

## **Home-stay: Assessment in Lwang Ghalel**

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### **Introduction**

Home-stay tourism is a community-based programme introduced by the Government of Nepal, where tourists can have interaction and direct experience of the day-to-day life of the community. The concept of home-stay addresses the theme of eco-tourism in Nepal. The programme's preliminary positive impact on women, local economy, environment, children and the community shows the effectiveness of the home-stay approach. This approach preserves the rural lifestyle, culture and identity. A growing number of locals are operating the home-stay programme, offering tourists a window into their local culture in areas without hotels.

This paper briefly outlines the findings of a field research on the different aspects of home-stay tourism in Wards 2 and 3 of Lwang Ghalel Village Development Committee in Kaski district<sup>1</sup>. The study includes aspects which both help promote as well as adversely affect the operation of home-stay in the study area.

### **Home-stay and the Environment<sup>2</sup>**

#### *Forest Resources*

Within past few decades conservation efforts have restored the greenery of the hills in Lwang-Ghalel. Elderly people like

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<sup>1</sup> Community-based Internship Field Report, Human and Natural Resources Study (HNRS) Students (Batch 2011), Kathmandu University, School of Arts

<sup>2</sup> Field Work by Mandira Thapaliya

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Laxina Ghale (86 years), Laxmi Gurung, (82 years) and Bishma Gurung point out that the sudden increase in forest is due to depopulation of the village. Lack of working human resources and people's interest to live in the cities has made the land uncultivated. When the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) ran plantation, it regained some of the lost greenery. Bisham Gurung said, "Had the youths not left the village and still were practicing agriculture, there would not be this many trees and this dense forest."

### *Agroforestry*

Previously people of Lwang practiced agriculture only. They had no idea that they could practice agriculture and forestry together where they would plant trees in their barren lands, nearby their houses or even in the middle of their croplands. But now they have started giving equal importance to agriculture and forestry both. Sita Gurung, Maita Kumari Gurung and Pyari Gurung remarked that they had greatly benefitted from the Agroforestry project of ACAP: "Before 10 years, we had to walk hours to bring fodder and firewood but now we have them right in our doorstep."

People of Lwang are helping in Carbon sequestration. Their planting trees in fallow land and even in their croplands can be taken as a positive step. The increasing demand of timber to make furniture for home-stay and other household uses is being met from their own private forest. About 55% of the total population have their own private woodlots from where they can get firewood, fodder and timber. They can even sell trees from their private forest, but only with the approval of CAMC, FMC and ACAP. Practice of planting trees after cutting tree is also seen in Lwang. Those who do not own private forest can buy wood from the jungle with ACAP's permission. Few farmers have started making green houses for more secure vegetable farming – for protection from hailstorms, excessive rains and frosts.

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*Dampness Due to Fog*

According to the elderly people, there used to be no fog in the past, but now there is. This is because of the denseness of the forests increasing overall dampness in the area. The youths think it is due to the climate change. For the women, they are really glad to have their area surrounded by forest. They know that forest is the main resource for the water they are drinking. They do not have to go far away for fodder, firewood or timber. They are grateful for the forest for making their surrounding look clean, green and healthy, as this is what tourists come to see.

*Conflict with Wildlife*

Wild animals have become a major problem for the people of Lwang. Animals like langur, deer and porcupines are devouring their entire crops. No maize remains till harvest, no oranges are left behind for farmers to be plucked, but are eaten by monkeys. Porcupines like millet and maize both, so they too destroy the entire crop. As it is a protected area, they cannot kill any animals. ACAP provides some compensation, but this is not enough to cover the amount of damage. According to ACAP's Unit Officer in Lwang, ACAP is giving only one fourth part of the crop destroyed as compensation. However, Tham Bahadur Chhanjel and Heem Kumari Gurung, say that although their entire crop was destroyed last winter, they were not given any compensation. "I thought I would invest in my Home-stay with the earning from oranges, but Languor monkeys destroyed my entire harvest", said Heem Kumari Gurung.

*Water Resources*

Small River and rivulets have sprung up from the forests making it easier for water supply for the village. There are two tanks in the forest on the way to tea plantation. These two tanks are the only sources of drinking water for the entire village.

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When there is heavy rain or landslide, the water supply gets disturbed, making it hard for the locals. The rivers are silt free.

### *Land Resources*

Farmers like Pyari Gurung, Bibi Gurung and many others believe that the soil of Lwang is so productive that one can bring harvest just by throwing seeds in soil. People plant paddy, maize and millet as food crops. They also plant amrisho, tea, tomato, ginger and various other vegetables as cash crops. Tea plantation, coffee and oranges were also added after it was made sure that Lwang had the right kind of soil, suitable enough for these cash crops. ACAP has tested the soil for almond cultivation in the neighboring village of Koley and this has now been started.

### *Solid-waste Management*

Masequekot *Aama Samuha* (Mothers' Group) takes the responsibility of solid waste management in Lwang. They call for *jhara*, a system of group work for cleaning up of whole village, water resources and the trail twice a month. Announcement is done a day before the event of *jhara*. They take turns in cleaning public places. If they clean any historical places for the first fortnight, they would go for cleaning some other important places the next time. Both the time they would start from the decided place and come back cleaning the way they went, ultimately cleaning the whole trail. At least one member of a family has to be present in *jhara*. The absent household is penalized with Rs 150 . This cleaning of their residential areas, trails, religious places like temples, *aaryaghat* is a good example of teamwork for the benefit of the whole village.

People are well aware of the impacts hygiene and sanitation has in day-to-day life. There are two pits, one for biodegradable substances and the other for non-biodegradable substances. Once the pits get filled up, the *Aama Samuha* finds a worker who would bury the waste in the riverbank near the pits.

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All the households of Lwang, both the *Dalits* and the *Janajatis* have a toilet in their house. The surrounding areas of the *Janajati* homes appeared cleaner as compared to the *Dalit's*. Very few houses have chimneys. One can say there's no outdoor air pollution. But there is indeed indoor air pollution from burning firewood.

#### *Road Construction and Environment Degradation Construction*

People of Lwang have constructed a road to their village for easier access to hospitals, communication, and transport of local produce to the markets. But the road is likely to cause serious environmental consequences like landslides, deforestation and soil erosion. It might also threaten the home-stay programme.

#### *Home-stay and Environment Linkages*

The overall greenery of Lwang plays a vital role in attracting tourists. ACAP has helped people realize the benefits they would get from forests. The flow of tourists has made the locals of Lwang more conscious about keeping their environment clean, green and healthy. Home-stay operators are learning to keep their households also clean.

