

# WOMEN IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: LEARNING FROM CASE STUDIES IN NEPAL

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Right 4  
Children 

WHERE HOPES & OPPORTUNITIES MEET

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Right4Children is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization committed to improve the lives of marginalised children and youth of Nepal through protection, education and livelihood support services.



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**DEDICATED TO  
ALL THE AMAZING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

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## List of Abbreviation

CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NLFS	Nepal Labour Force Survey
OJT	On the Job Training
R4C	Right4Children
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
TSLC	Technical School Leaving Certificate
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nepal has achieved significant progress in sending children to school in the recent years. Gender parity in enrolment at the primary and secondary levels are also encouraging. However, school attendance rate and completion rate are still big challenges. Only less than 20 percent of primary level children complete high school, and girls are at higher risk of dropping out. On the other hand, those who complete secondary and even tertiary level education also remain unemployed. The magnitude of this problem is higher among educated women. Recent labour force survey suggests that educational gains have not translated into labor market gains, particularly for young women. This is evident from the fact that labour force participation rate of young Nepalese women is very low. More strikingly, almost half of young women, aged 15-34 years, are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

The current mainstream educational model doesn't align well with the labor market needs. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) could provide an alternative pathway to work but it is overlooked. Girls' and young women's participation in TVET could substantially increase their labor force participation, yet there are several barriers to girls' participation in TVET programs and their acquisition of skills needed for their participation in traditionally male-dominated occupations. These barriers include underinvestment in TVET, limited information about TVET programmes, and social and gender norms that view TVET as the education for working-class men. When girls and women have access to TVET, it encourages and promotes equitable gender participation in non-traditional occupations.

## **Methodology**

This study reached out to seventeen women who pursued TVET career pathways and have become successful in their respective field of occupations. The cases were identified through different networks and contacts, especially from the TVET institutes and programmes. The methodological approach used for the study were field visit, observation and in-depth interview with the selected cases about their experience and achievements.

## **Major findings of the study**

- Women are generally underestimated and not fully trusted to work in non-traditional field of work. One of the main reasons is because the society has never seen women working in those fields. However, success is determined by hard work, passion, and dedication to the work and not by the gender of a person. No job, occupation or profession has a gender tag attached to it, it is actually the society, culture and people who differentiate work on the basis of gender.

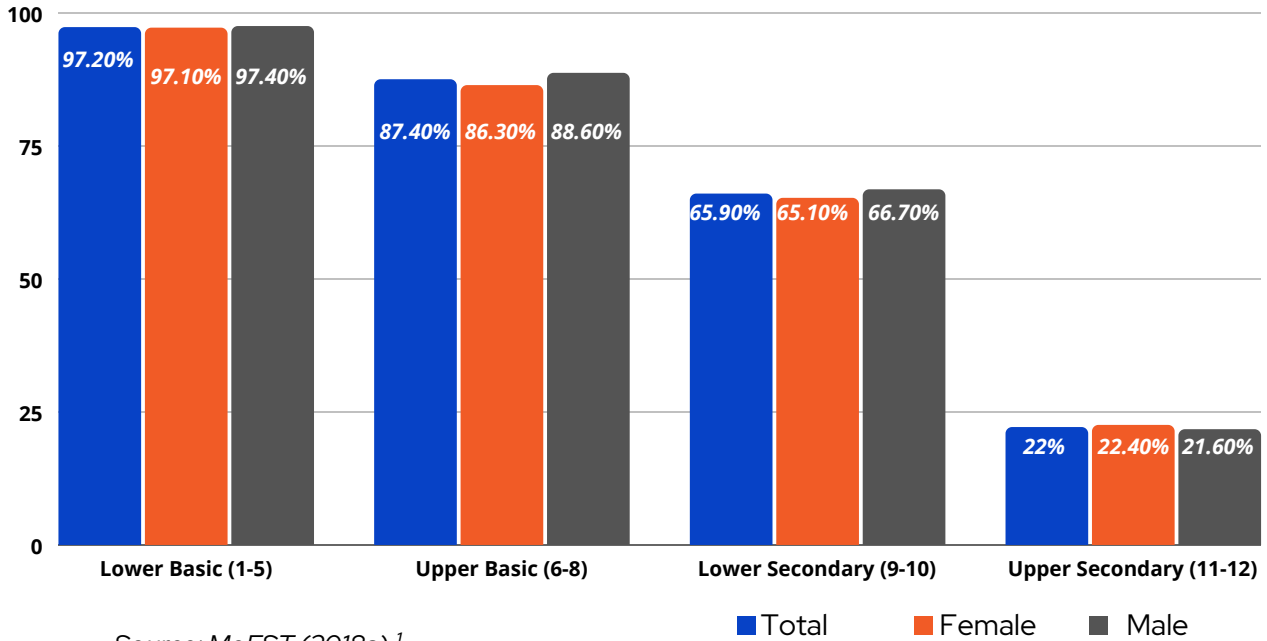
- The stereotypical mindset that technical jobs are for males only is the main reason behind less female participation in technical courses and employment. What gender you are is not the problem and it does not make any difference. A proper orientation and guidance both for the girls and their parents on the scope and prospects of TVET is crucial.
- There is a high demand, but shortage of skilled technical workforce in Nepal. The study suggests that there is really a good scope and opportunities for females in non-traditional occupations. However, family support is very important for this.
- There are women who are committedly involved in the so called male-dominated occupations and have become successful in the respective fields. Presenting successful female cases in TVET sector and using them as role models, sharing their successful stories and experiences among girls and young women would help to improve girls' participation not only in TVET programmes but also in the respective areas of occupations.

### **Suggestions for policy implication and future actions**

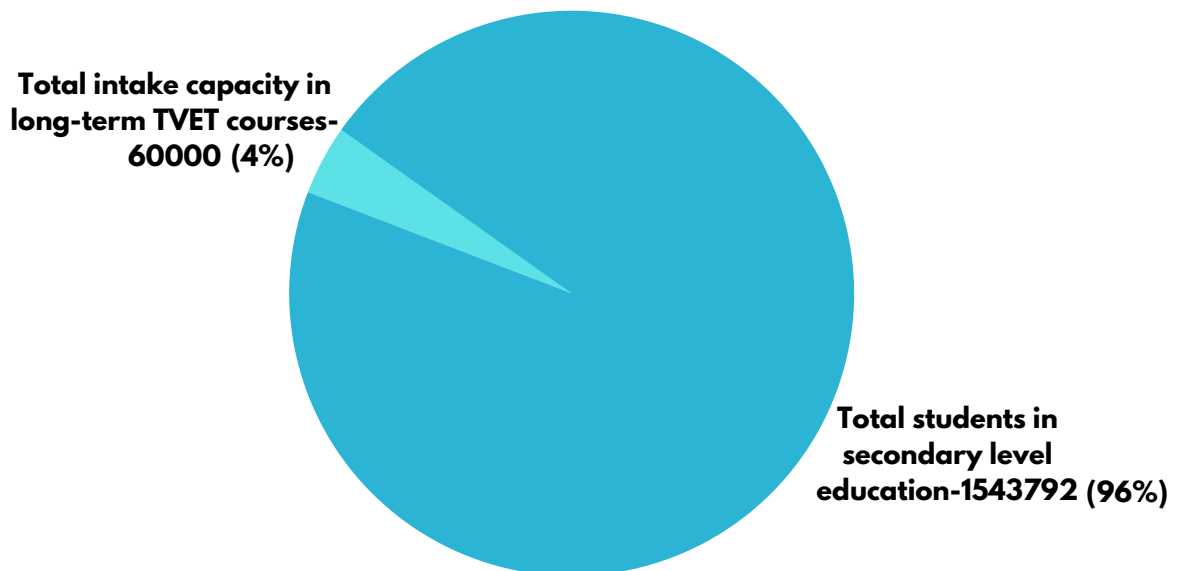
- A proper orientation and guidance both for girls and their parents on the prospects of TVET is very essential to break the traditional and stereotyped mindset. For this, every school should have a career guidance and counselling program so that the students get informed career choices. TVET career pathways should be emphasized and prioritized to female youth. This could enable and help them start something on their own even if they don't find a job.
- Successful female cases in TVET should be explored, identified and presented as role models to girls and young women who are at the stage to decide their career. Sharing their stories, experiences and achievements would definitely help to promote female participation in TVET courses and in the respective occupations.
- A certain number of quotas should be allocated for females to increase their participation in TVET. Besides, TVET institutes should focus more on improving the quality of education and training. Having female instructors in TVET programmes would definitely help girls to be more comfortable to choose TVET career pathways. Additionally, TVET courses and curriculums should be updated according to the context and the needs of the market.

