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The Women of Dho Tarap: Gender Roles, Challenges, and Change in Dolpo, Nepal

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The Women of Dho Tarap:
Gender Roles, Challenges, and Change in Dolpo, Nepal

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Abstract
By collecting and examining first-hand accounts of women and men from Dho Tarap, this report illustrates the many challenges that women report facing throughout their lives in Dolpo, offers a conceptual framework for understanding the significance of gender, and highlights women’s thoughts on change. The difficulties that women face appear to be due to cultural concepts that suggest that women are less capable than men, social norms that provide various learning and growth opportunities to men but not to women, and customs that result in women experiencing discriminate treatment in the home and community. Through an analysis of the role of gender, it seems that both women and men internalize concepts regarding female inferiority which resultantly hamper women in various aspects of life. Despite this pattern, it appears that the recent introduction of formal education, both in Dho Tarap and Kathmandu, is facilitating shifts in the perspectives of young people and disrupting the cycle of traditions that have governed gender roles for many generations. Although concepts of women’s empowerment are not currently prevalent within Dho Tarap, both young and elder women are hopeful for change in the future as many wish to see improvements in the status of women.
Acknowledgements

For my research and the creation of this report, I am indebted to countless individuals. To begin, I must thank the SIT staff and, in particular, Phurwa Dhondup for providing me with the cultural, geopolitical, historical, and linguistic knowledge that allowed me to have an understanding of Nepal, Tibetan culture, and women’s issues in the region. Additionally, without the help of my two-co-researchers, very many conversations would have been impossible, and much information would have been lost. I also feel a great deal of appreciation for the handful of others who either assisted me in logistics, took me into their home as one of their own, or were willing to make the long journey with me from Kathmandu to Dho Tarap.

Above all, I want to give a very special thank you to the young women at the Snow Leopard Residence in Kathmandu. This research would have been far less developed and my experience far less meaningful if it were not for the group of women who were willing to speak with me about the challenges they face, help me understand the role that gender plays within Dho Tarap, and serve as the foundation for this research. To them, I dedicate this work and thank for their endless help, friendship, and support.
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Introduction

During the final month of my semester in Nepal, I had the opportunity to perform four weeks of independent research. Preceding this period, I spent many days during the previous two and a half months of my time in Nepal visiting the Snow Leopard Residence in Boudha—a residential hostel for students from Dho Tarap who live in Kathmandu while completing classes eight through twelve. It was during this time that I was fortunate enough to build friendships with very many students who taught me about life in Dho Tarap and about the various issues that their community faces. After several weeks of visiting the Snow Leopard Residence, I began to talk with young women of the upper grades about the challenges that women face in Dolpo and about their hopes for change. As a result of these conversations and the mutual learning that arose, I decided to dedicate the focus of my independent research period to the status of women in Dho Tarap, the difficulties that women face, and women’s thoughts on change. This report is the first version of what resulted from my attempts to listen, understand, and present the voices and stories of various women whose willingness to speak with me made this research possible, purposeful, and enlightening.

In the creation of this report, I have tried my best to exclude my own voice and, instead, to allow the voices of those I interviewed to speak for themselves. This report’s illustration of women’s issues, the role of gender, and women’s hopes for change is based primarily upon the accounts of women. Bibliographical sources were referenced and used to help shape the mental framework that which I applied during my research, analysis of data, and in the creation of this report. The report is structured in such a way that readers can become aware of the many challenges that women face throughout their lifespan, consider a framework for understanding how gender works in society, and finally understand women’s thoughts on empowerment and change. The first section, where the challenges of women are illustrated, is organized in a chronological order, starting at birth and ending at old age. It contains ten sub-sections that roughly lay out the lifespan of a woman. I recognize and implore readers to understand that what is presented below does not offer a full portrait of the life of women in Dho Tarap—a task that is impossible for me to complete considering my positionality as both a man and a foreigner. Instead, I have attempted to use my interviews, as opposed to my own convictions, as a foundation for highlighting and accurately representing the very many issues that women face in Dho Tarap.
After Section I, the paper continues by offering an analysis of self-concept and gender. This analysis was produced after I returned to Kathmandu from Dho Tarap and reconnected with eight of my original interviewees to discuss my interpretation of my findings, how I came to understand the role that gender plays within the community, and the ways that which gender affects the self-concept of women. The analysis I offer is just one way to understand how gender may operate in Dho Tarap. It is important to note that this analysis incorporates the suggestions of individuals from Dho Tarap whom were willing to sit down with me to explore and edit my analysis before I published this report. In the last three sections, I present my interviewees’ opinions on change and empowerment, their hopes for the next generation, and what they would tell community leaders. Although this report may appear critical of culture within Dho Tarap, it was not written to serve as a platform for my own opinions. Instead, the criticisms offered in this paper are present due to my efforts to unbiasedly present the viewpoints of various women from Dho Tarap.

Finally, although much of what is presented as the words of interviewees is a criticism of traditions and the ways that women are treated, it is important to note that many women made it very clear that although they feel change should occur, they have a deep love for Dolpo as their home and are proud to have been born in Dho Tarap. It is also important to note that within Dho Tarap, only two genders are recognized, and gender is traditionally connected with biological sex at birth. Considering the framework that which gender is understood in Dho Tarap, I have produced this report. In closing, I implore readers to keep in mind that the culture of Dho Tarap is far more complex than this short paper is able to portray or that I can understand through one month of research.
Methodology

The Dho Tarap valley is geographically located in Upper Dolpo and lies at about four-thousand meters above sea level. Communities within the valley practice Tibetan culture and speak a dialect of Tibetan language. The main sources of economic sustenance include agriculture, animal husbandry, and the yartsa gunbu trade. The villages within the valley are currently inaccessible by road and lack access to internet (with exception of Wi-Fi at the Crystal Mountain School). Within Dho Tarap, I spent most of my time in the village of Dho completing my fieldwork.

The majority of my research was performed through one-on-one and group interviews as well as through an exploration of existing literature on women’s issues in Nepal. Interviewees were selected using the snowball method and through recommendations. Due to cultural norms and my positionality as a man, I applied several strategies to help ensure that my interviewees felt comfortable and safe during conversation. To begin, I worked with two co-researchers who were women and present during interviews for the purpose of translation. This ensured that there were always at least two women in the room with me (unless the interviewee expressed comfort and a desire to do a one-on-one interview). Additionally, I opted to run group interviews where there were more than one woman (besides the co-researcher) participating in the interview at a time. Furthermore, I intentionally avoided asking questions about sensitive issues that are atypical to be discussed with men in Dho Tarap. Instead, I crafted questions in a way that gave interviewees the option to discuss challenges specific to women but that did not put interviewees in a position where it was necessary for them to respond with answers related to sensitive topics (ex. menstruation, domestic violence, etc.). Using these strategies, as well as others, helped to balance the power dynamic inherent with my positionality and privilege as a man and outsider.

Before officially selecting my research topic, I met with four people from Dho Tarap, who were residing in Kathmandu, to discuss my potential research idea. During our meeting, we discussed whether they felt it was appropriate for me to explore this topic (considering my positionality and the nature of the topic), methods for performing this research in Dho Tarap, challenges that could arise, and cultural norms that I would need to be cognizant of. The four members of the Dho Tarap community were enthusiastic about and approved of my idea, and they gave me several recommendations related to research methods. Advice included the need to be honest with the interviewees about exactly what I was researching and why I was there as
well as to collaborate with the co-researchers before and during interviews to ensure that questions were posed in such a way so that they would be culturally appropriate.

As a precedent, I received oral consent from all interviewees. This was due to cultural appropriateness and the illiteracy of many participants. Before beginning interviews, I made it clear that individuals could stop an interview at point that they wished, skip questions that they felt uncomfortable answering, ask me questions, as well as several other options. With minors who wished to be interviewed, I performed these interviews after receiving consent from their parents or a guardian. Some interviews were audio-recorded. For these interviews, I received consent from participants to audio-record the interviews before beginning. Audio-recorded interviews were uploaded to my computer after each interview and kept under a locked file. No one besides myself has access to these files. The audio-recordings were only used for the purpose of transcribing the interviews and to check written notes that were taken during interviews.

In addition to my interviews, I analyzed existing academic literature and research for this report. In analyzing my data, drawing conclusions, and interpreting data, I have highlighted similarities in stories and responses shared by women and other interviewees. All interviewees are completely anonymous in this report. This is due to the sensitive nature of this topic, the small community size of Dho Tarap, and the potential social repercussions that could result from individuals sharing various viewpoints presented in this report. The purpose of this research is to highlight the common challenges that women communicated to me and face in Dho Tarap, the various perspectives on these challenges, and to analyze the role of gender in Dolpo.
Section I: The Life and Challenges of Women in Dho Tarap

A. Birth and Early Childhood

Before a woman is even born, the traditions and concepts surrounding the birth of a child foreshadow a life of hardship for those who are female. Prior to knowing the sex of the child, it is common in Dho Tarap for parents to hope for the birth of a male—one who is of the “preferred” sex within Dho Tarap and who can inherit the land of the family. If parents do not have a boy, it is common for families to continue having children until a male is born. Names given to newborns may reflect this reality (it is common in Dho Tarap for people’s names to have specific meanings). For example, if the first child is a girl and the parents want to have a boy, they may name the child “Bhuti” which in English can roughly be translated to “continue with boy.” Evidently, this name reflects the desire of parents to have a male child during their next pregnancy.