Lwang has a pristine scenic environment. One can go to Lwang, spend some quality time with Home-stay families, visit tea gardens, trek to the nearby villages and enjoy the local culture and their hospitable environment. The Home-stay owners, who all are in *Aama Samuha*, help in spreading awareness to keep their area clean. They have learned, seen and realized that tourists like clean environment. Lwang is on its way to being a fully agroforestry settlement. The forest resources are increasing contributing to the increase in water resources. Despite some problems from wild animals, people are taking agriculture and forestry hand in hand. Introduction of various cash crops like tea, ginger, amrisho, coffee and orange have helped people of Lwang improve their economic condition. The people of Lwang are contributing in carbon sequestration by planting trees.

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### Home Stay and Poverty<sup>3</sup>

*Gurungs* and *Dalits* of Lwang village have different opinions about what poverty is. *Janajatis*, being better off socially and economically than the *Dalits*, associate poverty as lack of physical assets and wealth. In contrast, *Dalits*, being socially discriminated, economically weak and also having little or no education, associate poverty with both social and physical aspects. *Janajatis* appear to see poverty as primarily a lack of property – not having a house in Pokhara, having no lands, no livestock and so on. Caste discrimination and dominance of another group is not reflected in their perception of poverty. In other words, they do not see the discrimination faced by *Dalits* as a problem.

For the *Dalits*, poverty is multi-dimensional - feeling of being discriminated, being born in a *Dalit* family, and like their forefathers, remaining poor in the future. *Dalits* have realized that because of discrimination they are held back from development. So, if they were treated as equal they would have also experienced social and economic changes.

#### *Education*

There is a government school in the Lwang village, which provides education up to class 8. The tuition is free but not the expenses of education materials. There are about 18 teachers and about 150 students. The school has a small library built with the help from the NGO Room to Read. Almost 80 percent of the students are from the *Dalit* community. Most of the *Janajati* children are sent to Pokhara for better education. *Janajati* respondent's (parents) most common answers were revealed that the quality of education in the local school was not satisfactory, especially because the teachers were negligent.

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<sup>3</sup> Field work by Ganga Sagar Rai

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Besides, they did not want their children to mix up with *Dalit* children.

The *Dalit* parents, on the other hand, liked the quality of the school. They complained that the young *Janajatis* forced their children to smoke and drink and even made physical assaults if the *Dalit* kids did not comply.

In one of the classrooms, there were about 16-18 year old students studying in class 6. Some of the students have repeated the same class for more than 4 years. The teachers complain that parents are not concerned about the student's education and that the students don't do their homeworks, nor study at home. However, as the school starts from 10 a.m. and finishes at 4 p.m, a big question is what they really do during the six hours at school.

The village life of the children starts long before school time. Prior to school, they cut grass, milk the buffalo, and sometimes even clean the house before finally going to school. The children have no other time to study than at school.

There is an Early Childhood Development Center in Lwang Ward no.3, opened with the effort from the *Aama Samuha*. The ECD is very helpful for working women. They charge Nepalese Rs.100 per child per month.

Women have received adult education before. They complain about the timings of the programme; they say it needs to be organized when they are not busy with regular work. Illiterate women have realized the need of educational programmes so that they can learn English also.

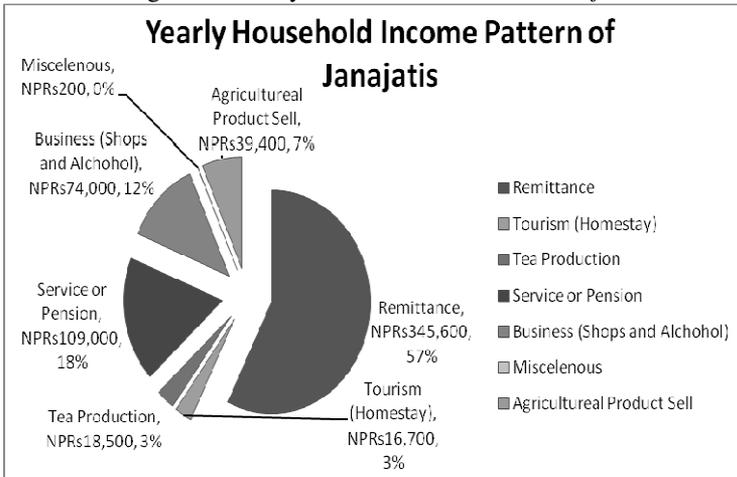
Trainings in tea planting, knitting/sewing, home-stay and handicrafts have been given to women but none of the *Dalit* women have utilized the training. *Dalits* are found busy working for other's fields as laborers.

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### *Economic Dimensions*

In general, all *Janajati* households have at least 6 ropanies of agriculture land. They have invested in tea garden, and have some shares in Tea Factory. They have an average of 2 buffaloes and some other livestock. Very few of the *Dalits* have land of their own. Most of them work as agricultural labor for the *Janajati* under a system known as *Adhiya*, where they can get 50 % of the harvest. Daily wages are respectively Rs. 250 for men Rs. 150 for women.

Figure 1: Yearly household income of *Janajatis*



The main source of income of Lwang is foreign employment. Most of the respondents (13 out of 19 interviewed) have had remittance coming in. They have at least one of their family members working outside of Nepal.

Being an army mercenary is the most common foreign employment for *Janajatis*, while for the *Dalits* working in Saudi-Arabs is a common choice. Although both the groups have someone of their family outside the country the results of this are very different. *Dalits* are mostly uneducated and untrained, and work as labourers in low paying jobs even when

abroad. The average income of *Janajati* from working abroad is NRs 6 lakhs, whereas that of *Dalits* is NRs 1.6 lakhs.

Figure 2: Yearly Household Income Pattern of *Janajatis*

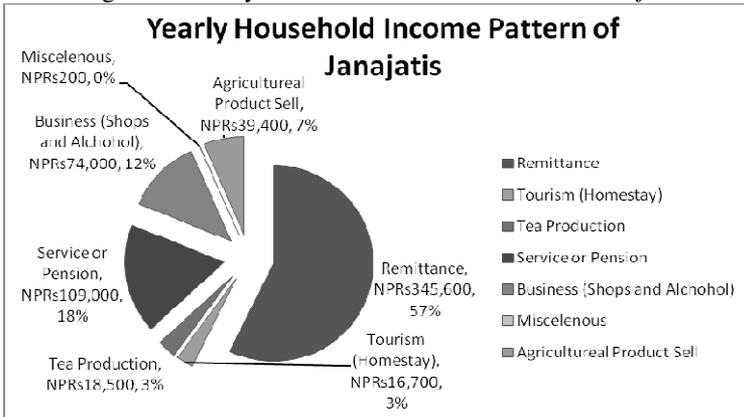
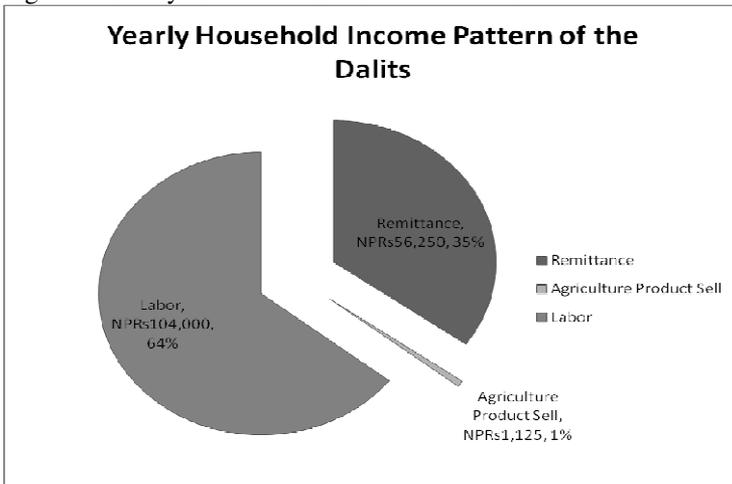


