Workforce Diversity in International Agencies in Nepal

Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG)
Kathmandu, Nepal
Workforce Diversity in International Agencies in Nepal

Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG)
Kathmandu, Nepal
Foreword

The workplace reflects the wider society in a micro-cosm with all its issues, concerns and opportunities. It reflects societal values and can contribute to creativity, innovation and development.

Recognizing that the greatest asset of an organization is its people and that greater diversity can contribute immensely to the development of Nepali society, this survey was conducted in an effort to better understand the existing level of diversity in the international agencies in Nepal.

International agencies contribute to Nepal’s development and its transition to peace. The workplaces of these international agencies provide important professional opportunities and are among the key sites from which program and policy agendas are set. It is important that international agencies in Nepal work in ways that are sensitive and responsive to Nepal’s rich diversity. It is also important that people from all of Nepal’s communities have equal access to the professional opportunities available in these agencies and that they have a say in the government program and policy agendas that these agencies help to set.

The survey described herein is set against the background of rich socio-cultural diversity that has always characterized Nepal and the growing realization that greater diversity within organizations has huge potential to contribute to development and to the establishment of long-lasting peace in Nepali society. Though Nepal has a highly diverse population across caste, ethnicity, religion, language, culture and topography, people employed in public and private institutions are not fully representative of this multi-cultural diversity. Opportunity for women in the workforce is still largely confined to the informal sector or to the private domain where their contribution to the development of society and nation is left unaccounted – and therefore undervalued and unacknowledged.

In addition to women, people living with disabilities in Nepal and people of many caste, ethnic, regional and religious groups, are under-represented in the overall workforce. There is growing awareness of this lack of diversity among those who lead institutions and manage resources. Increasingly pertinent questions are being asked:

- Where are the perspectives of the missing ethnicities, castes, regions, religions and languages?
- Where are the creative contributions and insights of women and the youth?

The richness of different perspectives and experiences that could make these institutions more responsive and effective remains untapped. Recognition that diverse peoples must be provided the space to contribute to nation-building has become extremely strong after the April Movement of 2006. It is now imperative that organizations reflect this realization. These factors together provide the argument for increasing workforce diversity in Nepal.

It is universally accepted that a diverse workforce is an invaluable asset to innovation and excellence. It enhances the ability of organizations to represent, adapt, and respond to the needs of different identity groups and better serve all the people, including those who have historically been excluded in the community.

Generally, “workforce diversity” refers to policies and practices that seek to include people within a workforce who are considered to be, in some way, different from the dominant groups. But diversity is
not just about balancing the numbers of different groups. It is also about embracing new ideas and different perceptions. It is about ensuring that all agency personnel, irrespective of their caste, gender, race, ethnicity, and their other identities, have opportunities for career progression. Finally, it is about de-stereotyping jobs and people – reducing preconceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of certain groups and communities and the jobs that are best for them.

The Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG) hopes that this study will make a contribution to the realization within organizations about their existing diversity levels and will assist them to move beyond the rhetoric of ‘diversity awareness’ to the practical implementation of valuing differences, tackling discrimination, and creating space for creative coexistence.

Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG)
April, 2008, Kathmandu
# Contents

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>Foreword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi</td>
<td>Key Findings and Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to SIAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Defining Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Diversity in Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rationale for Workforce Diversity in International Agencies in Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Survey Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Findings from the Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Affirmative Action: Recommendations for A Diverse Workforce in Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Annexes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings and Recommendations

Summary of Key Findings

The survey covers 1425 Nepali staff (417 women, 1008 men) working in 30 international agencies in Nepal (12 Bilateral Agencies (including Embassies), 3 Multilateral Agencies, and 15 UN Agencies). (See annex 3 for list of participating agencies).

Diversity across identity groups

- 88.2 percent of the staff come from three identity groups - Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar, and Hill Janajati - whose population percentages are 30.9, 5.5 and 21.9 percent respectively.
- Newar communities are the most over-represented, accounting for 28.3 percent of the Nepalis employed in the 30 agencies surveyed.\(^1\) To reach proportional representation the number of staff from Other Madhesi Caste Groups would need to be increased by 12 percent; the Tarai Janajati by 7 percent, the Hill Dalit by 4 percent and Madhesi Dalit and Muslim by 3 percent.
- People from Hill-origin communities currently occupy 92.2 percent of the positions within the participating agencies (as compared to their 66.2% of the national population). Staff from Madhes/Tarai-origin communities currently occupies 7.8 percent of the positions in the participating agencies (as compared to their 32.8 % of the national population).\(^2\) Women of Madhes/Tarai-origin comprise only 1.6 percent of the total staff.

Gender differentials

- Women comprise 29.3 percent of the surveyed workforce. The overall representation of women at Senior Management (SM), Middle Level Management (MLM), Administrative and Program Support Staff (APSS), and Other Support Staff (OSS) levels stands at 25, 32.2, 41.1 and 7.2 percent respectively.
- For each identity group, men are far more likely than women to be occupying positions within the international agency workforce. The biggest disparities exists for women from Madhesi Dalit, Muslim and “Other” communities, who occupy positions in international agencies in the lowest relative percentages.

Diversity at professional levels

- Less than one percent (0.28%) of the Nepali staff are in Senior Management level positions (25% women and 75% men), 22.04 percent are at the Middle Level Management level (32.17% women and 67.83% men), 48.63 percent are at the Administrative and Program Support Staff level (41.13% women and 58.87% men), and 29.05 percent are at the Other Support Staff level (7.25% women and 92.75% men);
- There is over-representation of men from Hill Brahman/Chhetri and Newar communities at Senior and Middle Level Management levels with much lower percentages of men from Hill Janajati communities at these levels.
- There is over-representation of women from Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati communities in Administration and Programme Support Staff; there are no women from Madhesi Dalit, Muslim, and “Other” communities at Middle Level Management and Other Support Staff levels.

Agency-wise differences

**Bilateral Agencies**

- 92.3 percent are people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati communities; only 3.5 percent are from Madhesi groups; people

---

\(^1\) The National Newar population is 5.5 percent but the Newar population in the valley is 30 percent in Kathmandu, 40 percent in Lalitpur and 56 percent in Bhaktapur.

\(^2\) Around 1 percent of the population in the 2001 Census is categorized as “Unidentified Others,” therefore, the total percentage of Madhesi/Tarai-origin and Hill-origin groups combined is 99%.
from Other Madhesi Caste Groups make up 0.6 percent; Dalit people (with no Madhesi Dalit people) 1 percent; there are no Muslim people; and other groups are similarly under-represented.

- Senior Management: includes only people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri and Newar communities.
- Middle Level Management: there is an over-representation of people from Newar communities and Hill Brahman/Chhetri communities; Administrative and Program Support Staff: the largest group is people from Newar communities. Other Support Staff: the largest group is people from Hill Janajati communities.

**Multilateral Agencies:**

- 93.2 percent are people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati communities. There is an over-representation of people from Newar communities (48.6%) and a proportional under-representation of people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri and Hill Janajati communities. The deepest under-representation is among Madhesi, Hill Dalit and Tarai Janajati communities.
- Senior Management level: There are no Nepali staff; Middle Level Management: There is an over-representation of people from Newar communities; Administrative and Program Support Staff: Hill Dalit (the only people from Dalit communities) are found only at this level. Other Support Staff: People from Tarai Janajati communities occupy positions only at this, the lowest professional level.