Upon birth, women receive the label of “kaymen” (a term also commonly used to refer to one’s wife). The component parts of the word possess specific meanings. Although interviewees expressed definitions with slight variance, “kay” was commonly translated to English as “birth” and “men” was commonly translated to English as “low”. Thus, upon birth, females receive a label that marks them as having a “lower birth” than males. This label bares significance. One young woman explained how she interprets the term as a way of communicating to women that they do not have the same capacities as men and that men are beyond women.

As women age and become accustomed to the social norms present within Dho Tarap, social practices exist that discriminately treat women differently than men. For example, the possessions of men are often treated in a higher regard than those of women. If a woman’s foot is to touch the clothes of her father, then she is excepted to apologize what is considered her mistake. Similarly, women are not permitted to physically step over (raise one’s foot above) the possessions of a man (father or son); however, men are permitted to step over the possessions of a woman (mother or daughter). Furthermore, when women perform the task of washing the

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1 Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
2 Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
3 Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
4 Interview #7, personal communication, April 23, 2018.
5 Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018.
6 Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
7 Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.
clothes of the entire family (a task typically performed by women in their role as housewives), young women may take notice to the fact that the clothes of the father are often washed separately from the clothes of the rest of the family.\textsuperscript{8} At the age of about 5 or 6 years old, young women begin to assist their mothers in her duties as a housewife (washing clothes, fetching water, washing dishes, etc.)—a role that often involves tasks that not only complete household chores, but that involve serving men (see sub-section \textit{G. Gender Roles within Family Life and Work} for further analysis).\textsuperscript{9}

Some of the most noticeable early differences in how men and women are treated can be observed within the setting of the kitchen. Most homes in Dho Tarap function around a communal kitchen space where a stove is positioned at the center of the room and people sit in a circle around the stove. The seating arrangement follows a specific social hierarchy which was almost unfailingly abided by during observation. Mothers of the home often sit directly in front of the stove (where she can best tend the fire and serve the family members and/or guests). Moving in a clockwise direction from the mother (the mother at twelve o’clock), mats and/or different seating objects are typically set out for people to sit on while around the stove. The quality and type of mat usually differs depending on where one sits. The best mats are laid out for guests and/or family members on the right side of the stove (three o’clock) as well as on the opposite side of the mother (six o’clock). The mats on the right side are usually of the highest quality (thickest and most well cushioned) and may sometimes have a back cushion for individuals to lean on. Moving clockwise from the three o’clock position, mats become of increasingly worse quality and/or contain less padding. To the left of the mother (nine o’clock), there was, in observation, usually only a very thin mat or a small wood stool for people to sit on.

Considering this specific layout of mats, guests and/or family members will typically sit in a very specific order. When sitting down, the best seats are usually filled according to the following ranking (going clockwise from the mother’s position around the stove and from high to low quality of seating): 1) a holy person (monk before nun); 2) position with community (community leaders receiving better spots); 3) gender (men before women); 4) age.\textsuperscript{10} By this

\textsuperscript{8} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10} Interview #7, personal communication, April 23, 2018; Interview #10, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
logic and continuously noted in observation, women, especially young women, fall at the bottom of this ranking and often find themselves with the least comfortable seating arrangement. Contrastingly men almost always find themselves in the most comfortable positions. One woman expressed that even though her family has more than enough mats to surround the entirety of the stove, they do not lay them out in the spots that the girls typically sit.\footnote{Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.} Within this social setting, further discriminatory practices are found as men often receive bigger bowls, spoons, and cups and are served before women during dining.\footnote{Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.}

Thus, from a young age, women often find themselves receiving poorer treatment than men in a variety of settings due to their gender. Some young women described how at a young age, women will not need to be taught these cultural norms. Instead, they learn these customs through observations, for everyone in the community abides by them. Resultantly, women begin to see at a very young age how men are treated and thought of as the superior gender. As a result, women reported that they will often experience feelings of inferiority beginning at a very young age.\footnote{Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.}

\begin{center}
\textit{A typical kitchen setting. Photo by author.}
\end{center}
B. Education

Today, almost all children in Dho Tarap are sent to be formally educated at Crystal Mountain School (CMS). The school was founded in 1993 by an organization called Action Dolpo and lies in the center of the Dho Tarap valley between Dho and Tokyou.\(^{14}\) However, when the school first opened, it was typical for families to only send boys to be educated.\(^ {15}\) One interviewee explained that parents felt it unnecessary to educate young women for it was the men who would be inheriting the property, performing work outside of the village, and caring for the parents in the future, while the women would simply be marrying into another household. Therefore, parents did not see the purpose of educating women.\(^ {16}\) Although parents now typically send all children (both boys and girls) to be educated, there do exist some rare cases where children (both boys and girls) are not sent to school. Instead, they are expected to labor in their own home or on the land of another family.\(^ {17}\)

Outside of the formal education at CMS, disparity in education between boys and girls exists in regard to the learning of Tibetan language.\(^ {18}\) Within Dho Tarap, people speak a dialect of Tibetan language and live traditionally Tibetan lifestyles, including the practice of Tibetan Buddhism as well as the Bon religion. Most individuals in Dho Tarap who identify as Buddhist fall under the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism.\(^ {19}\) Traditionally, parents have sent young boys to monasteries or village lamas to learn Tibetan language and philosophy. When men are educated, it is tradition for the teaching of Tibetan language to also be passed down from father to son; a tradition that typically excludes women in the learning process.\(^ {20}\) Learning how to read and write Tibetan enables young men to serve as household lamas within the community. Tasks of such men may include participating in and/or facilitating pujas, funeral rituals, festivals, and other ceremonies within the community.\(^ {21}\) One interviewee stated that while men are taught the Tibetan language as young men, young women are often taught how to work in the home (knitting, farm work, etc.).\(^ {22}\) Recently, there have been some changes in these traditions as

\(^ {14}\) Interview #10, personal communication, April 24, 2018. 
\(^ {15}\) Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018. 
\(^ {16}\) Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018. 
\(^ {17}\) Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018. 
\(^ {18}\) Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018. 
\(^ {19}\) Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018. 
\(^ {20}\) Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018. 
\(^ {21}\) Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018. 
\(^ {22}\) Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.
women are now also taught how to read and write Tibetan during the winter months. However, men still typically receive more education related to Tibetan language.\textsuperscript{23}

Many women cited a lack of confidence as one of the main obstacles that interferes with their performance in school. Due to a lack of confidence, young women are less likely to participate in class (raising their hands, offering answers to questions, etc.), talk to teachers, and/or share their views; a reality that was confirmed by the observations of a Crystal Mountain School teacher.\textsuperscript{24} This lack of confidence, which appears to result from discriminatory cultural practices (see Section II: Self-Concept of Women and Analysis for further analysis), can affect the performance of young women in school and, therefore, hamper their opportunities for learning and growth.

For many women, both young and old, education is considered a valuable opportunity. Women commonly stated that education gives girls more power in society, has the ability to change the unequal power dynamic between men and women, and is making women’s lives better than those of their mothers.\textsuperscript{25} Some older women, whom expressed a lack of hope for gender equality in their own generation, stated that the education of younger generations might lead to changes or improvements in the challenges that women face in Dho Tarap.\textsuperscript{26} One woman stated that if everyone in the community is to be educated, then people will become more aware of the social problems within Dho Tarap and think more critically about women’s issues. She then explained that this will, resultantly, promote a “sense of equality”.\textsuperscript{27}

A belief in education as a source of change was further revealed when interviewees were asked what their parent’s hope for them in the future. Most young women stated that their parent’s hope for them to become educated and to get a good job so that they can avoid the struggles and difficult, agricultural labor that their parents are engaged in.\textsuperscript{28} These responses revealed that, in the eyes of many parents, education is seen as a means for securing financial stability outside of agriculture, the yartsa gunbu trade, and the other means of economic

\textsuperscript{23} Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
\textsuperscript{24} Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #12, personal communication, April 26, 2018.
\textsuperscript{25} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{26} Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
\textsuperscript{27} Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018.
\textsuperscript{28} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
sustenance in Dho Tarap. In sum, both young, educated women and older mothers have faith that education can bring change to the culture of Dho Tarap and the struggles of women.

