

# Participation and Voice for Excluded Women (PAVE)

Learning report

September 2022



**Womankind  
Worldwide**



FEDO



दैतTewa



## About PAVE organisations

### **Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO)**

FEDO's approach recognises the importance of political representation in the voices of Dalit women being heard. The organisation empowers Dalit women to understand and fight for their rights through active political participation. FEDO works from grassroots to policy level and runs regular programmes and projects to eliminate caste and gender-based discrimination and enhance equal rights and opportunities, working on six key priority areas. These include fighting discrimination for Dalit women rights, equitable service delivery, peace and justice, leadership development, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian support, and poverty reduction

### **Tewa**

Tewa works to advance and empower women by fostering a culture of self-reliance through community philanthropy and grant-making to organised groups of women throughout Nepal. Tewa's vision is of a country without discrimination and injustice, in which all women enjoy their rights, freedom and peace. Through funding and capacity development, Tewa supports women to organise, raise their voices collectively and transform discriminatory policies, systems, norms and practices. Tewa's organisational style is to be diverse and inclusive, non-hierarchical, transparent and accountable.

### **Women for Human Rights (WHR)**

WHR was established in 1994 to strengthen the lives of single women (widows) in Nepal. It works for their human rights and economic, social, political and cultural empowerment to enable them to live their lives with dignity and respect. It believes there should be no discrimination on the basis of marital status. As well as providing refuge and counselling, WHR brings together women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds from across the country. They aim to build peace and include women in this process. The organisation works in 73 districts and has more than 100,000 single women members.

### **Womankind Worldwide**

Womankind Worldwide is a global women's rights organisation working with feminist movements to transform the lives of women. Womankind supports feminist movements to strengthen and grow by carrying out diverse joint activities, including advocacy and communications work, women's rights programming rather than service delivery, awareness-raising, knowledge-sharing, research, capacity development and fundraising.

## Introduction

This paper aims to document the results and key learning from the **Participation and Voice for Excluded Women (PAVE)** project in Nepal. The project was collaboratively designed by [Feminist Dalit Organisation](#) (FEDO), [Tewa, Women for Human Rights](#) (WHR) and [Womankind Worldwide](#) and implemented between October 2019 and September 2022 in five districts of Province 7 in Nepal. (Accham, Dadeldhura, Doti, Kanchanpur and Bajura). The project was funded through UK Aid Direct by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK government.

## Background

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) enshrined the rights of women to political participation through the introduction of gender quotas, ensuring 33% of all parliamentary seats and 40% of local election seats are reserved for women. According to FEDO, after the election in 2017, women constituted 40.9% of local government representatives, 16% of ministers and 29.5% of seats in the national parliament.

While women's representation increased in the 2017 election, women were elected to only 2% of the 756 mayor/chair positions and 1% of the 6,742 ward chair seats (*Paswan, 2017*). In Province 7, only two of 54 mayor/chair positions were held by women (*Nepal in Data*). The lack of women in key decision-making positions in Province 7 posed considerable challenges for elected women to meaningfully engage and is indicative of the degree to which political parties, the public, and women themselves, support female leadership.

The lack of marginalised women in positions of power also contributes to the continued oppression of marginalised women on the basis of caste, married status, ethnicity and physical and psychological abilities (Dalit women, single women [widows], women with disabilities, Janajati women), reinforcing multiple discrimination and resulting in lower literacy levels, poorer health outcomes and higher levels of poverty and violence than other sections of society in Province 7 (*2011 Census and 2016 DHS*).



## PAVE's approach and results

PAVE was designed to holistically address the underlying barriers to the lack of meaningful and equal participation, leadership and influence of women, particularly marginalised women, in decision-making in local and provincial level governance structures and communities in the five targeted districts of Province 7 (Accham, Dadeldhura, Doti, Kanchanpur and Bajura).

### **Elected women**

Many elected women lack technical knowledge of the political system and the confidence and skills to participate meaningfully in political dialogue. This includes developing their understanding of procedures and systems underpinning local governance, such as planning and budgeting and developing public speaking skills. Elected women also lack enough income to sustain their political careers.

#### ***What has PAVE done and achieved?***

PAVE provided elected women with leadership training, entrepreneurship training and opportunities to link with government officials and women in community groups so they could represent the views of their constituents more effectively. Evidence collected from elected women demonstrates that all 178 women reached by the project were proactive in contributing to change for their constituents in three key advocacy areas: for infrastructure projects; to allocate funds for marginalised groups; and to ensure women are represented in local user committees.

