

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of overlapping organic shapes in shades of orange, purple, and blue. It features various geometric patterns, including hexagons, circles, and lines, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

2025

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ANNUAL  
R E P O R T

# CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

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At FWLD, we are guided by a simple yet powerful belief: every woman and girl deserves to live free from violence and discrimination, with equal opportunities to thrive socially, economically, and politically. For over three decades, this belief has shaped our work to challenge injustice, promote legal and policy reforms, and amplify the voices of those often unheard.

Today, in a world facing growing conflict, inequality, and uncertainty, gender inequality remains one of the deepest divides. In Nepal, systemic and structural barriers continue to place women and girls at greater risk of violence, harmful practices such as child marriage, and exclusion from opportunities. Discriminatory laws and norms still limit access to education, employment, and property. Achieving legal equality is therefore essential to building a just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

In 2025, FWLD made meaningful progress:

- Improved access to justice for over 1 million women and girls
- Contributed to reforms in 23 local laws and 3 national laws
- Strengthened engagement through 6 international and 11 national coalitions

We remain committed to advancing justice through legal expertise, advocacy, and collaboration. Our sincere gratitude goes to our partners, government stakeholders, legal professionals, and activists whose dedication continues to drive this work forward.

Together, we are stronger. Together, we can build a future where every woman and girl lives with dignity, equality, and freedom.

Sr. Advocate Geeta Aryal

# ABOUT FWLD

The Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) is an independent, non-profit NGO dedicated to the protection, promotion and enjoyment of human rights. FWLD strives for a world where human rights are fully upheld, social injustice and discrimination are eradicated, and equality is achieved. Through its work in programming, research, and advocacy, FWLD supports the rights of women, children, minorities, and marginalized groups. Its initiatives include policy advocacy, evidence-based research, filing public interest litigations (PIL), capacity enhancement initiatives, providing legal assistance and support, and providing technical support to the Government of Nepal (GoN) in law-making processes. FWLD has played a crucial role in securing legal identity, addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), advocating for sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and accessing justice for Nepali women, children, and marginalized communities.



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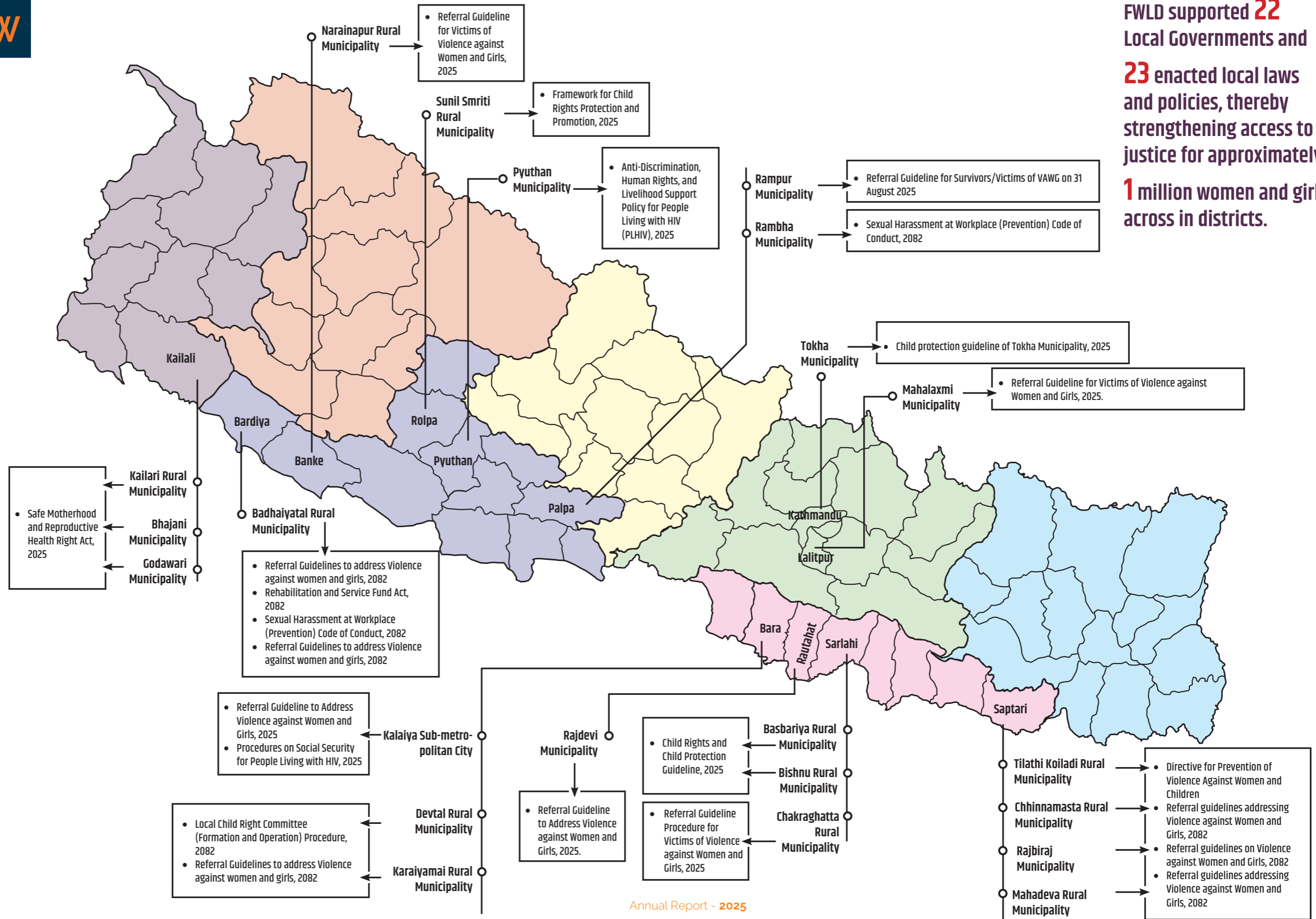
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# 2025 in Numbers