![Crystal Mountain School courtyard and classroom. Photos by author.](image)

**C. Menstruation**

Access to proper sanitary facilities and products as well as cultural norms around menstruation are two issues that women most commonly cited as being present in Dho Tarap. Until very recently, women within Dho Tarap lived without access to sanitary pads. In the past four or five years, various organizations, such as Nomadic Clinic and Vision Dolpo, have made intentional efforts to increase the availability of sanitary products in Dho Tarap. Between 2015 and 2017, Nomadic Clinic visited Dho Tarap multiple times in an attempt to increase awareness around and access to sanitary products.²⁹ In 2018, Vision Dolpo sent two-hundred sanitary packs to Dho Tarap with the goal of distributing them to women within the community between the ages of thirteen and thirty-five. Each pack is intended to serve one woman and includes one large pad, one smaller pad for when women are active, soap, a handkerchief, and two pairs of undergarments. The sanitary pads are distributed free of charge to women in the community and are expected to last each woman about five to six years. The cost per pack was around 700 Nepali rupees plus transportation costs.³⁰

The issue of access to sanitary products is further complicated by transportation challenges. When the two-hundred reusable sanitary packs from Vision Dolpo were delivered to

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²⁹ Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018; Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.  
³⁰ Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018; Interview #12, personal communication, April 26, 2018; Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
Dho Tarap from Kathmandu, they were transported by mule from Dunai via a three day walk. Upon arrival of the packs, members of Vision Dolpo and I discovered that a can of oil-based paint opened and spilled within one of the transportation barrels that contained some of the sanitary packs. The paint could not be cleaned from the pads and ruined about 84 of the 200 sanitary packs. As a result of the spill, many women cannot receive new and/or replace old sanitary pads until next year (when more pads are expected to be sent).\textsuperscript{31} This incident highlights just one of the many unforeseen challenges that can arise with the transportation of products to Dho Tarap. Not only can issues such as this arise during the delivery process, but the transportation of products to Dho Tarap generally costs four to five times the price of the actual products (there are no roads to Dho Tarap therefore most products must be delivered by mule, porter, or occasionally by helicopter).\textsuperscript{32} Thus, the lack of access to sanitary products is a multifaceted issue that faces many roadblocks that complicate proposed solutions.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{sanitary_pads}
\caption{Some of the 200 sanitary pad packs sent by Vision Dolpo. On right, photo of packs ruined by paint. Photos by author.}
\end{figure}

Despite these resources, residents of Dho Tarap currently do not have other means of acquiring sanitary products.\textsuperscript{33} As a result, women have traditionally relied on rags or cloth as improvised ways of soaking up blood during menstruation. Interviewees were willing to point out that both in the past and still today, women have been forced to utilize very unhealthy

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{31} Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018; Interview #12, personal communication, April 26, 2018.
\textsuperscript{32} Interview #10, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{33} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\end{flushright}
practices of hygiene as methods of caring for themselves during menstruation. Fortunately, with the new availability of sanitary products, practices are beginning to improve.\textsuperscript{34}

Although there have been recent steps to increase access to sanitary products within Dho Tarap, women still face a plethora of challenges surrounding menstruation. To begin, the cultural understanding of menstruation enforces ideas that suggest women are inferior to men. Many young, educated women explained that villagers do not understand that menstruation is a natural, biological process. Instead, it is seen as a weakness of women.\textsuperscript{35} For example, one man in the community described how many people in the community have traditionally seen menstrual blood as a “bad omen.”\textsuperscript{36}

During menstruation, there are some restrictions on what women can do and where they can go. For example, menstruating women are not permitted to enter the shrine room of homes or to go into monasteries. Furthermore, some women stated that traditionally, it is believed that menstrual blood should not be shown to men or the sunlight.\textsuperscript{37} Importantly, many women were adamant to note that the menstrual challenges and restrictions that women encounter within Dho Tarap are less extreme than in some other areas of Nepal. For example, villages within Dho Tarap does not engage in the practice of chhauadi and women are permitted to enter the kitchen while menstruating. However, this does not negate nor invalidate the many challenges that women do face related to menstruation in Dho Tarap.

During conversation, women described many difficulties that arose during menarche. Due to villager’s lack of education about and comfortability with the topic of menstruation, multiple interviewees stated that during menarche, young women often do not know what is happening to them and become worried that they are experiencing a health issue. It is also not uncommon for young women to wonder if they are the only girl experiencing the “problem” and to have to learn about the biological processes that they are experiencing from their friends or older peers.\textsuperscript{38} One interviewee described how she did not have any prior conversations with her parents about menstruation and was completely unknowledgeable about the processes of menstruation at the time of menarche. She blamed this upon tradition and stated that the parents

\textsuperscript{34} Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
\textsuperscript{35} Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018.
\textsuperscript{36} Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
\textsuperscript{37} Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{38} Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.
of her parents were the same way in that they too did not discuss such things.\textsuperscript{39} Other interviewees blamed this lack of communication on shyness and a lack of confidence by women to discuss the topic. Some women suggested that if women were to be more confident, then they might feel more comfortable talking about menstruation; a conversation that would be very helpful during what can be a very frightful and confusing time during young women’s lives in Dho Tarap.\textsuperscript{40}

Additional difficulties arise for women during menstruation due to the fact that Dho Tarap lacks access to proper sanitation facilities. Many homes do not have bathrooms, not to mention bathrooms with running, sterile water that women can use to clean and care for themselves during their period.\textsuperscript{41} Villagers typically rely on public taps and rivers as their primary sources of water. One woman stated that this water is typically so cold that it makes it difficult and unpleasant to wash oneself during menstruation.\textsuperscript{42} This lack of private, equipped sanitary facilities makes the practice of sanitation very difficult for women. During interviews, almost all women cited this as a problem, and some were willing to share that the lack of such facilities makes proper hygiene difficult for menstruating women.

Currently, there do exist some efforts to improve these challenges that women face. At Crystal Mountain School, the curriculum includes education around menstruation. Students will generally encounter a unit on menstruation during their Health and Education course in grades six or seven. A unit on menstruation is included as a section in the course’s textbook and involves two to three lessons on the topic. Educators commonly felt that more than just these lessons should be dedicated to educating students about women’s health. For this reason, CMS works to include lectures and awareness programs that can further educate students. The goal of educators at CMS is present menstruation as a natural, biological process that is necessary for the existence of healthy families and communities.\textsuperscript{43}

One educator expressed his own desire to host community-wide awareness programs in the upcoming months and years that are focused upon women’s issues in general. The purpose of

\textsuperscript{39} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.
\textsuperscript{40} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018; Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018.
\textsuperscript{41} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{42} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{43} Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
these programs would be to spread awareness about the challenges that women face and, resultantly, change some of the concepts that villagers hold related to women’s health, status, and capacities.44 Despite these efforts being taken by CMS and educators at the school, the local government in Dho Tarap does not have any projects that are directly working to address the lack of sanitation facilities in the community or to improve other health-related challenges specific to women in the valley.

D. Alcohol Consumption and Physical Appearance

Discriminate treatment between men and women is further evident when examining the differences in social approval of alcohol consumption and smoking. Within Dho Tarap, it not socially acceptable for women to drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes.45 Contrasting, it is acceptable for men to both drink and smoke. One young woman described how it is very common for men to drink arak or chang (local liquors); however, if a woman is to drink, then she will be looked down upon and criticized by the members of the community.46 Another woman described how she was scolded by her family when they learned that she had consumed alcohol outside of Dho Tarap and how it is very dangerous for woman to tell their parents if they drink or smoke because they are likely to be rebuked. A number of years ago when this same woman returned to Dho Tarap after completing class ten in Kathmandu, she recalled receiving small gifts from community members (such as bubbles) while many of the boys who were her classmates were greeted with arak.47

During observation, men could be seen consuming alcohol and smoking at various times throughout the day (morning, during the workday, at night); however, very rarely did women, at least publically, drink alcohol or smoke. There were several nights where men fell asleep on the floor of homes after becoming intoxicated; however, when asked if men receive criticism for such actions, women replied, “maybe a little, but not so much”.48 When asked why this is the case (women receiving criticism from the entire community when they consume alcohol but men receiving none), women often replied that it is because it has been the practice for generations

44 Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018; Interview #12, personal communication, April 26, 2018.
45 Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
46 Interview #8, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
47 Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
48 Interview #8, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
and that it is tradition for only men to drink.\textsuperscript{49} Despite this being a tradition, some women did not hesitate to mark this difference in treatment as an unfair cultural practice as well as an example of just one of the many ways that women are “dominated by men” within society.\textsuperscript{50}

Many people did not hesitate to describe the over consumption of alcohol as one of the major issues within Dho Tarap. Community members often stated that the consumption of alcohol leads to many negatives outcomes, such as increasing family debt, being a source of wasteful spending by men, causing men to become violent with their family and wives, increasing family conflict, and making money management difficult for families. Within some extreme circumstances, some individuals shared stories about how an over-consumption of alcohol has led some men to sell property in order to fund drinking habits.\textsuperscript{51} Interestingly, both men and women in Dho Tarap recognized and talked about the issue of over-consumption.