**UN Agencies**

- 86.6 percent are people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati communities; 6.1 percent are people from Madhesi communities.
- Senior Management: 2 Nepali staff (of 1039 UN Agencies’ staff); Across three levels - Middle Level Management, Administrative and Program Support Staff, and Other Support Staff - people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri communities are over-represented; Middle Level Management: 13 percent of the UN Agency Dalit staff and 22.2 percent of the UN Agency Madhesi staff are at this level; Administrative and Support Staff level: People from Dalit communities - both Hill Dalit and Madhesi Dalit - are more likely to occupy these positions as are people from Madhesi communities and Tarai Janajati communities. These groups are still proportionally under-represented.

The Madhes/Tarai-origin staff within the Bilateral Agencies, Multilateral Agencies and UN Agencies comprise 3.2, 2.8 and 8.6 percent respectively of the overall agency workforce.

**Recommendations for increasing and managing diversity**

A genuine commitment at top leadership level is crucial for enhancing and integrating diversity into all organizational functions as well as promoting an organizational culture that supports diversity. Agencies need to undertake affirmative actions for increasing and managing workforce diversity. Such actions include:

- Developing workforce diversity and inclusion as a corporate goal.
- Knowing one’s own organization’s diversity profile. This means assessing the composition of staff in terms of gender, caste/ethnicity, age, religion, etc. to identify existing disparities at various levels of the organization.
- Redefining and reconceptualising “merit” to capture skills and social/behavioral competencies beyond educational qualifications and work experience.
- Adopting recruitment and selection procedures that are diversity-sensitive, such as diverse interview panels.
- Following alternative methods for vacancy announcements to reach excluded and remote areas e.g. through local-level networks and radio.
- Providing internships for candidates from excluded groups and intensive mentoring and in-service training for female staff and staff from excluded groups.
- Building awareness and capacity among all staff, particularly managers, on diversity and inclusion.
- Incorporating criteria reflecting work-performance on diversity and inclusion issues in performance evaluation.
- Funding excluded groups’ participation in pre-service training and skill-building courses so as to build professional capacity for any field of development, public or private.
Introduction to SIAG

A large proportion of Nepal’s population – particularly women, children, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, people living with disabilities, religious minorities, and people living in remote areas – continue to face different forms of exclusion. Social exclusion is a complex and sensitive reality of Nepali society. Unless caste, gender, ethnic and regional hierarchies are dismantled, a sustainable socio-political transformation from feudalism and patriarchy to democracy and equal opportunity will not be achieved. The April 2006 Janandolan II has given directives to all, especially the Government of Nepal (GoN), to address all forms of exclusion and inequality. The Interim Constitution declares Nepal an “inclusive” state and provides directives for affirmative action for the excluded. Recognizing the need to work systematically on this complex issue, a group of committed individuals had already formed a “Social Inclusion Action Group” (SIAG) in 2005, primarily with the aim to build on each other’s experiences and to positively influence their own organizations, government, international agencies and civil society. Encouraged by the post Janandolan II developments towards greater social inclusion, SIAG expanded to encompass representatives from most of the major development agencies in Nepal.

SIAG works through a Steering Committee composed of Gender, Social Inclusion, Monitoring & Evaluation and Human Resource focal persons and experts representing international agencies. It has limited representation from civil society. The members are committed to developing and supporting the SIAG agenda, exploring synergy on inclusion issues, mobilizing resources, and ensuring institutional continuity and memory. An important area where the social inclusion agenda can be taken forward is the inclusion of Nepali staff from diverse communities. SIAG therefore, identified workforce diversity for systematic learning and action in Nepal.

---

1 State restructuring and proportional representation in state structures are key directives of the Interim Constitution.
2 Refer to Annex 1 for a brief overview about SIAG.
3 A SIAG secretariat provides program assistance and logistics support, with DFID’s financial support.
Diversity signifies that there are important and valuable differences between people. Although there are still ongoing debates, it is generally accepted that at least some differences are ascribed from birth and difficult to change like gender, caste, ethnicity, race, physical abilities and perhaps sexual orientation. Class is also from birth but (at least in a growing economy) it can change over time. Other differences like educational background, language, geographic location, religious or political beliefs, or other ideologies can also be acquired. The dimensions or categories of diversity vary across countries and cultures and in any given location, can change over time.

To tap the potential of diversity, organizations need to develop the ability to appreciate differences and deal with them in positive ways so that capacities, skills and competencies of different people can be optimally used. Diversity policies guide the conduct of employees and managers in order to:

- ensure that access to employment opportunities and opportunities for personal/professional growth are fair and non-discriminatory
- enable the perspectives and skills of diverse professionals to contribute to better development decisions and progress
- increase awareness about the negative impacts of discrimination and stereo-typing
- encourage all personnel to treat others with fairness, courtesy, dignity and respect
- encourage all personnel to be sensitive to the interpretation and potential impact of communication and behavior, and
- encourage the appreciation, valuing and celebration of differences
Diversity in Nepal

Nepal is a highly diverse country with 100 different social groups recognized and counted in the 2001 Census and more distinct groups likely to be incorporated before the next Census in 2011. There are many sub-groups within the major caste/ethnic social groups. People from Nepal’s Indigenous Nationalities – or Janajatis - have made significant progress on identifying their various subgroups (though there still remain some disagreements). Similarly, there is still an ongoing discussion regarding Dalit populations – especially some Newar caste groups who face similar social discrimination as other Dalit communities, but have expressed that they do not want to be categorized as Dalit. Also there is still insufficient clarity about how to meaningfully categorize Madhesi sub-groups.

Among these many groups a select few have tended to monopolize the positions of power and influence. Therefore, part of what is necessary to build an inclusive state and a cohesive society is to ensure that opportunities are created for more balanced representation of all groups in these positions. International agencies can contribute by making special efforts to recruit a diverse workforce and by implementing human resource policies that nurture all staff and acknowledge and reward good performance wherever it is found.

Although there are intra-group differences in access to opportunities, it can nevertheless be said that broadly, the Brahmans and Chhetris (both Hill and Madhesi), the Newars and certain ethnic groups like the Thakali and the Gurungs have done well in Nepal. Those who have been “left out” politically and who have lower economic, education and health outcomes are generally: 1) Dalit communities (both Hill and Madhesi); 2) Janajati communities (both Hill and Tarai); 3) Muslims; 4) Madhesi Other Caste communities; and 5) all women, with women of the above four groups experiencing overlapping exclusions. Increasingly, public and development sector agencies have begun to put affirmative action policies into place to seek out recruits from among these four groups and also to try to achieve a gender balance at all levels in their workplaces.

While all Dalit sub-groups and the Muslim population are greatly disadvantaged in terms of education, health and economic outcomes as well as access to positions of influence, there are some sub-groups among Janajati and among the Madhesi Other Caste communities that have relatively higher outcomes than others in their broad group.

