



WOREC

**"Structural Violence Against
Marginalized Community:
Vicious Cycle of Vulnerability"**

Sbr

Survey Team

Writers:

Prabha Paudyal, Ecological Justice and Women's Leadership Theme Coordinator, WOREC

Sabina Parajuli, MEAL Coordinator, WOREC

Data Collection Team:

Mamta Shah, Diwani Shrestha, Manju Mahato, Rambha Chaudhary

Table of Content

Background:	1
Objectives:	2
Methodology:.....	2
Limitation:	3
Results.....	3
Demographic information.....	3
1.1 District of origin	3
1.2 Ethnicity	4
.....	5
1.3 data disintegration by age and sex	5
1.4 Marital status and family size	6
1.5 Nationality of participants	6
1.6 Access to Land.....	6
1.7 Forms of disaster.....	7
2. Effects of disaster on family circumstances, access to nutrition, and overall well-being	7
2.1 Impact caused by disaster.....	7
2.2 Impact on livelihood	8
2.3 Government services	8
2.4 Reason for not able to rehabilitation after disaster	9
Conclusion:.....	9
Recommendation:.....	10

Background:

Landlessness in Nepal is a multifaceted issue deeply rooted in historical feudalism, capitalist land distribution systems, and persistent social inequalities based on class, caste, gender, and religion. The Land Reform Act's 8th amendment defines landlessness as a condition where individuals lack registered land ownership and the financial capacity to acquire even basic homestead land. However, this definition overlooks the broader, structural dimensions of landlessness. It is not merely the absence of legal ownership, but a result of centuries-long systemic discrimination that has disproportionately marginalized Dalit, Madheshi, and Indigenous communities. These groups have been excluded not only from land ownership but also from full participation in the socio-political avenues of Nepal, depriving them of their rights to identity, political voice, agency, civil rights, and access to services. This exclusion, in turn, severely limits their ability to exercise their Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR), including access to basic needs such as food, housing, education, health, work, and social security.

The concentration of land in the hands of a small elite class, driven by capitalist interests, exacerbates the issue of landlessness. The Madheshi Dalits, in particular, suffer disproportionately from this phenomenon, with many living on government land without legal occupancy. This lack of legal recognition not only deepens their poverty but also traps them in a cycle of socio-economic deprivation. Because the inability to access land and legal ownership further hinders their participation in broader economic systems, depriving them of opportunities to secure stable livelihoods and basic human rights. The persistence of unequal land distribution rooted in the feudal system reinforces the continued marginalization of these communities and continues a system of social and economic inequality.

Moreover, landlessness is both a cause and a consequence of marginalization. As these communities are deprived of land rights, they are also excluded from broader political and civil participation. Their vulnerability to various crises, such as disasters, is intensified, particularly in disaster-prone areas. The absence of legal land ownership limits their access to critical resources and services, such as government assistance, financial institutions, and humanitarian aid. In recent years, the increasing frequency and intensity of disasters have further exacerbated landlessness, widened the socio-economic gap and deepened their vulnerability.

The state's failure to ensure the protection of citizens' rights, particularly the right to land, has contributed to a vicious cycle of marginalization. Despite its obligation to guarantee ESCR, the state has largely neglected its responsibility to protect the rights of marginalized groups. As a result, these communities remain trapped in a cycle of poverty, exclusion, and social instability. The failure to address land rights also severely impacts other fundamental human rights, including access to housing, food, water, health services, and decent work. Ultimately, the intersection of landlessness and systemic exclusion underscores the urgent need for comprehensive land reform, social justice and intersectional approach for marginalized communities in Nepal.

Thus, this study examines the interconnectedness of the landlessness and other ESCR rights especially in the aftermath of disaster in Madesh province to emphasize the urgent need for redistributive and intersectional approach to ensure land rights of marginalized communities.

Objectives:

The major objectives of this survey are as follows:

- To explore the experiences of historically marginalized communities particularly the Madhesi and Terai Dalit populations, who have faced socio-economic and political exclusion.
- To provide a deeper political analysis of how multi-dimensional socio-economic issues intersect, leading to compounded vulnerabilities and ESCR rights violation of marginalized communities.