In addition to unequal standards regarding the consumption of alcohol, another example of discriminate treatment between men and women relates to how each gender is allowed to dress. Unlike men who often wear non-traditional clothing every day (jeans, colored shirts, t-shirts), women are expected to wear traditional Tibetan styles of dress (ex. chuba, kabo, etc.). If a woman is to wear clothing other than this, she may be criticized by community members.\textsuperscript{52} Thus, unlike boys who have freedom to wear what they want without ridicule, women of all ages experience social pressure to only wear traditional dress while living in Dho Tarap.

Further related to one’s physical appearance, women within Dho Tarap also experience social pressure to keep their hair long. Historically, it has been tradition for both men and women to keep their hair long. However, one of the recent changes in local culture is that now it is common for men to cut their hair short.\textsuperscript{53} Although this has been seen as an acceptable thing for men to do, some women have faced ridicule for wanting to cut their own hair short. One interviewee described how her mother did not approve of her idea of cutting her hair and described long hair as the “ornament of a woman”.\textsuperscript{54} In sum, considering the discriminate treatment in how men and women are allowed to consume alcohol, smoke tobacco, dress, and

\textsuperscript{49} Interview #8, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018
\textsuperscript{50} Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018
\textsuperscript{51} Interview #7, personal communication, April 23, 2018; Interview #13, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018
\textsuperscript{52} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{53} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{54} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
wear their hair, women appear to face more restrictions and have less choice over their appearance and how they want to treat their body.\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{E. Inheritance}

Within Dho Tarap, family property is passed generation to generation through inheritance. When a man passes away, the family’s land is typically inherited by his son(s). If there are no sons within the family, then the land will go to the daughter. Lastly, if there are no daughters, then the land will go to the wife.\textsuperscript{56} Within this system, sons will typically inherit the full share of the property. Women may get only a small portion of the land that will be gifted to her and her husband at marriage as part of local tradition. Most women described this tradition of inheritance as one of the main challenges that women encounter in Dho Tarap.\textsuperscript{57}

One woman described how when women are young, they work very hard in their family’s home but, at marriage, receive only a small portion of land. Despite all of the hard labor that young women dedicate to their home, they receive little to show for it. She stated that property should be divided equally between sons and daughters and that the traditions around inheritance are unfair.\textsuperscript{58} Due to this practice, young women feel that they “have no right” over their family’s property. As a result, young women feel that they must prepare their minds to move into another’s home when they get married.\textsuperscript{59}

Three men explained the rationale behind this system of property inheritance. They stated that women are expected to move into the home of a man at marriage and, therefore, will live with a man who has the full share of property. They explained that women who do not want to marry do not have to, but that they will end up having to live independently out of a small piece of land.\textsuperscript{60} Considering this system, a woman who does not choose to marry seems to have far less financial capital to be able to do so and live comfortably than would a man who does not choose to marry. Not only are women often looked down upon if they do not marry (see sub-section \textit{F. Marriage and Childbearing} for further analysis), but they are put in a position where they feel

\textsuperscript{55} Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.\textsuperscript{56} Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018.\textsuperscript{57} Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018; Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018; Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018.\textsuperscript{58} Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018.\textsuperscript{59} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.\textsuperscript{60} Interview #5, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
more financial pressure to marry due to the necessity of property in Dho Tarap’s agricultural based economy. This challenge is especially true for uneducated women who typically do not have alternative options for financially supporting themselves.61

F. Marriage and Childbearing

Marriage is a very common practice within Dho Tarap. One community leader stated that only about three to five percent of women will not marry.62 Although the majority of partnerships are love marriages, arranged marriages do still occur within Dho Tarap.63 The system of marriage between a man and a woman in Dho Tarap is characterized by a number of different traditions. To begin, when a marriage occurs, it is common for the woman to marry into the home of the man (known as “nama”), unless the woman’s family does not have any sons residing in the household. In this event, the man will marry into the woman’s home (known as “magpa”).64 When a marriage occurs, the family of the bride will typically give a small piece of land to the husband and wife. Additionally, the bride’s extended family will give various gifts of wealth to the couple. Although it is now changing, historically it has been common for families to take back the gifted land once the wife dies.65 Although dowry is demanded in some regions of Nepal, it exists more as a social custom within Dho Tarap. Unlike in other communities in Nepal, marriages will not be cancelled if a gift of land is not given.66

As discussed in the previous section, when taking into consideration the practices of land inheritance (the son typically receiving the full share of the land) and the prevalence of subsistence farming (requiring land ownership), women appear to be put in position where they feel more financial pressure to marry than does a man. In addition to the pressure to marry due to financial reasons, social forces also appear to put more pressure on women to marry than men. One interviewee stated that it is common for women who do not marry to be criticized by society and for community members to speculate why she was not able to “get” a husband. On the contrary, men who do not marry do not receive this same criticism.67

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61 Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
62 Interview #10, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
63 Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018.
64 Interview #5, personal communication, April 22, 2018; Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
65 Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018; Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #5, personal communication, April 22, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
66 Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
67 Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
Within marriages, one challenge that women may face is the issue of domestic violence, which was identified by one member of local government as a reason why women will sometimes initiate divorce.\textsuperscript{68} Besides the option of divorce, there appears to be very little protection for women against domestic violence, for there are no laws that punish perpetrators. Instead, the issue is considered a family matter.\textsuperscript{69} One woman stated that if there existed laws that punished men for domestic violence, then women would be punished even worse by their husbands after their husbands were disciplined.\textsuperscript{70} When later asked about the disadvantages of being a woman within Dho Tarap, this same individual stated that if a woman is to have a bad husband, then her life will be very difficult and full of misery.\textsuperscript{71}

Before a marriage even occurs, women encounter more restrictions than men in choosing a partner. For example, women and men of the upper caste experience discriminate treatment when marrying someone of a lower caste. If a woman of the upper caste is to marry a lower caste man, she will become lower caste herself and may become isolated from her family and community members.\textsuperscript{72} However, if a man of the upper caste is to marry a lower caste woman, he is able to partake in a “cleansing” ritual. During this ritual, the man will drink water mixed with gold. By doing so, he is thought to purify himself and thus is able to remain in the upper caste.\textsuperscript{73} It is important to note that in conversations regarding caste, most young women expressed a desire to diminish the social significance of caste in Dho Tarap. In addition to the differences in treatment during marriages between castes, women face more challenges when choosing a partner for they are more likely than men to be criticized if they marry someone of another culture. For example, a woman is more likely to be criticized if she marries someone who identifies as Hindu and lives in Pokhara than would a man who does the same.\textsuperscript{74}

Related to the topic childbearing, women also encounter discriminate treatment if they have a child out of wedlock. If a woman and a man are to have a baby before getting married, the woman is often looked down upon by the community and blamed for the pregnancy; however,

\textsuperscript{68} Interview #10, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{69} Interview #7, personal communication, April 23, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
\textsuperscript{70} Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018.
\textsuperscript{73} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{74} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
the man is not.\textsuperscript{75} When this occurs, the child is labeled by the term “nyalu”.\textsuperscript{76} If a woman is to have a child out of wedlock, she may be seen as less desirable for marriage, whereas the father is less likely to face difficulties in getting married. Although the man might give some funds to help support the child, the woman is also more likely to be the one to care for and raise the child.\textsuperscript{77} Woman who have children out of wedlock are usually the ones who do “morrang” or live independently out of a small piece of land.\textsuperscript{78}

\textit{G. Gender Roles within Family Life and Work}

Within family life in Dho Tarap, there appears to be very clear, gender-based roles. First and foremost, the father is typically considered the head of the family while mothers serve as caretakers of the home. For men, it is typically their responsibility to be the family’s main source of income and to make decisions on behalf of the family.\textsuperscript{79} Men are usually the ones who perform work outside of the home and travel (when needed) for trade and/or business.\textsuperscript{80} For example, men are usually the ones within families to travel to China a few times a year to purchase food, clothes, and goods for the family while the mother stays at home.

For women, their role is quite different and holds far less power than that of men. Women are often raised to believe that it is their responsibility to primarily serve as housewives.\textsuperscript{81} Within this role, the mother fulfills various tasks, typically without the assistance of men, that ensure that the family is fed, children and grandparents are cared for, and household responsibilities are fulfilled.\textsuperscript{82} Typical household activities of mothers include waking up before the husband and children to start the fire, fetching water for the home, washing family member’s clothes, preparing meals, cleaning used dishes, serving meals, and caring for the domestic animals that

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{75} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018; Interview #8, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{76} Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
\textsuperscript{77} Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018.
\textsuperscript{78} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #5, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
\textsuperscript{79} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{80} Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #17, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
\textsuperscript{81} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{82} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018; Interview #17, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
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the family owns. Within this role, women often do not receive the opportunity to visit villages or cities outside of the valley or engage in work where they have the opportunity to travel.