Figure 3: Yearly Household Income Pattern of *Dalits*

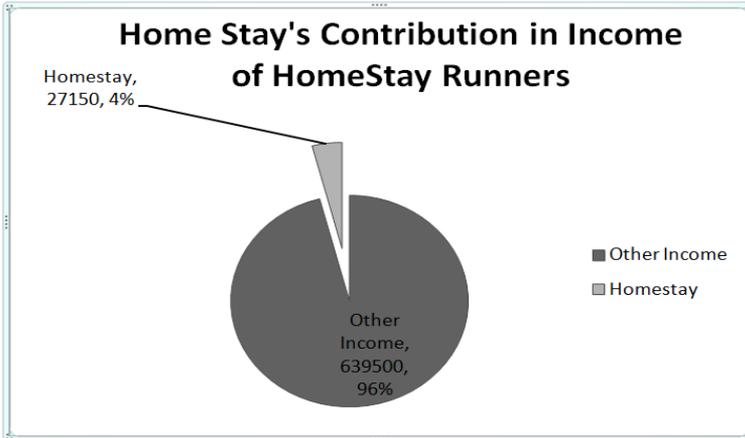


*Janajatis* could go abroad without burden of loans, for their being more economically well off. Many of the *Dalits*, on the contrary, take loans to go abroad for employment.

Home-stay programme has become a noticeable source of income for *Janajati* women in Lwang. The households who run

home-stay earn an average of Rs.27, 000 a year depending upon the number of rooms available in their home. This has helped economically the women who operate home-stay.

Figure 4: Home-stay's contribution to income



*Dalit* women are not taking any part in home-stay program. The income from home-stay has been contributing about 4% of the total income for the average *Janajati* household. However if the same amount of money had gone to *Dalit* homes, it would have contributed 14% to the *Dalit*'s total income.

Key informants say *Dalits* don't have proper homes for running home-stay. However, the *Dalits* should also be encouraged to take part because in Ghalegaun, Tanahun (another pioneer in home-stay programme) the *Dalits* are first to welcome the tourists in the village with their music, and receive some of the benefits.

### Health

There are no health posts in Lwang ward no. 2 and 3. The nearest one is in Koramukh (ward no.1), 45 minutes walk downhill from the village. Every month the health workers come to the village with medicines. But people still believe in traditional healers in Lwang. They have spiritual doctors and

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homeopathy practitioners. Although traditional healing is practiced in the village, some people also travel to hospitals in Pokhara in cases of emergency.

Women of both groups have had permanent family planning like laparoscopy after the age of 35. This shows a positive awareness about family planning in the village. While investments in health are almost equal for both the *Dalits* and the *Janajatis*, the expenses are a bigger burden to the *Dalits*. There is also a condition that *Dalits* only help *Dalits* because *Janajatis* do not touch them.

### *Poverty Scenario*

*Janajatis* in Lwang are more prosperous than *Dalits* who are economically weak and experience caste discrimination. Discrimination further intensifies poverty and injustice in the village. People in Lwang are not suffering from any kinds of famines, diseases or stark poverty. The main problem is caste discrimination. *Dalits* are far behind the *Janajatis* and have not been included in development activities like adult education, trainings and even the home-stay programme.

Some youths are becoming aware of these problems in their society. There is hope of change because caste discrimination is very low among the youths. According to Santosh Gurung (Youth Group Leader), "Caste only matters to our parents not to us. They are our friends."

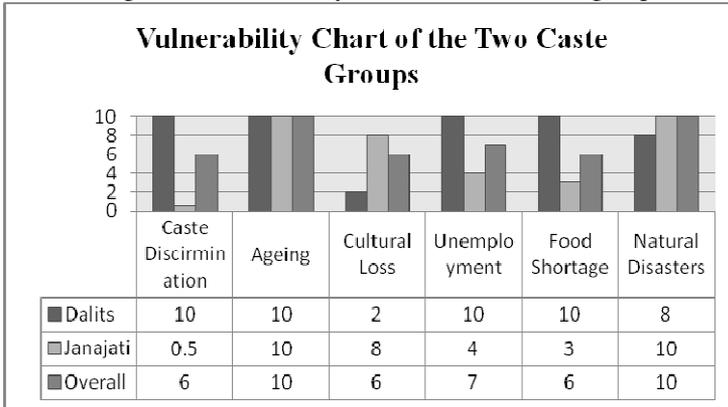
### *Vulnerability*

Figure 5 below shows different types of vulnerability exposures, which people might face, and how much they are vulnerable to it. The following are the standards giving to the levels:

- **0 to 4** are no vulnerability or Low Vulnerability to any changes or negative exposures.

- **4 to 7** are moderately vulnerable to changes or exposures.
- **8 to 10** are the highly vulnerable to any negative changes or exposures.

Figure 5: Vulnerability chart of the two caste groups



*Dalits* are clearly the most vulnerable. Caste discrimination has made *Dalits* live in poverty and inequality for generations. Ageing has become a problem for both *Janajatis* and *Dalits*. The young and active generations are leaving the village for better employment and studies outside the village. This leaves behind only the mothers and the elderly. Modernization among the young generations has made them neglect their cultures and traditions. Loss of culture and tradition is likely to affect the tourism of Lwang.

There is unemployment and *Dalits* are more affected. They don't have any savings or property to start a new business of their own. They are compelled to work as laborers in villages and also outside. *Dalits* depend upon their agriculture harvest in small areas. They are vulnerable to sudden food shortage. They are not able to buy food. Thus, the differences between the two groups are very clear. Greater emphasis in future development programmes should be for the *Dalits*.

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## Well-Being<sup>4</sup>

This study uses the Gallup-Healthways Well-being Index model<sup>5</sup>. This model includes the analysis of Life evaluation, Physical Health, Healthy Behavior and Basic access, which gives an overall view of the status of well-being of the research area. In this paper, well-being has been analyzed with respect to two respondents: Sita Ghale (42), a home-stay owner representing the Gurung Community, and Mata Nepali (30), a woman representing the *Dalit* Community.