Recent work done by the DFID/World Bank Social Inclusion Action Program (SIAP) for the National Planning Commission has developed an “Inclusion Index” to help in identifying the most disadvantaged (Bennett and Parajuli:2008). The Inclusion Index is a composite of several separate indices on consumption poverty, health, nutrition, education and representation in governance. In Chart 1, groups and sub-groups with composite inclusion scores below 50 percent have been highlighted in grey. This allows us to group Janajati communities and the Madhesi Other Caste communities into two categories: non-disadvantaged (those with scores 50% or above) and disadvantaged (those with scores 49% and below). Since all the sub groups among the Hill and Madhesi Dalits and the Muslims scored below 50 percent, these entire categories are considered disadvantaged and shaded in grey. The survey data presented in this report has not been analysed in terms of the disadvantaged/non-disadvantaged distinction since broader discussion of these categorizations needs to be undertaken. Additionally, at present there is a marked deficit in the agencies studied of women and men from even the non-disadvantaged Janajatis and Other Madhesi Caste groups. However the classification Chart is included to assist agencies to ensure (to the extent possible) that the people they recruit from these communities are representative of both non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged sub-groups.

* Using a 50 percent score as the cut-off point was an arbitrary decision made by the DFID/World Bank SIAP paper authors who developed the concept. The data are presented in such a way that GON and other actors may shift the cut-off point as they see fit. For example, if a 40 percent score were set as the cut-off point, 8 sub-groups would be removed from the disadvantaged category.
As discussed above, women of even advantaged social groups have had very limited opportunity in the public domain. While greater effort has to be made to improve the participation of women from the excluded social groups, women of the advantaged social groups need to be provided increased opportunities too.

Although the Newars have their own caste hierarchy, these differences are not captured by the Census.
International agencies are important employers in Nepal. However, up to now only a small section of Nepali society has been able to take advantage of employment opportunities offered by these agencies. Many groups have been excluded but this is not necessarily because they are not qualified. Rather it is a reflection of the structural inequalities that exist in Nepali society and the mechanisms of privilege that continue to accrue benefits to those who are relatively more privileged. Greater workforce diversity is recognized as critical not only because of the demand for greater fairness in employment opportunities, but also because of the increasingly recognized need to improve agency responsiveness by incorporating the perspectives of traditionally excluded groups and regions.

SIAG, therefore, initiated this survey on workforce diversity within international agencies. Based on the survey results, recommendations for ensuring greater diversity in the workforce of international agencies are presented in this document. SIAG intends to monitor the changes on an annual basis as a means to support and encourage international agencies to move as rapidly as possible to model the oft-cited goal of inclusion within their own workforces.
Survey Design

After numerous discussions, SIAG adopted the following steps for the survey:

**Design of the Questionnaire and Staff Profile Format**

A short questionnaire was designed to gather information on the diversity profile of the national staff in each agency and about each agency's workforce diversity policy, the challenges faced in implementing the policies, practices in terms of posting information about job vacancies and other such issues and its suggestions for improving diversity. The format was designed to collect actual numbers of women and men using the broad categories outlined in Chart 1. The survey did not cover people living with disabilities this time even though SIAG recognises them as a group experiencing exclusion. Given that the focus was on Nepali diversity, expatriate staff was not included in the survey. The survey primarily captures staff working with the agencies up to November 2007 (only in certain cases did the coverage extend to January 2008). For this first round, it was decided to cover only the Country Office/Program Office and not the implementing partners and projects.

The survey format requested information regarding professional levels. The definitions followed were:

- **Senior Management (SM):** Most senior executives/officials e.g. UN Resident Representative, Deputy Resident Representative, Ambassador, Country Director, Country Representative
- **Middle Level Management (MLM):** Assistant Resident Representative, National Level Advisors (e.g. HUGOU Advisors), Senior Program Officers, Operations Manager, Program Officers
- **Administrative and Program Support Staff (APSS):** Program Secretaries, Finance Assistants, Administrative Assistants
- **Other Support Staff (OSS):** Drivers, Guards, Cleaners

**Consultation**

A discussion session with representative staff of international agencies was organized. In this session, the diversity policies of two international agencies were presented along with an introduction to the objectives, methodology and the instruments to be used for the survey. Feedback received from the participants was used to revise the instruments for the survey.

**Electronic Mailing of Questionnaire and Telephone Follow Up**

The questionnaire and the format (refer to Annex 2) with a detailed list of caste and ethnic groups by Hill/Mountain and Madhes/Tarai regions seeking information on four different levels of staff were emailed to 32 international agencies including bilateral (including three Embassies that also function as development agencies), multilateral agencies and UN agencies with a time line of two months. A list of the participating organizations is given in Annex 3. Telephone follow up of the survey was conducted and completed questionnaires and formats were received from 30 organizations.
Information Analysis

Information analysis was done in three phases:

- The SIAG secretariat processed overall and agency-wise data capturing the information from the questionnaire and staff profile format.
- The SIAG discussed the overall results and formed a task force to prepare a booklet presenting results of the survey.
- The task force had several working sessions to discuss the data and agree on the analysis and recommendations and finalized this booklet.

Dissemination/Sharing of Survey Findings

This booklet presenting the findings of the survey is intended to be shared with a wider group of stakeholders in a dissemination session. The SIAG hopes the session will also identify future strategies for increasing workforce diversity and generate increased commitment among the agencies that were surveyed. The SIAG also hopes there will be interest in conducting a similar survey of employment patterns in donor-supported programs and projects jointly or independently.
Findings from the Survey

Patterns of Workforce Diversity in International Agencies in Nepal

The analysis of identity groups set within 10 broad categories with gender as a crosscutting category within each of the groups shows interesting results. The geographic/regional distinctions (Hill and Madhes/Tarai) present distinct patterns of exclusion. Firstly, this distinction allows an analysis of the differences between Hill and Madhes/Tarai identity groups (i.e. Hill Dalit vs. Madhesi Dalit and Hill Janajati vs. Tarai Janajati). Secondly, these categories allow for a more nuanced gender analysis in distinguishing the caste, ethnicity and regional background of women and men employed. One of the Hill Janajati groups, the Newars were separated in this analysis given a history of relative predominance. In order to provide a nuanced understanding of the dimensions of intra-group difference among Madhesi staff, Madhesi Other Caste groups as well as Muslim groups were also presented separately.

In Table 1, the survey results show that there are 1425 Nepali staff working in the 30 international agencies in Nepal participating in this survey. Of these staff, 88.2 percent come from three different identity groups: Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar, and Hill Janajati. While these groups have the highest numbers of staff, it is also important to note their relative percentages of the population, which are 30.9, 5.5 and 21.9 percent respectively. In comparison to their overall presence in the population, Newar communities are the most over-represented in the total agency workforce comprising 28.3 percent of the staff, but making up only 5.5 percent of the population. Though to a much lesser degree, Hill Brahman/Chhetri communities are also over-represented with 37.3 percent of the total staff as against their percentage of Nepal’s population (30.9%). Hill Janajati staff with 22.6 percent and the Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri staff with 2 percent slightly exceed their population percentages of 21.9 percent and 1 percent respectively. Highly under-represented among staff are people from Hill Dalit, Madhesi Dalit, Other Madhesi Caste Group, Tarai Janajati, Muslim, and “Other” communities as is shown in Chart 2.

The overall data can be disaggregated in terms of three different organizational categories: Bilateral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Group</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Staff in Participating International Agencies</th>
<th>Percentage of National Population in 2001 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hill Brahman/Chhetri</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Dalit</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Janajati</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarai Janajati</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhesi Dalit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Madhesi Caste Groups</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>1425</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the national population of Newars is 5.5%, they make up 30% of the population in Kathmandu, 56% of the population in Bhaktapur and 40% of the population in Lalitpur districts, which may be a factor for the over-representation in offices based in the Kathmandu Valley.
Agencies, Multilateral Agencies, and UN Agencies. Among the participating agencies, there were 12 Bilateral Agencies (including Embassies), 3 Multilateral Agencies, and 15 UN Agencies. The percentage of total staff positions across these agencies was 22.5 and 73 percent respectively. Table 2 shows the variations in actual numbers.