This study was conducted across two districts of Madesh Province, Saptari and Mahottari. The rationale behind the selection of those study areas is that these districts have been affected severely by disasters like fire outburst in recent years, most of the people of those areas belong to Madhesi and Terai Dalit community and are historically marginalized from the multi-dimensional aspects. In those areas WOREC has been working for disaster response, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and human rights for a long time. Thus, these interventions provided the need for conducting this survey to dig out more political analysis of the inter-connectedness of the issues.

Methodology:

This research adapted quantitative research methodology and online survey has been used as a research tool. A questionnaire has been prepared with both open and close ended questions and prepared a google form. WOREC field staff collected data based on those google form taking an interview of the respondents. Respondents were selected randomly from the fire affected region of the study area. The study involved 53 female and male respondents who provided their lived experiences of marginalizations.

Limitation:

This study has a few limitations that could impact the interpretation and generalization of the findings. The study involved only 53 respondents, which may not be representative of the entire population of the affected community. The sample size may limit to have broader conclusions about the entire population. Likewise, due to the socio-cultural context of the community, respondents may have hesitation to answer the questions openly as WOREC field staff facilitate the data collection process.

Results

The survey was conducted in the Terai region of Nepal, which has been historically grappling with multi-dimensional issues such as food insecurity, climate change, gender/caste based discrimination, harmful traditional practices, landlessness etc. The study is organized into several key areas with specific focus on disaster impact, food insecurity and landlessness, to gather comprehensive information from participants, including demographic data, impacts on livelihoods, occupation, access to nutrition and food, and health services. Each section examines how the disaster has affected respondents' lives and the societal structures, highlighting the groups most vulnerable during such conditions. The overall analysis reveals how the impacts of disaster have intersected with food insecurity and landlessness to widening the structural inequality.

Demographic information

1.1 District of origin

The survey was carried out in two districts of Madhesh province located in Terai region of Nepal. The data were collected from Mahhottari and Saptari districts, with the majority of participants from Saptari.

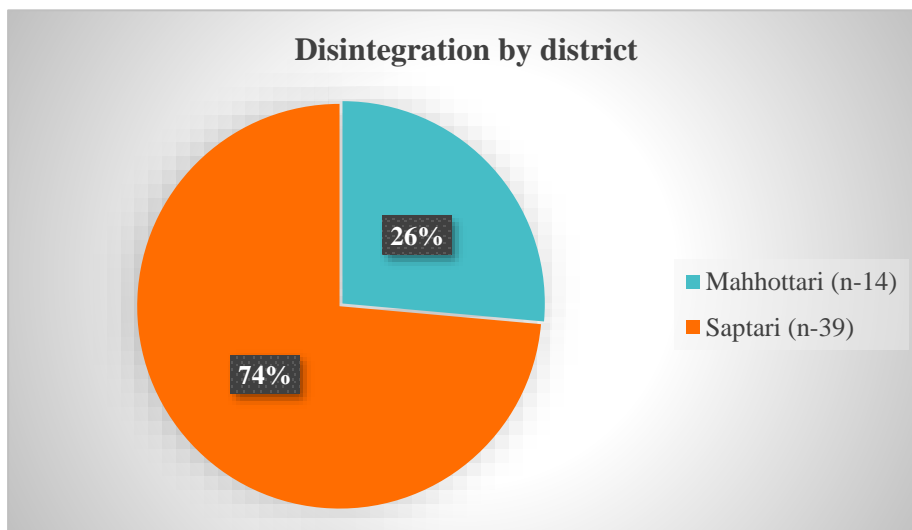


Figure: District of origin (Source: Field survey data, 2024)

1.2 Ethnicity

The survey was carried out in the Terai region of Nepal and the majority of people belonged to the Terai Dalit community as shown in the figure which highlights the heightened vulnerability of Dalit community to various forms of marginalization. Due to historical discrimination, the marginalization of Dalit community widened and intersected with issues of landlessness and food insecurity.