### *Life Evaluation*

Life evaluation considers how one's own life is evaluated. This can include health situation such as maternal health, occurrence of frequent sickness, physical conditions, chronic diseases and child health. Life evaluation can also include how one feels about responsibilities, support from family and society, opportunity for social and economic benefits and hope for a better life as well. Life evaluations are thoughts that people have about their lives – when they think about it and how they evaluate and measure it.

The two case studies had the following situation on the topic of life evaluation:

Sita Ghale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family member that supports the household head</li> <li>• Member of Mothers' Group</li> <li>• Home-stay facility provider for extra income</li> <li>• Children studying in Pokhara and husband in foreign employment.</li> </ul>
Mata Nepali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If Mata Nepali did not work for a single day, the family would have nothing to eat.</li> <li>• Out of 7 family members Husband and youngest son have special needs .Husband cannot work</li> </ul>

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<sup>4</sup> Field report by Abhash Shrestha

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.well-beingindex.com/>

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	<p>and the youngest is too small.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children go to school after finishing all the chores.</li> </ul>
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Sita Ghale's husband is working in a Gulf country and visits them once in two years. Her two sons study in Pokhara and the daughter studies in the local school. Her 87 years old mother-in-law also stays with her. She started providing home-stay services two years ago when it was initiated in the village. Her earnings are in the range of Rs. 50000 to Rs. 60000 per year with the home-stay program. Sita Ghale's family is cooperative and her daughter helps her with the extra work when visitors are staying in her house. The work burden is shared. Even her mother-in-law helps by cutting vegetables. Her sons, when they come home, also provide a helping hand with the household chores. Sita now hopes for a better future for her children and herself as well.

Mata Nepali has five children out of which two oldest daughters live and work for other families in the village as she cannot provide them with their basic necessities. Her husband and her only son need her special attention and care every day. Mata works for the Gurungs helping them in their household or their agricultural land for a daily wage of Rs 150 to Rs 200. She does not even own a house or any farm land. She makes a huge daily struggle to provide food for her family. Home-stay has no effect on her livelihood and the hope for better future is bleak in her case.

### *The Village Perspective*

The Gurung community is economically more prosperous in the village. They have access to more facilities and opportunities. The Gurungs have a history of family members specially males going abroad for employment as *Lahures* (British Army), which has shaped their culture and way of life. Now they are more educated, which in turn has helped to have a more secure and healthy life compared to that of the *Dalits*. The *Dalits* are still

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economically very deprived and are considered untouchables. Their way of life has not changed as much. They work for the Gurungs with minimal wages and there are less opportunities for them to grow economically and socially. On a positive note they have access to local health and education services established near the village.

The *Dalits* have low incentives (low returns ) and therefore low satisfaction for the work they do. They work hard but they don't consider themselves happy because of the presence of social discrimination they experience daily. Babu Ram B.K, a *Dalit* of the village, says the Gurungs tease them even when they wear new clothes and use mobile phones. Their self-esteem is diminished by constant social discrimination. Their identity is always in crisis which affects their emotional health. Despite this, they work for their livelihood and try to smile sometimes.

The Gurungs, on the other hand, have most of their younger male members abroad, so women run the entire household and are responsible for the social activities in the village. The women groups are strongly interconnected and when help is needed, the group is always there. The Gurungs also have a culture of celebrating and dancing , and with the initiation of home-stay this has become a daily ritual when guests visit. They have chance for recreation and enjoyment, with strong community feelings and participation. This greatly helps in restoring their emotional stability and richness.

### *Emotional Health*

Sita Ghale welcomes her home-stay visitors with a cheerful smile and a garland. She provides them with the local tea, grown in her garden and asks about their trek to the village. Home-stay has now become a part of her and her family members' life. She says work burden has increased but it is a burden that she can happily bear. She is pleased with her family's progress and her link with the mother's group, and home-stay group provides her with a sense of security. With this level of satisfaction, she performs her everyday activities of

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tending her family, agricultural land and livestock. Her main concern is for her children and husband. Apart from that she is genuinely hard working and happily settled in her village.

Mata Nepali's first chore of the day is to take care of her husband and make the children go for cutting the grass to feed the buffalos that she has borrowed. Then the three children living with her go off to school and she goes to work in the fields of the Gurungs. She is always preoccupied either with the work or with tending her family. She alone is solely responsible for the well-being of her family, which makes her feel hopeless for a better livelihood. There is no anger hatred or bitterness to anyone or anything in what she narrates but a strong sense of disappointment in her for being born as a *Dalit*. Her emotional state has been conditioned by the fact that she has to survive as a *Dalit*.

#### *Access o Basic Facilities*

Access to the facilities such as schools, health clinics, clean water, and other public amenities can make daily life less stressful. Basic access is determined by the geographic location and the capacity to pay for the facility. In both of the case study in consideration here, Sita Ghale and Mata Nepali both have the same level of basic access. The only difference is that Sita can pay for better facility but Mata cannot.

Well-being is a relative concept. Compared to Gurungs, the *Dalits* do not feel they are well-off. The social stigma of discrimination haunts and cuts across all aspects of village life and every child, woman and man born as a *Dalit* must experience its humiliating effect everyday. *Dalits* in Lwang village are certainly far better off than *Dalits* in many other parts of the country, but this does not reduce the burden of discrimination. The big question now is whether the practice of home-stay is able to integrate the *Dalit* households or not. Will this bring more conflict in the traditional setting? Or do we have to wait until the new youth bring social change to end discrimination once and for all in the village?

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## **Empowerment, Gender Equality and Inclusion<sup>6</sup>**

By empowerment, we understand a process of accessing opportunities and resources in order to make personal choices and this definition is followed while making an empowerment assessment of women in Lwang village. Empowerment is very necessary to uplift underprivileged and backward people's status in the society. For them to be able to make their own right choices and have their own control over their life, they need to be empowered both socially and economically.

Initially, the following were set as the indicators to assess the empowerment status of women in Lwang village:

### *Social empowerment indicators*

- Education
- Domestic/social violence
- Participation
- Mobility
- Decision making
- Gender based discrimination

### *Economic empowerment indicators*

- Employment
- Skills and capability
- Land/property holdings

But after conducting focused group discussions and observing the people, the system and the lifestyle there, we came up with slightly different factors that are contributing to empower the women of that area. The following eight empowering factors were set after that:

- Education
- Youth support

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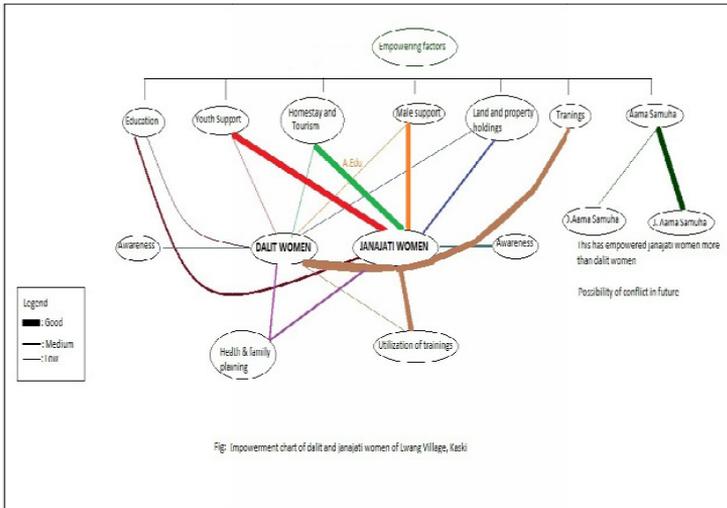
<sup>6</sup> Field report by Binaya Parajuli