In observations, it was very rare for me to observe a man serving food, washing dishes, or even pouring drinks for himself or others (with the exception of arak). Instead, it was common to observe young men demanding their sisters to pour tea for them, even when the tea kettle was within the arm’s reach of the man. These gender roles appear to be so strictly followed that even if a man is to help his wife in the home, then it would not be uncommon for him to receive criticism or be at the center of jokes from other men for his participation in “women’s” tasks or for being seen as “weaker” than his wife. These gender-based roles in the family appear to be strongly maintained and practiced in Dho Tarap today. One interviewee recalled being scolded by her father for allowing her partner to take initiative and wash his own dish after a meal. Although she herself expressed a desire not to follow these traditions, her parents still wish for her to continue to abide by the traditions that have guided life in Dho Tarap for many centuries.

Gender roles are also present in the division of field labor. Although both men and women participate in the farming work that is a major source of livelihood within Dho Tarap, tasks are often divided based upon gender. For example, farming work is typically divided the following way: 1) both men and women deliver manure to the fields; 2) men plough the fields; 3) women dig irrigation channels; 4) seeds are plugged by men; 5) women manage the fields (ex. pulling weeds); 6) women continue to irrigate the fields; 7) women continue to manage the fields; 8) women continue to irrigate the fields; 9) both men and women harvest the fields; 10) women separate seeds for the following season. During the summer and early autumn, men typically will spend time abroad or in other regions of Nepal performing trade and business work.

Considering the division of labor, an overwhelming majority of women stated that the balance of work between men and women is not equal. Although many stated that both men and women do about the same amount of labor outside of the home, almost all women felt that women perform more work in total because all of the household tasks are completed by

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83 Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
84 Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
85 Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
86 Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018; Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
women. Women often described how they had to wake up before men to begin their day’s work (fetching water, starting the fire, etc.) and how after men and women return from the fields, men have the opportunity to engage in leisurely activities (ex. socializing, drinking arak) while women must continue to work (i.e. cooking dinner, serving the meal, washing dishes, etc.).

This sentiment (that there exists an unequal balance in work between men and women) was not shared by men. When asked if there was an equal distribution of work between men and women, men often replied that there was. This opinion was expressed by men in various levels of society (both those who did not hold special positions in the community as well as high-ranking members of local government). Some men even stated that women have the same opportunities as men to travel outside of the valley; a statement that directly contrasts the words of most women who stated that outside travel is rarely available for women to do.

In observation, it was very common to witness men spending more time than women engaged in what appeared to be leisurely activities. For example, it was no uncommon to observe men gathered in groups outside where they would be laughing and talking or, in the evening, to see men sitting in someone else’s home drinking arak after the day’s fieldwork was complete. At the same time, women would unfailingly be found cooking dinner, serving arak to men, and/or completing various other household chores. In sum, there appears to be discrepancy both in the amount of labor that men and women engage in as well as their understanding of how balanced the work is.

Not only do women appear to engage in more work than men, but the role of women is fraught with challenges. To begin, the role of women entails a great amount of accountability, including being fully responsible for young children beginning at birth. Even before birth, women must carry the fetus for nine months, during which, they are still expected/required to fulfill their responsibilities as a housewife and in the field. After birth, the time that women have for rest depends upon one’s financial status as well as the number of family members the woman has. One woman reported that some women who have less money and/or family

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87 Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018; Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018; Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
88 Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
89 Interview #13, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #17, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
90 Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #13, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
91 Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
members will only rest for one week after giving birth while those who have more money and/or family members will rest up to fifteen days.\textsuperscript{92} Another woman in the community suggested that the rest time of women is a little longer (fifteen days to three months).\textsuperscript{93} Despite the differences, it is clear that those who are more financially secure and who have more family members are able to rest for longer periods of time than those who do not.\textsuperscript{94}

Additionally, the role of women fills the entire day and involves very little leisure time. Mothers awake up before the rest of the family (fetching water, starting the fire, cooking breakfast, etc.) while men and children are still asleep. The responsibilities of women continue throughout the day and into the night. Even after the men and women finish their fieldwork, women continue to labor over the stove and household chores. A typical day for a mother may appear as follows: wake up at 6:00 a.m. to begin household tasks, begin fieldwork or work outside the home at 9:00 a.m., return home around 5:30 p.m. to continue household chores, and then going to bed around 10:30 p.m. after serving and cleaning up from dinner. One mother explained that it is not uncommon for her to sometimes fail to have a proper lunch or dinner due to her busyness and many demanding responsibilities.\textsuperscript{95}

Though women often want to enjoy work and activities outside of the home and Dho Tarap, they are not permitted or able to do so. For this reason, women miss out on opportunities to learn new languages, gain useful skills, and expand their knowledge.\textsuperscript{96} Furthermore, women also become financially dependent on their husband due to the fact that the husband often serves as the primary source of income for the family. Although not necessarily a challenge specific to women, mothers also commonly worry a great deal about their children, especially when they are sent to Kathmandu (where their children will be from grades 8 to 12 with only one three-month vacation to visit home).

One final challenge that exists for women within the family relates to decision making and financial matters. Women often stated that there is an imbalance in the weight given to the opinions of men during decision making processes, as the opinions of men are often considered superior to those of women. One woman stated that planning related to fieldwork should be done

\textsuperscript{92} Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
\textsuperscript{93} Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
\textsuperscript{94} Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
\textsuperscript{95} Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{96} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
together by both men and women, but that only the opinions of men are considered.\textsuperscript{97} This imbalance in power is very evident in financial matters. Most women stated that men independently control the finances of the family and decide how money will be spent. It is very rare for women to go shopping and buy things on their own. Instead, almost all needed items for the family are bought by men during their travels to China.\textsuperscript{98} Interestingly, during a group interview with three men, the men stated that although it depends on the family, most financial decisions are made collaboratively between men and women.\textsuperscript{99} Women often argued that coordinated decision making would allow money management and the outcomes of decisions to be much more fruitful and effective.\textsuperscript{100} In sum, women appear to face a plethora of challenges and are subject to discriminate treatment within the family. In many interviews, women did not hesitate to explicitly admit that life for women in Dho Tarap is very difficult.\textsuperscript{101}

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\textit{Collection of dried dung used as fuel to burn in stoves throughout the year. Photo by author.}

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\textsuperscript{97} Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
\textsuperscript{98} Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018; Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
\textsuperscript{99} Interview #5, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
\textsuperscript{100} Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
\textsuperscript{101} Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
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**H. Local Government**

Within Dho Tarap, there is very little to no participation by or representation of women within local government and at village meetings. This reality presented itself in both observation and during interviews. During a village meeting in Dho, that was held in order to discuss issues associated with subsidized rice, all of the roughly fifteen participants/attendees were men. Traditionally, one person from each household in the village is expected to attend each village meetings. When asked why no women were present at the meeting that day, a man in the group replied jokingly that they were in the kitchen, which most of the group laughed at. He then responded more seriously and explained that the men were the ones who attended the village meetings because they are the heads of the household, which makes them responsible for whatever decisions are made during the meeting and how these decisions affect the family. The man explained that if the men are to not attend the meetings and the final decisions are to negatively affect their family, then the men will be to blame.

Two days later, there was another meeting amongst villagers. The meeting was held after a full work day of work where people from various villages gathered to participate in the construction of a rock wall that was being built in order to keep animals out of the farming fields. The meeting regarded the upcoming fieldwork that would be performed over the coming weeks (collecting yaks from the surrounding mountains, ploughing the fields, spreading fertilizer, etc.). Both men and women were present due to the fact that all had worked together that day. During the meeting, the group gathered in a circle, where everyone sat facing one another. Quite noticeably, the inner circle was composed of only men while all of the women sat at the periphery. During the course of the meeting, only men appeared to speak and not once was a woman observed participating in the conversation of the group.

The government of Nepal recently adopted a new constitution under a federalist form of government. Within the constitution, there is a mandate that requires thirty-three percent representation by woman in local government. Before the implementation of this new mandate, the government within Dho Tarap was filled almost entirely by men.\(^\text{102}\) However, the new

\(^{102}\) Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018; Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
mandate has led to at least one woman serving in each of the six wards that compose of the Dolpo Buddha Royal Municipality (under which the villages of Dho Tarap are located).  

Although this has led to an increased number of women who are now “members” of local government, it appears that men still dominate local systems of governance. Firstly, although each ward has women who are elected, each of the six ward chair positions are held by men. While women officially hold positions within the local government, it is more common for the husbands of these women than the women themselves to attend government meetings and to fulfill the responsibilities of an elected official. When elected women do attend meetings, it is common for them to simply sit and listen, rather than contribute to discussion. In some circumstances in Dho Tarap, men were elected for positions within local government but had their wife’s name placed on the official government paperwork. One woman in local government expressed this reality. She stated that although she did not have any interest in being a part of local government, she joined so that her husband could serve while maintaining the new constitution’s requirements for women to be represented. One interviewee stated that if women had been actually interested in running for a position within local government, she would not be surprised if their family discouraged them from doing so.

In discussions related to why women often do not participate in local government or village meetings, community members often stated that traditionally women have never participated and that there exists a culture of non-participation amongst women. One woman stated that although women are technically allowed to participate, they do not because they are busy inside the home and do not know about the meetings or have knowledge about work outside of Dho Tarap. Another woman stated that women do not participate because there exists a cultural concept that women cannot contribute news ideas at the meetings.