# IMPORTANT FACTS AND FIGURES

## 1. School level enrolment rate, Nepal, 2017/18



## 2. Total students in secondary level versus total intake capacity in long-term TVET, Nepal, 2017/18



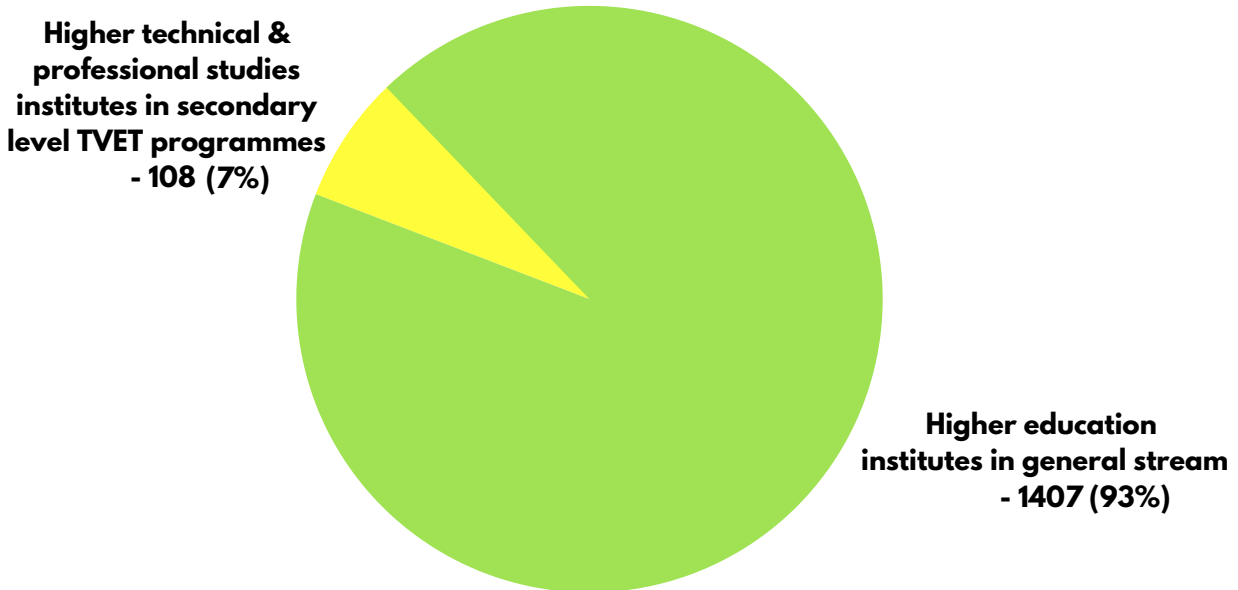
Source: MOEST (2018a) and MOEST (2018b) <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MoEST (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology). (2018). "Education in Figures 2017 (At A Glance)." Statistical Report, MoEST, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu.

<sup>2</sup>MoEST (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology). (2018). "Comprehensive TVET Annual Report 2017/18." Report, MoEST, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu.

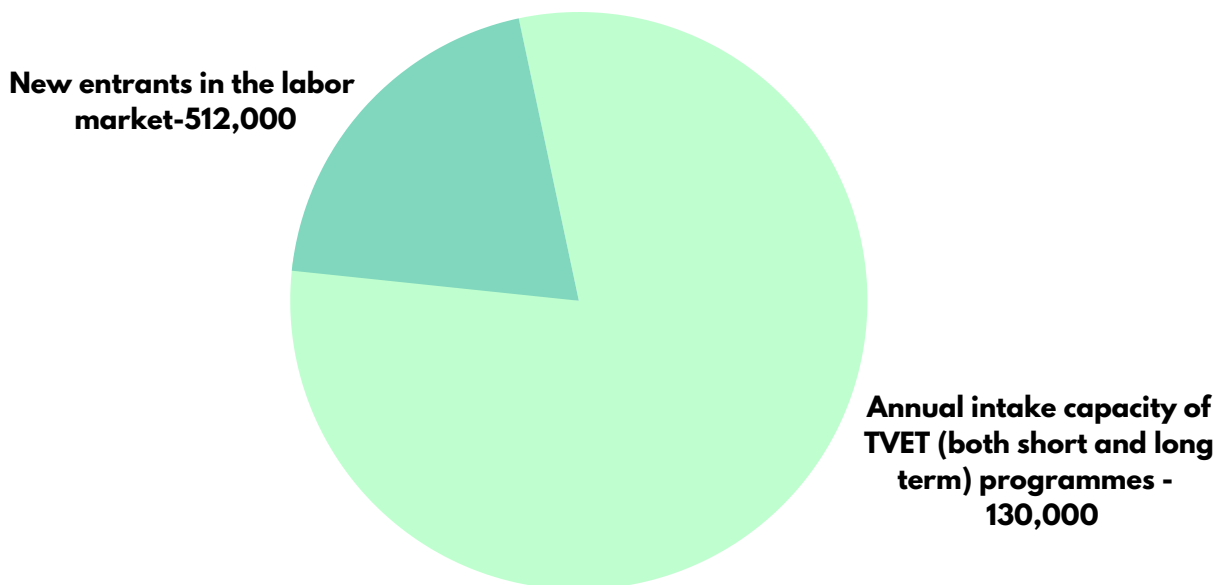


### 3. Higher education institutions in Nepal, 2017/18



Source: MOEST (2018a)

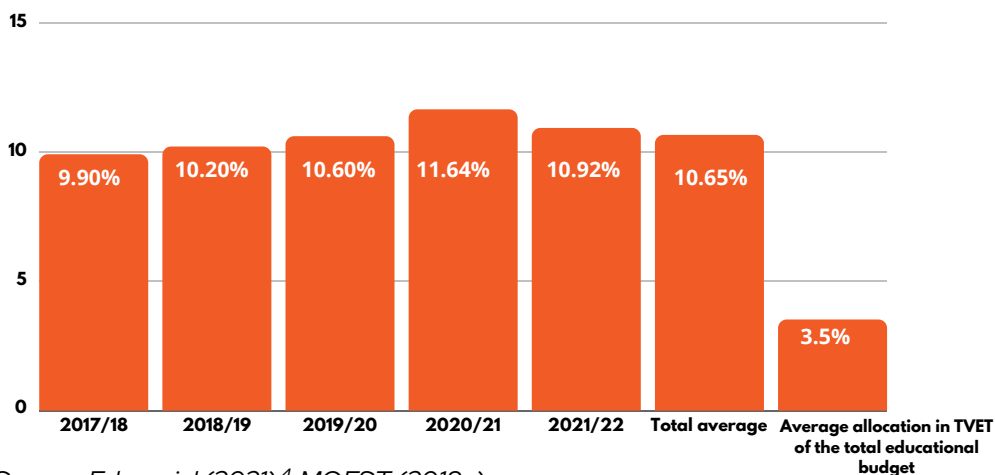
### 4. Annual new entrants in the labor market and total TVET intake capacity in Nepal 2017/18



Source: NLFS (2017/18) , MOEST (2018b)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>CBS and ILO (Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal, and International Labour Organization). (2019). "Report on the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/18." CBS, Government of Nepal Kathmandu.