Additionally, the overall data can be disaggregated in regional terms whereby disparities in opportunities between staff originating from Hill/Mountain⁹ populations or Madhes/Tarai¹⁰ populations can be seen. This disaggregation¹¹ reveals that people from Hill-origin communities currently occupy 92.2 percent of the positions (as compared to their 66.2% of the national population) across the international agencies. This stands in comparison with the 7.8 percent presence (as compared to their 32.8% of the national population) of staff from Madhes/Tarai-origin communities¹² (See Chart 3).

Organizational Categories and Workforce Diversity

**Bilateral Agencies** - In terms of the Bilateral Agencies, people from the three identity groups – Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati – comprise 92.3 percent of the staff of the participating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Organizational Categories and Number of Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁹ The identity groups in this survey that are categorized as Hill-origin communities are: Hill Brahman Chhetri, Hill Dalit, Hill Janajati, Newar, and Unidentified Dalit groups. Included in the Hill Janajati group are those groups of people who have been categorized by the Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities as Mountain Janajati groups.

¹⁰ The identity groups in this survey that are categorized as Madhes/Tarai-origin communities are: Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri, Other Madhesi Caste Group, Madhesi Dalit, Muslim, Tarai Janajati, and Unidentified Adivasi groups. The word 'Madhesi' has been used with the groups which self-identify with Madhesi.

¹¹ For the Janajatis the term 'Tarai' has been used as there is still some controversy regarding their identity as Madhesi.

¹² Six staff members under the category of Others are not included in this analysis because their regional origin is unknown. Therefore, the total number of staff in this analysis amounts to 1419 instead of 1425.

¹³ As noted in Section 3, the 2001 Census includes "Unidentified Adivasi," "Unidentified Dalit," and "Unidentified Others." Given distributions of these populations, "Unidentified Adivasi" has been included in Madhes/Tarai-origin group and "Unidentified Dalit" has been included in the Hill-origin group. The "Unidentified Others" (1% of the overall population) has not been included, therefore the Madhes/Tarai-origin and Hill-origin total percentage adds only to 99%.
Bilateral Agencies. (See Chart 4 for a comparison of staff representation in Bilateral Agency). The highest over-representation is of people from Newar communities who comprise 37.8 percent of the Bilateral Agency staff as compared to their 5.5 percent composition of the national population. Only 1 percent of the Bilateral Agency Nepali employees are from Dalit communities and none of these are from Madhesi Dalit communities. Additionally, there is no staff from the Muslim community. Also under-represented are people from Other Madhesi Caste Group communities (0.6% as compared to 13.6% of the population), Tarai Janajati communities (2.6% as compared to 9.8% of the population) and people from “Other” communities (0.6% as compared to 1.3% of the population). Although there is slight over-representation of people from Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri communities, overall there is a dramatic under-representation of people from Madhesi communities with only 3.5 percent of the staff from these communities as compared to their 23.8% percent of the population.

In terms of professional levels within the Bilateral Agencies, 0.6 percent of the Nepali employees are at the Senior Management level, 37.2 percent are at the Middle Level Management level, 26.6 percent are at the Administrative and Program Support Staff

---

The Madhesi percentage of 23.8% of the population is calculated from the 2001 Census and includes Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri, Other Caste Groups, Dalit, Muslim and also includes the Jain, Marwadi, Bengali, and Churaute numbers. The larger category of Madhes/Tarai-origin groups includes in addition 9.8% of the population who are Inner Tarai or Tarai Janajati groups and thus makes up a total of 32.8% of Nepal’s population.
level, and 35.6 percent are at the Other Support Staff level. (See Chart 5 for staff comparison in Bilateral agency by professional level and identity group).

In the Bilateral Agencies, Senior Management is comprised only of people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri and Newar communities. People from Hill Brahman/Chhetri communities are in the largest group at the Middle Management level, although there are large percentages of people from Newar communities across Middle Management, Administrative and Program Support Staff and Other Support Staff levels. Significantly, the largest percentage of people from Hill Janajati communities is at the Other Support Staff level.

**Multilateral Agencies:** As shown in Chart 6, within the participating Multilateral Agencies, 93.2 percent of the Nepali employees are from three identity groups: Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati. It is significant to note here that although there are a relatively large number of people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri communities (21 of a total 74), proportionately they are slightly under-represented (28.4% as compared to their 30.9% of the national population). The same is true of staff from Hill Janajati communities (12 of a total 74), who are also proportionately under-represented (16.2% as compared to their 21.9% of the national population). The largest over-representation, as is the case with the Bilateral Agencies, is of people from Newar communities (48.6% as compared to their 5.5% of the national population).

The deepest proportional under-representation among staff in Multilateral Agencies is people from Madhesi communities. The only Madhesi staff within the Multilateral Agencies is from the Muslim community. Their low numbers are under-representative of the Muslim national population (1.4% as compared to 4.3% of the population). But, this under-representation is much more dramatic when Madhesi sub-groups are taken together. While Madhesi people comprise an overall 23.8 percent of the population, they comprise only 1.4 percent of the staff within Multilateral Agencies.

Also under-represented among staff within Multilateral Agencies are people from Hill Dalit communities (1.4% as compared to their 7.1% of

---

**Chart 5: Bilateral Agency Workforce by Professional Level and Identity Group**

![Chart 5: Bilateral Agency Workforce by Professional Level and Identity Group](chart5.png)
the national population, and Tarai Janajati communities (1.4% as compared to their 9.8% of the national population). Slightly over-represented are people from “Other” communities (2.7% as compared to their 1.3% of the population).

There is currently no Senior Management level Nepali staff working in the Multilateral Agencies. Across the remaining three professional levels, the over-representation of people from Newar communities is largest at the level of Middle Level
Management. Although people from Madhesi communities are deeply under-represented within the Multilateral Agencies, the few Madhesi people working within Multilateral Agencies are at the Middle Level Management level. That cannot be said for staff from under-represented Tarai Janajati communities, who occupy positions only at the lowest professional level - Other Support Staff. As can be seen in Chart 7, the only people from Dalit communities within Multilateral Agencies are Hill Dalits, and they occupy positions only at the Administrative and Program Support Staff level.

**UN Agencies:** As a group, the UN Agencies are the largest employer among the participating International agencies in Nepal, comprising 73 percent of the currently held positions for Nepali staff. Within the UN Agencies people from the three identity groups that generally predominate (Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati) make up a smaller overall proportion of the staff than they do in either the Bilateral or Multilateral agencies (86.6% of the positions compared to 92.3% for the Bilaterals and 93.2% for the Multilaterals). Although still deeply under-representative compared to their share of the national population, people from Madhesi communities occupy more positions within UN Agencies (6.1% of the overall number of positions) than within Bilateral (3.5% of the overall positions) or Multilateral Agencies (1.4% of the overall positions). (See Chart 8).

