

Strengthening Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Governance (GRIG)

Through Leadership, Fellowship, and Institutional Reform

"Governance Innovations for Inclusive Development"

Mapping Study Report

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Prepared by:
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the Gender Responsive and Inclusive Governance (GRIG) Mapping conducted under the programme “Strengthening Gender Responsive and Inclusive Governance through Leadership, Fellowship, and Institutional Reform”, implemented by Governance Lab (GovLab) in partnership with UN Women. The GRIG mapping has adopted a mixed-methods research design that combined desk review, secondary research, and structured primary data collection to generate a comprehensive understanding of GRIG at the local level. It builds on and complements UN Women-supported GRIG and GESI assessments conducted under Provincial and Local Governance Support Program (PLGSP). Where baseline assessments already exist, the mapping updates and deepens evidence rather than duplicating earlier work.

The GRIG mapping included a phone based survey that covered 60 Local Government Units (LGUs) in Karnali, Lumbini, and Madhesh Provinces and established a baseline on the status of gender-responsive and inclusive governance practices at the local level.

The survey provides an evidence-based analysis of governance practices, institutional capacity, leadership dynamics, and enabling environments for gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). The findings are intended to inform the design and implementation of the programme interventions, through the Executive Policy Leadership Training (EPL), Gender Policy Leadership Training (GPL), Gender and Governance Fellowship (GGF), and Governance Learning Series (GLS).

1.1 Key Findings

A. Strong Formal Structures, Limited Functional Effectiveness

All surveyed LGUs reported the presence of GESI units, committees, or focal persons, and a majority have adopted gender equality or social inclusion policies. Accountability mechanisms such as public hearings are also widely institutionalized.

However, these structures are not yet fully effective. Weak coordination, unclear roles, limited use of data, and resource constraints significantly reduce their impact. This reflects a broader pattern where institutional compliance exists in form, but not consistently in function.

B. Gap Between Knowledge and Practice in GRPB

While awareness of Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB) is relatively high, with 41 LGUs reporting strong familiarity, its application remains inconsistent. Nearly half of LGUs do not apply GRPB tools at all, and only a small proportion use them regularly.

Cross-analysis shows that even among LGUs that report high familiarity, many do not translate this knowledge into practice. This highlights a critical implementation gap, indicating that current efforts are overly focused on awareness rather than practical application and institutional integration.

C. Representation Does Not Equal Influence

A significant majority of LGUs report that women hold key decision-making roles. However, this formal representation does not consistently translate into meaningful participation.

Only a minority of LGUs report that women's voices are regularly considered in decision-making, with most indicating that they are only sometimes or rarely heard. This reflects a clear gap between symbolic inclusion and substantive influence, shaped by institutional dynamics and socio-cultural norms.

D. Multi-Dimensional Barriers to Inclusive Governance

The analysis identifies a set of interconnected challenges constraining GRIG implementation:

- Resource constraints limit the ability of LGUs to implement gender-responsive programmes.
- Capacity gaps, particularly in GESI knowledge, weaken planning and budgeting processes.
- Weak institutional systems hinder coordination and accountability.
- Socio-cultural barriers, including traditional norms and male-dominated structures, restrict women's participation and leadership.

These challenges are not isolated but mutually reinforcing, creating systemic barriers to effective and inclusive governance

E. Women's Participation Remains Partial

- While participation mechanisms exist, women's engagement in governance processes is often limited in depth and quality.
- Most LGUs report that women participate only partially, indicating barriers related to confidence, mobility, time constraints, and social norms.
- Emerging risks such as backlash and digital harassment further highlight the need to ensure safe and enabling environments for women's participation and leadership.

F. Women's Participation is Unequal Across Social Groups

- Women's participation is not uniform among all women. Certain groups, particularly Dalit women, followed by Janajati, Madheshi, Muslim women, and women with disabilities face significantly greater barriers to accessing and influencing governance processes.
- Exclusion is shaped by intersecting factors such as caste, ethnicity, religion, education, and economic status, which compound disadvantages and limit both access and voice.
- General participation mechanisms may disproportionately benefit relatively more advantaged women, while those facing multiple layers of marginalization remain underrepresented or excluded from meaningful engagement.

G. Limited Engagement with Women's Rights Organizations (WROs)

- Although WROs are active in many LGUs, structured engagement remains weak. A large proportion of LGUs report no or only occasional interaction with WROs.
- Cross-analysis shows that higher levels of engagement are directly associated with stronger collaboration. Limited engagement therefore represents a missed opportunity to strengthen accountability, community representation, and evidence-based policy engagement.

H. Clear Demand and Readiness for Support

- Despite the challenges identified, LGUs demonstrate strong openness to reform. All respondents expressed willingness to test new approaches, and there is a clear demand for:
 - Skill-based and practical training
 - Technical and institutional support
 - Continuous mentoring and follow-up
 - Community-level awareness and engagement initiatives
- This indicates that LGUs are not resistant to gender-responsive governance, but require structured and sustained support to operationalize it effectively.

I. Implications for Programme Design

- The findings suggest that strengthening gender responsive and inclusive governance requires moving beyond standalone interventions toward an integrated, system-wide approach. The programme design should:
 - Prioritize practical application over awareness, particularly in GRPB implementation
 - Strengthen both institutional systems and individual capacity, including leadership skills
 - Address the gap between representation and influence by enhancing women's decision-making power
 - Build structured engagement mechanisms between LGUs and WROs
- Interventions under EPL, GPL, GGF and GLS should be designed as complementary and reinforcing components within this broader framework.



1.2 Recommendations

To address the identified gaps, the following priority actions are recommended:

- Deliver hands-on GRPB and GESI training, supported by practical tools.
- Enhance institutional systems, including coordination, monitoring, and data use.

The GRIG mapping demonstrates that while LGUs have made important progress in establishing structures for gender equality and inclusion, significant gaps remain in implementation, participation, and institutional effectiveness.


The findings clearly indicate that gender-responsive governance is not constrained by a lack of intent, but by limitations in capacity, resources, and enabling environments. Addressing these challenges requires integrated, sustained, and practice-oriented interventions that strengthen systems, build capacity, and transform social norms. With strong institutional openness and a clear demand for support, there is a critical opportunity to advance gender responsive and inclusive governance in a way that is both meaningful and sustainable.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background and Context

Gender Responsive and Inclusive Governance is central to Nepal's federal governance framework and to the realization of gender equality, social inclusion, and equitable development. The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 envisions an inclusive state and guarantees equality, non-discrimination, proportional inclusion, and participation for women and historically excluded groups, including Dalits, Adivasi Janajatis, Madhesis, Muslims, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized communities (Government of Nepal, 2015). These commitments are reinforced through constitutional commissions, affirmative action provisions, and sectoral laws and policies across all levels of government.

At the local level, the constitutional and legal provisions mandate significant representation of women and excluded groups. At least 40 percent of elected local representatives must be women, including safeguards for Dalit women, and one of the two executive positions, Mayor or Deputy Mayor in municipalities, and Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson in rural municipalities must be held by a woman when candidates are nominated by the same political party (Government of Nepal, 2017). As a result, the 2017 local elections marked a historic milestone, with women comprising over 41 percent of elected local representatives.




Despite these formal gains, national evidence consistently shows that women, youth, and marginalised groups continue to face structural barriers to meaningful participation and influence in local governance. Women's leadership remains concentrated in less powerful positions, while men continue to dominate mayoral, chairperson, and ward chair roles. Party nomination processes, coalition politics, and male-dominated decision-making structures constrain women's access to positions of authority, even when women demonstrate strong leadership aspirations and electoral viability (Yale & Governance Lab, 2019; Callen et al., 2024; Allard et al., 2025).

Evidence from the PLGSP mid-term review further demonstrates that increased representation has not automatically translated into institutional influence. The review highlights uneven delegation of authority, limited access to information for women leaders, particularly Deputy Mayors and Vice-Chairpersons and weak integration of elected women into core decision-making forums, including executive committees (PLGSP, 2022).

These challenges are particularly visible in planning and budget development processes, accountability mechanisms, and institutional decision-making spaces. Although Nepal institutionalized gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in 2007-08, implementation at the local level remains uneven. While many LGUs formally comply with GRB and GESI requirements, capacity constraints, procedural complexity, and weak facilitation often limit meaningful participation by women and marginalised groups, especially at ward and community levels (UN Women, 2012; PLGSP, 2022).

Institutional arrangements intended to promote inclusion, such as ward citizens' forums, user committees, and social mobilization processes have similarly fallen short of their transformative potential. While quotas ensure women's numerical presence, leadership positions within these bodies are frequently controlled by political parties and influential male actors, resulting in consultative rather than decision-making participation by women (UN Women, 2012; PLGSP, 2022).

Capacity gaps further compound these challenges. The PLGSP mid-term review highlights uneven understanding of GESI and GRIG concepts among elected representatives and municipal staff, high staff turnover, weak institutional memory, and limited authority of gender focal points and GESI units (PLGSP, 2022). At the same time, women representatives increasingly face social backlash, intimidation, and digital harassment, risks that are rarely addressed through formal institutional safeguards at the local level (PLGSP, 2022).



Addressing these gaps requires not only targeted capacity-building but also supportive policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms that enable local governments to implement inclusive practices effectively. The Government's 100-points action plan prioritizes the development of integrated digital governance platforms, enhanced data exchange systems, and digitized service delivery mechanisms (Pratipakchya, 2026). This presents a key opportunity to strengthen the digitization of WRO data on violence against women, enabling local governments to record, share, and utilize such information for evidence-based decision-making. Judicial committees, for instance, can leverage this data to improve timely and informed interventions.

Additionally, the plan emphasizes performance-linked accountability, IT capacity building, and inclusive governance, which aligns with GRIG objectives around GEDSI integration, WRO engagement, and marginalized group inclusion. By linking WRO strengthening to these priorities, the programme can support local governments in operationalizing inclusive practices, enhancing transparency, and incentivizing performance through evidence-based indicators.

Within this context, the programme "Strengthening Gender Responsive and Inclusive Governance through Leadership, Fellowship, and Institutional Reform" responds by working simultaneously with duty-bearers (elected representatives and administrators) and rights-holders (Women's Rights Organizations and youth actors). It is within this broader constitutional, institutional, and political context that the GRIG mapping is undertaken.

2.2 Purpose and Scope of the GRIG Mapping

The purpose of the GRIG mapping is to establish a practical, evidence-based understanding of governance practices, institutional arrangements, leadership dynamics, and enabling environments for gender equality and social inclusion in selected LGUs. The mapping provides a baseline to inform programme design, prioritization, and adaptive implementation.

Specifically, the mapping assesses LGUs' institutional capacity to implement participatory, transparent, and accountable governance, with attention to gender-responsive planning and budgeting, accountability mechanisms, and engagement with WROs and youth actors. It examines both formal structures (committees, focal points, procedures) and informal practices and power relations shaping decision-making.

A central focus is leadership and policy engagement among both duty-bearers and rights-holders. For LGUs, this includes leadership practices, use of evidence, and readiness to collaborate. For WROs and youth fellows, it examines leadership capacity, policy engagement experience, and constraints to participation.

The mapping also assesses the enabling environment, including dialogue platforms, accountability mechanisms, and risks related to backlash, intimidation, and digital harassment. Findings will directly inform the programme's EPL, GPL, GGF, and GLS interventions.

2.3 Linkages with UN Women and PLGSP

The GRIG mapping builds on and complements UN Women-supported GRIG and GESI assessments conducted under PLGSP. Where baseline assessments already exist, this study updates and deepens evidence rather than duplicating earlier work.

Importantly, the mapping explicitly incorporates lessons from the PLGSP mid-term review, which highlighted a persistent gap between formal GESI frameworks and implementation in practice.

PLGSP field-level evidence revealed enduring power asymmetries where female Deputy Mayors and Vice-Chairpersons often had limited access to information, while representatives elected through quota systems lacked meaningful voice. These findings underscore that formal representation alone is insufficient and that leadership authority, institutional behavior, and informal power relations are critical determinants of inclusive governance outcomes (PLGSP, 2022).

The GRIG mapping responds by moving beyond checklist assessments to examine how governance systems function in practice and strengthening the evidence base for future interventions.

2.4 Structure of the Report


The report includes:

- Analytical framework
- Research methodology
- Thematic findings aligned with the GRIG framework
- Cross-cutting analysis
- Implications for programme design
- Annexes

3. Literature Review

GRIG is a core pillar of Nepal's constitutional and federal governance framework. The Constitution mandates proportional inclusion of women and marginalized groups in state structures, including local governments, while subsequent policies emphasize gender-responsive planning, budgeting, and accountability. Local governments, as the closest tier of governance to citizens, play a decisive role in translating these commitments into practice through leadership, institutional arrangements, and service delivery (Bhattarai, 2019; Ministry of Finance, 2022).

Nepal has made significant progress in increasing women's descriptive representation in local governance, particularly following the introduction of gender quotas in the 2017 local elections. Women constituted nearly half of all elected local representatives, largely due to mandatory quota provisions. However, these numerical gains have not consistently translated into substantive decision-making power, leadership authority, or institutional influence, especially in executive roles. Political parties have often nominated women to positions with lower authority, such as Deputy Mayor, while retaining male dominance in Mayor and Ward Chair positions. Consequently, women's leadership has frequently been symbolic rather than transformative. Subsequent elections, including in 2022, revealed a decline in overall female representation, highlighting the fragility of gains achieved through quotas (Inclusion Economics, 2022; Inclusion Economics, 2024; Timilsina, 2024; Pande, 2024).



Political party behavior and coalition dynamics emerge as major structural barriers to substantive inclusion. Party selection committees are overwhelmingly male-dominated, shaping candidate nomination decisions in ways that disadvantage women, particularly for winnable and high-authority positions. Coalition negotiations often exacerbate this effect, allowing parties to circumvent the spirit of quota provisions while formally complying with minimum requirements, further entrenching male dominance in leadership roles. Importantly, women's political ambition is not the limiting factor. Surveys indicate that many female Deputy Mayors aspire to contest mayoral positions, yet these aspirations are rarely reflected in party nominations, highlighting the impact of institutional gatekeeping rather than individual capacity or motivation (Pande, 2024; Timilsina, 2024).