- Home-stay and tourism
- Male support
- Land and property holdings
- Trainings
- Health and family planning
- Mother’s group (*Aama Samuha*)

Lwang village has two major communities i.e. *Dalit* and *Janajati* community. Therefore, the empowerment assessment is done based on the condition of these two communities only. The following empowerment flow chart will explain the overall empowerment, gender equality and inclusion scenario of *Dalit* and *Janajati* Women in Lwang village.

The following flow chart explains the contribution of each factor in empowering both *Dalit* and *Janajati* women in Lwang. The bold lines indicate very good contribution, medium lines indicate medium contribution, and the thin line indicates very low contribution.

Figure 6: Flowchart of empowerment in women



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*Education*

The education level of *Janajati* women is good compared to *Dalit* women but if we look at the overall education status of all the women of Lwang, it is below average. Out of 16 women respondents only 2 have attended school and studied up to high school. Among the respondents, all *Dalit* women were illiterate and could not even write their names. However, all *Janajati* women were literate and could read and write in Nepali. This is the outcome of the adult education programme that was implemented in the village two years ago. *Janajati* women fully utilized the opportunity and attended the adult education classes, but *Dalit* women did not. Mata Nepali didn't attend the classes because she had no time to study. She said that *Dalits* are economically very weak and if they don't work every day their children will have to sleep with an empty stomach. *Dalit* women, despite getting full support from the male members of their family to attend the classes, could not do so because they work on daily wages, and since they have to do all the household chores and other works, they are busy all the time. Besides, they are also not aware about the importance of being able to read and write. This has become a major reason behind their backwardness in Lwang village. Almost all *Janajati* women are literate and have fully utilized their learning from adult education programme in running their Home-stay Business and *Aama Samuha* successfully. They are also willing to learn English if they are provided with an opportunity in the future.

One good thing we found was that *Dalit* women have now understood the importance of education and are willing to study if such adult education program is brought in the village in future. Based on our observation, discussions and interviews we found that education level of *Dalit* women is very weak and that of *Janajati* women is medium.

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*Youth Support*

There is one youth club named Chhetakyu Baraha Youth Club in Lwang. Almost all the members of the club are from *Janajati* (Gurung) community. Not a single youth from *Dalit* community holds a position in the board. However, the Club is inclusive in terms of gender. It works works in raising funds by organizing *Melas* (carnivals), supports *Aama Samuha* in different development related activities and works in coordination with ACAP to stop illegal activities in the forest areas. Youth support also has a significant role in the successful functioning of *Aama Samuha* and tourism business in Lwang. However, youth support is strong in case of *Janajati* women, especially for *Janajati Aama Samuha* and weak in case of *Dalit* women. The youths display dissatisfaction against the existing caste-based discrimination in their village. But the problem is they are not able to do anything to eliminate the problem. It is very deep-rooted and they can't change the type of culture that their elders are following in case of discrimination and untouchability. They are fully supporting *Janajati Aama Samuha* by helping them with the funds that they collect, but do nothing to support *Dalit Aama Samuha*.

*Home-stay and Tourism*

There are eight registered and two unregistered Home-stays in Lwang village. All the home-stays are owned and run by *Janajati* women. Home-stay business has played a major role in empowering some women in Lwang and after starting the home-stay business those 10 women have become economically independent and empowered at the same time. They have got the opportunity to attend different tourism and home-stay related training programs, which have enhanced their skills and capabilities. Their communication skills are improving, as they have to deal with their guests. It is playing an important role in making women strong, independent, capable and business-oriented. They are making money and that is improving their standard of living. Those 10 women have

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become inspirations for other women in Lwang and they are now saving to start up their own home-stay too.

However, so far as *Dalits* are concerned, they are totally excluded from this. First thing, they are not given opportunity to run home-stay business because they are considered untouchables, and second and most important thing, they don't have enough capital to invest and run this business. Untouchability is so deep-rooted in Lwang that even guests who belong to a *Dalit* community are treated badly and are sent to a *Dalit's* house to spend the night if they happen to visit and stay in the village as a tourist. According to Ram Bahadur BK, some *Dalits* who have the money to invest in home-stay business are not getting the opportunity to start up one on their own. This is the reason why there is *Janajati's* monopoly in home-stay business. Home-stay has uplifted the status of *Janajatis* but *Dalits* are still lagging behind.

#### *Male support*

Male dominance exists in both *Dalit* and *Janajati* community in Lwang. All the major households as well as community-related decisions are taken by men even if women are working harder than men. However, *Janajati* women have full support from their husbands. They get full support to study, run any kind of business and are free to talk to outsiders without any restrictions unlike in other communities. Although they don't take the final decision, their husbands listen to their opinions. In the same way *Dalit* women's husband do support their wives to study and to talk to people without restrictions. However, when it comes to decision making they are totally excluded. The reason for *Dalit* men not supporting their wife fully is that they themselves are not in a good condition to do so. They are poor and uneducated, which makes them equally in need of support.

#### *Land and Property Holding*

Lwang is dominated by Gurungs. They are richer and more privileged than *Dalits*. Out of six *Dalits* we interviewed, only

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two, Ram Bahadur BK and Baburam BK, had their own house. Others didn't even have a proper house to live in. Except few, no woman running the home-stay business had land and property ownership. In both communities, mostly men had the land and property ownership, which shows that property-wise women are still very dependent on men. Even women who are earning themselves don't have any formal saving accounts except few who are investing in *Dhukuti*. Women of Lwang are economically dependent on men who make all the finance-related decisions. This is the reason why women are still treated as subordinates to men despite being so active.

### *Trainings*

Skill development trainings are the ways to make women empowered and capable. Women of Lwang have been provided with various skill development trainings by organizations like ACAP and TAAN. Both *Dalits* and *Janajatis* have received handicrafts-related trainings like knitting, bag making, sewing etc. They have also received tourism-related trainings like housekeeping, cooking and cleaning. But the problem with *Dalit* women is that they receive trainings but they don't utilize them. The *Janajati* women fully utilize the opportunity. Many *Janajati* women started home-stay, knitting and bag making businesses after receiving those trainings and are making good money out of it, whereas *Dalit* women are still not able to do so. First, they don't get enough encouragement and support from their husbands; second they don't have the capital to invest and start a business utilizing those trainings. ACAP and TAAN should take note of this reality whenever they implement any training programmes targeted for women in Lwang. If they are providing such trainings, they should also show the ways of getting loans and financial help to start up their own business. Without this, those trainings fail to be useful. They will never help empower and improve the situation of women in Lwang, especially the *Dalits*.