Our strategy Works across six pathways: Law Making, Legal Support, Advocacy, Collaboration, Research and Raising awareness. Together these bring about a more just Nepal for women and girls. Here's how we used them in 2025:

**FWLD supported 22 Local Governments and 23 enacted local laws and policies, thereby strengthening access to justice for approximately 1 million women and girls across in districts.**





*Facilitating legal, thus systemic change that address discrimination against women and girls in Nepal*



### From Struggle to Citizenship

**Sukumaya Lama’s** journey reflects resilience and justice. Trafficked to India as a child and later widowed, she returned to Nepal seeking citizenship only to be denied due to discriminatory legal provisions affecting women married to foreign nationals. With the support of FWLD, she challenged this injustice at the Supreme Court. After a long 15-year legal battle, the Court ruled in her favor, recognizing her right to citizenship. Today, Sukumaya proudly holds her citizenship certificate. Her victory not only restored her legal identity and dignity but also set a landmark precedent, advancing equal citizenship rights for women across Nepal.



### A Step Toward Identity and Dignity

**Umesh Kumar**, a resident of Banke District from a marginalized community, lived for years without knowing the importance or process of obtaining citizenship. Lacking awareness and guidance, he remained without legal identity. His life changed when he visited the District Administration Office, where an FWLD-supported paralegal help desk guided him through the entire process. With their support, Umesh successfully obtained his citizenship certificate. Today, he not only holds his legal identity but also a renewed sense of dignity and belonging an inspiring example of how awareness and access to legal support can transform lives.