Voter attitudes provide additional context. Research indicates that female voters tend to prefer female leaders, particularly those who are responsive, inclusive, and aligned with community priorities. Male voters may favor male incumbents, but the electorate is generally more open to women candidates than parties assume. Political parties often overestimate the electoral risk of nominating women, resulting in conservative candidate selection that reinforces gender inequality (Allard et al., 2025).

Women's underrepresentation is also shaped by patterns of political retention and leadership progression, creating a "leaky pipeline." Between 2017 and 2022, female incumbents were less likely than male incumbents to recontest elections or be re-elected, with more than 80% of women elected in 2017 not contesting in 2022. First-time female entrants also declined relative to men, indicating that initial gains achieved through quotas are not sustained due to structural, institutional, and social constraints (Inclusion Economics, 2022). Intersectional factors such as caste and ethnicity further complicate inclusion: while Janajati representation has increased overall, Janajati women face compounded barriers in accessing leadership positions, highlighting the need for a multidimensional approach to inclusive governance (Timilsina, 2024).

Qualitative evidence underscores additional informal barriers. Women politicians consistently report disproportionate domestic responsibilities, limited financial resources, rising campaign costs, and gaps in political experience as major constraints. Party nomination processes are often opaque and reliant on personal networks and financial capacity. Experiences of intimidation, backlash, and exclusion discourage long-term political engagement. Women also note the limited effectiveness of existing support structures, such as women's wings and local gender-based organizations, while emphasizing the potential of cross-party women's networks to build capacity, solidarity, and influence (Inclusion Economics, 2025).



Complementing political inclusion efforts, GRB has been institutionalized in Nepal since Fiscal Year 2007/08 to ensure that budgetary policies and programs address the needs of women, men, and children. The Ministry of Finance leads GRB implementation through the Gender Responsive Budget Committee, Sectoral GRB Committees, and Gender Focal Persons, coordinating with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration to guide local-level implementation. Under the Local Government Operation Act (2017), local governments are mandated to prioritize programs for women, children, the elderly, and marginalized populations, often with Deputy Mayors heading local gender committees (Bhattarai, 2019; Ministry of Finance, 2022).

The GRB framework evaluates budget allocations through five qualitative indicators: women's capacity development, participation in program formulation and implementation, benefit incidence of public expenditures, support for women's employment and income generation, and impact on women's use of time and care work. Programs are categorized as directly benefiting women (over 50% beneficiaries), indirectly benefiting women (25-50%), or neutral (less than 20%). Over the past 15 years, direct GRB has increased from 11% to over 40%, while indirect GRB reached nearly 50% in 2016- 2017. Key policy interventions include reduced land registration fees for women-owned properties, quotas in parliament and security services, incentives for maternal health, safe houses for victims of violence, gender-friendly taxation policies, and scholarships and school sanitation programs for girls' education. These measures have contributed to improved land ownership, labor force participation, entrepreneurship, and access to education and health services for women (Bhattarai, 2019; Kanwar, 2016; Rajkarnikar, 2019).

Despite these advances, challenges remain. The majority of women work in informal sectors, limiting GRB's reach. Implementation is often constrained by limited technical capacity, inadequate political will, data gaps, weak monitoring and evaluation, cultural norms, and insufficient civil society engagement. Without strengthened oversight and local implementation, GRB risks remaining a policy success on paper rather than in practice (Kanwar, 2016; Sijapati, 2023).

Taken together, the literature indicates that while Nepal has made progress in the formal inclusion of women, significant gaps remain in leadership authority, institutional influence, accountability, and the enabling environment for meaningful participation (Allard et al., 2025; Inclusion Economics, 2024; Bhattarai, 2019; Ministry of Finance, 2022). The existing evidence underscores the need for LGU-level, practice-oriented analysis that examines institutional behaviour, leadership dynamics, and informal power relations, precisely the gap the GRIG mapping seeks to address.

The GRIG mapping initiative responds to these gaps by examining institutional arrangements, leadership dynamics, governance practices, and informal power relations at the LGU level. By capturing variations across municipalities, it generates actionable, localized evidence that helps bridge national-level policy and budgetary frameworks with municipal-level realities.

Overall, the reviewed literature shows that existing evidence largely concentrates on national trends and electoral outcomes, offering limited systematic insight into how gender-responsive and inclusive governance is experienced and enacted within individual LGUs.



The GRIG mapping initiative addresses this critical knowledge gap by providing a focused, LGU-level assessment. Specifically, the study:

- Assesses institutional arrangements, leadership dynamics, and governance practices within LGUs;
- Examines both formal structures and informal power relations that shape inclusion; and
- Generates actionable evidence to inform program design and policy interventions.

Where prior UN Women PLGSP GRIG baseline studies exist, this mapping builds upon and updates the available evidence, rather than duplicating it. By anchoring its methodology in both the existing literature and the realities of LGUs, the GRIG mapping provides a crucial bridge between national-level policy frameworks and local-level governance practices. This approach ensures that program design and implementation are informed by context-specific evidence, improving the prospects for effective and inclusive governance outcomes.

4. Analytical Framework

The GRIG mapping is guided by GovLab's Gender and Governance Transformative Approach (GGTA), which examines both formal governance systems and informal power relations shaping women's participation and leadership.

National-level evidence on gender quotas and party behavior informs this framework by highlighting how institutional rules interact with political incentives and social norms. While quotas have increased women's presence in local governments, party gatekeeping, male-dominated selection committees, and unequal access to education and experience continue to limit women's authority and influence (Yale & Governance Lab, 2019; Callen et al., 2024; Allard et al., 2025).


Accordingly, the analytical framework focuses on five interrelated dimensions:

- Institutional arrangements for gender equality and inclusion
- Gender responsive planning and budgeting (GRPB)
- Leadership and decision-making dynamics
- Engagement with WROs
- Social norms, safety, and enabling environment

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design that combined desk review, secondary research, and structured primary data collection to generate a comprehensive understanding of GRIG at the local level. The design was informed by the need to capture both the formal institutional arrangements and the informal dynamics that shape governance outcomes within LGUs.



The desk review formed the foundation of the research by synthesizing existing policies, legal frameworks, program documents, and prior assessments related to gender-responsive governance and budgeting in Nepal. This included analysis of constitutional provisions, sectoral policies, GRB guidelines, and relevant studies conducted by government agencies, development partners, and research institutions. The desk review helped establish the broader policy and institutional context, identify key gaps in existing knowledge, and inform the development of the research framework and tools.

Secondary research complemented the desk review by analyzing available datasets, reports, and evidence on women's political participation, leadership patterns, budget allocations, and governance practices. This included electoral data, administrative records, and findings from previous studies on gender inclusion and political representation.

Structured primary data collection was undertaken across all selected 21 LGUs using a standardized GRIG assessment questionnaire aligned with the analytical framework. Data were collected primarily through phone-based interviews with key municipal respondents, including Chief Administrative Officers, Planning Officers, Women's Development Officers, and other relevant focal persons.

5.2 Study Coverage

The study covered a total of 21 LGUs across three provinces: Lumbini, Madhesh, and Karnali. Of these, 10 LGUs were selected from Lumbini Province, 6 from Madhesh Province, and 5 from Karnali Province. The selection of LGUs was finalized in consultation with UN Women to ensure appropriate geographic representation and relevance to the study objectives. A detailed list of the selected LGUs is provided in

Annex 1.

5.3 Data Sources

The study drew on multiple data sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis. These included existing GRIG assessments conducted under the UN Women PLGSP, as well as relevant national and local policy documents that provided the broader governance and institutional context. In addition, the study utilized insights from the GovLab Coalition Brief on women's political representation and coalition dynamics to inform the analysis of political and institutional factors. These secondary sources were complemented by primary data collected through structured interviews with LGU officials, enabling the study to capture context-specific realities and perspectives from the local level.

5.4 Primary Data Collection

Structured primary data collection was undertaken across LGUs in Karnali, Lumbini, and Madhesh Provinces and established a baseline on the status of gender-responsive and inclusive governance practices at the local level. Data were collected primarily through phone-based interviews with key municipal respondents, including Chief Administrative Officers, Planning Officers, Women's Development Officers, and other relevant focal persons.

To ensure contextual sensitivity and cost-effectiveness, three enumerators based in Butwal (Lumbini Province), Janakpur (Madhesh Province), and Surkhet (Karnali Province) were engaged for a fixed period and operated under the supervision of the central and provincial programme team. This decentralized approach allowed for familiarity with provincial contexts while maintaining consistency in data collection across municipalities. In addition, collaboration with Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) supported access to LGUs and facilitated interviews where appropriate.

In total, 60 interviews were conducted across the three provinces, including 31 interviews in Lumbini, 14 in Madhesh, and 15 in Karnali.

6. Limitations of the Study

While the GRIG Mapping Study provides valuable insights into gender-responsive and inclusive governance practices across selected LGUs, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. The study is based on a relatively small sample of 60 LGUs across Lumbini, Karnali, and Madhesh Provinces. As such, the findings may not be fully representative of all LGUs across Nepal, particularly given the higher concentration of respondents from Lumbini Province.

The analysis relies primarily on self-reported data from LGU officials and representatives. While the respondents were selected based on their roles and expertise, responses may be subject to social desirability bias, particularly on issues related to compliance with gender equality frameworks, institutional practices, and participation.

The study captures both institutional structures and practices but does not include extensive direct observation of planning and budgeting processes. As a result, there may be differences between reported practices and actual implementation on the ground.

The study attempts to incorporate perspectives related to WROs and the data is largely drawn from LGU respondents. This may limit the depth of understanding of external stakeholder perspectives, particularly from marginalized groups and grassroots actors.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a robust and evidence-based foundation for understanding key challenges, capacity gaps, and opportunities for strengthening gender-responsive and inclusive governance at the local level.

7. Thematic Findings

7.1 Overview of Participating Local Governments

Data were collected primarily through phone-based interviews with key municipal respondents, including Chief Administrative Officers, Planning Officers, Women’s Development Officers, and other relevant focal persons. The respondent profile shows that 60% of respondents are male, while 40% are female. While this indicates a meaningful presence of women within LGU structures, the dominance of male respondents suggests that administrative and decision-making spaces continue to be influenced by male perspectives. This imbalance may shape how gender priorities are interpreted and operationalized, potentially limiting the depth of gender-responsive governance despite formal inclusion.

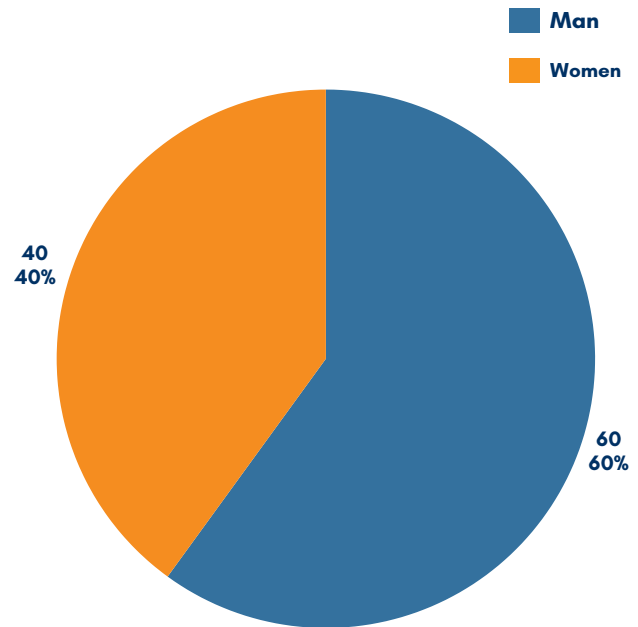


Fig 1 : Gender of Respondent

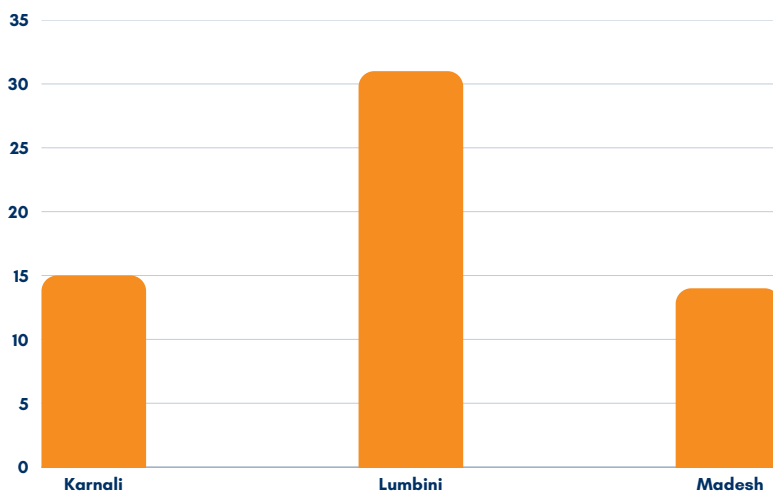
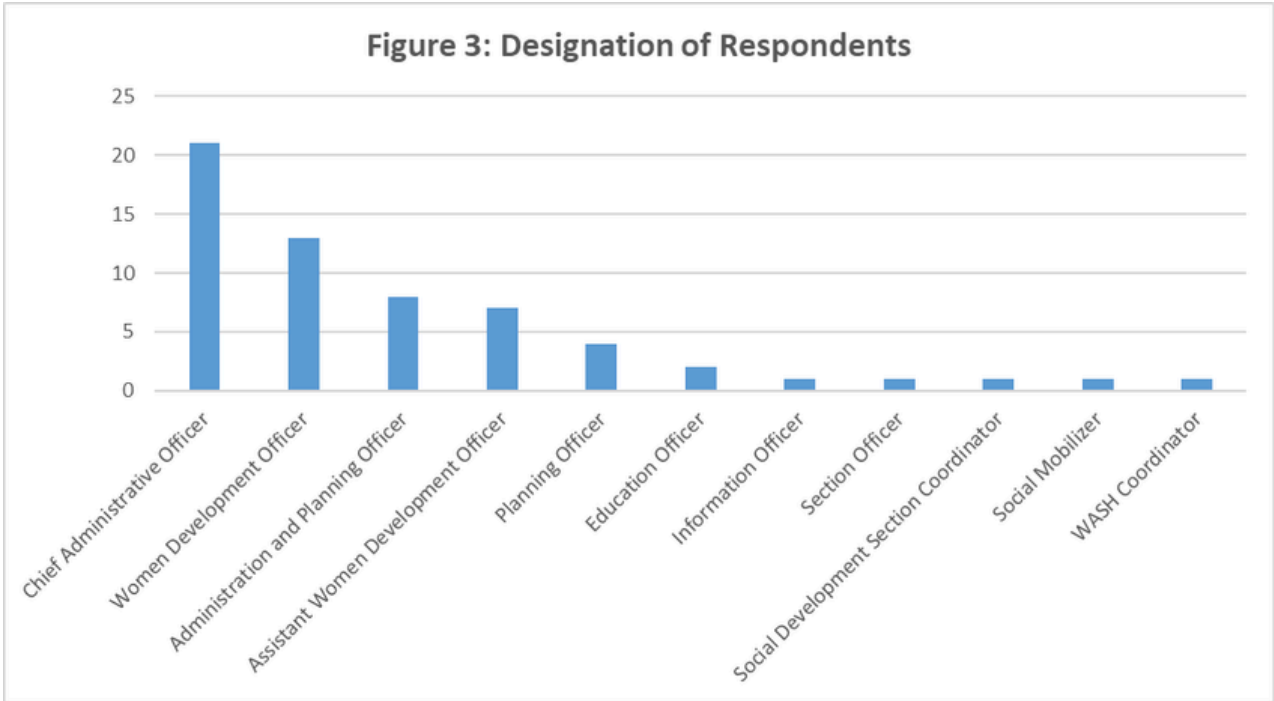


