Affirmative Action Practices by Development Actors Targeting Dalits in Nepal

Shedding Light on Theory and Practice Using the Case Study of Helvetas' Employment Fund

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

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Summary

Nepal's society is subject to persisting development inequalities between its different regions and socio-economic groups, and discrimination based on caste, ethnicity, gender and religion continues. Nepal's Dalits, who are positioned at the lowest rank of the Hindu caste system, are one section of the Nepali society that has historically been subject to socio-economic and political marginalization and that often suffers from poverty and caste-based discrimination. Nepal's Dalits encompass various social groups which are stratified along markers such as caste, class, region, religion and gender. Discrimination is not only practiced against Dalits but also between different Dalit groups. The situation of Dalit women in particular is often described to be shaped by their double discrimination due to them being Dalit and, in addition, to them being women in a patriarchal society.

Nepal's continuing socio-economic inequalities have raised demands for state-led inclusive development, which has become central to Nepal's political agenda since its democratization in 1990 and especially after the decade-long Maoist insurgency which came to an end in 2006. Affirmative action (positive discrimination) to the benefit of the economically and socially discriminated was first introduced by the Government of Nepal in its interim constitution of 2007, and taken over into Nepal's new constitution of 2015. Measures of affirmative action have also been adopted by many national and international non-governmental development actors advocating the social and economic inclusion of Nepal's discriminated groups. To construct target groups for development interventions, economic indicators for poverty are often intertwined with social or cultural categories such as caste or ethnicity. Among scholars, who frequently draw on the Indian experience regarding affirmative action, the positive discrimination targeting of groups based on social or cultural categories is debated as it can have unintended societal implications. It has been found to enforce social conflict instead of resolving it by fostering inter-group differences along caste or ethnic boundaries and by ignoring inequalities and issues of discrimination existing within socially constructed target groups.

Against this background, this Master's thesis investigates how the societal conditions of Nepali Dalits and associated caste and gender relations are taken into consideration and translated by development sector actors adopting affirmative action targeting approaches in Nepal. The thesis is divided into two major parts: firstly, a literature-based part, which reviews the scholarly state of the art of this research focus, and secondly, an empirical part, which focuses on the qualitative case study of one specific development intervention, the Employment Fund Nepal (EF) and the two Swiss development actors involved with it: The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) as one of the EF's donors, and the non-governmental organization HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (here referred to as Helvetas), which implements the EF.

The EF finances short-term vocational skills trainings for economically poor and socially discriminated youth. The EF thereby follows the SDC's Disadvantaged Group (DAG) approach, which defines the economically poor and socially discriminated (e.g. Dalits, Madhesis, Janajatis and women) as priority target groups. Within the EF, an incentive- and results-based payment system

encourages the private sector Training and Employment Service Providers (T&Es), who implement the skills trainings, to positively discriminate DAGs as their target groups.

For the case study of the EF, different data sources are analyzed. Firstly, policy papers and other official documents authored by the SDC, Helvetas and the Employment Fund Secretariat (EFS), which manages the EF, are reviewed. Secondly, data material is analyzed which was collected during a qualitative impact study of the EF that was conducted in 2015 by a team of the University of Zurich and the Nepali research firm Research Inputs and Development Action. The data material includes semi-structured interviews with EF staff, donor representatives and officials of the governmental Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector, EF beneficiaries, T&Es and other actors involved in the EF.

The case study of the EF reveals that the studied development actors only limitedly take the scholarly knowledge base on the societal conditions of Dalits and affirmative action targeting into consideration – or at least, that they limitedly report on how they translate it within their program modalities.

Nepal's "Dalit issue", i.e. the societal situation of Dalits which is shaped by persisting issues of discrimination against Dalits as well as societal problems (e.g. gender discrimination or untouchability practices) and heterogeneities existing within Dalit communities, is rarely addressed on a policy and official documentation level of the EF. The interviews with EF beneficiaries and T&Es, however, imply that the subjects of caste affiliation and issues of discrimination are of relevance to the interviewees' lives. The analyzed interviews show that the EF has generally enabled its beneficiaries to improve their socio-economic conditions and recognition within their families and communities, which implies that practices of caste-, ethnicity- and gender-based discrimination against the beneficiaries have decreased.

Nevertheless, some statements made in the interviews show that the EF's targeting approach is questioned by EF staff, T&Es and by the targeted youth themselves. They indicate that adverse implications of affirmative action observed by scholars might also arise from the affirmative action targeting applied within the EF. In contrast, on the policy and official documentation level of the EF, unintended implications of affirmative action are rarely addressed. The analyzed data show that the responsibility to adapt the targeting and program modalities of the EF to local caste and gender relations lies mostly with the local implementing actors of the EF, i.e. regional staff and T&Es.

In conclusion, this thesis presents prudent recommendations for practitioners in the development sector concerning the targeting of Dalits in Nepal and comparable caste societies. It is suggested taking into consideration the possible and unintended implications affirmative action can have if it is based on social categories such as caste and ethnicity. It is recommended that local implementers as well as communities on local levels of a development program are sensitized for the societal conditions of Dalits and other discriminated groups and that (qualitative) local program experiences are integrated into program-holistic evaluations and reporting.

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Abbreviations

CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist)
DAG	Disadvantaged Group
DfID	Department for International Development
EF	Employment Fund
EFS	Employment Fund Secretariat
EFSC	Employment Fund Steering Committee
EVENT	Enhanced Vocational Education and Training
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HDI	Human Development Index
Helvetas	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
LGCDP	Local Governance and Community Development Programme
MEJC	Micro-Enterprising for Job Creation
MOE	Ministry of Education
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPR	Nepali Rupees
NSTB	National Skill Testing Board
PAF	Poverty Alleviation Fund
PtP	Path to Prosperity
RIDA	Research Inputs and Development Action
RMA	Rapid Marked Appraisal
SCD	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDP	Skills Development Project
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
T&E	Training and Employment Service Provider
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UZH	University of Zurich
WB	The World Bank
YSEF	Youth and Small Entrepreneur Self-Employment Fund

1 Introduction

In September 2015, the Nepali constituent assembly agreed on the promulgation of a new constitution, which has the goal to create "[...] an egalitarian society on the basis of the principles of proportional inclusion and participation, to ensure equitable economy, prosperity and social justice" (CSA 2015: 2). By means of affirmative action (positive discrimination), the constitution aims at ending the prevailing discrimination and socio-economic inequalities that stratify Nepal's society along class, caste, ethnicity, gender, region and language (CSA 2015: 2, 6, 16). The constitution thus places inclusive development at the top of Nepal's national agenda. The call for inclusive development was vehemently raised by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) during its decade-long violent conflict against the Royal Nepalese Army from 1996 to 2006 and has since been a salient aspect to Nepal's post-conflict and state-restructuring discourse (cf. Hachhethu 2009: 63f; Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 2, 8; Manandhar 2011: 14).

This political discourse forms the background based on which many national and international development actors design and implement their development interventions (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 8f). When constructing target groups based on affirmative action approaches, development actors often interlace categories for economic poverty with social or cultural categories such as caste or ethnicity to address the socio-economic inequalities and issues of discrimination that are identified to exist along such social markers (cf. Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 2, 8; Shneiderman 2013: 46). Among scholars, affirmative action measures which are based on the selective targeting of groups along social or cultural categories are debated as they can have unintended societal implications. They can reinforce differences and competition between social groups or can ignore issues of discrimination and inequality existing within socially constructed target groups (cf. Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 8; Shneiderman 2013: 42, 50; Sapkota 2012: 74).

One societal group in Nepal which is often (socially) constructed as a priority target group of affirmative action measures and development interventions by the Nepali government and national and international development actors are Nepal's Dalits. The term Dalit applies to a heterogeneous group of people in Nepal as well as in other South Asian countries that historically have been subject to social, political, economic and religious discrimination practiced by people of a different (higher) social status (Cameron 2007: 14, 16). The literal meaning of the term Dalit can be translated with "to be broken or downtrodden" (Cameron 2007: 16). Dalits are positioned at the lowest rank in the caste system(s) stratifying the Nepali society (Kisan 2005: 3) and they are considered ritually impure from birth by the castes placed above them in the caste hierarchy (Cameron 1998: 23). Consequently, Dalits face persisting discrimination and socio-economic and political marginalization within Nepal's society (Bishwakarma 2004: 2).

In comparison to research on higher castes and ethnic groups, research on the societal situation of Nepal's Dalits is relatively rare (Folmar 2007: 41; Cameron 1998: 14). Scholarly studies concerned

with affirmative action measures in a Nepali context often focus on governmental policies of affirmative action and/or on Nepal's ethnic groups (cf. Shneiderman 2013; Sapkota 2012). Comprehensive scholarly studies that specifically bring together the research strands addressing the societally disadvantaged situation of Nepal's Dalits with the ones examining affirmative action measures adopted by non-governmental development actors appear to be scarce. This thesis aims at narrowing this research gap.

1.1 Research Focus and Objective

This Master's thesis investigates how development actors cope with and address societal issues of socio-economic inequality and discrimination against Dalits through targeting practices that are based on affirmative action. Nepal is studied as one of several, predominantly South Asian societies, which are shaped by comparable caste structures and face comparable societal issues of discrimination and social exclusion of social groups such as Dalits. The overall research question addressed by this thesis reads as follows:

How are the societal conditions of Dalits and associated caste and gender relations taken into consideration and translated by development sector actors adopting affirmative action targeting approaches in Nepal?

To address this overall research focus, this thesis initially sheds light on research literature concerning Dalits and affirmative action. The aim is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the "Dalit issue" in Nepal, i.e. of the Dalits' disadvantaged situation in Nepal's society including the socio-economic and political circumstances they are embedded in. Dalit women shall be given particular attention because their societal situation is special insofar as they are subject to discrimination not only based on them being Dalit but additionally on them being women in a patriarchal society (cf. Folmar 2007: 42).

The subsequent empirical part of this thesis addresses the outlined overall research question with a focus on Swiss development actors working in Nepal. One particular development initiative called Employment Fund Nepal (EF), which is managed by the Swiss non-governmental organization HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (here referred to as Helvetas) and partially funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), serves as a case study. Between 2008 and 2014, the EF financed short-term vocational skills trainings for more than 90'000 economically poor and socially disadvantaged youth all-across Nepal, who were selectively targeted through modalities based on affirmative action (EFS 2015a: 5).

For this thesis, a qualitative research methodology is adopted. Qualitative research aims at making complex social realities comprehensible and at describing structures and processes from the perspective of human actors (Flick et al. 2007: 14). To do justice to this complexity, this thesis adheres to the fundamental principle of openness and takes on an open theoretical orientation when approaching its research focus (cf. Flick 2007a: 27).

The main part of the data material analyzed for this thesis' case study was collected during a qualitative impact study of the EF, predominantly using qualitative semi-structured interviews. The impact study was conducted in 2015 under contract to Helvetas by a team of the Department of Geography of the University of Zurich, of which I was part of, in collaboration with the Nepali research firm Research Inputs and Development Action.

A major goal of this thesis is to critically relate the scholarly and societal debates concerning Nepali Dalits and affirmative action with the development sector practices adopted in the EF. Thus, this thesis aims at getting an insight into how these debates are taken up and discussed differently by scholars on the one hand, and the investigated Swiss development actors on the other hand. Underlying this goal is the basic assumption that some important aspects of the scientific debates concerning Dalits and affirmative action in Nepal are neglected or not openly discussed by the development sector. A possible explanation for this may be that development actors are concerned to uphold an image of political correctness as they have to navigate in a complex socio-political field. The thesis therefore brings these two fields of knowledge (the scholarly and the practical knowledge) together and develops prudent recommendations that can be adopted by development actors in Nepal regarding the targeting of Dalits.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This document is modularly structured along different research foci to which different research sub-questions are posed, which will be outlined at the beginning of the respective chapters. The second chapter, which follows this first introductory chapter, addresses the branches of research that are concerned with the conceptualization of the Hindu caste system and with debates about the societal position of Dalits within this system. Based on this theoretical background, chapter three examines how the caste system is constituted in Nepal, and chapter four discusses what it means to be a Dalit in contemporary Nepal. Chapter four specifically investigates the situation of Nepali Dalit women and addresses the question of how the dimension of gender is relevant with regard to the dimension of caste. Chapter five switches the research focus onto scholarly research which concerns itself with affirmative action. It addresses scholarly debates about the societal implications of affirmative action measures in the contexts of India and Nepal. India is taken into consideration as it shares cultural and societal similarities with Nepal and has a much older history of affirmative action. The Indian experience with affirmative action can serve as a point of reference to processes of negotiation surrounding affirmative action in Nepal (cf. Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 5f).

Chapter six moves on to the empirical part of this thesis by providing a descriptive overview of the EF. Chapter seven outlines the complete research design and process of the case study of the EF. A set of research sub-questions will be directed at the EF. The subsequent chapters eight to ten present the results to these research sub-questions. Chapter eight shows how debates concerning Dalits and affirmative action are taken into consideration and translated by the Swiss development actors involved with the EF on a policy and official documentation level. Chapter nine discusses the

challenges and effects of the EF's targeting approach from the perspective of EF staff, officials of the Technical Education and Vocational Training Sector and of donor representatives. Chapter ten sheds light on the EF, its targeting modalities and its effects on caste and gender relations from the perspective of the positively discriminated participants of the EF, of their Training and Employment Service Providers, who implement the vocational trainings, as well as of other actors involved in the EF.

The final chapter eleven presents a synthesis of the findings of this thesis. It brings together the knowledge gained on Dalits in Nepal and affirmative action from studying research literature (chapters two to five) with the insights obtained through the case study of the EF (chapters six to ten). Conclusions are drawn regarding the need for further research on the topic of affirmative action in the development sector of Nepal and recommendations are formulated for development practitioners concerning the targeting of Dalits.

2 The Caste System in Scholarly Concepts

The caste system is a form of social stratification predominantly found in societies in South Asia which have been under the influence of Hindu culture (Gupta 2004: 410; Madan 2016). Caste systems do not only exist within exclusively Hindu societies but have become part of other cultural and religious groups for example through processes of Hinduization of ethnic groups (cf. Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 16f), or through the conversions of members of Hindu societies to other religions (cf. Folmar 2007: 50).

To gain the theoretical understanding of the (Hindu) caste system necessary to pursue the research focus of this thesis, the subsequent sections are guided by the following leading question:

How is the Hindu caste system and the societal position of Dalits within this system conceptually addressed and discussed in research literature?

After a brief introductory outline of two main dimensions of the term caste, the second section of this chapter clarifies the Hindu concept of purity and impurity as it is central to the different scholarly conceptualizations and debates about caste and the caste system which will be addressed in the subsequent three sections. How the caste system is constituted in Nepal is not part of the following elaborations. The Nepali context will be discussed in the succeeding chapter 3.

2.1 Two Dimensions of Caste

According to Cameron (1998: 11), the English word caste includes two dimensions, namely *varna* and *jat*, and it is best understood if these two dimensions are distinguished.

In the first dimension, the word caste is used in the sense of *varna* (Cameron 1998: 11). The varna model is a systematic and ancient social ranking and classification system rooted in Hindu religion (Kisan 2005: 3; Höfer 1979: 115). This system is constituted by four encompassing categories, the

four varnas: The highest varna of the Brahmans (priests) is followed by the Kshatriyas (warriors) (Dumont 1970: 67; Cameron 1998: 176). Below the Kshatriyas are the Vaishyas (merchants), followed by the fourth varna of the Shudras (servants) who are considered ritually impure (Dumont 1970: 67; Cameron 1998: 12, 176). Those positioned at the bottom of this socially stratifying system have been designated as Dalit or "untouchables"[1] (Kisan 2005: 3). Untouchables are mostly considered to stand outside the varna categories (Dumont 1970: 67; Bishwakarma 2004: 2). Kisan (2005: 28f) sheds light on the historical debate about whether untouchables might constitute a "fifth varna", which may have emerged as a sociological category of people that were not classifiable within the four traditional occupation-based varna categories and therefore were treated as social outcastes and untouchables even inferior to the Shudras. Though untouchables can be seen as having no caste because they stand outside the varna system, while studying research literature for this thesis, it became clear that terms such as "low castes", "lower castes", "untouchables", "former untouchables"[2], "untouchable castes", "Dalit castes" or "Dalits" and sometimes "impure castes" are often used interchangeably (e.g. Cameron 1998: 12, 23; Karanth 2004: 137; Kisan 2005: 193; Höfer 1979: 221).[3] These combinations of terms imply that Dalits *can* be considered situated *within* the caste system. This observation is related to the second dimension of the word caste.

In the second dimension, the word caste is used in the sense of the Nepali word *jat* or the Hindi word *jati* (Cameron 1998: 11). Though the many existing different jats are broadly ranked within the varna categories, according to Cameron (1998: 13, 176), Nepali people usually do not refer to the varna system when they talk about caste. They use the word jat to differentiate among each other meaning "[...] an exclusive group into which a person is born, which forms the basis of one's social identity, and within one should marry" (Cameron 1998: 176). Kisan (2005: 5) similarly defines jat or caste as a "[...] group within society whose rights and duties are passed down hereditarily." He moreover states that "[c]aste is generally regarded as: all of the activities of human life; duties; rights; fate; future; occupations; and all of those things that are fixed on the basis of heredity." Caste affiliation thus determines a person's social status (Müller-Böker 1988: 25). Jats are part of a cultural and interactional system which shapes everyday transactions and relations (Cameron 1998: 11). Hereafter, the term caste is used in the sense of jat.

It should be noted that not all scholarly concepts of caste correspond to these elaborations. The use of the word caste often conflates the two dimensions of varna and jat (cf. Cameron 1998: 42). The following sections provide a broad insight into different and sometimes competing scholarly concepts of the Hindu caste system. Many of the discussed scholars base their conceptual elaborations on research studying caste societies in India. The complexities of caste in India and Nepal are not the

[1] The concepts of ritual impurity and untouchability are introduced in chapter 2.2.

[2] Especially in the Indian context, the term "former untouchables" or other terms such as Dalits or Scheduled Castes have often replaced the term "untouchable" because untouchability was legally abolished by the Indian constitution proclaimed after India's independence (cf. Gupta 2005:417f).

[3] In this thesis, it is mostly made use of those terms which are applied by the respective scholars referred to. All terms are used in a neutral way. It is tried to avoid derogatory terms but it is acknowledged that whether a term is considered derogatory or not is often debated (cf. chapter 5.4.3; cf. Cameron 1998: 23).

same (Cameron 1998: 2). Nevertheless, scholars concerned with societal caste structures in Nepal often make use of the same concepts as the scholars concerned with caste societies in India. It should also be noted that it is not possible to do justice to the abundance of research literature concerned with conceptualizing caste and the caste system due to the limited scope of this thesis. As ritual purity and impurity are central to many conceptualizations of the caste system, the following section initially gives a brief overview of this central concept of Hindu culture.

2.2 The Hindu Concept of Purity and Impurity

Purity and impurity or pollution, if understood in a ritual sense, apply to people, objects and actions (Cameron 1998: 7). Pollution exists in three forms: firstly, evoked by death, birth and miscarriage, secondly, caused by contact with certain objects (e.g. metal, cooking utensils, places, animals, soiled garments), and thirdly, associated to specific body parts (e.g. feet, sex organs) and bodily substances (e.g. blood, semen) (Cameron 1998: 7). Pollution is transmitted between subjects through water and food, physical contact, bodily substances and atmospheric germs (Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 1974).

Some forms of pollution or impurity are temporary and induced through certain actions or events such as ploughing, birth or death of a relative, or menstruation (Cameron 1998: 7, 46; Höfer 1979: 89). Women from all castes are considered to have bodily impurity when they are menstruating or during childbirth and are then regarded as untouchable (Cameron 1998: 7, 45). Other forms of pollution are permanent (Cameron 1998: 7). Permanent states of purity or impurity are associated to people based on their caste affiliation and are therefore status-specific and passed on hereditarily from generation to generation (Höfer 1979: 89; Cameron 1998: 7). Members of low castes are ascribed permanent bodily impurity and so-called occupational impurity (Glücklich 1984: 26 cited in Cameron 1998: 7).

The caste system is traditionally occupationally segregated (Bishwakarma 2004: 2). Within the traditional labor division between the castes, low castes are compelled to perform occupations in which they come into contact with materials and activities which are regarded as ritually impure such as the processing of leather, the forging of metals, tailoring, ploughing, pottering, the playing of certain musical instruments, prostitution, scavenging, begging, night soil carrying, or the removal of animal carcasses (Höfer 1979: 101; Cameron 1998: 7; Bishwakarma 2004: 3; Thieme 2006: 83).[4] Leather is for example considered an impure substance as it is a product of dead animals (Lochtefeld 2002: 388). The forging of metal, ploughing and pottering are considered impure because they transform the natural state of the earth or a substance (Cameron 1998: 278).

Everyday interaction between castes and between men and women are to some extent shaped by the avoidance of the impure by the pure (Cameron 1998: 7f). Because of their impurity, members of low castes are considered permanently untouchable (Cameron 1998: 45f). People are religiously obliged to adhere to the rules of interaction between pure and impure people as noncompliance is a sin and leads to negative consequences, e.g. one's livestock will get ill (Cameron 1998: 8). The purity of a person

[4] Some scholars therefore use the term occupational caste to refer to low castes (Cameron 1998: 126).

can be temporarily or definitely lost if that person comes into contact with someone less pure or with impure substances or actions (Höfer 1979: 50). If, for example, people who belong to a caste which is considered pure have to engage in impure actions such as ploughing, they have to make an effort to regain purity by bathing or fasting (Cameron 1998: 8). Another example is that water-boiled rice cooked by a temporarily or permanently impure person should not be eaten by a pure person (Cameron 1998: 7) as the impurity would be transmitted to the latter (Höfer 1979: 54). The receiver's purity can either be regained through purification or it is definitely lost and results in the degradation of the person's status (Höfer 1979: 56). How inter-caste codes of conduct based on purity and pollution were legally constituted in the context of Nepal by the legal code Muluki Ain in 1854 will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.2.2).

2.3 Caste as a Hierarchy of the Pure and the Impure

Many of the early and traditional scholars studying the Hindu caste system (mostly in India) consider it to be based on a hierarchy that can strictly be attributed to rankings according to ritual purity and impurity (Folmar 2007: 42). The foundation for this scholarly understanding of the caste system was laid by the French anthropologist Dumont (1970) in his treatise *Homo Hierarchicus* on the Indian caste system. Dumont (1970: 43; 1966: 36 cited in Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 21) bases his studies on the conceptualization of caste proposed by Bouglé, who identifies castes to be hereditary groups which are distinguished and connected by three principles: firstly, their separation in relation to marriage (endogamy) and contact (commensality restrictions), secondly, their labor division with each group following a traditional occupation resulting in their interdependence, and thirdly, their ranking in a hierarchic order. Dumont (1970: 43) considers these three principles to be reducible to the one single and true principle, namely the opposition between the pure and the impure on which the entire caste hierarchy is founded. The principle of separation is thus based on the separation of the pure from the impure (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 21). Labor division is required so that impure castes follow impure occupations to keep pure castes pure, and the hierarchic order places the pure above the impure (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 21). On the top of this hierarchy stand the most ritually pure Brahmans. At the bottom of it stand the ritually impure untouchables (Dumont 1970: 33f, 46f). All castes (i.e. the jatis) are ranked in between these two extremes according to their ritual purity or impurity (Dumont 1970: 39).

However, Dumont (1970: 66) states that the opposition of purity and impurity cannot explain how power is distributed in society. In the varna model, the Brahman priests are superior to the Kshatriya kings or rulers who hold economic and political power (Dumont 1970: 153; cf. Cameron 1998: 11). According to Dumont (1970: 74), the separation of ritual status from power, which was established in the varna system, i.e. the separation of the ritually pure Brahmans from the powerful Kshatriyas and the latter's inferiority, allowed for the hierarchy of the pure and the impure to develop itself. Consequently, Dumont (1970: 165) comes to the conclusion that the domain of political (and economic) power is subordinated to and encompassed by the religious domain.

Another central argument of Dumont (1970: 34) suggests that those who are part of the caste system have internalized their position within this system as a "state of mind", which is the reason why the caste system's hierarchic order is ideologically sustained by all castes (cf. Gupta 2005: 411). Dumont (1970: 34) further argues that castes "[...] should not be seen by starting from the notion of the 'element' [...], but by starting from the notion of the 'system' in terms of which fixed principles govern the arrangement of [...] elements." Within this line of argumentation, even the ones that are assigned a low and impure status are considered to willingly uphold the hierarchical system and their position within it (Gupta 2005: 411).

Dumont's (1970) view is supported by Moffatt (1979), who conducted research with Indian low castes in the state of Tamil Nadu. He also sees the caste system as a structure of interdependent elements and considers this structure to be based on a cultural consensus existing between the low and the high castes (Moffatt 1979: 290f). Moffatt (1979: 5, 102, 151, 222f, 303) argues that untouchable castes consent to participating in their own oppression by replicating the caste order among themselves and by copying the practices (e.g. religious rites) and institutions of higher castes which they are excluded from (cf. Folmar 2007: 44).

2.4 Critique on Caste as a Hierarchy of the Pure and the Impure

Dumont's (1970) essentially Brahmannical view of castes being ranked in an all-embracing hierarchic system based on the ideology of ritual purity with the low castes willingly complying with their low status long remained unquestioned by scholars (Gupta 2005: 411). However, in more recent scholarly literature, an abundance of objections to the Dumontian approach can be found. In the following, different points of criticism and alternative understandings of caste and the caste system shall be discussed in two interrelated sections: The first section addresses arguments which question whether the hierarchy of purity and impurity is the all-encompassing principle defining the caste order and whether this caste order is uncontested. The second section illustrates the scholarly objection against the perception of Dumont and Moffatt of low castes as acquiescing to their subordinate status.

2.4.1 Economic and Political Power Relations Shaping Regionally Varying and Contested Caste Structures

Cameron (1998: 48) criticizes that when following Dumont's (1970: 74) view of the superiority of ritual status over power "[...] the status of lower castes can be explained only through the synchronic ideology of ritual status, not through historical processes of exploitation and discrimination." Yet, when trying to understand the caste system from the perspectives of low castes, it is exposed as a ranking system not solely based on ritual purity and pollution, but also based on different allocations of material power, for example over resources and land (Cameron 1998: 50). According to Cameron (1998: 42), the hierarchy of ritual purity exclusively applies to the varna system and is only secondarily applied to the caste system of the jats. Jats are not classified based on hierarchy but instead based on the principle of differentiation according to features such as occupation or place of origin

(Cameron 1998: 14, 42).

These arguments go in the same direction as the opinion that the caste system is intermingled with other hierarchies such as class, race and gender (Folmar 2007: 43 referring to Hangen 2005 and Cameron 1998). Béteille (1965: 1, 4) for example studies the interrelations of three conceptual dimensions of social stratification: caste, (political) power and class. Béteille (1965: 220f) shows that such other hierarchizing orders should not be overlooked as they can reinforce or work against the ritual hierarchy established through caste (cf. Folmar 2007: 42f).

A similar view is brought forward by Gupta (2005: 412), who states that the understanding of the caste system as a hierarchy based exclusively on purity and pollution fails to explain the relation between caste and politics. Namely, political tensions and conflicts between different caste groups cannot be explained by the Dumontian view of an allegedly ideological consensus of castes about their relative ranking (Gupta 2005: 412). Instead of the caste system being characterized by mutual acquiescence, the caste order has always been subject to competition between castes contesting their relative position within this system (Gupta 2005: 412). Gupta (2005: 419) raises the objection that "no caste really thinks of itself to be inherently inferior to any other caste." He observed that the notions of the caste hierarchy differ among different castes (Gupta 2005: 411f). These dissimilar notions become visible when castes competitively assert their caste-identities often drawing on caste-specific origin tales which tell of their once elevated status (Gupta 2005: 411f)[5]. In doing so, the lack of economic power can hinder castes in successfully asserting their point of view (Gupta 2005: 419). The hierarchy of purity and pollution can only manifest itself in practice if it is supported by wealth and power relations (Gupta 2005: 409).

Gupta (2005: 412) further mentions the influence of locality on caste relations: The wealth and power relations interfering with the hierarchy of purity and pollution result in status rankings which vary across different localities depending on which groups have the power to impose a particular ranking system to their benefit. Jodhka (2002: 1813, 1823) also states that historically developed regional variations of social relations stand in contrast to Dumont's view of a unitary caste system valid for the whole of India.[6] This is further supported by Pfaff-Czarnecka's (1989: 35) argument suggesting that Hindu rules of ritual purity are subject to cultural change and differ from region to region.

A concept which also promotes that caste relations are not solely determined by status rankings based on ritual purity and that they are rather connected to socio-economic power is the concept of the "dominant caste" by the Indian sociologist Srinivas (1987: 97): According to this concept, a caste can be dominant if it is numerically superior to other castes (in regard to the number of people), and if it accumulates economic and political power. Further elements of domination are related to the number of educated persons in a caste group, and the occupations they engage in (Srinivas 1987: 97). Moreover, "[a] large and powerful caste group can be more easily dominant if its position in the local

[5] Gupta (2004: xiii) in this respect emphasizes how misleading it is to speak of "low" castes, as they do not perceive themselves as such.

[6] According to Pfaff-Czarnecka (1989: 22), Dumont denied the existence of caste anywhere else than in India.

caste hierarchy is not too low" (Srinivas 1987: 97). In his research in a multi-caste village in rural South India in the 1950ies, Srinivas (1987: 96-98) discovered a ritually low, but numerically and economically strong caste to be the most dominant. If a caste group can claim one form of dominance for itself, it will likely be able to acquire other forms of dominance (Srinivas 1987: 99). Thus, a numerically and economically powerful caste can move upward in the ritual hierarchy by replicating the ritual practices and way of life of ritually higher castes (Srinivas 1987: 99). This form replication is called Sanskritization or Hinduization (cf. Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 17) and will be explained in further detail in the following section.

2.4.2 Low-Caste Compliance and Resistance against the Caste Order

Srinivas (1966: 6) defines Sanskritization as "[...] the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high [...] caste. Generally, such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community." Srinivas (1952: 30; 1966: 3f) states that Sanskritization renders the caste system dynamic with the positioning of the castes within it being subject to movement and significant regional differences. While this is especially true for the middle ranks of the hierarchy, upward social mobility by untouchable castes faces serious obstacles in the form of the opposition by higher castes (Srinivas 1952: 30; 1987: 99f).

Among the reviewed scholars, Sanskritization was particularly addressed in relation to the criticism of Dumont's (1970: 34) and Moffatt's (1979: 303) thinking which suggests that all castes willingly adhere to their hierarchic ranking (as already illustrated) and that the replication of high-caste practices and institutions makes Dalits participate in and accept their own oppression. According to Folmar (2007: 50), it is debated whether Sanskritization should be interpreted as compliance with or resistance against the caste system.

Gupta (2000: 54-85 cited in Karanth 2004: 139) and Karanth (2004: 138f) criticize that Moffatt considers untouchable castes to form a unified group with a consensus about their status relations and a shared experience of exclusion. Karanth (2004: 138, 155-157) interprets the replication of high-caste practices (e.g. of religious rituals) as a way in which Dalits display their dissent and resistance against the dominant social order and in which they assert their autonomous cultural identity. According to Karanth (2004: 141f, 149, 161f), the reason why the assertiveness of the resistance of untouchable castes is limited lies in the patron-client network of interdependence that they find themselves in with economically powerful high-caste patrons, and which regulates the exchange of services and goods. This line of argumentation is congruent with the above mentioned reasoning that the caste order is influenced by intertwining hierarchies (e.g. economic power relations) other than the hierarchy of purity and pollution. Parish (1996: 57, 60) likewise observed that the fear of ostracism, economic sanctions and loss of livelihood can prevent members of low castes to display dissent against the dominant social order.

Parish (1996: 102, 115) also discusses the replication of high-caste practices by low castes. He

describes how untouchables justify the replication of high-caste religious rites by declaring that they are morally equal ("of the same blood") to other castes (Parish 1996: 56). On the one hand, replication can in this case be seen as a way to claim equality with the ones who are of higher status (Parish 1996: 206f). On the other hand, the rites which are replicated might specifically give meaning to caste-separation (Parish 1996: 56). If replication is used by low castes to assert a superior status relative to others (for example to gain material advantage), the idea of the caste hierarchy is rather enforced than challenged, as only the relative ranking within it is contested (Parish 1996: 58, 102, 115). Thus, through replication, untouchables may contribute to the hierarchy that degrades them even though they act out of resistance and self-affirmation (Parish 1996: 57f).

Parish (1996: 8, 56) found the replication of high-caste practices to be a sign for a composite and ambivalent consciousness that members of low castes develop of themselves and of society, on the one hand, reproducing hierarchic values, and on the other hand, contesting the ways in which they are socially constructed by dominant high castes. He argues "[...] that the symbolic forms and values of caste hierarchy are created, recreated, and contested, in minds and lives" and calls this "inner politics of consciousness" (Parish 1996: 7). Though Parish (1996: 8) rejects the Dumontian view of an all-determining hierarchy internalized by all members of the caste system, he nevertheless notes that oppressed people are exposed to the influence of such hierarchic values and that it might be difficult to act against the concepts that stigmatize them (Parish 1996: 8f): "Low caste actors do not live in a self-contained "culture" of their own, entirely apart from high caste culture, nor do they seamlessly share a "culture" with high caste actors" (Parish 1996: 55). According to Bourdieu's (1977: 164) theory of practice, people may perceive and accept the dominant social order to be objective and natural because "[...] the established order tends to produce [...] the naturalization of its own arbitrariness." Parish (1996: 9) argues that people can acknowledge this arbitrariness if they challenge their own sense of self and life.

An aspect which seems to be related to Parish's "inner politics of consciousness" is addressed by the statements of other scholars: Folmar (2007: 45) for example addresses the readiness of high castes to grant Dalits access to positions and places formerly restricted to high castes. On the one hand, there are cases in which the Dalits' reluctance prevents them for example from entering formerly inaccessible shrines, not the unwillingness of high castes (Folmar 2007: 46). On the other hand, though many high-caste people state that they do not practice discrimination, "[...] when confronted with the opportunity to grant equal treatment to Dalits, they do not transgress established boundaries and opt rather to maintain them" (Folmar 2007: 46). Kisan (2005: 3) similarly mentions that even people who reject untouchability practices face inner hurdles to change their behavior. This could be interpreted as that not only Dalits, but also members of high castes face their own ambivalent inner politics of consciousness.

2.5 Caste as Identity

Stemming from the criticism of the Dumontian view of caste as an inviolable and accepted hierarchic order based on ritual purity and pollution, Gupta (2005: 412) proposes to understand caste rather as a matter of identity than hierarchy. In doing so, castes shall be seen as distinct entities, each with a specific ideological heritage. This stands in contrast to Dumont's (1970: 34) understanding of caste relations as a fixed system. According to Gupta (2005: 413), political competition over status between castes can only be comprehended through this theoretical standpoint.

Still (2013: 69) supports seeing caste not as a concept of hierarchy but rather as a concept of identity. According to Still (2013: 69), the hierarchical, inter-dependent ranking system based on the measure of ritual purity is disappearing. In its place, caste affiliation has evolved as a form of identity, where castes represent different groups, similar to ethnic groups, each negotiating and defending its social and political interests and lifestyles (Still 2009: 10; 2013: 69f). Thus, the hierarchy of ritual purity is no longer of primal relevance when castes interact within political, economic or gender dimensions (Gupta 2004: vi).

Gupta's and Still's concept of caste as identity seems to make use of the concept of identity politics, which has been used in the social sciences and humanities to label a variety of social political phenomena, for example women's movements, civil rights movements and ethnic and nationalist conflicts in Africa and Asia (Bernstein 2005: 47). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Heyes 2016) defines the term as follows: "[...] '[I]dentity politics' has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups. [...] [I]dentity political formations typically aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determination."

Parry (2007: 482) is another scholar who argues that the significance of caste as hierarchy has decreased. However, Parry (2007: 490) rejects an overemphasis of processes of separation and differentiation between castes. Instead, he argues that the separation between high castes is dissolving, while the "pollution line" separating Dalits and higher castes is being reinforced (Parry 2007: 486, 490; cf. Still 2013: 70). He moreover brings forward that an increasing differentiation *within* castes (for example along wealth or power) "[...] is in the long term likely to prove incompatible with a strong conviction in the differences between castes" (Parry 2007: 484, 490). Aware of the fact that his view is in contradiction to the development of castes as separated blocks competing in the area of politics, Parry (2007: 491) states that "[...] politics is not the whole of social life [...]." He points out that while there was an overemphasis of ritual aspects of caste in the past, scholars nowadays run the risk of overemphasizing the political aspects of caste thereby ignoring how caste operates in other domains of social life (Parry 2007: 490f). Parry (2007: 491 referring to Barnett 1977) concludes that in many contexts, caste identity is less significant than other forms of identity such as regional ethnicity,

religion, education or occupation.

To conclude this chapter on different conceptualizations of caste and the caste system, it seems sensible to adopt an understanding of the caste system that allows the consideration of various aspects of it, meaning not only hierarchical rankings along ritual purity and impurity, but also its interrelation with structures of political and economic power and its intermingling with aspects such as (political) identity, gender[7] or education. Moreover, it is acknowledged that the caste order is always subject to processes of negotiation: Castes at all status levels contest their relative position within the caste order, which varies regionally and which is highly dynamic. The above elaborations could only cover a small fraction of the scholarly debates and concepts regarding the Hindu caste system. Nevertheless, they provide a theoretical foundation on the basis of which the next chapter can discuss how the caste system is constituted in Nepal.

3 The Caste System in Nepal

Keeping the above discussed scholarly concepts and debates about caste and the caste system in mind, the following chapter shifts its focus to how the caste system is constituted in the context of Nepal. A first section provides a schematic overview of the different caste and ethnic groups that make up the Nepali society. A second section gives an introduction into how the caste system emerged as an important form of social stratification of Nepal's society, how it transformed over time, and how these transformations were influenced by the turbulent political history of the country.

3.1 Caste and Ethnic Groups

Nepal is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country. According to Nepal's census of 2011, Nepal's population is composed of 126 different caste and ethnic groups speaking 123 languages and following ten different religions (CBS 2012: 4). In the year 2014, Nepal's population stood at 28.1 million with an annual growth rate of 1.2% (IFAD 2016). Hindus make up about 81% of the population, followed by the two sizeable minorities of Buddhists (about 9% of the population) and Muslims (about 4% of the population) (CBS 2012: 4). Nepal's caste and ethnic groups can broadly be distinguished according to their origin in Nepal's three latitudinal ecological regions (i.e. Mountains, Hills, Terai (lowlands)) (see Figure 1).

[7] It has been neglected so far to discuss the aspect of gender in relation to caste. This topic will be addressed in chapter 4.3 with special focus on Nepali Dalit women.