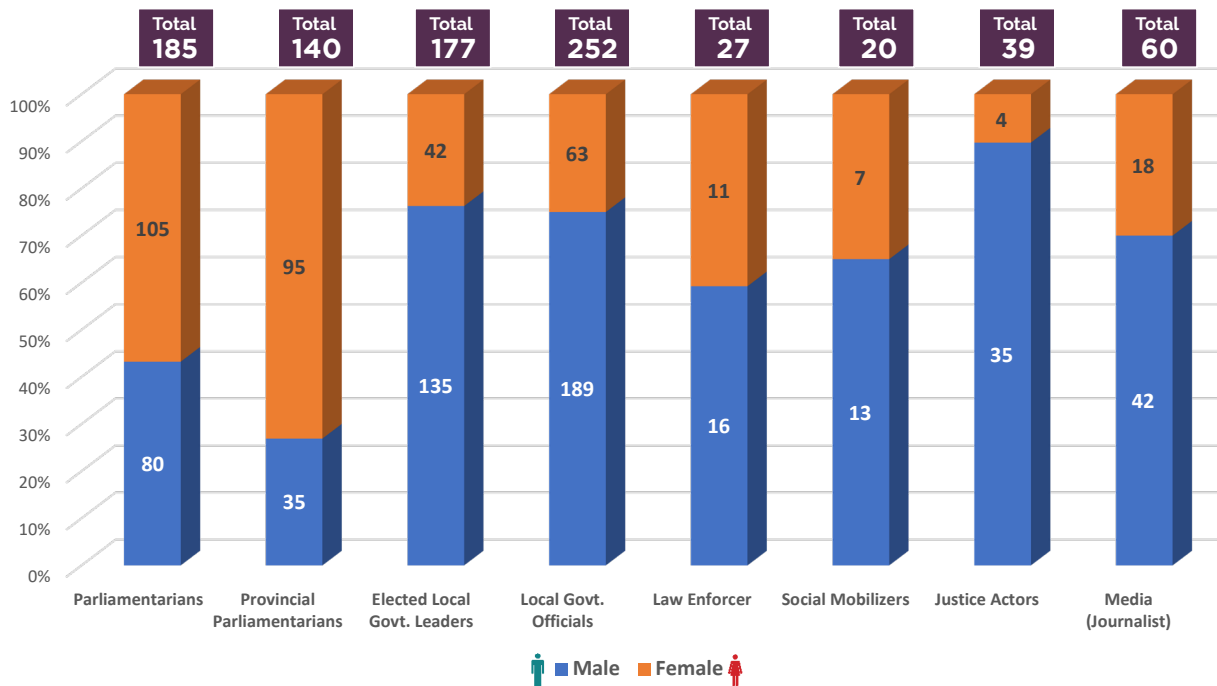


# CAPACITY BUILDING

FWLD believes that continuous learning is essential for driving positive and sustainable change. In 2025, FWLD strengthened the capacities of a wide range of stakeholders, including parliamentarians, local government leaders, government officials, justice actors, social mobilizers, and media professionals. These capacity-building initiatives enhanced their knowledge and skills on critical issues such as legal identity, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), child rights, anti-human trafficking, and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), including relevant new laws and policies and practical

strategies for implementation.

As a result, these stakeholders have been better equipped to raise their voices in parliamentary forums, improve service delivery mechanisms, and promote rights-based approaches within their respective roles. The enhanced capacity has also contributed to positive changes in attitudes and practices, enabling stakeholders to effectively apply their knowledge and skills in advocacy and decision-making processes, ultimately supporting inclusive and rights-based national development.





## ADVOCACY

FWLD worked with 168 Federal Parliamentarians and 118 Provincial Parliamentarians and advocated for the advancement of the rights of women and girls in Nepal.

FWLD conducted 48 high-level meetings with key decision-makers and change-makers, engaging government representatives, parliamentarians, and justice actors on a wide range of policy and legal issues.

FWLD organized 78 local-level advocacy meetings to support the development and reform of local laws and policies.



### Achieving Legal Equality

In Nepal, passage and certification of the Citizenship (Second Amendment) Act, 2081 B.S., by the Right Honorable President of Nepal, Mr. Ram Chandra Paudel. The bill was approved by both Houses of the Federal Parliament and certified in accordance with Article 113(2) of the Constitution of Nepal, addressing long standing challenges related to citizenship. Under the new provisions, if a father's name appears on an individual's birth certificate, educational documents, or other official records, but the mother declares that the father is no longer in contact, the father's identity will not be recognized. In such cases, the individual becomes eligible to obtain citizenship in the mother's name. Additionally, children born abroad to Nepali mothers and residing in Nepal are now eligible for Nepali citizenship. The Act also ensures that children born abroad to Nepali women engaged in foreign employment, who do not possess foreign citizenship or passports and whose fathers are unidentified, can obtain Nepali citizenship through self-declaration. This provision plays a crucial role in preventing statelessness and strengthening legal identity rights in Nepal.