Fig 2: Province-wise Distribution of LGUs

The majority of LGUs surveyed are from Lumbini Province (31 LGUs), followed by Karnali (15) and Madhesh (14). This distribution suggests that the findings are more reflective of governance dynamics in Lumbini Province. Provincial variations in institutional capacity, socio-cultural norms, and resource availability should therefore be considered when interpreting the results.



Respondents primarily include Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), Planning Officers, and Women Development Officers, indicating that the data reflects perspectives from individuals directly engaged in governance, planning, and GESI-related functions. This strengthens the credibility of the findings, as insights are drawn from both decision-makers and those responsible for implementation.



7.2 Institutional Arrangements for GRIG

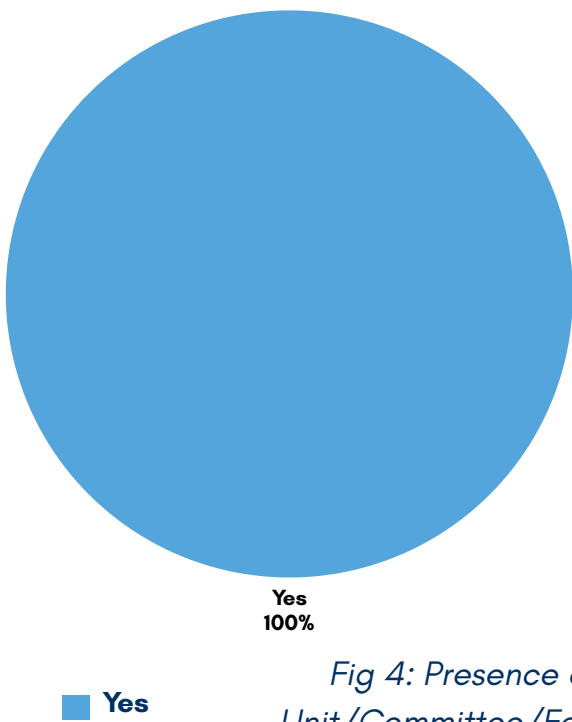


Fig 4: Presence of GESI Unit/Committee/Focal Person

All surveyed LGUs (100%) reported having a designated GESI unit, committee, or focal person, reflecting strong formal compliance with policy frameworks. However, subsequent findings reveal gaps in capacity, coordination, and implementation, suggesting that these structures often function more as formal requirements rather than fully operational mechanisms driving gender-responsive outcomes.

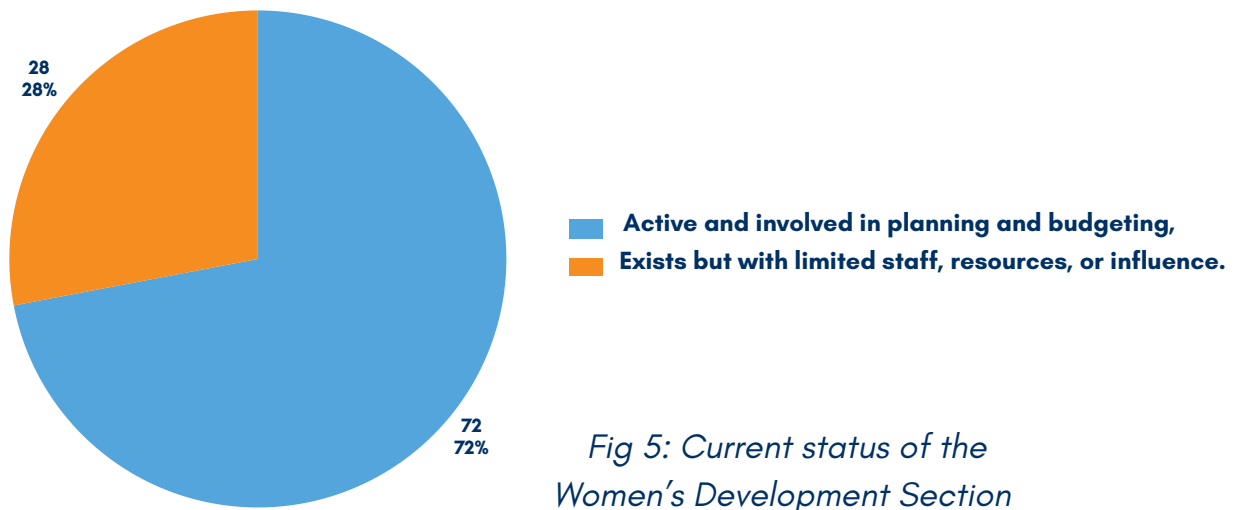


Fig 5: Current status of the Women's Development Section

A majority of LGUs (72%) reported that the Women Development Section is active and involved in planning and budgeting, while 28% indicated that it exists but with limited staff, resources, or influence. This highlights that even where institutional structures are active, their effectiveness is uneven, often constrained by limited capacity and institutional authority.

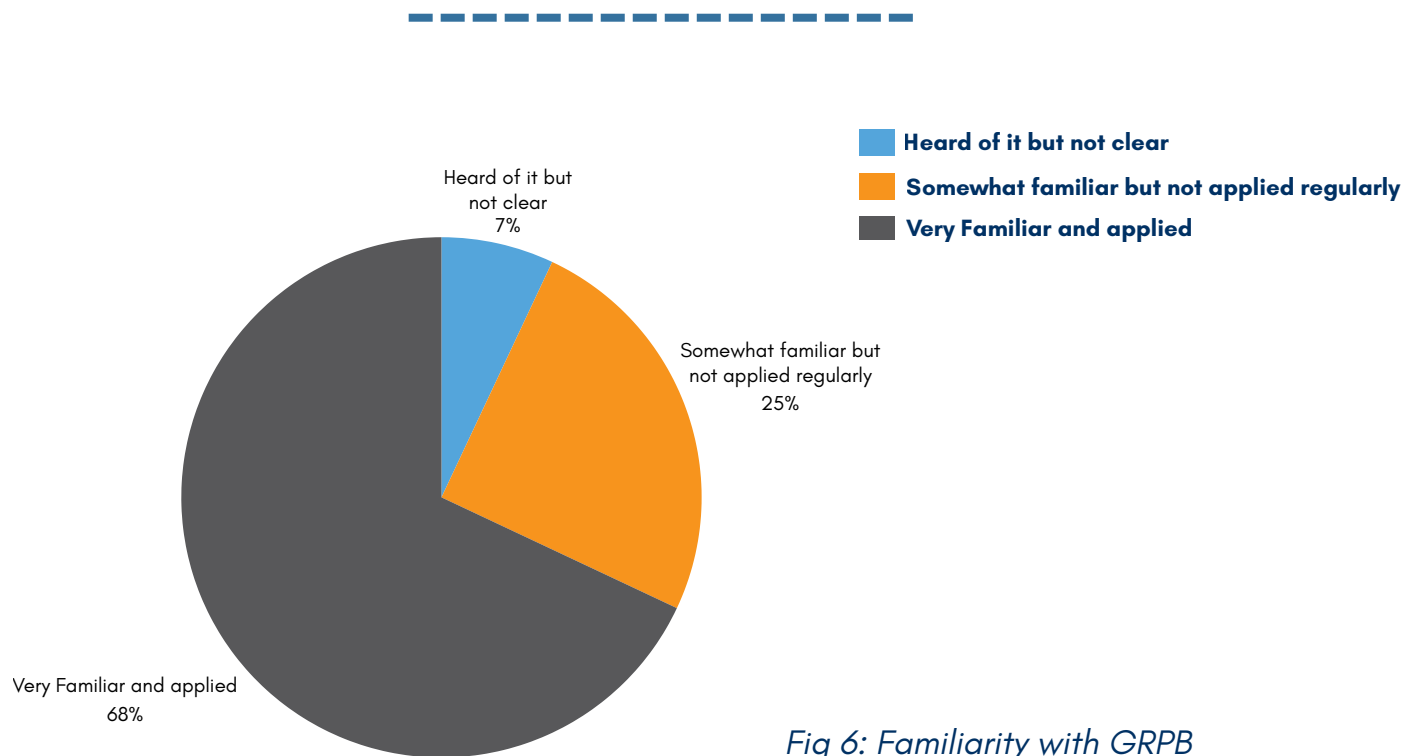


Fig 6: Familiarity with GRPB

A majority of respondents (41 out of 60) reported being very familiar with GRPB, indicating strong awareness at the LGU level. However, 19 LGUs reported limited clarity or irregular application. This suggests that awareness alone is insufficient to ensure effective implementation, pointing to a gap between conceptual understanding and practical application.

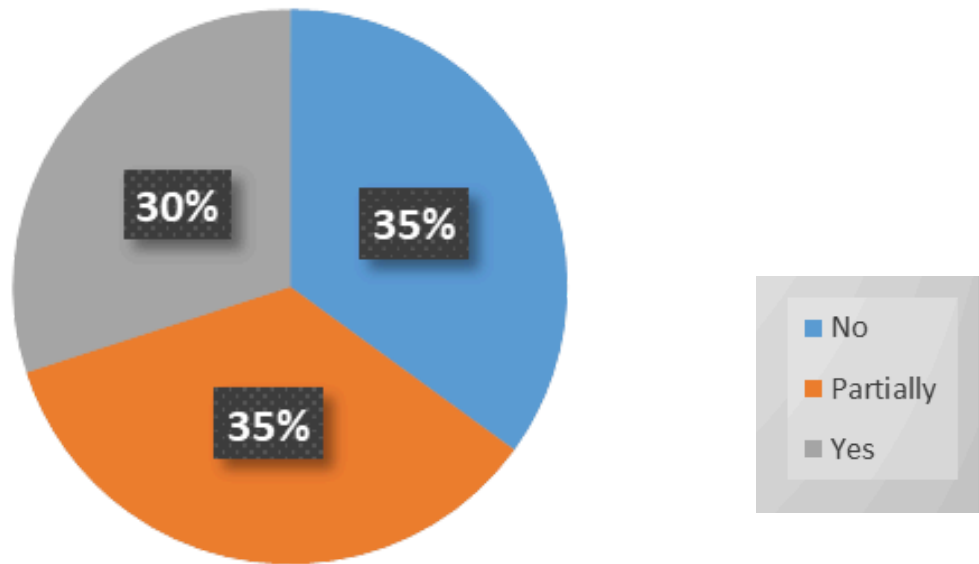


Fig 7: GRPB Roles and Responsibilities Clearly Defined

Only 30% of LGUs reported clearly defined roles and responsibilities for GRPB, while 70% indicated partial or no clarity. This lack of role definition weakens accountability and contributes to inconsistent application of gender-responsive planning, reinforcing institutional gaps identified in other sections.

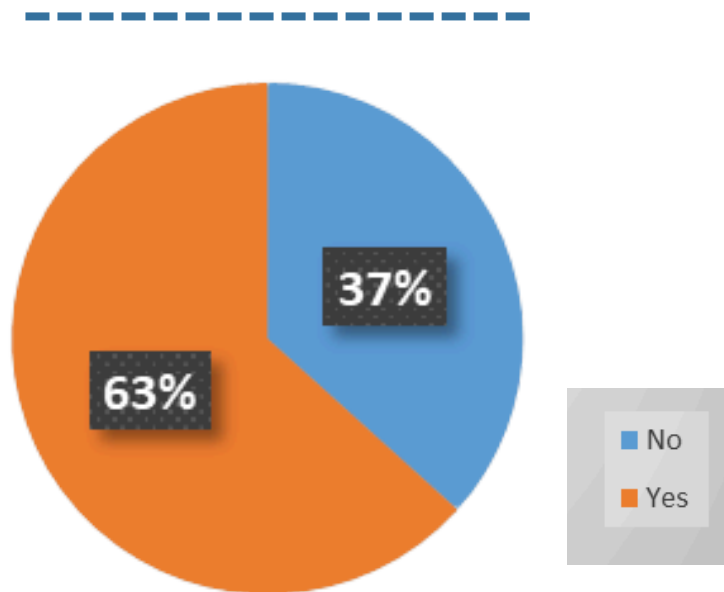


Fig 8: LGUs have approved gender equality or social inclusion policies or guidelines

While 63% of LGUs reported having approved gender equality or social inclusion policies, 37% do not. Even among those with policies, earlier findings suggest that implementation remains weak, indicating that policy presence does not necessarily translate into practice.