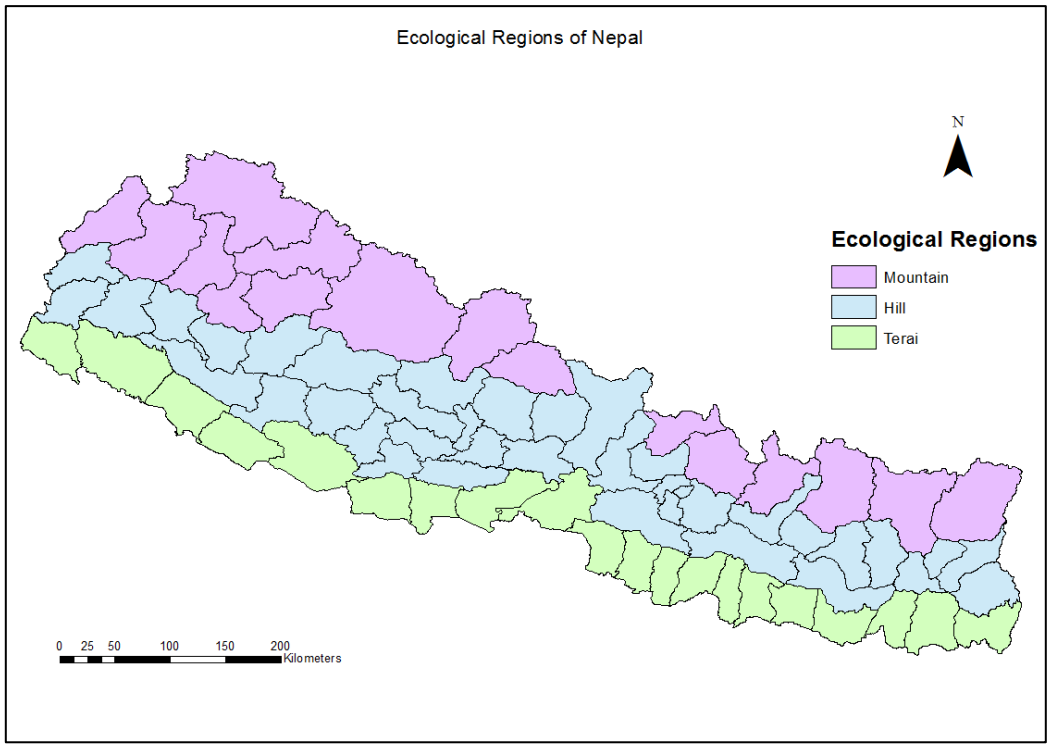

Figure 1: Map of Nepal Showing its Three Ecological Regions
(Own illustration; Data source: https://github.com/mesaugat/geoJSON-Nepal (accessed: 14.09.16))

Nepali speaking Hindu "hill castes" (Parbatiya), who originally immigrated from India (Müller-Böker 1998: 16), live the in the midland hill area of Nepal (Höfer 1979: 44). They make up the majority of Nepal's population and have their own caste hierarchy (Höfer 1979: 44). As the Parbatiya are the most dominant group, all other sections of Nepal's population are minorities (Höfer 1979: 46). Among the hill castes, the Brahmans (Bahun) are the highest caste (Höfer 1979: 43). Traditionally they were priests, however, many of them work as farmers (Müller-Böker 1998: 16). They are followed in rank by the Chhetris, who also mostly engage in farming but traditionally were warriors (Müller-Böker 1998: 16). While Hindu hill castes of middle status are missing, a number of impure (and untouchable) occupational or artisan castes exist (Müller-Böker 1998: 21; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 173; cf. chapter 2.2). They make up one fifth of all hill castes and hold an unprivileged status in society (Müller-Böker 1998: 16f, 21). Examples of untouchable occupational castes are the Damai tailors and ritual musicians, the Sarki leatherworkers, who dispose of animal carcasses, the Kami smiths, who are responsible for the castration of animals, or the Gaine beggar-musicians (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: xxiv, 173, 176).[8] The untouchable castes themselves are positioned differently within the caste hierarchy (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: xxiii). Nowadays, the term Dalits is used most frequently to refer to these

[8] Pfaff-Czarnecka (1989: 181) argues that the labor division between the hill castes, in which the Brahmans take on the roles of priests and the untouchables provide different occupational services, can be regarded as a ritual labor division following rules of purity and pollution. However, neither does this ritual labor division encompass all aspects of labor, nor do all castes perform a traditional occupation as was proposed by Dumont (cf. chapter 2.3; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 181). Nowadays, modern jobs with no caste-association have to some extent replaced the caste-based labor division and have modified caste boundaries (Müller-Böker 1988: 25).

impure, untouchable caste groups (Kisan 2005: 8).[9]

The ethnic groups of Nepal, called Janajatis (indigenous nationalities), each have a subjective ethnic identity and certain linguistic and cultural characteristics (Müller-Böker 1998: 15). They live in all three ecological regions of Nepal. Ethnic groups of Tibetan linguistic and cultural decent, called Bothia, live in the high mountain area (e.g. the Sherpa or Manangi) (Höfer 1979: 44).

The ethnic groups of the midland hill area are comprised of for example the Gurung, Tamang, Magar and the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley (Höfer 1979: 44). Their languages are Tibeto-Burmese (Höfer 1979: 44). The Newars have an intra-ethnic caste system of their own, which ranges from Brahmans down to untouchable castes (Höfer 1979: 43). Within this system, the different castes are allocated different ritual and economic functions (Müller-Böker 1988: 23). In the Newar society, Hinduism and Buddhism intertwine and the priestly castes are clearly divided into Hindu and Buddhist castes (Müller-Böker 1988: 25).

The ethnic groups of the Terai are called Awaliya (e.g. the Tharus) and they speak Nepali and North Indian dialects (Höfer 1979: 44). In addition to these ethnic groups, the Terai is also populated by caste groups, the "Terai castes", who have their own intra-regional caste hierarchy and are almost identical to the neighboring North Indian population (Höfer 1979: 44, 46). In Nepali, these groups are called Madhesis (low-landers). The Madhesis are culturally and linguistically heterogeneous and they also include the Muslims living in the Terai (Müller-Böker 1998: 17). See Table 1 for a summarizing overview of the described caste and ethnic groups and Table 2 for a list of the numerically largest groups.

Table 1: Caste and Ethnic Groups of Nepal
(Adapted from Müller-Böker 1998: 15 & Höfer 1979: 44)

Mountains	Ethnic Groups (Bothia): e.g. Sherpa, Manangi, Thakali
Hills	Hill castes (Parbatiya): e.g. Bahun, Chhetri, Kami, Sarki, Damai
	Ethnic Groups: e.g. Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Newar, Limbu, Chepang, Rai
Terai	Madhesi: Terai castes e.g. Brahmin, Yadav, Chamar; & Muslim
	Ethnic Groups (Awaliya): e.g. Tharu, Darai, Bote

[9] The term Dalit was introduced to Nepal's Dalit leaders only in the 1950ies by the Dalit leader and Indian economist and reformer B.R. Ambedkar and it has only become known to many rural communities in Nepal in recent years (Cameron 2007: 16).

Table 2: Caste and Ethnic Groups and their Relative Share of the Total Population
(Source: Müller-Böker 1998:16; CBS 2012: 4)

Groups with more than 2% of the total population (26.5 million)	Percentage of the total population	Origin Group
Chhetri	16.6%	High Hill Castes
Hill Brahman	12.2%	High Hill Castes
Magar	7.1%	Hill Janajati
Tharu	6.6%	Terai Janajati
Tamang	5.8%	Hill Janajati
Newar	5.0%	Hill Janajati
Kami	4.8%	Hill Dalit
Muslim	4.4%	Muslim
Yadav	4.0%	Terai Castes
Rai	2.3%	Hill Janajati

It has to be noted that the regional attributes used here to describe the different caste and ethnic groups refer to their regions of origin. A high amount internal migration has taken place in Nepal. For example, many Nepali originating from the Hill region moved to the Terai in search of land or work (Cohen 1995: 368). This internal migration witnessed a significant increase in the 1950's with the elimination of Malaria in the Terai (Cohen 1995: 368). Another example is the continuing internal migration from rural to urban areas, with the Kathmandu Valley showing the highest net inflow of migrants among the urban areas (Muzzini & Aparicio 2013: 38f). Though regarded a rural country, around 18% of the Nepali population lived in urban areas in 2014 (IFAD 2016).

3.2 Transformations in the Caste System over Time

In the following, initially, it is illustrated how the caste system emerged in Nepal and how it was institutionalized during the time the country was developed into a Hindu state by its high-caste rulers. Processes of Hinduization and Nepal's first legal code, the Muluki Ain, are looked at more closely in two separate sections. A last section describes the first legal steps that were taken towards the abolishment of the caste system.

3.2.1 The Emergence of the Caste System

The Hindu system of the varnas (cf. chapter 2) is believed to have first been brought to Nepal during the Licchavi age (200-879 A.D.) by Licchavi rulers who aimed at spreading Hinduism and the social rules associated with it (Kisan 2005: 47f). During the Malla period, the medieval age of the Nepali history (879-1768 A.D.), Hindu immigrants further spread the varna system, which became more and more strict, across western Nepal (Kisan 2005: 50). In the 14th century, under the rule of the Newar king Jayasthiti Malla, the population of the Kathmandu Valley was categorized into 64 castes (Kisan 2005: 50). The different castes were assigned specific occupations (Müller-Böker 1988: 24) and their rights and duties were defined (Kisan 2005: 50). Müller-Böker (1988: 24) states that is debatable whether Jayasthiti Malla completely restructured society and that some social stratification based on a

division of labor must have already existed. Jayasthiti Malla rather intensified the process of Hinduization and strengthened the meaning of social hierarchy (Müller-Böker 1988: 24). Similarly, Kisan (2005: 52 referring to Khatri: 1993) states that Jayasthiti Malla enforced the caste system which had already emerged in the Licchavi age. The rules related to castes thus became increasingly strict and led to a systematization of caste discrimination (Kisan 2005: 52).

In the Gorkhali kingdom in the 17th century, king Ram Shah systematized the discriminatory caste system similarly to as Jayasthiti Malla had done in the Kathmandu Valley (Kisan 2005: 53). In the 18th century, the territory of today's Nepal was composed of many kingdoms (Elmer Udry 2014: 24). The Gorkhali king Prithvi Narayan Shah violently conquered these kingdoms and unified them to the state of Nepal with the seizure of the Kathmandu Valley in 1769 (Elmer Udry 2014: 24). Since Nepal's unification, the power over the state has remained in the hands of high Hindu castes from the Hill region, to which the Shah kings as members of the high Thakuri caste also belonged (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: xxi). The high-caste rulers promoted Hinduism as the state religion and Nepali as the official language (Hangen 2005: 50) with the aim of making Nepal a Hindu country (Kisan 2005: 53). Consequently, the caste system was widely expanded (Kisan 2005: 53). The Shahs issued decrees forcing the subjugated groups to follow Hindu rules and rites, e.g. the ban on cow slaughter[10] (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 84-87). Under the Shah rule, different caste and ethnic groups were assigned different duties and status-specific occupations – for example, the low-caste Sarkis had to process skins and furs and high political or military positions were reserved for high-caste Chhetris and Thakuris (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 77f). Low-status peasants were expropriated and pushed into forced labor and tax systems, while high castes were granted privileges and benefited from land allocations (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 269f; Müller-Böker 1998: 17).

In 1846, the Rana, a high-caste Chhetri family (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 91), seized power (Elmer Udry 2014: 26). Jang Bahadur Rana was the first to rule the country under the title of "Prime Minister" (Elmer Udry 2014: 26f). Though the Shah kings formally retained their superior position, they were excluded from all political matters (Elmer Udry 2014: 27). Under the Rana rule, Nepal's first legal code, the Muluki Ain was issued.

3.2.2 The Muluki Ain

The Muluki Ain was initiated by Jang Bahadur Rana in the year 1854 (Elmer Udry 2014: 34). The Muluki Ain categorized and ranked the whole Nepali population into a national caste hierarchy based on ritual purity and pollution (Höfer 1979: 40, 49f; Hangen 2005: 58). All ethnic and caste groups, including the Parbatiya (hill castes), the Newars and the Terai castes, who each have their own hierarchic caste systems, were incorporated into the all-encompassing, national caste hierarchy of the Muluki Ain (Höfer 1979: 46). Its aim was to legitimate the Rana rulers (Höfer 1979: 40) and to legally codify the superiority of the high Hindu hill castes over the rest of the population of Nepal (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 271). The economic and political dominance of high hill-caste Brahmans, Chhetris

[10] Cows are revered in Hindu religion (Lochtefeld 2002: 157).

and some Newars was thereby intensified (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42). Social mobility was rendered almost impossible (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42). The caste hierarchy of the Muluki Ain defined five groups of castes (Höfer 1979: 46; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: xix):

1. **Wearers of the holy cord** (e.g. Brahman, Thakuri, Chhetri, Sannyasi, some Newar castes)
2. **Non-enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers** (e.g. Magar, Gurung, some Newar castes)
3. **Enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers** (e.g. Bhote, Chepang, Tharu)
4. **Impure but touchable castes** (e.g. Muslims, Europeans, some Newar castes)
5. **Impure and untouchable castes** (e.g. Damai, Kami, Sarki, some Newar castes)

The different Newar and Parbatiya castes were discontinuously distributed among all of the five caste groups of the Muluki Ain (Höfer 1979: 45, 141). The high hill castes were declared ritually superior to the high Terai castes (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 263). The ethnic groups (other than the Newars) were incorporated into the middle of the caste system to either the Non-enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers or, in most cases, to the Enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers (Höfer 1979: 141; Hangen 2005: 59). Each ethnic group was treated as a separate caste (jat) (Höfer 1979: 141). The so-called "water-line" separated the upper three caste groups, the "water-acceptable castes" or pure caste groups, from the two lower caste groups, the "water-unacceptable castes" or impure caste groups (Höfer 1979: 46, 56). "Members of the pure castes are polluted by intercourse with those of the impure castes, that is to say, by the acceptance of water, of certain kinds of food [...] as well as by sexual intercourse and physical contact in general" (Höfer 1979: 211). Whereas pure caste groups were allowed to accept water from each other, impure castes were not allowed to accept water from impure castes ranking lower than themselves (Höfer 1979: 64). Impure castes were in turn separated in touchable and untouchable castes.

In the Muluki Ain, surprisingly, it was stated that occupation shall not be determined by caste affiliation and shall not be linked to ritual purity and impurity (Höfer 1979: 119). This stood in contrast to the status-based labor division promoted under the Shah rule (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 106) and to the lived reality of labor division between the different castes (Höfer 1979: 119).

Among the topics regulated in the Muluki Ain were land tenure, the law of inheritance and adoption, criminal law, the status of slaves and regulations of inter-caste interactions based on rules of purity and pollution (Höfer 1979: 41f). The Muluki Ain thereby systematized caste discrimination (Kisan 2005: 57). The rules of inter-caste interaction concerned, inter alia, commensality (eating together), transactions of food especially of rice and water, contact, marriage, sexual relations and entry into rooms (Cameron 1998: 12; cf. chapter 2.2). These rules aimed at the upholding of the caste hierarchy (Höfer 1979: 69). Specific punishments were defined which a member of a pure caste had to face when he or she had, for example, knowingly accepted rice or water offered by a person of inferior status (Höfer 1979: 58-60). The Muluki Ain determined a system of punishments for the violation of these codes of conduct, which differed based on the intent, marital status, sex, level of purity, caste and status disparity of the persons involved (Macdonald 1975: 283-86 cited in Cameron 1998: 12;

Höfer 1979: 62, 109). The punishments ranged from water purification, fines, imprisonment, degradation and banishment from the community to the death penalty. In the case of the engagement in sexual relations, for instance, the status of women was more negatively affected by pollution than the status of men (Höfer 1979: 69f, 74).

The concept of purity and pollution was of vital importance for defining the caste hierarchy in the Muluki Ain as every caste (and ethnic group) was associated with a certain level of purity or pollution (Höfer 1979: 97). According to Höfer (1979: 104), the status-positioning of each caste relative to all other castes was apparent in all rules of the Muluki Ain, sometimes implicitly other times explicitly. In the Muluki Ain "[...] caste status is, indeed, the chief factor determining an individual's juridical status; and the relationship between individuals is to a large extent determined by the purity-conditioned status" (Höfer 1979: 211). The importance of purity and pollution in the Muluki Ain seems to be supportive of Dumont's (1970) conceptual understanding of the caste hierarchy as a system in which the castes are ordered according to the principle opposition of purity and pollution (cf. chapter 2.3). Pfaff-Czarnecka (1989: 10), however, points out that the Muluki Ain neglects the more holistic orientation of the system towards the separation from power and ritual status, and the latter's superiority, which Dumont (1970: 74) considered to be the principal pre-condition for the development of the hierarchy of the pure and the impure (cf. chapter 2.3). Höfer (1979: 103) explains what was underlying the hierarchic ordering of the Muluki Ain as follows: "For the authors of the MA [Muluki Ain] it is not an abstract and static collective amount of purity which conditions the status of each caste and thus the empirical reality of the hierarchy." Instead, patterns of caste interrelation are the principle criterion determining a caste's status and they form the empirical reality which conditions a caste's status-specific amount of purity (Höfer 1979: 103). Höfer's reasoning shows parallels to Cameron's (1998: 42) view which suggests that the Muluki Ain secondarily applied a hierarchy of purity and pollution to the castes (cf. chapter 2.4.1).

The Muluki Ain described the caste order among the impure castes with the most detail (Höfer 1979: 105). According to Höfer (1979: 42, 105), the reason for this was that its legislators mostly belonged to high castes, who maintained regular relations to these impure castes and were therefore interested in legally determining the low status of the impure castes from above. It was beneficial to them to assign low hierarchic ranks to the castes that were politically and economically dependent on them (Höfer 1979: 105). In contrast, the hierarchic order of the pure castes was not as precisely defined as the one of the impure castes (Höfer 1979: 105). The pure castes in the group of Alcohol-Drinkers mostly comprised of ethnic groups in remote areas of Nepal (Höfer 1979: 105). The legislators of the Muluki Ain did not have much information about these ethnic groups and could not allocate them into the hierarchic ranking as easily as the impure castes (Höfer 1979: 105). Moreover, many ethnic groups were not related to the high castes of the legislators, and their precise classification into the hierarchy might therefore not have been of great interest to the legislators (Höfer 1979: 105).

Correspondingly, the Muluki Ain was not enforced in the same way all over the territory of the Nepali

state (Höfer 1979: 40). Where high Hindu castes, who benefited the most from the system, predominated, or where regional institutions represented the state, the criminal law outlined by the Muluki Ain was adhered to (Höfer 1979: 40). In remote areas, however, the caste hierarchy proclaimed by the Muluki Ain often remained a technicality directed from above and was not locally accepted (Höfer 1979: 40). In some areas, certain groups were granted to keep their traditions even though they were not in line with Muluki Ain (Höfer 1979: 40).

3.2.3 Processes of Hinduization

The consolidation of power of the high Hindu hill castes, under both the Shah and the Rana rule, stimulated processes of Hinduization (also called Sanskritization, cf. chapter 2.4.2), in which the subjugated ethnic groups adapted to the dominant Hindu culture to different extents, striving for upward social mobility (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 16, 36, 243). Pfaff-Czarnecka (1989: 265f, 271f) argues that the high-caste legislations, including Muluki Ain, did not force ethnic groups to take up Hinduism and were not intended by high caste rulers to legitimate themselves in front of the subjugated groups. The ruling high castes rather wanted to legitimate themselves *within* the ruling class and their political allies by uniting them under the ritual frame of Hindu ideology, which proclaimed their superiority (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: xii, 266). Yet, as a probably unintended effect, the high-caste rulers' legislations stimulated processes of Hinduization among ethnic groups, especially among ethnic elites, who identified the adoption of the Hindu ideology as a strategy to legitimate, for their part, their striving for local political power and for access to state resources in front of the Hindu rulers (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 265f, 271). This shall be illustrated further in the following:

The central government supported the migration of high Hindu hill-caste farmers into parts of the country inhabited by ethnic groups to expand their access to resources and their political power (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 275). Due to the cultural proximity of the migrated high castes to the ruling Hindu elites, the Hindu ideology became the ideological basis on which struggles for power and resources took place between the migrated high castes and local ethnic groups (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 276). Thus, the local ethnic groups strategically took up Hindu elements to be able to compete in these struggles (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 275f). However, processes of Hinduization also took place in remote parts of the country where no Hindu high castes could migrate to: In such areas, the Rana rulers preferred to establish relationships to ethnic elites that were open to spread processes of Hinduization and who in return were granted access to state resources (e.g. the Thakali elites in north-western Nepal[11]) (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 93f, 266).

The adopted Hindu elements often concerned the religious domain. For example, Hindu religious rituals and festivals were adopted or local deities were associated with deities of the Hindu pantheon (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 244). Moreover, ethnic groups started following rules of ritual purity, for

[11] The Thakali elites promoted Hinduization within their ethnic group by prohibiting the wearing of Tibetan clothes or the consumption of Yak-meat, and by taking up the Nepali language (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 94).

example in the culinary domain (e.g. some groups stopped eating beef[12]), or when interacting with Hindus or other ethnic groups (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 255f). Ethnic groups especially adopted untouchability practices against untouchable Hindu castes and sometimes even against other ethnic groups (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 255). By declaring to have a higher social status than the impure Hindu castes (for instance by claiming to descend from high Hindu castes), the ethnic groups acknowledged the validity of the Hindu idea of hierarchy (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 248-251).[13]

Apart from a few ethnic elites who managed to sustain their privileged roles by means of Hinduization, the ruling Hindu high castes pushed members of ethnic groups into low societal positions by degrading them to landless tenants, by imposing tax systems, and by keeping them away from high political or military positions (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: xiii, 15f). The process of Hinduization of Nepal's ethnic groups remained inconclusive and allowed for the development of a culturally and religiously heterogeneous society (Holmberg 1980: 32f cited in Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 263).

3.2.4 First Steps towards the Abolishment of the Caste System

In 1950, the Nepali Congress, the strongest political party of many emerging parties who wanted to end the Rana rule, started an armed rebellion (Elmer Udry 2014: 62). In 1951, the Shas restored their ruling position with King Tribhuvan Shah Dev, who had sympathized with the anti-Rana protestors, and the Rana rule was terminated (Elmer Udry 2014: 62f). King Tribhuvan announced democratic elections and a democratic constitution (Elmer Udry 2014: 63). Yet, the elections were postponed several times and the young political parties lacked stability (Elmer Udry 2014: 63f). A Civil Rights Act was commissioned in 1955, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of religion, class, sex or ethnicity in civil service appointments (Kisan 2005: 61). The original Muluki Ain, however, prevailed as "the law of the land" (Kisan 2005: 61). This contradicts the statement of Höfer (1979: 40) mentioned above that the Muluki Ain was not thoroughly enforced all over Nepal. In 1959, King Mahendra Bikram Shah finally announced democratic elections and proclaimed a new constitution (Elmer Udry 2014: 65). The constitution of 1959 declared all Nepali citizens equal before the law (Kisan 2012: 61). Nevertheless, in 1962, King Mahendra prohibited all political parties, proclaimed the Panchayat system and promulgated a new constitution (Elmer Udry 2014: 68). The Panchayat system was a decentralized system of village self-governments based on Hindu traditions (Elmer Udry 2014: 69). The constitution, which declared Nepal a Hindu Kingdom, and the Panchayat system secured the position of the traditional Hindu elites and the monarchy (Elmer Udry 2014: 74f). In 1963, King Mahendra replaced all previous editions of the Muluki Ain with a new version (Höfer 1979: 39) and untouchability practices and caste discrimination were legally banned (Kisan 2005: 96). Caste affiliation was no longer an aspect determining the type and measurement of imposed punishments,

[12] Eating beef is an act considered ritually impure (Cameron 1998: 7) because of the Hindu reverence of cows (Lochtefeld 2002: 157).

[13] While Pfaff-Czarnecka (1989: 273) thoroughly elaborates on processes of Hinduization among subjugated ethnic groups after Nepal's unification, she does not address whether a similar striving for upward social mobility also took place among Nepali Dalit castes.

and rules for inter-caste interactions were not explicitly outlined (Höfer 1979: 203). However, by stating that each social group (caste) is allowed to follow its traditional customs, the caste hierarchy was implicitly sanctioned and therefore caste discrimination and untouchability were not explicitly abolished in this new version of the Muluki Ain (Höfer 1979: 204f; Kisan 2005: 63). Moreover, untouchability practices were not declared crimes and did not entail punishments (Kisan 2005: 186). Though some Dalits were able to obtain government positions during the Panchayat period, caste discrimination and untouchability prevailed in the Nepali society (Kisan 2005: 64).

In the late 1970ies and 80ies, an anti-panchayat movement grew (Elmer Udry 2014: 85). It criticized the monarchy's failure in its national development planning and the increasing dependency of Nepal on foreign aid (Elmer Udry 2014: 85). In 1990, the People's Movement (Jana Andolan) consisting of political parties and the civil society triggered the end of the Panchayat system (Elmer Udry 2014: 85; Geiser 2005: 8). King Birendra bowed to the pressure of the People's Movement, the Panchayat system was abolished, and Nepal was declared a multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy (Geiser 2005: 8). The constitution of 1990 pronounced caste discrimination and untouchability to be a punishable offence for the first time (Kisan 2005: 65).

4 The Societal Situation of Dalits in Nepal

The above chapter introduced the various caste and ethnic groups of Nepal. It further elaborated on how the caste system first emerged in Nepal and on how Hindu ideology was used as a resource of power centralized in the hands of the high-caste Shah and Rana rulers (cf. Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 273). Moreover, it briefly outlined how the issue of caste discrimination became officially recognized by the state starting with the termination of the Rana rule in the 1950ies, up to the first official ban of caste discrimination in Nepal's democratic constitution of the year 1990.

With this overview as a basis, this chapter now shifts its focus to the current societal situation of the Dalits of Nepal. The aim is it to address the following leading questions:

What does it mean to be Dalit in Nepal today?

How can the agency of Nepali Dalits regarding and within the caste system manifest itself?

How do Nepali Dalits develop forms of resistance against their low status?

To answer these questions, a first section gives a description of how socio-economic inequalities and caste discrimination against Dalits persist in Nepal's society today. Subsequently, a second section discusses research of scholars who are concerned with the agency of Nepali Dalits (meaning their ability to act within and against the caste system). Especially the scholarly debate about how and whether Dalits develop forms of resistance against the caste system is reviewed for a Nepali context. Some of the scholars that will be discussed have already been referred to in chapter 2 on the conceptualization of the caste system. However, while chapter 2 focused on elaborations on the level

of concepts, the following sections integrate the practical and empirical reality of the "Dalit issue" (i.e. of the disadvantaged societal situation of Dalits) to a larger extent. Even so, some conceptual thoughts will be resumed. In a third section, the societal situation of Nepali Dalit women shall be addressed in particular. In doing so, the interplay of the concepts of gender and caste, an aspect which has been neglected so far, is to be shed light on. The leading questions to this focus read as follows:

How is the dimension of gender relevant with regard to the dimension of caste?

How does the societal situation of Dalit women in Nepal look like?

In advance, it has to be noted that scholarly literature on Dalits in Nepal is relatively scarce in comparison to research on high castes and ethnic groups and in comparison to research on Dalits in India (Folmar 2007: 41; Cameron 1998: 14). First research including information about Dalits in Nepal appeared in the 1970ies, 20 years after Nepal was opened to the outside world, and became more frequent only in the 1990ies (Folmar 2007: 41). As one explanation for why the "Dalit issue" in Nepal has been given little attention by scholars, Folmar (2007: 42) brings forward that the "Dalit issue" might be deemed of lesser importance in the presence of other topics such as women's issues, the spread of HIV or the Maoist insurgency, which struck Nepal from 1996-2006, even though these topics are all linked to the status of Dalits. Cameron (1998: 1f) speculates that scholars might think of the history and culture of Nepal's Dalits to differ little from the one of Indian Dalits and have therefore not given Nepal's Dalits extra attention. Folmar (2007: 42) moreover attributes the scarcity of research on Dalits to the fact that it can be difficult to conduct research among them. Cameron (1998: 36), in this respect, mentions difficulties in working with low-caste women: She had to ask her high-caste hostess for permission before inviting low-caste interviewees to her premises. Also, it required persuasiveness to obtain the low-caste women's consent to enter the house of the high-caste hosts. Folmar (2007: 42) elaborates on certain trade-offs that have to be considered for example when assessing where to live during field work, as residing with Dalit families complicates the access to high-caste people and vice versa. A further reason for the scarcity of studies on Dalits might be the often destitute conditions they live in, which can deter researchers from long ethnographic stays in Dalit communities (Gellner 1995: 264 cited in Cameron 1998: 36f). With this brief parenthesis in mind, the leading questions outlined above can now be discussed.

4.1 Socio-Economic Inequality and Caste-Based Discrimination Today

Since its democratization starting in 1990, Nepal has adopted various strategies promoting human development and inclusive growth, meaning economic growth everyone can profit from (UNDP 2014: 7, 27). Nevertheless, Nepal is currently categorized as a least developed country (UNDP 2014: 1).

Though its Human Development Index (HDI)[14] has improved, in the year 2011, Nepal had the second lowest HDI of the South Asian Nations after Afghanistan (UNDP 2014: 11). Around 25% of the total population live under the national poverty line of 19'261 Nepali Rupees (NPR) per capita per year (≈ 180 US Dollar) (ADB 2013: 1). Many of the 70% of Nepal's population who work in the agricultural sector do not have enough or unproductive agricultural land to fully provide for their livelihoods (Khadka & Pabst 2012: 102). An insufficient welfare system and drawbacks in a functioning rule of law exacerbate Nepal's situation (Khadka & Pabst 2012: 102). Nepal persistently shows human development inequalities between its different regions and socio-economic groups (UNDP 2014: 3) and discrimination and social exclusion based on caste, religion, gender and ethnicity continue (Geiser 2005: 3). Discriminated groups are prone to suffer from malnourishment and face limited access to land and natural resources, health care, education, employment and decision-making processes (Khadka & Pabst 2012: 102).

4.1.1 Socio-Economic Inequality between Different Caste and Ethnic Groups

Inequality between caste and ethnic groups can be made visible when comparing their HDI values: The Brahmans, Chhetris and Newars show the highest, Dalits and Muslims the lowest values (UNDP 2014: 17). According to Nepal's Human Development Report 2014, diverging HDI values between caste and ethnic groups are largely due to differences in their educational attainment (UNDP 2014: 18). Dalits, especially Madhesi Dalits, and Muslims show the lowest levels of education which, together with their social and economic exclusion, results in limited economic and political opportunities (UNDP 2014: 18).

Figure 2 illustrates that caste and ethnic inequalities are also present in a geographic dimension: Groups from the hills (e.g. Hill Janajatis or Hill Dalits) generally show higher HDI values than their counterparts in the lowlands (e.g. Terai Janajatis or Madhesi Dalits) (UNDP 2014: 17f).

[14] The HDI measures three dimensions of human development "a long and healthy life", "knowledge" and "a decent standard of living" using the three measures „life expectancy at birth", "adult literacy and mean years of schooling" and "Gross National Income per capita in purchasing power parity" (UNDP 2014: 11). HDI values are grouped into four categories: Very high human development (values of 0.800 and above), high human development (values of 0.700-0.799), medium human development (values of 0.550-0.699) and low human development (values below 0.550) (UNDP 2015: 204).

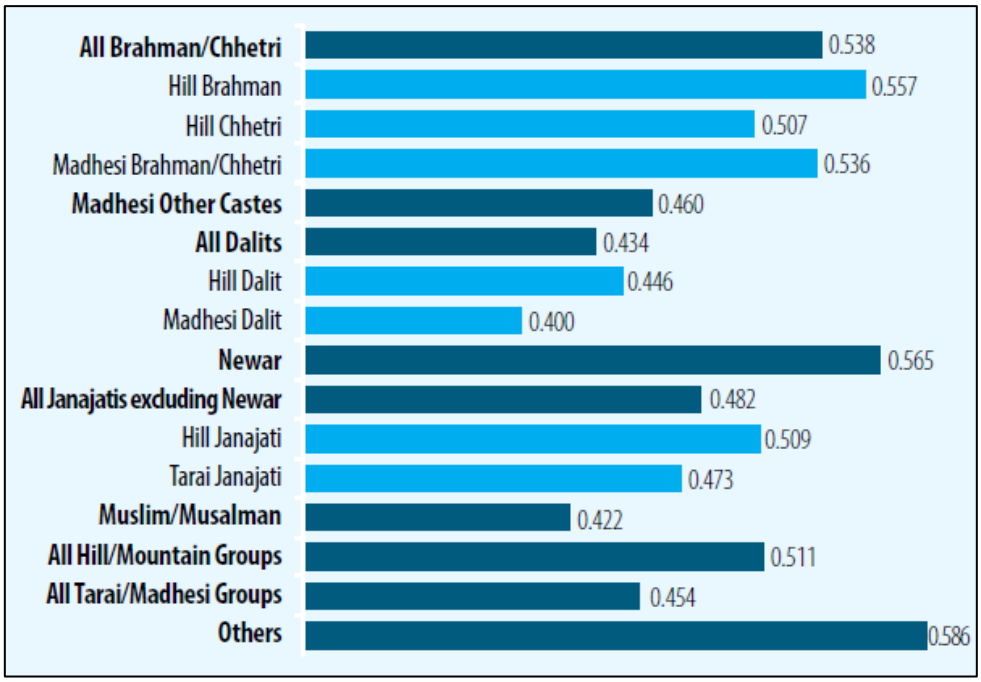

Figure 2: HDI Values by Major Caste and Ethnic Groups
(Source: UNDP 2014: 17)

These regional patterns are also reflected by the Human Poverty Index[15]: Poverty is lowest in the Hill region and highest in the Mountain region followed by the Terai region (UNDP 2014: 21). When including the five longitudinal development regions of Nepal (see Figure 3), human develoment particularly lags behind in the Mid-Western and Far-Western Hills, the Western, Mid-Western and Far-Western Mountains and the Eastern and Central Terai (UNDP 2014: 7, 25, 66). Moreover, poverty in rural areas is 1.8 times higher than in urban areas (UNDP 2014: 21).

The Nepali Dalits mostly live in such rural areas, in all geographic regions of the country (Cameron 2007: 14), and they belong to the poorest parts of the population (Folmar 2007: 46). Many Dalits are landless or do not have enough land to sustain their livelihoods (Folmar 2007: 46). Together with ethnic minorities, Dalits generally have been excluded from land distribution systems (Basnet 2012: 85). Apart from missing the most vital basis for sustaining one's livelihood, landlessness also results in people being denied access to services such as financial institutions, electricity or drinking water facilities (Basnet 2012: 84). So far, Nepal's government has not succeeded in introducing a land-reform in favor of the poor and marginalized (Basnet 2012: 85).

[15] The Human Poverty Index measures the deprivation in the three basic dimensions of human development covered by the HDI (UNDP 2014: 88).

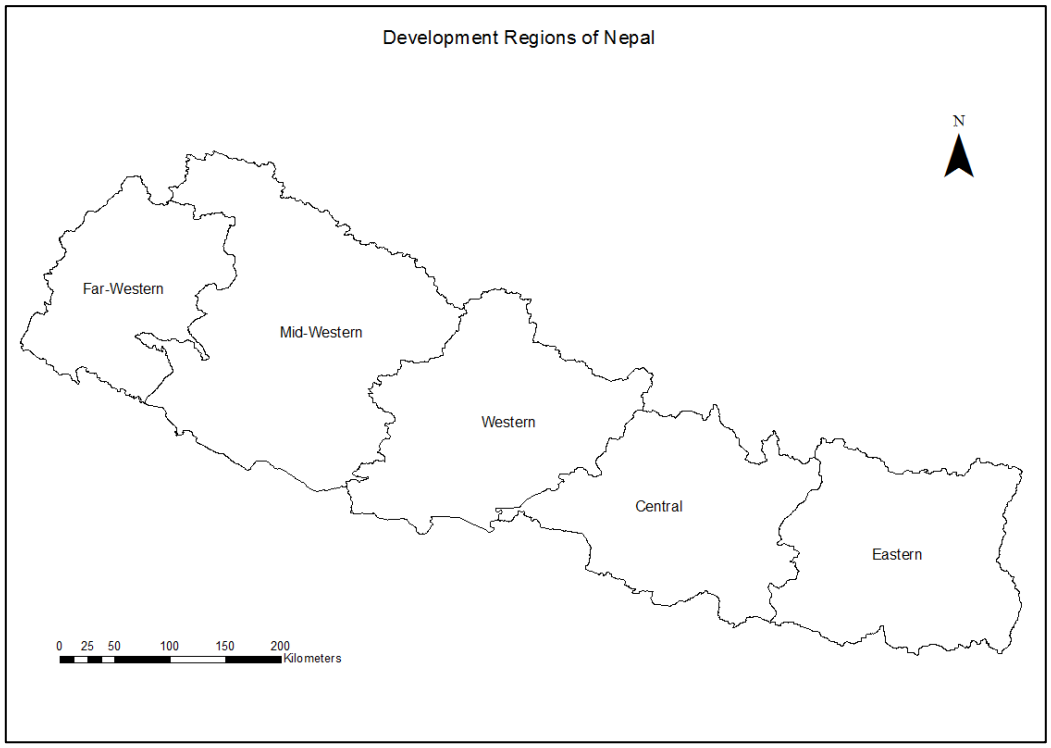

Figure 3: Map of Nepal Showing its Five Development Regions
(Own illustration; Data source: https://github.com/mesaugat/geoJSON-Nepal (accessed: 14.09.16))

4.1.2 Rules of Ritual Purity and Caste-Based Discrimination Today

Even though caste discrimination is legally prohibited in Nepal, untouchability practices remain and Dalits still suffer from their low social status (Kisan 2005: 3). Laws prohibiting caste discrimination are not adequately enforced and leave room for oppression (Kisan 2005: 3). Cameron (2007: 24) also states that the laws prohibiting caste-based discrimination are not complied with and violence towards Dalits is frequent and often remains uninvestigated.

In her ethnographic research in Far-Western Nepal in the 1980ies and 1990ies, Cameron (1998: 4, 12) observed that caste rankings and inter-caste codes of conduct were still prevalent. In the 1980ies, Pfaff-Czarnecka (1989: 236) stated that purity regulations are being followed less strictly in certain places (e.g. urban areas) and by certain groups of society (e.g. young men), but that it cannot yet be presumed that such changes are pointing towards modernization.

Kisan (2005: iv, 67f) gives several examples of how caste discrimination and untouchability are still practiced in Nepal's society today (or at least until 2000, which is the last year covered by his research). Due to untouchability practices, Dalits are prevented from taking up certain occupations, such as working in the hotel industries, selling dairy products or engaging in food-related businesses (Kisan 2005: 165). In some localities, Dalits are denied access to public spaces and facilities such as temples, water taps, ponds, canals, funeral ghats or hotels (Kisan 2005: 67). The people denying Dalits access often remain unpunished. Dalits in turn have to fear consequences such as being fined or beaten if they do not comply with the prohibitions (Kisan 2005: 68f). Dalits in the Kathmandu Valley face discrimination when they try to find a flat to rent (Kisan 2005: 70). In Mid- and Far-Western districts,

Dalits are not allowed inside shops or hotels (Kisan 2005: 71). In some schools, Dalit schoolchildren are not allowed to eat their meals together with the other pupils (Kisan 2005: 71).[16]

Folmar (2007: 45) brings forward that "[k]ey symbolic changes in oppression, such as access to once-forbidden cultural spaces, in particular temples, tea shops and wells, working in jobs once unattainable and side by side with non-Dalit colleagues without fear of discrimination are debated. They are argued over both as evidence for positive social change and as examples of superficial changes that obscure the fact that things are changing very little."