There are only 2 Nepali staff working at the Senior Management level (A woman from Hill Brahman/Chhetri community and the other man from Newar community) among the 1039 UN Agencies’ staff (representing 0.2% of Nepali staff within the UN Agencies). A majority of the currently occupied positions (84.1%) within the UN Agencies are at the two lowest professional levels: Administrative and Program Support Staff level (56.5% of the positions) and Other Support Staff level (27.6% of the positions). Middle Level Management comprises 15.7% of the overall workforce in the UN Agencies.

**Chart 8: Comparison of UN Agency Workforce Profile with National Population Profile**

![Chart 8: Comparison of UN Agency Workforce Profile with National Population Profile](image)
Across three levels - Middle Level Management, Administrative and Program Support Staff and Other Support Staff - people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri communities are in the largest numbers (and proportionately over-represented).

People from Dalit communities - both Hill Dalit and Madhesi Dalit - are more likely to occupy positions at the Administrative and Support Staff level (51.9% of the UN Agency Dalit staff), or at the lowest, Other Support Staff level (35.2% of the UN Agency Dalit staff). There are no people at the Senior Management level from Dalit communities, although 13 percent of the people from Dalit communities working in the UN Agencies in Nepal work in Middle Level Management. To an even greater degree, people from Madhesi communities are also more likely to work at the Administrative and Program Support Staff level (57.1% of the UN Agency Madhesi staff) than at the Senior or Middle Level Management level. Some 22.2 percent of the UN Agency Madhesi staff work at the Middle Level Management level and 20.6 percent work at the Other Support Staff level.

As noted above as well, within UN Agency staff, there is a proportional under-representation of people from Tarai Janajati communities, 92.6 percent of whom are working in the two lowest professional levels - Administrative Support Staff (63% of the UN Agency Tarai Janajati staff) and Other Support Staff (29.6% of the UN Agency Tarai Janajati staff) (See Chart 9).

Gender and Workforce Diversity

Nepali women comprise 29.3 percent – or less than a third – of the overall workforce of the participating international agencies in Nepal. Gender disparities exist within each of the organizational categories, within each identity group and across all professional levels. Female staff working in Bilateral, Multilateral and UN Agencies comprise 27.6, 32.4 and 29.5 percent respectively as compared to 72.4, 67.6 and 70.5 percent men in these respective organizational categories (See Chart 10).

Within these organizational categories, there is also gender disparity across professional levels. Although

![Chart 9: UN Agency Workforce Diversity by Professional Level and Identity Group](image-url)
the numbers are relatively very small, it is nonetheless significant that there is only one woman working at the Senior Management level (in a UN Agency). Only at the Administrative and Program Support Staff level within the Multilateral Agencies are there more women than men. The overall representation of women at the four professional levels - Senior Management, Middle Level Management, Administrative and Program Support Staff, and Other Support Staff – stands at 25 (i.e. 1 out of 4), 32.2, 41.1 and 7.2 percent respectively. Employment opportunities for women are thus wider.
at the Middle Level Management and Administrative and Program Support Staff levels, and opportunities are narrower both at the Senior Management level (which is true for male staff as well), and at the Other Support Staff level (which is not true for male staff). Chart 11 shows the distribution across organizational categories and professional levels.

While gender disparities exist across all identity groups, they vary across groups as can be seen in Chart 12.

As some identity groups have relatively smaller numbers within the overall workforce, Chart 13 depicts the ratio of men to women within each identity group in order to highlight the gender disparity within different identity groups. As the Chart shows, for each and every identity group, men are far more likely than women to be occupying positions within the international agency workforce. The biggest disparities are women from Madhesi Dalit, Muslim and “Other” communities, who occupy positions in international agencies in the lowest relative percentages (14.3/85.7% female/male Madhesi Dalit, 17.6/82.4% female/male Muslim, and 16.7/83.3 % female/male “Other”).

The highest percentages of women are from the Newar and Hill Janajati communities: 34.5 percent of the staff from each of these communities is women. Hill Dalit communities also have a somewhat higher than average proportion of women (27.5%) among staff from their group employed by the participating agencies. For the remaining groups - Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Tarai Janajati, Madhes Brahman/Chhetri, Muslim, Madhesi Dalit and “Other” communities, women are less than 25 percent of the workforce from those communities.

Gender analysis by regional origin (See Chart 14) shows that of the total of 1419 staff, only 7.8 percent (a total of 111 people) are of Madhes/Tarai origin, of which only 20.7 percent are females. Of the total female staff in the workforce of international agencies, only 1.6 percent is of Madhes/Tarai origin.

Among female staff, the predominance of people from Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati
communities – though with different groups’ predominance at different professional levels – is evident across all four professional levels (See Chart 15). A very nominal presence of women from Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri, Muslim, Other Madhesi Caste Group, and Tarai Janajati communities can be seen at the Middle Level Management level. The stark disparity in terms of over-representation of women from Hill Brahman/Chhetri, Newar and Hill Janajati communities in Administration and Programme Support Staff and the absence of female staff from Madhesi Dalit, Muslim, and “Other” communities at Middle Level Management and Other Support Staff levels makes a very strong statement on its own regarding inclusion and exclusion of certain groups in the workforce of these participating agencies.

Although a similar general trend in terms of over-representation of men from Hill Brahman/Chhetri and Newar communities can be seen, of note is the fact that there are much lower percentages of men from Hill Janajati communities at the Senior and Middle Level Management levels (See Chart 16).
Region and Workforce Diversity

The severe under-representation of people from Madhes/Tarai-origin communities is the greatest disparity apparent across the international agencies participating in this survey. The Madhes/Tarai-origin staff within the Bilateral Agencies, Multilateral Agencies and the UN Agencies comprises 3.2, 2.8 and 8.6 percent of the respective organizational category’s workforce, while people from Hill-origin communities comprise 93.9, 97.2 and 91.4 percent of the respective organizational category’s workforce (See Chart 17).

Disaggregation in terms of identity group also shows the stark contrast between the predominance of people from Hill-origin communities against the low...
percentages of people from Madhes/Tarai-origin communities. As was mentioned in Section 6.1, in each of the organizational categories Madhes/Tarai-origin people are proportionately under-represented, with the deepest under-representation in the Multilateral Agencies where there are no staff from Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri, Madhesi Dalit, and Other Madhesi Caste Group communities as well as proportional under-representation of people from Muslim and Tarai Janajati communities. The Bilateral Agencies' Madhesi/Tarai-origin staff includes an over-representation of people from Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri communities and no people from Madhesi Dalit or Muslim communities. Although there is a

Chart 18: Regional Disparity Across Organizational Category and Identity Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Bilateral Agencies</th>
<th>Multilateral Agencies</th>
<th>UN Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Group</th>
<th>Percentage of National Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hill Brahman/Chhetri</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Dalit</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Janajati</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhesi Dalit</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Madhesi Caste Groups</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarai Janajati</td>
<td>Percentage of Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
larger number of staff from Tarai Janajati communities working within the UN Agencies, taken as a percentage of the overall staff within their respective organizational categories, there is the same percentage of Tarai Janajati staff (2.6%) working within the Bilateral Agencies and the UN Agencies. By a small percentage, the UN Agencies have the highest overall percentage of staff from Madhesi/Tarai-origin communities (8.6% as compared to 6.1% in Bilateral Agencies and 3.0% in Multilateral Agencies). However, among these Madhesi/Tarai-origin staff members within the UN Agencies, people from Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri communities are over-represented. Chart 18 paints a disaggregated picture of these disparities.