A final reason that another interviewee suggested is that women are not confident at the decision-making level of village leadership and for this reason, do not feel confident to attend the

103 Interview #10, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
104 Interview #7, personal communication, April 23, 2018; Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
105 Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
106 Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
107 Interview #10, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
108 Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
109 Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
meetings participate. One interviewee explained a typical scenario that many other women eluded to. If women are to go to meetings, the society will discriminate against her. For example, people may ask why a woman is present and not her husband. Resultantly, such remarks further discourage women from participating. Many community members shared similar sentiments, stating that if a woman is to attend village meetings, men will ask why they are there and tell them to send their husbands.

Despite the overwhelming presence of challenges that women report facing both within local government and in society in general, it does not appear that all members of government are aware or willing to talk about them. In a discussion with a man who serves as a high-ranking member of the local government, the individual stated that the main focus of the government is to develop Dho Tarap. When asked what are the main challenges that the community faces, he responded by discussing the lack of roads to Dho Tarap and electricity. When asked if there were any challenges specific to women in the community, he stated that in the past women were not included in local government and that the workloads of men and women were not equal. He continued by saying that women are now included and actively participate in local government and that men and women perform equal amounts of work. He concluded by stating that people in the community now see men and women as equal.

When comparing the answers of this man to those of other interviewees, there are stark differences between his statements and the responses of women regarding the current state of women in Do Tarap. Firstly, the man did not mention any challenges specific to women that women mentioned, such as a lack of proper sanitation facilities. Additionally, he stated that men and women perform equal labor while almost all women noted an unequal distribution of work. Furthermore, women appear to disagree with his belief that men and women are seen equally in society. Almost all women stated that the opinions of men are held in a higher regard and that men are seen as more capable and as of the superior gender. Thus, there appears to be a serious disconnect between some men who serve as leaders and the lived experiences of women within Dho Tarap.

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110 Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.  
111 Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018.  
112 Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.  
113 Interview #13, personal communication, April 27, 2018.  
114 Interview #13, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
In conversation about the advantages of having women in local government, interviewees listed various benefits of including women in village meetings and local government. Some of the perceived benefits are as follows: women would be more informed about community matters; women are more aware and have a better understanding than men of the challenges that women face and can better represent these issues; by attending, women would gain a greater understanding of village plans regarding communal work; women would use community funds more responsibly than men; and participation by women now will inspire women to participate in the future.\textsuperscript{115}

Currently, steps are being taken within Dho Tarap to increase women’s participation in government activities. On April 28, 2018, about fifty villagers from Dho gathered for what would be the first ward meeting solely for women. The meeting was held to first teach women about the processes for acquiring and the importance of birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates—concepts that many women knew little about previous to the meeting due to their lack of attendance at other village meetings.\textsuperscript{116} Secondly, the meeting was held in order to introduce a new women’s committee that was being formed; a directive under the central government of Nepal. The foundation of the committee is occurring during a crucial time for the previous women’s group, Amasamuha, is no longer in operation.

The function of the committee is to offer resources that will enhance the lives of women and alleviate some of the problems that women face.\textsuperscript{117} For example, the committee will be collecting taxes from villagers and then using the funds to offer loans to women, hold training programs, hosting awareness programs, and funding other projects. Trainings will focus on topics crucial to women, such as how to respond to domestic violence.\textsuperscript{118} The purpose of the committee’s programs is to not only provide women with practical skills and knowledge but to build women’s self-confidence so that if an issue like domestic violence occurs, women will be more likely to seek proper support and bring forth their problems.\textsuperscript{119} At the initial meeting, women seemed enthusiastic and excited about the group’s potential.\textsuperscript{120} One individual, who is in

\textsuperscript{115} Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #13, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018.

\textsuperscript{116} Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
a position of leadership within the group, feels that the group’s progress will occur slowly over time and eventually gain full support from the community. She does not feel that the group is currently being fully supported due to the fact that only a small number of men and women in the Dho fully understand all of the challenges that women face.\textsuperscript{121}

\textit{I. Divorce and Remarriage}

If challenges, mistreatment, or other issues occur within a marriage, divorce is an option for partners to separate. As a custom within Dho Tarap, there is a monetary fine associated with divorce called a “bhorcha”.\textsuperscript{122} The fine must be paid under some circumstances by those who either initiate the divorce and/or made the “mistake” which led to the divorce (etc. such as an extramarital affair). It is up to community leaders to decide who is to pay the bhorcha. One member of local government stated that the fine is currently valued at ten-thousand United States dollars. This same individual also estimated that only about ten to fifteen percent of marriages within Dho Tarap end in divorce. However, it is much more likely for men to initiate a divorce than for women.\textsuperscript{123}

In order to pay the Bhorcha, individuals will either pay with available money, sell their livestock or property, or take out a loan (typically from family members or other members of the community). However, it is not typical for people to have enough money available to pay the fine in full. Therefore, individuals are usually left with the last two options—selling land and livestock or taking out a loan. When considering who owns the majority of property, as well as the traditions of property inheritance, it is not surprising that men typically own more property than women before the marriage. As a result, one interviewee recognized that it appears in general that men are more financially able than women to initiate a divorce due to their greater ability to pay the monetary fine.\textsuperscript{124} Thus, if a woman wants to initiate a divorce and is told by village leaders that she must pay the fine, it is likely that she will be more financially disadvantaged than would her husband. This situation could discourage women from leaving marriages that they do not feel are healthy for them but that do not possess “mistakes” that would lead to the husband paying the fine.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Interview #5, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Interview #7, personal communication, April 23, 2018.
On a different note, in the event that one’s spouse is to die, there is a difference in social acceptability of remarriage. Although there is no law against remarriage, one interviewee stated that if a woman is to lose her husband and remarry, it is common for the community to gossip about or criticize her. However, if a man is to remarry, then he will not be criticized.\textsuperscript{125} Such norms are another example of the discriminate treatment that women face before, during, and after marriage.

\textit{J. Old Age}

As women grow older, new challenges arise that they typically do not encounter at earlier stages in life. For example, many women begin to have difficulty completing the physical labor that characterizes their work in the home and in the fields. If a woman does not have children or family members who can assist her in the completion of the household tasks, she may experience a significant amount of difficulty with the physically demanding tasks. Other old-age challenges that women mentioned included not being able to properly care themselves as well as the mental and physical difficulties that come with a loss of independence.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{125} Interview #8, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.

\textsuperscript{126} Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
Section II: Self-Concept of Women and Analysis

The traditions within Dho Tarap that have excluded women and subjected them to discriminate treatment have existed for many generations. Through conversation and observation, it is clear that the gender roles and challenges that are presently being practiced in Dho Tarap and that are discussed in this paper have been around for several decades. As noted in the previous section, these traditions have historically and/or currently prevented women from being able to travel, perform work outside of the valley, participate in local government or village meetings, act as leaders within the community, attend school, learn Tibetan language and philosophy, serve as the heads of family, make choices over how they treat their body, freely choose who or if they want to marry or remain married without external pressure, and, in countless other ways, act the same or do the same things as men.

The consequences of such traditions appear to prevent women from having many of the same learning opportunities that men receive. As a result, women may fail to gain the same knowledge that men acquire through these formal or informal learning experiences. Thus, these traditions seem to lead to a significant difference in the common lived experiences of men and women. The context in which this system is operating is a society where the existing cultural norms express the idea that men are superior and more capable than women. In other words, women find themselves not only being told they are inferior to men, but also missing out on many of the same opportunities for personal and intellectual development that men are engaged in.

Resultantly, this exclusion of women appears to cause them to gain less knowledge, have less exposure to life outside of the valley, be engaged in fewer leadership opportunities, and have less chances to expand their perspective than men. Such a difference appears to act as a roadblock to women and thus may cause them to possess less knowledge and experience within these fields. It then appears that the differences in perceived capability that arise as a result of this discriminant treatment reinforce the existing cultural ideas that men are superior. In other words, the traditions enforce the concept that men are superior because they allow men to develop their capacities while failing to provide women with the same opportunities to do so.

More often than not, during interviews women stated that most women believe in the concept that men have more capabilities than women, are the superior gender, and are, therefore,
more valuable to society.\textsuperscript{127} As explained by interviewees, women appear to hold these ideas due to the fact that they do not have examples of women who have risen above or exceeded these restrictions, do not have knowledge of societies outside of Dho Tarap and of how women are treated within these societies, observe the entire society respecting and valuing men more than them, and lack the same skills and knowledge as men (due to traditions that have prevented women from having the same learning opportunities and experiences as men).\textsuperscript{128} Furthermore, one interviewee stated that men treat women like they are just there to have babies and cook for them\textsuperscript{129}; similarly, one man admitted that men within the community view and treat women as inferior.\textsuperscript{130} In sum, there are many social and cultural factors that appear to put pressure on women to accept concepts of inferiority.