### **Women in communities**

Women, particularly marginalised women, lack knowledge of their rights and entitlements, including government budget allocations, and are unaware of political processes. Taken together, these factors prevent the issues these women face being heard in communities and by decision-makers. Political participation of marginalised women is also weakened by economic and time constraints, with women being primarily responsible for all the home-based care work in addition to livelihood activities.

#### ***What has PAVE done and achieved?***

PAVE has worked through community women's group structures (spaces that promote change, support women's individual agency and the power of collective problem solving and group action) to bring this new knowledge directly to marginalised women and link them to elected women leaders so they can air their issues. Some women have also received leadership training, with some contesting the local election in 2022 and a significant number being engaged in local leadership roles.

In addition to support through group savings and loans schemes, the most marginalised women in each group also received tailored entrepreneurship training and support to establish and strengthen their businesses. In addition, political party membership and active leadership within parties has escalated, with 392 women taking up new positions/membership in political parties since PAVE began, with 157 in the role of treasurer and vice president.

### **Community members**

Community members outside of women's community groups also lack the knowledge, skills and resources to actively support women's participation and leadership due to negative gendered social norms and a lack of knowledge of women's rights and gender equality.



### ***What has PAVE done and achieved?***

PAVE has raised awareness of gender inequality through locally led in-person campaigns (such as campaigning around the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence) and run radio programme slots about marginalised women. PAVE has also held training for local government administrative officials on gendered resource budgeting and established and supported networks of journalists in each district, who have written over 70 articles in the local media about the importance of marginalised women's participation. Evidence from family members in 25 households across the project also indicated how social norms had begun to shift in the home as a result of PAVE. Male interviewees, in particular, were found to be more aware and supportive about the lived realities for marginalised women and the importance of their participation in civic spaces.

### **Women's movement**

The women's movement in Nepal (a collective group of organisations and individuals with mutual aspirations for gender equality) often lacks sustained coordination and effective mechanisms to promote collective working on women's participation and leadership and the knowledge to incorporate the specific needs of marginalised women into their planning.

### ***What has PAVE done and achieved?***

The women's movement has strengthened the Women's Network for Social Transformation (WONEST) in Province 7 through leadership, advocacy, campaigning and political empowerment training. WONEST delivered a unified campaign ahead of the elections on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022 demanding women's representation beyond the quota limit of 33% and that women be nominated for 50% of the seats.



## Implementation context

### Coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic began in March 2020, the month PAVE was due to begin implementation. Nepal was particularly affected, with multiple lockdowns imposed across the country preventing activities and travel and many project staff becoming ill themselves. During the period of lockdown, the PAVE team was able to adapt its plans to pivot towards emergency response planning and distributed much-needed emergency relief supplies to affected communities across the five project districts once travel was allowed. Elected women in each district played a pivotal role in relief planning and distribution in partnership with local government officials. This intervention was a testament to the motivation and commitment of elected women to their constituents and created a strong foundation for relationship building that continued for the rest of the project.

### May 2022 election

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022, Provincial Elections took place in Nepal. Overall, there was a rise in women's positions in the elections, but not in the powerful seats of deputy mayor or mayor. The number of elected women engaged in PAVE who were re-elected reduced from 178 to 27, obviously a significant disappointment for the PAVE team. However, this reduction is mainly due to collective political bargaining between leading political parties to oust the current political party from office. In coming together, the alliance of parties did not need to follow a key gender parity rule of the Nepali Election Commission: that all political parties engaged in elections must forward a woman candidate for the position of mayor or deputy Mayor at district level. The political alliance put forward men as their candidates in almost all cases and won a significant number of seats. This loophole in the Local Election Act has a significant impact on the meaningful inclusion of women and marginalised groups. It goes against articles in the Constitution of Nepal enshrining the rights of women to political participation by reserving 40% of local government seats for women. While the results are drastically lower than expected, there is still success behind these numbers and much learning for the women's rights movement in Nepal ahead of the Federal Elections in November 2022.

**Seven elected women** have been re-elected to ward member seats. This is significant as it continues to provide an opportunity to advocate in government spaces for the realisation of rights and resources for Dalit women. Two women that won seats, in Accham and Doti, have also been elected to District Co-Ordination Committees, which have a lot of influencing power in the districts.