Kisan (2005: 165) argues that hindrances for the social inclusion of Dalits also exist *within* Dalit communities: "Dalits often engage in social practices that further undermine their social respect or their economic conditions." As examples for such practices, Kisan (2005: 165) mentions polygamy, alcoholism, gambling, or the extensive spending of money on festivities such as marriage ceremonies. Kisan (2005: 161) does not clearly point out what scientific basis he derives these observations from. Such problems existing within Dalit communities are rarely addressed in the other reviewed research literature. One problem which is mentioned by several scholars is the fact that untouchability is not only practiced against Dalits, but also between different Dalit castes (Pariyar & Lovett 2016: 136; IIDS 2008: III; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: xxiii). This observation is in line with the argumentations of Gupta (2000: 54-85 cited in Karanth 2004: 139) and Karanth (2004: 138f) illustrated in chapter 2.4.2 stating that untouchable castes cannot be considered a unified group with a consensus about their status relations and a shared experience of exclusion.

4.2 Dalit Resistance against the Caste System

The above section has illustrated that Dalits are among the most disadvantaged sections of the Nepali population, with them facing economic and social exclusion and caste-based discrimination. The following section addresses the above questions concerning the possibility of Dalits to act against and resist their low position in the caste system. Chapter 2.4.2 already discussed Parish's study (1996: 7) on the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, which examined Dalit resistance at the level of inner negotiation processes of individuals. The literature referred to in the following sections discusses examples of agency and resistance of Nepali Dalits, as mentioned, from a less conceptual and more practical and empirical perspective.

Cameron (2007: 13) examines Dalit agency in the rural context of Far-Western Nepal, where mostly poor and landless Dalits take part in inter-caste economic exchanges and systems of customary obligation. These inter-caste economic exchanges are determined by a traditional patron-client system operating in rural mixed-caste communities that engage in interdependent farming and artisan

[16] How rules of ritual purity (i.e. not only the rules concerning inter-caste relations but also for example rules concerning temporary impurity) are followed in daily practices today (in the 2010s) cannot be answered here conclusively. In a personal conversation with my supervisor Prof. Dr. Müller-Böker (21.03.2016), it was discussed that Nepalis differently uphold and interpret rules of ritual purity. The example of well-educated, modern women was mentioned who adhere to the rule of avoiding preparing meals during their menstruation due to their temporary impurity and who interpret this temporary situation not as discriminating but as a welcome possibility not having to cook.

activities (Cameron 2007: 15). This system binds landless, low-caste families to landowning high-caste families (e.g. Brahman, Chhetri or Thakuri), with whom they have been connected through economic interdependence for many generations (Cameron 2007: 13, 15; 1998: 75). Within this patron-client system, members of low castes trade their artisan products and labor services for harvest shares, food or cash payments (Cameron 1998: 75). The actual act of requesting material goods from a landowning, high-caste person is called *riti magné* (Cameron 2007: 15, 19). According to Pfaff-Czarnecka (1989: 181), this patron-client system institutionalizes parts of the ritual labor division between castes of different ritual status, which was briefly mentioned in chapter 3.1 and which was promoted and strengthened for example under the Shah rule after Nepal's unification (cf. chapter 3.2.1).[17]

Cameron (2007: 15, 18f) argues that even though the act of requesting material goods from a landowning, high-caste person is structured by inter-caste relations and codes of conduct, Dalits draw on cooperative aspects of the encounter. This "[...] intermittently undermines a caste-based hierarchy of difference" (Cameron 2007: 19). Dalits employ a variety of strategies of resistance to receive the needed material goods (Cameron 2007: 21). For example, Cameron (2007: 15) found Dalits ridiculing their patrons or delaying their work if they had not been given the requested amounts of material goods. According to Cameron (2007: 15), by delaying their work or shaming their patrons, Dalits demonstrate their "[...] equal to superior moral understanding of community obligations." Thereby, the caste system is contested and the domination by upper castes is invalidated (Cameron 2007: 19f). Such forms of resistance are deployed by Dalits in a way that is applicable within the cultural order they find themselves in together with the non-Dalits (Cameron 2007: 20). According to Cameron (2007: 13), rural Dalit agency "[...] both resists domination and affirms status difference." She adopts a similar reasoning as has already been illustrated in chapter 2.4.2 referring to Karanth (2004) and Parish (1996) – namely, that the seeming compliance of Dalits with their low status and participation in the caste system can be interpreted both as acquiescence, but also as resistance. Dalit resistance against the caste system can be subtle, sometimes even culturally acceptable and embedded in everyday life as illustrated by the forms of resistance mentioned above (cf. Cameron 1998: 51; Haynes & Prakash 1992: 3). Resistance might, however, also be direct and open. Haynes and Prakash (1992: 3) define resistance as "[...] those behaviors and cultural practices that contest hegemonic social formations, that threaten to unravel the strategies of domination."

Folmar (2007: 41, 45) is another scholar who examines forms of resistance of Nepali Dalits. He investigates local social and political strategies which Dalits in Central and Western Nepal apply to regulate their inter-caste relations. Folmar (2007: 45) describes that "Dalit agency" "[...] is referenced specifically in relation to people of higher and dominant status, including castes and ethnic groups" and that it is also "[...] a particular kind of socio-political action that is akin to identity politics [...]"

[17] Some services of occupational castes (e.g. the disposal of animal carcasses or ritual music), which are also part of the ritual labor division, happen outside this institutionalized patron-client system (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989: 181).

(see chapter 2.5 for a definition of identity politics). In his ethnographic observations, he identified various strategies through which Dalits seek social equality, either by drawing on their Dalit identity or by altering and masking their identity (Folmar 2007: 45, 49).

One strategy of promoting the development and social advancement of Dalits is the formation of local committees which deal with local issues of social status improvement, administrative issues and/or material or financial development (e.g. local branches of the Federation for Dalit Women, "Mother's Groups", micro-credit groups, musician groups) (Folmar 2007: 48f). The extent to which such groups make use of identity politics differs. On the one hand, there are groups openly contesting the caste hierarchy and publicly using the term Dalit (Folmar 2007: 49). On the other hand, there are groups standing up for a certain caste group's interests without using the term Dalit and without openly challenging the caste system (Folmar 2007: 49).

Another strategy adopted by some Dalit groups to contest their low status is the attempt to leave the system in which their oppression is produced (Folmar 2007: 49). By converting from Hinduism to another religion such as Buddhism or Christianity, they seek equality within another moral order (Folmar 2007: 50).). In the low-caste village Folmar (2007: 50) studied, several Sarki households converted to Christianity. Kisan (2005: 153) illustrates that conversion to other religions is debated among Dalit activists as it is not considered to bring change to high-caste Hindu attitudes.

Folmar (2007: 50) further mentions Sanskritization among Nepali Dalit castes as a strategy to eliminate the reasons for their stigmatization. For example, in the village he studied, Sarkis stopped eating beef. As was discussed in chapter 2.4.2, Folmar (2007: 50) mentions that Sanskritization can be regarded as compliance with or resistance against the caste system.

A further strategy of Dalits to resist their oppressed status is the masking of their identity (Folmar 2007: 50). When someone's Dalit identity is unknown, individuals can act more freely against the system (Folmar 2007: 50). This masking-strategy is for example applied when Dalits visit temples where the priests do not know them, so that they are not identified as Dalits and are not denied access to the temple (Folmar 2007: 50). A further strategy of Dalits to mask their caste affiliation is to change their surnames from jat (caste) to thar (clan) names (e.g. Kami changed their names to Bishwokarma; Damai changed their names to Pariyar or Das), which have, however, also become associated with a Dalit origin (Folmar 2007: 51). An alternative strategy is applied when Dalits adopt a surname of a higher caste only for specific occasions, for example when demanding access to a ritual space (Folmar 2007: 51) or when working in a government agency (Parish 1996: 113). Parish (1996: 113f) mentions in this respect that members of low castes claim multiple identities for themselves depending on the occasion and the purpose. Folmar (2007: 46) raises the question if the illustrated strategies of masking one's identity can induce an improvement of the status of Dalits or whether they rather counteract the efforts of seeking equality because the Dalit identity is denied.

So far, the above sections have predominantly paid attention to subtle, often individual forms of Dalit agency and resistance (cf. Cameron 1998: 51). Dalit agency and resistance in the context of political

movements has not yet been addressed. The prevalent oppression of Nepali Dalits has triggered demands for governmental measures of affirmative action among Dalit political activists, which have also been taken up by many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supporting the social inclusion of Dalits. The next chapter discusses one aspect of the "Dalit issue" in Nepal which so far has been neglected, namely the societal situation of Nepali Dalit women. This is followed by chapter 5, which focuses on the recent developments of how socio-economic inequalities and issues of discrimination against Nepal's Dalits and other discriminated groups are addressed by various governmental and non-governmental institutions through measures of affirmative action.

4.3 The Situation of Nepali Dalit Women

The societal situation of Dalit women is generally described as to be shaped by their double or multiple discrimination stemming from both their gender and their caste (cf. Folmar 2007: 42; UNDP 2008a: 31f). According to a report compiled by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2008a: 31f), Dalit women face gender discrimination including untouchability from within and from outside their communities and are pushed into subordinated positions in their family and society by patriarchal thinking. A report by the Human Rights Watch (2001: 21) states that Dalit women are economically marginalized and exploited on a family as well as on a community level. They are the largest workforce engaged in manual labor and agricultural production (Bishwakarma 2004: 2) and they are paid lower wages than Dalit men (IIDS 2008: vi). According to the UNDP (2008a: 32), Dalit women have no access or control over resources and are highly underrepresented in public positions. They are moreover victims of various forms of psychological and physical violence such as verbal abuse, domestic violence, sex trafficking and rape (IIDS 2008: 146 UNDP 2008a: 32). The rates of raped and trafficked women have been found to be higher among Dalits than among higher castes (IIDS 2008: 146). It has been observed that gender discrimination against women is higher among the most discriminated caste or ethnic groups, of which Dalits show the highest gender differences followed by Muslims and Terai Janajatis (Bennett & Parajuli 2008 cited in UNDP 2009: 45). Among Dalits, gender discrimination against Madhesi Dalit women is even more severe than against Hill Dalit women (IIDS 2008: vii).[18]

Because scholarly studies on low-caste women in Nepal seem to be scarce (cf. Cameron 1998: 1-3), these elaborations on the situation of Dalit women in Nepal largely stem from non-academic literature. Research addressing gender relations in Nepal mostly focus on high castes and ethnic groups (Cameron 1998: 52). Therefore, to address the situation of Dalit women in Nepal from a scholarly perspective, the following sections largely focus on the widely recognized ethnographic research of Cameron (1998), who studied gender and caste relations from the position of lower-caste women in Bajhang district in Far-Western Nepal in the 1980ies and 1990ies. Cameron (1998: 2) analyzes the abstract interrelations between the hierarchy of caste and the hierarchy of gender and how they

[18] These results show similarities to the diverging HDI-values of different caste and ethnic groups presented in chapter 4.1.1.

structure and influence everyday social, economic and religious interactions in a rural context. Aspects of the lives of Dalit women outlined above, such as their roles as productive laborers or their level of control over resources will be readdressed with respect to Cameron's research. As will become clear, her findings reveal to some extent a different picture of the livelihood realities of Dalit women than the one briefly described above. It is acknowledged that by focusing on Cameron's research due to the scarcity of comparable studies, this chapter is not able to grasp more current livelihood realities of Nepali Dalit women, and of women situated in contexts other than the rural one referred to by Cameron.

In a first following part, conceptualizations of the interplay between gender and caste are briefly addressed by firstly introducing the intersectionality approach, and secondly, the conceptual approach adopted by Cameron (1998). In a second part, aspects of Cameron's analysis of the economic and religious role of Dalit women in contrast to the role of high-caste women are discussed.

4.3.1 Conceptualizing the Relationship between Caste and Gender

The Intersectionality Approach

Intersectionality is a theoretical and analytical approach which refers to multiple forms of marginalization (cf. Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 3). The concept of intersectionality proposes that experiences of individuals and groups are subject to the simultaneous interaction of different dimensions of social inequality and oppression which are associated to systems of social categorization (social markers) such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste or age (Norris et al. 2010: 62, 65; Bishwakarma et al. 2007: 27; Howard 2014). Due to the simultaneity with which these dimensions interact, it is not possible to analyze inequalities by looking at such social categories separately (Norris et al. 2010: 62; cf. Hill Collins 1993: 30).[19]

The concept of intersectionality is valuable to identify subgroups within heterogeneous social groups and to assess the different experiences and situations of marginalization they face (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 3). Thus, an intersectional perspective on discrimination can prevent ideas of over- or under-inclusion (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 12): Over-inclusion describes the subsumption of the racial (or ethnic) dimension under the dimension of gender (Crenshaw: 1994 cited in Norris et al. 2010: 63). An example of over-inclusion is the "feminization of poverty" thesis, which addresses experiences of poverty solely in relation to gender. On the contrary, under-inclusion describes the disregarding of gender aspects if a phenomenon is solely perceived to be determined by the racial (or ethnic) dimension (Norris et al. 2010: 63). With respect to preventing over- or under-inclusion, Contzen and Müller-Böker (2014: 12) illustrate the usefulness of an intersectionality approach to address the multiple marginalization of Dalit women in Nepal: If poverty in Nepal is examined with the feminization of poverty thesis, the fact that Dalit women are more impoverished than women of

[19] Though the need for intersectional approaches in formulating development policies has been recognized by NGOs and researches, "[...] the flawed view that discrimination is one-dimensional and affects all women or all minority communities in the same way" still exists, especially at government levels (worldwide) (Patel 2001).

other social groups is rendered invisible. Conversely, if an under-including perspective is adopted, the gender inequality existing between Dalit men and women is ignored (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 12).

Cameron's Conceptualization of Caste and Gender

By looking at how the cultural domains of gender and caste influence each other, Cameron (1998: 3) seems to adopt an intersectionality perspective in her study of caste and gender relations in rural Nepal. In doing so, Cameron (1998: 2f) places special focus on the hierarchical nature of both, caste and gender, and investigates how hierarchy operates in every-day aspects of a person's life.

In the Far-Western community which Cameron (1998: 3) studied, ideas about caste are closely interlinked with ideas about gender. Correspondingly, the term jat is used to refer to both caste and gender (Cameron 1998: 42). According to Cameron (1998: 42), the differentiation of jats is not primarily about hierarchic ranking but rather about the grouping of people sharing essential features (cf. Cameron's definition of caste in chapter 2.1). The jat of women is defined by many features that differ from the jat of men such as the female sex organs, childbirth and menstruation (Cameron 1998: 42). The hierarchy of the pure and the impure can then be secondarily applied to the features differentiating the jats, understood in the sense of caste or gender respectively (Cameron 1998: 42f)[20]. When applied to gender, it is the secondary application of impurity to female features such as childbirth and menstruation that render women temporarily impure. Though low- and high-caste women share the same impurity in their bodily functions, the gender relations among low castes differ from the gender relations among high castes (Cameron 1998: 43). While high-caste women are only considered temporarily impure, low-caste women are considered permanently impure due to their caste (Cameron 1998: 46). This shows that gender relations intersect with caste relations (Cameron 1998: 43).

However, according to Cameron (1998: 43, 271), how gender and caste relations are constituted is not exclusively determined by the ideology of the pure and the impure. This does not mean that the discursive and practical significance of the ideology of the pure and the impure is denied. Cameron (1998: 44f) notes that the application of the hierarchy of purity and impurity to both caste and gender leads to the naturalization of caste and gender rankings in practice. In other words, when impurity is attributed to the bodies of women and low castes, hierarchy is naturalized (Cameron 1998: 44f). "It is primarily one's caste and gender that give everyday form to Hindu doctrines of proper personhood" (Cameron 1998: 45). Yet, Cameron (1998: 3) argues that "[w]hat is of interest about people living with definite codes about social position and social interaction is people's agency in creating, re-creating, and resisting the system from their position within it." Cameron (1998: 271) states that the "[...] economic, social, and religious agency of low-caste women cannot be understood within the purity-impurity ideology that relegates their caste to a low position." Cameron's elaborations show

[20] According to Cameron (1998: 42), as mentioned, a secondary application of hierarchic ranking to the jats (castes) was established in Nepal through the legal code Muluki Ain (see chapter 3.2.2).

many parallels to the ones of Parish (1996: 7, 9) discussed in chapter 2.4.2, who also studied how "[...] symbolic forms and values of caste hierarchy are created, recreated, and contested, in minds and lives" and how the naturalization of this hierarchy can thereby be challenged.

4.3.2 Gender and Caste Relations within and between Low and High Castes

A number of South Asian scholars share the opinion that low-caste women have more freedom and autonomy than high-caste women because they are less restricted by social and behavioral rules due to their caste impurity, which they share with their husbands (Cameron 1998: 54 referring to Kolenda 1982, Bennett 1983). Cameron (1998: 43) also observed that the gender hierarchy among low castes is not as distinct as among high castes. However, in line with her conceptualizations outlined above, Cameron (1998: 43, 56) states that the shared impurity of low-caste women and men is not the reason for the smaller disparity between them. It rather stems from the low-caste women's "[...] real and recognized economic contribution to the household, the lack of land and its associated patrilineal/patriarchal ideology in low-caste families, and low-caste women's religious roles" (Cameron 1998: 43). These three aspects of low-caste women's greater parity with their husbands shall be looked at in the following.

In traditional rural communities, the local economy is often structured by the traditional patron-client system which was introduced in chapter 4.2, in which low castes trade their artisan products and labor services for harvest shares, food or cash payments with landowning high castes (Cameron 1998: 75). Though members of low and high castes spend almost the same amount of time working (with members of low castes working slightly more), the kind of work allocated between the castes is quite different (Cameron 1998: 94). The productive work[21] performed by low-caste men and women shows more variety (artisanal production, farming and daily wage labor) than the work performed by high castes, who mostly engage in farming (Cameron 1998: 101). When comparing men and women, both low- and high-caste women spend more time working than men (Cameron 1998: 92-94). Women across all castes almost entirely bear the responsibility of carrying out reproductive (domestic) work such as child care, cooking and cleaning in addition to their engagement in productive work (Cameron 1998: 131). While low-caste women's productive work includes artisanal production and (agricultural) service work on their own family farms or for landowning high-castes, high-caste women exclusively carry out productive work on their family farms (Cameron 1998: 90, 101).

Cameron (1998: 95) illustrates that the labor division between the genders has been subject to local, regional and global influences (e.g. caste dynamics, government-led allocation and access to resources and international markets) and that it points towards a "feminization" of agricultural labor. Low-caste artisanal occupations are increasingly threatened to be replaced by (international) factory mass production, affecting for example the Sarki leatherworkers or the Damai tailors (Cameron 1998: 97f). Moreover, their access to raw materials used for artisanal production has decreased (e.g. because

[21] "'Productive' work involves the expenditure of energy and resources in such a way that a product is made or a service is rendered" (Cameron 1998: 90).

strictly protected nature reserves are established) (Cameron 1998: 97f). Due to a lack of employment opportunities, increased male labor migration has taken place resulting in the absence of males as agricultural laborers. Low-caste women have had to take over the obligations of their husbands towards their high-caste patrons. Moreover, a relaxation of social norms has let women (not only from low castes) experience an enhanced freedom to travel, allowing them to do work formerly only performed by men (e.g. working in the forests or on distant fields) (Cameron 1998: 99). With these socio-economic changes, the work of low-caste women has become more varied and flexible and oriented towards family farm production and paid agricultural and nonagricultural labor for landowning high castes, whereas their engagement in artisanal production has decreased (Cameron 1998: 127). As a result, low-caste women are important contributors to the household economy, they have control over daily production activities, over the distribution of resources, over their freedom to travel, and they are therefore less dependent on their husbands for subsistence (Cameron 1998: 198f). The greater parity of low-caste women with their husbands moreover stems from the fact that due to their families' landlessness and the respective lack of a material basis for their husbands' Hindu-based patriarchal authority, their husbands' authority is lowered (Cameron 1998: 180).

In comparison to low-caste women's economic roles, the economic role of high-caste women is quite different: High-caste men have control over their women's labor and labor products because they provide and own the land their wives work on (Cameron 1998: 199). High-caste women are forbidden to work for others for payment and it is their socially honorable, moral and religious duty (dharma) to uphold their privileged high-caste status by being submissive to their husbands' patriarchal authority (Cameron 1998: 103, 199). The dharma of high-caste women is defined in relation to their husbands and determines that women have to accept their lower status (Cameron 1998: 144, 277). The submissive and moral role of high-caste women obliges them to follow certain deferential practices which are said to consume their husbands' impurity (e.g. eating from the husband's plate after he has finished) (Cameron 1998: 149, 279). High-caste women's productive and reproductive labor translates into the prestige of their husbands and is not directly recognized but instead mystified and devalued (Cameron 1998: 144, 199, 277).

In contrast, the dharma of low-caste women is primarily defined in relation to their family-sustaining work and only secondarily in relation to their husbands (Cameron 1998: 149). Low-caste women are required to work because of their household's poverty, not to increase their husbands' prestige (Cameron 1998: 277). The value of low-caste women's work is acknowledged, they are not entirely subordinated to their husbands, and do not follow the same female comportment practices as high-caste women (Cameron 1998: 277). In addition, low-caste women are freer in their public movement than women from high castes, who have to act more discretely to comply with their honor and their elite-status (Cameron 1998: 159). Low-caste women are allowed to remarry, whereas high-caste women are denied this option because it is considered a sin to their dharma (Cameron 1998: 45, 59, 149). The caste hierarchy is reproduced when both, low and high-caste women draw on their different

gender relations and dharma to positively differentiate themselves from the others (Cameron 1998: 149, 271f).

Cameron (cf. 1998: 91, 272f) shows that gender ideals are differently configured through caste (for example through the concept of dharma) and that caste and gender hierarchies are reflected and reproduced in the division of labor. According to Cameron (1998: 91, 101), when low-caste women work for high-caste women on land owned by high-caste men, the caste hierarchy is reproduced. Gender hierarchy is reproduced as it is women who have to work on land owned by men (Cameron 1998: 103). The different economic situations of low-caste households compared to high-caste households, with the low-castes mostly being landless and materially dominated by the landowning high-castes, nevertheless confer economic and social autonomy to low-caste women (Cameron 1998: 277).

Cameron's (cf. 1998: 58f, 206) findings that gender relations among low castes are more egalitarian than among high castes, and that low-caste women have autonomy and power over economic resources due to the economic (and religious) roles they take on in their families, seems to be opposing the situation of Dalit women as it was described in the beginning of this chapter 4.3. The sources cited in the beginning of this chapter stated that gender discrimination is higher among Dalit communities than among high castes (cf. Bennett & Parajuli 2008 cited in UNDP 2009: 45) and emphasized that Dalit women are multiply discriminated, economically exploited and missing access to resources (cf. Folmar 2007: 42; UNDP 2008a: 31f). Guneratne (2001: 99) questions whether it is justified to say that low-caste women wield "economic power", which is the wording used by Cameron (cf. 1998: 199, 206), in view of the limited economic opportunities and states of poverty Cameron (cf. 1998: 63) describes low-caste families to be confronted with. Bishwakarma (2004: 2) states, in accordance to the line of thinking of Cameron, that Dalit families depend on the participation of their women in productive activities due to their poverty, which in some Dalit groups makes women more respected than women in high-caste communities. Bishwakarma (2004: 2) nevertheless puts emphasis on the fact that in comparison to high-caste women, the situation of Dalit women is more vulnerable as they are "[...] thrice alienated on the basis of class, caste and gender." For this thesis, it seems reasonable to be aware of both illustrated versions of the livelihood realities of Dalit women, on the one hand, their vulnerable situation shaped by multiple forms of discrimination, on the other hand, their more autonomous economic and religious roles in comparison to ones of high-caste women.

5 Affirmative Action Targeting Dalits

The previous chapters gave an insight into how the affiliation to a certain caste or ethnicity has developed to be an important factor influencing the socio-economic status of a person in the history of Nepal. It was shown that discrimination and social exclusion on the basis of caste, religion, gender and ethnicity continue until today and that Nepali Dalits belong to the most excluded groups in Nepal's society. Apart from triggering the discussed, often subtle, forms of Dalit resistance against their low

status, the continuing oppression of Nepali Dalits (and other discriminated groups) has fueled demands for governmental measures of affirmative action (positive discrimination), and has encouraged political and development actors to advocate the societal advancement of these groups. With regard to these demands for affirmative action, this chapter addresses the following leading questions:

By whom and how is affirmative action used in Nepal (e.g. by the Government of Nepal or non-governmental development actors)?

What societal implications have been observed in connection with the positive discrimination of Dalits?

As a constitutionally mandated affirmative action system is new to Nepal, the societal implications of affirmative action in the context of Nepal have not yet been subject to many scholarly studies. In contrast, India looks back at a much longer history of affirmative action of its marginalized groups and consequently, a larger body of research exists on the Indian context. It is therefore insightful to also discuss the outlined questions for the Indian context, as it can serve as a valuable reference point for Nepal's affirmative action efforts (cf. Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 5, 10).

In the following, a first section briefly clarifies the terms affirmative action and positive discrimination. A second section discusses how target groups of affirmative action measures can be conceptualized and constructed, and how such concepts are debated in scholarly literature. A third section sheds light on the affirmative action system of India and its societal implications. Finally, the research questions and debates about affirmative action shall be addressed with respect to the Nepali context.

5.1 Clarification of the Terms Affirmative Action and Positive Discrimination

All over the world, state governments implement policies of affirmative action which aim to "[...] compensate for past discrimination and minimize existing inequalities that persist on the basis of group identity—whether defined by culture, race, ethnicity, language or other markers of belonging [...]" (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 3). Affirmative action policies try to enable disadvantaged groups to get access to education, formal employment or political representation (Higham & Shah 2013: 81). Affirmative action is based on the reasoning that social and political inclusion and participation of everyone cannot always be achieved through equal treatment, but rather requires the provision of special rights that address group differences and counteract the disadvantage and oppression of underprivileged groups (cf. Young 1989: 251; Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 3). The term "affirmative action" appeared in the 1960s in the United States and described the responsibility of federal governments to hire people disregarding their race, religion, national origin or gender (Anderson 2005 cited in Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 4).

According to Shah and Shneiderman (2013: 4), affirmative action is popularly distilled to the idea of "positive discrimination", which can broadly be defined as the prioritized selection of individuals of

targeted groups over people not belonging to a targeted group (Higham & Shah 2013: 81). Positive discrimination can be applied through numerical quotas, for example by setting a fixed quota of reserved seats in a university for certain marginalized groups (Higham & Shah 2013: 81). A practice which can be distinguished from positive discrimination is "positive action". Positive action provides special encouragement and support to defined target groups but not to the disadvantage of other groups (Higham & Shah 2013: 81). Following Shah and Shneiderman (2013: 4), this thesis adopts a broad understanding of affirmative action referring to a diverse set of policy measures which intend to "[...] create the conditions for disadvantaged groups to compete equally [...]." This understanding of affirmative action does not only include measures implemented by governmental actors, but also the ones implemented by non-governmental actors.

Generally, research on affirmative action can be found in abundance. However, most studies use quantitative methods to statistically measure the success or failure of affirmative action (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 4). Little is known on the effects of discourses and practices of affirmative action on (every-day) social relations, which cannot be measured quantitatively (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 4). Shah and Shneiderman (2013: 5) argue that affirmative action policies always transform society, sometimes with unexpected results, in a way that socio-economic inequalities may be reduced on the one hand, but on the other hand, may persist or be refigured.

5.2 Conceptualization of Target Groups: Targeting the Economically Poor versus Targeting the Socially Discriminated

A central question in the debates regarding affirmative action is whether target groups of affirmative action measures should be constructed using cultural (or social) classifications or whether they should be based on economic classifications.

Middleton and Shneiderman (2008: 41f) and Shneiderman (2013: 46) formulate the above question in relation to the concept of marginality. On the one hand, there is the approach that causally links economic poverty to cultural marginality and therefore defines target groups based on cultural terms (Shneiderman 2013: 46). On the other hand, there is the approach that tries to avoid linking poverty to cultural marginality and therefore focuses on economic poverty and exclusion indicators rather than cultural ones to define target groups (Shneiderman 2013: 46).

Middleton and Shneiderman (2008: 41f) argue that when marginality is defined and target groups are constructed based on cultural criteria, this can reinforce differences between social groups. For example when certain social groups feign their cultural traits or transform their culture to make themselves entitled to the benefits of affirmative action measures. Such processes enable cultural ideologies to creep into allegedly secular systems of political recognition (if state-led affirmative action on a political level is concerned). This is also the case when government officials that are responsible for deciding on a group's marginality-status are guided by their cultural prejudices (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42).

Regarding the two approaches of constructing target groups, Contzen and Müller-Böker (2014: 1-3)

similarly state that there is a tendency to either define target groups based on a single social (or cultural) category (e.g. caste, gender, ethnicity, religion or origin) or on a single poverty indicator. When certain social groups are defend as socially discriminated based solely on social, identity-based criteria, economic differences within these groups are not acknowledged (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 1). In addition, by focusing on single categories, forms of multiple marginalization or oppression cannot be addressed (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 3; cf. chapter 4.3.1 discussing the concept of intersectionality, which avoids assessing marginalization based on single criteria). In the following sections, when affirmative action in India and Nepal is discussed, the mentioned different approaches to construct and classify target groups of affirmative action measures are readdressed.

5.3 Affirmative Action in India

The subsequent sections elaborate on scholarly research about India's nationwide affirmative action system and its societal effects. India is taken into account as it shares cultural and societal similarities with Nepal, and because it has a much older affirmative action system. In both countries, Dalits and indigenous peoples (called Adivasis in India and Janajatis in Nepal) form the most disadvantaged groups in society (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 5). The purpose of reviewing research literature on India is that India's experience with affirmative action may allow making assumptions concerning possible societal implications of affirmative action in Nepal.

5.3.1 India's Reservation System

India's affirmative action policies can be traced back to the colonial period (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 5) and were introduced by Christian missionaries and British colonial authorities (Jaffrelot 2006: 173). The British colonialists established an enormous anthropological system to classify India's society (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 43). India's nationwide affirmative action system includes quotas, so-called "reservations" of government seats, jobs in the public sector (e.g. political positions and state-employment) and seats in educational institutions (e.g. in state-universities) for Dalits, ethnic minorities, women and other disadvantaged groups based on their proportion in the Indian population (Higham & Shah 2013: 81; Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 4f; Chandhoke 2006: 2289). The entitlements of reservations and benefits are assigned to the people based on their group affiliation and not based on individual needs (Michelutti & Heath 2013: 57). The targeted groups are named Backward Classes and they comprise so-called Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis), Scheduled Castes (Dalits) and Other Backward Classes (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 5f). Other Backward Classes are lower-caste communities which were not formerly considered untouchable (i.e. which are not Dalits) but which are economically and socially deprived, mostly peasants (Michelutti & Heath 2013: 57; Gupta 2005: 423). They were included into India's reservations in the 1990s (Michelutti & Heath 2013: 57).

India's reservation system requires enormous administrative expenses from national, state and local governments (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 43). When a group applies for a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe status, this entails complex, long-lasting bureaucratic certification processes. The

ethnographic reports consulted when checking applications for Scheduled Tribes status sometimes stem from the colonial period and are outdated, and the application processes can last decades (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 43). Which groups are listed as a Scheduled Caste or Tribe differs from state to state (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 7). Some groups hold a Scheduled Tribe or Caste status in one state but not in the other.

5.3.2 Implications of India's Reservation System

India's reservations are highly debated within the Indian society as well as among scholars. The following sections address some societal implications and limitations of the Indian reservation system that are discussed by the consulted research literature.

Inter-Group Polarization and Differentiation

One societal implication of India's reservation system which is repeatedly addressed by various scholars is that it can cause increased polarization and differentiation between different caste and ethnic groups.

Michelutti and Heath (2013) investigate how affirmative action (i.e. reservation policies and related community entitlements) in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh affect the perception of different caste groups of themselves and of others and how this has influenced their opinion about and participation in politics. Michelutti and Heath (2013: 61f) speak of a political manipulation of categories such as Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes through uprising caste politics. On the one hand, the participation and representation of Dalits and their political and cultural awareness and recognition has increased. On the other hand, the emerging caste politics cause social conflict, new forms of economic and social discrimination and a new polarization between Dalits and higher castes. According to Michelutti and Heath (2013: 57-59), affirmative action has contributed to the transformation of the caste system from a vertical hierarchy to "[...] disconnected groups with their own distinct culture and way of life" whereby the difference between the castes considered pure and the castes considered impure is reinforced. Michelutti and Heath (2013: 57, 66) are of the opinion that affirmative action has, instead of enhancing the social well-being of certain groups, led to the disconnection, distrust and suspicion between different caste communities that compete politically over the benefits and rights they think themselves, and not others, as entitled to.

This division along cultural differences which is enforced by India's reservations is also illustrated by Middleton and Shneiderman (2008: 40). They elaborate on the situation of ethnic communities in the Indian district of Darjeeling, which became political competitors in the effort of receiving Scheduled Tribe status. Groups already registered as Scheduled Tribes are afraid of losing their privileges to the new applicants and therefore arise as opponents against the efforts of other groups seeking recognition (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 41). Competing identity politics are reproduced in the daily lives of people, which is illustrated by the example that former friendly inter-ethnic exchanges have ceased (e.g. the joint celebration of festivals) (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 41). Furthermore, "non-

tribal" groups, some of which are already recognized as Other Backward Classes or even Scheduled Castes, are increasingly applying for Scheduled Tribe status due to the fear of becoming economically and politically marginalized (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 40). There is a common understanding in Indian society as well as among governmental certifiers of applications for Scheduled Tribe status that tribes (ethnic groups) are essentially non-Hindu (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 41). As a result, groups seeking Scheduled Tribe status, often under the lead of their group elites, alter and abandon their cultural practices in order to fit into the stereotypical image of non-Hindu tribalism (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 41).[22] This leads to the intermingling of cultural ideologies with the alleged secularity of India's reservation system as described in chapter 5.2.

Still (2013) is another author who found the Indian reservation system to be fueling new forms of discrimination and processes of differentiation, especially the polarization between Dalits and higher castes. She examined how the people's knowledge of India's reservation system in the state of Andhra Pradesh shapes their opinions and everyday behavior and interrelations. She argues that discrimination towards Dalits by higher castes is no longer articulated on the basis of ritual purity and untouchability, it has rather found new legitimation and is expressed through the language of reservations "[...] combined with ideas about habits, morality, and cleanliness [...]" (Still 2013: 68). Still (2013: 69) observed that higher castes reveal their resentment and dissociation towards Dalits by claiming that they are incapable und unworthy of performing the jobs and of holding the positions they are granted through reservations. Moreover, Still (2013: 75) illustrates how members of higher castes use their ideas of allegedly intrinsic Dalit characteristics as a justification for why they do not consider Dalits to deserve the reservations. For example, Dalits are perceived to be naturally prone to idleness, which is seen to become apparent in their low levels of cleanliness. Such "typical Dalit" characteristics are not only feared by members of upper castes to be reinforced by the granting of "unmerited" reservations but also to be spread within the larger society (Still 2013: 76). In contrast to these higher-caste views, the Dalits consulted by Still (2013: 75) placed great importance on them working hard to endure their often precarious economic situations.

According to Still (2013: 72), the concerns of upper caste members that Dalits might challenge their high-status and well-paid jobs are unfounded. Many state-employed Dalits still work in low-status jobs. Moreover, the majority of Dalits do not take on reserved seats, either because they cannot withdraw from their everyday agricultural, domestic and reproductive duties, especially in the case of very poor Dalits, or they cannot afford the investments to gain the necessary qualifications to get a reserved government job (Still 2013: 72). Despite the fact that the majority of Dalits gain little socio-economic advantage and no greater social mobility from the reservations, Still (2013: 72) observed that Dalits consider the reservation system to be vital to overcome social inequality and that they regard it to be a sign of the state acting in their favor. Members of higher castes also believe the

[22] Though this was not mentioned by the authors, the process of ethnic groups giving up cultural elements that are associated to Hinduism to appear more tribal seems to be the opposite process of Sanskritization or Hinduization (cf. chapters 2.4.2 and 3.2.3).

reservation system to be symbolic for a pro-Dalit state and thereby feel threatened and treated unfairly (Still 2013:72f). Still (2013: 72f) argues that this symbolic value attributed to the reservation system, and not the actual changes the reservation system brings about, is the most influential driver of the increasing polarization between Dalits and higher castes. According to Still (2013: 69), this polarization and these new forms of discrimination against Dalits reflect and support the theory of a changing nature of caste, away from the concept of caste as hierarchy and towards the concept of caste as identity, which was introduced in chapter 2.5. It becomes clear that affirmative action measures in India have contributed to how caste operates within India's society.

Intra-Group Inequalities are not Addressed

Another debate about India's affirmative action system questions whether only the better-off among the disadvantaged groups benefit from affirmative action measures and whether this fosters social subdivisions within Dalits and other positively discriminated groups (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 6; Still 2013: 78). Teltumbde (2009: 17) for example argues that reservations enforce intra-caste inequality (e.g. they fuel competition between Dalit sub-castes) rather than eliminating it because they are based on the erroneous assumption of castes to be "a cohesive mass". Teltumbde (2009: 18) is of the opinion that only an influential minority of Dalits has been able to benefit from reservations, while "[...] the issues of the vast majority of dalits - landless and marginal farmers in the villages and workers in the informal and unorganised sector in the urban areas - have been completely marginalized." This shows parallels to Still's (2013: 72) observations mentioned above that many Dalits cannot profit from reservations because they cannot afford leaving their daily work and because they lack the necessary qualifications. Social movements have developed for example in the state of Andhra Pradesh demanding reservations *within* reservations to prevent that the reserved seats are monopolized by the better-off within a Scheduled Caste or Tribe (Still 2013: 78; Teltumbde 2009: 17). Jaffrelot (2006: 173), similarly to Still (2013: 72) in the section above, came to the conclusion that while the political representation at the national level of Dalits has increased, the affirmative action system has not brought substantial improvement to their socio-economic situation (cf. Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 8).

Limitation of Affirmative Action to the Public Sector

A further aspect of the Indian affirmative action system which is widely discussed by scholars is its limitation to the public sector. Shah and Shneiderman (2013: 6) and Higham and Shah (2013: 90) argue that the possibilities and efficacy of the system, which is restricted to the public (governmental and educational) sector, have decreased due to the rapid privatization and liberalization of India's economy. In view of increasing market-led gains of more socio-economically privileged groups, the relative position of the targeted disadvantaged groups has deteriorated and their dependency on the state has increased (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 6). This illustrates that the relative effects of affirmative action have to be studied by taking into account the contexts of political and economic

transformations (Higham & Shah 2013: 80). An increased access to resources provided through affirmative action does not necessarily lead to an improvement of the relative socio-economic position of the targeted disadvantaged groups (Higham & Shah 2013: 90).