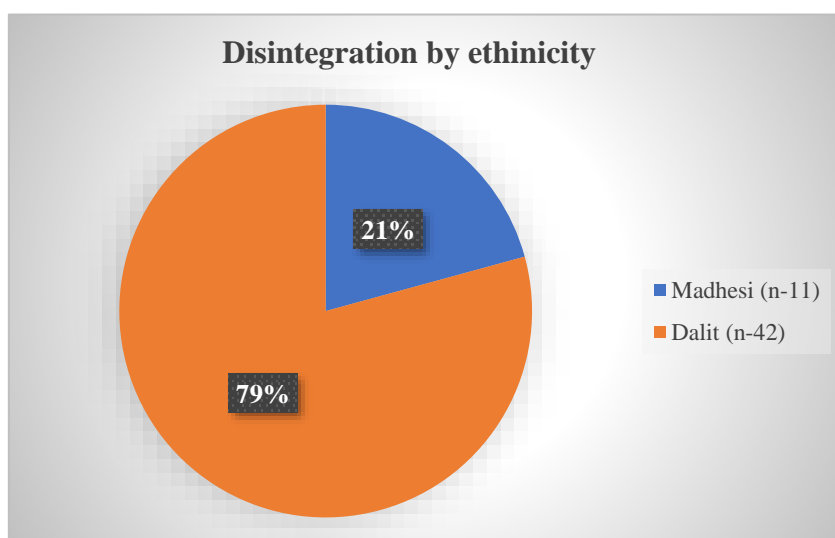


Figure: Disintegration by ethnicity (Source: Field survey data, 2024)

1.3 data disintegration by age and sex

The majority of participants were male, making up 62% of the group, while the remaining were female. This data indicates that due to the mobility control and social taboo women are still less engaged in outdoor activities, such as answering questions, participating in surveys, and providing feedback, compared to men.

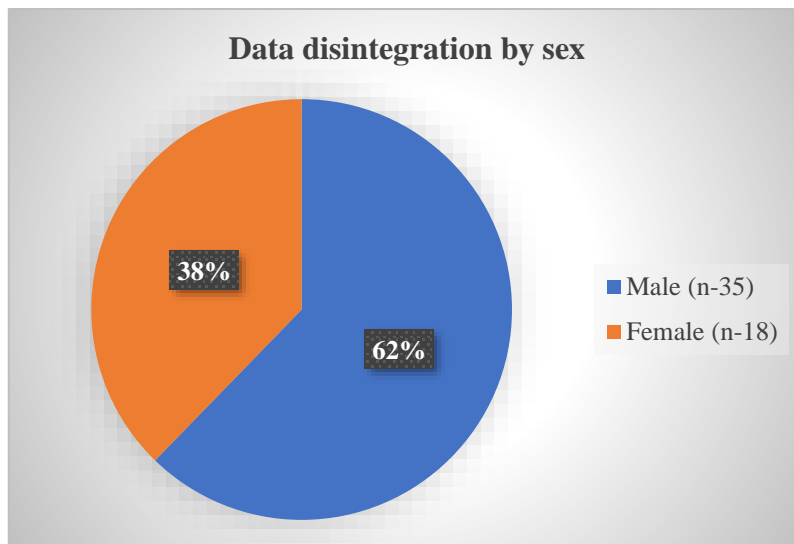


Figure: Disintegration by sex (Source: Field survey data, 2024)

The majority of participants are over 60 years old, followed by those aged 41-60, as shown in figure. Additionally, the active youth group from age 18-25, and age between 26-40 also took part to share their experiences and knowledge on this survey.