Ministry of Health and Population has issued the "Standards relating to the Operation of Infertility Management Services, 2025" This marks a significant step forward in acknowledging the need for regulation in this critical area, an issue FWLD has long championed.



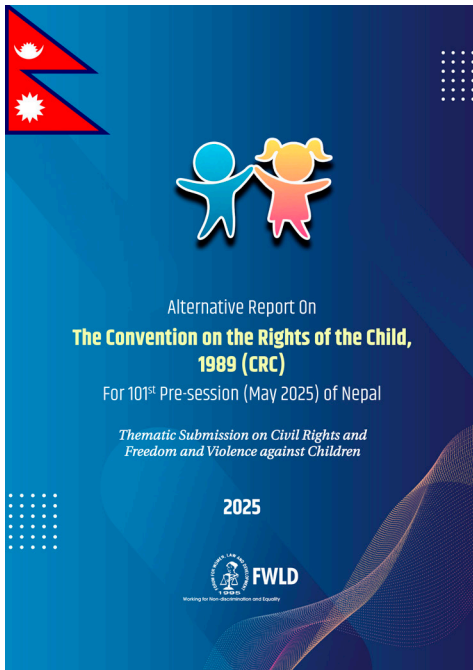
# COLLABORATION

*Diverse range of actors to increase our mutual understanding, reach, and impact with respect to ensuring the rights of all women and girls, to promote strategic collaboration and the pooling of expertise, and be held accountable*

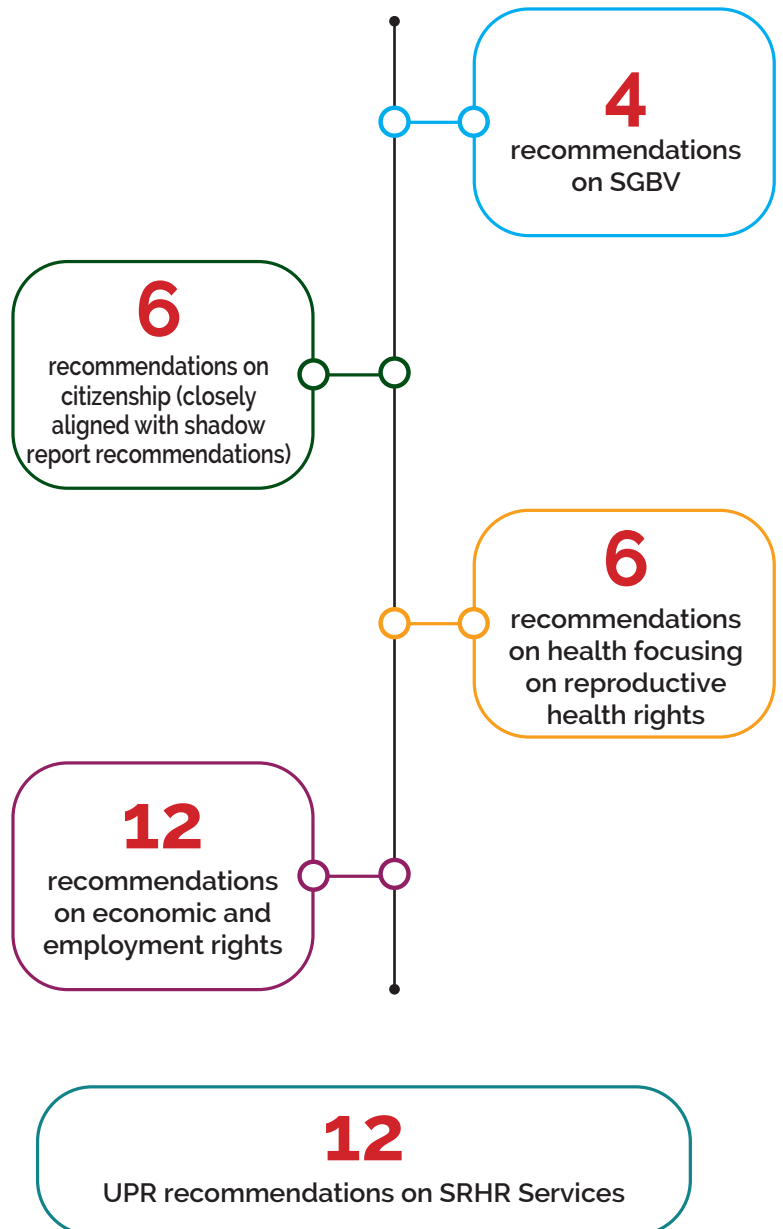
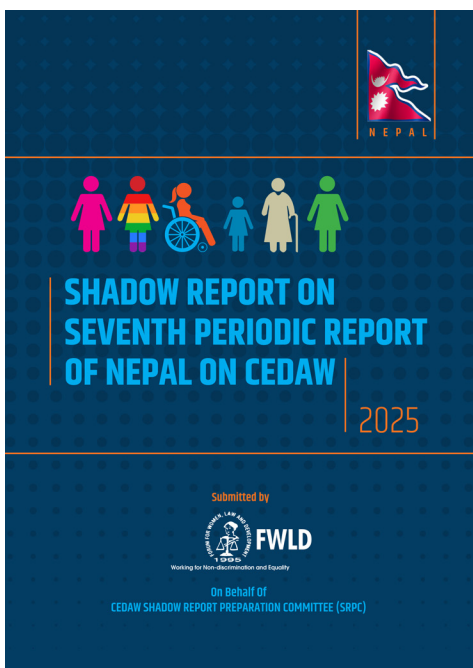