This is illustrated by Higham and Shah's (2013: 80) study in the Indian state of Jharkhand on affirmative action state policies concerning the provision of education for Adivasis. They found that even though the access of Adivasis to state-led education improved remarkably, their position relative to other, more advantaged groups has declined. This is partly due to the fact that state schools are considered to provide education of lower quality (Higham & Shah 2013: 90). In the meantime, more advantaged groups have been able to benefit from higher-quality private sector education (which does not target Adivasis) and have thus improved their relative position to an even higher degree (Higham & Shah 2013: 80f). As already pointed out in the previous sections, more advantaged groups have the means (i.e. the money and the social and cultural resources) to progress through the education system and to employment (Jeffrey et al. 2008 cited in Higham & Shah 2013: 82). In contrast, Adivasis and Dalits fail to transit to higher education levels or formal employment because they lack these means (Higham & Shah 2013: 82) and because they are not provided with adequate support to be prepared for the seats that are reserved for them (Weisskopf 2006: 724).

The limited socio-economic impact of public sector affirmative action and state-led education is also taken up by Chandhoke (2006: 2090), who considers India's reservation practices to have become an insufficient substitute for the underlying idea of creating a more egalitarian society in terms of equal access to collective resources for every individual. She calls the reservation practices "[...] a soft option for political elites, who reluctant to carry out deep-rooted changes in society, would rather opt to enlarge the constituency for reservations in a shrinking state sector and in a declining educational system, than transform ownership of resources in the country" (Chandhoke 2006: 2090).

5.4 Affirmative Action in Nepal

While India's affirmative action system has its roots in the colonial period, a constitutionally mandated affirmative action system is new to Nepal (cf. Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 5). Processes of negotiation about how to address persisting socio-economic inequalities have only become salient in Nepal's political discourse since the People's Movement of 1990 and especially in its current post-conflict and state-restructuring period, which is outlined in the upcoming sections (cf. Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 39, 43). This chapter looks at how affirmative action policies aiming at the social inclusion of Dalits and other discriminated groups have been adopted in Nepal not only by government actors, which are discussed in the first section of this chapter, but also by non-state actors including international development actors, which are addressed in the second section. A third section elaborates on research which has studied (potential) societal implications of these actors' affirmative action efforts, when possible with reference to the implications of affirmative action discussed above for the Indian context.

5.4.1 Affirmative Action by the Government of Nepal

The Nepali policymakers long rejected to introduce positive discrimination policies in the form of protective legislations (Höfer 1979: 206). The possibility for the formation of affirmative action policies was first mentioned in the constitution of 1990 (Kisan 2012: 115). Yet, no such policies were introduced while this constitution was in place. Generally, the post-1990 governments (ten between 1991 and 2002) did not manage to stimulate Nepal's development and democratization which led to political instability (Elmer Udry 2014: 245; Geiser 2005: 8; Krämer 2012: 37). Moreover, the constitutional monarchy remained dominated by Hindu high-caste elites (Geiser 2005: 8).

In 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M) started their People's War against the constitutional monarchy (Geiser 2005: 5). The Maoists' main goals were to end monarchy and to establish a republic with a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution (Do & Iyer 2010: 736). They aimed at the formation of a socially inclusive and federalist state (Kisan 2012: 113). Prevailing caste, ethnic and gender inequalities and the political oppression of the majority of Nepal's people cultivated wide support among low castes, ethnic groups and women for the Maoists (Geiser 2005: 6). After unsuccessful peace talks in 2001, the Royal Nepalese Army started engaging in combat and the conflict became more intense (Murshed & Gates 2005: 121). The civil war led to widespread political violence on the side of both warring parties and caused many human rights violations (Geiser 2005: 11). It lasted until 2006, when a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was established between the Maoists and the main political parties (Do & Iyer 2010: 735, 737).

The Maoists can be seen as the catalysts that brought the demands for secularism, federalism, social inclusion and the formation of a republic on the agenda of almost all political parties (Hachhethu 2009: 63f). Nepal's post-conflict discourse on restructuring the Nepali state to a "New Nepal" has aimed at ending discrimination based on caste, ethnicity, class, gender, region, language, culture and religion (Manandhar 2011: 14). Debates about affirmative action and ethnic federalism are central to this state-restructuring discourse (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 39). In 2007, the leaders of the political parties agreed on an interim constitution and on elections of a constituent assembly (Krämer 2012: 27). It was the interim constitution which officially cleared the path to state-led affirmative action policies termed "special provisions" under its "Right for equality"-article (Kisan 2012: 115):

> *"The State shall not discriminate among citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, tribe, gender, origin, language or ideological conviction or any of these. Provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the making of special provisions by law for the protection, empowerment or advancement of women, Dalits, indigenous ethnic tribes [Adivasi Janajati], Madhesi or farmers, labourers or those who belong to a class which is economically, socially or culturally backward, or children, the aged, disabled or those who are physically or mentally incapacitated."* (UNDP 2008b: 64)

Most of these groups were granted representation in state structures based on their proportions in the population (UNDP 2008b: 70; Kisan 2012: 115). Several laws were adjusted to apply to these inclusive constitutional regulations (Kisan 2012: 115). For example, The Civil Service Act 2007 defined that 45% of all civil service jobs were to be reserved for marginalized groups (14.85% for

women, 13.15% for Janajatis, 9.05% for Madhesis, 4.05% for Dalits, 2.25% for people with disabilities and 1.8% for people from backward regions) (Kisan 2012: 115). Yet, these proportions represented less than half of the actual proportions that these social groups make up in the Nepali population (Kisan 2012: 115).

In 2008, elections for a constituent assembly were held, the monarchy was abolished, and Nepal became Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal (Do & Iyer 2010: 736f). The CPN-M won the largest number of seats in the constituent assembly that were allocated through direct mandates (Krämer 2012: 38). The CPN-M's victory was due to the party having the most inclusive selection of its candidates in comparison to the other parties, where the traditional high-caste elites still dominated (Krämer 2012: 38). Moreover, people held the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) (CPN-UML) responsible for the unsuccessful system of the 1990ies (Krämer 2012: 38).

Nevertheless, the newly elected constituent assembly did not manage to agree on a new constitution for several years (Haviland 2015). The interim constitution of 2007 had stipulated that all parties have to reach a consensus on the new constitution (Krämer 2012: 38). No party made up the absolute majority in the constituent assembly (Krämer 2012: 38). Especially the federalist subdivision of the country and the question whether it should be based on ethnic delineation fueled the disagreement among the constituent assembly and provoked riots and clashes between Janajatis, Madhesis, Muslims and Hindu castes (Krämer 2012: 40). In 2011, a State Restructuring Commission was established, which should make a proposal for the country's federalist subdivision (Krämer 2012: 40). As the commission was composed of members from different social groups reflecting Nepal's cultural diversity, they could not agree on one proposal and therefore presented two proposals (Krämer 2012: 41). The first proposal, which was supported by the Janajati, Madhesi and Dalit members of the State Restructuring Commission, suggested the division into eleven federalist states based on ethnicity and cultural identity (Krämer 2012: 41). The other proposal suggested six to seven federalist states without an ethnic reference and was supported by the members of the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML representing the (high) Hindu castes (Krämer 2012: 41). In May 2012, due to the party leaders' disagreement on the federalist subdivision of Nepal and the resulting failure to draft a new constitution, the constituent assembly was dissolved (Krämer 2012: 41).

Nepal's current and second constituent assembly was elected in 2013 and is again dominated by the traditional parties Nepali Congress and CPN-UML (Haviland 2015). In September 2015, it finalized Nepal's new constitution and replaced the interim post-war constitution of 2007 only a few weeks after two devastating earthquakes had struck Nepal in April and Mai (Haviland 2015). The new constitution divides Nepal into seven federal provinces (Phuyal 2015). In line with the interim constitution of 2007, the new constitution legally defines inclusivity as one major goal of the Nepali state (Phuyal 2015). The constitution includes a great amount of fundamental rights encompassing economic, social and cultural rights (Phuyal 2015). Various institutional bodies were included into the

constitution such as a Women Commission, a Dalit Commission, an Adibasi Janajati Commission, a Madhesi Commission, a Tharu Commission and a Muslim Commission (Phuyal 2015; CSA 2015: 113-120). The wording of the earlier cited part of the "Right to equality"-article of the interim constitution of 2007 was slightly amended and new categories, e.g. sexual minorities, were added as target groups for "special provisions":

> *"The state shall not discriminate among citizens on grounds of origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, economic condition, language or geographical region, ideology and such other matters. Provided that nothing shall be deemed to bar the making of special provisions by law for the protection, empowerment or advancement of the women lagging behind socially and culturally, Dalits, Adibasi, Madhesi, Tharus, Muslims, oppressed class, backward communities, minorities, marginalized groups, peasants, laborers, youths, children, senior citizens, sexual minorities, persons with disability, pregnant, incapacitated and the helpless persons, and of the citizens who belong to backward regions and financially deprived citizens including the Khas Arya."* (CSA 2015: 6)

In the article defining the "Right to social justice", most of these target groups are given the right for employment in state structures following "the principle of inclusion" (CSA 2015: 14).

The cited "Right to equality"-article shows that the target groups for special provisions are defined by an intermingling of social and cultural as well as economic aspects of marginalization and backwardness (cf. chapter 5.2 on the construction of target groups). For example, Dalits seem to be integrated as a target group for special provisions based on the social/cultural criterion of being Dalit. A group that was added as a target group which seems to be identified using a combination of a social criterion and indicators of economic poverty are the economically poor Khas Arya, i.e. economically poor members of high hill castes. The term Khas Arya denotes Chhetris, Brahmans, Thakuris and Sanyasis (cf. CSA 2015: 36). The inclusion of Khas Arya into the groups entitled to affirmative action has been met with criticism for example by Janajati organizations (LAHURNIP 2016).

Article 40 of the new constitution especially defines the "Right of Dalits" and emphasizes their proportional inclusion in all state agencies (CSA 2015: 13). It defines legal provisions for Dalits in areas such as higher education, health care and social security, employment, housing and landownership (CSA 2015: 14). Dalits shall also be supported by the state in pursuing modern professions which are related to their traditional occupations (CSA 2015: 13). The government thereby seems to react to the demand of Dalit political actors and scholars for the protection of the Dalits' traditional artisan skills and occupations from imported competing mass products and related processes of globalization (cf. Bishwakarma 2004: 8; cf. chapter 4.3.2).

Despite the new constitution's general orientation towards inclusivity, it triggered strong protests among sections of the population, especially in the Terai region among the Madhesis and Tharus (Jha 2015). They fear that the constitution will put them at a disadvantage (Haviland 2015). They fight for example against their, in terms of population numbers (Phuyal 2015), proportional underrepresentation in the parliament, which is still dominated by men from high hill castes (Jha 2015; Haviland 2015). The subdivision of Nepal into seven new provinces is another reason for the uprising protests (Poudel 2015). The demarcation of the provinces is said to be neglecting the demands of Janajati and Madhesi

communities (Prasad 2016). Tharus for example criticize that they have been split into two provinces, in which they fear the domination of hill districts (Haviland 2015). The unequal distribution of resources among the provinces may cause further tensions in the future (Poudel 2015). Right after the promulgation of the new constitution, the Madhesi protestors initiated a blockade along the Indian border restricting the transportation of necessary goods into Nepal such as petrol, gas, food and medicines (Jha 2015). It was speculated that India was involved in the blockade in support of the Madhesi protestors (cf. Pathak 2015; Stratfor 2016). The blockade was terminated by Madhesi political leaders in February 2016, who nonetheless want to take forth their opposition (Pokharel 2016). Nepali women's groups have also protested against the new constitution as it denies women the possibility to pass on their Nepali citizenship to their children (Haviland 2015). Moreover, Hindu fundamentalist groups have expressed their disapproval as they want Nepal to be changed back from a secular state to a Hindu state (Phuyal 2015).

Despite Nepal's constitutionally mandated affirmative action policies, Middleton and Shneiderman (2008: 43) elaborate that there is a lack of a comprehensive state classification system that could form the basis of these affirmative action policies. The authors also state that, in their opinion, a state classification system should not solely rely on cultural categories to assess marginality, but rather should allow the assessment of economic, social, regional and gendered forms of marginalization. Similarly, Kisan (2012: 117) points out that the Nepali governmental affirmative action does not address the issue of multiple discrimination, i.e. the exclusion practices prevalent *within* and *between* already discriminated groups. One governmental attempt to define social discrimination which seems to take into account social as well as economic categories, and allows assessing forms of multiple discrimination is the inclusion index developed by the National Planning Commission of the Government of Nepal in 2008 (Bennett & Parajuli 2008 cited in UNDP 2009: 45). The index is composed of three sub-indices (poverty or economic exclusion, human capacity and political participation) and was computed for 80 different caste and ethnic groups, in some cases divided by gender. It reveals that Madhesi Dalits are the most excluded followed by Hill Dalits, Muslims, Terai Janajatis and Hill Janajatis. Contzen & Müller-Böker (2014: 7) criticize that the Newars were classified as the most included group, disregarding the fact that the Newars are an ethnic group which is highly segmented (e.g. along caste). The inclusion index further revealed higher exclusion levels for women than men especially among Dalits, followed by Muslims and Terai Jajanati (Bennett & Parajuli 2008 cited in UNDP 2009: 45).

5.4.2 Affirmative Action by Non-Governmental Actors

Apart from governmental actors, non-governmental actors also play a vital role in the debates about the formation of affirmative action measures in Nepal and the construction of target groups, e.g. by developing own measures of affirmative action or engaging in processes of negotiation with the Nepali government. According to Middleton and Shneiderman (2008: 43), the above mentioned lack of a comprehensive state system to classify target groups for affirmative action has led to many

development actors (often with the support of international NGOs and donors) establishing their own classification systems of marginalized groups. In the following sections, some groups of non-governmental actors who are involved in the debates over affirmative action, especially with a focus on Dalits, shall briefly be introduced.

One societal development actor that aims at the social inclusion of Dalits and has demanded affirmative action policies from the government are the various Dalit organizations which together form the Nepali Dalit social movement. A first organized Nepali Dalit social movement had already emerged in the late 1940ies (Kisan 2005: 89). Of the many organizations involved in the movement, some are affiliated to political parties, while others try to remain independent from political parties, for example in order not to have to defer Dalit issues in favor of party issues (Kisan 2005: 117, 135, 151, 161f). According to Kisan (2005: 135), ideological differences between the different Dalit organizations have hampered the unity and effectiveness of the Dalit social movement. Though the organizations share common goals of an egalitarian society and of the end of caste discrimination and untouchability, there is no consensus among the organizations on what kind of political and economic system, and on what kind of state mechanisms are necessary to achieve these goals (Kisan 2005: 139f). Although the call for a state-led Dalit reservation system is widely shared among the Dalit social movement, the way these reservations should be organized is still subject to debate (Kisan 2005: 149). Kisan (2005: 173) criticizes that the leadership of Dalit organizations often remains in the hands of a few Dalit castes, while many other Dalit castes are not included in the movement (Kisan 2005: 173). Pariyar and Lovett (2016: 134) also agree that the Dalit social movement has not yet managed to unite and develop a unified political agenda. They mention the heterogeneous composition of Nepali Dalits along factors such as religion, caste, region, class, gender, occupation, age, language or urbanity and rurality as a reason for their difficulty to unify (Pariyar & Lovett 2016: 137, 142). Folmar (2007: 50) adds that status differences and conflicts between Dalits cause debates in the forging of a political Dalit identity. In line with the last listed factor by Pariyar and Lovett, Folmar (2007: 41) as well as Cameron (2007: 14f, 22) criticize that the daily experiences of rural Dalits, including their interdependency with high-caste landowners and their ways of resistance (cf. chapter 4.2) are not accurately considered in the formation of a modern political Dalit identity and in the social reforms promoted by urban Dalit activists. Cameron (2007: 15) argues that this is due to the fact that activists, who are influenced by ideologies of modernity and development, are prone to consider rural Dalit life to be cut off from processes of progress.

Development-oriented Dalit NGOs are non-governmental actors that are often distinguished from Dalit organizations, especially from the party-affiliated Dalit organizations (cf. Kisan 2005: 162f). They particularly target Dalits and try to address and reverse their discrimination (Cameron 2007:17). “Their goals are [...] raising the awareness and consciousness of Dalit communities; raising issues of caste/ethnic discrimination and untouchability at national and international forums; ascertaining Dalit socio-economic situations; publicizing and broadcasting incidents of untouchability and caste

discrimination; exerting moral pressure on the government; and mobilizing human rights activists and intellectuals to take up the Dalit cause" (Kisan 2005: 163). Apart from Dalit NGOs, many other national and international NGOs, which do not specifically label themselves as Dalit NGOs, engage in projects in which they specifically define Dalits as their target groups (Cameron 2007: 17).

Many international donor agencies have started to fund development interventions targeting Dalits and have become important actors influencing how Dalits (or other targeted marginalized groups) develop their political identity (Cameron 2007: 17). International development actors are involved in the policy level as well as the programmatic level of classifying communities for the sake of defining target groups for affirmative action (Shneiderman 2013: 46f). In the reviewed research literature discussing current debates about India's affirmative action system, international development actors were not frequently mentioned. It is assumed that international development actors might take on a more salient role in Nepal's debates about affirmative action than in India. The following chapter illustrates that the role of international development actors has been ambivalent in their attempts to promote the social inclusion of marginalized groups in Nepal.

5.4.3 Implications of Affirmative Action in Nepal

Shah and Shneiderman (2013: 7) argue that in view of the complex and heterogeneous demographics of the Nepali society, challenges observed in India for affirmative action (cf. chapter 5.3.2) will also emerge in Nepal if the affirmative action measures are to rely on identifying target groups based on group identities. Middleton and Shneiderman (2008: 40) state that possible administrative and social implications of affirmative action policies are rarely discussed in Nepal by the groups demanding them as well as by the government. They imply that the problematic consequences of India's reservation system do not seem to deter Nepali political actors to consider similar policies "with relative optimism" (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 39).

According to Shah and Shneiderman (2013: 8), it is yet too early to analyze implications of the (state-led) affirmative action measures regarding their goal of transforming inequality in Nepal. Correspondingly, studies focusing on what effects affirmative action in Nepal has already had in general and on Nepali Dalit communities in particular appear to be rare. The mentioned authors, along with other scholars, however already discuss (possible) implications of affirmative action policies in Nepal, often in relation to the Indian experiences. They take up debates about how to conceptualize the target groups of such policies, some with special regard to the social movements of Janajati communities. Their findings shall briefly be introduced in the following sections, in particular concerning the ambivalent role that international development actors can take on when they support marginalized groups in their demands for social inclusion.

Fostering of Inter- and Intra-Group Differences

The possible risk of fostering group differences as well as inequalities that persist within constructed target groups if they are defined using cultural or social indicators (e.g. caste or ethnicity), which has

been observed in India, is also prominently discussed by scholars investigating affirmative action in Nepal (cf. chapters 5.2 and 5.3.2). The problematic implications of targeting marginalized groups by using their caste and ethnic affiliation as the most important social categories pose a challenge to Nepali state-actors as well as social scientists and international development actors when they develop affirmative action measures (Shneiderman 2013: 42; Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 8).

Shneiderman (2013: 42, 50) addresses this issue by studying affirmative action for Janajati communities and its embeddedness in Nepal's current post-conflict process of state and ethnic restructuring. She suggests that, on the one hand, the efforts of affirmative action to identify and classify marginalized ethnic groups might raise their ethnic awareness and demand for recognition, and might reduce ethnic conflict. On the other hand, development interventions that selectively target marginalized ethnic groups based on their cultural backgrounds might foster and politicize ethnic boundaries (Shneiderman 2013: 42, 50).

A similar argument is raised by Contzen and Müller-Böker (2014: 7, 9): They also identify the current post-conflict political discourse in Nepal as the "paradigmatic background" based on which the Nepali government and many donors and NGOs define their target groups with respect to social indicators (e.g. caste, ethnicity, gender, religion or region), which are combined with economic indicators. They regard this combination of indicators to generally consider the livelihood realities of the target groups (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 10). Nevertheless, their research revealed that by operationalizing social discrimination according to the origin (birth) of people (i.e. their caste or ethnic affiliation), caste and ethnic consciousness is reinforced (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 7). The resulting increased sense of belonging to a specific caste and ethnic group causes processes of "othering" (differentiation) between groups and can perpetuate the caste system, i.e. the social categories that cause poverty and are actually intended to be dissolved (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 7f, 9f). Furthermore, people that may be in need of benefits of affirmative action measures (e.g. economically poor Brahmans) might be excluded as target groups if social categories are focused on (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 9). The targeting concept moreover stimulates people with mixed marriage backgrounds into strategically emphasizing one or the other aspect of their ethnic or caste identity (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 7). Additionally, heterogeneities within caste or ethnic groups are not considered (e.g. economic inequalities within Dalits) (Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 9).

The definition of target groups based on social indicators is not only a matter of scholarly debates. This is illustrated by Cameron (2007: 14, 16), who elaborates on how the usage of the term Dalit is disputed among Nepali Dalit activists and NGOs. Supporters of its use consider it to unify different groups which share similar pasts of oppression, stigmatization and discrimination (Cameron 2007: 16). In addition, the term is globally known and politically accepted in South Asia, which makes it politically powerful (Cameron 2007: 16). Some advocates of the term consider the influence of international donors as particularly significant in shaping the political relevance of a political Dalit identity and consider it necessary to use the term Dalit to gain international donors for the Dalit cause

(Cameron 2007: 16f). Others disapprove of the assumption to be dependent on donors when trying to promote social change and plead for the term to be understood as a temporary term which should only be in place until the condition of oppression it describes is overcome (Cameron 2007: 17). There are also general opponents of the term Dalit who believe that the term "[...] perpetuates and reinforces the boundaries of exclusion, rather than ultimately eradicating them" as it emphasizes the lower status of Dalits as opposed to non-Dalits (Cameron 2007: 17f). Furthermore, some consider the term to disguise social inequalities that may persist within Dalit groups, for example inequalities connected to gender and class, as also mentioned above (Cameron 2007: 18).

The Role of International Development Actors

The involvement of international donors in supporting affirmative action measures is subject to debates. According to Shah and Shneiderman (2013: 8), the efforts of international development agencies in classifying Nepal's population for the sake of affirmative action can be compared to the role British colonialists played in classifying India's society (cf. chapter 5.3.1). International donor agencies are often confronted with the paradox that their intention to promote the empowerment and social inclusion of targeted groups can actually lead to the groups becoming politically radicalized (Shneiderman 2013: 50; cf. Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 8). International donors run the risk of facing accusations of being political and of fueling the conflicts between different social groups, for example the debate over ethnic federalism (Sapkota 2012: 74). This ambivalent role of international donors shall be illustrated with an example concerning Janajati communities.

Since the start of the new millennium, programs such as the national non-governmental umbrella organization Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) have started to create strategies to identify ethnic groups in order to promote their political activity (Shneiderman 2013: 43). The legal category "indigenous nationalities" (Adivasi Janajati) was introduced by the Nepali government in 2002 in the National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities act, which formally recognized 59 Janajati communities (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42).[23] In 2004, NEFIN established a classification scheme of these different Janajati communities for future affirmative action purposes, which linked each community to a certain economically defined marginalization status ("endangered", "highly marginalized", "marginalized", "disadvantaged" and "advantaged") (Shneiderman 2013: 43; Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42). This classification scheme was established as part of the Janajati Empowerment Project which was funded by the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42). Many (international) development actors have since then used the classification system of NEFIN to selectively target the communities classified as "endangered" or "highly marginalized" (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42). This has supported the naturalization of NEFIN's classification scheme in political discourses (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42). It has also created some resentment among

[23] At the same time, the National Dalit Commission identified 22 different Dalit castes (Shah & Shneiderman 2013: 6).

the once politically unified Janajati community because some groups feel that they have been given less donor funds than others, or they criticize that NEFIN is dominated by members belonging to "advantaged" Janajati groups (Middleton & Shneiderman 2008: 42f). These consequences point to the mentioned fostering of inter- and intra-group differences. In 2010 and 2011, NEFIN organized national strikes to draw attention to its demands for the consideration of Janajati issues in the drafting of the new constitution. In view of this political agitation, DfID discontinued funding NEFIN which led to the further radicalization of the indigenous organization (Shneiderman 2013: 50).

According to Shneiderman (2013: 53), the Nepali state and its foreign donor agencies need to find a way to design affirmative action policies that do not foster cultural differences but strengthen marginalized communities to become recognized as "fully competent political actors". Development actors have to be aware of the practical realities and discourses they enter and in doing so, they have to reflect on the consequences of adopting (discursively constructed) cultural or social categories to selectively target individual marginalized groups (Shneiderman 2013: 5; Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 1, 11).

6 The Employment Fund Nepal

A major goal of this thesis is to critically relate the scholarly knowledge concerning Nepali Dalits and affirmative action discussed in the above chapters to the development sector practices adopted by Swiss development actors within the development program called Employment Fund Nepal (EF). The following chapters shift the focus to the empirical case study of the EF. The upcoming sections provide a descriptive introduction into the EF and its modalities. Subsequently, the design and process of the case study will be outlined.

6.1 Socio-Economic Background and Objective of the Employment Fund

According to the United Nations Nepal Information Platform (2012), the unemployment rate among Nepali youth aged 15-29 years is 3.6%. When adding this rate up with the rates for involuntary part-time work, inadequate earnings and skills mismatch, this results in a total rate for labor underutilization of 40% (cf. CBS 2009: 22, 89). Of the 400'000 youth who enter the Nepali labor market every year, the majority has not acquired any skills training which would support them in finding employment (DfID 2014: 2). Many formal government-sponsored Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions request that potential trainees must have acquired a School Leaving Certificate (SLC), which is obtained after completing secondary-level education, i.e. after the 10^{th} grade of formal schooling (DfID 2014: 2). Only 12% of Nepali youth reach SLC level (CBS 2014: 209). Therefore, most of them are not able to access the formal TVET sector (DfID 2014: 2). As elaborated in chapter 4.1.1, such limited economic opportunities and low levels of education are closely linked with the poverty of many Nepali households and often affect socially discriminated groups more severely than others.

The EF operates within this described socio-economic context. The overall aim of the EF is "[...] to improve the living condition of economically poor and socially discriminated youth in Nepal" (EFS 2015a: 5). The EF finances short-term, three-month vocational skills trainings combined with business and life skills training primarily for poor and discriminated, under- or unemployed youth aged 18 to 40 who have low levels of educational attainment (EFS 2015a: 4f). The purpose of the EF is not only to provide vocational training but also to facilitate the youth's entry into the labor market and to ensure their gainful employment[24] (EFS 2015a: 5). The EF also supports business-minded youth in establishing their own micro-enterprises and in creating jobs for others (EFS 2015a: 5f).

6.2 Organizational Structure and Collaboration with Private Sector Training and Employment Service Providers

The EF was established under a bilateral agreement between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Government of Nepal in 2008 (EFS 2015a: 5). In 2008 and 2010 respectively, the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom and the World Bank (WB) also started funding the project through separate project agreements with the Swiss non-governmental organization HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (here referred to as Helvetas) (EFS 2012b: 4; 2015a: 5). Helvetas leads the Employment Fund Secretariat (EFS), which manages the EF and which is based in Kathmandu (EFS 2015a: 5). The Employment Fund Steering Committee (EFSC) is the governing body of the EF (EFS 2015a: 3). It is chaired by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and includes representatives of the Government of Nepal and the donor agencies. After the project period of the EF was extended in 2014, the termination of the project was set to June 2015 (EFS 2015a: 4; DfID 2015: ii).[25]

The EFS collaborates with private sector Training and Employment Service Providers (T&Es) who implement the vocational skills trainings (EFS 2015g: 5). The EF is hence based on a Public-Private Partnership (Seithel 2016: 42). The EFS, as a public non-profit actor, stands on the one side of this Public-Private Partnership, the T&Es, as private for-profit actors, on the other (Seithel 2016: 42, 48, 59). The EFS manages the EF according to the guidelines and policies approved by the EFSC. The EFS is responsible for monitoring the training and employment services of the T&Es, for innovating new occupations and approaches, for conducting labor market research and for building the capacity of the T&Es regarding their training and management qualities (EFS 2014c: 5). The T&Es have to (re-)apply annually for the collaboration with the EFS (EFS 2015g: 5). In the beginning of this annual application phase, the EFS publicly invites T&Es to submit a so-called Letter of Intent (EFS 2009: 15). In the Letter of Intent, the T&Es provide a detailed organizational profile of their companies

[24] "Gainful employment" is defined as having an income of at least 4'600 NPR per month for a minimum of six months after training completion (EFS 2015g: 5, 7).

[25] After the earthquakes in Nepal in April and May 2015, the SDC continued funding skills trainings under a new EF component called "Employment Fund Skills for Reconstruction" to train earthquake victims for example as carpenters, plumbers or masons (EFS 2016c; cf. Helvetas 2016: 2). This current project phase initiated mid-2015 is not taken into consideration in this thesis. Though this thesis examines already terminated project phases, for stylistic reasons, the present tense is used to refer to the EF.

including information on their regions of operation, the types of skills trainings they offer, their target groups and their expertise (EFS 2014a). The T&Es who are pre-selected by the EFS, based on their Letter of Intent, are provided with training on how to conduct a labor market assessment called Rapid Marked Appraisal (RMA) (EFS 2009: 15). After conducting a RMA to analyze the labor market demands in the districts they want to operate in, the T&Es submit their service proposals with a detailed cost and implementation plan for their training courses (DfID 2014: 5; EFS 2009: 15). After the submission and acceptance of the service proposals, the contractual annual agreements between the EFS and the selected T&Es are completed (EFS 2009: 15). The T&Es are then responsible for implementing the following program process:

- Announcing the training courses (e.g. through newspapers, interpersonal communication, radio stations)
- conducting the application process of the trainees and selecting the trainees,
- conducting the training events (most T&Es deliver trainings in a variety of trades),
- arranging the attendance of their training graduates at the skills test offered by the government-led National Skill Testing Board (NSTB),
- linking their graduates with employment by developing Employment Placement Plans, and
- ensuring and verifying their graduates' gainful employment status (EFS 2012b).

All project stages – pre, during and post-training – are thoroughly monitored by the EFS, and the T&Es are regularly given orientations about the monitoring system (EFS 2012b; 2015g: 19). The EF's organizational structures can be summarized with the following Figure 4:

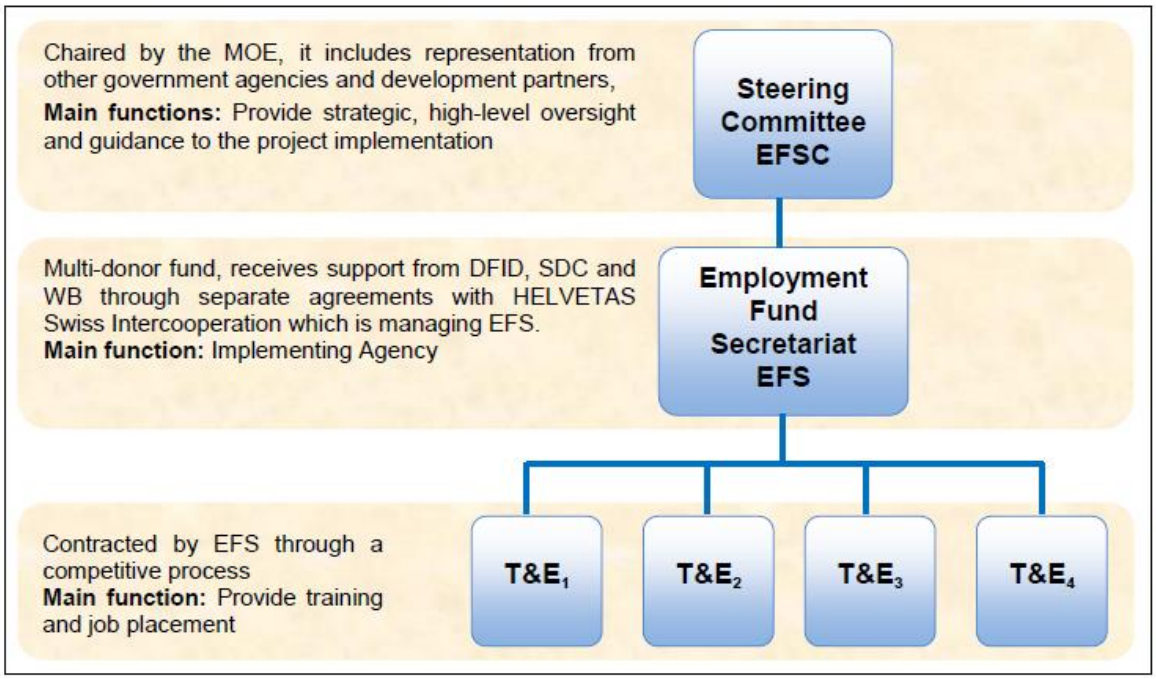

Figure 4: Organizational Structure of the EF
(Source: EFS 2012a: 30)

6.3 Program Components and Target Groups

In 2014, the EF was restructured into two components: Path to Prosperity (PtP), which is the larger component, and Micro-Enterprising for Job Creation (MEJC) (EFS 2015a: 5f). The PtP component aims at linking the trained youth to gainful employment. PtP continued the EF's former modalities but with a stronger focus on poor and disadvantaged youth (EFS 2015g: 5). MEJC was introduced as a new component in which the skills trainings are aimed at supporting business-minded youth in establishing their own micro-enterprises and in creating jobs for others (EFS 2015a: 5f).

As an overall target of the EF, 50% of the total number of trainees have to be women and 60% have to belong to a Disadvantaged Group (DAG)[26] (EFS 2013b: 4). There are four target group categories (see Table 3; EFS 2016a). The target groups of the two program components differ in one aspect: Trainees of MEJC do not have to meet the criterion of "economically poor" (EFS 2016a). Still, MEJC also intends to ultimately benefit the economically poor and unemployed youth by training potential future employers (EFS 2014e: 2). The target group categories are tied to different financial incentive payments which will be explained in chapter 6.4.

Table 3: EF Target Group Categories
(Adapted from EFS 2014d: 14; 2015g: 13 & 2016a)[27]

Category	Path to Prosperity (PtP)	Micro Enterprising for Job Creation (MEJC)	Proportion of the training costs as additional incentives
A	Economically poor women from discriminated groups (Dalit, Janajati, Madhesi) and groups with special needs (widows, disabled, ex-combatants, internally displaced, HIV/AIDS infected etc.)	Women from discriminated groups and groups with special needs	80%
B	Economically poor women from all castes/ethnicities not referred to under category A	Women from all castes/ethnicities not referred to under category A	70%
C	Economically poor men from discriminated groups and groups with special needs	Men from discriminated groups and groups with special needs	50%
D	Economically poor men from all castes/ethnicities not referred to under category C	Men from all castes/ethnicities not referred to under category C	40%

Apart from the already mentioned age range of 18-40 years, a further eligibility criterion is that the targeted youth should not have passed their SCL (EFS 2010: 1). But, due to many T&Es demanding the eligibility of participants having passed their SLC, this criteria has been loosened since 2012 for certain trades, in most cases only for women (Johanson & Sharma 2013: xvi; EFS 2012b: 8).

[26] The EFS uses the SDC's definition for Disadvantaged Groups: "DAG are groups of economically poor people that also suffer from social discrimination based on gender, and caste/ethnicity." (EFS 2013b: 4). How the SDC and the EFS conceptualize their target groups is discussed further in chapter 8.1.

[27] Three different sources of the EFS were combined in this table. The sources show slight terminological differences in describing the target groups.

To be able to reach out to extremely poor households through the PtP component, the EFS collaborates with the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF), a program implemented by the Government of Nepal, and the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) implemented by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (EFS 2014b: 17). T&Es may only select their PtP participants from people identified as poor by the well-being rankings of PAF or LGCDP (EFS 2014d: 1f).[28] Before the introduction of PtP, the EF relied on self-declarations of the participants to assess their economic status (Ahmed et al. 2014: 9). If a community has not been rated based on the PAF or LGCDP well-being ranking, which is exceptional, the poverty definitions of PAF still have to be applied to the self-declaration of potential trainees (EFS 2014d: 4f).

As another means to reach out to its target groups, the EFS collaborates with various so called outreach partners, which are organizations advocating the causes of poor and disadvantaged groups, e.g. the Feminist Dalit Organisation, the Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Society or the National Federation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (EFS 2016b). These organizations help the T&Es to establish links to the desired target groups (EFS 2013a: 9; 2015g: 14). Additionally, to facilitate the enrollment of people living in remote areas, T&Es conduct mobile trainings by arranging temporary training facilities in such remote places. Moreover, the EFS spreads news and information about the EF on various media channels and organizes events such as skill fairs, during which T&Es can advertise their training events (EFS 2015a: 16).

The technical skills trainings offered by the EF include, for example, skills needed in the construction industry, plumbing, furniture making, mechanical and electrical skills, cooking and hospitality, tailoring, handicraft and agricultural skills (EFS 2014b: 38f). In 2013, the EF introduced multi-skills trainings to enhance the income and employability of its trainees, in which the trainees are provided with one month additional training in a further occupation (EFS 2014b: 8; 2015g: 9). Special focus is placed on the enrollment of women in non-traditional trades, i.e. trades that are stereotypically perceived as male-based occupations (EFS 2015e: 1), for instance, electrical wiring, television repair, mobile phone repair and masonry (EFS 2015b: 8). Women are enrolled in non-traditional trades "[...] to demonstrate the capabilities of women in society" and because these trades yield higher incomes than traditionally female-dominated trades (e.g. beautician, tailoring or cloth weaving) (EFS 2015b: 19; 2015e: 1).

In addition to the technical skills training, participants in the PtP component are provided with support packages in the form of life skills, functional literacy and numeracy skills and business skills training to facilitate their integration into the labor market (EFS 2014d: 12). Mandatory five-day life skills trainings address topics such as social and communication skills, coping skills, decision-making, self-

[28] Within the well-being ranking of PAF, households are classified into four categories: "hard core poor" (less than 3 months of food security), "medium poor" (3 to 6 months of food security), "poor" (6 to 11 months of food security) and "non-poor" (12 or more months of food security) (PAF 2015: 35). LGCDP similarly ranks communities into the four categories "pro-poor" (less than 3 months of food security), "poor" (3 to 6 months of food security), "medium" (6 to 9 months of food security) and "well-off" (more than 9 months food security) (EFS 2014d: 3). People who fall into the PAF category "non-poor" or into the LGCDP category "well-off" are not eligible for EF trainings within the PtP component (EFS 2014d: 3).

awareness, work attitude, labor rights, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, gender and violence (EFS 2014d: 12f; 2015d: 2). Literacy and numeracy skills training is provided on a demand-basis (EFS 2014d: 13). All PtP participants attend a one-day business orientation course (EFS 2014d: 13). Participants who are interested in self-employment can attend an optional five-day training in business skills and must be supported by the T&Es to establish links to cooperatives and banks (EFS 2014d: 13). Apart from these support packages, all PtP trainees receive on-the-job training for at least one third of the total 390 training hours, which should enable the trainees to have some income even during the training period (EFS 2014d: 10). To improve the access of very poor youth to PtP trainings, trainees are provided with additional services in the form of food, compensation for transportation costs, accommodation and child care facilities (EFS 2015a: 63). Training hours are limited to 5 hours a day to allow PtP participants to still follow their daily chores and work (EFS 2014b: 47).

The MEJC component also provides training packages complementary to the technical skills trainings, which are however solely focused on entrepreneurial skills, e.g. five-days business motivation training on basic business education (EFS 2014e: 4f). Like PtP participants, MEJC trainees attend one month on-the-job training, preferably in a micro-enterprise similar to their own future businesses (EFS 2014e: 9). In the six months following the completion of training, MEJC graduates attend four meetings called business clinics to exchange their experiences (EFS 2014e: 11).