The greatest number of women from Madhes/Tarai-origin communities working in the participating agencies is from Tarai Janajati communities (8 women among the overall number of 417), followed by Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri women (6) and women from Other Madhesi Caste Group communities (5). In the 30 participating international agencies, there are only 3 women from Muslim communities and only 1 woman from a Madhesi Dalit community among the overall workforce of 1425 people. A large majority of the women from Madhes/Tarai-origin communities working in the participating agencies work at the Administrative and Program Support Staff level (69.6%), while fewer work at the Middle Level Management level (21.7%). Only 2 women from Madhes/Tarai-origin communities (8.7%) work at the Other Support Staff level. (See Chart 19).

Comparatively speaking, there is less of a gender gap in opportunities for people from Hill-origin communities (30% women and 70% men) than for people from Madhes/Tarai-origin communities (20.7% women and 79.3% men) working in the participating agencies. Although gender parity is far from the case overall, at the Middle Level Management and the Administrative Support Staff levels, women from Hill Janajati communities outnumber men from Hill Janajati communities. At the Administrative and Program Support Staff level,
there are an equal number of women and men from Hill Dalit communities. Among the staff from Hill-origin communities, Hill Dalit people overall are in the smallest numbers and Hill Dalit women hold no positions at the Senior Management and Middle Level Management levels. (See Chart 20).

**Affirmative Action in International Agencies: Experiences and Issues**

Most organizations surveyed noted that developing an affirmative action policy is necessary for promoting workforce diversity. However, very few organizations have specific written policies on this. The majority of agencies participating in this survey have a general clause in their human resource development policy committing the organization to having recruitment procedures and a code of conduct free from bias or discrimination. Almost all vacancy advertisements mention equal employment opportunities for women and encourage women and people from excluded groups to apply.

Only a few agencies included in this survey (UNDP, UNICEF, SDC) have a specific written policy outlining affirmative action in recruitment processes. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation also defines its core organizational values guiding diversity, and outlines its operational understanding of affirmative action as the basis for the way the programs and projects it supports get implemented. SDC also documents some diversity friendly recruitment procedures\(^\text{14}\) including an annual staff profile to monitor its own staff diversity.\(^\text{15}\) UNDP’s interim policy has affirmative action provisions to create more opportunities for women and individuals from excluded communities to appear for the assessment process during recruitment.

Most organizations raise the issue of availability of qualified women and men candidates from excluded groups and the challenges of reaching them with information about employment opportunities and job vacancies. Reaching out to potential candidates living in remote areas is a special challenge since, by definition, most of these places

---


\(^{15}\) Ibid.
are cut off from electronic or print communication. This makes it difficult to get information about job opportunities to excluded groups and people living in remote areas. Some Human Resource Managers expressed the view that rather than lack of competent candidates or lack of interest on the agency’s part, a key barrier has been the difficulty in getting information to possible candidates. Some agencies also expressed difficulties in attracting candidates from excluded groups who are physically within access.

They point out that women and members of excluded groups require assurance from the employer on gender sensitivity and support for diversity in the work environment. Some agencies even shared their experiences where successful female candidates had not accepted the positions due to the lack of agency support for their gender-specific responsibilities of child-care. These women would have accepted the positions had the agency offered arrangements such as flexible work hours, child-care facilities, and breast-feeding facilities.

Many organizations continue to recruit using educational qualifications and job experience as the primary selection criteria. This has hampered inclusion of groups with different skills and competencies. Many of the agencies shared the same dilemma: How to create recruitment policies that are both fair (without bias or favor) and reasonable (without compromising quality or commitment to the agency’s mission)?

Some agencies suggested identifying organizations to help in recruiting under-represented groups as an alternative way to increase outreach to these groups beyond the normal channels.

In order to become more gender sensitive, some organizations have thought through the implications of overtime work, how to provide security for female staff while traveling and other such issues.

They also noted that provisions of social support and guidance for members of excluded groups as they take up jobs in a new environment have worked well to nurture diversity. While some agencies pointed out the necessity of having specific provisions for mentoring and coaching newly recruited staff, very few organizations actually have such provisions in place.

Most noted that it is important to create an enabling environment for women and people from excluded groups so that they can gain confidence and adjust well within the usually male dominated and generally highly homogeneous staffing pattern of most agencies. They stated that the sensitivity of human resources managers is key in creating an enabling environment and retaining staff across diverse cultures and identities.
Affirmative action is generally understood as steps taken to correct historical disadvantage and unfair discrimination. It enables access to full opportunity and benefits and seeks to create the conditions necessary to bring persons from excluded groups to a minimum level of competition. To be effective, affirmative action must be understood and implemented as a holistic approach.

While there are many aspects of affirmative action, one essential step in the context of Nepal is the reconceptualization or redefinition of selection criteria. Till now selection has been based solely on “merit” as an organization may have traditionally defined it. It is important to realize that to some extent “merit” is a subjective term usually defined by the elite groups in any given society – and sometimes unconsciously reflecting the characteristics, cultural values and traits of these groups. Merit is still critical to selection in an affirmative action setting, but a critical re-evaluation of “merit” may be required and may yield some important new insights about what skills and perspectives the firm or agency really requires for successful completion of its mission.

Selection criteria can be changed to emphasize language skills, local knowledge or other characteristics, which the people of excluded groups are likely to have (See Box 1).

**Box 1: Language: barrier or opportunity?**

One agency, in reviewing its recruitment practices, observed that written exams and interviews were conducted primarily in the English language for all levels and positions whether center-based or field-based. Requiring proficiency in English, particularly spoken English, even for field-based positions where all work - with the exception of reports written for the central offices - is conducted in Nepali, was creating an unnecessary barrier for many potential candidates, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The organization changed its policies, and now, for field-based positions, conducts written tests with half the questions and answers in Nepali, and the other half in English. Similarly, parts of the interviews are conducted in Nepali.

Other agencies are using similar approaches. In a joint donor fund, the selection of a mid-management level staff member included a language switch halfway through the focus group discussion, given that both Nepali and English fluency are part of the job requirement. Similarly, the written exercises had to be given in both English and Nepali.

In another recent recruitment, the two international agencies involved decided to re-interview one candidate in Nepali, as they felt the job did not require a high level of English, but did require excellent communication skills in Nepali. They felt the second interview in Nepali would allow the candidate to best show evidence of his ability to complete the job responsibilities.

Emphasizing other language skills may also increase staff diversity and improve effectiveness on the ground: requiring fluency in one or more languages spoken in the Tarai (such as Maithili, Bhojpuri or Awadhi) helped one agency recruit a team that has been effectively monitoring development activities even in remote, conflict-affected VDCs in several central and eastern Tarai districts.

**Expanding the definition of “merit”**

One policy promoting workforce diversity specifies that “all interviews for professional positions will consist of at least one question about gender equality and social inclusion in Nepal in order to assess the candidates’ knowledge in this area”.

Affirmative Action: Recommendations for A Diverse Workforce in Nepal

Affirmative action is generally understood as steps taken to correct historical disadvantage and unfair discrimination. It enables access to full opportunity and benefits and seeks to create the conditions necessary to bring persons from excluded groups to a minimum level of competition. To be effective, affirmative action must be understood and implemented as a holistic approach.