**10 women from community women's groups** have been elected for the first time into political office and this is significant for them and for their communities. It is testament to the work of PAVE to increase their knowledge and skills and encourage participation as active citizens inspired by the elected women around them.

**Eight women** who took part in the mentoring programme have been elected as ward members positions for the first time. This is a testament to the success of the mentoring approach used by the project in building women's political aspirations to run for office and allocate their time and resources for campaigning.

Successes achieved by PAVE are in spite of significant barriers and much has been learnt during the project implementation. This paper seeks to draw out three areas of learning from the project:

- 1) **What is the role of livelihood interventions in the meaningful engagement of women from marginalised groups in political participation?**
- 2) **How has the feedback from women from marginalised groups helped to deepen project interventions and make them more relevant and responsive to their needs?**
- 3) **What are the ways partner organisations can build on their expertise as they practice working in an intersectional manner to support marginalised women's political participation?**

## Areas of learning

### What is the role of livelihood interventions for the meaningful engagement of women from marginalised groups in political participation?

During project design, limited **household income coupled with a lack of financial independence, low family and community support and respect** and the **prevalence of harmful gender norms** were highlighted as major barriers for marginalised women to participate in leadership and decision-making.

Most women fulfil a triple time and work burden in their lives and this is a major barrier to their rights to full participation in all spheres of society. Women are expected to manage all reproductive work including domestic work (childcare, care for sick family members), productive work (work for income including informal and formal work) and community work (including local leadership roles and commitments). The volume of time involved in these three areas is not equally shared by men, especially reproductive work, which means women spend more of their time in the home rather than public spaces. This reality contributes to the myth that women belong in the home and the natural space for men is outside the home in more public-facing leadership and decision-making roles.

Dhauliji in Amargadi Municipality (Dadeldhura District) explains her reality: *'My husband's good at everything else. He's never angry. But even if he's starving he won't cook something for himself or eat; forget that, he won't even fetch water from the vessel. If I remind him, he will eat, otherwise he will not eat. If I have to go to social work in the morning, he will go hungry all day. If I ask why, he'll say he doesn't know how to'*.<sup>1</sup>

Even though women contribute more than their fair share to households, harmful gender norms can also dictate that women are financially not independent from their husbands and other household members such as in-laws. Women often have to ask permission to use household income on community and governance activities and seek support with reproductive work and this is not always forthcoming.

Even if women are able to step out of the home and attend governance spaces with support, the costs involved in being meaningfully politically active are extremely high in Nepal which is often impossible for marginalised women. Running campaigns for formal office requires a high cost which many women can't raise so they often get overlooked for candidature by political parties. This is in addition to political networks of influence that women don't have access to due to gender discrimination and the ongoing myth that women belong in the home.

PAVE has sought to address these barriers through three main interventions. **Tailored livelihoods training and the provision of seed money** has been provided to the most marginalised elected women and those in women's community groups to build up their businesses. Additionally, women meeting monthly in community groups have been supported to develop financial management knowledge, confidence and skills by being engaged in **savings and loans activities**. Taken together, these activities have increased income, promoted a savings culture and built confidence in financial literacy, having a positive impact on how women view themselves and are treated by family members and those in the community. In some cases, women have used increased income to directly engage in their political careers but for the majority of women, the two main livelihood interventions have been instrumental in laying the foundations for them to be able to step into more formal leadership positions in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> PAVE Rapid Gendered Livelihood and Market Analysis (Federation of Business and Professional Women Nepal)

In the examples below, women engaged in PAVE livelihood interventions share how they have benefited and the importance of economic empowerment in fostering a more conducive enabling environment for their own women's political aspirations even if they have not been elected or re-elected.

## Elected women

Kokila B.K is the only woman who was re-elected from Bajura, one of the most remote districts of Province 7. Koila struggled to get to government meetings before she received seed money from PAVE to improve her business of making iron dishes. Her business has now begun to earn excess income which she has used to travel to Martadi town for meetings. Her family have also stepped in to support her with childcare in her absence, as she can sometimes be away for up to 15 days. This example shows how some families have changed their behaviour to support the political careers of elected women and it is hoped this will have a wider impact on social norms that consider a woman's primary role to be in the home. Furthermore, the previously elected women who have received the seed money but not been re-elected are also found to be extremely motivated to continue their political journeys.