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*Aama Samuha (Mother's Group)*

There were two types of *Aama Samuha* in Lwang village; one of *Dalit* women named *Prije AamaSamuha* and another of *Janajati* women named *Masekukot Aama Samuha*. *Janajati Aama Samuha* is very active and empowered unlike *Dalit Aama Samuha*. *Dalit AamaSamuha* is so invisible that we came to know about their existence only on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of our stay in Lwang. Their Group exists only in the name. The *Janajati* Group has recognition in whole ACAP area and MMT. They are working very actively in constructing road in Lwang, running community home-stay, promoting MMT, solving social issues like domestic violence, alcoholism etc. All the members of *Masekukot Aama Samuha* are from Gurung community with few from Magar community. *Dalits* are totally excluded. Both Groups work together when it comes to the development of Lwang. The *Janajati* Group invites and includes *Dalits* only when they need more labour force to do any activity, otherwise the latter are excluded as they are considered to be untouchables. Only the members of the *Janajati* group gets to participate in programmes organized by ACAP and TAAN. It is not because these organizations are discriminatory but because of the elite's capture. Every year ACAP organizes an interaction programmes with *Aama Samuhas* from 7 VDCs of MMT with 2 members representing their Group from each VDC. But, till now only *Masekukot Aama Samuha* has participated in the interaction programme.

The Mothers' Group has taught women how to work in a team, how to organize events and work for the betterment of their village. They have understood the importance of education and are getting market exposure. However, this is not happening in the case of *Dalit* women owing to caste-based discrimination.

*Health*

Women in Lwang have a very good health status. Although there are no sufficient health services in the village, the people are healthy and aware about keeping themselves healthy. Both

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*Dalit* and *Janajati* women are using family planning services and contraceptives. One good thing in Lwang is when it comes to health even *Janajati* women are helping *Dalit* women to get family planning services from the nearby hospitals. They are helping them consult the doctors and suggesting them to do family planning on time. Awareness about health and family planning is very good among both *Dalits* and *Janajatis* in Lwang. The awareness about nutrition, clean drinking water, healthy eating habits, organic food, lots of physical work and the pollution free environment has kept the people of Lwang very healthy. According to the health worker of Lwang, some of the villagers have health problems like Hypertension and Diabetes. Except for some minor fever, digestion, and cold-related problems no serious health problems were found in Lwang through our study.

### *Social Exclusion*

Untouchability is deep-rooted in Lwang. *Dalits* empowerment status is very poor which has resulted into their poor economic condition. It is all clear that *Dalits* are still disempowered and backward because of the existing culture of untouchability. Youths are aware that untouchability is a social evil but they too are following what their elders are doing. Like their parents, they prefer not to go to the schools where *Dalits*' children go. Even the *Janajatis*' children are bossing and bullying *Dalits*' children. Untouchability is not merely the reluctance to touch or socially interact with *Dalits*. It is an attitude on the part of a whole group of people that relates to a deeper psychological process (of thought and belief), translated into various physical acts and behaviors, norms and practices. After our study in Lwang we found that, Lwang village could reach the peak of development very easily provided the practice of untouchability and discrimination is abolished. *Dalits* are still excluded no matter how rich or educated they are.

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## **Livelihood Assessment<sup>7</sup>**

Livelihood Assessment consists of five factors: human capital, social capital, physical capital, natural resources (natural capital) and financial capital. Each of these factors was used to assess Lwang's livelihood status of household members of Ward no.2 and 3.

### *Human Capital: Education*

According to FAO, human capital is commonly measured in terms of labor power, health and nutrition, education, skills and knowledge. Lwang's human capital regarding education involved only the lower secondary level. There local school lacks equipment and facilities. The school library established with the support from Room to Read has limited books and does not provide a library atmosphere. The books donated are not thought for the children but more so given for the sake of donating. Each party (teacher and parents) has its own complaint but we could see the children satisfied with what is provided. They are happy to be around their friends and enjoy going to school. According to the teachers, the parents do not provide enough interest in their children's education and their lack of interest has further hindered their children's educational capability and productivity. They are unable to provide the school supplies and do not attend to see how their children are doing in school.

Furthermore, the Nepal government's new education policy consisting of passing every student from class one to three has caused the educational system to lag behind. Teachers have to re-teach the students the material from the previous class because technically they should not have been promoted to the next level. Therefore, rather than building a refined educational system, this new policy has further deterred the system and educational growth of students.

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<sup>7</sup> Field work by Ojaswee Pande

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Although there is a visible discrimination and disparity between the *Dalits* and *Janajatis* in the community, this kind of sentiment is not visible in the school. Majority of the students are of *Dalit* families (80 percent). There are a few *Janajati* children as well. There is no resentment or maltreatment either from the *Janajati* children or the teachers towards the *Dalit* children. The teachers do not treat the *Dalit* students differently from the *Janajati* students. Furthermore, the *Janajati* children play and mingle with the *Dalit* children with no indifference.

In addition, adult education seems to have been a huge success in this village, especially amongst the women. However, it is no longer provided. All of the nine female home-stay owners (*Janajatis*) have learned to read and write in Nepali and calculate basic mathematics, which has enhanced their business furthermore.

Women feel that adult education should continue to be provided in Lwang and the timing of the classes should be adjusted according to the women's needs. In addition, they would like to learn English. Learning English would not only benefit them but would enhance the tourism industry in Lwang. They would be able to communicate with the foreigners and have a much-needed skill in their pockets. In contrast, the five *Dalit* respondents that we interviewed were illiterate and were not able to take advantage of the adult education classes that were provided due to household work.

The educational system in Lwang needs a lot of improvement in order to build a growing future for home-stay and tourism. Lwang needs to enhance the educational system and produce capable children with strong educational background who will one day continue to grow Lwang's tourism industry.

### *Health Sector*

Lwang's health sector is weak. The village does not have a health post. The nearest health facility is located in Khoramukh, 45 minutes walking distance, which does not even have an

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accredited doctor or nurse available. Although there is a health worker available, people in this community continue to fall back on *Jhakri* medicinal support, which is seen especially in the *Dalit* community. For Ram Bahadur BK's family the community's continuing belief of *Jhakri* practices for medicinal purposes would help support his family financially because his wife has *Jhakri* skills to cure people. She is able to earn 2,000 a month for being able to practice such skills.

Neeru Thapa, ACAP head, opines that the 45 minutes journey to a local health post for this village is very convenient. According to her, there are other villages that are in worse condition than Lwang. Nevertheless, with an ageing population and the youth migrating, it is necessary for the older generation to have the health post nearer.