## 5. Share of education budget in national budget and share of TVET budget in education budget in Nepal 2017/18-2021/22



Source: Edusanjal (2021)<sup>4</sup>; MOEST (2018a)

## 6. Youth and labor market indicators, Nepal, 2017/18

Description	Total	Female	Male
Total Population (in thousand)	29022	15513	13509
Youth (15-24 years) population (in thousands)	5654	3120	2534
Working-age population (in thousands)	20744	11537	9208
Youth's (15-24 years) share in working age population (%)	27.3	27.0	27.5
Labor force participation rate	38.5	26.3	53.8
Youth (15-24) labor force participation rate	28.6	20.3	38.9
Employment to population ratio	34.2	22.9	48.3
Youth (15-24 years) employment to population ratio	22.5	15.4	31.2
Unemployment rate	11.4	13.1	10.3
Youth (15-24 years) unemployment rate	21.4	23.9	19.7
Youth (15-24 years) not in employment, education or training (NEET)	35.3	46.6	21.5

Source: NLFS (2017/18)

<sup>4</sup><https://edusanjal.com/news/education-sector-gets-180-billion-budget/>

# INTRODUCTION

## Background of the study

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is widely believed to be the education and training that provides knowledge and skills for employment. There is ample evidence that TVET prepares people for the world of work, equipping them with the skills required for a job (CTEVT 2016<sup>5</sup>; ILO 2014<sup>6</sup>). Therefore, TVET has been recognized as a pivotal tool for empowering people by bringing them out of poverty and ultimately contributing to the economic growth of a nation. TVET can significantly impact an increase in employment opportunities, especially in the developing countries where there are very limited job opportunities available in the market and where the employment rate is low.

In almost every economy, women are both under-represented and discriminated against in the labour market and though the gap is highly prevalent in the developing countries (UN 2020)<sup>7</sup> like Nepal. Nepal is a small country with the total population of close to 30 million. According to NLFS (2019),<sup>8</sup> the ratio of female population is higher (53.5%) than that of male (46.5%). Female make up 56 percent of the total working-age population but only 26 percent of working-age females are in the labor force, compared to 54 percent in the case of male. Furthermore, many females work in the informal sector where the working conditions and facilities are very poor.

Unemployment is one of the biggest challenges of Nepalese economy as it is in other underdeveloped nations. Although unemployment is a common problem for both male and female working-age population, the problem is severe among the young women of 15-24 old age group. Findings of the NLFS (2019) show that half of the female youth (ages 15-34) are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) while only around 20 percent of male youth are in that status.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) focuses on TVET under SDG 4 “Quality Education”. The goals 4.3<sup>9</sup> and 4.4<sup>10</sup> are explicitly targeted for skills development, lifelong learning opportunities and for decent work and life for every youth and adult, especially for girls and women.

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<sup>5</sup>CTEVT (Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training). (2016). “Impact Study of Karnali Technical School, Jumla.” CTEVT, Bhaktapur, Nepal.

<sup>6</sup>Serrière, Nicolas, and CEDA (Center for Economic Development and Administration). (2014). “Labour Market Transitions of Young Women and Men in Nepal.” Work4Youth Publication Series No. 12, International Labour Office, Geneva.

<sup>7</sup>UN (United Nations). (2020). “The World’s Women 2020.” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York. <https://worlds-women-2020-data-undesa.hub.arcgis.com/>.

<sup>8</sup>CBS and ILO (Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal, and International Labour Organization). (2019). “Report on the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/18.” CBS, Government of Nepal Kathmandu.

<sup>9</sup>SDG Target 4.3. “By 2030 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.”

<sup>10</sup>SDG Target 4.4. “By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.”

Many international development agencies have also been emphasizing TVET as an important instrument to strengthen school-to-work transition and to fight youth unemployment and poverty. However, TVET is found to be greatly underused and not accessible to the population that needs it the most (MoEST 18)<sup>11</sup>. The socio-cultural norms stand as additional barrier for females' access to it and where they do have access to TVET, their participation is highly skewed in stereotypical occupational courses such as nursing, tailoring, cosmetology etc. (Paudel 2019)<sup>12</sup>. Female participation in non-traditional TVET programs is extremely low.

Young women who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) are at higher risks of early marriage, child bearing, slavery, unsafe migration, trafficking and other forms of abuse (NPC, UNICEF, and New ERA 2010)<sup>13</sup>. A greater focus on general education has not necessarily helped fulfil people's expectation of better life outcomes, especially for girls. Although the demand for labour shows a strong need for people trained in technical occupations, many still opt for higher education in general stream. This is either because they are not well informed about the labour market needs or because the access to technical occupational courses is difficult.

Therefore, investment in gender transformative TVET programs seems to be an important strategy to help bridge this gap. Along with this, public orientation about the labour market information and needs, particularly targeting young women, is equally essential. Poor school attendance rates and alarming school dropout rate along with the low rate of school to work transition also suggests the need to provide informed choices in education emphasizing technical and vocational subjects. Even if young women do not pursue higher studies, this will help them to acquire job skills and be prepared for the available jobs in the market. At the same time, it will also boost their confidence for self-employment. So, improving their access to TVET is critical.

## **Rationale of the study**

This study aims to serve the purpose of sharing the successful cases of young women in TVET career pathways with policy makers as well as girls and young women. The report presents different cases highlighting their stories of struggles and achievements, and also provides recommendations to different concerned groups. The study expects that the presented stories and the findings from those stories will be helpful in providing well-informed educational and career choices for girls and young women, persuading policy makers for needful changes in education policies and systems.

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<sup>11</sup> MOEST (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology). (2018). *Comprehensive TVET Annual Report 2075.* Report, MoEST, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu

<sup>12</sup> Paudel, Anil. (2019). "Girls' Transitions to Work through Higher-Quality TVET Programs in Nepal." Policy Paper, Center for Universal Education, Brookings, Washington, D.C.

<sup>13</sup> NPC, UNICEF, and New ERA (National Planning Commission, United Nations Children's Fund, and New ERA). (2010). "Child Poverty and Disparities in Nepal: Towards Escaping the Cycle of Poverty. Nepal Report 2010." Country Report, UNICEF, New York.



**FINDINGS FROM SUCCESSFUL  
CASE STUDIES**



## Case 1

# DETERMINED TO BECOME A DRIVER



Low income and growing expenses in the family worried her much. Therefore, she wanted to assist her husband in improving household income so that she could also contribute for their daily living expenses and make some savings for the future. Thus, she was looking for an opportunity that could help her fulfill her wishes. However, finding a job was very tough for her as she was not even a high school graduate. Moreover, there were very limited job opportunities in the market. Fortunately, she heard about a free driving training course from her husband, who is also her biggest motivator. She applied for it and eventually got selected for the three-month training course after an interview.

**“People consider driving as men's profession only, but a woman can also be as good driver as a man can be”**

Menuka Ghimire was an avid learner, and she never used to hesitate to ask her queries to the trainers. Her trainers were amazed to see her enthusiasm, learning attitude and passion for the training. She did not have to remain jobless after the training. Right after the completion of the training, she was offered a job in the same institute as the instructor. "They might have seen some quality in me because of which I was selected as an instructor even though I did not have any experience", said Menuka. She worked there as a driving instructor for two and half years and then got selected for the government job. She and her family are very proud of her achievements.