6.4 Results- and Incentive-Based Payment System and Results Monitoring

The EF applies a results-based and incentive-based (differential pricing) financing system (EFS 2015g: 6). Results-based means that the T&Es do not receive any payment before the completion of a training event and are paid only after delivering the agreed services (DfID 2014: 12; EFS 2015b: 6f). They have to fully pre-finance the training costs (EFS 2015g: 7). To be qualified to receive payment, the T&Es have to ensure that their trainees successfully complete the trainings and that they take the skills test by the NSTB (EFS 2015g: 7). The T&Es further need to ensure continuous gainful employment for their PtP graduates for six months[29] or successfully support their MEJC graduates in establishing an enterprise and in creating jobs for others (EFS 2015g: 5, 7).

For successful results, the T&Es receive three installment payments (EFS 2015g: 13). These payments are based on the so-called outcome price, which is calculated for each trainee by adding the training costs, which the T&Es have to finance in advance, to category-based incentives (EFS 2014d: 15). Whereas category A is related to a high incentive of 80% of the training costs, category B, C and D yield slightly lower incentives with 70%, 50% and 40% respectively (EFS 2015g: 13; see Table 3).[30] Through this differential pricing system, which is a form of affirmative action, the EF aims at encouraging the T&Es to target women and other DAGs (EFS 2015g: 6, 13).

The three installment payments are linked to different stages of the results monitoring in which the

[29] As mentioned, gainful employment is set at an income level of at least 4'600 NPR per month.

[30] For example, if the training costs for a trainee belonging to category A were 20'000 NPR, the respective incentives would be 16'000 NPR (= 80% of 20'000 NPR). This would result in an outcome price of 36'000 NPR.

mentioned results are verified (see Figure 5). As a first stage, upon verifying how many of the trainees have successfully graduated from the training and how many have taken the mandatory skills test (cf. EFS 2012b: 32), the first installment payment of 40% of the outcome-price is paid to the T&Es for successful cases (EFS 2015g: 7). As further stages of the results monitoring, random stratified samples of the graduates of a T&E are jointly visited at their workplace by the EF monitoring staff and T&E representatives three and six months after the completion of training (DfID 2014: 14; EFS 2012b: 47, 58): In the three-months verification, the monitoring team verifies the claims of the T&Es about the number of PtP graduates who are employed and the number of MEJC graduates who have established an enterprise for a 10-15% sample (EFS 2012b: 47; 2015g: 20, 22). In the six-months verification, the six-month income is verified for a random 30-40% sample of the PtP graduates a T&E claims to be gainfully employed (EFS 2012b: 47; 2014c: 7; 2015g: 20, 22).[31] A random sample of 30-40% is also verified for the number of MEJC graduates a T&E claims to have created an additional job (EFS 2014c: 7; 2015g: 20, 22). For the second and third installments the results of the three- and six-months verification are extrapolated to the cohort of the T&Es' claims (EFS 2012b: 44; 2014e: 14). Upon this verification process, the T&Es receive 25% of the outcome-price after the three-months verification, and the remaining 35% of the outcome-price after the six-months verification provided a graduate was verified or extrapolated as a successful case (EFS 2014c: 15). Thus, payments to the T&Es are based on the extrapolation of the monitoring results and not the T&Es' initial claims.

An example shall illustrate this procedure: A T&E claims 1'200 of 1'500 PtP graduates to be gainfully employed after six months, which equals a success rate of 80%. As part of the six-months verification, the EFS then draws a 30-40% sample from the 1'200 graduates claimed to be gainfully employed. If this sample shows that only 50% of these graduates are actually gainfully employed, this 50% rate is used to extrapolate the number of gainfully employed graduates to the whole lot originally reported as gainfully employed. In this example, this results in the T&E being paid for the gainful employment of 600 graduates instead of the initially claimed 1'200 graduates (EFS 2012b: 44f).

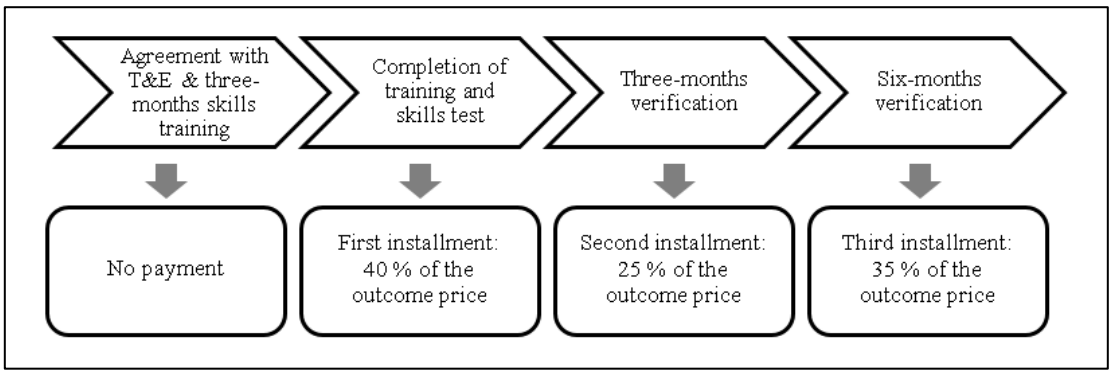

Figure 5: Installment Payments to T&Es and their Link to the Results Monitoring
(Adapted from EFS 2015g: 7)

[31] If graduates are not immediately employed after training, T&Es can request a two-month grace period so that the income will be calculated over six months chosen out of a total of eight months after training (EFS 2012b: 44).

6.5 Outreach and Outcomes 2014

Since the EF's establishment in 2008, more than 90'000 youths were trained, of which over 70% were verified to be gainfully employed (EFS 2015a: 3, 5). In 2014, the latest reporting year as of writing this thesis, the EFS cooperated with 39 T&Es who conducted 815 trainings in 45 trades for PtP and 50 trades for MEJC in 67 districts of Nepal (EFS 2015a: 3, 9). In the same year, 16'008 youths were trained, which exceeded the annual target of 15'800 (EFS 2015a: 3; see Figure 6). 72% of the 12'986 PtP participants of 2014 were verified to be gainfully employed and 81% of the MEJC participants established their own enterprise with 67% creating an additional job (EFS 2015a: 7). 55% of all trainees in 2014 were women and 70% belonged to DAGs including 11% Dalits, of whom 60% were women, and 51% Janajatis, of whom 56% were women (EFS 2015a: 3f).

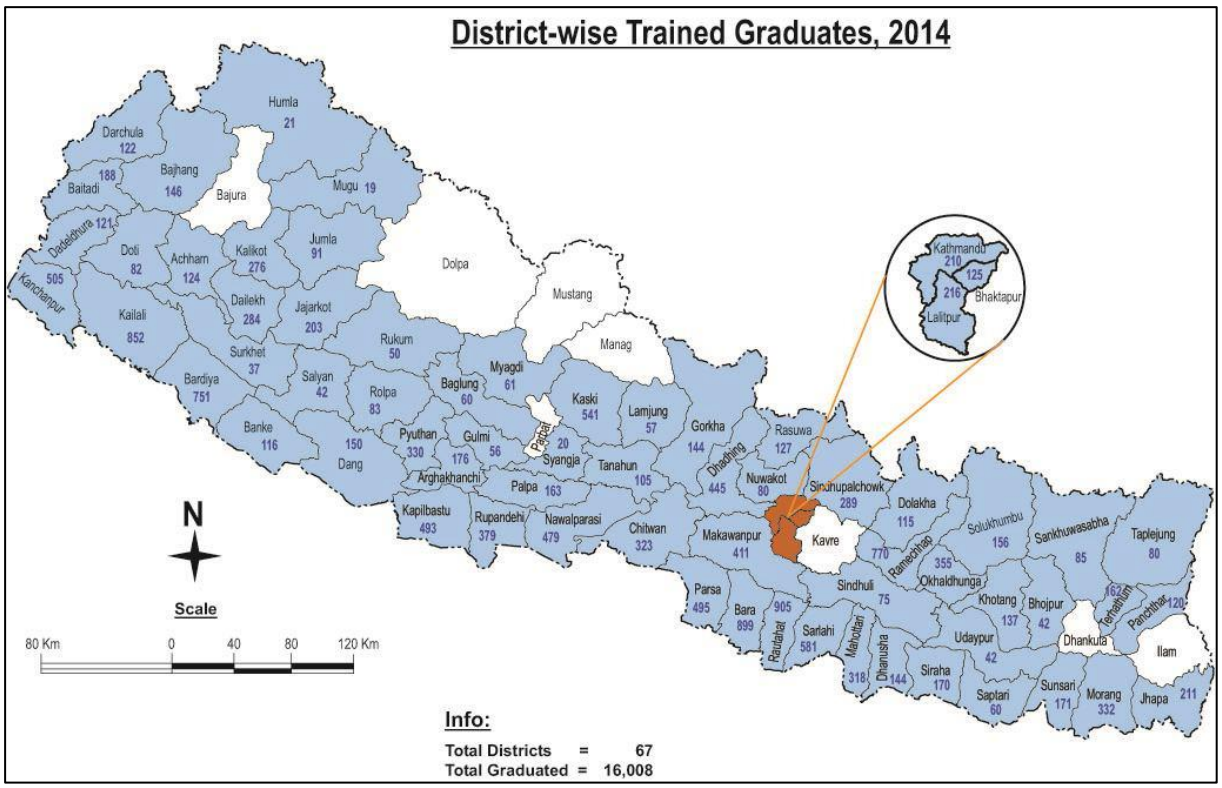

Figure 6: Map of Nepal Showing the Number of EF Graduates per District in 2014
(Source: EFS 2015a: 43)

6.6 Collaboration with the Governmental Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector

To institutionalize the tools and processes of the EF in the formal TVET sector, the EFS collaborates with two government-led programs: The Enhanced Vocational Education and Training (EVENT) project by the MOE and the Skills Development Project (SDP) by the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training, which is funded by the Asian Development Bank (EFS 2015a: 6). The EVENT project has already taken up many of the EF's modalities, e.g. the result-based financing, the affirmative action for poor and disadvantaged youth and women through differential incentive-pricing,

RMA and the monitoring process which is conducted by joint EVENT and EF monitoring teams (EFS 2014c: 7; 2015g: 27).

7 Case Study of the Employment Fund

The EF was selected as a case study for this thesis to empirically shed light on the overall research question of how the societal conditions of Dalits and associated caste and gender relations are taken into consideration and translated by development sector actors adopting affirmative action targeting approaches in Nepal. The EF serves well as a case study for several reasons (cf. chapter 6): It has a strong focus on targeting Dalits, women and other DAGs through affirmative action measures, which are integrated into the project's result- and incentive-based payment system. The project has also had a sizeable, almost nation-wide outreach, which allowed for the enrollment of people from various socio-cultural and regional groups. Furthermore, the EF is supported by three internationally eminent donor agencies and its modalities, including its affirmative action measures, are being adopted by institutional bodies of the Government of Nepal. Though the EF is an individual case, the socio-cultural, economic, political and development sector context it is embedded in is comparable with the context of many similar development interventions in Nepal (and possibly even other countries with similar societal caste structures which face their own "Dalit issue"). Thus, the case study of the EF, which is an information-rich case creating context-dependent knowledge, might allow for some degree of generalization of its results (cf. Flyvbjerg 2006: 223, 228; Patton 1990: 169). For these reasons and the reason of feasibility, no other development projects were taken into consideration as case studies for this thesis.

The broad scholarly background of this thesis (cf. chapter 2 to 5) made it possible to decide on various research questions to be posed at the case study of the EF. Thus, the thesis does not miss a theoretical anchoring, but it still adopts an open theoretical understanding (cf. Schmidt 2007: 447). A first research question concerns the policy and official documentation level surrounding the EF. Further research questions are posed at various actors involved in the EF. The research questions read as follows:

How are debates concerning the societal conditions of Dalits ("the Dalit issue"), associated caste and gender relations, and their affirmative action targeting taken into consideration and presented by ***the EFS, Helvetas and the SDC on a policy and official documentation level****?*

What do ***EF staff members, TVET officials and donor representatives*** *mention as challenges of the affirmative action targeting practices such as the ones applied by the EF? What do they mention as effects of these targeting practices on caste and gender relations and issues of discrimination? What do they imply about their view on debates concerning Dalits (the "Dalit issue") and about how they are taken into consideration in these targeting practices?*

*What do **beneficiaries of the EF**, especially Dalits, say about their integration into the EF (e.g. regarding positive discrimination) and the treatment they encountered (e.g. regarding their caste affiliation)? What do they say or imply about the effects of their participation in the EF and their general views on caste and gender relations and issues of discrimination?*

*How do the **T&Es** implement the affirmative action targeting modalities of the EF and what challenges do they face? What do T&Es say or imply about the effects of the affirmative action targeting on caste and gender relations and issues of discrimination?*

As the possibility to standardize qualitative research is limited, a central quality criterion of qualitative research is to guarantee the intersubjective comprehensibility of one's research process (Steinke 2007: 324). To ensure intersubjective comprehensibility for this thesis, the following two chapters firstly give an in-depth overview of the data and methods used for the case study of the EF, and secondly reflect about the limitations of its research process.

7.1 Data and Methods

To address the above outlined research questions, different sources of data were investigated (see Table 4). To examine the first research question, a range of policy papers and other official documents authored by the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS were selected and reviewed. This document selection and review is described in the following first section. The remaining research questions are addressed by analyzing primary data material, mostly qualitative semi-structured interviews, that was collected during and was made available by the qualitative impact study[32] of the EF. The data collection and analysis of this primary data material is presented in a second and third section.

Table 4: Data Sources Used for the Case Study of the EF

Data Sources	**Data Collection**
Policy papers and official documents of the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS	Selected for this thesis
Semi-structured expert interviews with EF staff, TVET officials and EF donor representatives	Collected as part of the precedent **impact study** of the EF
Semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions with EF beneficiaries, T&Es and other EF-related actors	Collected as part of the precedent **impact study** of the EF

[32] As briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter 1, the impact study of the EF was conducted in 2015 by a team of the Department of Geography of the University of Zurich (UZH), which consisted of Prof. Dr. Ulrike Müller-Böker, Head of the Human Geography Unit, Dr. Pia Hollenbach, associate researcher at the Political Geography Unit, my fellow student Sunna Seithel and me, Annabelle Jaggi, the author of this Master's thesis, together with a team of the Nepali research firm Research Inputs and Development Action (RIDA), which was also composed of four people: Jeevan Raj Lohani as principal researcher, Uttam Prasad Upadhyay as consultant and Kamana Upreti and Barsha Bhetwal as associate researchers. The overall aim of the impact study was to get a deeper qualitative understanding of the impact the EF has had on its participants, especially on women and other disadvantaged groups (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 17).

7.1.1 Selection and Review of Policy Papers and other Official Documents

To investigate the policy and official documentation level of the EF, 27 policy papers and other official documents published by the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS were purposefully selected and reviewed (see Table 5). The SDC is a major collaborating partner of Helvetas and Helvetas aligns its country program with the SDC's cooperation strategy for Nepal (cf. Helvetas 2011: 12, 19). Because of this and due to the set focus of this thesis on Swiss development actors, as well as for reasons of conciseness, documents of the other two donor agencies financing the EF (DfID and the WB) were not taken into consideration for this selection. For both, the SDC and Helvetas, two respectively three documents were selected including the organizations' cooperation strategies for Nepal. This rather small selection was considered adequate to get an insight into the organizations' general development approaches. The document versions were preferred which were valid for the project phases of the EF covered in this thesis (2008 to mid-2015). Helvetas' latest annual report for Nepal for the year 2015 and its latest country strategy for the years 2016-2020 do not meet this criterion. The selection of documents authored by the EFS comprises 22 documents and covers the EF annual reports 2008 to 2014, a range of EF policy papers and guidelines, and all four-page "Learning series" that were published by the EFS and are probably directed at a wider development practitioners audience. As the focus lies on documents published by the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS, documents about the EF such as tracer or impact studies that are authored by external agencies and which were mostly written under contract to the EFS or Helvetas, were not included in the selection of documents. Most of the documents were accessed online on the respective organization's official website. Some were made available by EFS staff to the impact study teams.

A review was undertaken of the selected policy papers and official documents. Relevant passages were identified and then discussed with regard to the posed research question about how debates concerning Dalits, associated caste and gender relations, and affirmative action targeting practices are taken into consideration and presented in the documents. The documents were understood as communicative devices giving insight into how the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS convey their institutional understanding of these social realities (cf. Flick 2007a: 324, 327 331). The review was conducted after the analysis of the primary data stemming from the impact study, which will be presented below in chapter 7.1.3. Relevant passages in the documents were identified by screening them for themes that had been (deductively and inductively) determined during the analysis of the data material of the impact study (cf. Table 8 & Table 10). Therefore, this rather pragmatic document review was given preference over a more method-driven, in-depth analysis of the documents, i.e. coding and categorizing methods or conversation analytic approaches were not applied (cf. Flick 2007a: 331).

Table 5: Selected Policy Papers and other Official Documents (SDC, Helvetas, EFS)

	Authoring Organization	Year of Publication	Used Citation	Title	Type of Publication	Source**
1	SDC	2013	(SDC 2013)	Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Nepal 2013-2017	Cooperation Strategy	https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/nepal/en/home/international-cooperation/publications-multimedia/publications.html
2	SDC	2010*	(SDC 2010)	50 Years Nepal-Swiss Development Partnership 1959 to 2009	Anniversary Report	https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/nepal/en/home/international-cooperation/publications-multimedia/publications.html
3	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Nepal	2011	(Helvetas 2011)	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Country Strategy 2011 – 2015	Cooperation Strategy	https://nepal.helvetas.org/en/country_programme/
4	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Nepal	2015*	(Helvetas 2015)	Annual Report 2014	Annual Report	https://nepal.helvetas.org/en/about/reports/
5	Helvetas Nepal	2002*	(Helvetas n.d.)	Empowering Dalits	Learning and Sharing Series	https://nepal.helvetas.org/en/news/publications/
6	EFS	2014	(EFS 2014d)	Implementation Guideline for "Path to Prosperity"/Samriddhiko Bato	Guideline for T&Es and EF staff	Made available by EFS staff during the impact study
7	EFS	2014	(EFS 2014e)	Updated Implementation Guideline for Micro Enterprise Development for Job Creation	Guideline for T&Es and EF staff	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/reports/
8	EFS	2012*	(EFS n.d.)	Rapid Market Appraisal. Handbook for RMA Practitioners	Guideline for T&Es and EF staff	Made available by EFS staff during the impact study
9	EFS	2012	(EFS 2012b)	Field Monitoring Guideline	Guideline for T&Es and EF staff	Made available by EFS staff during the impact study
10	EFS	2013	(EFS 2013b)	Yearly Plan of Operation 2014	Yearly Plan of Operation	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/reports/

11 - 18	EFS	2009 – 2015	(EFS 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012a; 2013a; 2014b; 2014c; 2015a)	EF Annual Reports (2008-2014), EF Half Annual Report 2014	Annual Reports	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/reports/
19	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015g)	Results-based Financing in Technical and Vocational Training. A step-by-step Implementation Guide	Guideline for development practitioners	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/
20	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015b)	How to Increase Access of Women to Employment Opportunities. An Implementation Guide	Guideline for development practitioners	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/
21	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015c)	Implementation and Relevance of Business Skills Training for Women	Learning Series	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/
22	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015d)	Implementation and Relevance of Life Skills Training for Women	Learning Series	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/
23	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015e)	Non-traditional or Traditional Trades for Women?	Learning Series	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/
24	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015f)	Observations and Strategies Regarding Women in Non-traditional Trades	Learning Series	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/
25	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015h)	Women's Access to Occupational Skills Training	Learning Series	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/
26	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015i)	Women's Reasons to Stop Working in Non-traditional Trades	Learning Series	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/
27	EFS	2015*	(EFS 2015j)	Women's Views on Training and Strategies for Employment in Non-traditional Trades	Learning Series	http://www.employmentfund.org.np/category/resources/publications/

*These years of publication were not specified in the respective documents. They had to be derived from the documents' content or they represent the year the documents were published online on the respective organization's official website.

**Documents published online were accessed on the 14.06.16.

7.1.2 Primary Data Collection

To address the research questions directed at different actors involved in the EF, this thesis' case study relies on different data material that was collected during the impact study of the EF. On the one hand, as representatives of the UZH team, my fellow student and co-researcher Sunna Seithel and I carried out field research for the impact study in Nepal, mainly in Kathmandu, from January to March 2015. We conducted twelve semi-structured expert interviews with selected EF staff members (Regional Monitoring Officers and EFS staff), TVET officials and EF donor representatives.

On the other hand, our co-researchers from RIDA, who took the lead in carrying out the main part of the qualitative field research for the impact study from February to April 2015, conducted semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with more than 110 respondents including participants of the EF, T&Es and other actors related to the EF (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 17, 33f). The interviews focused on the impact of the EF, but also covered questions relevant for this case study. The following sections first describe the sampling and data collection for the expert interviews, and then the sampling and data collection for the field research carried out by RIDA.

Semi-Structured Expert Interviews

Four focal members of the EFS were purposefully sampled for the expert interviews because they were information-rich key informants due to their important roles in the EFS (cf. Patton 1990: 182; see Table 6). Three further interviews were held with Regional Monitoring Officers of the EF, one in Kathmandu and two in the districts Parsa and Kaski, which Sunna Seithel and I visited while accompanying RIDA in two of their field visits for the impact study. Even though these interviewees were (conveniently) sampled due to their easy accessibility, their important positions in the EF made them information-rich cases (cf. Patton 1990: 182).

Further interviews were conducted with two representatives of EF donor agencies (SDC and DfID) and with three TVET officials including focal persons of the EVENT project, the SDP, and a project of the Ministry of Finance called Youth and Small Entrepreneur Self-Employment Fund (YSEF)[33]. These interviewees represent information-rich cases surrounding the EF. Except for the representative of the YSEF, all interviewees have a connection to the EF, either as representatives of donor agencies funding the EF or as TVET officials engaged in EF-related projects (cf. chapter 6.6). Contact to the interviewees was either facilitated by the EFS or our co-researchers from RIDA, or directly established by contacting them via their official e-mail addresses.

Table 6: Expert Interviews

Interviewees	Number of interviews
EFS staff	4
Regional Monitoring Officers	3
Donor Representatives	2
TVET officials	3

[33] The YSEF provides loans to unemployed youth to facilitate their self-employment (YSEF 2016).

To conduct the interviews, my co-researcher Sunna Seithel and I developed semi-structured interview guides. The guides provided a possible sequence of questions and were divided into thematic sections (e.g. related to monitoring, targeting, the TVET sector etc.). The proposed sequence ensured that all important thematic sections would be covered (cf. Willis 2006: 145). The guides also left room to adjust the sequence of questions, to reformulate them and to use further in-depth questions when deemed necessary (cf. Hopf 2007: 351). In contrast to standardized guides, the semi-structured guides enabled the respondents to speak freely and express thoughts and ideas that were relevant to them (Helfferich 2009: 114; Willis 2006: 145). Questions were formulated as open questions (Helfferich 2009: 108, 114).

The expert interviews had the form of "explorative expert interviews" as defined by Bogner and Menz (2002: 37). The interviews helped us orient ourselves in and thematically structure the research field of the impact study (cf. Bogner & Menz 2002: 37). The interviewees acted as experts by being "bearers of contextual knowledge", which made it possible to gain a complementary insight (in relation to the data material collected by RIDA) into the context and actors surrounding and involved in the EF (cf. Bogner & Menz 2002: 37).

All interviews were conducted in English. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes. Six expert interviews were recorded on tape, including the ones with representatives of donor agencies and TVET officials, as well as one interview with two Regional Monitoring Officers, who were interviewed together. The remaining six interviews with Regional Monitoring Officers and EFS staff members were not recorded under the assumption that the interviewees would speak more freely without being recorded, for example concerning possible critical statements about the EF. During all interviews, one researcher would focus on interviewing while the other would focus on taking notes.

The EFS staff members were asked about their personal views on a range of topics concerning the EF, such as the challenges and efficiency of the EF targeting modalities, internal decision-making processes or data management. The Regional Monitoring Officers were asked about processes and challenges concerning the EF monitoring system, as well as about the targeting modalities. The donor representatives were questioned about their views on the development and TVET sector in Nepal in general. They were also requested to elaborate on, for instance, how donors can influence the targeting practices of the development projects they fund and what societal impact and outreach they want to achieve. The TVET officials were asked about the components of their respective projects, the societal impact they want to induce and their general opinions on the TVET sector.

Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

The main part of the field research of the impact study carried out under the lead of RIDA was conducted in five sample districts covering all three ecological regions (Mountains, Hills, Terai) and all five development regions (Far-Western, Mid-Western, Western, Central, Eastern) of Nepal (cf. UNDP 2014: 7). Namely, Kanchanpur (Far-Western Terai), Jumla (Mid-Western Mountains), Kaski

(Western Hills), Parsa (Central Terai), and Terhathum (Eastern Hills) (see Figure 7). These districts were selected in consultation with the EFS. This selection took the country's regional (high/lowland, rural/urban regions) and socio-cultural diversity into account (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 34).

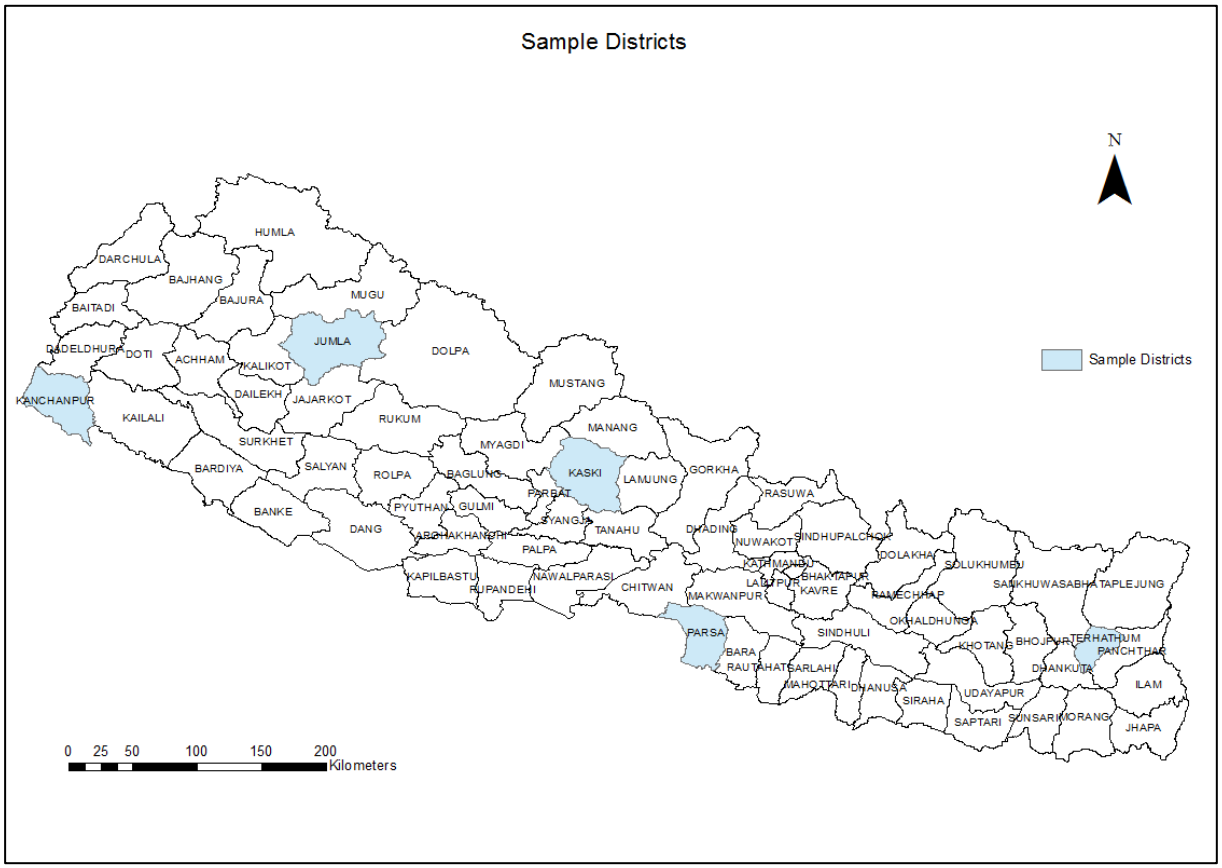

Figure 7: Map of Nepal Showing the Impact Study Sample Districts
(Own illustration; Data source: https://github.com/mesaugat/geoJSON-Nepal (accessed: 14.09.16))

The UZH and RIDA jointly decided on the sampling for the semi-structured interviews and FGDs. They determined the different groups of respondents, the desired variation among them according to pre-defined sampling categories, and the sample sizes.[34] The respondents included direct beneficiaries (participants of the EF), indirect beneficiaries (dependents of direct beneficiaries such as spouses, parents, brothers and sisters), non-beneficiaries (youths who were eligible but did not participate in the EF), T&Es, employers of EF graduates and district-level stakeholders (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 33-37).[35]

The sampling categories aimed at capturing the whole diversity of the population of respondents to achieve a purposeful Maximum Variation sampling (cf. Patton 1990: 172). This sampling strategy was applied especially for direct beneficiaries with special focus on the inclusion of women, members from DAGs and youth with special needs as defined by the EFS (cf. chapter 6.3). Thus, the EF's target

[34] See Annex 1 for a tabular overview of the impact study sampling.
[35] The usage of the term "beneficiaries" is subject to debates within development discourses as it for example implies beneficiaries to be passive recipients of development initiatives (cf. Vorhölter 2009: 1). The terms "direct, indirect and non-beneficiaries" were nevertheless adopted for this thesis from the terminology of the impact study as they comprehensibly label the different groups of interview respondents.

group categories, the two program components PtP and MEJC, and the participants' gender and employment status were taken into account as sampling categories for direct beneficiaries. Per district, ten direct beneficiaries, two indirect beneficiaries and two non-beneficiaries were sampled. In addition, direct beneficiaries of ongoing PtP and MEJC training classes were selected for FGDs of eight to ten people in each district (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 33-37).

Furthermore, per district, two T&Es who offered trainings in different trades and who differed in size were purposively sampled. Additionally, two employers were selected per district: On the one hand, independent employers who employed EF graduates, and on the other hand, EF graduates who had set up an enterprise and provided employment to other EF graduates. As a last group of respondents, three district-level stakeholders were selected per district who were directly or indirectly related to the EF and/or the TVET sector. The district-level stakeholders included officials from district Chambers of Commerce and Industry, District Development Committees, District Education Offices and banks or cooperatives. The sampled banks and cooperatives had provided loans to EF beneficiaries for example to enable them to establish their own enterprises (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 34-36).

Field access was established through the selected T&Es. Contact to the T&Es was facilitated by the EFS. RIDA provided the T&Es with a list describing the groups of respondents, the sampling categories and the sample sizes as outlined above (see Annex 1). According to the mentioned list, the T&Es proposed potential direct, indirect and non-beneficiaries as respondents for the interviews and FGDs and arranged the meetings. District-level stakeholders were contacted by RIDA directly (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 33-35).

Table 7 presents the sample sizes per group of respondents that were available as a database for this thesis. 112 semi-structured interviews and eight FGDs were conducted. These numbers slightly deviate from the mentioned sample sizes, which were determined before field research was carried out.

Table 7: Semi-Structured Interviews and FGDs

Interviewees	**Number of interviews**
Beneficiaries (direct, indirect, non)	68 (+ 8 FGDs)
T&Es	10
Employers	10
District-level stakeholders	16

For both, the interviews and FGDs, the UZH and RIDA jointly developed semi-structured guides adjusted to each category of respondents according to the same principles as the guides for the expert interviews described in the precedent chapter. During the impact study, the semi-structured qualitative interviews were categorized as "in-depth interviews" (with direct, indirect and non-beneficiaries and T&Es) and "key-informant interviews" (with employers and district-level stakeholders) (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 37). It is refrained from re-categorizing the interviews in retrospect to specific types of semi-structured qualitative interviews. While the interviews with direct, indirect and non-beneficiaries

placed special focus on understanding the individual, subjective livelihood realities of the interviewees, the T&Es, employers and district-level stakeholders were rather interviewed as experts for their sphere of activity (cf. Flick 2007a: 214). The conducted FGDs had the form of semi-structured focus group interviews, in which the interview situation was extended to a group of people (cf. Flick 2007a: 249). Thereby it was possible to interview multiple people at the same time and to stimulate answers among the group that might go further than the ones of a single interviewee (cf. Flick 2007a: 250).

The data collection was carried out by RIDA. The four RIDA-team members responsible for the impact study were supported by ten additional RIDA-researchers to conduct the field work (RIDA 2015: 14, 49). The field visits to the five sample districts were each completed within four to five days and each interviewee was visited on a one-time basis (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 33f). The interviews and FGDs were held in teams of two, by an interviewer and a note taker. Most teams consisted of members of the same gender. Sometimes the teams were gender-mixed. The interviewees were mostly interviewed by interviewers of the same gender. The interviews and FGDs were conducted in Nepali and lasted from 25 to 90 minutes. If the respondents spoke a language different from Nepali (e.g. Bhojpuri in Parsa District), a local interpreter facilitated the conversations (cf. RIDA 2015: 15). The conversations were recorded.

My co-researcher Sunna Seithel and I were only partly involved in the field work. We participated in the initial development of the sampling categories as well as the development and pre-testing of the semi-structured interview guides. During the pre-testing, we acted as interviewers in three test interviews with a T&E, an employer and a direct beneficiary. As we do not speak Nepali, RIDA-researchers acted as interpreters. After the pre-testing phase, we accompanied RIDA in the data collection in two out of the five sample districts, Parsa and Kaski. I attended eleven interviews and one FGD, which were all held in Nepali or local languages, as a silent observer. Immediately after the interviews the interviewers provided me with brief summaries of what was discussed.

Direct beneficiaries were interviewed on topics such as how and why they applied for an EF training, how they experienced the trainings, how taking training has influenced their current life situation, their socio-economic environment and their behavior. Indirect beneficiaries were asked similar questions concerning their family member who had taken training. Non-beneficiaries were also interviewed on their socio-economic life situations.[36] T&Es were asked about the development of their training agencies and their cooperation with the EF, their targeting strategies, their training modalities and how they rate the EF's impact on their training graduates. Employers were interviewed about their businesses, how and what kind of people they hire and especially about the EF graduates working for them. Representatives of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, District Development Committees and District Education Offices were asked about topics such as the overall economic situation in the

[36] Non-beneficiaries were interviewed with the aim of comparing how the lives of direct beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries might have developed differently with and without the influence of the participation in the EF (Personal communication with RIDA researchers, 22.01.2015).

respective district, the availability of a skilled labor force and the TVET sector. Representatives of banks and cooperatives provided information about their business, how they go about giving loans and how and to what kind of EF beneficiaries they have granted loans. The FGDs examined the trainees' motivation to take training, their experiences with the trainers and training environment, previous training experiences and their plans to utilize the acquired skills for income generating activities (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 37).

7.1.3 Primary Data Analysis

To analyze the data material stemming from the impact study in the context of this thesis, I decided to work with interpretative-categorizing procedures through which the data is dissected into segments which are coded, categorized and interpreted with regard to their content. The process of analyzing the data seized aspects of different interpretative-categorizing procedures: Mayring's (2015) qualitative content analysis and Strauss and Corbin's Grounded Theory (1996).

Qualitative content analysis aims at analyzing the communicative content, as well as at detecting formal aspects and underlying meaning structures of any data material derived from communication (Mayring 2007: 468f). The central part of qualitative content analysis is the construction of a category system, which is used to code the data material (Mayring 2015: 370). Working with a category system makes it possible for others to retrace the coding process and thus contributes to intersubjective comprehensibility (Mayring 2015: 370; cf. Steinke 2007: 324). Whilst analyzing the expert interviews as well as the semi-structured interviews and FGDs conducted by RIDA, the main emphasis was put on inductive category formation, which is a "reducing procedure" of qualitative content analysis through which the data material is reduced to its essential content (Mayring 2015: 373f). Inductive category formation determines categories directly out of the data material and should prevent the researcher from being biased by preconceptions (Mayring 2015: 374). It was decided not to apply a "structuring procedure" of content analysis, which filters out specific aspects of the data material according to pre-defined, deductively-formed categories (Mayring 2007: 473; 2015: 373). Bearing in mind that the theoretical and scholarly background of this thesis is open (cf. chapters 2 to 5), it would have been too restrictive and not theoretically well-founded enough to put the focus on deductive (theory-guided) category formation (cf. Mayring 2015: 374). Yet, as will be explained below, Mayring's (2015: 374) inductive category formation does include deductive aspects, which guarantees the theoretical anchoring of the data analysis.

In contrast to the inductive category formation of qualitative content analysis, Strauss and Corbin's (1996) Grounded Theory is more explorative and open (Mayring 2007: 474). It aims at developing a theory out of the data (Flick 2007a: 387). Though the development of a theory is not the aim here, to benefit from the openness and practicality of Strauss and Corbin's (1996) coding procedure, some aspects of it were included in the data analysis.

One initial step of Mayring's (2015: 369) qualitative content analysis is to be clear about the communicative context in which one's data material is embedded in. This includes reflecting about

how the data material was generated, who was involved in its collection and who it is addressed to (Mayring 2007: 471; Flick 2007a: 409). This was discussed in the previous chapter 7.1.2 regarding the data material originating from the impact study. As a further step of qualitative context analysis, the next section briefly outlines how the data material was documented and pre-processed during the impact study before it was analyzed for this thesis (cf. Flick 2007a: 409). Subsequently, the process of data coding and categorizing, which was conducted with the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti (version 7.1.8), shall be presented in detail.

Documentation and Pre-Processing of the Data Material

The twelve semi-structured expert interviews conducted with EFS staff, Regional Monitoring Officers of the EF, TVET officials and EF donors were distilled into field notes. Additionally, for the seven interviews conducted with EFS staff and Regional Monitoring Officers, my co-researcher Sunna Seithel and I created short summaries during our field stay. Two of the six recorded interviews were already wholly transcribed in Nepal. A simple transcription was chosen, i.e. the conversations were smoothed by not transcribing expletives or repetitions (cf. Dresing & Pehl 2013: 18f). As the focus of the transcription lay on the semantic content of the conversations and not on non-verbal aspects or on the way the interviewees expressed themselves, this type of transcription was appropriate (cf. Dresing & Pehl 2013: 18f).

For each of the 112 interviews and FGDs conducted by RIDA, RIDA-researchers compiled field notes in the form of summarized transcripts and translated them to English (RIDA 2015: 14). These field notes are one to three pages long. They include a selection of statements, written mostly from the perspective of the interviewee, which the note-taker regarded as main points of the interview or FGD. At the beginning of the field notes, "key details" about the respondents were specified (see Figure 8). Occasionally, the key details were incomplete. In some cases, it was possible to derive them from the interviewees' statements.