Resultantly, it seems that women begin to lack confidence in their abilities, feel that they are powerless, and believe that men are superior. One interviewee gave a real-life example of this reality. She described how when women attempt to start new initiatives or take the lead on something, other women will criticize her and question why she is making an effort to create change when women are “less capable than men” and “don’t have the ability to do anything”.\textsuperscript{131} Thus, when these ideas are internalized by all members of society, women begin to discourage themselves.

When this occurs, it appears that the traditions not only directly oppress women but indirectly as well. This is because the traditions cause women to form and internalize self-concepts that further hold them down—self-concepts characterized by feelings of inferiority, incompetence, and little self-belief. This idea is evident when one’s looks at the participation of women in local government. Not only do traditions prevent women from participating (ex. traditions that state that only men should attend meetings), but the self-concepts of women also keep them from participating (i.e. this is clear in the example a woman who attended a government meeting but did not participate because she believed that she could not positively

\textsuperscript{127} Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018; Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
\textsuperscript{128} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018; Interview #22, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
\textsuperscript{129} Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
\textsuperscript{130} Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
\textsuperscript{131} Interview #22, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
contribute to government or offer new ideas—thus exemplifying an internalization of the idea that women have fewer capabilities and less knowledge than men).\textsuperscript{132}

Furthermore, it appears that when these traditions and concepts are passed from generation to generation, they begin to look and feel less like challenges and more like the way things should be. If the tradition states that men are superior and women inferior, women’s issues begin to look a lot more like the ways things should be. During interviews this reality was clearly evident. One co-researcher explained to me that during interviews, when she would ask older women what challenges they face in the community, the women sometimes would not know how to answer the question due to the fact that the ways of life for women within Dho Tarap have been the same for generations.\textsuperscript{133} Contrastingly, young women, who are students in Kathmandu, explained that they did not realize that they were being mistreated within society until they were able to leave and see how women live elsewhere in Nepal and the world. Thus, in the mind of some interviewees, challenges were not challenges, but simply tradition (a different perspective than many young, educated women in Kathmandu) within a system where it “makes sense” for men and women to receive discriminate treatment due to their “unequal” capabilities and value.

The man who serves as a high-ranking member of local government that I referenced in the sub-section \textit{H. Local Government} made one other statement that is worth exploring. He stated that today men and women have the opportunity to do the same things but that women discourage themselves from doing so.\textsuperscript{134} Although there does appear to be truth in the fact that the self-concepts of women can oppress them, the member of local government appears to have overlooked the fact that if women are discouraging themselves, then it might be due to discriminate traditions within the culture and not simply the women’s lack of courage or drive. It seems to be the traditions, not the women, that have led women to hold beliefs that discourage them. By blaming women for not achieving or doing the same things as men, one completely invalidates the continuous challenges that women have faced and the effects of these challenges. Not only do interviewees seem to disagree with the idea that men and women are permitted to do the same things, but it seems to be these traditions, not the women, that are the true culprit for any “failure” that women have shown to act in the eyes of this community-leader.

\textsuperscript{132} Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
\textsuperscript{133} Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
\textsuperscript{134} Interview #13, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
Despite the many decades where lifestyles and concepts have remained the same in Dho Tarap, there appears to be a new factor that is slowly disassembling current ways of thinking—education. Beginning in 1993, young men and women began to be educated through Crystal Mountain School and sent to Kathmandu. It is in Kathmandu that students complete classes eight through twelve. During their education, many students are exposed to a new part of the country and new ways of life. For many, the journey to Kathmandu is the first time in their lives that they will travel and live outside of Dho Tarap. Young women described how after spending some time in Kathmandu, they came to realize that the way that women are treated within Dho Tarap is not how all women are treated in the world. For many, they described how what had always just seemed like tradition began to look a lot more like discrimination and oppression.  

Leaving Kathmandu was the first time for many that they became aware of the fact that it is possible to have societies where gender equality exists or at least is being worked towards. These women described how the women who are unable to leave Dho Tarap often do not have any understanding of the lives of women outside of Dolpo or know that women are treated differently in other places of the world. Not only has education countered this reality, but it has allowed many young people to see alternative ways of life for both men and women. After seeing such things, many young women hope that in the future their generation of educated Dolpopas can bring change to the culture of Dho Tarap and improve the lives of women.

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135 Interview #22, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
Section III: Empowerment, Change, and Women’s Rights

Many women and men expressed a desire to see changes within Dho Tarap in various ways. Such changes that women wished to see include the following: increased presence of and access to sanitation facilities; changed norms around menstruation; a decrease in alcohol abuse by men; equal participation in work between men and women; proper use of and control over family funds; opportunities for the opinions of women to be considered equally to the opinions of men; equal control by men and women over financial matters; diminished partiality given to the son; a more fair distribution of household activities; opportunities for women to play more active roles in community meetings and local government; and the eradication of misconceptions about women and their perceived inferiority. In addition to specific and tangible developments within the community, many individuals stated that what is most important is for community members to transform their way of thinking. One man in the community stated that if men view women as inferior, this is, first and foremost, a thinking problem that is at the root of other issues. For this reason, he explained, it is the mental models of individuals that must be transformed in order to create lasting change in Dho Tarap.

In order to do so, awareness programs and education were two of the most commonly cited solutions. One young woman defined education as a means of changing the way that one thinks. Many interviewees saw the benefits of education as extending to both men and women. Not only do many see education as a means of expanding the perspectives of women and men around gender, but education is also understood as a way to help women develop their capabilities, grow in confidence, gain knowledge about the outside world and their rights, and have a better understanding of the social issues that affect women. Furthermore, women stated that they themselves need to take initiative on their own and lead by example in challenging specific concepts and ways of thinking that have been passed from generation to generation. For example, one woman stated that she needs to show those in the younger generations that if

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138 Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018; Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018
139 Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
140 Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.
141 Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 201; Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018.
she is step over her father’s belonging, nothing is going to happen, and thus show the hollowness of the importance of such an idea.\textsuperscript{142}

In a conversation with two young women about change, they both explained that they really love Dho Tarap and many aspects of the culture, and that they do not want to change these positive aspects, but simply wish to see changes to specific norms that are harmful to women.\textsuperscript{143} Thus, although these women are dissatisfied with some of the ways that women are treated and/or forced to live within Dho Tarap, they do not wish to completely overhaul the culture or all of the traditions. Instead, these women simply wish to see change in what they consider to be the negative aspects of their culture.

At the root of the desire for such changes, community members often cited fairness, equality, and women’s rights as the motivating factors. One young woman explained that change should occur within Dho Tarap because men and women are born equally and possess the same capabilities. For this reason, they should both be treated and respected the same. The women further stated that it is simply unfair that women are forced to be confined to the home while men are able to travel, enjoy leisure, and take advantage of many opportunities that are not available to women.\textsuperscript{144}

In a conversation with three young women, the women listed out what they felt were the rights of women and then identified which rights they specifically felt were being violated within Dho Tarap. The list is as follows: women should receive the same education as men; women should to be able to talk about the challenges that they face; women should be given the same consideration as men (preference to the son should be erased); men should not be permitted to dominate women; women should have access to proper maternal health care; it should not be compulsory for women to have to work in the home; women should have the freedom to go anywhere they please; women should have the opportunity to be leaders in government and the community; women should have the right to be the head of the family; women should be allowed to be independent; and women should be allowed to do the same work and things that men can do. When asked which of these rights were most prominently not being practice in Dho Tarap, the group of women identified three. These included the following: women should be given the

\textsuperscript{142} Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.
\textsuperscript{143} Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018.
\textsuperscript{144} Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
same consideration as men (preference to the son should be erased), women should have the right to be the head of the family, and women should be allowed to do the same work and things that men can do.\textsuperscript{145} In examining these perceived compromised rights, one can plainly see countless examples of violations in the accounts of interviewees.

When asked about the role of women’s empowerment within Dho Tarap, women commonly stated that the idea of empowerment does not exist. However, some women did share their understanding of what women’s empowerment meant to them. One definition offered by a woman is as follows: women’s empowerment means that women are educated, aware of their own rights, and aware of the social problems prevalent within society. Another definition was that women’s empowerment means that women have the same opportunities as men to participate in all sectors of work and are able to live in a society with there is no partiality.\textsuperscript{146}

If community members were to question the importance of change, women did not hesitate to describe the many benefits that they felt would arise if change were to occur. To begin, women stated that change would result in more confident women. They continued by explaining that having more confidence will allow women to be more successful and active in school, more open to discuss health and menstrual issues with their mothers, daughters and other family members, and would serve as a protection against unwanted arranged marriages (i.e. women would be more likely to advocate for themselves and express their dissatisfaction).\textsuperscript{147}

Furthermore, many interviewees made the argument that if the opinions of men and women were to be considered equally, then the society would be more prosperous, the results of decision would be more fruitful and efficient, and there would be less of a burden on women.\textsuperscript{148} Lastly, women commonly cited that if women are empowered and educated, then the whole family will be educated due to the fact that mothers will be able to pass on their knowledge to both their male and female children, and thus benefit the entirety of the next generation.\textsuperscript{149} However, for many, change is not being sought out for this reasons. Instead, many are driven by the simple

\textsuperscript{145} Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018.
\textsuperscript{146} Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
\textsuperscript{147} Interview #8, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\textsuperscript{148} Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
\textsuperscript{149} Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
conviction that gender equality is necessary for creating a more just society and a right that women deserve.