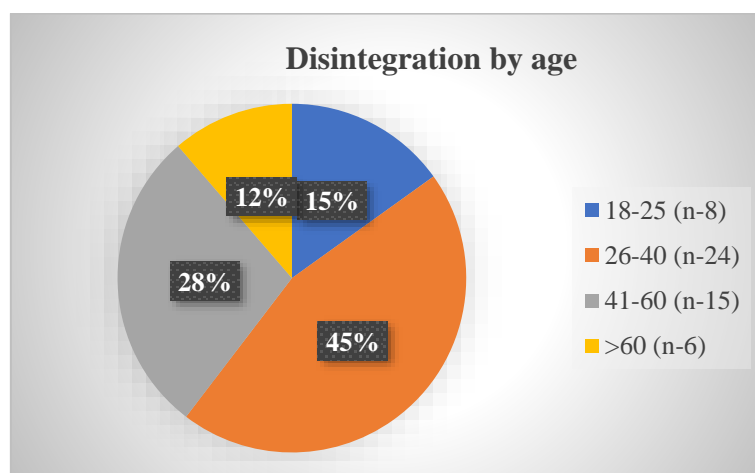


Figure: Disintegration by age (Source: Field survey data, 2024)

1.4 Marital status and family size

The survey results revealed that the majority of participants, 96%, are married, while 2% are widowed and the remaining 2% are single. This distribution offers valuable insights into the social structure of the survey area and provides information on the experiences and needs of different groups. Among those surveyed, 47.17% live in households with fewer than 5 people, 49% have 5 to 10 people in their household, and 3.77% have more than 10 people in their home.

1.5 Nationality of participants

In the survey area, 13.2% have lived in the same place for less than 10 years, 17% have resided there for 11-20 years, and 69.8% have stayed in the same location for over 20 years. Among those surveyed, 94.3% of participants hold Nepali citizenship, while 5.7% do not. Of those without citizenship, 66.6% are Dalit men and the rest are Madhesi women. All of them are married, over 20 years old, and have lived in the area for more than 20 years, yet they still lack Nepali citizenship. This situation highlights how the Dalit community continues to struggle with basic civil and political rights, such as obtaining citizenship, which impedes their ability to improve their lives.

1.6 Access to Land

In the surveyed area, only 6% people have their own land in the resident area, whereas, 94% people do not have their own land. Among them, 84% of people who do not have land belong to Dalit community.

Among the surveyed people, 44% do not own land because their fathers and ancestors did not, 40% are unable to buy land due to financial constraints, and 16% are unemployed and lack the financial resources to purchase land.

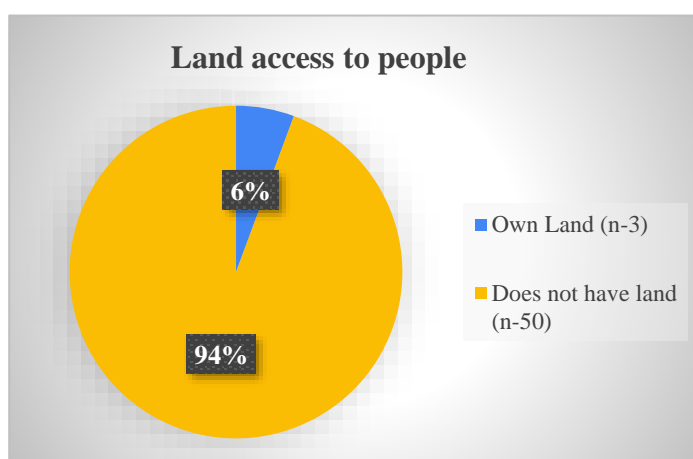


Figure: Accessibility to land (Source: Field survey data, 2024)

When surveyed about the challenges they face due to lack of land ownership, 45.28% of participants reported insufficient access to food, while 24.52% said they are deprived of government services. Additionally, 20.75% mentioned that they lack safe housing, and 5.67% expressed increased risk of disaster. Furthermore, 1.89% of respondents who were female indicated a higher risk of gender-based violence. This highlights that the lack of land ownership disproportionately impacts women, exacerbating their social burdens and exposure to violence.

1.7 Forms of disaster

The survey area is prone to fire, but we also asked participants if they had experienced other types of disasters. All participants reported that fire is the only disaster they have faced since the last three years in both districts, making their lives vulnerable in every aspect.