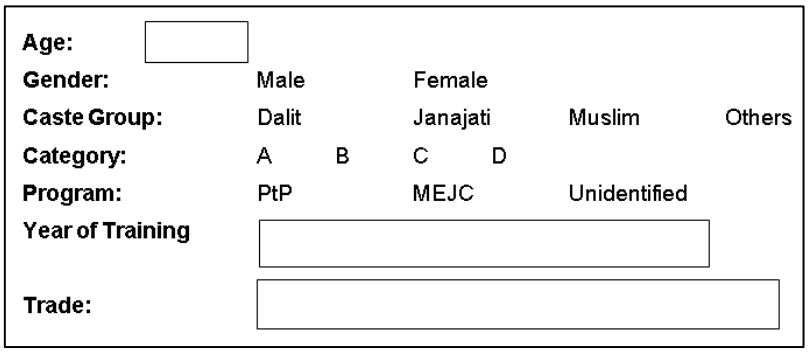

Figure 8: Key Details about the Interview Respondents as Specified in RIDA's Field Notes

Analysis of the Semi-Structured Expert Interviews

The following sections outline the analysis process for the twelve semi-structured expert interviews. In a first step, a theme or criterion for the formation of categories was to be defined based on this thesis' theoretical background and the research questions concerning the interviewed experts (see

Table 8; cf. Mayring 2015: 374; cf. introduction to chapter 7). This is the above mentioned deductive aspect of inductive category formation.

Table 8: Deductively-Defined Themes for Category Formation in the Expert Interviews

Targeting practices e.g. affirmative action targeting of Dalits
Expressed views on societal structures e.g. caste or gender relations
(Intended) outreach and effects on society e.g. on caste or gender relations

In a first step, the available field notes, short summaries, recordings and transcripts were screened in search of passages relevant to the above defined themes. It was important to also remain attentive to the emergence of new topics to do justice to the openness of the analysis (cf. Schmidt 2007: 449). The material was not yet coded, but potentially relevant passages were highlighted in the field notes, short summaries and the transcripts. For the four recorded interviews which had not been transcribed yet, the identified relevant passages were selectively transcribed, again following a simple transcription (cf. Dresing & Pehl 2013: 18f). One of the four interviews with EFS staff was excluded from further analysis due to its lack of relevant passages for this case study.

In a second step, the data material was read line-by-line (cf. Mayring 2015: 375). Relevant text passages were assigned categories (codes) using a suitable term or short sentence to label them (cf. Mayring 2015: 375). Categories were assigned that are close to the content of the coded passages to avoid over-interpretation. The size of the content-analytical units (cf. Mayring 2015: 370f), i.e. the size of the coded passages, was set to range from fragments of sentences up to groups of sentences forming a statement.

The identified categories were compiled into a coding-guide. To set up the coding-guide, aspects of "open coding" and "axial coding" of Strauss and Corbin's (1996) Grounded Theory were used. Within open coding, identified categories (called "concepts" in Grounded Theory) are summarized to superior categories describing similar phenomena (cf. Flick 2007a: 391; Strauss & Corbin 1996: 43). A total of 42 codes were categorized into seven superior categories (see Table 9). Moreover, relations between and within inferior categories and superior categories were established using axial coding (cf. Flick 2007a: 388, 393). The resulting system of inter-related categories was interpreted with regard to the research questions concerning the interviewed experts (cf. Mayring 2015: 375; cf. introduction of chapter 7).

Table 9: Coding-Guide for the Expert Interviews

Superior Categories	Inferior Categories (Codes)
Target Group Definition	EVENT target group definition; SDC target group definition; SDP target group definition; DfID target group definition; YSEF target group definition
Targeting Modalities	Adaption to geographical differences; Effectiveness of EF targeting; Financial literacy training; Incentive-based payment for positive discrimination targeting; Result-based payment system; Mobile trainings to reach remote areas
Targeting Challenges	Awareness raising among target groups; Enrolling women in non-traditional trades; Linking women to gainful employment; Reaching people in remote areas; Reaching people through the media; Reaching the poor of the poor
TVET Sector Challenges	Bureaucracy; Fragmentation of TVET sector
Implementation Challenges	Assessing labor market (conducting RMA); Establishing links to financial institutions: remoteness, low creditworthiness; Linking trainees to employment; Missing linkage to industries
Impact of Projects like the EF	EF's power to induce social change is limited; Increased mobility; Reduction of societal tensions; Small improvements in the employment sector; Social empowerment of women and Dalits
Future Adaptations of the TVET Sector or Projects like the EF	Governmental standardization; Apprenticeship training; Better collaboration with employers; Better links to financial institutions; Standardized national certification system; Larger campaigns and awareness raising

Analysis of the Semi-Structured Interviews and FGDs

The analysis of RIDA's field notes followed a similar analysis process as the one described above for the expert interviews. Some analysis steps differed due to the much larger size of this database.

Likewise, an initial theme or criterion for the formation of categories was deductively defined (see Table 10; cf. Mayring 2015: 374).

Table 10: Deductively-Defined Themes for Category Formation in the Semi-Structured Interviews and FGDs

Integration (of Dalits) into the EF program
Treatment during training
Effects/Impact of the EF on its beneficiaries
Caste (discrimination)
Relation and role allocation between women and men

All of the field notes were read with respect to passages relevant to the outlined themes. If at least one passage was identified as relevant, the interview or FGD was selected for further analysis (cf. Mayring 2015: 375). Of the 112 field notes provided by RIDA, 95 were selected for further analysis.

In a second run through the material, the field notes were read line-by-line and relevant text passages were assigned categories (codes) (cf. Mayring 2015: 375). Superior categories were formed as in Strauss and Corbin's (1996: 43) open coding. As the resulting system of assigned categories was extensive, the interviews and FGDs were divided into subsets to facilitate further interpretation (see Table 11). The data-subsets were formed with regard to the respondents' gender and their belonging to a DAG or non-DAG.

Table 11: Data-Subsets Formed to Analyze the Semi-Structured Interviews and FGDs

Data-Analysis-Subsets*	**Caste/ethnic group and gender as specified in RIDA's field notes**	**Groups of respondents as used in the impact study (cf. chapter 7.1.2)**	**No. of interviews or FGDs (Total: 95)**
DAG Women	Dalit Women	8 direct beneficiaries	17
	Janajati / Muslim Women	6 direct beneficiaries 1 non-beneficiary 2 indirect beneficiaries (sister-in-law; husband)	
Non-DAG Women	Non-DAG Women	12 direct beneficiaries 1 non-beneficiary 3 employers 1 indirect beneficiary (father)	21
	Caste Unspecified Women	2 direct beneficiaries 1 non-beneficiary 1 indirect beneficiary (husband)	
DAG Men	Dalit Men	8 direct beneficiaries 1 non-beneficiary 1 indirect beneficiary (wife)	18
	Janajati / Muslim Men	6 direct beneficiaries 2 employers	
Non-DAG Men	Non-DAG Men	5 direct beneficiaries 1 employer 1 non-beneficiary	14
	Caste Unspecified Men	1 employer 2 indirect beneficiaries (wives) 1 non-beneficiary	
	Caste and Gender Unspecified	3 employers	
Focus Group Discussions	Mixed groups	Direct beneficiaries	8
T&Es			10
District-level stakeholders			7

*Interviews with indirect beneficiaries were allocated to the subsets to which their family member who had participated in the EF and who the interview was primarily about belonged to. E.g. interviews with husbands of trained DAG women were analyzed together with the interviews with DAG women. Statements of interviewees whose caste or ethnicity was unspecified in the field notes were analyzed together with the men and women not belonging to DAGs. The three employers whose caste or ethnicity and gender were unspecified were analyzed together with the interviews of male respondents not belonging to DAGs. Employers were not treated as a separate subset because six out of the ten interviewed employers were former direct beneficiaries. District-level stakeholders were included as a separate subset but were treated as a supplementary data source to the interviews with beneficiaries, T&Es and employers.

The data-subsets were interpreted consecutively. Thereby, the coding and superior category formation was refined for each subset. Some codes were grouped into intermediate categories, which were in turn grouped to superior categories. The superior categories, of which there were around seven per subset, and the intermediate categories were essentially the same for all subsets. The subsets consisted of 40 to 88 inferior categories (codes) each, with many codes occurring in more than one subset. Relations between and within categories were again established using axial coding (Flick 2007a: 388,

393). The different coding systems of the data-subsets were compared and compiled into an overall coding-guide (see Table 12).

Table 12: Coding-Guide for the Semi-Structured Interviews and FGDs

Superior Categories	**Intermediate Categories**	***Examples* of Inferior Categories (Codes)**
Integration into the EF Training	Life skills; Knowledge of EF targeting	To reach the poor, allowance would be necessary
Treatment during Training		Trainers were friendly; No discrimination from trainers
Gender Roles	Gender-related barriers; Statements against women in male-based trades; Statements in favor of women in male-based trades; General indicators for gender equality	Cannot take training: household responsibility; Men should do male and women should do female-based trades; Men and women are able to work alike; Shared decision-making wife and husband
Non-Gender Related Barriers		Difficulty to combine training and daily wage labor
Effects of Participation in the EF	Effects on community; Changes on a personal level; Changes in family relations; Changes in economic situation	Increased respect and appreciation by community; Increased self-confidence and secure demeanor and independence
Caste Affiliation		„We don't practice untouchability“*
Family Support		Family support to take training
Land Ownership		“I want to buy land”

* In some cases, “in-vivo codes” were used to label categories (cf. Strauss & Corbin 1996: 50).

Sorting the data according to the respondents’ gender and affiliation to a DAG or non-DAG opened up the possibility to compare the results of the analysis between these subsets. However, drawing comparisons between DAGs and non-DAGs was treated with caution due to the heterogeneity of the societal groups subsumed into the subsets. It would have been possible to divide the subsets even further, e.g. to analyze interviews with Dalit women separately from interviews with Janajati or Muslim women. Yet, this would have resulted in very small samples. Moreover, separating the subsets might not have done justice to the heterogeneity that may exist within these groups either (e.g. within Dalit women, or within Janajati women). During the interpretation process it became clear that the analysis of the interviews of members from DAGs and non-DAGs did not reveal noticeable differences. Differences between men and women were more salient. Even so, some statements of members from certain subgroups e.g. Muslim women, occasionally stood out even though they were analyzed as part of a larger data-subset. The results were sequentially written down parallel to reviewing, refining and interpreting the coding and category formation and relations for each data-subset.

7.2 Limitations and Reflexivity

The impact study of the EF made a large body of data available to the great advantage of the case study of this thesis. It also facilitated the triangulation of data and methods. Triangulation minimizes biases and distortions, and helps broaden and deepen the knowledge gained about a research topic (Steinke 2007: 320; Flick 2007b: 311). Through triangulation, a research topic is examined from different points of view (Flick 2007b: 309). Within the case study of the EF, data was triangulated by taking into consideration different data sources for the collection of data (cf. Flick 2007b: 310). In addition, by complementing different qualitative data collection and analysis methods with each other, "between-method" triangulation was applied to gain knowledge of different aspects of the EF (cf. Flick 2007b: 313). For example, the expert interviews gave insight into contextual and professional knowledge surrounding the EF, the semi-structured interviews and FGDs conducted by RIDA with EF beneficiaries operated on a more subjective and personal level, and the analysis of official documents of the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS shed light on another, rather institutional aspect of the EF (cf. Flick 2004: 41; 2007b: 313).

Even so, there are limitations affecting the appropriateness of the used sources of data, of the applied methods and of the research process of the case study of the EF in general. Guaranteeing the appropriateness of one's research process is a central quality criterion of qualitative research (Steinke 2007: 326). Therefore, in the following first section, these limitations affecting the case study are outlined. Subsequently, a second section elaborates on another central quality criterion of qualitative research, namely reflective subjectivity. Within qualitative research, a researcher is required to reflect about his or her constructed role as a subject in the research process and as a part of the social world which he or she examines (Steinke 2007: 330f). Thus, my subjective role and the roles of the other researchers involved in the research process of the case study of the EF shall be discussed.

7.2.1 Limitations of the Research Process

A first limitation of this case study's research process concerns the sampling of respondents for the interviews and FGDs conducted by RIDA. The purposeful sampling ensured a wide variety among the respondents. Nevertheless, the T&Es could ultimately decide on which direct, indirect and non-beneficiaries they would short-list as possible interviewees according to the list of sampling categories that they were provided with. This entailed the risk of them not suggesting too many beneficiaries who would express their dissatisfaction with the T&Es and their training. Moreover, the sampling depended on the beneficiaries' availability and the accessibility of their place of residence (cf. Merkens 2007: 288). This for example means that beneficiaries living in very remote areas were likely to be left out in the sample.

A further limitation affects the appropriateness of the semi-structured interviews and FGDs with EF beneficiaries. The field research in the five sample districts was carried out in short, single field visits. Hence, the living environment of the interviewed beneficiaries and the societal context including the caste relations in which they are placed could not be sufficiently assessed (Hollenbach et al. 2015: 39).

To get a well-founded insight into their livelihood realities and the caste and gender relations they are situated in, long-term field visits would have been necessary. The semi-structured interviews could then have been complemented with additional methods e.g. participatory observation (cf. Lüders 2007: 384f). However, within the design, time-frame and financial resources of the impact study, long-term research was not possible. Regarding the interviewed TVET officials, EF staff, donor representatives, T&Es and district-level stakeholders, the one-time interviews are considered appropriate because the central aspects to be studied were the interviewees' expert and context knowledge, not their individual livelihood realities.

A further shortcoming revolves around the fact that the data provided by the impact study were not specifically collected for this thesis. This to some extent limits the data's meaningfulness. Large parts of the expert interviews and the RIDA-interviews and FGDs alike were not of relevance to the research questions of this thesis. In retrospect, additional in-depth questions could have been posed to the interviewed EF beneficiaries about their family and community relations. The interviewed experts and T&Es could have been asked more in-depth questions about their opinions on the affirmative action targeting in the EF. The targeting of Dalits and the experts' views on the societal situation of Dalits were not addressed in detail during the interviews.

Another limitation of the data material arises from the fact that the field notes of the semi-structured interviews and FGDs provided by RIDA come in the form of translated and summarized transcripts. In some cases, the translation of the field notes from Nepali to English was preceded by ad-hoc translations during the interviews from local languages (e.g. Bhojpuri) to Nepali. To translate text from one language to another is an interpretative act in which meaning can be lost (van Nes et al. 2010: 313f). Loss of meaning could stem from concepts in Nepali not being adequately transferable to English (cf. van Nes et al. 2010: 314) and because the translators were non-native English speakers. The summarization of the transcripts is another interpretative act in which the RIDA-researchers selected passages they perceived to be important. In general, as I was neither present in the majority of the conducted interviews and FGDs, nor involved in their subsequent documentation, a complete outline of this part of the research process cannot be provided, which impairs the striving for intersubjective comprehensibility (cf. Steinke 2007: 325).

7.2.2 Reflective Subjectivity

During our field stay in Nepal, my co-researcher and fellow-student Sunna Seithel and I took on different roles in front of a multitude of actors. Primarily, we were commissioned researchers of the impact study research team, representing the UZH team as Swiss Master students, who simultaneously had the task of conducting their Master's theses. We stepped into a practical professional field, the development sector, that was essentially new to us. Moreover, we entered a cultural setting as young European women with which we were unfamiliar and to which we were foreign. Despite our initial inexperience, the cooperation with our co-researchers from RIDA and the communication with the EFS went smoothly and was instructive and considerate. It was helpful to be able to continuously

discuss our experiences and our own demeanor with each other.

During the expert interviews with EF staff members, TVET officials and donors, our personal abilities enabled us to manage our role as interviewers well (cf. Steinke 2007: 331). We confidently and open-mindedly approached our interviewees. When contacting possible interviewees and in the beginning of each interview, we made our twofold role as impact study researchers and students writing their Master's theses transparent. This created a relationship of trust between us and the interviewees (cf. Steinke 2007: 331), who we perceived to frankly and critically express their views.

When we took part in a few interviews and FGDs conducted by RIDA as silent observers, our presence did not seem to intrude the course of the encounters. Before each interview and FGD, the RIDA-interviewers informed the respondents about the impact study's objective and the confidentiality with which the information they provided will be used, and obtained their consent to partake in the interview or FGD (RIDA 2015: 15). As written down in some of the field notes, the interviewees in most cases openly expressed themselves. This suggests that the interviewers were able to create a pleasant atmosphere (cf. Hermanns 2007: 367). As mentioned, female respondents were mostly interviewed by female interviewers, which might have helped making the interviewees feel comfortable. Yet, the researchers from RIDA often had a different (urban, well-educated and generally high-caste) background than the respondents, which might have influenced the dynamic of the conversations. Because Sunna Seithel and I did not understand what was spoken during the interviews and were generally new to the Nepali customs of communication, concluding remarks on the interaction between the interviewers and interviewees cannot be made.

Regarding my overall role as the author of this thesis, it has to be noted that despite the two-month field stay in Nepal and the extensive literature research conducted, the cultural setting of Nepal is still foreign to me. On the one hand, this might limit my sensitivity to Nepal's socio-cultural context and my ability to grasp this research subject in its entirety. On the other hand, my naivety might have enabled me to approach the research subject without the personal bias I may have had if I were part of the Nepali society.

Keeping this outline of the research process of the case study of the EF in mind, the following chapters go on to present its findings.

8 Conceptualization of Target Groups and Consideration of the "Dalit Issue" in Official Documents of the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS

In the following sections, the review of the 27 selected policy papers and official documents published by the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS (see Table 5) is discussed with respect to the research question posed to this policy and official documentation level of the EF:

How are debates concerning the societal conditions of Dalits ("the Dalit issue"), associated caste and gender relations, and their affirmative action targeting taken into consideration and presented by the EFS, Helvetas and the SDC on a policy and official documentation level?

To be able to investigate this research question, it is necessary to initially provide an overview of how the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS terminologically address and conceptualize their target groups in the reviewed official documents. A further chapter then discusses how the "Dalit issue" is taken into consideration and presented in the documents.

8.1 Conceptualization of Target Groups

When reviewing the SDC's current cooperation strategy (SDC 2013), its Nepal-Swiss development cooperation report (SDC 2010), Helvetas' country strategy for the years 2011-2015 (Helvetas 2011) and its annual report 2014 (Helvetas 2015), it becomes clear that the two institutions largely follow the same rationales when conceptualizing their target groups.

The SDC (2013: 1) identifies ethnic and social complexities and the unequal distribution of political, social and economic opportunities as major challenges for Nepal. The unequal distribution of opportunities is described to be shaped by discrimination based on gender, caste, ethnicity and religion (SDC 2013: 2), and to be especially prevalent in rural communities (SDC 2010: 10). Discrimination and reduced access to goods and public services are mentioned as the main causes of poverty (SDC 2013: 13). Helvetas (2011: 4) similarly describes poverty to be caused by social exclusion and to be closely linked to the factors caste, ethnicity, gender and remoteness:

> *"Poverty is still very high among certain groups of Janajatis, Dalits and minority groups such as Muslim communities. Hill and High-Hill areas, particularly from the mid and far-west are far from the benefits of development initiatives. Gender is also a significant poverty factor. Women lag behind men in most aspects (economic, social, political and legal) and at all levels of society."* (Helvetas 2011: 11)

Upon identifying the importance to address these societal issues, the SDC (2010: 6, 32) shifted the focus of its development interventions after the year 2000 onto promoting the social equity and inclusion of members of DAGs:

> *"Over time, SDC has realized that focusing on technical issues is indispensable, but it alone will not advance development. Increasingly it has become evident that real development is not possible without engaging in the transformation of social conflicts. Today, the Swiss programme is characterised by the strong participation of local communities, particularly through the support extended to members of Disadvantaged Groups to participate in decision making and in accessing services and resources."* (SDC 2010: 32)

Helvetas (2011: 3) likewise emphasizes the necessity to promote the social inclusion of poor and marginalized communities to advance Nepal's development. Helvetas' development strategy seems to be considerably guided by the SDC, which is one of its main partners besides DfID (cf. Helvetas 2011: 12, 29). Helvetas similarly aims at creating access to services, infrastructure, food production and income, and at increasing the decision-making power and benefit sharing of members of DAGs

(Helvetas 2011: 11). Both institutions apply the same approach to define DAGs. They combine indicators of economic poverty (although using different thresholds) with indicators for social discrimination such as gender, caste and ethnicity:

> *"Disadvantaged Groups are groups of economically poor people (living on less than 19,261 NPR[37] (equivalent USD 225) per year/person or having less than six months food security) that also suffer from social discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, caste/religion and regional identity (regional identity denotes people's origin, i.e. 'mountain people', 'hill people', or 'Terai/ Madhesh people')."* (SDC 2013: 30)

> *"The initiatives target particularly disadvantaged people, i.e. the economically poor living on less than 3000 NRs monthly income per household member, or having less than six months food sufficiency, who also suffer from social discrimination based on gender, caste/ethnicity and regional identity."* (Helvetas 2011: 2)

Discriminated groups are provided an extra definition:

> *"Discriminated Groups refer to groups affected by discrimination based on gender, caste/religion or ethnic identity, such as women, Dalits, disadvantaged ethnic groups (Janajati)."* (SDC 2013: 6)

Both the SDC (2013: 19) as well as Helvetas (2015: 7) aim at reaching a target group composition of 60% DAGs and 50% women. Helvetas (2011: 21) states that the remaining 40% besides the DAGs are to be economically poor. As measures to promote the equitable access to public services and decision-making for DAGs, the SDC (2010: 36) applies empowerment as well as incentive and support systems. Helvetas (2011: 21) reaches its target groups through community-based organizations and thereby takes care not to support organizations which are dominated by traditional power relations. To further consolidate its focus on DAGs, Helvetas has introduced measures to monitor social inclusion within its development activities:

> *"HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal will further strengthen its focus on socially discriminated and economically poor people under its defined disadvantaged people approach. The collection of disaggregated data by socio-economic cohort (poverty, gender, caste) will be integrated into all the development work with local partners. Additionally, investments and benefit flows will be assessed by socio-economic cohort. These innovations in social inclusion monitoring will be done in close coordination with other organizations at local and national level."* (Helvetas 2011: 18)

The reorientation on social equity and inclusion has found expression in the policy on workforce diversity of the SDC, which has also been adopted by Helvetas (2011: 19, 22):

> *"SDC's conflict sensitive programme management recognises that one of the most effective ways of understanding the aspirations of its beneficiaries – who are suffering from caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, and region-based discrimination – lies in SDC's ability to integrate into its own staff people from all social groups, again, particularly members of discriminated groups. [...]. The representation of women and members from discriminated groups in the SDC coordination office and in the field has been steadily increased through diversity-sensitive affirmative action."* (SDC 2010: 28)

The EFS follows the same targeting rationale as its managing organization Helvetas, and the SDC respectively. Around a fourth of the 22 reviewed EFS documents thereby use the term DAG to

[37] This is the national poverty line of Nepal, which was defined in 2011 (cf. ADB 2013: 1).

describe the EF's priority target groups (EFS 2011: 5; 2012a: 4; 2013a: 3; 2013b: 4; 2014b: 6). In the implementation guideline for PtP, which provides the most detailed description of the EF target groups (cf. chapter 6.3), the EFS identifies barriers for its target groups to access skills trainings and employment and mentions similar factors for social exclusion and unequal socio-economic opportunities as Helvetas and the SDC:

> *"The group of the poor and youth with special needs is often excluded from skills training, as for them the opportunity costs of attending training are usually too high. This particular target group has to earn a living on a daily basis and cannot afford to forego their daily chores to attend training over a period of several weeks. Furthermore, their chances of accessing a skills training programme, and more importantly subsequent employment, are often limited by a large range of factors such as very low levels of literacy/illiteracy, social stigmatization, physical condition as well as their place of living (slums, rural poverty pockets) reducing access to labour markets."* (EFS 2014d: 1)

> *"The primary stakeholders for the Path to Prosperity component trainings often live in hard-to-reach locations, are immobile due to their economical or physical constraints and face discrimination in access to education and training opportunities due to their social and/or ethnic background."* (EFS 2014d: 2)

The implementation guideline for PtP divides the youth targeted under the PtP component into two groups: "youth who are poor" and "youth with special needs who are poor" (EFS 2014d: 4).[38] Poverty is thereby classified using the well-being rankings of PAF or LGCDP as described in chapter 6.3. Special needs are defined as follows:

> *"The term 'special needs' broadly circumscribes groups of society which are, due to their physical or mental condition, ethnicity, family background and other circumstances marginalized and/or disadvantaged. Due to this they are prone to poverty and highly vulnerable to social exclusion."* (EFS 2014d: 5)

A not exhaustive list of groups is declared to fall into the criterion of special needs:

- *"People with disabilities and their parents*
- *HIV/ AIDS affected*
- *Slum dwellers*
- *Prisoners and/ or their dependants [sic!], ex-prisoners reintegrating in society*
- *Landless/ internally displaced/ former bonded labourers*
- *Women affected by violence and/ or prostitution*
- *Widows and single women*
- *Orphans, street children*
- *Very poor farmers looking for off-farm/ agro-processing opportunities*
- *Men and women affected by conflict and violence*
- *Drug-addicts and individuals in rehabilitation from abusive substance consumption"* (EFS 2014d: 4)

Later in the document, "youth from disadvantaged ethnic groups" are added to this list (EFS 2014d: 7). While ethnicity is thus explicitly mentioned as an eligibility criterion for poor youth with special needs, affiliation to a discriminated caste is not explicitly mentioned as such in the implementation guideline for PtP. The document however provides a table of the EF target group categories A to D

[38] Within the MEJC component, the poverty criterion is not applied to the target groups. Otherwise the target group categories are the same as in the PtP component (cf. chapter 6.3).

(see Table 13, cf. chapter 6.3), in which discriminated groups encompassing Dalits, Janajatis and Madhesis are mentioned as target groups additional to the targeted groups with special needs which were specified in the above-cited list:

Table 13: PtP Target Group Categories as Specified in the Implementation Guideline for PtP
(Source: EFS 2014d: 14f)

Categories	Target Groups	Incentives for the T&Es
A	Economically poor women from discriminate groups (Dalit, Janajati, Madeshi women) Economically poor women from all groups with special needs as per list under 2.3	Very high
B	Economically poor women not referred to under category A	High
C	Economically poor men from discriminated groups (Dalit, Janajati, Madeshi) Economically poor men from all groups with special needs as per list under 2.3	Medium
D	Economically poor men not referred to under category C	Low

In summary, it can be noted that the targeting approach applied by the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS alike is based on the positive discrimination of DAGs, which are identified using social indicators for discrimination (e.g. caste, ethnicity, gender and region) in combination with economic indicators for poverty. The EFS additionally defines the term "groups with special needs", which encompasses (more) specific individual conditions that can cause discrimination. The conceptualization of target groups by the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS is in line with Nepal's post-conflict political discourse aiming at the inclusion of socially and economically discriminated groups as described in chapter 5.4 (cf. Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 7f). The organizations' target groups thereby largely overlap with the groups that Nepal's new constitution defines to be entitled to governmental affirmative action. Based on this overview of the conceptualization of target groups adapted by the SDC, Helvetas and the EFS, the next chapter focuses on addressing how the societal conditions of Dalits in particular are taken into consideration and presented in the reviewed documents.

8.2 Consideration of the "Dalit Issue"

8.2.1 Consideration of the "Dalit Issue" in SDC and Helvetas Documents

Apart from mentioning that Dalits often face social discrimination and poverty, thereby falling into the category of the targeted DAGs, the above mentioned cooperation strategies and reports of the SDC (2010; 2013) and Helvetas (2011; 2015) do not make further elaborations on how societal debates about Dalits are taken into consideration within their positive discrimination targeting practices. However, Helvetas issued a learning and sharing series paper called "Empowerment of Dalits"

(Helvetas n.d.), which provides insight into Helvetas' understanding of the "Dalit issue" in Nepal. The paper describes Helvetas' experiences with the targeting of Dalits in Mid- and Far-Western Nepal through a former community development program (Helvetas n.d.: 3). Deriving from its content, the document was probably published in 2002 (cf. Helvetas n.d.: 6, 15). It is questionable whether the approaches of targeting Dalits presented in this rather old document still reflect Helvetas' current approaches. As the document is prominently displayed in the publications section of Helvetas Nepal's website[39], and because no follow-up version of the document seems to exist, some of its passages shall be discussed in the following.

The "Empowerment of Dalits" paper explains the rationale behind targeting Dalits by stating that Dalits have been politically, socially and economically discriminated and regarded as "untouchable" by Hindu society since the 12th century, with a majority of them facing poverty, landlessness, and lacking access to income, education and health facilities (Helvetas n.d.: 3, 8):

> *"They [Dalits] are discriminated against in their daily lives at water springs and taps, in employment, at schools, hotels, restaurants, temples, and milk cooperatives (milk supplied by Dalits is refused)."* (Helvetas n.d.: 8)

It is mentioned that though caste discrimination was declared punishable by law in Nepal's constitution of 1990 and despite efforts of NGO advocacy and program initiatives to address this issue, caste discrimination continues (Helvetas n.d.: 9). In addition, it is stated that discrimination and untouchability are also practiced within Dalit communities (Helvetas n.d.: 8). Dalit women are described to face a "double burden" of being women and Dalit (Helvetas n.d.: 8). Furthermore, it is outlined that Dalits often work as leather workers, sweepers, blacksmiths, tailors and agricultural laborers with many of them actually working as bonded laborers (Helvetas n.d.: 8). As an overall objective, the paper states the following:

> *"Helvetas recognizes the urgent need for development programmes to address the issue of Dalits."* (Helvetas n.d.: 9)

> *"One of the operation objectives [...] is to empower the disadvantaged – women and Dalits – to address the effects of discrimination and exploitation."* (Helvetas n.d.: 9)

To target and reach Dalits through economic and social programs, it is elaborated that it is sensible to develop the confidence and unity of Dalits by working with Dalit-only groups and by uniting different Dalit communities through the formation of support organizations and networks (Helvetas n.d.: 3, 10, 16). A set of reasons is mentioned why working with Dalit-only groups has proven to have more immediate impact on Dalit issues in the reviewed community development program than working with mixed groups (Helvetas n.d.: 16). For example, it makes Dalits perceive a program to be directly working for them, it helps address issues of discrimination within Dalit communities, it increases their

[39] https://nepal.helvetas.org/en/news/publications/ (accessed: 14.06.16).

solidarity, it enables Dalits to more easily influence and participate in group activities, and it ultimately benefits entire communities (Helvetas n.d.: 14, 16f):[40]

> *"Introducing new interventions first to Dalits builds relations with others in the community. Dalits cannot easily copy the activities of the higher castes because they lack the same resources – house, water, animals, land, education, knowledge and exposure. If activities and skills are introduced to Dalits first, then these can trickle upwards, and the Dalits gain greater respect in the community."* (Helvetas n.d.: 17)

The sensitization of non-Dalits, local institutions and government offices for the Dalit issue is also supported:

> *"The sensitisation of a broad range of stakeholders provides the opportunity for developing consensus for change, and minimizing conflict. Dalit issues should not be positioned as antagonistic to so called "upper caste" interests. Dalit issues must be mainstreamed and a Dalit movement that will ultimately bring benefits to all must be advocated."* (Helvetas n.d.: 14)

Though the document strongly promotes the development of a unified Dalit movement, it acknowledges the potential risk the institutionalization of a Dalit movement can entail:

> *"The question of the institutionalisation of Dalit groups/organisations requires further careful reflection and testing. It is important that they are strong and have a feeling of identity and pride. Then again, it is important that institutionalisation does not lead to a kind of elitism and formality, since such institutions can potentially become exclusive rather than inclusive, and the organization can become more important that the purpose of the movement itself."* (Helvetas n.d.: 14)

Many of these points raised by the "Empowerment of Dalits" paper have also been discussed in the chapters on the scholarly background of this thesis: "Empowerment of Dalits" is the only paper of the reviewed documents to address social problems of discrimination existing within Dalit communities, which was also mentioned in chapter 4.1.2. The document moreover mentions the double discrimination faced by Dalit women, which was focused on in chapter 4.3.1. The paper also seems to acknowledge the observation made by scholars that affirmative action entails the risk of enforcing a polarization between low and high castes (cf. chapter 5.4.3). In the last of the above citations, the document deploys arguments similar to those of the scholars referred to in chapter 5.4.2, who argue that the Dalit community is heterogeneous and that status differences within Dalits have to be addressed in order to develop a Dalit movement which does not only benefit certain better-off sections of the Dalit community.

While the "Dalit issue" and implications of the priority-targeting of Dalits are addressed in the "Empowerment of Dalits" paper, these topics are not discussed in the other, more current reviewed documents of Helvetas and the SDC. A comparable follow-up version of the "Empowerment of Dalits" paper does not seem to exist. In the following, it shall be elaborated on how the societal condition of Dalits finds consideration and mentioning in the documents authored by the EFS.

[40] In contrast, within the EF, T&Es are encouraged to form mixed training groups in order not to isolate or segregate youth of one particular targeted subgroup: E.g. they are encouraged to integrate people with disabilities into regular training classes (EFS 2014d: 4).

8.2.2 Consideration of the "Dalit Issue" in EFS Documents

The reviewed EFS documents only contain a few direct explanations on how the societal conditions of Dalits are coped with by the EF. However, the EFS has issued several four-page "Learning series" papers and an implementation guide, in which the EFS shares its experiences with the enrollment and employability of women, especially in non-traditional, male-based trades.[41] These documents make some references to how the EFS takes gender relations that vary among different caste and ethnic groups into consideration, which shall be discussed in the first of the following sections. Subsequently, a second section addresses a paragraph in the reviewed documents that particularly deals with the targeting of Dalits, namely their enrollment in trainings in caste-based occupations.

The Enrollment of Women of Different Caste and Ethnic Groups

To facilitate the enrollment of women into the skills trainings, the EF adopts a variety of approaches. As part of its communication and outreach strategy, local community members are hired, mainly in rural areas, to conduct door-to-door visits to potential trainees' families and neighbors at the earliest stages of targeting to gain support from possible trainees' families and communities (EFS 2015b: 12, 14). Moreover, T&Es provide counselling services before and after training to the women and their families to raise awareness about their options (EFS 2015f: 2). Other approaches to enroll women, especially in non-traditional trades, are to hire women-trainers, who act as role models to motivate other women to take training (EFS 2015h: 3), to train women in the male-based trade of their family business and to provide multi-skills training in both non- and traditional-trades (EFS 2015f: 2).

The "Learning series" papers state that many factors hinder women to work in non-traditional trades and that they often prefer traditional trades which can be carried out close to their homes and at flexible working hours (EFS 2015i: 2). This especially applies to women who have to combine their work with household and child care responsibilities. Marriage and childbirth were reasons for women who were trained in a non-traditional trade to switch to a flexible home-based traditional trade (EFS 2015e: 4). Especially in families who are not in financial need of additional income, women are discouraged to continue working in a non-traditional trade, e.g. out of the families' concerns of being negatively perceived by their communities (EFS 2015e: 3). Conversely, "[...] women in ethnic groups and from less affluent households had fewer family and cultural proscriptions" (EFS 2015e: 3).

This shows that the possibility to train and link women to employment, especially in non-traditional trades, is influenced by the women's local cultural environment, their economic background and the caste or ethnic group they belong to (EFS 2015e: 3). For example, in conservative communities, particularly in some areas of the Terai, women are constrained to their household boundaries (EFS 2015e: 4) and are inclined to take training in home-based trades (EFS 2015i: 3). In urban areas and some rural areas where women have higher educational levels and are freer in their mobility, taking training and working in non-traditional trades is more accepted (EFS 2015e: 4; 2015i: 3):

[41] The enrollment of women in non-traditional trades is encouraged as these trades generally yield higher incomes and "[...] demonstrate the capabilities of women in society" (EFS 2015e: 1; cf. chapter 6.3).

> *"The T&Es mentioned differences between the Pahadi community from the hills and the Madhesi community in the Terai. For instance, numerous proscriptions in Madhesi culture inhibit women from leaving their homes to go to work in the bazaar or out in the fields. The families totally prohibit women from interacting with men other than their family members. The T&Es said that it was better to train Madhesi women in trades such as poultry and vegetable growing where they did not have to leave or travel far from their own homes to engage in non-traditional trades. The T&Es said that certain cities with high populations of migrant people, were more progressive, so it was more socially acceptable for women to be working in non-traditional trades."* (EFS 2015e: 3)

Training women in male-based trades can counteract local cultural norms and gender role allocations to such an extent that it can yield negative consequences for the women, for instance in the form of missing employment opportunities (EFS 2015b: 9). It is acknowledged that in some communities it might be preferable to train women in time-flexible and socially-accepted home-based trades to ensure their sustainable employment (EFS 2015i: 4):

> *"While EF found that there is value in helping women push the barriers of gender roles through gainful employment in traditionally male sectors, pushing too far from the existing gender roles can result in women being unable to find employment, or having to quit. However, the situation across Nepal is extremely varied even within the Terai and the gender analysis needs to be highly localized. Certain cities such as Hetauda and Butwal are more progressive areas, where it is more socially acceptable for women to be working in a wide variety of trades. A careful assessment of the situation of women in a particular district and locale is important since their situation can vary greatly across the country. A deeper understanding and careful consideration of the social norms in the community and the employment environment is essential for women to be employed sustainably."* (EFS 2015b: 9)

The citation of a T&E shows that the affiliation to a caste and ethnic groups generally influences what kinds of trades are chosen by women:

> *"Among women producing poultry, they are 90% Brahmin-Chhetri because they have the money to invest but will not do labour intensive work. These women do not work in masonry – those doing that work are all Dalit and Janajati."* (T&E cited in EFS 2015e: 3)

A further paragraph states that extremely poor women from DAGs living in rural areas are generally difficult to enroll into the EF due to their need for a daily income as daily wage laborers and due to the T&Es not being in the position to grant them allowance (EFS 2015h: 2). Another passage describes that among the Dalit community, fewer women chose to be self-employed than among Janajatis due to their greater lack of financial resources, access to markets and their low degrees of confidence (EFS 2015c: 3).

The reviewed "Learning series" papers and the implementation guide published by the EF on the enrollment of women show that the EFS takes into consideration that social norms and notions of gender roles vary between different caste and ethnic groups with different socio-economic backgrounds. Though the documents rarely address the enrollment of Dalit women in particular, they imply that caste and gender do not act independently of each other, similar to the research literature discussed in chapter 4.3.

Training Dalits in Caste-Based Occupations

While gender roles and the labor division between the genders is examined and taken into account by making a difference between traditional (female-based) and non-traditional (male-based) trades, the

traditional ascription of occupations to different caste groups and the respective labor division between caste (and ethnic) groups (cf. chapter 3.1) is not explicitly discussed in the reviewed EFS documents. Some paragraphs only generally state that social customs and cultural beliefs need to be considered when implementing EF trainings as they influence which occupations are engaged in or how they are perceived:

> *"People in the society engage in various jobs for earning of their living. Economic activities of the people are guided by need and norms of people living in a society of a particular geographical location. For example, the types of goods and services produced and consumed in a society depend on a geography and social customs. The assessment of the local economy identifies a sector with highest employment generation potential. Once the potential sector is identified, the actual RMA process for particular occupation begins."* (EFS n.d.: 14)

> *"Young people's choices to work in a given occupation depend, among others, on their attitudes, societal image and attributions made in relation to the work, their economic situation, availability of jobs and salary prospects, culturally rooted beliefs, as well as their geographical location."* (EFS 2015g: 25)

In connection with these cited passages, the traditional allocation of certain occupations to specific (low) caste groups is not mentioned. However, one passage in the implementation guide for PtP explicitly addresses the training of Dalits in their traditional, caste-based trades:

> *"The main focus [of PtP] is on wage employment as the very poor and youth with special needs often do not have sufficient capital to invest in an enterprise and chances to get a loan are slim. However, especially in rural areas where opportunities for wage employment are limited, self-employment is a viable alternative. In such cases the graduates need to be supported during six months with technical backstopping and market linkage (e.g. through producer/ marketing groups, group enterprising etc.). Dalits and occupational castes may be supported with upgrading their skills in their relative trades (e.g. blacksmiths, shoe-making, etc.)."* (EFS 2014d: 13)

However, the reviewed EFS documents do not provide information on whether Dalits are actually often trained in their traditional (artisanal) occupations and what effects this might have on societal caste relations. It is not discussed that societal notions of caste-based occupations reflect status-allocations based on ritual purity and pollution (cf. chapter 2.2.). It could be argued that training Dalits in caste-based occupations might foster caste boundaries and underlying systems of discrimination, e.g. by reinforcing economic dependencies and systems of ritual labor division (cf. chapter 4.2). This possible interpretation is derived from the following observation: While women are encouraged within the EF to take training in non-traditional trades to challenge traditional gender roles, the corresponding reasoning that Dalits should be trained in occupations that are "non-traditional" in their respective caste group does not seem to be considered.