Tara Devi Giri started goat rearing after receiving seed money from the project. This single woman from Kanchanpur, Beldandi, Rural Municipal-3, is a re-elected candidate in the local level election. Apart from her political journey, she is fully engaged at home rearing her goats. As festive season approaches, she hopes to earn a good amount and enjoy the festivities with her family. The support has liberated her politically, made her financially stable, independent and able to look after herself and family members and maintain prestige within different social strata, ultimately empowering her to thrive and grow.

Dhana Devi Ode is an elected woman from Amargadhi Municipality-3, Dadeldhura. With the seed money received, she has been progressive in her business transactions. She has invested money saved from profits in her successful local election campaign. She says: *'The growing business and network at the local level community has impacted a positive image about me towards the community people. I am taken as one of the examples at the ward level for prosperous political and economic status.'*

Dipa Shrestha is a re-elected woman representative at ward level. A seed money recipient from Doti, Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality-6, she has been grateful for the investment. She explains: *'Being a single woman is harsh in the society of patriarchy, as women have to completely depend upon men to support daily livelihood.'* But after starting her own small business with support from the project, she has been able to financially take care of her own family. Many things like nutritious food, quality education, good health check-ups have been possible, which would not have been before.

*'The feeling of being re-elected at local level is unexplainable. I am really looking forward to this tenure as there are many things to be done for women which the new elected representatives along with me are excited about,'* says Ghanti BK of Achham. She is also a seed money recipient who has invested in her small business and she has the wholehearted support of her family. The money saved was used for the election campaign making it possible for her to reach to the different community of diverse women. She says: *'That project has directly supported me financially: however, the indirect implication of the project is even more. Many women like me are slowly but steadily being an example for change, being financially independent, politically aware and socially active.'*

## Women in community women's groups

Juna Karki from Bajura, Badimalika Urban Municipal-1, is a visually impaired married woman. She says: *'Because of the condition, I am not able to work technically to support my family.'* However, with the constant support from the project in empowering women through technical and financial assistance, Mrs Karki with the help of her family members started goat rearing. She has built a



shed for the goats and has been taking care of grazing and vaccinations. The financial stability in the family has grown. She is even able to save money and provide quality education for the children. The involvement has helped her to build social prestige as people have started perceiving her differently. Connections with other financial institutions have further strengthened the networking.

Sabitri Sunar, a single woman from Kanchanpur, Suklaphata Urban Municipal-6, was a local election candidate, but was unable to win. *'Probably, being a single woman, plus economically not well-off to invest in the election campaign is the reason I didn't win.'* With seed money from the project, she has invested in goat rearing, to sustain her life without deprivation. Being involved in an array of activities through the project, political activeness has empowered her vocally and built her capacity in life skills.

Yasodha Tamrakar, a permanent resident from Dadeldhura, Nabadurga Rural Municipal-1, is a grocery shop owner. She was a local level election candidate but was not voted in as the representative. She says: *'It was a very new learning experience, reaching out to people, considering their voices, campaigning for the election. The experience has been quite a learning ride to get to know about the community, women and other sections of the community.'* Savings from tailoring have helped her grow financially, made her independent and provided quality education for the children. The changing status of the family has boosted her confidence to stand strong and grow accordingly.

*'I have been selling buffalo milk in the market and earning 600 NPR daily,'* says Rekha Pariyar from Mangalsen-8 Achham. With the growing sales and support from the PAVE project to buy nutrition and vaccinations, caring for the buffaloes has been easier. *'The microfinances have started trusting me when I request loans - before they used to suspect just because of me being single woman and not financially strong,'* she adds. Life is going better for her as she can now take care of the basic needs of her family members.



## How has the feedback from women from marginalised groups helped to deepen project interventions and make them more relevant and responsive to their needs?

The PAVE project centres the needs and aspirations of marginalised women in Province 7 of Nepal. It has been a critical part of the project cycle to meaningfully engage marginalised women in the implementation of the project to ensure they are not simply passive recipients of activities designed by FEDO, TEWA and WHR.

*Project management processes:* FEDO, WHR and Tewa have all worked with and through five district coordination teams for PAVE. District teams have been at the forefront of project delivery and worked closely with social mobilisers who themselves are part of the communities being supported. PAVE project coordinators have weekly and monthly meetings with their district teams and these spaces are used to share feedback given by project participants outside of the more formal channels listed below.