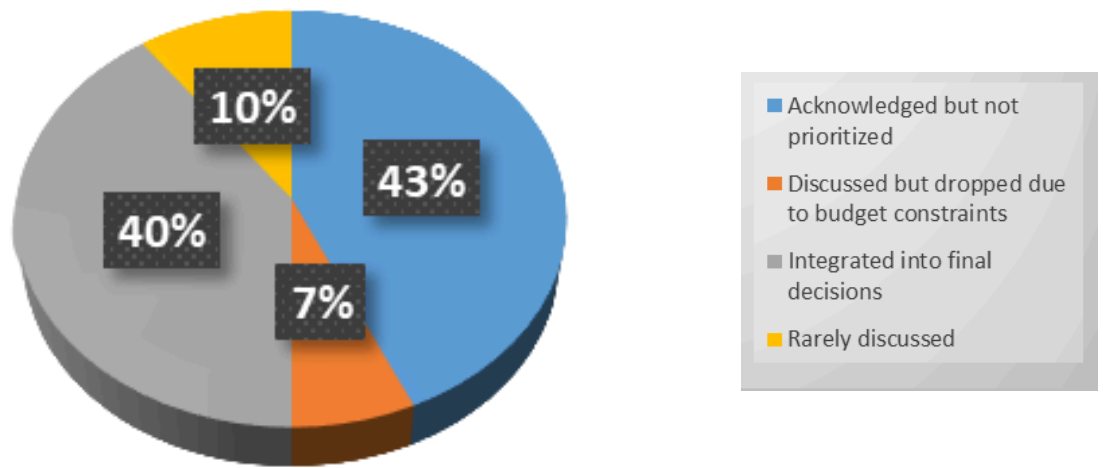


Fig 9: How Gender or Inclusion Issue Are Treated During Planning or Budgeting

Gender and inclusion issues are often acknowledged but not prioritized (43%), or integrated inconsistently (40%). A smaller proportion reported that such issues are dropped due to budget constraints (7%) or rarely discussed (10%). This reflects a pattern where gender considerations are recognized but not systematically embedded, often sidelined by competing priorities such as infrastructure.

7.3 Planning, Budgeting, and Data Use

The application of GRPB tools remains limited and inconsistent. Nearly half of LGUs (29) do not apply them at all, while 18 apply them only occasionally, and only 13 apply them regularly. This highlights a critical implementation gap, where gender-responsive planning frameworks are acknowledged but not institutionalized in routine processes. This finding directly aligns with identified capacity gaps, resource constraints, and weak institutional systems.

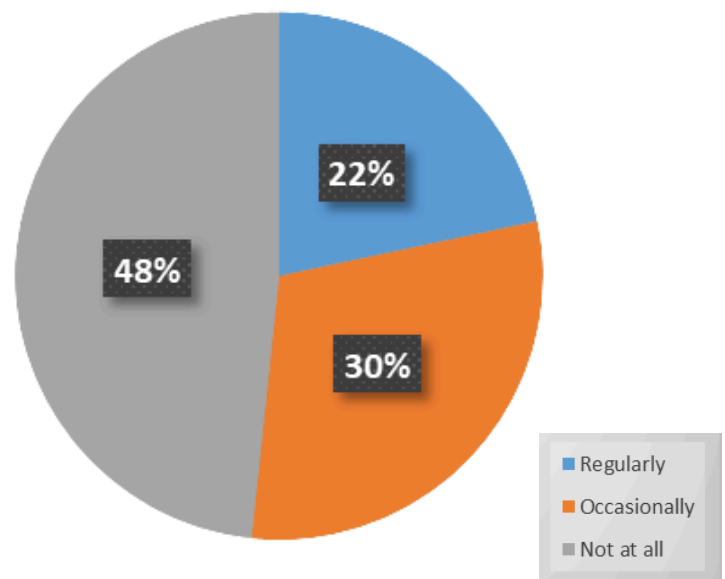


Fig 10: Application of GRB Tools in Annual Plan

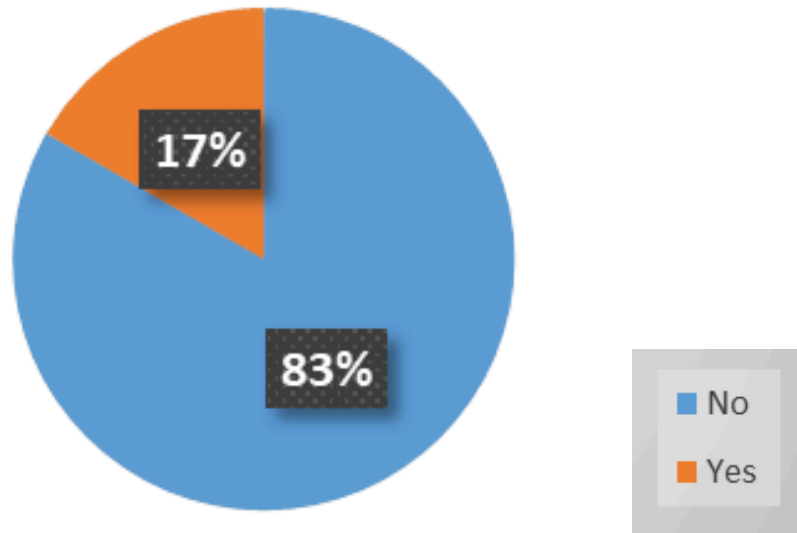


Figure 11: Use of Sex Disaggregated or Inclusion Sensitive Data for Planning and Budgeting

A significant majority of LGUs (83%) do not use sex-disaggregated or inclusion-sensitive data in planning and budgeting. This severely limits evidence-based decision-making and weakens the ability to design targeted interventions, further reinforcing the gap between intent and implementation.

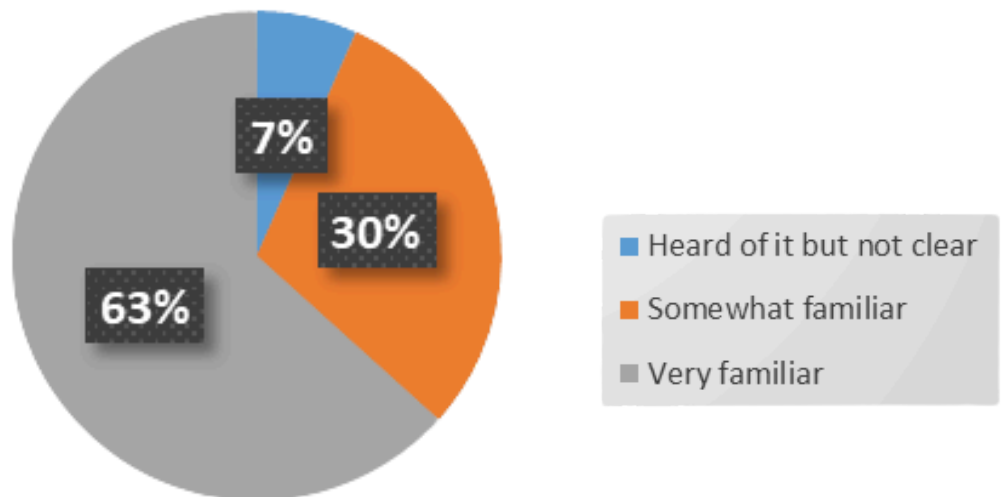
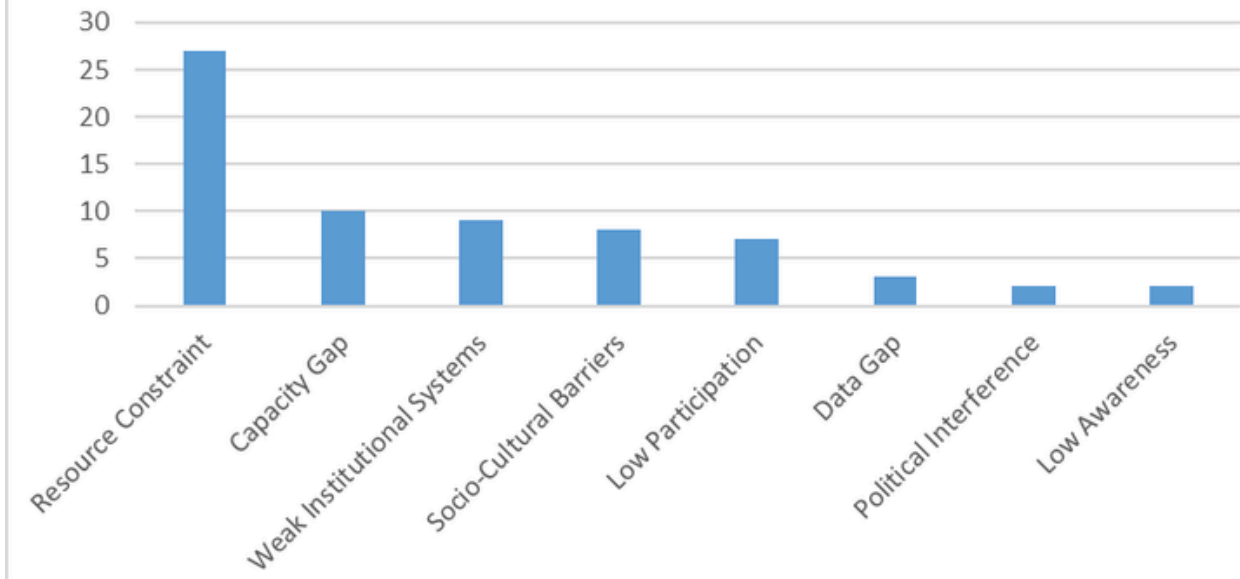


Figure 12: Familiarity with the 7-step local planning process

While 63% of respondents are very familiar with the 7-step planning process, gaps in understanding among the remaining LGUs affect the quality of participatory planning. Limited knowledge undermines effective community consultation and reduces the ability to incorporate the needs of women and marginalized groups, ultimately affecting service delivery outcomes.

Figure 13 : Key Challenges in Implementing Gender Responsive Governance at LGU Level Count



Resource constraints (27 responses) emerge as the most significant barrier, followed by capacity gaps (10) and weak institutional systems (9). Socio-cultural barriers (8) and low participation (7) further highlight that challenges are both structural and social. These interconnected constraints create a reinforcing cycle that limits effective implementation of gender-responsive governance.



7.4 Leadership and Decision Making

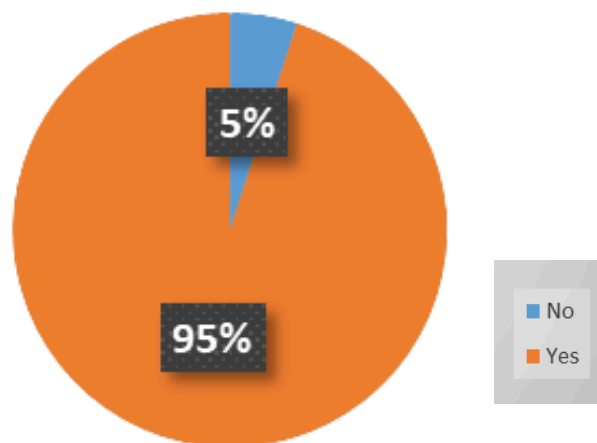


Fig 14: Elected Women Representatives holding key decision-making roles.

An overwhelming majority (57 LGUs) reported that women hold key decision-making roles, indicating strong formal representation. However, this finding requires deeper interpretation in light of participation and influence data.