**“ She used to feel underestimated and not fully trusted to work as a professional driver as women drivers were rare in the country but she did not lose faith in herself.**

Menuka has a light vehicle driving license and professional driving experience. At present, she is engaged in one of the government offices as a Driver. But she had to face some bitter experiences at the initial phase of her career. In those days, she used to feel underestimated and not fully trusted to work as a professional driver as women drivers were rare in the country but she did not lose faith in herself. She kept on giving the best service as a driver. Gradually, people started appreciating her and her driving skills. She often recalls a memory when she had a field visit to a rural village and the people there were very surprised to see a woman driving a car. The villagers applauded her.

She thinks, "Success will follow you sooner or later, if you are hardworking, sincere and determined in your chosen field." She encourages girls and young women to join technical and vocational education and training programs and suggests their parents and families to provide necessary support to them.

Such support is crucial to complete the course successfully and to start a career in the respective field. Likewise, she recommends the Government to invest more in the TVET sector and provide training programs according to the needs of the labor market of the country. By doing this, she believes, skilled and qualified human resources would be produced within the nation. Today she is earning a decent salary and is very much satisfied with her profession. She also wants her children to follow the TVET career pathway.



***Investing more in the TVET sector and providing need-based training programs would help in producing qualified human resources required for the nation.***

## Case 2



# STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT THE SOCIAL NORMS

She is just 25 in age, but has already got eight years of experience working as an electrician, the occupation widely regarded as masculine job. Santoshi Ghimire who currently works for Nepal Electricity Authority, is an energetic lady who loves to challenge traditional social norms and practices that promote gender stereotypes and underestimate women.

**“As she was bold and laborious, she never had to feel any kind of intimidation and discouragement even though she was the only female participant in the training.”**

She was self-motivated to choose this sector as she had always wanted to do something different, which other girls usually hesitate to do. Her family backed and supported her in her choice of becoming a professional electrician. Though she was the only female participant in the training, she never felt any kind of intimidation and discouragement from anyone. Indeed, she was very bold and laborious. "I used to study even during the lunch time and attend additional practical classes to enhance my knowledge and skills. Whatever I have achieved so far is all because of my dedication and hard work", said Santoshi.

Santoshi worked as an Electrical Instructor for five years after doing a Diploma in Electrical Engineering. As an instructor, she used to teach and persuade girls to join non-traditional sectors. "People scare girls saying that they cannot perform well in electrical and other engineering courses which discourages them to join such courses and incites them to drop the course even if they had joined. That is why proper orientation and guidance on the scope and opportunities in the TVET sector is very crucial not only for girls but also to their parents", she shares her experience and notions.

Today, she is extremely happy and satisfied with her job. The right choice of career at the right time helped her become an independent woman today. She earns NRs 45,000 per month on an average. "Hadn't I chosen this career field, I do not think I would have come to this level of my professional career", she told proudly. She is truly a role model for all those young girls who want to try and do something new and different in life.



### Case 3

## BOLD BIJAYA, THE EXCAVATOR OPERATOR



**“ I felt like a celebrity when a crowd of people gathered so astonishingly to see me (a female) operating an excavator and clicked my pictures.**

She began her career journey in the technical sector by doing TSLC course in Auto-mechanic. Immediately after that, she showed her interest in heavy vehicles (excavators and cranes). She talked to the training instructors of the heavy vehicle operator course and they encouraged her saying that if she was interested, she could ofcourse do it. "I was the only female among the total 45 participants", she recalled the training days. She was so resolute to do the course that being the only female participant never bothered her. Her performance during the training and on-the-job training (OJT) was so good that even her male colleagues used to praise and refer to her for any queries/questions they had related to the course. She successfully completed the course and also passed the license procedures.

She has been professionally working as a heavy equipment operator for 5 years now. She had lots of encouragement and support from her husband and other family members. "It wouldn't have been possible to enter into this profession without his support and guidance", she said, giving all the credits to her husband for her professional achievement and successful career. She is, in fact, away from her family for her job on the field and this is not a problem both for her, a mother of a 10 years old child, and her family.

"One of the best moments of my life was when I was provided with the key of the excavator which I operate and is under my direct care", she shared.

She is quite sure that technical courses have higher demand in the job market these days but the main challenge is that our society undermines girls' capabilities to be engaged in the technical sector, especially in the non-traditional occupations. "We should motivate and educate girls as well as their families regarding TVET courses, their prospects and opportunities from the school level itself. There are many short- and long-term TVET

courses, which girls can choose according to their interest and capacity", she emphasized. She also highlighted the fact that there are good opportunities for females in the government sector, but most of the reserved quotas for females remain unfulfilled as there are no qualified females to compete for the jobs.

***There are good opportunities for females in the government sector, but most of the reserved quotas for females remain unfulfilled as there are no qualified females to compete for the jobs.***



“

***It wouldn't have been possible for me to become a professional heavy equipment operator without the support and guidance from my family***

She is successful today all because of her self-confidence, passion, dedication and conscientious nature. She earns around NRs 30,000 per month and also gets paid additionally for her overtime work and hence is fully satisfied from her job. She encourages girls not to put an end to their career after marriage or having babies and further suggested the government to focus and invest more on TVET with more priorities to females. She also pointed out the need to establish a good link between TVET institutes and the job market.



## Case 4



### FLOURISHING IN THE WOOD CARVING INDUSTRY

The best advice that I have ever got in my life was “participate in woodcarving training”, said Rasna Suwal, 26 years old, who is running her own business in Kamalbinayek, Bhaktapur. She received this training 8 years ago and worked as an employee for about 6 years after the training. For the last two years, she has been running her own business.

She heard about the short training course from her friend and they both got selected for the course after an interview. However, her friend couldn't continue her career in this sector, while she is flourishing in it. She said, “I belonged to an economically poor family and due to family circumstances, I could continue my education only up to secondary level (10th grade). I was badly in need of a job to support myself and my family but I could never find a job. I got the opportunity to participate in the wood carving training and that is helping me to change my life”.

***Having female instructors in the training programs would be more comfortable for girls to express their problems and concerns.***

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"For a girl to be successful in whatever occupation she chooses to follow, family support plays a vital role", this is what Rasna has felt. The continuous support from her parents and husband bolstered her journey. She has also transferred the wood carving skills which she learnt from the training to her husband and now both of them are working hard and taking care of the business.



Sharing her own experience and observation, she suggested that it would be more comfortable for girls to express their problems and concerns if there would be female instructors in the training compared to male instructors. She also strongly recommends the government to provide more of such free technical and vocational education and training opportunities to needy girls and young women so that they could benefit from it.

***“ Hadn't I gone for the training, I would only be staying at home, perhaps spending my time weaving, knitting and baby-sitting.*”**

She works hard every day in her factory and supplies the products she makes to the market. She is financially independent today, with an average income of NRs 50,000 a month and she is very satisfied with her achievements so far. She says, "I don't have to financially rely on my husband or my parents which I am very proud of. Hadn't I gone for the training, I would only be staying at home, perhaps spending my time weaving, knitting and baby-sitting." She wants to tell other girls and young women to be courageous and hardworking enough to excel in their respective field of work.



## Case 5

# FROM HOMEMAKER TO A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PERSON

"Males usually belittle females saying that they take training but end up doing household chores wasting time and resources. I had to prove them wrong and I did it too. I have become a well known entrepreneur today, I have my own wood carving business", said Krishna Laxmi Chhetala, 35 years, from Suryabinayek, Bhaktapur. She started her career in wood carving 13 years ago and is still very motivated and ambitious towards her work.