Providing significant technical, financial, or other support in 18 partnerships, and ensuring we continually marry our legal expertise with local expertise.

We produced, launched, and disseminated 18 publications, including a continued to use the processes of the law to advocate for change for women and girls, including by making a total of 2 submissions to UN treaty bodies, the CEDAW and UPR



The comprehensive advocacy efforts achieved significant success with the CEDAW Committee issuing strong concluding observations to Nepal, including:





Child marriage remains a critical issue in Nepal, with serious impacts on children’s rights and well-being despite existing legal prohibitions. The review highlights gaps and inconsistencies in laws and their implementation, particularly in addressing forced versus voluntary child marriages. It also reveals mixed judicial responses, where inconsistent court decisions have limited effective protection for child victims. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for stronger legal enforcement, clearer frameworks, and more consistent judicial approaches to effectively combat child marriage.

In 2025, FWLD completed two key research studies focused on discriminatory laws against women and the special measures. These studies generated strong evidence to identify legal gaps and systemic barriers affecting women’s rights in Nepal. The findings supported inclusive stakeholder engagement and informed strategic advocacy efforts.

Importantly, the research directly led to the filing of two Public Interest Litigations (PILs), translating evidence into concrete legal action to challenge discriminatory provisions. This work not only advanced judicial interventions against systemic discrimination but also established a strong evidence based foundation to guide future policy reform and gender equality initiatives



# AWARENESS RISING

FWLD campaigns reached 559k + individuals with information on Legal Identity (Birth registration and Citizenship), GBV prevention, gender equality, SRHR, and child rights, empowering them to understand their rights and obligations equality.





# INCREASING LOCAL AUTHORITY OWNERSHIP

## ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Sexual violence, including all forms of rape and sexual abuse occurring within or outside domestic settings, continues to significantly impact individuals and communities. While anyone can become a victim of sexual violence, structural misogyny and systemic gender inequality mean that women and girls are disproportionately affected. In 2025, FWLD

continued its advocacy to strengthen legal protections for those most at risk of sexual violence, while encouraging government authorities to improve survivors' access to justice, protection, and support services. As a result of these sustained efforts, 19 local governments enacted local laws on the prevention of violence against women and children. These

laws aim to strengthen institutional mechanisms at the local level to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The enactment and implementation of these laws are expected to benefit over three million women and girls, helping to safeguard their rights, enhance their security, and promote an enabling environment for their dignity, freedom, and development.