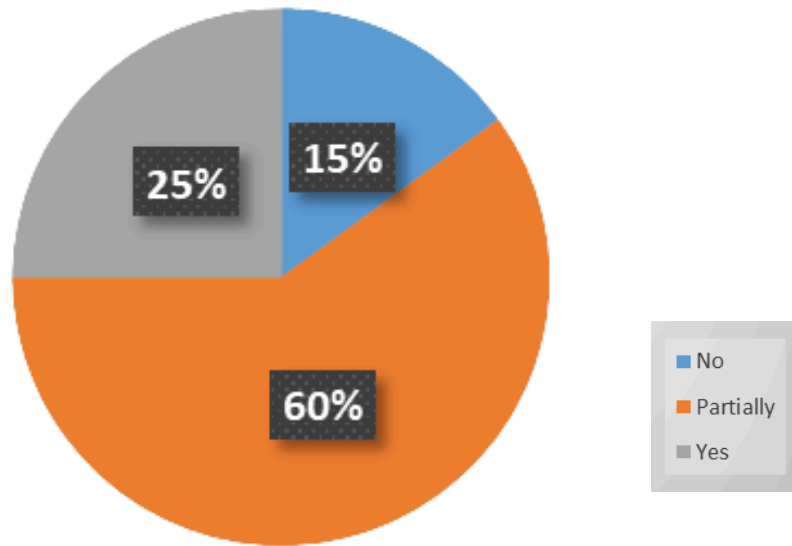
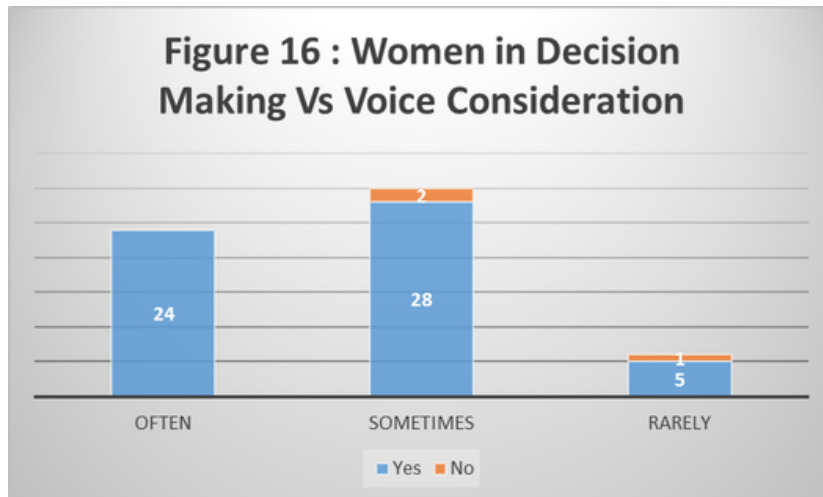
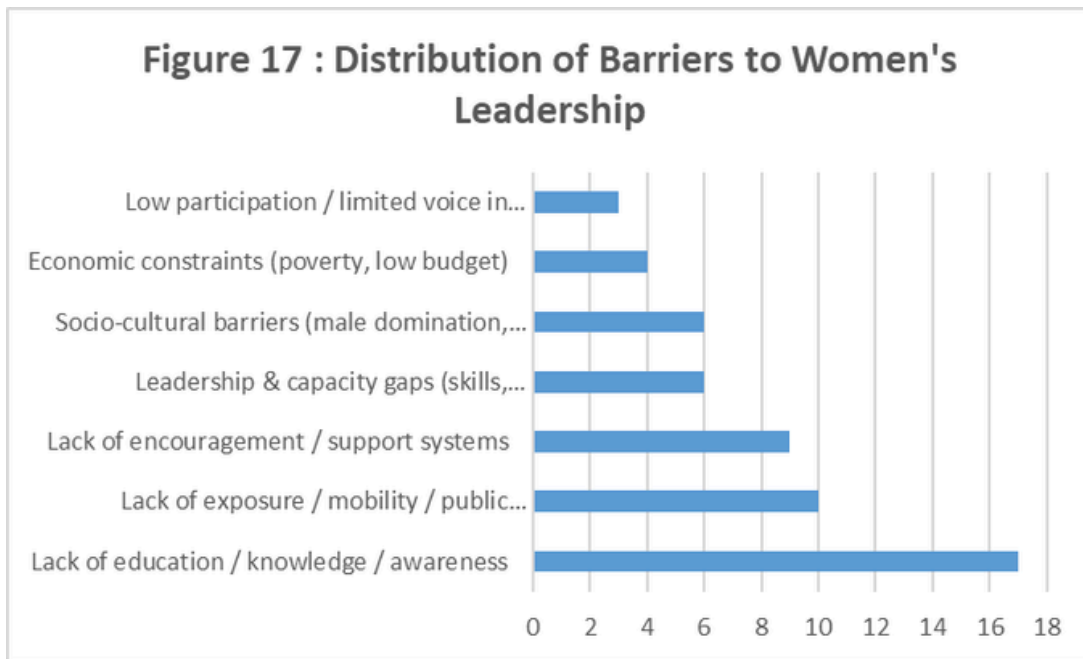


Fig 15: Marginalized Women Able to Influence Decision Making

Only 25% of LGUs reported that marginalized women can influence decision-making, while 60% indicated partial influence. This highlights that inclusion remains limited in practice, particularly for the most marginalized groups.



Despite high representation of women in leadership roles, meaningful participation remains inconsistent. Only 24 LGUs reported that women’s voices are often considered, while the majority indicated that they are only sometimes or rarely considered. This reveals a clear gap between representation and influence, suggesting that inclusion remains largely symbolic rather than substantive. This finding aligns with broader challenges identified in the study, including socio-cultural barriers (22 responses) and low participation levels, which continue to limit women’s effective engagement in governance.



Women’s leadership is constrained by an interlinked set of barriers, including lack of education, limited exposure, low encouragement, and socio-cultural norms. Hence, women’s leadership in LGUs is not constrained by a single factor, but by an interlinked ecosystem of educational, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers that collectively limit their visibility, voice, and authority in governance processes.”



7.5 Engagement with WROs

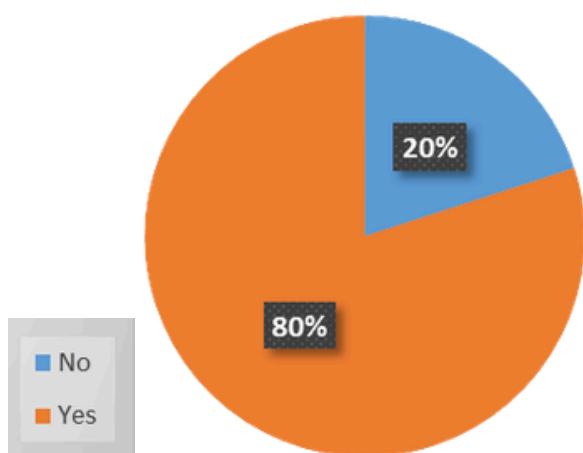


Fig 18: WROs Active in the LGUs

While 80% of LGUs report the presence of WROs, engagement remains weak, with 28 LGUs reporting no engagement. This finding highlights a clear gap between presence and participation.. The fact that 28 LGUs report no engagement suggests that WROs are not being systematically included in planning, decision-making, or accountability processes. This indicates missed opportunities for leveraging WROs’ community connections, local knowledge, and advocacy role to strengthen inclusive governance. It also reflects underlying issues such as weak coordination mechanisms, lack of formal engagement platforms, or limited institutional prioritization of collaboration with civil society.

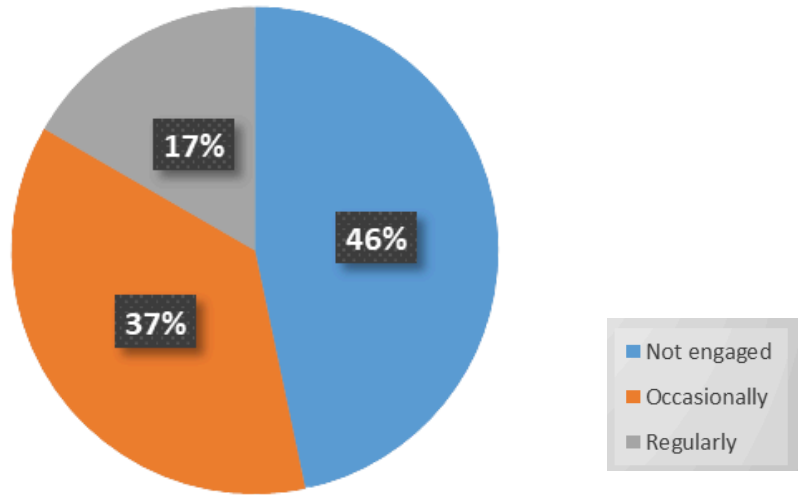


Fig 19: Frequency of WRO engagement

A large proportion of LGUs (28 out of 60) report no engagement with WROs, while only 10 LGUs engage regularly. This indicates that WROs are underutilized, representing a missed opportunity to strengthen inclusive governance and accountability mechanisms.

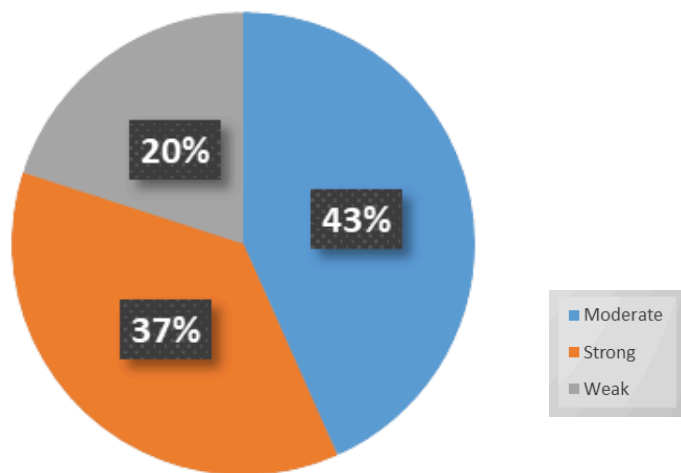


Fig 20: Effectiveness of LGU and WRO collaboration

Collaboration is moderate (43%) or strong (37%) in most LGUs, but weak engagement directly correlates with weaker outcomes. Barriers include lack of coordination, political interference, resource constraints, and socio-cultural factors.

Table 1 : Key Barriers to WRO Engagement

Key Barriers to WRO Engagement
Weak coordination with LGUs
Political influence in decision-making
Limited financial and programmatic support
Low organizational capacity
Social norms and low awareness

7.6 Accountability, Safety and Digital Risks

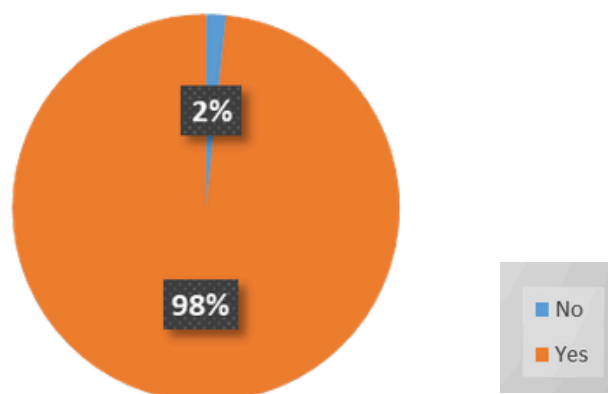


Figure 21 : LGU Conduct Public Hearings/Social Audits/Feedback Mechanisms

Almost all LGUs (59) report conducting public hearings or feedback mechanisms, indicating strong formal accountability structures. However, their effectiveness in ensuring inclusive participation remains uncertain.

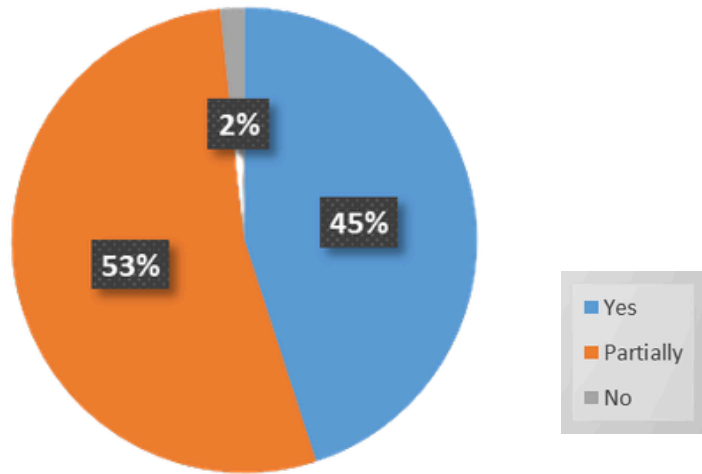


Fig 22: Women's Safe Participation in Public Hearing

Women's safe participation in public hearings is largely partial (32 LGUs), with only 27 reporting full safe participation in public hearings. This suggests that while spaces for safe participation exist, they are not fully inclusive or enabling.

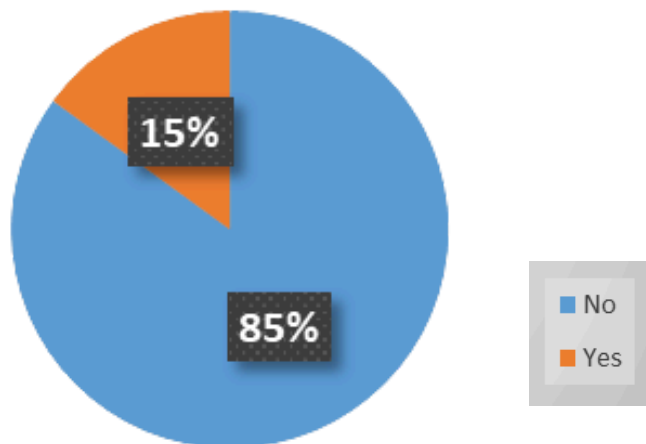


Fig 23: Elected Women Representatives or Officials Experience Backlash or Resistance

A smaller but significant number (9 LGUs) reported instances of backlash or resistance faced by women leaders. Although not widespread, backlash remains a critical risk that may discourage women's active participation in governance.

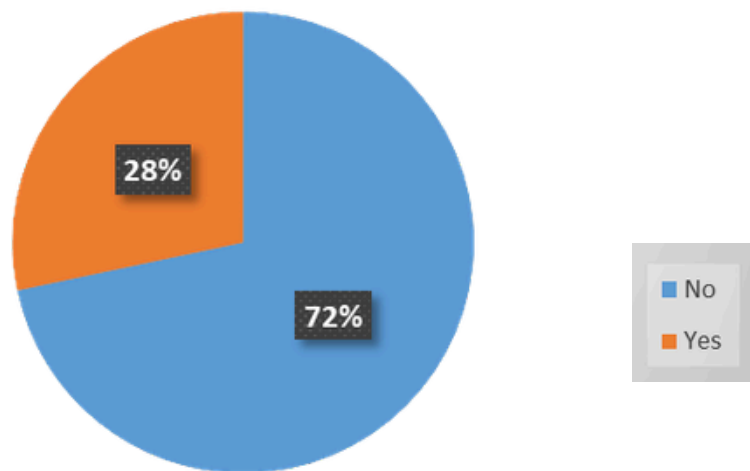


Fig 24: Digital Harassment

Approximately one-third of LGUs (17) identified digital harassment as a concern, reflecting emerging risks associated with women’s public roles. Digital spaces are becoming an important dimension of governance, with online harassment posing new challenges for women leaders.