**“** We should explore, identify and present successful female cases in TVET sector and let them share their successful stories and experiences among young girls.







Mrs. Chhetala had studied up to Grade 7 only. Her time and work was limited within the household only, especially after marriage. Later, her husband motivated her to do a course on wood carving and she was enrolled in the training program. Initially, it was very hard for her mostly in theory classes. However, with all the hard work and high level of self-esteem, she completed the course. She had to do On-the-Job Training (OJT) as well and luckily, seeing her potential, she was offered a job where she did her OJT. Her knowledge and skills in this sector were enriched when she worked there for 6 years. Subsequently, she came up with an intent to start her own business.

In the initial days of her business, she had to struggle a lot as most of all the other entrepreneurs were male. Even so, she moved on with a positive spirit and it almost took her a year to convince her customers that she too can produce and deliver quality products. She started her business with 3 employees, but currently she has 10 employees working for her.

She says, "No work should be differentiated gender-wise. We need to motivate females to come out of the domestic spheres and participate in vocational training programmes. This can help them become independent." When asked about the ways to encourage girls in the TVET sector, her response was, "We should explore, identify and present successful female cases in this sector and let them share their experiences among young girls".

She is extremely happy and satisfied to take up this occupation. She also feels proud that she has been able to provide employment to other people. She saves around NRs 80,000 each month. She has become a source of inspiration as other young women in the neighbourhood have also started to work in the same field and she is very glad to have set the example for all of them. She says, "I still have a long way to go and achieve more".

## Case 6

# MANU- THE PRIDE OF MANANG

"Once widely discredited by my society for choosing non-traditional occupation, today I am recognized as Manang's Pride after I set the World Record to be the first female to climb Mount Annapurna IV", said Manu Gurung, 33 years, who already has 14 years

of experience in Trekking and Rock-Climbing. Manu got married when she was 14 and had a baby at 16. After getting separated from her husband, she had the responsibility to take care of her baby, mother and siblings. She started working as a daily wage labor to make some income for livelihood.



**“Once widely discredited by the society for choosing non-traditional occupation, I am now recognized as Manang's Pride after setting the World Record to be the first female to climb Mount Annapurna IV**

As she comes from Manang, she had noticed foreigners coming for a trek and expedition. This, directly or indirectly, attracted her interest in the field. One day, she asked a trekking guide (male) if she could also do the same work but his reply, "It's not for females", demotivated her. A ray of hope emerged in her when she heard about Three Sisters Adventure Trekking providing trekking guide training to women in Pokhara. Then, she decided to come to Pokhara for the training to make a career in trekking. She still remembers the day when her mother was so reluctant to send her away from home fearing that she could be sold in a new place and would not see her back.

The initial days of the training were very difficult for her as the training was in English and she was very poor at it. However, she was very hard working and she used to practice speaking English till late at night. Now, she can comprehend English pretty well. She started her career as a porter.





At present, she is professionally involved in mountain/rock-climbing and trekking. Moreover, she has visited several countries like Italy, Poland, Austria, Africa and Netherlands representing Nepal in rock-climbing and also to share her experiences as a female role model in the very field. "All you need is passion, hard-work and the ability to take risks. Females can also do what males can in any given field or profession", this is her message to the every girls.

***Females can also do what males can in any given field or profession. All we need is passion, hard-work and the ability to take risks.***

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Manu is very happy and satisfied with her profession. She got everything- name, fame and a decent income in this field. On an average, she earns at least NRs 25,000 per month. She has become a good example for all the girls and women. Her villagers, who were once against her choice of occupation, have now realized that daughters too can become trekking and rock-climbing professionals.

## Case 7

# THE LEADING LADY IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

One of the pioneer female entrepreneurs in Nepal, Lucky Chhetri, is persistently working to empower women to be self-reliant for more than 25 years. She is actively engaged in providing specialized training for females to become trekking guides and she also employs them.

She started her career in Mountaineering in 1990 by doing a 6-week training. During that time, she was clueless about it, she enrolled in the course just to utilize her spare time. However, she developed an interest in it gradually. Later in 1996, she also undertook 3-month 'Trekking Guide Training'. Being a woman, it was very difficult for her to join the training in those days as there were no other women in the trainings. She had to request the training providers many times to let her participate in the training. Seeing her zeal and energy, they were very much impressed and finally enrolled her in the training. Her father supported and motivated her abundantly which helped her a lot to complete the training successfully.

**“Choose your educational and career pathway out of your own interest and not under the pressure from anyone else.**



It was very difficult for her in the initial days of the training but she never thought of giving up in between. Instead, she was more curious to learn and started working very hard to complete the course. She said, "Physically it was too arduous; yet, I was very vigorous mentally". Her instructors were also overwhelmed by her performance and used to praise her. "Learning to become a trekking guide is difficult but working as a trekking guide is more difficult in our socio-cultural context", she reflects from her own experience. People used to make fun of her saying that it was a stupid idea for a woman to become a trekking guide. It was very discouraging for her to hear such remarks but she never quit the field because she had an unwavering desire towards the profession and wanted to grow her career in it. As a result, she has now become a very successful and a renowned personality in the sector.

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Lucky Chhetri has established her own organization to empower Nepalese women. The organization provides opportunities for young women to undertake trekking guide training courses. She has become a role model and a good source of inspiration for girls and young women who wanted to pursue a career in the tourism sector, especially in trekking. She believes, "We all have distinct capacity, interest and strength. We have to identify our potential ourselves and utilize our talents". She is very successful today and she thinks self-trust, hard-work and consistency are the key to her success. She feels very fortunate to come this far in her career journey.

***People used to make fun of her saying that it was a stupid idea for a woman to become a trekking guide. It was discouraging for her to hear so but she never gave up as she had unwavering desire towards the profession and now she is a well renowned professional in the sector.***

She wants more girls to join and follow TVET career pathways. According to her, women are lagging behind due to cultural and conceptual barriers that are prevalent in our society. People still believe that TVET is for men only and homemaker, teacher, beautician or nursing are better careers for females. This traditional mindset must be changed to increase female participation in TVET.

We should allow our daughters to take courses like electrician, plumbing, automobiles, etc. For that, a plethora of training opportunities, motivation and counselling is a must. She urges every girl to choose their education and career pathway out of their own interest and not under the pressure from anyone.



## Case 8

# BENJANA WHO ENJOYS MAKING HER HANDS DIRTY



"I do not like using nail polish and other cosmetics to look beautiful, rather I like to work hard and enjoy being dirty while I work in my workshop. I don't care what others think and say about me", said Benjana Gaud who has been operating her own auto workshop in Sunwal, Nawalparasi for 4 years now.

It has been 12 years since she started her journey in this sector by attending a 3-month auto mechanic course. As part of the course, she also had to do On-the-Job training (OJT). It was her hard-work and passion for the work that won her a job at the same company where she did her OJT. Having worked there for 8 years boosted her confidence level and job skills.

Her parents were very understanding from the beginning. She was single then, but she found a very supportive husband later when she got married. She even inspired her husband to follow the same occupation and also trained him herself to be an auto-mechanic.

After appearing in the final examination of the secondary level education, her friends chose general subjects for their studies at post-secondary level and suggested her to do the same. But instead, she decided to do something different. "Nobody inspired me to adopt this profession; I was myself very determined to do something unusual for women to do. Today, I am known as a role model in this profession and I am very proud of the decision that I made", she was so happy to tell. She further told, "I was suggested by many that working in the workshop and repairing motorbikes makes you dirty and filthy, instead a career in beauty work or in tailoring would be a better choice." However, she always ignored such advice and followed her interest.