## ADDRESSING CHILD EXPLOITATION



In 2025, FWLD, in collaboration with Basbariya Rural Municipality in Sarlahi District and Tokha Municipality in Kathmandu, supported local governments in the formulation and enactment of the Child Rights and Child Protection Guideline. These legal frameworks were developed to strengthen the protection of children from exploitation, abuse, and neglect at the local level.

The enactment and implementation of these guidelines are expected to benefit approximately 35,000 children, ensuring the protection of their rights and promoting a safer and more supportive environment for their growth and development.

## ACCESS TO SAFE MOTHERHOOD AND SRHR SERVICES



In 2025, FWLD collaborated with Kailari Rural Municipality, Bhajani Municipality, and Godawari Municipality in Kailali District to enhance the capacity of local governments to effectively plan, implement, and monitor policies and strategies related to safe motherhood and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). This support included technical assistance in the formulation and implementation of relevant local laws and frameworks. As a result, local governments have strengthened their ability to deliver responsive and rights-based SRHR services. It is estimated that approximately 45,000 women and girls have benefited from these initiatives, enabling them to better access services and claim their rights related to safe motherhood and SRHR at the local level.



# PROMOTING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

In 2025, FWLD strengthened access to justice through multi-stakeholder training initiatives that primarily engaged justice actors and law enforcement officials. These efforts focused on identifying and addressing gaps in existing laws and practices, improving access to services and support for survivors, and promoting equitable access to justice for marginalized and vulnerable groups. The trainings also emphasized the importance of accountability, encouraging government institutions to uphold their responsibilities in

ensuring justice and protection for all.

FWLD further contributed to building and sustaining inclusive, multi-sectorial platforms by raising collaboration among key stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and legal professionals. In addition, the establishment and strengthening of national networks played a key role in promoting access to justice, enhancing coordination, and supporting collective advocacy efforts across different levels.





# INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

## **CEDAW Shadow Report**

Advocate Sabin Shrestha, Executive Director of FWLD delivered oral statement during 2119th Public Informal Meeting, 90th Session, UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) at Geneva, Switzerland on February 3, 2025.

Advocate Sabin Shrestha highlighted the key issues about how Nepal has failed to enact a specific anti-discrimination law that defines discrimination against women and addresses intersectional and multiple discrimination faced by marginalized groups, including women with disabilities, Dalit women, religious minorities, LGBTIQ individuals, Indigenous women, Madhesi women, senior citizen women, girls, adolescents, and women in humanitarian crises. He also mentioned that while Nepal's National Criminal Code prohibits discrimination by public authorities, discrimination in the private sphere remains unaddressed. Even after 35 years of CEDAW ratification, discriminatory laws persist in areas such as nationality, vital registration, and family relations. Similarly, he added that the budget for gender equality remains critically low, with only 0.09% of the national budget allocated to the Ministry of Women, and this allocation continues to decline yearly. Statutes of limitations hinder access to justice, and abortion remains partially criminalized, restricting women's reproductive rights. He also expressed concern that despite ratifying the Palermo Protocol, Nepal's anti-trafficking laws remain non-compliant with international standards. Additionally, he mentioned SRHR services are not recognized as essential, further limiting access, especially during disasters and humanitarian crises.



Advocate Sagar Pathak, Advocate Binu Lama and Ms. Prakriti Shrestha from FWLD delivering oral statement on Nationality, SGBV and adolescent girls respectively before UN CEDAW Committee expert members during private lunch time briefing on February 4, 2025



### Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Pre-session of Nepal

FWLD participated in the UPR Pre-session of Nepal from November 25th to 28th, 2025, held in Geneva, Switzerland. Advocate Laxmi Pokharel (Secretary), Advocate Sabin Shrestha (Executive Director), and Advocate Deepesh Shrestha (Program Manager) on behalf of FWLD participated in the pre-session. The issues related with rights of women and children, legal identity, person with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities, transitional justice etc. were raised during the session by the participants.

