved.

Support from men of the family. From vocal support to sharing household work, men can help women achieve more. Involvement in local structures is time consuming and women need support so that they, their families, and their communities can benefit. 71% of male respondents believed women are qualified to fulfill roles and responsibilities demanded by key decision making positions.

Economic empowerment. Financial capability opens up opportunities. It frees women so they can take on productive activities, gain support from the family, make them mobile and allows them to gain access, helps them acquire training and attend events, and allows them to participate and gain employment.

Creating an enabling environment. Changing practices and traditions for the