**“Nobody inspired me to adopt this occupation; I was self-determined to do something different and today I am known as a role model, and I am very proud of the decision I made.**



At the initial phase of her career, no one believed that a female can also do motorbike repair and maintenance services. They hesitated to let her do the maintenance of their motorbikes. Gradually, she gave the impression that she was very good at it. Today, she has an excellent customer base. She said, "I serve my customers without caring about the time and weather, whether it is late night, or heavy rainfall. Whenever my customers call me for my service, I go to them and do my job". She is very bold and loves her work. Her monthly income is NRs 50,000 on an average.

***Don't care about what people will say when choosing and deciding your career and neither should you feel shy about your choice.***



She recommends young girls to learn technical and vocational skills so that they could get a job immediately and live an independent life. She says, "You should not care about what people will say when choosing and deciding your career or occupation, neither should you feel shy about it. We girls are not only born to be limited within the households, we can do a lot more. Had I listened to others' opinions, I wouldn't have been doing what I am doing. So, you should be courageous and industrious". She wants to urge every parent to support their daughters in what they wish to do and become in life.



## Case 9

### BUSY LADY IN THE FARM

"I would have been engaged in some low-paid job today had I not heard about the course- Diploma in Plant Science from my friend. It was by coincidence that I knew about the course and something inside me incited to join the course. After completing the course, I opted for professional farming and started with a small land area (around 1 acre). I have now leased almost 30 ropanis (4 acres) of land for vegetable farming. I have also employed many females in my business", said Basanta Gharti Magar who is a successful farming business woman from Pyuthan district.

Her father, actually, wanted her not to continue her study after high school though her mother was very supportive. Nonetheless, she was very determined to study hard for her better future. So, she continued her education anyway. She got married when she was doing her diploma course and her husband provided her necessary support to complete the course. After the completion of the course, they decided to start farming on a large scale to make the use of Basanta's knowledge and expertise in the field. She has already been involved in professional farming for 5 years now. She is very satisfied with what she has been doing and earns around 1.5 million rupees a year. She can be a good role model and the source of inspiration to other young females who want to achieve their dreams and support their family economically.



***The TVET courses and curriculums should be updated according to the context and the needs of the market.***

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Basanta believes that the reason for less participation of females in TVET education pathway is because of very less support both from the family and from the government. She thinks that many of the girls discontinue their education and careers after marriage as they cannot manage their time for both personal and professional responsibilities. Therefore, she suggested that counselling and orientation/awareness programs are very crucial for families, especially for fathers (in the case of unmarried girls), husbands (for the married ones) and teachers so that they could guide and support them to continue and complete their education and help them to start their professional career.

Also, many girls choose a course at a higher level without having proper knowledge about the career scope and future prospects of the course. In fact, many choose a subject under the influence of peer pressure. Basanta emphasized on the need to promote and encourage girls to join technical education as there are so many opportunities in the technical sectors. Many jobs that are allocated for females in the technical sector are going vacant as there is a shortage of trained female workforce to compete for the jobs.



***“ I would like to request every girl and their parents to prioritize TVET career pathway so that they can start something on their own even if they don't find a job.***

She is successful today by virtue of her determination and positive spirit. She said that continuous hard work and dedication will lead to a successful career. She further added, "There are so many TVET institutions in Nepal with various courses to chose from. I would like to request every parent and girl to prioritize TVET career pathway so that they can start something on their own even if they do not find a job. Interestingly, Basanta's 7 years old daughter also dreams of becoming a farmer in future.

I would also like to recommend the government to allocate more quotas for females in TVET and provide scholarships to them. Additionally, the TVET courses and curriculums should be updated according to the context and the needs of the market."

## Case 10

# NO JOB HAS A GENDER TAG



"No job, occupation or profession has a gender tag attached to it. It is people who differentiate work on the basis of gender" says Kamala Chaudhary who is herself an auto-mechanic and runs her own motorcycle workshop in Lamahi, Dang.

***No job, occupation or profession has a gender tag attached to it. It is people who differentiate occupations gender wise.***

After completing her SLC, instead of joining higher education in general stream which usually many prefer to do, Kamala decided to enroll in one of the technical/vocational short training courses that would help her start a career. She, therefore, went to Kathmandu for the training program where she had many options to choose a course like tailoring, handicraft, auto-mechanics, etc. Interestingly, she went for a course in 'Auto-mechanic' which is widely considered to be only for males. When asked for the reason for choosing the Auto-mechanic course, Kamala responded, "I wanted to learn something unique, which usually females do not aspire for. I successfully completed the one-year course including 6 months of On-the-Job training. The training equipped me with the practical and workable skills and knowledge in the sector which I have been utilizing professionally since then."





***My biggest learning in life is that if you have a strong will and determination, you can do anything and become successful in that area.***

Kamala said that there were only two females out of the total 20 participants in the auto-mechanic course in her group. But they never had to feel any discomfort as the trainers and their male colleagues were very supportive and they highly respected them for choosing the course in which female participation is very rare. Even during her OJT, her clients and other people appreciated her courage and confidence. After completing the course, she returned back to her hometown. "When I came back, everyone was congratulating and admiring me for my achievements. I then started working for others for about one and half years. Now, I am well known in my area as a female auto mechanic and people fully trust me in my work. This is something that makes me feel very glad, satisfied and proud", said Kamala.

Kamala saved her earnings to start her own workshop. Currently, she owns two workshops as a head-mechanic and has other employees too. It has already been 7 years since she started her own business.

Kamala started from scratch and at present she has made a very good progress in her business. Her daily earning ranges from minimum of NRs 5,000 up to NRs 10,000. She said, "My biggest learning in life is that if you have a strong will and determination, you can do anything and become successful in that area."



## Case 11

# THE LADY WITH THE THEODOLITE

She was so happy and excited to hold the Theodolite for the first time when she was working in the field during her practical sessions. After the final examination of Grade 12 (in Management), she decided to join TSLC in Survey Engineering (*Amin*) course and today she has secured a permanent government job in the respective field. Laxmi Shrestha, a very young and aspiring lady works in the Survey Department Office in Chitwan. She is just 26 years old and she already has around 7 years of experience in the sector.

Laxmi revealed that it was her mother who motivated and influenced her to do this course as she wanted her to choose the technical stream over the general one in education and career. This is the main reason why she joined the TSLC level Survey Engineering course although she was already enrolled in a Bachelor's degree in Management.




***Laxmi was very young when she got the job and people hardly believed that she too was a Land Surveyor.***

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There were only 13 females who were enrolled in this course but only a few of them have continued working in this sector. Most of them either dropped the course or left the occupation after getting married.

She had to struggle a lot to come this far. She said, "I used to be very busy and exhausted while working all day in the field. In spite of the fatigueness, I used to prepare and practice a lot for the Public Service Commission examination but unfortunately, I was not successful in many attempts. It was only in the fifth attempt, I passed the examination and secured the government job. I was very young when I got this job, so it was hard for the people to believe that I was also a survey engineer (Assistant level). When they knew about me, everyone used to praise me for my achievements at an early age."



***Proper guidance, hard work,  
motivation and determination are  
the keys to her success.***

Talking about the opportunities in TVET sector in the present context, she believes that the TVET career pathway is more rewarding than the general stream of education. Even Bachelor's and Master's Degree holders are jobless today, but people with technical and vocational skills are very much demanded in the job market and are earning well. She further expressed, "Many young students and their guardians are still unknown about TVET and the career opportunities that it can bring. Young ones are choosing their education and career under the pressure of their parents or elders. So, awareness about the importance and benefits of choosing TVET career pathway is very important."

Laxmi feels very proud and happy about choosing the TVET pathway at the right time though with the influence of her mother. She has a stable job and future today. She feels that the main reasons for her success are guidance, hard work, motivation and determination. She says, "Girls should not be afraid to try out new things, we can perform as well as boys if not better."