*Activity feedback mechanisms:* PAVE has also used written and verbal feedback and evaluation mechanisms from training delivered through the project, including on livelihoods and leadership, to gather feedback and inform adaptation.

*Data collection within the PAVE MEL Framework:* The MEL framework was also designed to gather feedback on a regular basis from those engaged in the project. A general feedback form was created to be inclusive of those with low levels of literacy and then share feedback with project participants within 30 days of receiving their responses to let them know of any actions or developments arising from their input.

*Needs assessments:* During project implementation, periodic assessments were carried out to gauge the specific needs of marginalised groups. This was especially critical in understanding the needs of communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as natural disasters not factored into the project design process.



## **Examples of responding to the needs of the most marginalised women**

*COVID-19 response:* During the first COVID lockdown, the PAVE team carried out a needs assessment with local stakeholders in Province 7 to understand who the most marginalised households were. The assessment was conducted in close liaison with government officials, elected women in each target district and with women in existing community groups (especially to track incidences of violence and the type of relief items needed). The feedback enabled the PAVE team to procure appropriate relief supplies to match local consumption needs including rice, lentils, cereals and oil. As women were a key group, the assessment had a specific gender dimension and as a result, sanitation, hygiene and dignity kits were also purchased. A local counsellor was also provided to support women who were reporting higher rates of domestic violence as a result of the lockdown.

The most marginalised women were also meaningfully consulted as part of the Gendered Market Assessment process to understand their socio-economic status. The results of focus group discussions (FGDs) with elected women and women in community groups informed the types of livelihood training to be delivered through the project. The FGDs also gauged feedback from family members about the extent to which they were assisting women to pursue their engagement in community leadership and political life.

### **Location**

PAVE is being implemented in some of the most geographically marginalised districts of Province 7 and Nepal. In Bajura district in particular, women attending the community group meetings, which would usually be held outside due to the pandemic and social distancing requirements, requested meetings during the harsher colder months between October and March should be held indoors. Social mobilisers worked closely with the district coordinators to find indoor spaces in local schools and health posts that could accommodate the groups in a safe, COVID-secure way. Bajura district is also severely affected during the monsoon season with many roads being impassable due to landslides. The 30 women involved in the training could not physically reach the original training venue in Accham and so this was relocated to a space within Bajura district.

### **Disability access**

TEWA coordinated a training on disability inclusion for the full partner team in each district to support awareness about how to meaningfully include women with disabilities in all project activities. In practical terms, this meant every project activity was assessed through the lens of disability accessibility with particular focus on physical issues. The project team were introduced to the realities of access by the training provider, himself a person with a disability. In booking the residential training venue, the consultant had been given a room on a higher floor but this was not suitable for him as a wheelchair user. The PAVE team relocated him to a ground floor room for the duration of the training.

Since the training, PAVE colleagues have been planning meetings and events with disability access in mind. For example, when the women's community groups met in Shuklaphanta Municipality in Kanchanpur, a venue was chosen closer to the home of a woman with a disability to reduce her travel time. In the same district, venues for the journalist network meetings were also changed to accommodate a journalist with a disability. In Dadeldhura district, the monthly forum took place at a venue with accessible toilets and on the ground floor.

### **Responding to women's reproductive role**

For women to attend project training, they have often had to travel for hours, or even a whole day to the venues. For some women this would have meant leaving their children behind, including infants. Being mindful of this reality and in consultation with women, the PAVE team ensured women with caring needs could bring a caregiver with them so they could engage fully in the training.

## Literacy

Many of the women in the PAVE target areas have low or no formal literacy. Elected women with low literacy engaged in the first set of leadership training fed back that the resource materials made too much use of the written word and they felt excluded. The PAVE team responded by adjusting the training materials to incorporate more visual materials like videos and more interactive group sessions.

## Distribution of seed funds to support entrepreneurship

In Doti, the district team gave the responsibility to the community group members themselves to select the most vulnerable and underprivileged members in the group to avoid conflict within the group, which had been a concern raised by group leaders. Similarly, during monsoon season it was difficult to have group meetings in the open air so social mobilisers asked the nearby school to provide them with a classroom after school hours.