2. Effects of disaster on family circumstances, access to nutrition, and overall well-being

2.1 Impact caused by disaster

The surveyed participants reported that the fire damaged and destroyed their homes. This disaster also worsened mental health issues among family members and themselves, and led to job losses. Additionally, they experienced disruptions in access to food, safe drinking water, sanitation, and health services. The crisis placed an increased burden on women, who are often the primary caregivers and spend considerable time on household chores. The combined effects of deteriorating mental health and job loss further intensified the strain on women as they struggled to care for their families.

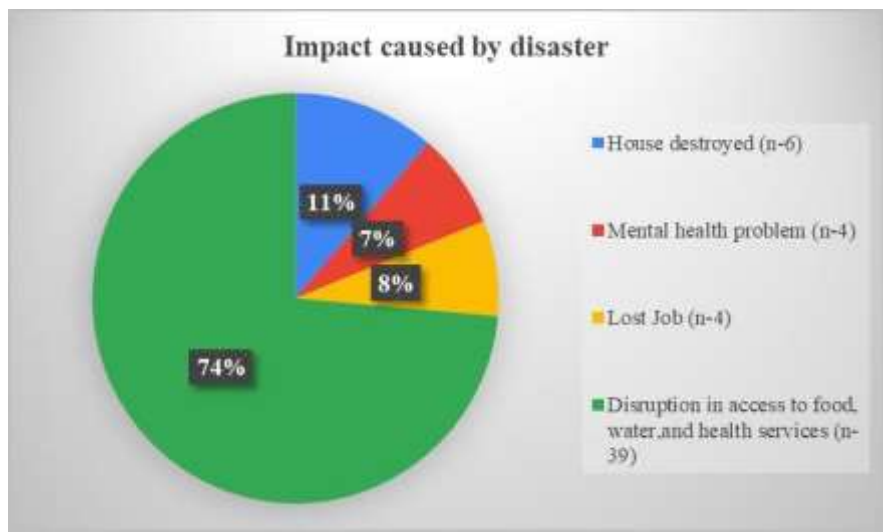


Figure: Impact caused by disaster (Source: Field survey data, 2024)

2.2 Impact on livelihood

2.2.1 Impact on job

The survey participants were found to be involved in agriculture (18.87%), daily wage labor (67.92%) and foreign employment (13.21%) to support their livelihood before the disaster. After the disaster, 98% participants were found to be involved in the previous job. When asked about how they allocate their monthly income, 90.56% of participants reported that they use it primarily for daily household expenses such as food and water. Meanwhile, 9.44% indicated that their spending also includes health services for their family members. Relying heavily on income for daily necessities can lead to additional challenges, including health issues and limited access to education.

2.2.2 Impact on access to nutrition and food

After the disaster, 84.90% of people shared that they do not have enough food for family members and only 15.10% shared that they have enough food for their family. Among the surveyed members, 94.34% shared that they do not have enough nutritious food for their family. Among them, 92.5% of people shared that their income is not enough to provide enough food for their family members and only 7.5% can provide enough food to their family members.

Survey participants were asked what measures could ensure their families and community's food rights. The majority, 54.71%, indicated that stable job opportunities would improve their food security. Meanwhile, 39.62% believed that owning a home and land would contribute to food security. Additionally, 5.67% felt that specific training for job or business would help them address the issue. Overall, participants agreed that land ownership for cultivation, stable employment, and financial stability are key factors for enhancing food security.

2.3 Government services

When asked the survey participants regarding the services and facilities provided by the government to disaster affected people, 64% said they are unaware about the government schemes, whereas 7.5% people said they know. Around 28% participants said they knew little bit about the information. However, 71.70% of people said they received support from the government and 28.30 % did not receive any kind of support from the government. Among them, all people belonging to the Madheshi community received service from the government, however, 36% Dalit did not receive any kind of service from the government as they did not

know about the service information. Although 71.70% of people received government services, 77.4% felt that the quality of these services was poor.