To summarize the review of the selected EFS documents, it can be noted that they do not provide in-depth discussions on how the societal conditions of Dalits and related issues of caste discrimination are taken into consideration. For example, while Helvetas' "Empowerment of Dalits" paper reviewed above (cf. chapter 8.2.1) mentions the need to address the heterogeneity and possible social problems (e.g. discrimination) existing within Dalit caste groups, similar findings are not integrated in the EFS' official documents. Possible implications that the positive discrimination targeting of Dalits might

have are not addressed either. It might be possible that the "Dalit issue" is taken into consideration in more detail through other communication channels than through the official reporting of the EFS.

9 EF Targeting from the Perspective of EF Staff, TVET Officials and Donor Representatives

In the following sections, the results of the analysis of the semi-structured expert interviews with EFS staff members, EF Regional Monitoring Officers, TVET officials and donor representatives (see Table 6) are discussed in view of the research questions posed at these actors:

What do EF staff members, TVET officials and donor representatives mention as challenges of the affirmative action targeting practices such as the ones applied by the EF? What do they mention as effects of these targeting practices on caste and gender relations and issues of discrimination? What do they imply about their view on debates concerning Dalits (the "Dalit issue") and about how they are taken into consideration in these targeting practices?

As mentioned in the limitations chapter 7.2.1, the expert interviews were not particularly focused on exploring the interviewees' understanding of the societal situation of Dalits and on how it is taken into consideration in the affirmative action targeting practices in the EF and in the EVENT, SDP and YSEF projects respectively. Even so, the interviews give a valuable insight into what societal, political and geographical circumstances and challenges shape the implementation, especially the targeting, and the societal impact of such development interventions.

A first section gives an overview of these different types of challenges. Additionally, the interviewees' perceptions of the effects that have been and are hoped to be brought about by the EF and the related development interventions are presented. Moreover, the interviewees' suggestions on how to respond to the outlined challenges are reviewed. In a second section, the interviews are interpreted regarding the experts' view on debates concerning Dalits and how these are taken into consideration in the targeting practices within programs like the EF. The presented results are illustrated with citations.

9.1 Challenges and Effects of Reaching Target Groups

Chapter 8.1 showed that the EF and the SDC follow the same approach in conceptualizing their target groups. The other institutions, DfID, the SDP, the EVENT project and the YSEF also essentially focus on targeting people who are economically poor and/or socially discriminated:

> *"From SDC perspective it is sure that we cannot reach to everyone, that is why we want to maximize the benefits to those people who are backward, for example disadvantaged group. We have our own definition for disadvantaged group. 'Own' means SDC definition, because all the donors have their different definition. We consider those people as disadvantaged who are economically disadvantaged and socially discriminated. This is the combination for the definition of disadvantaged group. So we want to reach to disadvantaged group. And now in our strategy which we are striving to reach, actually, which we are achieving also, 60% of our total support should reach to this disadvantaged group. […]. And apart from that, 50% of women should receive that support […]."* (SDC representative)

> *"So DfID's involvement in the EF is very much trying to concentrate on reaching the poorest and the most vulnerable including women and people from disadvantaged groups."* (DfID representative)

> *"So there are three categories A, B, C. In A, it's Janajatis, marginalized Janajatis, Dalit. In B category, women. And C category general ones."* (EVENT official)

> *"[...] mainly our focus is on 40% women and 30% deprived community. That is our target."* (SDP official)

> *"Our focus is for women. You know the Dalit, very poor, marginalized group and conflict affected people. That is our target group."* (YSEF official)

In accordance with the EF and the SDC, the other institutions also define their target groups by combining social indicators (e.g. caste, ethnicity, gender) with economic indicators for poverty, and thereby seem to have taken up Nepal's political discourse on inclusive development (cf. chapters 5.2 & 5.4; Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 7, 9). The interviewed experts mention various challenges to reach out to these target groups, which are discussed in the following.

9.1.1 Awareness Raising

One frequently mentioned challenge is raising awareness among the target groups of the importance and value of taking skills training. The interviewees attribute the lack of awareness among the target groups to a range of different reasons. One is that society generally values formal education higher than vocational education. A further reason is the lack of institutionalized channels to disseminate information to the Nepali youth about their options in the TVET sector and the labor market. On the one hand, this lack of institutionalized awareness raising is connected to a large fragmentation and insufficient coordination of the TVET sector in general. On the other hand, one of the interviewees mentions that people expect the government to link them to training and employment and miss the necessary initiative of their own to make an effort. However, it is also pointed out that the target groups lack the general mindset and idea about why skills training might be beneficial to them. This especially applies to targeted people in remote areas of Nepal:

> *"I think there is a lack of information and options available to young Nepali to basically understand what's available to them. [...]. So the fact that it's such a fragmented area doesn't help to kind of provide an individual with this kind of wider knowledge of what's going on."* (DfID representative)

> *"People think that everything should be given by the state. And even the job and everything, I mean the opportunity for training, and this would be given to them. It means access, this is another hindering factor, because of self-exclusion."* (SDC representative)

> *"I have already told that the main challenge is to our people in this sector, in the remote area of Nepal they don't know how to approach in the training, how to take training and what happens in the skills training. They don't have that kind of idea. And it is really the challenge to reach that type of community who need training but don't know about it. That kind of awareness programs really needed in the country."* (SDP official)

9.1.2 Reaching People in Remote Areas

The challenges to reach target groups in remote areas of Nepal are not limited to the difficulty of awareness raising. Within the EF, T&Es are encouraged to conduct mobile trainings in remote areas to

create access to skills trainings even in areas far from urban centers. However, the lack of adequate infrastructure (e.g. training halls), few employment opportunities and the absence of financial institutions from which trainees could get loans to an affordable interest rate pose additional challenges to successfully target and train people in remote areas. The difficulty of being granted loans is exacerbated by the low financial possibilities of the target groups to provide sufficient collateral:

> *"In the countryside when they [the T&Es] go to the rural areas and there it is difficult to get employment and provide employment. So the training providers are mainly in urban areas. Because there are employers. So only if they are employed they get the money. So they are focused in urban areas."* (EVENT official)

> *"Extreme poor persons are getting training for PtP. But there is challenge also for employment. Because the very poor persons are in rural area. Surrounding the urban area, market area, there is more opportunity of employment than rural area."* (EF monitoring officer)

> *"Another challenge for us is linking the graduates with financial institutions. Like banks. For PtP clients or MEJC clients also. Bank want collateral for their loan. But our graduates to whom we are providing training are very poor persons. If they want to start their own business or enterprises, they have to take loan from somewhere. So banks do not believe them easily for loan. That is a challenge for us. So we are trying to tie up our graduates with local cooperatives which is in their own village. But the interest rate is more than bank. Higher than bank. [...]. And also banks do not want to go to rural areas. They only want to work in easy areas where they can get access to easily."* (EF monitoring officer)

The elaborations of the experts on the difficult socio-economic situation of many people living in rural Nepal is largely congruent with the situation of socio-economic inequalities described in chapter 4.1.1.

9.1.3 The Enrollment of Women

Another targeting challenge mentioned by the interviewed experts is the enrollment of women into the skills trainings, especially into non-traditional trades, and linking them to employment. Similar observations are mentioned as in the official EFS documents reviewed above (see chapter 8.2.2). According to the interviewees, non-traditional trades are not favored by women due to their preference for "easy" and home-based trades which are culturally more accepted. Apart from that, the enrollment of women was not discussed in more detail during the interviews.

> *"In non-traditional trade it is little bit difficult to get female participants. They want to take training in female-based training. For example for building electrician, it is a little bit difficult to find female trainees. Because from the beginning, building electrician is doing by male. [...]. Because in our traditional culture going outside, just like working as a male, is not easy to be done by females."* (EF monitoring officer)

> *"They do not want to go more away from their house or village for employment. They can't stay outside of their home at night. So they prefer to take an easy trade like tailoring." (*EF monitoring officer)

9.1.4 Reaching the Very Poor

In spite of the mentioned challenges, the interviewees generally consider the EF's targeting modalities through the differential incentive- and result-based payment system to be efficient. The collaboration with LGCDP and PAF within the PtP component, in which the EF makes use of these programs' well-

being rankings, is regarded to have improved the outreach to the poor in particular. Moreover, the cooperation with outreach partners such as the Feminist Dalit Organization is considered fruitful in reaching out to DAGs (cf. chapter 6.3).

However, one EF staff member points out that very poor people who are dependent on daily wage labor to have a means of livelihood for themselves and their families face insurmountable barriers to take training.[42] The interviewee does not consider the facilities provided during EF trainings such as child care, transportation and accommodation to be solutions to these barriers. Moreover, the incentive for T&Es to enroll the very poor is small due to the risk of not being able to successfully train and link them to employment. In this respect, the interviewee mentions that the level of education of very poor people is so low that they would not be able to follow the trainings and that the five days life skills training cannot make up for their missing socialization.

9.1.5 Effects of the EF and Related Development Interventions

When asked about the desired and achieved impact of the EF (and the related projects respectively), the interviewees mostly consider the participation in the trainings to empower its participants economically and socially, especially women and people from DAGs. This empowerment is estimated by some of the interviewees to reduce societal tensions and inequalities between the genders and different caste and ethnic groups, and to help diminish practices of untouchability as illustrated by the following citation:

> *"And because of economic empowerment, some level of empowerment, and definitely it has built up social changes, a social image. That is one thing. Another one is: now girls are coming out, in the training. That is one very crucial social change I can see. And Dalit, disadvantaged groups. The Dalit is outcast in our context, but now people are living together, taking training in one room, eating together. So these types of social changes we can see. Previously, people did not want so-called outcast people to enter their house. But if you're a plumber, an electrician, you have to come to house. Nobody asks about your caste. That's the major social change we can see."* (SDC representative)

An increased mobility of the people and improvements of the professionalization of employers (e.g. safety standards) are mentioned as other effects of the EF. However, some interviewees also note that the impact a project like the EF can have on society as a whole is limited. They regard its power to break up strong cultural ties which perpetuate social inequalities to be small. Nonetheless, these interviewees also bring forward that the EF might induce small societal changes or at least contribute to their multiplication in society:

> *"So the ideal [desired impact] is cultural change. Especially when we are talking about inequality and inequality of opportunity and Nepal has a lot of issues in this. Not just from a gender point of view but also from a huge number of different groups in society both across caste and across different ethnic groups and things. And the hope is that through a program like the EF by encouraging more women more people from disadvantaged background to actually partake in the training that they will become a lot more encouraged to be able to do it and other people might see that and be encouraged as well. I mean the EF is being quite useful in that respect [...]. I mean,*

[42] This difficulty is also pointed out by one of the above reviewed "Learning series" papers of the EFS (2015h: 2) (see chapter 8.2.2).

> *potentially, I don't know whether society is changing in Nepal. I think, generally, it might be but that might be because of external influences, media, rather than these programs directly, but they can help."* (DfID representative)

Within scholarly literature (cf. chapter 5.4.3) it is often discussed whether the positive discrimination of groups based on their group identity (e.g. caste or ethnicity) possibly reinforces social conflict between groups which receive benefits through an affirmative action measure and others who do not. This debate is not brought up by the interviewed experts.

When asked about future prospects of programs like the EF, adjustments of the applied targeting modalities are not primarily mentioned. The interviewees rather emphasize the need for governmental standardization of the TVET sector and for the introduction of apprenticeship trainings. The interviewees stress the need for better linkages of the trainees to employers in the private sector industries, which could be established through apprenticeship trainings and which the current T&E-modality cannot sufficiently provide.

To sum up, the expert interviews give a comprehensive overview of the many challenges skills training projects like the EF face in reaching their target groups and implementing their modalities within the context of Nepal's TVET sector. The difficulty to raise awareness about skills trainings among the target groups, reaching out to the very poor and people in remote areas, linking graduates to financial institutions, enrolling and creating linkages to employment especially for women, and properly assessing the Nepali labor market within a fragmented TVET sector seem to be regarded as the most pressing challenges. When asked about suggestions on how to tackle such challenges, most interviewees call for holistic and standardizing adaptions of the skills training modalities and the TVET sector in general.

9.2 Coping with the "Dalit Issue"

Two focal staff members of the EFS were directly asked about how the EF is adjusted to local societal structures and what differences in the effects, the performance and feasibility of the project have been observed in different districts. Their answers give hints about how caste and ethnic differences and the societal situation of Dalits in particular are taken into consideration within the EF's modalities.

The two interviewees explain that the T&Es have a lot of freedom to adapt to local contexts. Regional EF staff members work in close collaboration with the T&Es and are required to be familiar with the local settings and have to have knowledge of the local languages spoken in the regions they work in. T&Es can adjust the training duration to local societal structures and choose their trades respectively. For example, the training period can be extended and the training hours per day reduced to enable women to take training who need time to follow household and working responsibilities parallel to the training. Furthermore, for example, within Muslim communities, female trainers are hired to motivate Muslim women to take training. Moreover, the EF staff members check the T&Es' service proposals for their adequacy regarding the local contexts and the target groups they are directed at. As an example it is mentioned that if a T&E was to plan to deliver beautician training to Dalits, this would

be discussed with the T&E as the employability of Dalits within this trade would be low due to still existing untouchability practices. If it is unclear whether a specific local caste or ethnic group has to be considered discriminated or not, this is discussed with the respective T&E and official government documents are consulted (e.g. of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities).

However, despite the T&Es' and regional EF staff's flexibility to adapt to local contexts, one EFS staff member mentions that local communities can be so heterogeneous that it is difficult to do justice to this heterogeneity in the local implementation of the EF. This interviewee further points out that the SDC's definition of DAGs, which is adopted by the EF, is oversimplifying and ignores certain societal heterogeneities. For example, all Janajatis are included in the definition of DAG, even though there are Janajati groups which cannot be considered marginalized. The interviewee thereby raises an issue which is also discussed among scholars referred to for example in chapters 5.2 or 5.4.3. Namely, by using a social category to define target groups such "Janajati", economic differences and heterogeneities within such socially constructed target groups are ignored.

As mentioned, the other expert interviews rarely include implications about how program modalities are adapted to different social groups and districts or about how debates concerning Dalits are taken into consideration within these modalities. The most obvious reason for this is probably that the remaining interviewees were not directly asked about such considerations. Moreover, when generally asked about the challenges of implementing their development interventions, the interviewees might have regarded the program-holistic challenges outlined in the previous chapter as more worth-mentioning than the challenges of targeting people of different caste and ethnic groups. The elaborations of the two interviewees who were specifically asked about local program adaptations imply that issues of caste and ethnic differences are taken into consideration rather on local implementation levels than on program-holistic levels.

10 The EF from the Perspective of Beneficiaries and T&Es

In the following, the results of the analysis of the interviews and FGDs conducted by RIDA (see Table 11) are presented regarding the research questions posed at EF beneficiaries and T&Es:

What do beneficiaries of the EF, especially Dalits, say about their integration into the EF (e.g. regarding their positive discrimination) and the treatment they encountered (e.g. regarding their caste affiliation)? What do they say or imply about the effects of their participation in the EF and their general views on caste and gender relations and issues of discrimination?

How do the T&Es implement the affirmative action targeting modalities of the EF and what challenges do they face? What do T&Es say or imply about the effects of the affirmative action targeting on caste and gender relations and issues of discrimination?

Though the research questions place some focus on Dalit interviewees, the following elaborations show that there were rarely any instances where the statements of Dalit respondents would stand out from the ones of the other interviewed EF beneficiaries. Comparing the response patterns between different respondent-groups (e.g. DAGs and non-DAGs) was treated with caution due to their heterogeneity and due to the interviews not providing enough insight into the caste (and ethnic) relations the interviewees are subject to (cf. chapters 7.1.3 & 7.2.1).

The first of the following chapters discusses the integration of EF beneficiaries into the EF program. The (direct, indirect and non-) beneficiaries' knowledge of the targeting mechanisms of the EF, barriers to take training, the targeting practices of the interviewed T&Es and, finally, the EF participants' experiences during training are addressed. In doing so, the first of the research questions posed at EF beneficiaries and T&Es respectively are examined.

The second chapter outlines effects the EF has had on different areas of life of the EF beneficiaries: effects on their economic situation, and effects on a personal, a family and a community level. With respect to the latter research questions posed at EF beneficiaries and T&Es respectively, possible implications on caste and gender relations are thereby discussed. A set of topics related to the participation of women in the EF are particularly elaborated on. The results are illustrated with citations.[43]

10.1 Integration of Beneficiaries into the EF

10.1.1 Knowledge of EF Targeting

A majority of the interviewed (direct, indirect and non-) beneficiaries seem to be aware of the selective targeting of the EF. As target groups they mention the poor, the landless, DAGs, Dalits, Janajatis, women and the uneducated. Yet, none of the interviewees indicate that they know about the differential incentive payments which are paid to the T&Es according to the target group categories. While most interviewees do not elaborate on their opinion about the target group definition of the EF, a few interviewees, especially non-beneficiaries and people not belonging to a DAG, express their discontent with the selection of target groups. Some are of the impression that only rich people and people with connections get selected to participate in EF trainings:

> *"I don't have anyone who can refer me for the training. Only the rich and the ones who have people who can refer them are enrolled in the training."* (non-DAG woman, non-beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"I got to know about training through a brother of my village. After that I gave application. But they didn't select me; they only select their relatives."* (caste/ethnicity and gender unspecified non-beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

[43] The citations do not necessarily reflect the original wording of the statements as the field notes are not complete transcripts and have undergone one or two translation steps (cf. chapter 7.2.1). For the sake of legibility, the statements were in some cases grammatically corrected without altering their content. For illustrative reasons, the following details as specified in the field notes are noted down for each cited interviewee: (1) Caste or ethnicity: Dalit, Janajati, Muslim, non-DAG, unspecified. (2) Gender: man, woman, unspecified. (3) Involvement in the EF: direct beneficiary, indirect beneficiary (husband, wife, etc.), non-beneficiary, employer, T&E, district-level stakeholder. (4) District.

This view is also supported by the statement of an interviewed district-level stakeholder:

> *"Disadvantaged and people who are weak financially should be targeted. But it hasn't been done. Only the ones who have relatives and who are rich are getting access to such training. There is no promotion or information shared with the people of the district."* (district-level stakeholder, Jumla)

Other indirect and non-beneficiaries feel unfairly treated or express their disapproval with the selective targeting of DAGs or people from certain (lower) castes:

> *"I feel the disadvantaged groups are getting more training compared to others. As they are focused on in everything. I feel they have more opportunities. Since there is a quota system, we can't get enrolled."* (non-DAG woman, non-beneficiary, Kaski)

> *"Training should be provided to those who are really interested and in need of it. They should have willingness, confidence and interest to do something. It should not only be focused on those people who are backward as it has no use if they are not interested."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified man, husband of a trainee, Terhathum)

> *"The reason that I may not have been selected was that I don't belong to a Dalit caste."* (non-DAG man, non-beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"I think the training should be provided to the unemployed. It shouldn't be categorized according to caste. I think the training should be provided to the poor, instead of categorizing according to caste."* (non-DAG man, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

Conversely, there are also non-DAG interviewees who appreciate the positive discrimination of people from DAGs as illustrated by the following exemplary citation:

> *"The EF was searching for people who are unemployed and have failed their SLC. They were prioritizing Dalits, which I liked the most."* (non-DAG man, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

The statements that argue against the affirmative action targeting of DAGs and certain caste groups seem to support the arguments raised by scholars that positive discrimination based on social criteria such as caste or ethnicity can fuel resentment against members of prioritized target groups and can revive caste differences (cf. chapters 5.2, 5.3.2 & 5.4.3). This risk seems to be existing despite the fact that the EF does not exclusively target DAGs. By also targeting people solely based on economic criteria, the EF should not run the risk of excluding economically poor people not belonging to a socially discriminated group (e.g. economically poor Brahmans).

10.1.2 Positive Discrimination Targeting by T&Es

The ten interviews with T&Es give the impression that the T&Es largely comply with the targeting modalities defined by the EFS. They announce their trainings through various channels such as local radio stations, newspapers, loudspeakers and pamphlets. Some collaborate with local community programs (e.g. women's groups) to disseminate information about their trainings. Most T&Es conduct mobile trainings in rural areas, provide life skills trainings and establish links to financial institutions. Some T&Es state to prioritize people from DAGs, Dalits in particular, and/or women:

> *"Dalits and women are more trustworthy. During the selection procedure most of the trainees were of 'A' category."* (T&E, Jumla)

In contrast, other T&Es state not to prioritize DAGs despite the higher incentive payments linked to their (successful) participation. One of them brings forward the following reason:

> *"Taking the disadvantaged group is attached with the incentives, but we don't prioritize it. There is a risk in taking Dalits in the training as they have many opportunities in the market, they can leave the training anytime."* (T&E, Terhathum)

A few statements give insight into other challenges the T&Es face concerning the targeting of DAGs:

> *"INGOs [International NGOs] put pressure on us to reach to the DAG."* (T&E, Kaski)

> *"If we select the disadvantaged groups, they will expect more support. They have less patience compared to others. They can't decide on one thing."* (T&E, Kaski)

> *"Disadvantaged groups mostly spend their money in alcohol."* (T&E, Parsa)

> *"Dalits face a challenge in going to work for others, people first take their own people in their business. There is challenge to [train Dalits as] cooks, as people don't eat food prepared by Dalits."* (T&E, Jumla)

It becomes visible that the T&Es have contrasting views on the targeting of DAGs and Dalits in particular. The cited statements stand rather isolated in the field notes and were not further elaborated on during the interviews. It is difficult to tell what experiences the statements about the DAGs' inclination to be impatient, indecisive and to spend their money on alcohol are based on, how the statements are influenced by the T&Es' personal opinion and perhaps prejudiced thinking, or how they correspond to actual societal realities. The statements imply that social problems might exist within DAGs, which was discussed by referring to Kisan (2005) in chapter 4.1.2. The last citation is the only statement among the T&Es which directly addresses caste-based discrimination. It shows that persisting untouchability practices diminish the Dalits' opportunities in the labor market (cf. chapter 4.1.2).

10.1.3 Treatment during Training

Concerning the treatment EF participants got during their training, more than a third of all interviewed participants state that their trainers were friendly and/or that there was no discrimination on the part of the trainers. Criticism towards trainers is rarely expressed.

While discrimination on the basis of caste affiliation or ethnicity does not seem to have been an issue during the trainings, there are a few statements of women concerning gender-related difficulties they faced during training. A few women from DAGs mention challenges (but also advantages) of being trained by male trainers or in mixed-gender groups. Correspondingly, some women express their happiness about having been trained in female-only training groups:

> *"At first when I took training it was difficult for me as there was a male trainer and I didn't have enough confidence in myself."* (Muslim woman, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"In my view it is good to provide training in mixed groups as we can compare [ourselves] […]. The advantage of having mixed groups is that the women will also speak up and do like the males. The disadvantage of having mixed groups is that women may not speak up. They may hesitate to ask or talk in front of men."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"It was hard to be friendly with the males in the training."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

> *"Only females were in the training. I feel only females were kept in the training to motivate them to come out from their home."* (Janajati woman, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

There were no similar statements made by non-DAG women. In view of the scarcity of these statements, it would be speculative to conclude that difficulties with being trained by and together with men were only faced by women from DAGs. It seems that being trained in gender-mixed groups and by male trainers is not considered a normality by all of the trained women.

10.1.4 Barriers to Take Training

When asked about their integration into the EF trainings, some of the interviewees discuss barriers they faced, which were connected to their working-situations. Household and child care responsibilities are a barrier especially impeding women to take training and follow an occupation:

> *"I also want to take part in training if it will come again, but I am worried about the timing as I have to look after my home as well. I wasn't able to take the training as my children were small.* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, wife of a direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"I also have interest in taking part in training. I had a small baby so I didn't get the chance to take training."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, wife of a direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"Another reason [for women to leave their job] is that they have no support from the family, as they are more engrossed in their household chores."* (non-DAG woman, employer, Parsa)

> *"Before, there were two female workers in my business. They left after they got married."* (caste/ethnicity and gender unspecified employer, Kanchanpur)

> *"The women who have small children, women who don't have citizenship and those whose age was not applicable, they weren't selected in the training."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

In view of this barrier, it would seem likely that the possibility to draw on provided child care facilities during training would be mentioned frequently by female interviewees. Yet, only one woman states that it was the provision of child care which made it possible for her to participate in the EF:

> *"There was a facility and support of food and child care due to which it was easy for me to take the training. If such facility had not been available, then I wouldn't have been able to take the training."* (Janajati woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

The difficulty to enroll people, mostly women, into the EF who have to follow household and child care duties is repeatedly mentioned by the interviewed T&Es. It increases the risk of the trainees dropping out of training and makes it challenging to successfully employ them. Some T&Es suggest increasing the age range as a selection criteria (e.g. from 40 to 45 years) to make the program accessible to people who already have grown children:

> *"Outcome-based payment is very positive. But due to the outcome-based payment, it's very difficult to give training to people who have children. They can't continue with their work and this will create loss."* (T&E, Kanchanpur)

> *"We have so many challenges for the selection [of trainees], regarding the age they must be 16 years and less than 35. We also receive applications from people who have already crossed 35 years. They also have their own problems. They get married at an age of 18-20 years. They cross 25-30 years while raising their children. So, women don't get the chance to get out of their house."* (T&E, Parsa)

Another barrier to take training is to combine training hours and the daily (wage) labor necessary to sustain the livelihood of one's family. This seems to be a barrier faced more often, but not exclusively, by the interviewed men than the interviewed women. Around half of the DAG men, and a few of the non-DAG men imply that they are the principle income earners in their families:

> *"Even though the training was free of cost, due to the lack of a person working at home I couldn't take the training. I had to work to earn for my family at that time.* (Dalit man, non-beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"As Pokhara is a very expensive place it was very hard to sustain my family during training. [...]. For poor people, free training is not enough. As we had to live in the city area and without working it was really hard even to fulfill the basic needs."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

> *"Since it was the time of cultivation during the training, arranging time for the training was a challenge. The family members were not fully convinced since it was peak agriculture time. I promised them to arrange some money through daily wage work at the same time."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"Since I have to look after my children and the expenses of my household, even if I were selected, I wouldn't have been able to take training."* (non-DAG man, non-beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"Since we don't have land and we have to work as laborers, we had to manage the time. When my wife went for the training, it was hard to manage things for livelihood. [...]. In the morning I used to take her to the training center, then I used to go to do the labor work. Once her training was over, we both used to go to the labor work once again."* (Janajati man, husband of a direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

The difficulty to enroll people into the EF who have to continue engaging in daily (wage) labor alongside taking training was also mentioned by some of the T&Es. The T&Es therefore suggest that EF participants who depend on a daily income should be entitled to an allowance to enable them to take training. Some of the interviewed direct and non-beneficiaries, especially males from DAGs, also bring forward that an allowance would increase their options to participate in the EF:

> *"The people who are taking the training need to be provided with incentives because at that time [during training] they would not be able to work. They also need to look after their family."* (Muslim man, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"There were many people [in the training] who used to earn by working as laborers. If they could get a certain amount of money in the training, it would have been helpful for them."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"It was difficult to arrange things for training. My contractor would be angry for being late to work. My wife used to bring food to work. Allowance would serve better since we need to work at any cost to enable our family to make their living."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"When providing training to poor people, there should be a provision of incentives as well. Even though people may have the desire to get training, due to a lack of incentives, they may not take it."* (Dalit man, non-beneficiary Parsa)

That women mention child care and household responsibilities as a barrier to take training more often than men points to the traditional labor division between the genders, in which women almost entirely bear the responsibility of carrying out reproductive (domestic) work (see chapter 4.3.2). That the difficulty of combining training and providing for one's family was mostly mentioned by men might imply that the interviewed women less often took on the role of principle income earners in their families (at least before taking training).

10.2 Effects of Participating in the EF on Gender and Caste Relations

10.2.1 Contribution to Household Expenses and Financial Independence

The analysis of the interviews with EF beneficiaries shows that the majority of the interviewees were able to increase their income and improve their economic situation after taking EF training and being linked to (self-)employment. Many of them spend their money on household expenses, the education of their children, health care, the purchase of land or the establishment of an own business. As a consequence of their increased income, many of the interviewed women (or their dependents) state that they can now contribute to their families' household expenses:

> *"In the past I didn't earn anything. Now I can also contribute to household expenses."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"I also can help with the expenses of my house. I also take decision on the spending."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"She has unburdened the family financially."* (Muslim woman, sister-in-law of a direct beneficiary, Parsa)

Around half of the interviewed women mention their increased financial independence and the decision-making power they have gained:

> *"I can earn by myself. I don't need to depend on anyone."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"I am able to have my own money in my hand. I have become independent."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"After taking the training and getting the work, I didn't have to depend on my family for money. I was independent."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"I feel that now I have access to the income at my home. I can also give my opinion for the expenditures."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"I take my own decision on where I spend money."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

As becomes visible, the interviewed women often mention that they "help with" or "contribute to" household expenses. Moreover, they describe their financial independence using expressions such as

"own money", "access" to household income and "control" over their own earnings. The interviewed men describe their gained financial independence differently:

> *"I have my own business now. I am self-dependent. The income is much better compared to the labor work that I used to do. [...]. I have also managed to cover household expenses. [...]. I can manage household expenses on my own. [...]. I have a family and land to look after."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"In the village, when I needed money I had to take a loan from others. Now, due to this employment, it's easy to run a family."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"Before, I couldn't feed my family but now, I am working in a monthly paid job, so it has been easy for me and I am also saving the money from my income."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"I am 80% satisfied with my job. My income has also increased. I have paid back my loan [...]. I have kept my family in the city. We are staying in a rented room. My father doesn't need to work. I am able to earn myself. [...] I don't have any plan to go abroad. I am the only person earning here."* (non-DAG man, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

Instead of speaking of "helping with" and "contributing" to the household income, the male interviewees rather speak of "covering" expenses or "running a family". This underlines their role as principal income earners in their families. The interviewed men seem to have had control over their income allocation even before taking training. Conversely, some of the cited women seem to partially finance their household expenses and seem to have gained a say in how their families' income is spent only after taking training.

The increased contribution to household expenses and increased financial independence of the trained women might have helped them rise in status in their families. The following sections take up this thought by looking at how the lives of female and male beneficiaries and the role allocation within families were affected by the participation in the EF.

10.2.2 Changed Working-Situation and Gender Role Allocation

Concerning their working-situation before their participation in the EF, around half of the trained men and around a quarter of the women declare having worked as daily (wage) laborers (e.g. doing construction labor or agricultural labor). Since having taken training, most of them no longer have to engage in daily labor:

> *"Now I don't have to carry Doko [basket to carry goods] and go for labor work, so it's nice."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"I used to work as laborer, but after getting the training, I have been working as mason."* (non-DAG man, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

Apart from daily (wage) labor, around a fourth of the women mention that they stayed home, e.g. doing household chores, taking care of children and family members or "doing nothing" before taking training. This was rarely mentioned by the interviewed men.

> *"Before taking the training, I used to take care of my family (father-in-law and children)."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"I didn't use to work. I used to stay at home and look after the children."* (non-Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"In the beginning I only used to do the household works."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"Before taking the training, I was just staying at home, doing nothing."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

The allocation of reproductive work within some families seems to be affected by the trained women's changed working-situation. Some of the women (or their dependents) mention that family members and husbands have started supporting them in doing household chores since they have taken training:

> *"Now, since I have learned the skill, the family members also help me with the household chores."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"I support her by letting her concentrate on her work, instead I do all the household works."* (Muslim woman, sister-in-law of a direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"There has been change in the family as well. Before training only I used to do the household chores, now we both do the household chores. There has been a change in the thinking as well."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

Such statements imply that the trained women might have risen in status in their families and that gender relations might have become more egalitarian possibly due to the women's increased contribution to their families' income. Other trained women had been supported by their husbands in doing household chores already whilst taking training:

> *"I helped her doing household chores and taking her to and receiving her back from the training. [...]. I want to support my wife in all things. I want to support her in household chores as well as in the work."* (Janajati man, husband of a direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"I supported her in household activities as she used to be busy in the training. I had to handle all the works that she used to do. [...]. We had some challenges in the household activities. It used to be really difficult to manage them. I had to take care of the children's school, cooking etc. I had to take leave from my work to take care of my house and family."* (caste unspecified man, husband of a direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

These two statements indicate that a supportive and gender-egalitarian family-environment might in some cases be a precondition for women to take training, and not necessarily an effect of it.

Among the interviewed male EF participants, statements about the allocation of household chores are rare. This implies that the impact on the labor division between the genders was limited in families in which men received training.[44] One trained man mentions how the role allocation between himself and his wife is balanced, whereas another trained man expresses the opposite:

> *"The work division in the family is balanced. Both work equally. Due to the nature of my current work I need to travel and be out of house a lot so I get very little time to be at home. I do household works when I am not out."* (non-DAG man, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

[44] This is also a finding of the impact study presented by RIDA in a meeting with the EFS on 05.03.2015.

> *"After taking the training, there has been no change in the household work. The household works are done by females, while males do work outside their home."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary Jumla)

It is difficult to interpret the interview data with respect to how gender role allocations differ between different caste and ethnic groups. The different economic roles of high- and low-caste women described by Cameron in chapter 4.3.2, who found low-caste women to have higher levels of economic autonomy than high-caste women, are not observable when comparing the statements of DAG women (Dalit women in particular) with the statements of non-DAG women. Before shedding light on how family relations were affected by the participation of a family member in the EF, the effects on a personal level as reported by the interviewees are described in the upcoming section.

10.2.3 Increased Self-Confidence and Secure Demeanor

As an effect on a personal level, the interviewees frequently mention that they have gained self-confidence and have developed a self-assured demeanor, especially the ability "to talk to people". Some of the EF participants attribute the changes in their personality and their economic progress to the life skills training they were provided with. The enhanced secure demeanor of their graduates was also observed by the interviewed T&Es:

> *"In the initial phase of training, they feel scared regarding how to get along with other trainees and trainers. After they complete the training there will be change in their skill and their way of talking."* (T&E, Jumla)

Around half the interviewed women mention that the EF training has positively affected their self-confidence:

> *"When I became a single woman, I used to think, 'How will I raise my children?' But after I received this training, I feel I can do anything."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"I feel that I have a weakness, I can't speak up. I am shy. I feel scared all the time. But after getting into the training I have developed self-confidence. I can talk."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"My self-confidence has increased. I feel that if you have belief and will, then we can achieve anything. In the past, whatever my husband gave or however he treated me, I used to accept it but after taking the training I felt we are equal. I can also bring up my child by myself."* (Non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"I have seen change in myself as I can go out and interact with people. I have gained confidence."* (Non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

A few of the interviewed DAG men similarly mention that they have gained self-confidence. Among the men who do not belong to a DAG or whose caste affiliation was not specified, increased self-confidence is only rarely brought up:

> *"After the training, I have managed to establish some network. I can speak with others. I am self-dependent."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"I am confident. I have got the training and work. I can now work anywhere."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"During training, they also taught us about life skills, health and how to do marketing. They first showed us by doing themselves. My confidence has increased."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"He [trained husband] learned how to face problems and challenges which come in life."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, wife of a direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

The scarcity with which the interviewed non-DAG men mention increased self-confidence as an effect of taking training may indicate that they were more self-confident before the training than the interviewed DAG men. This might be rooted in the different societal status of DAG and non-DAG men. However, such interpretations lie beyond the representativeness and depth of the available interview data.

10.2.4 Increased Appreciation and Respect on a Family Level

As indicated above, the EF participants' improved personal and financial situation seems to have had a positive effect on the relations to their families. Almost half of the interviewed women (or their dependents) mention that they have earned respect and appreciation in their families, or that their relatives are happy about them having taken training:

> *"Before, people didn't recognize me, now they do. They tell me being a daughter, she's been working hard as son. This gives me strength and will."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

> *"The behavior of the family has changed. They also take my opinion while making decisions."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"Family members are impressed by me and they have been supporting me since my training period and it's continuing."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"We feel happy that the daughter of the house, who used to do nothing, is now earning money."* (Muslim woman, sister-in-law of a direct beneficiary, Parsa)

Among the interviewed men, statements concerning positive effects of the training on their family relations are fewer:

> *"After taking this training, my father and mother also used to tell me it's good. I have been able to support my brother and sister."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"The relation with my family has improved. The income has also improved."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"There have been a lot of changes in the family as well. [...]. Before taking the training, my in-laws used to dominate us. [...]. After this training everything has changed for us.* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, wife of a direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

10.2.5 Increased Appreciation and Respect on a Community Level

The apparently enhanced status of the interviewed women in their families is also reflected on a community level. A majority of the interviewed women point out that they have gained respect and are approached differently, in a positive sense, by members of their communities since they have taken

training. A few women state that they are looked up to as role models and have passed on their skills to family and community members:

> *"There has been change in the behavior of the people as well. They look at me in a good manner. I have also earned respect in society and at home. I have been an example in the society."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"Since I have learned skill, the people of the family and community will also come to me to get their clothes stitched. So our status will also increase in the community."* (Janajati woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"If you have skill in your hand, then the people of your home and community will have respect towards you. Seeing that I feel really happy."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

> *"In the past the people of my neighborhood used to think that I can't do anything but now, they say I have done well and have been able to do something with my life. They also send the customers to me by saying that I work well."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"There has been change in the relation as well, in the past my neighbors didn't use to talk to me. Now they come to my shop and talk. They encourage me. They tell me that I have done better than they had expected."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"By seeing me, the confidence of other women has also increased. They also want to learn this skill."* (caste-unspecified woman, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"Women are not recognized by their own name in our society. They are recognized by the name of male members of the family. After taking training, we are recognized by people."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, direct beneficiary)

While the interviewed men seldom mention effects of the training on their family relations, statements about their increased status in their communities are almost as apparent as among the interviewed women. Some interviewees state that due to the trust they have gained in their communities, their chances to be granted loans have increased:

> *"Now, people behave properly with us. I have become a technician. Laborers are not taken well by the society."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"In the village, the behavior of people has changed. I feel that after having money, my prestige has increased."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"People know me these days compared to before. People would not lend us money when we were laborers but these days, they trust us."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"I am satisfied. After doing this work, everybody knows me, and everybody talks to me nicely. In the village, people of the neighborhood also behave nicely."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"I am satisfied with the training. People come to me to provide the work. As I have a certificate, they respect and trust me."* (non-DAG man, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

A majority of the interviewed T&Es also state that EF graduates gain respect and appreciation in their communities through their acquired skills. Some T&Es particularly refer to people from DAGs or

mention the greater societal recognition of EF graduates, who are skilled, in comparison to people who are formally well educated:

> *"There has been change in the way people perceive the disadvantaged group. [...]. After taking the training, people consider the ones who are skilled more important than the ones who are educated. There are unemployed people who are educated, while skilled people are earning."* (T&E, Jumla)

> *"The society has a positive attitude towards them after they get the skill training as they will be a skilled person in the society."* (T&E, Kanchanpur)

> *"People don't have to feel disadvantaged. They can come forward in society and can be a skilled person."* (T&E, Terhathum)

It could be argued that the increased reputation of EF participants and their families, especially of the ones belonging to DAGs, might have a positive effect on the relations between different caste and ethnic groups and might contribute to diminishing practices of caste- or ethnicity-based discrimination in the respective communities. A few statements explicitly show that acquiring skills is considered to reduce discrimination against DAGs:

> *"Society praises and respects the people who have received the skill training. They don't care about us [the probably DAG the interviewee belongs to]. [...]. I want people to see us as equal in the society. For this, we need the skill training."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified, probably DAG man, non-beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"The disadvantaged groups will be affected more if they don't receive training compared to others. If they get the training, maybe they will be independent, but if not, they have more challenges since they are dominated in the society and have to struggle for getting a job."* (non-DAG man, non-beneficiary, Kaski)

> *"Before, people used to dominate us but now, they behave nicely. If we hadn't got the training, then we would still be disadvantaged people in the community."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

10.2.6 General Remarks about Caste Relations

Generally, the interviews give little in-depth information about how the social reality of the interviewees is shaped by caste relations.[45]

There are two statements of trained women which show that caste affiliation can be an important aspect influencing which trades are chosen to be trained in. A Dalit woman mentions to have chosen to take training in tailoring, which is the occupation traditionally performed by her caste (cf. chapter 3.1):

> *"This trade [tailoring] was our culture by birth so I took this training."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum).