## Leadership training focus

Before the training, elected women were asked if there were any specific topics they were interested to focus on. Many across the five districts stated they would like more time to be spent on public speaking and understanding Gender Responsive Budgeting, topics that would substantially support their political careers. The subsequent leadership training therefore gave more emphasis and time in the schedule to these areas.

## What are the ways partner organisations can build on their expertise as they practice working in an intersectional manner to support marginalised women's political participation?

PAVE partners have decades of experience in specific sectors within the wider women's movement in Nepal: FEDO in working with Dalit women, Tewa working with women's organisations in Nepal and WHR with single women. However, historically, women's rights organisations in Nepal have tended to work in silos, with each organisation advocating for their own group's rights rather than standing in solidarity with women with other identities.

While there was a growing understanding of the importance and need for intersectionality within the women's movement, there is still room to enhance capacity around how to work in a more intersectional manner. PAVE was specifically designed to be an intersectional project both through the collaboration and sharing of knowledge between partners and through the application of new knowledge through project implementation.

## In reflecting on PAVE's progress in taking an intersectional approach, the PAVE team considered where each organisation started and what they were able to do during the project.

Tewa as a women's fund in Nepal prides itself on having inclusive grant-making processes and a focus on building the capacity of a range of different women's rights organisations. Through PAVE, Tewa worked with Women's Development Forum (WDF) in Bajura, which requires a deep understanding of the realities for rural women marginalised by their location.

Through PAVE, Tewa understood more clearly the importance of ensuring women with disabilities are included in all aspects of project implementation. Tewa has now considered which of its partners may need more support because of intersecting marginalisation in its grant-making processes. Decision-making on grant-giving now looks for additional marginalisation intersecting with gender including disability, sexuality and gender identity.



In Bajura, Tewa established women's community groups for the first time under PAVE, unlike FEDO and WHR who already had groups established. Tewa was able to create the groups with intersectionality in mind in terms of representation and inclusion giving priority to single women, women with disabilities and Dalit women. Working with WDF, Tewa carried out a small study to understand who was the most marginalised and in which wards, so they could make sure PAVE support was properly targeted.

WHR was an organisation focused solely on issues for single women before PAVE and the only areas where inclusion beyond this were considered was at the board and staff level. The PAVE disability training in particular has been very powerful learning for WHR, who had never considered the additional needs of single women with disabilities before the project. WHR has made some significant changes in its decision-making structures by making sure there are women from marginalised communities on their board and recruiting staff members from multiple caste identities.

WHR intentionally made changes in PAVE activities to ensure there were representatives from all marginalised groups in the women's community groups and monthly forums with elected women.

FEDO is the main organisation in the PAVE consortium focused on Dalit rights. Many marginalised Dalit women are also single women and FEDO had been acting in solidarity with the single women's movement with this understanding prior to PAVE. Women with disabilities had been less of a focus for FEDO, but they have also given more attention to this through the project, in addition to women from other identities such as lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex identifying (LBTI) women. The dialogue series between elected women and government officials in August 2022 focused on women with disabilities who attended as speakers to share their lived realities and for those attending to understanding their economic and social rights and entitlements.

FEDO was also able to practice an intersectional approach through the COVID-19 pandemic by making sure through their emergency relief targeting criteria sought out the most marginalised individual women based on caste, economic status, ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation.

**Together the partners have grown their knowledge of intersectionality by working together and not just because of training and other project inputs**

Tewa has gained a lot of new perspectives from FEDO and WHR which will help to grow the organisation's systems and practices as an intersectional women's fund. Tewa now understands the importance of taking a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) lens to their work and always questioning more than what appears on the surface. They understand single women are not only single because their husbands have died but also because they have left to work in other countries, a common factor in Province 7 in Nepal. Tewa has also learnt from FEDO about Dalit rights, reflected on their privileges as a non-Dalit organisation in the women's movement and sought out opportunities to advocate proactively for Dalit rights.

WHR especially learnt from FEDO about Dalit rights and the realities for Dalit women in rural areas. Additionally, single women fed back to WHR that their focus was too narrow on high caste single women identifying as Brahmin or Chetri. As PAVE has shown, there are many single women who also identify as Dalit who were being unintentionally excluded from WHR's work before PAVE. WHR has made some significant changes in its decision-making structures by making sure there are women from marginalised communities on their board and recruiting staff members from multiple caste identities. Also, organisational planning meetings of WHR in 2022 have included a discussion on intersectionality for the first time in the organisation's history and it was agreed to carry out a study of intersectionality among single women to generate data to be used to plan WHR's future work.