## Case 12

# THE DOCTOR OF MOBILE PHONES



***"My dream was to become a nurse but there came an interesting twist in my career interest and instead I became a mobile phone technician which I never regret about."***

Sajina Paudel is a young and ambitious lady from Parbatipur, Chitwan. She is married and has two children. She has been running her own mobile repair and service business for more than eight years now. The mobile repair training which she had 11 years ago stimulated her to start the business.

Her aim was to become a nurse since her childhood and therefore she was preparing to get enrolled in BSc. Nursing program after completing her upper secondary (+2) level education in Science faculty.

Out of coincidence, one of her relatives informed her about the mobile repair training course and encouraged her to join the training to utilize her free time before the start of her nursing course. She took it as an opportunity and decided to do the training. It was during the training that she realized that mobile phones fascinated and attracted her very much. She wanted to know more about how mobile phones function.

***Her dream was to become a nurse but she became a doctor, doctor of mobile phones.***





She took this course immediately after getting married and her husband also supported her for the training. Her husband already had a computer sales and repair shop. After the completion of the training, Sajina added mobile phone and repair section into it. These days, both husband and wife are running the shop jointly looking after their specialized area separately.

**“ We need to have confidence and trust in ourselves and should always have the spirit of 'I CAN DO IT'.**

Sajina has now become a renowned mobile technician in her area. She says, "I do not regret leaving nursing and stepping in this sector. Although I could not become a nurse, I am happy that I have become a doctor of mobile phones." Apart from her business, Sajina also works as an Instructor of the mobile repair training course on a part time basis. "I feel very proud and honored to be teaching and instructing people from both the young and older generations." She also motivates other females to participate in the training course and encourages them to learn the skill which they can use to become independent.

She expressed her concerns regarding less female involvement in this and other technical and vocational sectors. "In our society, there is a presumption that technical jobs are for males only, but it is not. If I can do it, other women can also do it." Sharing her experience she said, "Whenever new customers visit her shop to repair a mobile phone, at first they do not believe that I am the technician and ask for the technician. Later when they learn that I am the technician myself, they become surprised and often hesitate to give their mobile phones to me." She strongly believes that family counselling is very crucial to educate parents and



or husband about the career prospects of TVET so that they could support their daughters to go for technical education and employment. She advises everyone, especially girls, to have confidence and trust in themselves and always have the spirit of 'I CAN DO IT'. She is very satisfied with her occupation and earns more than hundred thousand rupees per month on an average. Her advice to the young girls who are about to start their career is "If you have skills, you can apply it anywhere, find a job easily and you do not have to be dependent on others".

## Case 13

# HEROIC HIRA- THE JUNGLE GUIDE

***A job or an occupation  
has no gender and  
hierarchy and therefore  
the most important thing  
is work, not the type or  
level of job.***

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She used to be scared of walking in the jungle alone but not anymore after the Nature/Jungle Guide training she had received 15 years ago. Instead, she enjoys it these days. She has become more confident and courageous because of the work she has been doing. People in her community take her name to suggest other girls and women from her area, "If Hira can be a Nature/Jungle Guide, why can't you be?" She is taken as a role model to motivate other females in this sector.

Hira Bhattarai is a courageous lady of 40 years old from Bardiya. She is a 'Nature/Jungle Guide'. She has been very interested in flora and fauna since her childhood. One day, she came to know about the Jungle Guide training being organized in her locality. She instantly became interested for it and went to sign up her name for the training without any hesitation. This was a big thing for a woman at the time. She did this training almost 15 years ago. Her husband and family both supported her in her decision to receive the training. She said, "I was very lucky to have such a supportive family who encouraged me a lot during the process. Many other females, during the time, did not get adequate support from their family to enroll in this type of training as this kind of work was not supposed to be for women. Instead, they were asked to take care of their family responsibilities only".





***"If Hira can be a Nature/Jungle Guide, why can't you be?" She is taken as a role model to motivate other females.***

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Hira, on the other hand, has also seen some girls whose family supports them but they are not themselves interested to enroll in such training opportunities and utilize it optimally. She thinks that more women should come into the technical field. To increase female participation in the technical/vocational sector, awareness should be given to females as well as to their families regarding the importance and career opportunities in the technical field. Hira would like to credit her self-determination, passion and diligence for what she has achieved so far. Besides, she added that one should not feel ashamed to do any kind of job. She thinks that a job or an occupation has no gender and hierarchy and therefore the most important thing is work, not the type or level of job.

Hira believes that people can make a good income in this sector and she is very satisfied with what she has been earning. However, she remembered that she was condemned by her relatives for not continuing general education. But now with her progress and achievements, everyone says that she made the right choice.

## Case 14

# RIGHT CAREER DECISION IN RIGHT TIME



"I am not only self-reliant, but also supporting my family and this makes me feel that I made the right career decision in right time which I am proud of ", said Sujata Palli, 24 years old. Sujata completed a Diploma course in Mechanical Engineering and has been working in an Engineering Company for about a year now.

She had no idea about this course until her uncle informed her about it. He also encouraged her to enroll in this course. She sat for an entrance test and passed all the enrollment processes and finally got selected.

The initial days were somehow difficult for her as a girl doing a mechanical course, but due to her patience, interest and hard work it became normal later. Out of the total 60 students in her class, only 10 were girls and she was one of them. She said, "There are very few females in the Engineering sector. Most girls hesitate to come to the technical sector thinking that it is only for men and not for them. I also used to think so. However, it is completely a wrong notion. I completed the course successfully and have been working professionally in this field performing as much and as well as men".

***A certain number of quotas should be allocated for females to increase their participation in TVET whereas TVET institutes should focus more on improving the quality of education and training.***

She is satisfied with the workplace environment and job. She said, "I am very confident today. Had I studied other general subjects, I would not have found a job immediately after the course. Many of my friends who followed the general education stream are jobless today despite doing well in their studies".



Sujata is growing in her professional career due to her dedication, discipline, time-management and diligence. The course helped her to find a job and start a professional career at an early age. She is forever grateful to her uncle who guided her in the technical sector. She would also like to suggest other young girls to consider studying Engineering or any other technical courses after high school for their better career and future opportunities.

**“ Most of my friends who followed the general education stream are jobless today despite doing well in their studies; in my case, I am not only self-reliant but also supporting my family.**



Coming from TVET background, she feels that the government should take some necessary actions to increase girl's participation in TVET programmes. She says, "Our country should produce skilled workforce based on the needs and demands of the market. For that, the government should invest more in TVET so that youth would get practical education and employable skills." She also wishes that a certain number of quotas should be allocated to females to increase their motivation and participation in technical education. Along with this, she also thinks that every TVET institution should focus more on improving the quality of education and training.

## Case 15

# THE EXEMPLARY ELECTRICAL ENTREPRENEUR



"I did a Diploma in Electrical Engineering 20 years ago, when this course and the subsequent occupation was prominent among males only", said Anju Pandey who is now a very successful entrepreneur and a role model to the young girls who aspire to begin their career in the technical field.


***The stereotypical mindset that technical jobs are for males only is the main reason behind less female participation in technical courses and employment. What gender you are, is not the problem and it does not make any difference.***

Anju was self-motivated and determined to do the electrical course even when some of her relatives were against her choice of the course. She was so bold and confident that she never got affected by others' viewpoints and completed the course successfully. She had full support from her family. Of the total 40 students who were admitted in the electrical course in her time, only 5 were females. The situation is still more or less the same as there has not been a significant increment of females in non-traditional technical courses. Usually girls run after 'Nursing' or other traditional courses that were conventionally tagged as female courses. Knowingly or unknowingly, many girls do not want to go out of their comfort zone in terms of educational and career choice. Only a few dare to do something challenging and exceptional.