None of the other Dalit (and non-Dalit) interviewees mention to have chosen a trade which is traditionally associated with their caste. A district-level stakeholder however states that Dalits mostly apply for metal welding training in their district, which is probably the trade associated to their caste. It is imaginable that the cited Dalit woman was not the only EF participant who based his or her

[45] The most probable reason for this scarcity with which caste relations were addressed during the interviews is that the interviewees were not specifically asked about their views on caste and caste-based discrimination.

choice of trade on caste affiliation.

An interviewed non-DAG woman reports to have chosen to be trained in tailoring, even though this trade is traditionally associated with lower castes:

> *"My family members weren't supportive of taking tailoring training since stitching works are considered to be done by the lower caste groups. [...]. In the past, only the lower caste people (Damai) used to do this trade, but now my family is also happy seeing me do this work."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

A question which was already raised in relation to the review of official EFS documents (cf. chapter 8.2.2), is whether training people in caste-based occupations might foster caste boundaries and nurture systems of caste discrimination. In this respect, it could be argued that cases like the last one of the cited non-DAG woman taking training in tailoring might contribute to dissolving the societal notions of caste-based occupations and might help diminish caste boundaries and discrimination based on rules of ritual purity and impurity. However, as statements concerning the influence of caste affiliation on choosing trades were so scarce, it is not possible to make any conclusions regarding this topic.

10.2.7 Effects of Taking Training on Women

In comparison to implications on inter-caste relations, effects of participating in EF trainings on gender relations were addressed more often and more directly during the interviews. The role allocation between men and women and the possibly enhanced status of trained women in their families and communities have already been touched upon. This chapter further illuminates the effects of the participation in the EF on women in particular. Especially the training of women in home-based trades and non-traditional trades is discussed.

Effects of Training Women in Home-Based Trades

The preference of women to choose to take training in a home-based trade, which was already discussed in chapter 8.2.2 when reviewing the "Learning series" papers published by the EFS, and which was brought up by interviewed experts as shown in chapter 9.1.3, also became noticeable among some of the interviewed female EF beneficiaries:

> *"The good aspect of the skill [tailoring] is that we can do the work by staying at home. [...]. Since I can stay at home and do the work, my family also encourages me to work. When I used to work in someone else's shop, my family used to say, 'Don't go, what will happen if you don't go one day?'"* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"We can stay at home and earn money. I also suggest other women of the community to take the training as we can earn and work at our home only."* (Muslim woman, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

Considering the barrier reproductive work can create for women, one reason for choosing home-based trades is the possibility to follow child care and household responsibilities parallel to working:

> *"Before learning this skill, we used to weave at other people's place. After completion of this training we have planned to open our own business. We can also do this work even doing the household chores."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"The work [hand embroidery] is also easy and we can do it after finishing our household chores."* (caste/ethnicity unspecified woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

All three interviewed women belonging to the Muslim community mention their preference for home-based trades. A female dependent of a trained Muslim woman implies that working in a home-based trade increases the women's prestige in their communities:

> *"The Muslim community is also happy about the skill training as women are staying home, working and earning money. Since she could work from home, there was no barrier to take the training."* (Muslim women, sister-in-law of a direct beneficiary, Parsa)

Based on these few statements concerning women in home-based trades, it can be argued that the traditional notion of the role of women as child carers and housewives (cf. chapter 4.3.2) might pressure women into taking training in home-based trades. Correspondingly, an interviewed district-level stakeholder, a T&E and a participant in a FGD mention that the societal acceptance of women leaving their houses to work is missing in some communities:

> *"There is still no supportive environment for females to get out of their house. Therefore, it's more important to open training institutions in villages rather than in urban areas. I think if this can be done, then the participation of poor and female could be done in training."* (district-level stakeholder, Kanchanpur)

> *"It's a bit difficult for females to get employment because it's difficult for them to finish their household work and reach to work. If they go to work, their husbands become very possessive and see them in a negative way."* (T&E, Kanchanpur)

> *"There may be women taking level-2 [MEJC] training in the hill areas, but in the Terai area it is hard for women to come outside home and work. They are more interested in taking the training of stitching."* (caste/ethnicity and gender unspecified direct beneficiary, Parsa)

Though regional differences are not focused on in this analysis, it appears that especially women in the Terai, where Kanchanpur and Parsa are located and where the interviewed Muslim women come from, seem to be faced with a local cultural environment making them choose home-based trades.

Training women in home-based trades raises questions which have not been addressed by the EFS documents reviewed in chapter 8.2.2 and which cannot be answered based on the available interview data: What influence does training women in home-based trades have on gender relations? Does it enforce or reduce gender inequalities? Could home-based trades bind women to their home thereby hindering their empowerment and consolidating the traditional role allocation between men and women? Might a home-based trade increase the workload of women if they are not relieved of their household responsibilities? Are these possible adverse effects outweighed by the generally observed rise in the status of trained women in their families? Such questions require further investigation.

Effects of Training Women in Male-Based Trades

A component of the EF which is also influenced by and in turn might exert an influence on gender relations is training women in traditionally male-based trades (cf. chapter 8.2.2). As mentioned, training women in male-based (non-traditional) trades is encouraged by the EF as they yield higher

incomes than traditionally female- and home-based trades and positively affect the women's status in society (EFS 2015e: 1). This section elaborates on what the interviewed men and women think of ascribing occupations to a specific gender and of training women in male-based trades, and what views on gender relations might be implied in their statements.

Two interviewed district-level stakeholders observed that the societal consciousness of gender equality has risen and that women have gained acceptance in performing traditionally male-based trades. This opposes the above cited statements about the social environment in the Terai region hindering women to leave their homes to work.

> *"Women are coming out of the four walls and are coming ahead in society. [...]. Men and women are equal. They have become more conscious."* (district-level stakeholder, Jumla)

> *"Women are also coming forward and working in male-based work, especially related to construction."* (district-level stakeholder, Jumla)

In line with these observations, around a fourth of all interviewed women speak against the ascription of trades to a specific gender:

> *"I don't think any trade is male- or female-based. Anyone can take any trade."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"I feel the persons who have interest should take the training. We don't need to categorize for male or female."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"I don't think any work is good or bad or categorized for male or female. There is no such work which one can't do."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"In the past there used to be a division of work for men and women. Now there is no such thing."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"It's not the case that only men can do this work [aluminum fabricator], women can also do it, if they have a will. If you have a will, you can do anything. [...]. In the past this skill was considered a male-based trade. Now women also come ahead and get the training."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

Also around a fourth of the interviewed men express a similarly egalitarian view on the work abilities of men and women:

> *"There were also a few women during the training [furniture maker]. They also did well. At the beginning, they were hesitant. The trainer behaved well with all. Women can also do a male-based trade. We used to encourage them."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"I believe women can also learn what we learned. The skill is not difficult itself for women. They can also be building electricians. There are women in our community who have taken the training in various trades. My wife has also taken the first level training now.* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"Females are physically weaker than males but female workers also work hard and they are more honest. We can trust them. They feel it is easy to work with us. They share every problem with us. For example: We give them easy work during their monthly period."* (Janajati man, employer, Kanchanpur)

> *"Everyone can do this work [furniture maker], there is no such criteria or thinking that furniture making work can only be done by men."* (caste/ethnicity and gender unspecified, direct beneficiary and employer, Jumla)

Opposing these statements, some male respondents speak against an equal ability of women to work in traditionally male-based occupations, and against dissolving the labor division between men and women:

> *"I think females cannot do this work [carpeting]. […]. There has not been any change in the work pattern which was done by women. Parents don't allow sons to do household chores. […]. Males need to be provided training of motor cycle, cycle, mobile and computer, whereas females need to be provided training related to making different varieties of food. Tailoring training is very necessary for women."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Kanchanpur)

> *"Both males and females took the training, but I haven't seen any female working in this trade [house wiring]. The reason for women not working in this trade is that they won't be able to handle electric current and work hard."* (non-DAG man, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"Women should take stitching skills, while welding skills should be taken by males. Women feel shy to do male-based trades."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"In the training [arc welding] there was no female. There were only males. Females cannot do this work because they feel shy."* (Dalit man, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"Since Nepali females always want to stay behind, they don't come to take mobile repairing training."* (Janajati man, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

The perception of women as being too shy for male-based trades is mentioned repeatedly by different male interviewees. This aspect of shyness is only rarely mentioned by the interviewed women themselves. One Dalit woman does make a reference to her shyness regarding taking training in a male-based trade:

> *"At first I was hesitant and used to stand far and watch the boys doing the work. Once I understood about the work and after having practice, it was easy for me. Boutique is a women-based trade, while aluminum is a male-based trade, but it also has a women quota. So it wasn't hard for me to get into the training. In my training, there were both males and females. The trainers were helpful and supportive. They encouraged me. It was hard to be friendly with the males in the training."* (Dalit woman, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

Not only male interview-respondents argue against the integration of women in male-based trades. Some of the female interviewees were confronted with the disapproval of their communities when taking training in a male-based trade. For example, an interviewed woman not belonging to a DAG was trained in an agricultural trade and, despite the discouragement of members of her community, successfully established her own farming enterprise:

> *"People used to tell me females can't do work in the field that's why you do other work."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Kaski)

In the case of an interviewed Muslim woman, it was not possible to overcome the financial and societal hurdles to find employment in the male-based trade, TV-mechanic, she had been trained in:

> *"Since I belong to a poor family, it was hard for me to get the money for travel. […]. My community is conservative, I had to work outside and late. So they didn't show good behavior towards me. […]. The skill training which I took was in a male-based trade. It is very hard for the females to do that job."* (Muslim woman, direct beneficiary, Parsa)

The above statements of women and men who are in favor of women working in male-based trades can be seen as indicators for the emergence of more egalitarian gender relations and labor divisions. It is not possible to say whether the interviewees developed their expressed views based on their participation or connection to the EF or whether they were influenced by general societal processes towards more egalitarian gender relations. The statement citing a Dalit woman who was successfully trained in a male-based trade suggests that training women in male-based trades can support their social empowerment. In contrast, the example of the Muslim woman who was trained as a TV mechanic shows that training women in male-based trades is no guarantee for a positive reception by the women's communities. If no supportive environment is available, taking training in a male-based trade can even have adverse effects on the women's status and employability. The societal conceptions hindering some women to be successful in male-based trades are probably identical with the ones urging women into choosing socially-accepted home-based trades. That training women in male-based trades can contradict local notions of gender roles to such an extent that it can have a negative impact on the trained women was also touched upon in the EFS' official reporting (cf. chapter 8.2.2).

Effects on the Mobility of the Trained Women

The above sections have shown that the interviewed women's choice of trade is influenced by their level of mobility, especially their possibility to leave their homes for training and work. This section addresses the few instances in which the interviewed women explicitly mention how their mobility has changed after participating in the EF. Among the male beneficiaries, a change in mobility was not specifically addressed during the interviews.

A few non-DAG women mention the increased mobility they have gained after taking EF training. Mobility does not only seem to be understood in a spatial sense but also as an expression of the women's raised societal awareness and self-confidence:

> *"After earning a lot of money, I have a plan to go abroad for two or three months, so that I can see new places and learn a new language. I have never been out of Jumla. I don't even know how Kathmandu looks like. I want to go there. I want to fly there."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Jumla)

> *"Lots of changes have taken place in me. I was just limited within the territories of my household and family. But due to my confidence now, I am able to face the outer world."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

> *"Before taking the training, I had no idea about anything, I was just limited within the household work, but now I understand the society and its ways."* (non-DAG woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

Among the interviewed women from DAGs, mobility is addressed differently than by the above cited non-DAG women. Two trained women from DAGs have changed their habits of going out with

friends and now prefer working instead. This development, which could be considered a decrease in mobility, is valued positively by the interviewees:

> *"In the past she used to go out with her friends, now she is busy working and earning so the family is also very happy."* (Muslim woman, sister-in-law of a direct beneficiary, Parsa)

> *"There has been a huge change in our life. In the past I used to roam around with my friends but now I can tell them I have work and I can be busy and happy with my work. There has been a huge change in my life."* (Janajati woman, direct beneficiary, Terhathum)

Due to the scarcity of these statements it is difficult to compare the increased sense of mobility mentioned by a few non-DAG women with the possibly decreased mobility of the two cited DAG women. It can be noted that the participation in the EF can affect the trained women's mobility differently and that the women value their mobility differently, possibly depending on their own societal and cultural notions. That the level of mobility differs between women from different caste groups was discussed in chapter 4.3.2. Cameron (1998) observed that low-caste women have higher levels of mobility in comparison to high-caste women. The interview data do not allow drawing any conclusions on whether this observation also applies to the interviewed female EF beneficiaries.

11 Synthesis and Conclusion

This Master's thesis investigated *how the societal conditions of Nepali Dalits and associated caste and gender relations are taken into consideration and translated by development sector actors adopting affirmative action targeting approaches in Nepal*. A major goal of this thesis was to get an insight into how debates concerning Nepali Dalits and affirmative action are taken up and discussed by scholarly literature on the one hand, and within actual development sector practice on the other hand. Correspondingly, the thesis was divided into two parts: firstly, a literature-based part, which reviewed the scholarly state of the art of this research focus (chapters 2 to 5), and secondly, an empirical part, which focused on the case study of one specific development intervention, the Employment Fund Nepal (EF), and the two Swiss development actors involved with it – namely, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) as one of the EF's donor agencies, and the non-governmental organization HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (here referred to as Helvetas), which implements the EF (chapters 6 to 10). The findings to these two parts shall briefly be summarized.

The aim of the **literature-based chapters** of this thesis was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the "Dalit issue" in Nepal, i.e. of the Dalits' disadvantaged societal situation including the socio-economic and political circumstances they are embedded in.

- Firstly, it was studied *how the Hindu caste system and the societal position of Dalits within this system is conceptually addressed and discussed in research literature*. A majority of the reviewed scholars who conceptualize the Hindu caste system agree that the caste system cannot solely be explained as a religious hierarchy based on the concept of ritual purity and pollution.

The caste system is rather interrelated with other (hierarchic) systems such as political and economic power and aspects such as (political) identity, individuality or gender. The caste order has been found to be regionally varying and dynamic. Castes at all status levels contest their relative positions within the caste system, including Dalit or "untouchable" castes, who are positioned at the bottom of the caste hierarchy and are considered impure by the castes placed above them. Dalits develop an ambivalent consciousness of themselves and of society. On the one hand, they may reproduce the hierarchic values that stigmatize them, on the other hand, they may reject and contest the dominant social order (cf. Gupta 2005; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989; Srinivas 1952; Parish 1996; Karanth 2004).

- Secondly, an overview was provided of how the caste system is constituted in Nepal and how it has transformed over time. After Nepal's unification in 1769, the Hindu ideology and the caste system were institutionalized as a resource of power by the ruling Hindu high castes originating from the Hill region. Nepal's various other caste, ethnic, linguistic, regional and religious groups were pushed into low societal positons and socio-economic inequalities within Nepal's society were consolidated (cf. Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989; Höfer 1979; Kisan 2005).
- Thirdly, *what the societal situation of Dalits in Nepal looks like today, and how their agency and resistance within and against the caste system can manifest themselves* was examined. Nepal persistently shows human development inequalities between its different regions and socio-economic groups, and discrimination based on caste, religion, gender and ethnicity continues. Dalits are one section of the Nepali population which has historically been confronted with caste-based discrimination and socio-economic and political exclusion. Nepal's Dalits encompass various social groups which are themselves stratified along markers such as caste, class, region, religion and gender. Even though caste discrimination was legally prohibited in 1963 and declared a punishable offense in 1990, untouchability based on considerations of ritual purity and pollution is still practiced, also among Dalits themselves. Dalits have developed forms of resistance against their low social status, which can range from subtle, even culturally acceptable everyday forms of resistance engaged in by individuals, up to overt and organized resistance in the form of a political Nepali Dalit social movement, which is based on Dalit identity politics (cf. Geiser 2005; UNDP 2014; Kisan 2005; Cameron 2007; Folmar 2007).

  Additionally, the societal situation of Dalit women in Nepal was given particular attention and the question was addressed of *how the dimension of gender is relevant with regard to the dimension of caste*. Caste and gender are considered two interrelated systems differently shaping the lives and roles of women belonging to castes of different status. In the case of Dalit women, caste and gender are often described as two intersecting systems of oppression. Gender discrimination against women has been found to be higher among Dalits than among more socially included caste or ethnic groups. Dalit women face discrimination from within and from outside their communities and are pushed into subordinated and vulnerable positions in their

family and society. In contrast, Cameron (1998) found gender relations to be more egalitarian among Dalits than among higher castes. The often poor economic conditions of rural Dalit families make Dalit women vital contributors to their household economy. According to Cameron (1998), the religious and economic roles of Dalit women are less defined in relation to the patriarchal authority of their husbands than the roles of high-caste women. Therefore, Dalit women can yield more economic and religious autonomy than their high-caste counterparts. For this thesis it was deemed sensible to be aware of both illustrated livelihood realities of Dalit women: on the one hand, their vulnerable situation shaped by multiple forms of oppression, on the other hand, their more autonomous roles compared to the ones of high-caste women.

- Fourthly, the questions of *by whom and how affirmative action is used in Nepal (e.g. by the Government of Nepal or non-governmental development actors) and which societal implications have been observed in connection with the positive discrimination of Dalits* were investigated. Demands to address persisting socio-economic inequalities within Nepal's society have become politically salient since the People's Movement of 1990 and especially in Nepal's post-conflict state-restructuring discourse after the decade-long Maoist insurgency from 1996-2006. Affirmative action to the benefit of the economically and socially marginalized was first introduced by the Government of Nepal in its interim constitution of 2007, and taken over into Nepal's new constitution of 2015. Measures of affirmative action have also been adopted by many national and international non-governmental development actors advocating the social and economic inclusion of Nepal's discriminated groups. International development actors are involved in the policy level as well as the programmatic level of classifying communities for the sake of defining target groups for affirmative action. To construct target groups, economic indicators for poverty are often intertwined with social or cultural, identity-based categories such as caste or ethnicity. Among scholars, who frequently draw on the Indian experience with affirmative action, the selective targeting of groups along social or cultural categories is debated as it can have unintended societal implications, which also have to be taken into consideration in Nepal. Firstly, affirmative action can reinforce divisions along the cultural categories that are used to construct target groups. Thus, affirmative action can perpetuate the social structures (e.g. the caste system) which it actually intends to overcome. In India, an increasing polarization between high castes, which are not targeted by affirmative action, and Dalits, who are targeted by affirmative action, has been observed. International donor agencies are confronted with the paradox that their intention to promote the empowerment and social inclusion of targeted groups can fuel (political) competition between different social groups. Secondly, if target groups for affirmative action are defined as socially discriminated per se, socio-economic inequalities and discrimination existing within these groups are ignored, for example economic stratifications or intra-caste and gender discrimination existing within Dalit groups. Related to this is the possibility that only the better-off among the targeted groups benefit from the affirmative action

measures, while the more disadvantaged lack the necessary qualifications and economic resources to be able to do so. Thirdly, the social construction of target groups can lead to the exclusion of groups which would be in need of affirmative action but do not meet the defined social criteria (e.g. economically poor Brahmans) (cf. Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014; Shneiderman 2013; Shah & Shneiderman 2013; Middleton & Shneiderman 2008; Still 2013; Higham & Shah 2013).

The **empirical chapters** of this thesis presented the case study of the EF. The EF finances short-term vocational skills trainings to economically poor and socially discriminated youth. The EF thereby follows the SDC's Disadvantaged Group (DAG) approach, which defines the economically poor and socially discriminated (e.g. Dalits, Madhesis, Janajatis and women) as priority target groups. Within the EF, an incentive- and results-based payment system encourages the private sector Training and Employment Service Providers (T&Es), who implement the skills trainings, to prioritize DAGs by rewarding them for training and linking members of DAGs to employment.

The data analysis carried out for the case study of the EF included different data sources. Firstly, official documents and policy papers authored by the SDC, Helvetas and the Employment Fund Secretariat (EFS), which manages the EF, were reviewed. Secondly, data material was analyzed which was collected during a qualitative impact study of the EF that was conducted in 2015. The data material included semi-structured expert interviews with EF staff, donor representatives and officials of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector and semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions with EF beneficiaries, T&Es and other actors involved in the EF. The findings to the research questions posed at the case study of the EF are summarized in the following.

- Firstly, it was examined *how debates concerning the societal conditions of Dalits ("the Dalit issue"), associated caste and gender relations, and their affirmative action targeting are taken into consideration and presented by the EFS, Helvetas and the SDC on a policy and official documentation level.* The "Empowerment of Dalits" paper issued by Helvetas in the early 2000s is the only selected document which addresses the societal conditions of Dalits and how they are taken into consideration within the affirmative action targeting approaches adopted by Helvetas. The document mentions the need to address the heterogeneity and possible social problems (e.g. intra-caste discrimination) existing within Dalit caste groups and advocates the strengthening of a unified Dalit identity. It states that Dalit issues should thereby not be addressed in opposition to the interests of higher castes and promotes sensitization programs for non-Dalits. Moreover, Dalit organizations should be prevented from becoming elitist and exclusive. The document thereby seems to be aware of the risk discussed by scholars that affirmative action can fuel inter- and intra-caste differences. In comparison, the remaining and more current reviewed documents by Helvetas, the SDC and the EFS contain few explanations on how the societal conditions of Dalits are coped with. Possible implications of the affirmative action targeting of Dalits and other

socially constructed target groups are not addressed. Even so, the EFS published a set of "Learning series" which present the EF's experience with the positive discrimination targeting of women. These documents show that the cultural environment of the targeted women, including caste and ethnic structures and gender relations they are subject to, is taken into special consideration on local implementation levels of the EF.

- Secondly, it was investigated *how EF staff members, TVET officials and donor representatives speak of the challenges and societal effects of the affirmative action targeting practices such as the ones applied by the EF, and what they imply about their view on debates concerning Dalits.* The interviewees mostly addressed targeting challenges related to more general target groups than Dalits in particular: Frequently mentioned challenges were the difficulty to raise awareness about skills trainings among the target groups, reaching out to the very poor and people in remote areas, linking graduates to financial institutions, and enrolling and creating linkages to employment for women. Similarly as the reviewed EFS documents, the interviews showed that T&Es and regional EF staff have a lot of freedom to adapt the targeting to local societal environments on local implementation levels of the EF. Yet, it was mentioned that it can be difficult to do justice to the heterogeneity of local communities. Moreover, one interviewee pointed out that the overall target group definition of DAGs is too broad to be able to grasp certain societal heterogeneities. This shows that the possible risk of ignoring intra-group differences discussed by scholars is also acknowledged by some of the interviewed development practitioners.

  Concerning the effects of the targeting of the EF, most interviewees considered the EF and related programs to economically and socially empower its participants, especially women and people from DAGs. This empowerment is estimated to reduce societal tensions between the genders and between different caste and ethnic groups and to diminish practices of untouchability. However, it was also brought forward that the social impact of the EF might be too small to break up strong cultural ties which perpetuate social inequalities and that the desired impact might only be achieved if supported by larger processes of social change.

- Thirdly, research questions directed at EF beneficiaries and T&Es were addressed. They aimed at *assessing the interviewees' view on the targeting of the EF, and the effects the participation in the EF had on the caste and gender relations that the EF beneficiaries are situated in.* The analysis of the interviews revealed few differences in the response patterns of members from DAGs and non-DAGs, or between Dalits and non-Dalits respectively. Differences between men and women were more salient.

  Most of the beneficiaries were aware of the EF's priority targeting of the poor and the disadvantaged. A few of them implied that they disapprove of positively discriminating people based on their caste affiliation. They were rather in favor of targeting people on the basis of economic need and interest. The interviewed T&Es revealed contrasting views on the targeting

of DAGs and Dalits in particular. Some emphasized that it is difficult to successfully enroll members of DAGs because they consider them to have certain negative characteristics such as being impatient or indecisive. One T&E addressed the difficulty of enrolling Dalits in hospitality-related occupations as their employability is small in such occupations. Other T&Es were in favor of prioritizing DAGs because they consider them to have certain positive characteristics such as being trustworthy.

Concerning the effects of the participation in the EF, most of the beneficiaries were able to improve their economic condition. They became financially independent and more self-confident. On a family level, especially women gained increased appreciation and respect. In many of the families of the interviewed beneficiaries, the role allocation between the genders appeared to be based on women bearing child care and household responsibilities and men taking on the role of the principle income earners. In some families of trained women, the labor division between the genders became more balanced after the women had taken training and had started contributing to the household income. Other interviewees reported to have had balanced gender relations within their families even before taking training. Some women could particularly enhance their status in their families because they were trained in a traditionally male-based trade. Other women faced insuperable disapproval of their families and communities to successfully find employment in the male-based trade they were trained in. Correspondingly, a few women preferred to be trained in home- and traditionally female-based trades to be able to follow their child care and household responsibilities parallel to engaging in their occupation. On a community level, most of the interviewed men and women gained appreciation and respect after taking training, which implies that practices of caste- or ethnicity-based discrimination against the trained beneficiaries decreased.

Generally, the interviews gave little insight into the caste relations the interviewed beneficiaries were situated in and issues of discrimination were rarely addressed. Caste affiliation was mentioned in a few instances related to the choice of trades by EF participants. While some Dalit beneficiaries seem to have chosen trades related to their traditional caste-based occupations, one non-Dalit beneficiary mentioned her family's initial disapproval of her taking training in an occupation which was traditionally performed by low castes.

With respect to the **overall research question** of *how the societal conditions of Nepali Dalits and associated caste and gender relations are taken into consideration and translated by development sector actors adopting affirmative action targeting approaches in Nepal*, this thesis shows that the studied development actors only limitedly take the scholarly knowledge base on the societal conditions of Dalits and affirmative action targeting into consideration – or at least, that they limitedly report on how they translate it within their program modalities. This shall be elaborated on in the following sections by synthesizing and interpreting the findings presented above:

- **Consideration of the "Dalit issue":** Except for the "Empowerment of Dalits" paper by Helvetas, the reviewed official documents revealed little consideration of Nepal's "Dalit issue", i.e. persisting issues of discrimination against Dalits as well as societal problems (e.g. gender discrimination or untouchability practices) and heterogeneities existing within Dalit communities are not addressed in detail. The interviewed experts occasionally mentioned Dalit issues. Some indicated that the EF can help diminish caste-based discrimination, others consider the EF to have limited power to break up strong cultural ties perpetuating social inequalities. Though caste affiliation and issues of discrimination were rarely addressed during the interviews with EF beneficiaries and T&Es, the occasional statements which *do* refer to these subjects are presumed to indicate that caste affiliation *is* still of relevance to the interviewees. These occasional statements concerned the EF beneficiaries' choice of trade, the difficulty of linking Dalits to employment in certain occupations, the possibly prejudiced reasons of some T&Es for why they consider it difficult to enroll DAGs, or the trained beneficiaries' increased societal recognition.
- **Affirmative action within the EF:** The studied Swiss development actors, the SDC and Helvetas, construct their target groups based on a combination of economic indicators for poverty and social indicators for discrimination (e.g. gender, ethnicity, caste, religion and regional identity) and are thereby in line with Nepal's post-conflict state-restructuring political discourse. On an official documentation level, this targeting rationale is not particularly questioned. The EFS' official reporting as well as the expert interviews showed that the responsibility for taking into consideration how local caste and gender relations are constituted when identifying possible participants for the program mostly lies with the local implementing actors of the EF, i.e. regional EF staff and T&Es. They seem to fine-tune the targeting modalities predetermined by Helvetas and the SDC. *How* such local societal relations are taken into consideration on local implementation levels, i.e. the experiences of regional staff and T&Es, finds little reflection in the studied official documents, except for the experiences with targeting women which are addressed in several "Learning series" published by the EFS.

  Occasional statements made in the analyzed interviews showed that the EF's targeting approach is questioned and reflected about on the basis of individuals – by EF staff, T&Es and by the targeted youth themselves. Their statements implied that possible adverse implications of affirmative action examined by scholars might also arise from the targeting approaches applied within the EF: Firstly, in view of the great societal heterogeneity of the Nepali population, the definition of DAGs cannot grasp societal heterogeneities operating at finer levels than the social categories used to define discrimination. By subsuming targeted groups under broad homogeneous categories (e.g. Dalit or Janajati), socio-economic inequalities within these positively discriminated groups are not acknowledged. Secondly, giving priority to people falling into the category "DAG" entails the risk of provoking resentment among people who do not fulfill the criteria of DAG but still feel in need of receiving skills training. This might ultimately

fuel a polarization between DAGs and non-DAGs, or between Dalits and higher castes respectively.

The qualitative research methodology applied in this thesis has proven useful to look at the "Dalit issue" in Nepal and affirmative action from a scholarly as well as from a practical (empirical) viewpoint. Within the case study of the EF, the qualitative research approach made it possible to examine the EF on a policy and official documentation level as well as from the perspective of a range of actors involved in it. The EF as an individual case cannot automatically be considered representative for any other development intervention in Nepal. Nevertheless, the socio-cultural, economic, political and development sector context the EF is embedded in is comparable with the context of many similar development interventions in Nepal. Hence, the main result of this thesis (which states that the studied development actors only limitedly take the scholarly knowledge base on the societal conditions of Dalits and affirmative action targeting into consideration – or at least that they limitedly report on how they translate it within their program modalities) might likely be applicable to other development actors in Nepal. It is presumable that similar observations could even be made with development actors operating in other countries than Nepal which face comparable societal issues of discrimination and exclusion of groups based on social categories such as caste. Yet, the data analyzed for the case study of the EF do not allow drawing conclusions about the reasons *why* development actors seem to make limited use of scholarly fields of knowledge on Nepali Dalits and affirmative action. Possible explanations shall be outlined in the following.

- Reporting in the development sector is still dominated by the presentation of quantitative aspects and results of development interventions. It is probable that the EFS is mostly required to report on its program achievements in relation to the broadly defined target groups such as DAGs, men, women, Dalits or Janajatis through quantitative measures. Qualitative reporting, which would allow addressing heterogeneities within socially constructed target groups and would allow discussing the experiences of local EF staff and T&Es regarding working in heterogeneous communities, is probably not specifically demanded for.
- Development actors might be concerned to uphold an image of political correctness. They have to navigate in a complex socio-political field. It might be easier to bring their targeting modalities in line with the current political discourse in Nepal than to openly discuss persisting issues of discrimination existing against and within Dalit communities and to systematically reflect about the possible adverse implications of their target group construction. It is imaginable that the "Dalit issue" and applied targeting approaches are more critically debated through internal communication channels of the studied development actors rather than through the official reporting and the interviews examined for this thesis.
- The mentioned political correctness might stem from the development actors' need to legitimize their work in front of their "supervising" organizations. The SDC is dependent on the

Government of Nepal, which has to agree with its development interventions. Helvetas needs to legitimize its program implementation in front of its donors. EF staff and the T&Es have to follow the rules and policies predetermined by the EFS. Moreover, most of the EFS staff members involved in authoring the EFS' official documents do not only have to follow the rules of the program, they are also part of the Nepali society and its societal codes of conduct. To hold discussions about how and by whom discrimination is produced and reproduced on an official documentation level might not be possible without making accusations. This puts development actors who are insiders to the societal system of inequalities they are trying to work against into a delicate position.

- In contrast, the scholarly debates about Dalits and affirmative action are held by scholars who can work without the pressure of having to legitimize themselves. Moreover, many of these scholars have a western cultural background. This cultural distance probably facilitates the examination and discussion of societal issues of (intra- and inter-caste) discrimination prevalent in Nepal's society. Conversely, it also entails the risk of relating western (post-colonial) ideas to societal concepts to which a western interpretation might not be applicable. However, this boundary between development practitioners that are insiders to the Nepali society and scholars that are outsiders to the Nepali society is permeable. This thesis has referred to scholars that are insiders to Nepal, as well as to development practitioners with a western cultural background.

To assess which of these elaborations might actually explain the development actors' limited open consideration of scholarly fields of knowledge on Nepali Dalits and affirmative action, further research is necessary. For future research it might be appropriate to choose a narrower research focus than the one adopted by this thesis. For example, further research could examine more closely how and by whom the final decision on the target group construction of a development project is made. It might be valuable to therefore analyze the communication channels between the Government of Nepal and foreign donor agencies. It might also be insightful to more closely investigate the targeting of development projects like the EF on local implementation levels, preferably through long-term field research.

In the following, prudent **recommendations** are formulated that can be adopted by practitioners in the development sector concerning the targeting of Dalits in Nepal and in other caste societies.

- **Be aware of the possible and unintended implications affirmative action can have if it is based on social categories such as caste and ethnicity.**

  Development actors have to develop a deepened understanding of the heterogeneities of target groups on local implementation levels and of the societal, political and economic contexts these groups are embedded in. It has to be assessed whether broad and predetermined target group categories (e.g. DAGs) can be fine-tuned to local societal contexts (cf. Contzen & Müller-Böker 2014: 1).

- **Sensitize local implementers of a development program for the societal conditions of Dalits and other discriminated groups.**

  Especially in development programs such as the EF, where the responsibility for the local program implementation is largely devolved to partnering institutions (the T&Es), sensitization programs could increase these local implementers' (self-)awareness of societal preconceptions and discriminating behavior practiced against (and within) Dalits and other discriminated groups. Increasing these local implementers' ability to react to and address such societal issues together with program beneficiaries could facilitate the beneficiaries' successful participation. In addition, the local implementers' social background and their personal attitudes towards societal issues of discrimination should be assessed before employing or contracting them.

- **Sensitize local communities for the societal conditions of Dalits and other discriminated groups.**

  Through sensitization programs, the families and communities of potential program participants can be sensitized for the societal conditions of Dalits, women and other discriminated groups. Sensitization programs should be designed in a way that they can prevent the fueling of resentment between positively discriminated target groups and groups that are not targeted by a program.

- **Integrate (qualitative) local program experiences into program-holistic evaluation and reporting.**

  The assessment of the local societal contexts (e.g. inter- and intra-caste and gender relations) of program beneficiaries and the strategies developed by local program implementers to adapt to such local contexts should be systematically taken into consideration and evaluated on an official documentation level. Possible unintended implications of affirmative action targeting need to be identified. Therefore, the collection and analysis of qualitative data needs to be included when evaluating and reporting about the design and achievements of a program (e.g. qualitative data on the tacit knowledge of local program implementers or on the impact of a program on its beneficiaries and their family and community environment).

This thesis has shown that there is a large academic knowledge base available which gives insight into firstly, how and why socio-economic inequalities and discrimination against Dalits and other discriminated groups on the basis of caste, gender, ethnicity, religion and region are still rooted in Nepal's society, and secondly, into how and whether affirmative action has proven to be an adequate measure to address such societal issues, for example by drawing on the Indian experience. On the one hand, the findings of this thesis suggest that development actors who construct Nepal's discriminated groups as their primary target groups could benefit more from this scholarly knowledge base if they more openly integrated it into the design, evaluation and official reporting of their development interventions. On the other hand, the findings imply that more research is necessary to fully understand the rationales behind the construction of target groups applied by development actors and

the pressures they might be subject to when they have to navigate and legitimize their development initiatives within in a complex socio-political context. This thesis suggests that an increased knowledge exchange between academic fields of study and the development sector might improve the targeting of Nepal's Dalits and might contribute to a faster elimination of the societal barriers obstructing their social inclusion.

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Annex

Annex 1: Impact Study Sample Categories and Sample Sizes

(Source: Hollenbach et al. 2015: 36)

Information source	Categories	Method	Frequency (per district)	Remarks
Direct beneficiaries (youths who received training – PtP)	Female/Male (Employed)	IDI	2	1 male, 1 female (1 recent, 1 of previous batches)
	Dalits/Janajatis (DAGs)	IDI	2	Attempt to select one Dalit, and another district specific DAG
	Youths with special needs	IDI	1	Special needs include people with disabilities, widows, violence affected individuals
	Unemployed youths	IDI	1	Trained but unemployed youths
	Ongoing trainees	FGD	1	A group of 8-10 trainees who are currently taking training
Direct beneficiaries (youths who received skills training – MEJC)	Female/Male (Self-Employed)	IDI	2	1 Male, 1 Female (preferably self-employed but could also include employed)
	Dalits/Janajatis	IDI	1	Since MEJC does not focus on DAG, 1 interview with DAG member
	Unemployed youths	IDI	1	Trained but not employed youths
	Ongoing trainees	FGD	1	A group of 8-10 trainees who are currently taking training
Indirect beneficiaries	Dependents (family members especially spouses or parents)	IDI	2	Family members of MEJC and PtP beneficiaries who are employed/self-employed
Youths eligible but did not benefit	Male/Female	IDI	2	1 Male, 1 Female (Eligible youths who did not take training)
T&Es	Local training and employment service providers	IDI	2	Two T&Es selected for the study covering large and small providers
Employers	Employers	KII	2	Two employers (try to find MEJC graduates employing PtP graduates)
Stakeholders	Bank/Financial institution who provided loans to beneficiaries	KII	1	Cooperatives/Banks from where beneficiaries have taken loans
	Relevant government office (DDC or DEO)	KII	1	Depending on the availability of representatives
	Chamber of Commerce	KII	1	District chapter of the chamber of commerce

Personal declaration: I hereby declare that the submitted thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

Zurich, September 2016

Annabelle Jaggi