While there are many aspects of affirmative action, one essential step in the context of Nepal is the reconceptualization or redefinition of selection criteria. Till now selection has been based solely on “merit” as an organization may have traditionally defined it. It is important to realize that to some extent “merit” is a subjective term usually defined by the elite groups in any given society – and sometimes unconsciously reflecting the characteristics, cultural values and traits of these groups. Merit is still critical to selection in an affirmative action setting, but a critical re-evaluation of “merit” may be required and may yield some important new insights about what skills and perspectives the firm or agency really requires for successful completion of its mission.

Selection criteria can be changed to emphasize language skills, local knowledge or other characteristics, which the people of excluded groups are likely to have (See Box 1).

**Box 1: Language: barrier or opportunity?**

One agency, in reviewing its recruitment practices, observed that written exams and interviews were conducted primarily in the English language for all levels and positions whether center-based or field-based. Requiring proficiency in English, particularly spoken English, even for field-based positions where all work - with the exception of reports written for the central offices - is conducted in Nepali, was creating an unnecessary barrier for many potential candidates, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The organization changed its policies, and now, for field-based positions, conducts written tests with half the questions and answers in Nepali, and the other half in English. Similarly, parts of the interviews are conducted in Nepali.

Other agencies are using similar approaches. In a joint donor fund, the selection of a mid-management level staff member included a language switch halfway through the focus group discussion, given that both Nepali and English fluency are part of the job requirement. Similarly, the written exercises had to be given in both English and Nepali.

In another recent recruitment, the two international agencies involved decided to re-interview one candidate in Nepali, as they felt the job did not require a high level of English, but did require excellent communication skills in Nepali. They felt the second interview in Nepali would allow the candidate to best show evidence of his ability to complete the job responsibilities.

Emphasizing other language skills may also increase staff diversity and improve effectiveness on the ground: requiring fluency in one or more languages spoken in the Tarai (such as Maithili, Bhojpuri or Awadhi) helped one agency recruit a team that has been effectively monitoring development activities even in remote, conflict-affected VDCs in several central and eastern Tarai districts.

**Expanding the definition of “merit”**

One policy promoting workforce diversity specifies that “all interviews for professional positions will consist of at least one question about gender equality and social inclusion in Nepal in order to assess the candidates’ knowledge in this area”.
A pre-requisite before taking affirmative action is to first understand the existing status of diversity in the organization. This implies mapping and analyzing a disaggregated staff profile that shows who has access to what opportunities, types of resources and levels of decision making power. Sometimes the analysis may reveal unexpected results demanding unusual and creative responses. For example, one agency found that in one project it actually had to take affirmative action to increase inclusion of people from non-disadvantaged groups (See Box 2).

Recruitment policies and advertisements for positions should state clearly that the firm or agency is committed to:

- attracting, developing, rewarding and retaining a diverse workforce and;
- becoming an equal opportunity employer that respects all facets of diversity including ethnic origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, different abilities, and work/life experience.

In addition to formal policy statements, practices and procedures like: i) requiring diversity in the short list for any position and ii) ensuring diversity among those who interview and judge the candidate, can help ensure that the commitment to diversity becomes a reality.

Some approaches to creating a workplace that is supportive of diversity include:

- Understanding and respecting that every individual or community has the right to self-identification, and that no one culture or identity is intrinsically superior to another.
- Going beyond acknowledging the existence of others to creating a nurturing environment where the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual and each social group are not only accommodated, but appreciated.
- Understanding that there are diverse ways of being and of knowing and that working positively across these differences can enhance creativity and

---

**Box 2: Exclusion and the “power” dimension**

After conducting a baseline survey on staff composition across its programmes and projects, one agency discovered that the majority of positions across all categories (Manager, Officer, Assistant, and Support Staff) were held by staff from Brahman, Chhetri and Newar communities. However, the survey data also showed that:

While many projects with Team Leaders from the Brahman, Chhetri or Newar communities were found to have a majority of staff from that same community, a few projects with Team Leaders from the Janajati community also had a majority of staff from Janajati community.

This statistical relationship between the Project Team Leader’s community and higher representation of project staff from the same community helped the agency to understand that, irrespective of whether he or she was from an “advantaged” or after “disadvantaged” community, the Project Team Leader’s access to power played a strong role in determining the staff profile of each project. Whether they were from “advantaged” or “disadvantaged” communities, Project Team Leaders seemed to favor recruiting staff from their own community.

The agency through its policy and procedures advocates Affirmative Action for “disadvantaged” groups to address the larger organisational disparity. However, to address project-specific disparity encountered in the survey, the organisation decided to ask certain project(s) led by Janajati Project Team Leaders—to apply Affirmative Action to integrate staff from Brahman, Chhetri, and Newar communities.

Through this act, the organisation strongly communicated and continues to convey to its program and project staff that exclusion in any form is not accepted and will not be tolerated.
innovation. This is about who we are and how we are different and how we learn to value and socialize about these differences.

- Recognizing that discrimination occurs at various seen and unseen levels (personal, cultural, structural or institutional) and that any kind of discrimination can create and sustain privileges for some and disadvantages for others.
- Supporting solidarity and alliance creation across differences to tackle all forms of discrimination.

Some other ways to encourage excluded groups include:

- Provision of internships for people from excluded groups – who if they do well could become potential candidates for recruitment;
- Adopting new channels of advertising for positions that are more likely to reach the target group;
- Revising short listing and selection procedures to ensure that at least some candidates from excluded groups get a chance to be interviewed;
- Revising recruitment panel criteria so that interviews are carried out by a diverse panel where members of different social groups and genders have an equal say in the evaluation (See Box 3);
- Interviewing in English as well as Nepali and any other language appropriate for the specific job requirements;
- Mentoring, pre-service and in-service training of staff from excluded groups;
- Incorporating performance evaluation criteria for performance on diversity, gender and social inclusion issues (e.g. rating manager’s performance on the degree to which he or she supports a diverse workforce in his or her department or unit);
- Awareness and capacity building of all personnel.

Awareness and capacity building on diversity and inclusion is essential. This needs to be a process and not a one-off training event. All employees need to strengthen conceptual clarity and skills to understand their role and create the behavior changes that are required to effectively manage and work within a diverse workforce. Application strategies and support is necessary for everyone so that awareness and skills can be applied to improving work performance.

As mentioned above, affirmative action requires a holistic approach and hence it is not synonymous with quotas for different groups. There are other ways to seek out and give opportunities to excluded groups that do not involve strict numerical quotas. They can be considered a “last resort” when other more indirect means have failed. Quotas carry many well-known risks including the danger that other staff may believe the person hired under the quota does not really have the professional qualifications to do

---

**Box 3: The importance of a diverse interview panel**

A Human Resource Manager who was recently involved in a selection process for a middle level management position found out that two of the selection committee members (one expatriate and one Nepalese) had perceived a Dalit candidate as being very “dominating” because he interacted and debated proactively in the group discussion largely made up of dominant social groups. In contrast, the HR manager had perceived the same candidate as being “assertive” and able to prevail over social barriers to find his space within the discussion group and to present his views and opinions concretely. For the HR manager, this was a strong behavioral competency that would enable the post holder to perform well. When the HR manager presented her perception to the other two selection committee members, they were initially very surprised that the candidate’s behavior had been perceived so differently by the different interviewers. The HR manager believes that perhaps a Dalit behaving with confidence that is not expected in someone from his group was perceived negatively by the other two members of the panel. A different perception and interpretation of the Dalit candidate’s behavior not only helped the committee members to confront their own personal preconceptions, but also enabled the organisation to successfully recruit a staff member from the Dalit community - one who has proved quite successful in his position.
the job but was only recruited because of his or her social identity. If management genuinely sees the value of having different perspectives and skill sets in the workforce, communicates this and sets in place procedures and policies to support diversity, formal quotas will not be required.