FEDO have benefitted from being in a consortium with Tewa and WHR, helping to internalise the multiple issues marginalised women face in Province 7. FEDO is already planning how to make intersectional programming central to their work in their implementation districts of Accham and Dadeldhura after the project has ended.

PAVE has disaggregated data by identity (age, gender, caste, married status and disability) and this has contributed to seeing where undue emphasis is being given in the project in terms of age or identity and led to adaptations. While quotas for political participation of marginalised groups are a critical start, they are not a long-term sustainable solution to meaningful inclusion of all marginalised women in Nepal. The women’s movement has a key role to play in making sure it is diverse and intersectional and advocates for all marginalised women to be meaningfully engaged in politics.

## Conclusion

PAVE has established systems and structures to support the project’s sustainability.

Newly-elected women are already working with previously elected women so key knowledge from the leadership manual is shared. Previously elected women continue to attend monthly forums to build relationships with newly-elected government officials.

The women’s rights network in Province 7 also offers a space in which to continue to advocate and lobby for women’s political participation and representation and capacity strengthening, building on the successes of PAVE and linking with national efforts ahead of the federal elections in November 2022. WHR and FEDO are also partnering with Sankalpa, the main women’s movement alliance organisation in Nepal, who have been active in analysing the results of the election and drawing together lessons for the women’s movement ahead of those elections.

Tewa, WHR and FEDO will also continue their alliance within many spaces in the women’s movement, not only through the established women’s platform in Province 7 but also more nationally. Within these spaces they can bring their new knowledge on intersectionality so the needs of all women can be woven into campaigns advocating for political participation.



## Photo captions

Page 1 - Saraswoti Poudel, 27, is a single woman with two children. She started working after her husband passed away two years ago. She joined the single women group and learned about different training that is available. She started as a small shop, but after attending the PAVE project workshop, she expanded her store. She sells jewellery boxes and raw materials to jewellery stores. Her store is the only store in Dadheldhura that sells these products so she is making a good income.

Page 3 - Chandra Devi Marasi, 34, a single woman and mother, runs a small grocery shop outside her house in Doti district. After her husband died, she had to take care of her family, fulfil their basic needs and pay her husband's debts. With the support of PAVE project, she received NPR 20,000 and additional training to establish her business. With the seed money, she added some cosmetics and food items.

Page 5 - Guddi Nepali, Rama Devi Bhandari, Laxmi Kumari Khatri Khadka. Rama Devi Bhandari Bista, 55, is a single women who makes a living by rearing goats. She received seed money of NPR 20,000 through the PAVE project, which she used to buy goats.

Page 9 - Tara Devi Giri, 40, is a re-elected member in Ward 3 of Beldadi rural municipality. Her husband was killed during the 10-year Maoist conflict. She always wanted to be involved in politics but feared public speaking. Even though she was elected as a ward member in the previous election, she couldn't express her ideas and would agree to others' decisions. After being a part of the PAVE project, she understood the value of her position and started to speak up for the rights of women. She also lobbied for a decent position in this recent election. Even though her party didn't provide a ticket for a good position, she was re-elected as an executive member of a rural municipality. With the NPR 30,000 seed money, she purchased additional goats. To expand her business, she added some money to the seed money and constructed a shed for her goats.

Page 10 - Kamala Devi Karki, 55, is a single woman who lives with her sons. She is the former vice chairperson of the Beldandi Rural Municipality. She owns a poultry farm and has been running it with her sons. With the support of PAVE she received NPR 30,000, which she used to make a roadway to her poultry farm. Now, it is easier for the supplier to drive the vehicle up to the farm.

Page 14 - Smriti Chunara B.K., 28, is a re-elected member. A month ago, she was appointed as deputy chief of the District Coordination Committee in Doti district. During her college days, she became a member of the Nepal Students Union. After that, she rejoined the political party in 2016 and gave her nomination for an election in 2017. After being in the government position, she initiated birthing centres inside newly established health units in the district. She is also running a hotel business. Under the PAVE project, she received seed money of NPR 30,000 to expand her hotel business. Her business supported her financially during the election.

**All photos: @WomanKind Worldwide/Sajana Shrestha**