2.4 Reason for not able to rehabilitation after disaster

Three years after the disaster, the lives of survey participants remain largely unchanged, with many continuing to face similar challenges annually and no noticeable improvement in their daily lives. When asked why they have not been able to return to their pre-disaster state, 49% said that they lack sustainable income, as most of their earnings are consumed by daily expenses. Additionally, 13.20% identified ineffective disaster response as a major issue, while 7.59% pointed to insufficient resources as a significant barrier to recovery. Furthermore, 30.20% mentioned other factors, such as social structure and government response, particularly noting that many participants belong to the Dalit community.

When asked about what could facilitate their reintegration into society, 77.36% of participants said that having access to land and owning a house would significantly ease their recovery. In contrast, 22.64% felt that having job opportunities or seed money to start a business would enable their reintegration by improving their financial stability and providing a sustainable income source.

Conclusion:

The purpose of this study was to understand how multi-dimensional issues intersect and create historical marginalization, building a vicious cycle of vulnerability in terms of disaster, landlessness and food security. The findings of this survey provided a clear picture to analyze these components in the context of Madesh Province.

- **Ethnicity, Landlessness and Exclusion**

The findings indicate that 94% of the respondents don't have land rights . The majority of the people who are deprived of land ownership belong to the Madhesi Dalit and Madhesi community. 79% of respondents belong to Dalit and 21% belong to the Madhesi community. Likewise, 69.8% of participants residing in those areas for more than 20 years. Despite residing at the same place for decades, the communities are not entitled to the land rights. Because of these reasons they are constrained to face insufficient access to food, safe housing, increased

risk of disaster and being deprived of government services. Lack of employment, inheritance land and financial constraint were the reasons for the landlessness.

- **Disaster and Multi-dimensional Impact**

The surveyed communities of both districts have been facing fire outburst as major disasters since the last three years. Due to the multiple vulnerability, the impact of disasters are also diverse. The majority of the respondents faced disruption in access to food, water and health as an adverse impact. Likewise, disruption of shelter, loss of livelihood options and mental health problems are also major impacts created in the community. The community relied on the daily wage labor (67.92%) as livelihood options faced higher impacts on their food security as well. 84.90 % of respondents do not have enough food and 94.34 % do not have access to nutritious food. Lack of stable livelihood opportunities and landlessness are the major cause for food insecurity of the surveyed community.

- **Inefficient government intervention and Rebuilding**

A significant proportion of respondents highlighted gaps in government intervention and support. 64% reported being unaware of government schemes, which limited their access to assistance. While some members of the Madhesi community were able to receive government services, 36% of Dalit respondents reported not receiving any support, largely due to lack of information.

In terms of recovery, many households have not yet returned to their pre-disaster state. Nearly 49% reported lacking sustainable income, as most of their earnings are spent on daily expenses. Additionally, 13.20% identified ineffective disaster response and 7.59% cited insufficient resources as major barriers to recovery. Another 30.20% attributed challenges to broader social structures and government response, with Dalit participants disproportionately affected.

When asked about what could facilitate reintegration, 77.36% of participants emphasized the importance of access to land and home ownership, while 22.64% highlighted the need for job opportunities as critical for rebuilding their lives.

Recommendation:

- The government must prioritize and introduce comprehensive and redistributive land reform policies that ensure equitable distribution of land based on historic marginalization.

- Government land reform policies should be able to address the root cause of landlessness such as historical feudalism, caste-based discrimination and capitalist structure.
- The government must enforce and enact effective social protection provisions that guarantee the Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR) of marginalized communities ensuring their access to food, water, housing, healthcare, and education especially in disaster-prone areas.
- Given the diverse and multi-dimensional vulnerabilities of the landless community to disaster, disaster preparedness and response policies should focus on building community resilience and establish a specific disaster recovery framework that address needs of the landless community of intersectional identity.
- Marginalized communities' representation, voice and experiences must be included in decision-making processes related to land governance, land reform process and disaster response in local, provincial, and national governance structures.
- Along with strategic intervention, local government and concerned local stakeholders should implement effective and gender sensitive disaster response programs that address immediate needs of affected communities in a coordinated approach.