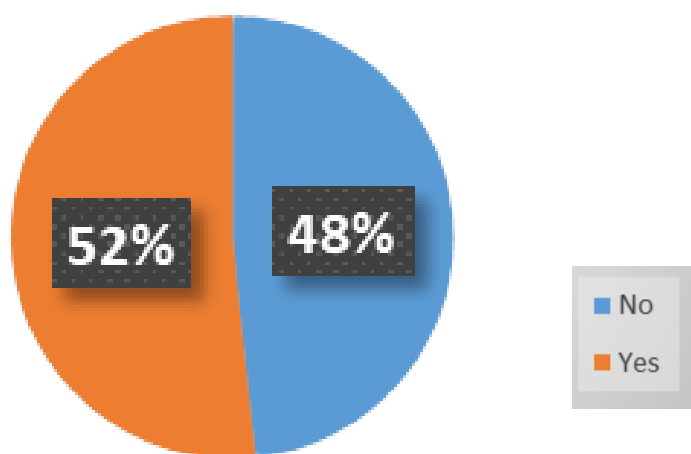


Figure 25 : Institutional Protocols for Safety Against Harassment

Backlash (9 LGUs) and digital harassment (17 LGUs) highlight emerging risks for women leaders. While 52% of LGUs have safety protocols, gaps remain in ensuring secure and enabling environments.

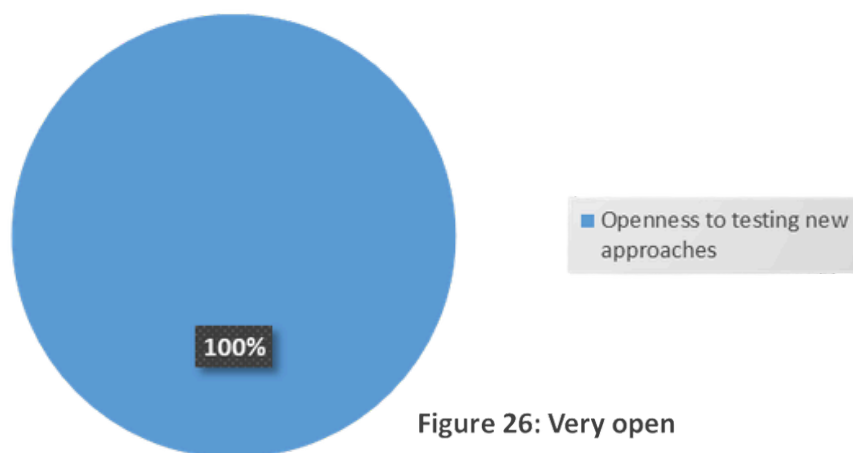
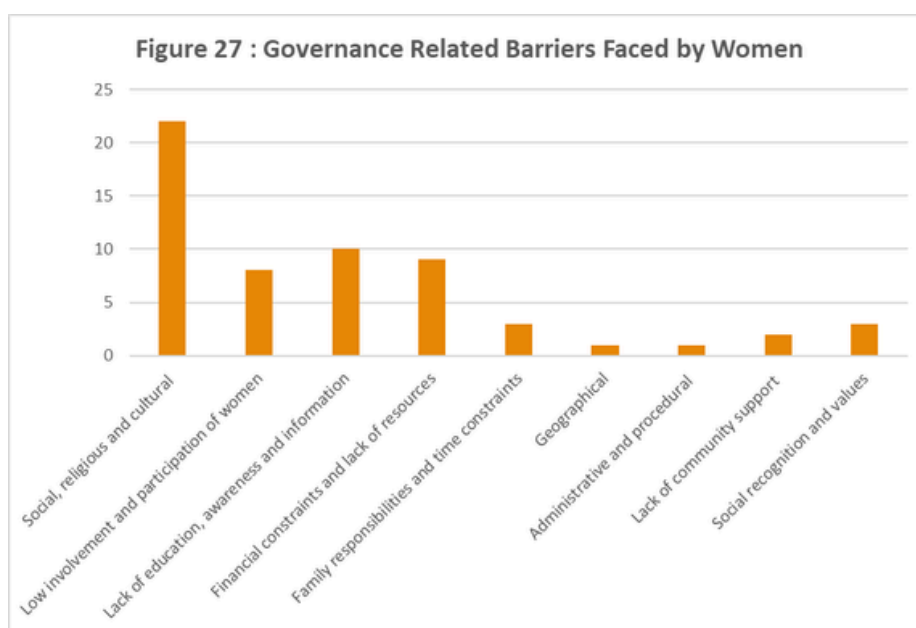


Figure 26: Very open

All LGUs reported being open to testing new approaches, indicating strong readiness for reform and innovation.

7.7 Challenges, Barriers, and Capacity Gaps



The analysis clearly indicates that socio-cultural barriers (22 responses) are the dominant constraint affecting women's participation in governance and economic activities. These include traditional beliefs, gender roles, and practices such as male domination and restrictions on women's mobility. In addition, lack of education and awareness (10) and financial constraints (9) further limit women's ability to engage meaningfully in governance and livelihood opportunities. Low participation (8 responses) reflects both structural exclusion and social discouragement, while family responsibilities and time constraints disproportionately affect women's engagement. These findings reinforce that women's exclusion from governance is driven primarily by deep-rooted social norms, reinforced by limited access to resources, information, and institutional support.

Table 2 : Groups of Women Facing the Greatest Barriers

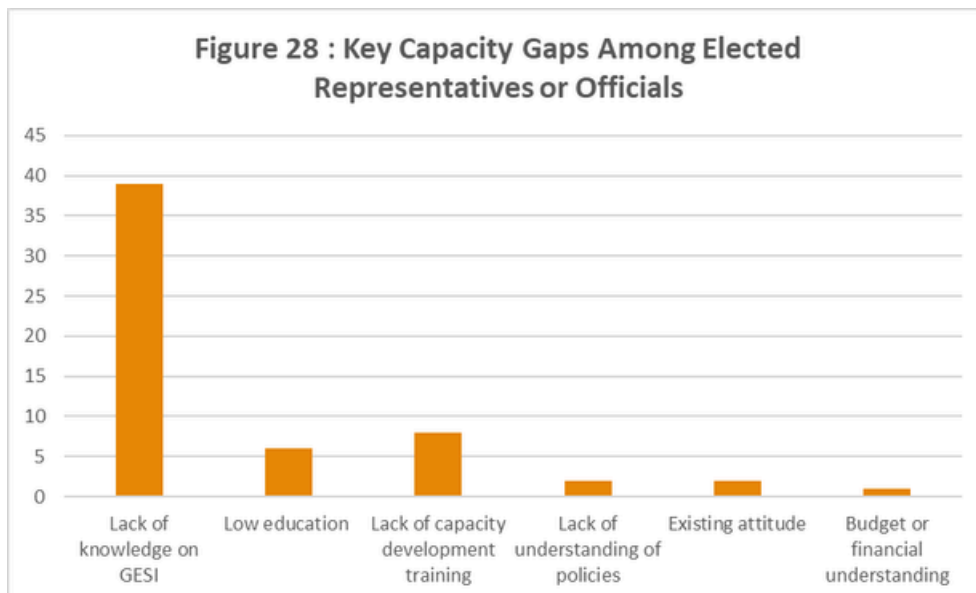
Category of Exclusion	Groups Identified	Frequency	Analytical Interpretation
Caste-based exclusion	Dalit women, other marginalized caste groups (Gandharva, Badi,	34	Caste remains the most dominant structural
Ethnic or regional exclusion	Janajati women, Madheshi women	23	Ethnic and regional identity significantly
Religious minority	Muslim women	4	Religious identity intersects with gender to
Disability based exclusion	Women with disabilities	7	Physical and social barriers limit participation
Socio economic exclusion	Low economic status, poor women	3	Financial constraints restrict engagement in
Education and awareness	Low education, low awareness	5	Limited knowledge reduces confidence and
Household or social position	Single women	3	Social roles and stigma affect participation
Perception gap	No specific group identified	12	Indicates limited awareness of

The analysis of responses on marginalized women’s ability to influence decision-making alongside identification of groups facing the greatest barriers reveals a clear intersectional pattern in exclusion from governance processes. While a majority of respondents reported that marginalized women are only partially able to influence decision-making, the data further shows that barriers are not uniform across all women. Instead, exclusion is concentrated among specific groups, particularly Dalit women, followed by Janajati women, Madheshi women, Muslim women, and women with disabilities. In addition, women with low education levels, low economic status, and those with limited social exposure are repeatedly identified as facing compounded disadvantages.

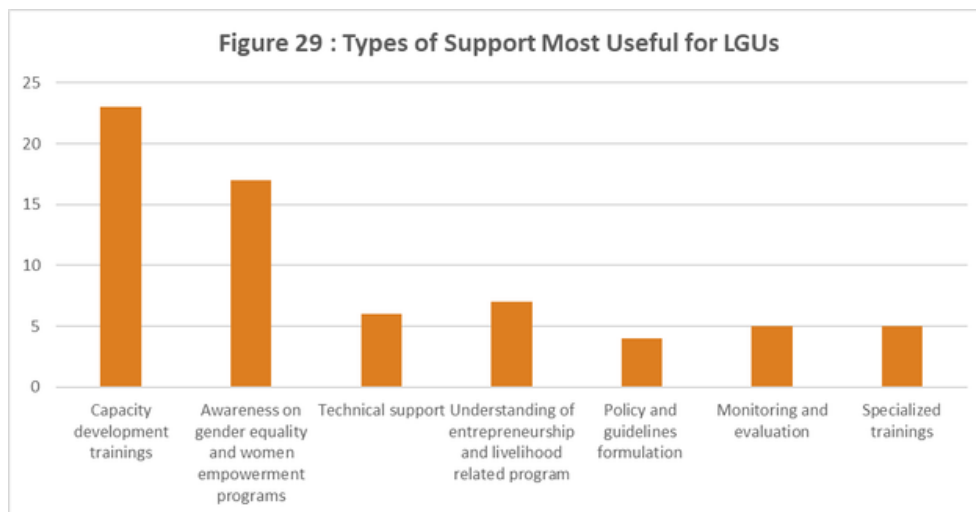
Dalit women emerge as the most consistently cited group across responses, indicating that caste-based discrimination remains a dominant structural barrier. Similarly, ethnic identity (Janajati and Madheshi women), religious minority status (Muslim women), and disability further intersect with gender to deepen exclusion. Economic vulnerability and lack of education further intensify these barriers, limiting both access to opportunities and the ability to participate effectively in decision-making processes.

This layered pattern of exclusion suggests that women’s participation in governance cannot be understood as a single-category issue. Rather, multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage based on caste, class, education, and social identity interact to shape the extent to which women are able to engage, influence, and lead.

The findings highlight that while general efforts to promote women’s participation are important, they may not adequately reach the most excluded groups unless interventions are explicitly designed through an intersectional lens.



The most critical capacity gap identified is the lack of knowledge related to GESI (39 responses). This overwhelming trend suggests that LGU officials and elected representatives often lack a foundational understanding of gender-responsive governance. This is complemented by gaps in training (8) and general education levels (6), which further constrain effective implementation of gender-responsive planning and budgeting (GRP). Attitudinal challenges, such as prioritization of infrastructure over social inclusion, also indicate the need for mindset and behavioral change interventions, not just technical training. The effectiveness of GRIG implementation is fundamentally constrained by limited GESI knowledge and weak technical capacity within LGUs.



LGUs expressed a strong demand for skill-based and capacity development training (23 responses), highlighting the need for practical, hands-on learning approaches. This is followed by awareness and empowerment programs (17), reflecting the need to address socio-cultural barriers and improve understanding of gender equality at both institutional and community levels. The demand for livelihood and entrepreneurship support (7) indicates a strong linkage between governance and women’s economic empowerment. Importantly, LGUs also emphasized the need for continuous monitoring and technical support, suggesting that one-off training is insufficient without sustained engagement. The demand for support reflects a preference for practical, community-oriented, and sustained interventions, rather than standalone policy or training initiatives.

7.8 Linking Challenges, Barriers, and Capacity Gaps

Table 3: Key Constraints Affecting the Implementation of GRIG

Issue	Evidence	Implication
Resource constraints	27 responses	Limits implementation of GRIG initiatives
GESI knowledge gap	39 responses	Weak planning and budgeting integration
Social norm	2 responses	Restricts women's participation
Low participation	8 responses	Limits inclusive decision-making

The analysis across datasets highlights a clear and reinforcing pattern of structural and capacity-related constraints that limit the effective implementation of GRIG at the local level.

Resource constraints emerge as the most significant barrier, with 27 responses indicating that limited budget allocation and financial capacity directly restrict the ability of LGUs to design and implement gender-responsive programmes. This suggests that even where awareness and intent exist, financial limitations prevent meaningful operationalization.

Closely linked to this is the substantial GESI knowledge gap (39 responses), which represents a critical capacity deficit within local institutions. Limited understanding of gender equality and social inclusion frameworks weakens the integration of GRPB into planning and budgeting processes, resulting in superficial or inconsistent application.

Although reported less frequently, socio-cultural norms continue to play a restrictive role by shaping participation dynamics and limiting women's engagement in governance processes. These norms reinforce structural inequalities and influence both institutional behavior and community-level participation.

Low participation further compounds these challenges by limiting inclusive decision-making processes. When marginalized groups, particularly women, are not actively engaged, governance outcomes fail to reflect diverse needs and priorities.

Table 4: Linking Key Challenges to Strategic Interventions for Strengthening GRIG

Key Issues	Recommended Intervention
Resource constraints	Flexible funding and financial planning support
GESI knowledge gap	GRPB and GESI training for LGU officials
Socio-cultural barriers	Community awareness and behavior change programs
Low participation	Women leadership and engagement platforms
Weak institutional systems	Strengthen coordination, monitoring and policy frameworks

The analysis demonstrates a strong alignment between identified challenges and the types of interventions required, indicating that LGUs have a clear understanding of both the problems they face and the support needed to address them.

Resource constraints, identified as a primary barrier, are directly linked to the need for flexible funding mechanisms and improved financial planning support. This reflects the importance of not only increasing financial resources but also enhancing the ability of LGUs to allocate and utilize budgets in a gender-responsive manner.

The significant GESI knowledge gap is matched by a strong demand for GRPB and GESI-focused training, highlighting the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives that go beyond awareness to include practical application within planning and budgeting processes.

Socio-cultural barriers are addressed through recommendations for community awareness and behavior change programmes, recognizing that institutional reforms alone are insufficient without parallel efforts to transform social norms and attitudes that restrict women’s participation.