Anju thinks that the stereotypical mindset that technical jobs are for males only is the main reason behind less female participation in technical courses and employment. "If you are determined and have a strong will, you can do anything. What gender you are, is not the problem and it does not make any big difference. Things might be difficult but not impossible. It might be tough in the beginning but the outcome of it will be very productive", this is what her experience says. Initially, during her practical classes, she had to work with iron, metals, use hammer and other tools, which was an arduous job for her and she used to struggle a lot but she never gave up. During the OJT period, people used to be amazed to see her working with screwdrivers and other electrical tools on her own. It was so astonishing for the people to see females working as an electrician.

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The course that she did gave her the courage to enter into the world of business. She started an electrical shop when her husband was abroad though he encouraged and supported her from the distance. There was a time when people used to discourage and humiliate her, basically for being a female entrepreneur. Today, her business is prospering and she is counted among the most successful entrepreneurs. She said that if she had decided to do some other jobs, she wouldn't have been earning this much. She earns about NRs 1- 1.5 lakh every month. Anju can really be a very good example for other girls and young women.



***The course she did gave her the courage to start the business and today, her business is prospering and she is counted among the successful entrepreneurs.***

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Anju would like to recommend other females to follow the technical stream of education. "This will also help to increase one's self-strength and self-esteem and make you proud of your own achievements", says Anju.



## Case 16

# INFORMED CHOICE CHANGED HER CAREER

Unaware of different educational and career choices while in school, she joined +2 in science stream. However, when she came to know about other technical courses later, she became interested in Animal Science and made a shift from +2 Science to Diploma in Animal Science.

**“It was only when I was doing my +2 in Science that I knew about TVET career pathways and options. I then changed my mind and got enrolled in a Diploma in Animal Science. I am happy that I changed my career pathway and think I made the right choice.”**

“I had no idea that I could also get enrolled in technical courses after my high school (SLC). Therefore, I joined +2 in Science as I was a quite smart student and my SLC result was also good. It was only when I came down to the city to do 10+2 in Science, I knew about different career choices in education, especially about the technical courses and their career pathways. I then changed my mind and got enrolled in a Diploma course in Animal Science. I am actually happy that I changed my career pathway though I regret wasting two valuable years of my life”, said Bidhya Aire from Baitadi who is currently employed as an Assistant Instructor in Tikapur Polytechnic Institute.



She shared her experience saying that some of her friends did not like the shift she made in her education and career. They used to say that it was not a wise decision for her to jump to Animal Science especially being a female. Such remarks further motivated and encouraged her to do the course and show to the people that women can also study animal science and become professionals in the field. She feels lucky and glad that ultimately she made the right educational choice. She too believes that family support played a major role in her life. Though her parents were illiterate and belonged to a remote village, they always motivated her to follow her dreams.



***Every school should have a career guidance and counselling program so that the students could have informed choices about their career to help them make the right career decision as per their interest and capacity.***

Bidhya, with her experience, strongly feels that every school should have a career guidance and counselling programme. This will make the students well informed about the career choices and opportunities which would importantly assist them in making the right career decision as per their interest and capacity. She said, "In today's context, only general education is not enough; one should have technical skills to be employable in the job market".

She would like to suggest other young females to prioritize technical education as it can provide more job opportunities and prospects for better income. She also feels that the government should emphasize and invest more on TVET and make TVET more accessible to females.

## Case 17

# NAMRATA- NURTURING TECHNICAL WORKFORCE



"Having come from a technical background, I felt that there is a high demand, but shortage of skilled workforce in the technical field in our country. The situation motivated me to start a technical institute so that I could contribute in producing the skilled workforce required in the market", said Namrata Thapa who is the owner of 'Jayan Technical College of Technology' in Butwal. She has earned a Diploma in Electrical Engineering and has been working in the respective field for 16 years.

***There is a high demand, but shortage of skilled workforce in the technical field in our country.***

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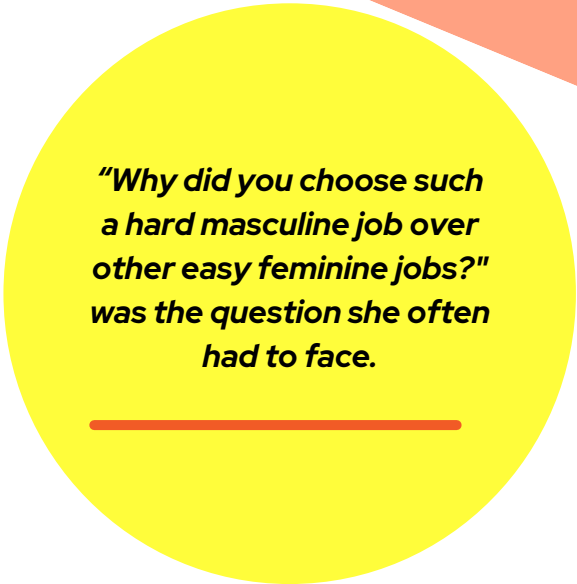
It was actually her father's dream to make her an engineer. So, he inspired her to get enrolled in the technical course and she is very grateful to him for his guidance. She was the only female to complete the Diploma course in her batch. She shared her experience of working on the field saying that it was tough for her to climb the electric poles in the beginning but it was normal afterwards when she was used to doing it. Meanwhile, people also used to comment saying "Why did you choose such a hard masculine job over other easy feminine jobs?" Nevertheless, she was not discouraged at all. Namrata always thought of doing something of her own rather than working for others. Therefore, she started her own workshop at first and used to repair electrical items. Most people used to be surprised to see a woman electrician and did not easily trust to let her repair their electrical items. Slowly and steadily, with her work proficiency, she was able to convince people that females can also be good electricians.

Namrata is currently involved in motivating and providing different TVET courses to the youth. She is even providing employment to many females in her institute and also convinces young girls and their families to let them study technical education and gain technical skills. She added that if someone is looking for a secure job and future, one may apply for a government job as there are many opportunities, especially for females, in the technical sector.



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Even as a private TVET institute owner, Namrata gives priority to providing quality education and training over making profits. She strongly believes that TVET institutes should have a good link with the market so that they can coordinate and assist in employing their graduates in the job market. Her institute has a separate unit to provide career counselling and to assist the training graduates in finding job placements. She suggests every family to provide appropriate educational and career guidance to their daughters and necessarily support them if they choose TVET career pathway.



***"Why did you choose such a hard masculine job over other easy feminine jobs?" was the question she often had to face.***

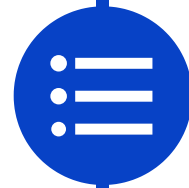
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With her confidence, dedication and hard work; Namrata was able to challenge the traditional social norms that technical education and occupations are for males only. She has become successful in accomplishing her dreams and goals in life. There is a lot that other girls can learn from her.

# Methodological Approach



**Identification of the research participants:** Contacts and consultation with TVET institutes



**Selection of research participants :** Purposive, those with higher level of professional achievements in TVET career pathway (variation in occupations was considered)



**Cases selected for the research:** 17



**Information collection:** Field visit, observation and in-depth discussion using checklist



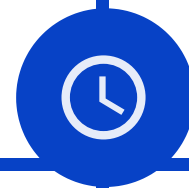
**Narrative development:** Descriptive, synthesizing the information collected



**Ethical consideration:** Informed consent obtained from the participants



**Study area:** Throughout Nepal  
Provinces covered-4 (Bagmati, Gandaki, Lumbini and Sudur Paschim)



**Study time frame:** 6 months  
(January-June 2021)



**Limitations:** Size of the participants, coverage of occupational and geographical area



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