#### *Skills, Labor and Knowledge*

Continuous youth migration has drained skillful labor from Lwang. Lwang lacks productive labor that could further enhance the home-stay concept and tourism. There does not seem to be any youth aspiring employment opportunities available for the Lwang youth, which has driven young men and women of Lwang to Pokhara and other major cities. The home-stay industry is completely run by the older generation with some support from the youth once in a while. The youth do not seem interested in running the home-stay programme in the future.

With the introduction of the home-stay programme, *Janajati* women have gained new skills and knowledge in regards to tourism etiquette, and enhanced their cooking skills through workshops conducted by ACAP. Furthermore, ACAP has introduced knitting and crafting programs for all the women in the village.

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*Social Capital*

In Lwang the *Janajati* community is very closely linked together and the support for one another is incredible, especially among the women who run home-stays and are part of the *Aama Samuha*. The support for each other in times of need goes beyond their community. The *Dalit* and *Janajati* women say that when it comes to a women's crisis, it does not matter what the caste is. The support would always continue to exist. For example, if there was a newborn in the family, and if the mother would need assistance in anything, they would assist her. According to Maita Nepali, it was two *Janajati* women who advised her on family planning and took her to the clinic to get the required mechanisms. Without those two women's assistance she would have had no knowledge of family planning and would continue to give birth to children whom she would not be able to feed.

Another phenomenon that occurred in the village that depicts social trust and working together would be *Jhara*. *Jhara*, as stated earlier, is a community initiative to keep the trekking trail clean and happens twice a month. This kind of initiative portrays team building and communal feeling, which can be a key ingredient in the success of tourism in Lwang. However, the unequal participation and input of the *Dalit* community in Lwang's development as a tourist destination could be detrimental to Lwang's future because many tourists could look down upon the prevalence of caste discrimination.

The development of Lwang does not only consist of *Janajatis'* accomplishments but *Dalit's* as well. They need to be provided with equal opportunities in the growth of the tourism industry and that especially includes introducing home-stay programmes in their homes. There is a growing interest amongst the *Dalit* community to have home-stay programmes, but they lack finance and the knowledge of how to run a successful programme like the *Janajatis*. The *Janajatis* have more exposure to the outside world and have knowledge about

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tourism through living abroad. Therefore, more trainings and knowledge regarding tourism and home-stay programme needs to be provided to *Dalits* in particular.

### *Natural Capital*

In Lwang, the community and nature are entwined together. Lwang is surrounded by greenery and the serenity projected by the surrounding is extraordinary. Everybody has equal access to crystal clean water and the forests are privatized. Access to firewood is guided by ACAP and people are not allowed to sell firewood as the area has been protected. There has been initiation of a community forest in Lwang, but nothing has been legitimately institutionalized yet. Lwang community continues to rely on firewood as their cooking resource even though ACAP has introduced and installed a few biogas plants in households.

With ACAP's guidance and also with the community's awareness the forest has not been mismanaged and no such issue/conflict regarding natural resources (forest, water, land) has been heard of. In terms of land, Lwang is rich and fertile with cultivation of tea, and orange and other cash crops. Rapid tea leave growth from the plantation indicates that Lwang is an excellent place to grow cash crops and the land is very generous as many of the households grow their own food and generally do not have to buy their food.

Overall, there aren't any qualms about Lwang's natural capital. The community should continue to work with the nature in the same manner as they have done and utilize to its sustainable potential.

### *Financial Capital*

The main source of income for the households in Lwang comprises remittance (57 percent for *Janjatis* and 35 percent for *Dalit*), agriculture (7 percent for *Janjatis*), tea production (3 percent), home-stay (4 percent for *Janjatis*), labor (64 percent

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for *Dalit*), service and pension (18 percent for *Janjatis*). It was seen that *Janajati* households' financial status is stronger than the *Dalit* because the *Janajatis* have various sources of income and financial knowledge. Although a *Dalit* does receive the opportunity to go abroad and work, he does not earn as much as a *Janajati* man does due to his lack of education and the opportunists (middlemen) taking fair share of their income.

A financial dream of a *Dalit* and *Janajati* man differs immensely. For Ram Bahadur BK, with the income he will receive from his Saudi trip will be invested in livestock whereas for Tham Bahadur Chhanjel it is expanding his home-stay by adding another building. This strong contrast in dreams, one small and another big, portrays the financial disparity that exists in Lwang between the two groups.

Financial stability makes one able to take more risks as few *Janajati* households have done by investing in the tea plantation and home-stay programme. In terms of home-stay programme, there has been an average investment of NRs 4,16,000, with investments ranging from NRs 10,000 to 20 lakhs. However, the return thus far has been of 27,000 yearly on average. If the trend of tourist visit continues, it will take almost 16 years for the home-stay owners to experience break-even from their investments.

Although they have not seen a return thus far, their ability to invest in such kind of money shows how prosperous few *Janajati* households are in Lwang. Furthermore, few *Janajati* households have started saving in various local enterprises such as Female Development Group and Disaster Protection where they deposit on average NRs 75 weekly to their accounts. One *Janajati* lady, Asari Gurung, had two savings accounts in Bank of Kathmandu with a good sum of money saved for her children's future.

Although, in comparison to the *Dalit* of Lwang, the *Janajatis* seem to have a strong financial capital, there is still a room for improvement. Reliance on remittance and the success of home-

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stay could make the Janajati community vulnerable to financial instability because it is just one generation focused and the uncertainty remains of what the other generation will do. In addition, the income from remittance is not permanent. The youth are migrating and the older generation only has so much knowledge to make the tourism industry successful in Lwang in relation to finance. Furthermore, the older generation has invested all that they have on home-stay and the tea plantation. From our ten-day stay we inferred that they have not benefited to the maximum yet, and the concept of saving for the future has not quite started. Therefore, the financial capital is weak in terms of the *Janajati* community as well.

### *Physical Capital*

In case of Lwang physical capital can be defined as agricultural land holdings (*khet* and *bari*), house and land ownership. In average every *Janajati* family owned a house and 10-12 hal of *bari* on average. The agricultural land provided some families food for a year, while others got for six months, where they then would have to buy vegetables etc. In the midst of these ownerships, we found that few *Janajati* women, such as Dambar Kumari Gurung and Pushpa Kumari Gurung (head and treasurer of the Aama Samuha) owned lands and homes in their names. Therefore, women played a huge role in the *Janajati* community. In every community home-stay that we interviewed it was a *Janajati* woman as an owner. In addition, out of the 14 *Janajati* respondents we interviewed, at least three of them had a house or land in Pokhara.

