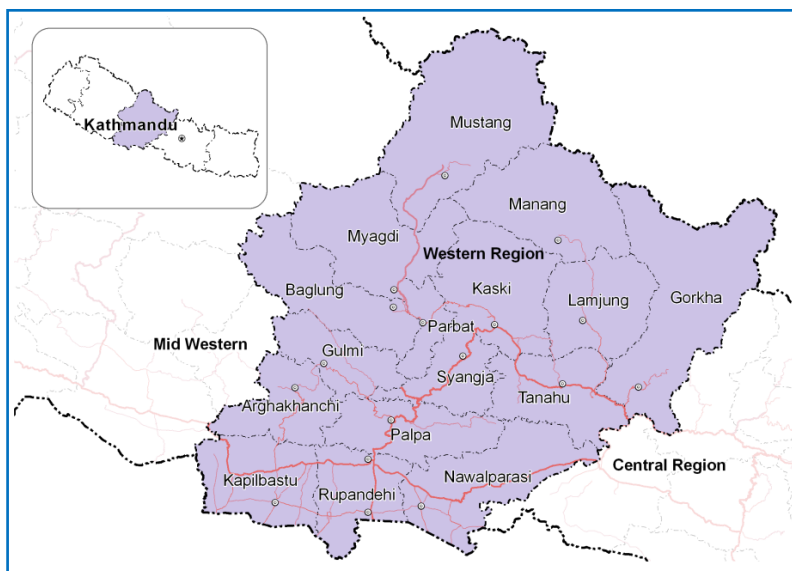


An overview of Western Development Region (WR)

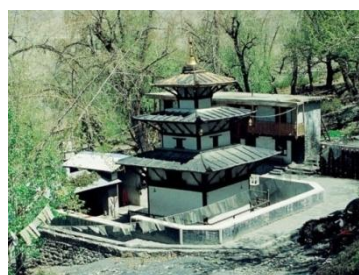
The Western Region (WR), one of the five development regions of Nepal spans all three eco zones – mountain, hill and plain. Headquartered in Pokhara, an important tourism hub, the WR comprises of three administratively zones (Dhawalagiri, Gandaki and Lumbini), 16 districts, 865 VDCs and 12 municipalities¹. The population is diverse and includes ethnic and religious communities such as Magars, Gurungs, Tharus, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. The WR is home of several places of particular cultural and religious importance, including the birth place of Lord Buddha in Lumbini (a UNESCO World Heritage site sine 1997) and the Muktinath temple.



Indicator	WR	Compared to all Nepal
Population	4,571,013	19.70%
Total Area (Sq Km)	29'398	20%
Population growth	1.92	2.25
GDP /Capita (PPP US\$)	1,477	1,597
HDI	0.516	0.509
Human Poverty Index	33.2%	35.4%
Infant Mortality Rate	56/1,000	48/1,000
Life Expectancy at birth (2006)	64.12	63.69
Adult Literacy	55.65%	52.42%

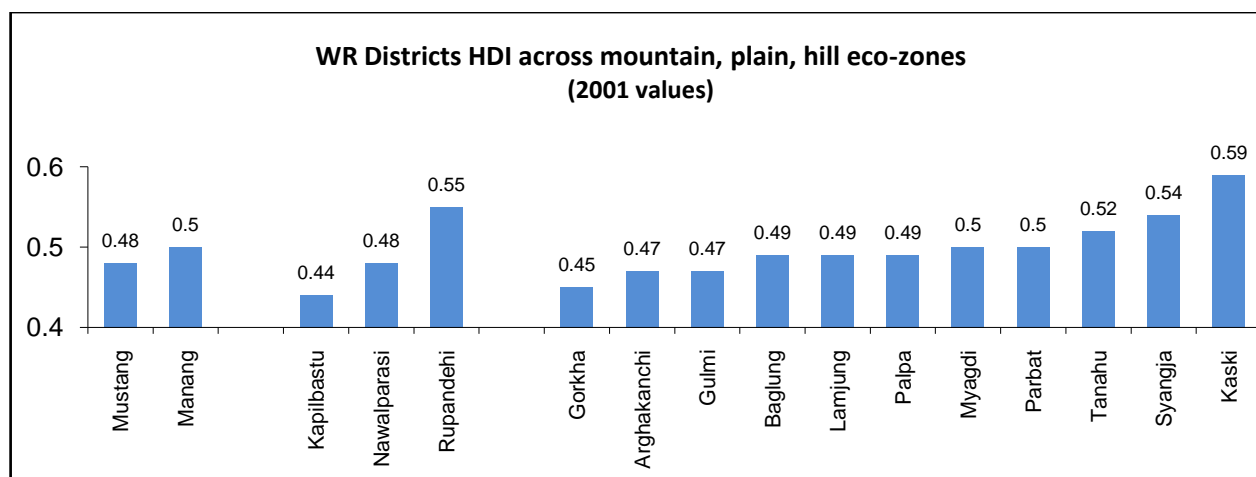
Sources: CBS 2001, NHDR 2009, Demographic Health Survey 2006