Low participation is linked to the need for women’s leadership and engagement platforms, emphasizing the importance of creating structured spaces for women to actively contribute to decision-making processes.

Finally, weak institutional systems are connected to the need for strengthened coordination, monitoring, and policy frameworks, underscoring the importance of institutionalizing gender-responsive governance rather than relying on ad hoc or fragmented efforts.

Table 5: Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Constraints and Capacity Needs for GRIG

Dimension	Key Themes	What It Means
Governance Challenges	Resource constraints, weak institutional systems and low	LGUs struggle structurally to prioritize GESI
Barriers for Women	Social norms, low awareness and financial constraints	Women face external and systemic barriers
Leadership Constraints	Lack of education, exposure and encouragement	Women face internal and societal limitations
Capacity Gaps of Officials	Lack of GESI knowledge and training	Institutions lack technical ability
Support Needed	Training, awareness and technical support	Clear demand for capacity strengthening

At the institutional level, resource constraints and weak institutional systems limit the ability of LGUs to effectively implement gender-responsive planning and budgeting. These structural gaps are further compounded by significant capacity deficits among elected representatives and officials, particularly in understanding and applying GESI principles.

At the community and societal level, deep-rooted socio-cultural norms, including male-dominated structures and traditional beliefs, continue to restrict women’s participation in governance and economic activities. These norms directly influence women’s limited exposure, low confidence, and restricted mobility, thereby weakening their leadership potential.

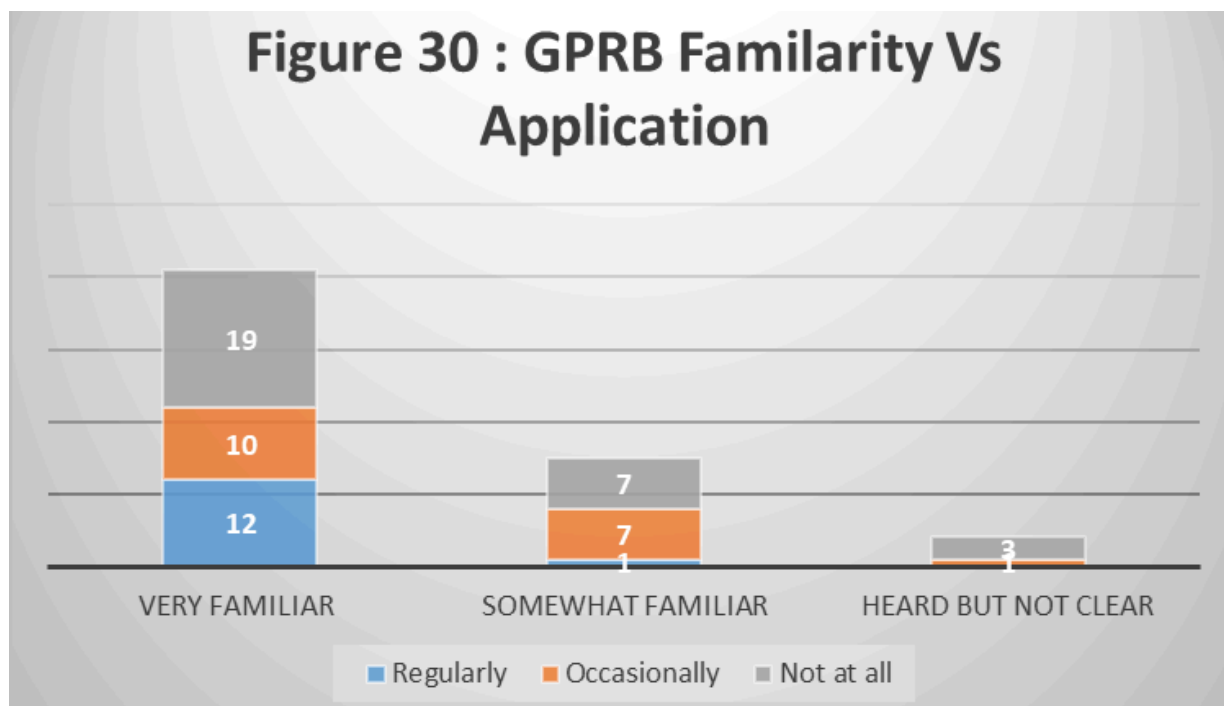
The findings also show that lack of education, awareness, and technical knowledge operates as a cross-cutting constraint affecting both institutions and individuals. While LGUs demonstrate openness to gender-responsive governance in principle, the translation into practice remains weak due to limited technical capacity and inadequate institutional support mechanisms.

Importantly, the analysis highlights that demand for support is clear and consistent. LGUs have identified a strong need for:

- Skill-based and technical training
- Awareness and empowerment programmes
- Continuous mentoring and monitoring
- Policy and system strengthening

This indicates that LGUs are not resistant to change but rather require structured and sustained support to operationalize gender-responsive governance frameworks effectively.

8. Cross-Cutting Analysis

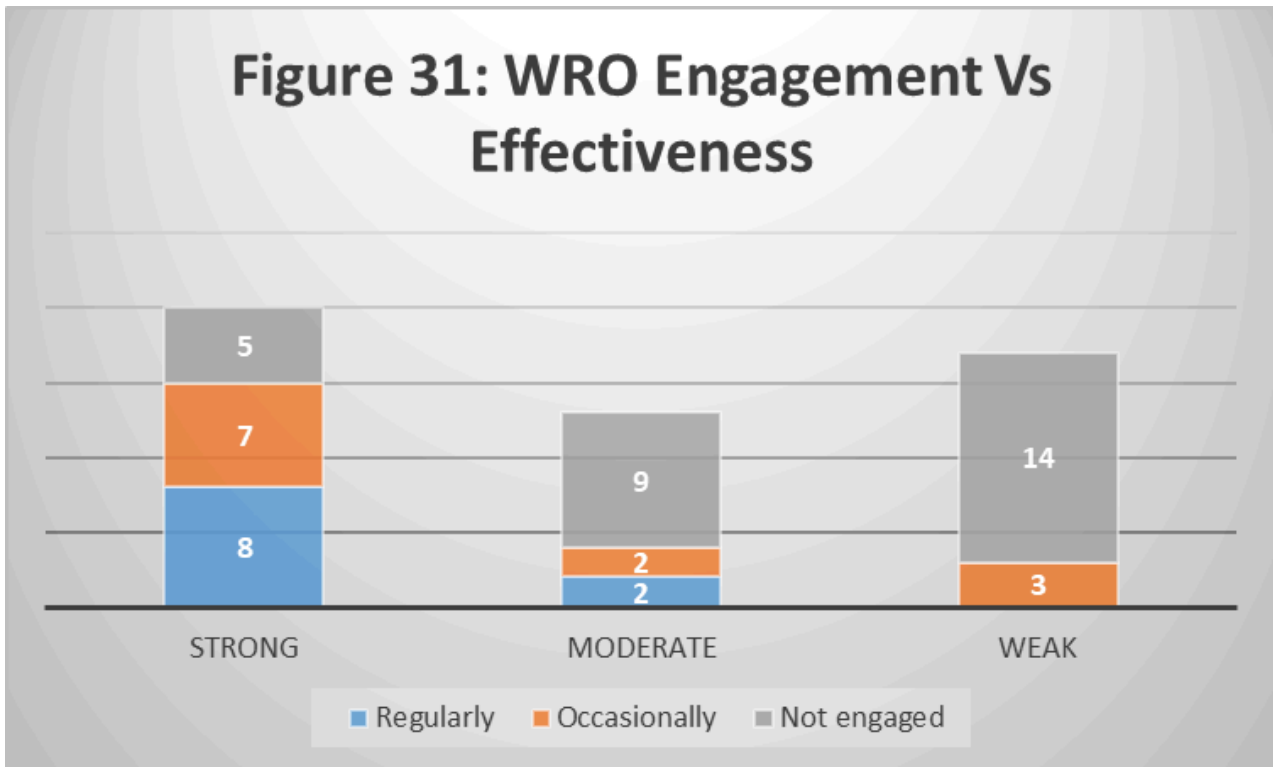


The cross-analysis between familiarity with GRPB and its actual application reveals a significant gap between knowledge and practice. While a majority of respondents (41 LGUs) reported being very familiar and applying GRPB, only 12 LGUs within this group actually apply GRPB tools regularly. Notably, 19 LGUs in this same category reported not applying GRPB tools at all, despite high levels of familiarity.

Among those who are somewhat familiar, application remains inconsistent, with nearly equal distribution across occasional and non-use. For respondents who have only heard of GRPB, application is predictably minimal.

Hence, this shows that high levels of familiarity with GRPB do not necessarily translate into consistent application, indicating a clear implementation gap between knowledge and practice. This finding suggests that current efforts may be overly focused on awareness-building, while practical implementation capacity, institutional incentives, and accountability mechanisms remain weak. Bridging this gap will require shifting from knowledge-based training to hands-on, practice-oriented support, including mentoring, tools, and integration into actual planning processes.

Figure 31: WRO Engagement Vs Effectiveness



The cross-analysis demonstrates a strong relationship between the level of engagement with WROs and the perceived effectiveness of collaboration.

Among LGUs that engage WROs regularly, the majority (8 out of 10) reported strong collaboration, with none reporting weak collaboration. In contrast, LGUs with no engagement show significantly weaker outcomes, with 14 out of 28 reporting weak collaboration.

LGUs with occasional engagement fall in between, with most reporting moderate levels of effectiveness.

Higher levels of engagement with WROs are directly associated with stronger and more effective collaboration.

The findings clearly indicate that limited or absent engagement with WROs significantly weakens collaborative governance, reducing opportunities for inclusive and participatory decision-making. Strengthening formal and regular engagement mechanisms with WROs could play a critical role in enhancing accountability, inclusiveness, and responsiveness of local governance systems.

This also reinforces broader findings that LGUs currently underutilize civil society actors, despite their potential to strengthen gender-responsive governance outcomes.

9. Implications for Programme Design

The findings from the GRIG mapping highlight that while LGUs demonstrate strong formal commitment to GESI, significant gaps remain in translating policy frameworks into effective practice. These gaps are not isolated but are interconnected across institutional capacity, leadership dynamics, socio-cultural barriers, and engagement mechanisms. As such, programme design must adopt an integrated and adaptive approach that responds to these multi-dimensional challenges.

A key implication is the need to move beyond awareness-based interventions toward practice-oriented capacity strengthening. While a majority of LGUs report familiarity with GRPB, its application remains inconsistent. This indicates that the EPL training should prioritize hands-on learning, practical tools, and real-time application within planning and budgeting processes.

WROs play a critical role as intermediaries between communities and local governments, representing the voices and priorities of women and marginalized groups. However, the findings indicate that engagement between LGUs and WROs remains limited, inconsistent, and often informal. This gap reduces opportunities for inclusive planning, accountability, and evidence-based advocacy. To address this, the GPL training should focus on areas such as policy engagement, evidence generation, structured dialogue and collaboration. The GGF, in particular, can serve as a bridge to strengthen these relationships by positioning fellows as facilitators of engagement and evidence-based advocacy.

Another critical implication relates to institutional strengthening and system-level support. Despite the presence of GESI units and accountability mechanisms, weak coordination, unclear roles, and limited use of data constrain effectiveness. The GLS can play a key role in strengthening institutional systems by focusing on topics such as inter-departmental coordination, use of sex-disaggregated data, monitoring frameworks, and integration of GESI into core governance processes. This is further reinforced by the Government's 100-points action plan, which prioritizes integrated digital governance platforms, enhanced data systems, and performance-linked accountability. Programme design can leverage these priorities by incorporating digitization of WRO data, strengthening evidence-based decision-making, and embedding GEDSI principles into digital governance processes at the local level.

The strong demand expressed by LGUs for training, technical support, and continuous engagement indicates a high level of institutional readiness for reform. All LGUs reported openness to testing new approaches, presenting a significant opportunity to introduce pilot initiatives, innovative tools, and adaptive learning models. Hence, the programme design should leverage this openness by incorporating iterative learning and context-specific adaptation.

10. Recommendations

The findings of the GRIG mapping highlight that strengthening GRIG requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that simultaneously addresses institutional capacity, leadership dynamics, socio-cultural barriers, and coordination mechanisms. The following recommendations are designed to inform programme implementation and ensure that interventions under EPL, GPL, GGF, and GLS are targeted, practical, and sustainable.

10.1 Strengthen Practical Implementation of GRPB

While awareness of GRPB is relatively high, its application remains inconsistent. To bridge this gap:

- Integrate digital governance and data-driven approaches into EPL training design to support local governments to digitize WRO data, enhance evidence-based decision-making, and embed GEDSI principles across planning, budgeting, and service delivery processes
- Deliver hands-on, practice-oriented GRPB training focused on real LGU planning and budgeting cycles
- Introduce practical tools, templates, and checklists for integrating GESI into annual plans and budgets
- Integrate GRPB into existing planning processes rather than treating it as a standalone exercise

10.2 Build GESI and Governance Capacity of LGU Officials

- Significant gaps in GESI knowledge and technical capacity limit effective implementation. Provide structured capacity-building programmes on GESI, GRIG, and inclusive governance
- Include modules on use of sex-disaggregated data, evidence-based planning, and monitoring frameworks
- Incorporate mindset and behavioral change components, addressing biases and prioritization of infrastructure over inclusion
- Develop learning platforms through GLS

10.3 Strengthen Women's Leadership and Decision-Making Influence

- The gap between representation and influence requires targeted leadership interventions. Hence, design leadership development programmes focused on negotiation, communication, and decision-making skills
- Promote institutional mechanisms that ensure women's voices are reflected in final decisions, not just consultations.

10.4 Address Intersectional Barriers to Women's Participation

- Adopt an intersectional approach in planning and budgeting by explicitly targeting marginalized groups, particularly Dalit women, Janajati women, Madheshi women, Muslim women, and women with disabilities.
- Design tailored capacity-building interventions that respond to the specific needs of these groups, including literacy support, leadership development, and confidence-building initiatives.
- Promote institutional mechanisms that ensure meaningful representation of marginalized women in ward-level planning, committees, and decision-making platforms.
- Strengthen the use of disaggregated data to identify exclusion patterns and ensure that programmes are responsive to the needs of the most marginalized.