Besides home and land ownership, physical capital in Lwang can also be characterized through ownership of livestock. In general, almost every household had a buffalo and in one particular *Janajati* house, they owned four buffaloes. We understood that raising cattle is not an easy task rather it is time consuming. The *Janajati* household that owned four buffaloes told us that the husband would be on the go all the time for collecting grass. The other livestock that were owned were chickens and goats. Families make an income from selling these

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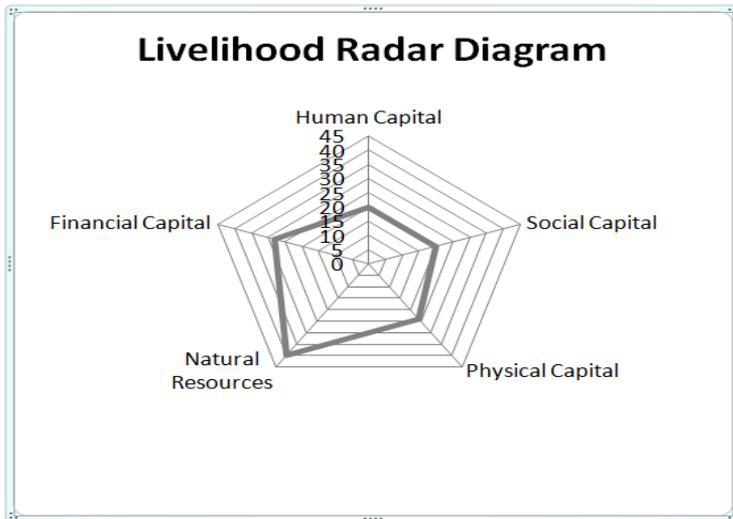
livestock within the community, especially when there is a high rate of tourists staying at other people's home-stay who do not own chickens.

As for the *Dalits*, ownership of land and house rarely existed. There were one or two families that we interviewed that actually owned their homes and the fields they did their farming in, so on average it was between 2-3 hal amongst the *Dalit* ownership. Most of them worked on someone else's land and did not have ownership of the house they were living in. There were a few families who had made an investment on livestock and were looking into expanding, but many of them again did not even own the livestock that they were taking care of.

An aspect that has come to debate is creating a better road in order to flourish the tea industry and other cash crops in the future. A better road access would mean that the tea factory would be able to meet the demands of the supplier faster, especially since there are foreign suppliers involved. In contrast, people believe that with a better road, the idea of Lwang as a tourist destination would be hindered. However, agriculture and tea production (7%) play a bigger role in terms of income than tourism/home-stay (3%). Therefore, having a better road would further increase agriculture potential in Lwang as it is one of the major sources of income for both *Dalits* and *Janjatis*.

The following diagram depicts our overall assessment of the status of the five capitals in Lwang: natural resources, financial, social, physical and human. From our interviews, observations and analysis, as the diagram indicates, natural capital is the strongest because of the crystal clear drinking water, silt free running water, well-managed forest, environmental awareness, and cultivatable and generative land. It does not deserve an excellent rating because there is a disagreement between ACAP and the villagers regarding the management of the private forests.

Figure 7: Livelihood Radar Diagram



Level	Rating	Level	Rating
0-10	Worst	<b>Human Capital</b>	<b>20</b>
11-20	Bad	<b>Social Capital</b>	<b>20</b>
21-30	Average	<b>Physical Capital</b>	<b>24</b>
31-40	Good	<b>Natural Resources</b>	<b>40</b>
41-50	Excellent	<b>Financial Capital</b>	<b>28</b>

Following the natural is financial capital and is given an average rating because the *Janjatis*' capital is strong in comparison to that of the *Dalits*. The *Janjatis* have invested more and have more sources of income, whereas the *Dalits* live in crisis of hand-to-mouth existence due to the lack of financial capital. However, the *Janjatis* have not received the returns in terms of their investment.

Physical capital is also given an average rating because the fertile land has not been used to its full potential such as cash crop plantations. They have started with the tea plantation and

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ideas have come about almonds as well. In addition, in order to have a successful production and market success, accessibility comes into play and in this regard the existing road does not allow for the business to meet the demand and deadline of the production.

The next two capitals: human and social have been given bad ratings. To begin with human capital, education and health systems are very weak in Lwang in terms of quality. Facilities are being provided, but the quality needs to be improved. With an ageing population travelling to a 45-minute far health post does not seem feasible. In addition, human capital has further decreased due to youth migration because Lwang does not provide youth-related opportunities such as employment and quality education.

Social capital is defined to be weak due to caste discrimination, which has held back the *Dalits* and also could one day hinder tourism and village development. There were negative sentiments shared about each other from both sides. If these sentiments continue to grow, conflict would ensue. However, on the positive side this kind of sentiment is fading away amongst the youth; there is light at the end of the tunnel.

## **SWOT Analysis of the Home-stay**

### *Strength*

Home-stay in the area provides an opportunity to experience the area. The main attraction to the area apart from its natural beauty is the home-stay where tourists can experience the local culture and interact with the community. Home-stay accepts the newly emerging concept of eco-tourism in Nepal, which will positively reciprocate to the programme itself.

Home-stay as a package involves the local community. It empowers them for sharing local benefits as well. The ownership of the concept helps the community to help

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themselves and also to make possibility of future endeavors. More importantly, it has targeted the development of women and increasing the living standards of the people as a whole.

Home-stay is an adaptive and flexible concept; the mode of its utilization differs from place to place. Fundamentally, however, the programme guidelines give communities an opportunity to innovate their own ways of implementation.

### *Weakness*

For home-stay to work, the community must be very strong. In Lwang, the Gurung women had a strong bond hence it became successful. It is a purely service-oriented concept. So, if the service quality is low, home-stay is destined to fail.

Conservation and protection of environment by the local community is a must as they are utilizing the essence of their environment. The benefit-sharing must be with in the community so as not to bring huge economic disparity between the home-stay communities and other villagers.

Security issue, to both the home-stay service provider and service user must be taken into consideration. Cooperation and coordination to run home-stay business among both *Dalits* and Gurung community is a must, otherwise it can bring about conflict in future. The younger generation must be involved in promoting tourism in Lwang for the sustainability of home-stay business.

### *Opportunity*

Home-stay provides opportunities to the communities situated in extreme rural areas. This can also be initiated in urban areas with high cultural lifestyle. Various communities can utilize the adaptive and diverse nature of this concept. In a country like Nepal local culture and innovation can be advertised through this concept to increase the tourist arrival in the national level as well. Eco-tourism can be backed by this concept, as this is an

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eco-friendly approach to tourism. Rural tourism can help empower the people of that area as it can help develop the area.

### *Threats*

National level protection is required for such a concept to flourish beyond the confines of the local community. Home-stay is vulnerable to hotel business. Hotel establishment in these areas is the biggest threat as hotels bring unhealthy competition.

Westernization of culture can hamper home-stay concept in the long run. Also, continuous migration of local youths to urban areas is likely to impair the home-stay with possible lack of human resource to help in its sustainability when the present operating generation ages. Finally, if loss of biodiversity (degradation of environment) is not properly checked with the increase of tourists, the pressure on the environment will increase resulting in further loss. This will cause the number of visitors to dwindle in the long-run.