A broader and more long-term measure is to make funds available for individuals from disadvantaged groups so that they can access training and capacity-building courses. These measures can contribute to building the skills that members of excluded groups need, to excel in their chosen field of development.

It is also essential to integrate diversity and inclusion sensitivity into all organizational functions, to use a combination of strategies, and to create an organizational culture that supports diversity.

In all of these approaches, the key is genuine commitment from top leadership. This commitment has to be demonstrated not just by rhetoric of the organization’s leader, but by his or her own actions in the people recruited and in the way middle level managers are rewarded when they promote diversity and sanctioned when they don’t. When leadership asks for regular data on gender, caste, ethnic and regional diversity in each unit and creates the environment necessary for people from excluded communities to perform well, it sends a strong signal about the importance the organization attaches to diversity.
Conclusion

Managing diversity is challenging. The leadership plays an important role by creating an appropriate organisational and socio-cultural climate. Effective implementation and successful management of diversity in organizations requires strong conviction, commitment and sensitivity. Individuals at all levels – from leadership to staff in the lowest unit of the organisational hierarchy must be ready to examine and confront their own intrinsic attitudes, perceptions and behaviour that have been shaped by the culture and traditional beliefs they have grown up with.

The process of transforming the workplace is not easy as the process challenges the status quo and influences a paradigm shift in many taken-for-granted ways of thinking and behaving. Only through conscious awareness and preparedness for such challenges can an organization handle the inevitable tensions in a constructive way, turning potential conflicts into opportunities for personal growth and greater organizational success.
Annex 1

Brief Overview of SIAG

Evidence from the Census 2001, the Nepal Living Standard Survey and other studies shows quite clearly that in Nepal there are wide disparities in human development indicators between different social groups based on gender, region, caste and ethnic identity differentials in Nepal. Additionally, structured inequalities, the political marginalisation of a major part of the population, and differential access to resources have been identified as key causes of the Maoist insurgency.

Recognising the need to work on this complex issue, groups and networks such as the Social Development Learning Group led by DFID and the Social Inclusion/Affirmative Action Network piloted by UNDP were formed in 2004. Later members of these groups and the social scientists, civil society activists and development practitioners who were involved in the preparation of the study Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal came together to form an action group. The main objectives of the group which they called the Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG) was to continue learning from each other and to be able to influence the social inclusion agenda effectively in a collaborative manner. As an informal group, it was originally composed of representatives from UNDP, WB, UNFPA-Country Office, UNICEF Country Office, UNMIN, Danida, SDC, DFID, ADB, GTZ and HURDEC.

Purpose of SIAG

Promote social inclusion in policy and practice

SIAG approach:

- Share information and enhance knowledge concerning social exclusion among a diverse group of individuals and organizations
- Influence pro-inclusive government, donor and civil society policy and practice in the development sphere

Key focus areas:

- Work force diversity
- Gender and social inclusion responsive monitoring systems
- Capacity building of women and men from excluded groups to enhance work force diversity
- Social Inclusion perspective in constitution drafting process and the process of restructuring the state

Major Actions:

- Learning events for operational clarity on social inclusion
- Internships, bridge courses, mentoring, trainings
- Communication and media (Website, FM etc)
- Briefing papers and fact sheets
- Sustained discourse on inclusion issues
- Evidence and influencing for incorporating Social Inclusion issues in constitution drafting and the on-going process of building an inclusive state.

Since 2005, this group has organized a number of learning events on monitoring social inclusion and on increasing diversity in human resources within agencies. To be able to work effectively it recognised the need to widen participation and in 2007 – 2008, it expanded to include representation of almost all development agencies, including other international bodies. At present it has membership from UNDP, WB, UNFPA Country Office, UNICEF Country Office, UNMIN, Danida, SDC, DFID, ADB, GTZ and HURDEC.

**ANNEXES**
Organization of the SIAG

Steering Committee:
This will be composed of Gender, Social inclusion, Monitoring & Evaluation and HR focal persons representing a maximum of 12 organisations.

Steering Members must commit to the following responsibilities:
- Hosting and chairing meetings
- Developing SIAG program agenda (suggesting topics, issues and possible activities)
- Supporting implementation of specific programs
- Supporting the SIAG secretariat
- Looking for opportunities for synergy with other actors on inclusion issues
- Mobilizing resources
- Ensuring institutional continuity and memory

Membership:
Membership is open for all interested institutions including Government, INGOs, NGOs, other civil society organizations and development agencies. Members can at any time contact the Steering Committee to suggest topics and share ideas. A more formal mechanism will be membership meetings held twice a year for policy direction to the SIAG agenda.

Secretariat:
One of the Steering Committee members oversees the secretariat for a year which is managed by a program assistant.

Financial resources for SIAG:
£75,000 from DFID (from April 2007 to March 2010)
Annex 2:

A. Questionnaire for Workforce Diversity Survey, SIAG—2007

Date: …………………2007
Name of the development agency ..........................................................

Contact person for follow up:
Name: ………………………………………………………………………………...
Designation ………………………………………………………………………...
Phone: ………………………Email: ……………………………

1. Does your agency have a workforce diversity policy?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. If yes, since when has it been implemented?
   a. Month_________________, Year _________________
   b. Can you share it with SIAG? Yes ______, or No______.
      If yes, please send a copy

3. If you don’t have a policy now, are you planning on developing one?
   Yes_______, No__________.
   If yes, by when? By_____________

4. What have been your three key challenges to implement your diversity policy?

5. Do you have any suggestions to development agencies to promote diversity within their organizations?

6. Where do you send your vacancy announcements?
### B. SIAG Workforce Diversity Survey -- 2007

Data on National Staff

Name of the development agency: 
Staff profile as of the month of: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional level</th>
<th>Total Staff</th>
<th>Dalits</th>
<th>Janajatis</th>
<th>Brahman/ Chhetri</th>
<th>Other Madhesi/ Tarai Caste groups</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>Madhesi (Tarai)</td>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>Madhesi (Tarai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle level management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin and program support staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other support staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Staff diversity in country office/Development Program
### Annex 3:

List of the participating organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank - ADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency/Canadian Cooperation Office - CIDA/CCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Danida Human Rights and Good Governance Advisory Unit - Danida/HUGOU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Department For International Development - DFID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Education Sector Advisory Team/DANIDA - ESAT/DANIDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Embassy of Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Embassy of Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Energy Sector Assistance Programme - Danida/Norway - ESAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>European Commission - EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization - FAO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>International Labor Organization - ILO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Japan International Co-operation Agency - JICA Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal - OHCHR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Royal Norwegian Embassy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - SDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Technical Cooperation of Germany - GTZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The United Nations Population Fund - UNFPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>United Nations HABITAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Nepal - UNMIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>United Nations Children Fund Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF ROSA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>United Nation Development Program - UNDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>United Nations Children Fund - UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women - UNIFEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - UNHCR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - UN OCHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development - USAID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>World Food Programme - WFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>World Health Organisation - WHO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Australian Government Overseas Aid - AUSAID (did not respond)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS - UNAIDS (did not respond)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>