FWLD detailing specific concerns regarding sexual and reproductive health rights, sexual and gender-based violence, the rights of children, and the rights of persons with disabilities prepared reports and were submitted to the UPR Working Group of Human Rights Council on July, 2025.



# Dialogue on inclusive justice for persons with disabilities in Second World Summit at Doha, Qatar



A special session on “Redefining Justice: Ending the Exclusion of Persons with Disabilities through Inclusive Systems” was held during the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha, which was jointly organized by the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) along with other organizations.

Keynote speaker Ms. Sanni Grahn-Laasonen, Finland’s Minister of Social Security, and Dr. Heba Hagrass, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, highlighted global commitments to ensuring equal justice and participation for people with disabilities.

Panelists included Advocate Sabin Shrestha, Executive Director of FWLD, representing Nepal; Esther Carolyn Sturr from Kenya; and Mohammad Al Hasnan from Pakistan. The session was moderated by ICJ’s Advocate Karuna Parajuli. Speakers stressed that states must create enabling environments for persons with disabilities, ensuring full participation and access to justice, rather than restricting or discriminating.

## Raised Voice at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

FWLD actively engaged in international advocacy during the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Through this global platform, FWLD raised critical issues affecting women and girls, with a particular focus on gender equality, women’s rights, and child rights. The organization contributed to advancing dialogue, influencing policy discussions, and amplifying the voices and concerns of marginalized groups at the international level.





# LOOKING FORWARD

As we look ahead, FWLD remains committed to using the power of law as a catalyst for lasting, systemic change. In 2025 and beyond, we will deepen our engagement with national and regional decision-makers while strengthening the capacity of our local partners to advocate for progressive legal and economic reforms across Nepal.

## Achieving Legal Equality



Advancing legal equality will continue to be at the heart of our work. FWLD will further strengthen national advocacy efforts, including the National Campaign for Equality in the Constitution of Nepal and the Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, to challenge discriminatory provisions and promote equal rights under the law. Alongside this, we will continue our research, documentation, and collaboration with national and international partners, contributing to key human rights mechanisms such as CEDAW, the Universal Periodic Review, and other UN platforms. Through sustained advocacy at all levels, we aim to ensure both reform and effective implementation of gender-equitable laws and policies.

## Ending Sexual Violence



FWLD will continue to work closely with government bodies and stakeholders to strengthen laws and policy frameworks that prevent and respond to sexual violence. Our focus will remain on promoting a victim-centered approach and ensuring that national commitments translate into meaningful action at the local level. Through continued advocacy and collaboration, we aim to expand access to justice and support services, contributing to safer and more accountable communities.

## Ending Sexual Exploitation



Recognizing emerging challenges, FWLD will intensify its efforts to address sexual exploitation through advocacy, awareness, and digital engagement. We will promote the development of inclusive and rights-based digital frameworks, ensuring safer online spaces for women and girls. At the community level, we will continue to support and empower those at risk, strengthening protection systems and access to essential services.

## Ending Harmful Practices



FWLD remains dedicated to eliminating harmful practices that undermine the dignity and rights of women and girls. Through evidence-based research and advocacy, we will continue to identify root causes and support the development of responsive legal and policy frameworks. Working closely with local governments and communities, we aim to strengthen prevention, raise awareness, and ensure that such practices are effectively addressed.

Together with our partners, we move forward with determination and hope—committed to building a more equal, safe, and just society for all.

# Empowering Our Team for Greater Impact



We are committed to their professional development and well-being. In 2025, staff received training in Staff Capacity Building & Strategic Development, enhancing their capacity to deliver impactful programs and achieve our strategic goals. We also foster staff well-being and team building, recognizing that a thriving team is the foundation of sustain-able change.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## TO OUR DONORS

We sincerely thank all our donors and partner organizations whose generosity empowers us to advance the rights of vulnerable women and girls in Nepal and create lasting, meaningful change.





Working for Non-discrimination and Equality

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