Interviewees also pointed out that actively working to create such changes within society is very difficult. One interviewee described how within Dho Tarap, women fear challenging the social norms due to a fear of being isolated from and rejected by the community. In such a communal society, there is great risk in attempting to break away from norms and ways of life that people not only hold as truths but that have been inherited generation to generation. Not only do these social risks prevent individuals from fighting for change, lack of hope acts as a roadblock as well. For example, many elder women stated that they do not have much hope for change in their own lifetime (although many do hope that the next generation will have gender equality). As an exception to this trend, many young women did not hesitate to express a desire and hope to bring change to Dho Tarap. After thanking one interviewee for speaking with me, she replied that she was happy to talk for she wants to fight to change the challenges that women face.

In a different interview with several young, educated women in Kathmandu, the women made it clear that although they recognize the difficulties of creating change, they are hopeful that they and other educated Dolpopas can slowly facilitate change over time and help to transform Dho Tarap into a society that they consider to be more just for women.

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150 Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
151 Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018; Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
152 Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018.
153 Interview #22, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
Section IV: Hopes for Next Generation

Interviewees did not hesitate to share what they hope for the next generation of young women. Many women hope for a society where women will be fully educated, there will be open communication about women’s issues, the community will have infrastructural development, proper sanitation facilities will exist, community members will have moved away from old concepts that have oppressed women, women will be able to participate in work outside of the valley and be much more knowledgeable about life outside of Dho Tarap, women will be able to hold positions of leadership within the community, the concept of women’s empowerment will be present in the community and embraced by all villagers, arranged marriages will no longer exist, women will be able to act as the heads of the household, there will be no preference given to the son, women will be confident, independent, and able to share their voices, men and women will be equal in reality and not just on paper, and where all the challenges faced by women will be solved.\textsuperscript{154}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018;
\item Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018;
\item Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018;
\item Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018;
\item Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
\end{itemize}
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Section V: Women’s Advice for Community Leaders

When asked what women would tell community leaders if they were able to sit them all down and discuss the challenges that women face, many women stated that would first explain to leaders that gender equality does not exist within Dho Tarap, that there is not an equal distribution of work, and that women face a number of social challenges that men do not. One woman said that she would encourage leaders to think of their own mother, to reflect upon how they feel towards her, and then to apply these feeling towards all women in the community. She encourages leaders to treat all women in the community with the same respect, concern, and care that they would their own mothers. She further implores men within the government to try and emphasize with women, reflected upon the challenges that women face, to think about what needs to be improved, and then to take actions that improve the status of women.155

Other interviewees stated that they would tell community leaders that there needs to be an increase in sanitation facilities for women, community awareness programs focused upon women’s issues, and opportunities given to young women. Furthermore, many women ask community leaders to consider the many changes and solutions that women described and proposed in this report and to take proper action.156 Another interviewee stated that she would encourage women in local government to be confident and engaged in their work, to leave old concepts about gender behind and consider themselves equal as men, and to create practical changes within the community, rather than just talking about change. She further explained that she would tell men in local government to respect and support the positive things that women are doing in the community and to be give equal opportunities to women.157

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155 Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018.
156 Interview #1, personal communication, April 4, 2018; Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018; Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
157 Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.
Conclusion

It is clear that women face very many challenges throughout their life within Dho Tarap. Traditions, ways of life, social concepts, and cultural norms all contribute to the difficulties inherent in the lives of women and to the internalization of ideas that suggest that women are inferior to men. As discussed, the recent availability of formal education, both in Dho Tarap and Kathmandu, appears to be facilitating unprecedented shifts in the mindsets of young people. Despite these shifts, challenges still remain overwhelmingly present for women. Interviews with men reveal the fact that most men, even community leaders, do not appear to share the same opinions as women on women’s issues. Once again, this report offers only a small illustration of the lives of women living within Dho Tarap and cannot offer readers a full picture of life within Dho Tarap nor the complexities of the issues that women face. The coming years appear to be an interesting time when education, new government structures, and changing perspectives amongst the younger generation may bring significant change to cultural practices and social concepts. Despite this report’s analysis and my attempts to highlight and understand women’s thoughts on change and empowerment, it will be up to the young men and women of Dho Tarap to decide for themselves how or if their community should respond to the gender issues present within the community and what the future should hold for the next generation of Dolpopas.
**Words from the Women of Dho Tarap**

“First, I would like to thank Luke for giving me a great chance to share about our lifestyle and especially about women’s issues in Dolpo. Also, thank you for your [interest in being the first to research women’s issues] which [women have faced] from ancient times until now in Dolpo. With the help of you, I got the chance to express my own problems which I faced when I was younger in Dolpo. As talking about my own difficulties, though I'm the youngest child in my family and I was very close in relation with my family, I didn’t get any hint or knowledge about menstruation from my mom and sister. After my own start I was shocked, very afraid and speechless. After that day, I didn't ask my mom or my school friends about it. I thought I was the only girl who faced this kind of difficulty in life. After, I slowly [began] getting information from teachers in school about how this is the natural process and how every girl faces this in this world... But in the remote place like ours, we all are not aware of it. We don't have concepts of using sanitary pads or even a piece of cloth. Also, such little things that we need to know are no shared to us by our parents because they were also the same in that their parent also [did not talk about] such necessary things. In a similar way, women face many problems, not only mensuration but others too. So, you are only one whom I got the chance to share my opinion regarding women issues in Dolpo. Again, I would like to say very very thanks.” – Woman of Dho Tarap

“I am feeling very much happy as I got [a] precious opportunity to write some of my few words regarding your research even though I know very little about it. At first, I would like to give immense of my thanks towards you for supporting “us”, we women in an undeveloped rural area called “Dho Tarap.” I love your topic on which you have done research and that you always come on by [SLR to] research women and keeping thoughts. I hope my little interview with you may help you during your preparation of your presentation. What I want to say is that, as talking about the gender inequality throughout the world, it keeps on decreasing day by day, but in a place like ours there still exists [gender inequality]. Women are not given the chance to [be included] in works like trade, business, leadership, and also even when they are given the chance, they feel inferior [because they are told] that they don’t [have] such kinds of capabilities in doing such works. Men are respected even if they have done something wrong but when women [are included] in doing something wrong or any extra [activities] other than house work,
the society keeps on making rumors about that woman which is the most contrasting [way that men and women are treated] and there are many more such kinds of things occurring [in Dho Tarap]. But we few who are educated do hope [that] one day we will change these systems in our village. So lastly, please everyone respect everyone for their works, for their behavior, for any kindness of character.” – Woman of Dho Tarap
Limitations and Future Research

In having only four weeks to complete independent research and needing to dedicate almost half of this time to traveling to and from my destination, there was limited time to perform fieldwork within Dho Tarap. In future research, more interviews should be performed outside of Dho, with more members of local government, with more men in order to understand their perspectives on gender, and with more women in general. This report provides a board overview of the many challenges that women face with Dho Tarap; however, any one of the topics that which I touched upon can and should be explored in more detail. Each subject and sub-section deserves more in-depth analysis that I was not able to offer in this report. Other limitations included language barriers, privacy challenges (interviewing women privately with a co-researcher within a community where individuals freely move in and out of each other’s homes unannounced), confidentiality concerns (community members potentially seeing me enter someone’s home to do an interview), my positionality as man while attempting to discuss women’s issues with women, and my lack of complete understanding of the cultural norms, values, and traditions within Dho Tarap. In addition to exploring any one of the topics presented in this report in more detail, future research could further explore topics related to how education is changing the perceptions of young women in Dho Tarap as well as how the new structure of government in Nepal manifests in Dho Tarap and how women fit into this system.
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Appendix: Interviews

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Interview #2, personal communication, April 6, 2018.
Interview #3, personal communication, April 8, 2018.
Interview #4, personal communication, April 10, 2018.
Interview #5, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
Interview #6, personal communication, April 22, 2018.
Interview #7, personal communication, April 23, 2018.
Interview #8, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
Interview #9, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
Interview #10, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
Interview #11, personal communication, April 24, 2018.
Interview #12, personal communication, April 26, 2018.
Interview #13, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
Interview #14, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
Interview #15, personal communication, April 27, 2018.
Interview #16, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
Interview #17, personal communication, April 28, 2018.
Interview #18, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
Interview #19, personal communication, April 29, 2018.
Interview #20, personal communication, May 4, 2018.
Interview #21, personal communication, May 11, 2018.
Interview #22, personal communication, May 11, 2018.