10.5 Enhance Institutional Systems and Accountability Mechanisms

- Despite the presence of GESI units and accountability tools, effectiveness remains limited. Hence, clearly define roles and responsibilities for GESI implementation within LGUs.
- Strengthen inter-departmental coordination mechanisms for integrated planning
- Institutionalize monitoring and reporting systems for tracking GESI outcomes
- Promote the use of sex-disaggregated and inclusion-sensitive data in planning and decision-making

10.6 Strengthen Engagement with WROs

- Limited engagement with WROs reduces inclusiveness and accountability. Therefore, establish formal platforms for regular dialogue and collaboration between LGUs and WROs
- Provide targeted capacity-building support to WROs on policy engagement, advocacy, and programme design
- Support joint planning and monitoring initiatives involving LGUs and WROs
- Position GGF fellows as a support to strengthen coordination and bridge institutional gaps

10.7 Promote Inclusive and Safe Participation Mechanisms

- Develop and enforce institutional protocols to address harassment and backlash, including digital harassment
- Ensure safe and accessible spaces for women's participation in governance processes

10.8 Provide Flexible Funding and Technical Support

- Resource constraints remain a key barrier to implementation. Hence, support LGUs to design flexible funding mechanisms for gender-responsive initiatives.
- Provide technical assistance for budget planning and resource allocation
- Link funding with performance and accountability indicators



10.9 Institutionalize Continuous Learning and Adaptive Programming

- LGUs demonstrate strong openness to innovation, which should be leveraged. Therefore, establish continuous learning platforms through the GLS
- Integrate adaptive management approaches, allowing programmes to evolve based on feedback and evidence
- Document and scale good practices and successful models

10.10 Adopt an Integrated Programme Approach

- The challenges identified are interconnected and require coordinated responses. Hence, design EPL, GPL, GGF, and GLS as complementary and reinforcing interventions ensuring alignment between capacity-building, institutional strengthening, and WRO engagement.
- Promote multi-stakeholder collaboration, including LGUs, WROs, and youth actors

11. Conclusion

The GRIG mapping highlights a governance landscape in which formal structures for gender equality and social inclusion are largely in place across LGUs, but their effectiveness remains uneven. While LGUs demonstrate strong policy alignment, institutional presence of GESI mechanisms, and openness to reform, significant gaps persist in translating these commitments into consistent and meaningful practice.

A central finding of the assessment is the disconnect between policy intent and implementation. Although awareness of gender-responsive governance tools such as GRPB is relatively high, their application remains limited and inconsistent. Similarly, while women are well represented in leadership positions, this does not consistently translate into substantive influence over decision-making processes. These gaps point to deeper challenges related to technical capacity, institutional systems, and entrenched socio-cultural norms.

The analysis further underscores that constraints to gender responsive and inclusive governance are multi-dimensional and interlinked. Resource limitations, capacity gaps, weak coordination mechanisms, and restrictive social norms reinforce one another, creating systemic barriers to inclusive governance. At the same time, limited engagement with WROs reduces opportunities for accountability, participation, and community-driven decision-making.

Despite these challenges, the findings also reveal strong institutional readiness and demand for support. LGUs have clearly articulated the need for practical training, technical assistance, and sustained engagement, and all respondents expressed openness to adopting new approaches. This presents a significant opportunity to strengthen governance systems through targeted, context-responsive interventions.

Moving forward, strengthening gender responsive and inclusive governance will require a shift from compliance-driven approaches to implementation-focused strategies. This includes building practical capacity, strengthening institutional systems, enhancing women's leadership and influence, and addressing socio-cultural barriers that limit participation.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that gender-responsive governance in LGUs is not constrained by a lack of intent, but by limitations in capacity, resources, and enabling environments. Addressing these challenges through integrated and sustained interventions will be critical to ensuring that governance systems are not only inclusive in structure, but also equitable and effective in practice.

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Annex

Annex I : GRIG Mapping Questionnaire

Title: Gender Responsive and Inclusive Governance (GRIG) Mapping Questionnaire

Purpose: To assess the status of gender responsive and inclusive governance practices in Local Government Units (LGUs) and generate evidence to inform programme design and implementation.

Target respondents: Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Planning Officer, Women's Development Officer, or relevant focal person.

Mode of data collection: Phone based interview

Estimated duration: 40 to 50 minutes

Enumerator Introductory Script

Hello.....madame/sir, my name is, and I am calling on behalf of Governance Lab, in partnership with UN Women. We are conducting a research study called the Gender Responsive and Inclusive Governance Mapping.

The purpose is to understand how gender equality and inclusion are being integrated into governance, planning, and decision-making processes in your municipality. Your responses will help us generate evidence that will guide the design of our programme to strengthen leadership, policy-making, and governance practices that are more inclusive of women and marginalized groups.

The interview will take approximately 40 to 50 minutes. You may choose not to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. All information you provide will be treated confidentially, and responses will be reported in aggregate, without identifying individuals.

Do you have any questions before we begin? If you are happy to proceed, we will start the interview now.

Section A: Respondent and LGU Information

- Name of Local Government Unit (LGU):
- Province:
- Name of respondent:
- Designation:
- Gender of respondent:
- Contact number/email:
- Date of interview:



Section B: Institutional Arrangements for GRIG

8. Does the LGU have a designated unit, committee, or focal person responsible for gender equality or GESI?

- Yes No

If yes, please specify:

.....

9. What best describes the current status of the Women’s Development Section in this municipality?

- Active and involved in planning/budgeting
- Exists but has limited staff, resources, or influence
- Exists in name only
- Does not exist

10. How familiar are you with Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting ?

- Very familiar and applied
- Somewhat familiar but not applied regularly
- Heard of it but not clear
- Not familiar

11. Are roles and responsibilities related to Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting clearly defined within the LGU?

- Yes Partially No

12. Does the LGU have any approved policies, guidelines, or strategies related to gender equality or social inclusion?

- Yes No

If yes, please specify (brief):

.....

Section C: Planning, Budgeting, and Data Use

13. Does the LGU apply gender responsive planning and budgeting tools in the annual planning and budgeting process?

- Regularly Occasionally Not at all

14. To what extent are gender and inclusion priorities reflected in the annual plan and budget?

- High Moderate Low

15. Are women’s economic empowerment, livelihoods, or enterprise-related priorities reflected in the plan or budget?

- Yes No

If yes, please mention key sectors or programmes :

.....

16. Are sex-disaggregated or inclusion-sensitive data used to inform planning and budgeting decisions?

- Yes No

17. Are you familiar with the 7 step local level planning process?

- Yes, very familiar Somewhat familiar Heard of it but not clear Not familiar

Note to Enumerators: If the reply is somewhat familiar, heard of it but not clear or not familiar, explain the 7 step planning process briefly:

Step 1 : Preparation (Poush Masanta to Chaitra Masanta)

Step 2 : Resource Estimate and Budget Ceiling Preparation (Baisakh 15)

Step 3: Settlement Level Planning/Project Selection (Baisakh Masanta)

Step 4 : Ward Level Planning/Project Selection and Prioritization (Jestha 15)

Step 5 : Integrated Budget and Programme Formulation (Asadh 5)

Step 6 : Budget and Programme Approval from Rural/Municipal Executive (Asadh 10)

Step 7 : Budget and Programme Approval from Rural/Municipal Assembly (Asadh 10)

18. At which stages of the local planning process are women and marginalized groups consulted?

- Settlement/Ward level
 Municipal planning stage
 Budget approval stage
 Not systematically consulted

19. What are the main challenges the LGU faces in implementing gender responsive planning and budgeting?

.....

Section D: Leadership and Decision-Making

20. What proportion of elected representatives in the LGU are women?

- Less than 33% 33-50% More than 50%

21. Do women elected representatives hold key decision-making roles (e.g. mayor, deputy mayor, committee chair)?

- Yes No

22. How often are women's voices meaningfully considered in executive-level decision-making?

- Often Sometimes Rarely

23. Are marginalized women able to influence decision-making processes?

- Yes Partially No

24. What factors most limit or enable women's leadership and authority in this LGU?

.....

Section E: Engagement with Women's Rights Organizations (WROs)

25. Are Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) active in this LGU?

- Yes No

26. How frequently are WROs engaged in LGU planning, budgeting, or monitoring processes (including livelihoods or enterprise programmes)?

- Regularly Occasionally Not engaged

27. What formal mechanisms exist for WRO engagement?

- Consultations Committees Public hearings Informal coordination None

28. How would you rate the effectiveness of collaboration between the LGU and WROs?

- Strong Moderate Weak

29. What limits meaningful engagement of WROs in governance processes?

.....

Section F: Accountability, Safety, and Digital Risks

30. Does the LGU conduct public hearings, social audits, or citizen feedback mechanisms?

- Yes No

31. Are women and marginalized groups able to participate safely and meaningfully in these forums?

- Yes Partially No

32. Have women elected representatives or officials experienced backlash or resistance related to their public roles?

- Yes No

33. Is digital harassment (e.g. social media abuse, online threats) a concern for women leaders or staff?

- Yes No

34. Are there any institutional protocols or support mechanisms to address harassment or safety risks?

- Yes No

Section G: Women's Enterprise, Livelihoods, and Economic Inclusion

35. Does the LGU currently support any programmes related to women's livelihoods, entrepreneurship, or income generation?

- Yes No

If yes, please specify (e.g. skills training, cooperatives, grants, market linkage):

.....

36. Are women and marginalized groups able to access these enterprise or livelihood-related programmes?

- Yes Partially No

37. What are the main governance-related barriers limiting women's participation in enterprise or livelihood opportunities in this LGU?

(e.g. access to finance, land, information, social norms, administrative procedures)

.....

38. Are WROs involved in the design, implementation, or monitoring of women’s enterprise or livelihood programmes?

Yes No

Section H: Capacity Gaps, Fellowship, and Readiness

39. What key capacity gaps exist among elected representatives or officials related to gender-responsive and inclusive governance?

.....

40. What types of leadership or technical support would be most useful for this LGU to strengthen gender-responsive governance, including women’s economic inclusion?

.....

41. Would the LGU be willing to host a Gender and Governance Fellow?

Yes No

If yes, what areas of work would be most relevant?

.....

Section I: Priorities and Closing

42. What are the top two or three governance challenges related to gender equality and social inclusion in this LGU?

.....

43. What reforms or changes would the LGU prioritize if technical or leadership support were available?

.....

44. Any additional comments or recommendations?

.....

Enumerator Guidance (Internal Use Only)

Obtain informed consent before starting

Keep interview within 45 minutes; prioritize closed questions if time is tight

Probe only to clarify institutional practices

Note concrete examples where possible

Flag sensitive issues (harassment, backlash) discreetly

Maintain neutrality and confidentiality

Annex II: List of Participating LGUs

Province	District	Name of the Municipalities	Name of the WROs
Madhesh Province	Bara	Pheta Rural Municipality	Sakhi
		Kolhabi Municipality	Maiti Nepal/WDSC
		Adarsha Kotwal Rural Municipality	Pahichan/Mithila Sarathi Society Nepal
	Sarlahi	Bagmati Municipality	Pahichan/Disabled Women Organization Nepal
	Mahottari	Loharpatti Municipality	Pahichan/Saahashi Nepal
	Dhanusha	Ganeshman Charnath	Maiti Nepal/SDRC
Lumbini Province	Kapilvastu	Maharajgunj Municipality	WOREC/Janchetana Mahila Samudavik Sanstha
		Sudhodhan Rural Municipality	TWUC/LDDC
		Bijayanagar Rural Municipality	FEDO/Nav Jeevan
		Kapilvastu Municipality	NIWF/NMWWs
	Dang	Buddhabhumi Municipality	WOREC/Kishori Adhikar Manch
	Bardiya	Gulariya Municipality	TWUC
	Arghakhachi	Bhumikasthan Municipality	FEDO/CWAD
		Sandhikharka Municipality	FEDO/Dalit Chetana Bikash Parisad
	Rupandehi	Lumbini Cultural Municipality	Rupandekhi Apanga Punarshthanana Kendra
	Gulmi	Resunga Municipality	FEDO/Mahila Bikas Manch
Karnali	Surkhet	Barahtal Rural Municipality	Aawaz/WDS
		Lekbeshi Municipality	Aawaz/WHR
	Humla	Simkot Rural Municipality	NIWF/WDS
	Jumla	Patarasi Rural Municipality	Sarbodaya
		Sinja Rural Municipality	

Annex III: About Governance Lab

Governance Lab (GovLab) is a research-driven “think and do” tank that works at the intersection of evidence generation, policy engagement, and institutional strengthening in Nepal. The organization places equal emphasis on producing high-quality research and translating that evidence into practical policy solutions and implementation support.

GovLab aims to strengthen both federal and local governance systems by promoting evidence-based decision-making. It does so by generating context-specific insights, supporting institutional capacity development, and facilitating the design and implementation of innovative governance programmes. Its work is grounded in the belief that sustainable policy reform requires not only strong evidence, but also capable institutions and informed leadership.

As a collaborative platform, GovLab brings together national and international researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and development partners to foster dialogue, exchange knowledge, and co-create solutions. The organization actively promotes inclusive, multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure that diverse perspectives inform policy processes.

GovLab’s core areas of work include governance reform, with a focus on strengthening transparency, accountability, and inclusive practices within public institutions. Through its integrated approach—combining research, dialogue, and capacity building—GovLab contributes to advancing more responsive, equitable, and effective governance systems in Nepal.

Study Team and Contributors

The study was carried out by a team of experts and practitioners from Governance Lab bringing together expertise in governance, research, and field implementation.

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5. Radha Gyawali, Province Coordinator – Research Coordinator
6. Sudha Sharma – Enumerator
7. Ramobh K.C. – Enumerator
8. Barub Dev Gautam – Enumerator