The Human Development Index (HDI) of the WR (0.516) is slightly above the national average of 0.509. However, human development varies greatly across eco-zones (see diagram below). Similarly, the Human Poverty Index (HPI) ranges from 48% in the mountains to 36% in the Tarai with 32% in the hills⁷. In addition, the section on Gender and Social Inclusion below shows an unequal level of development across social groups.



Lumbini's sacred garden (Left) and the Muktinath Temple (Right) (Source: Nepal Tourism Board. www.welcomenepal.com)

¹ Local Administration Act, 2028 (1971) and its Fourth Amendment, 2058 (2001). www.lawcommission.gov.np



Source: Nepal Human Development Report, 2004, UNDP

Geography and Natural Disasters

All district headquarters have all-year road connectivity except for the ones in Manang and Mustang, two particularly remote districts which rely on air transport. Nonetheless, geographical isolation, vulnerable roads and the lack of bridges across most of rivers are major challenges to accessibility in all districts. The climate of the region varies from temperate in the hills and valleys to tropical in the plains. The region has a diverse landscape, ecology and biodiversity.

The WR is regularly affected by natural disasters such as floods and landslides. Severe thunderstorms, cold waves, drought, food insecurity (mostly in hills), epidemics, accidental fires and earthquakes are other natural hazards. Human and economic costs of disaster in the WR are high. During the period 1971-2009, the WR has seen 4,411 deaths (about 15% of disaster related deaths in Nepal), with 6,607 injured, 963 missing, 619,034 affected and 7,925 evacuated. 23,570 houses were destroyed during the same period and 11,235 houses were damaged. The economic losses have been estimated at NRs. 1,894,778,725².

Conflict Dynamics

The decade long armed conflict in Nepal saw widespread violence, torture, disappearances, displacements and a general anticipation of terror. The WR has been comparatively less exposed to the conflict than other parts of the country with 2,000 deaths and 142 disappearances (respectively 15% and 14% of nationwide figures) between 1995 and 2006³.

Despite the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006, violence linked to political instability has continued in the WR. The situation in some Tarai districts remains volatile with regular occurrence of strikes, blockades, crime, clashes, use of explosive devices and unlawful killings. The WR saw 33 killings (12.6% of all killings by armed groups or security forces across Nepal) during the period 2008-2010, most of which took place in Kapilbastu and Rupandehi districts⁴.

The Tarai districts of the WR are also affected by the possibility of underlying socio-economic conflict, such as land distribution, being awoken along ethnic and religious lines, as illustrated by the particularly violent

² Source: Nepal DesInventar Database, NSET 2010

³ Source: Conflict Victims' Profile, INSEC 2010, www.insec.org.np/victim

⁴ Sources: Killings in Terai, Democratic Freedom and Human Rights Institute-DFHRI, 2011

riots that occurred in Kapilbastu September 2007 (see box).

Box: Riots in Kapilbastu in September 2007

16 September 2007, Kapilvastu: Widespread violence followed the murder by unidentified people of Mohit Khan, a local Muslim landowner and a former long-time Nepali Congress party member as well as a former member of the vigilante group Pratikar Samiti and a Madheshi rights activist.

The violence persisted from 16-21 September during which time 14 people were killed, nine injured and several thousand displaced. There was widespread looting and destruction of property (official figures counted more than 300 buildings damaged). The violence spilled over in Dang and Rupandehi districts where property, including mosques, was damaged and a large number of people temporarily displaced.

Despite the initiatives to rebuild confidence among the communities, tensions remain high and much awaits to be done to address the underlying causes of the violence, which many believe were linked to decade-long land disputes between Pahadi and Madhesi (both Muslim and Hindu).

Source: http://nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/Documents/English/reports/HCR/2008_06_18_KAPILVASTU_Report_E.pdf

Health and Sanitation

21 district hospitals, 42 primary health centers, 145 health posts and 691 sub-health posts provide health services to a total population of 4,571,013. International and national non-governmental organizations and private clinics also provide health care services in the region.

Despite some vacant posts and absenteeism, staff of health and sub-health posts in the VDCs generally provides basic health services and regular vaccination programmes. However, the quality of services delivery is observed to be low as illustrated by

Health Infrastructure in WR

Health post:	145
Hospital:	21
PSC:	42
SHP:	691
Total:	899

Source: MoH_Annual Report 2007/2008

the reproductive

Reproductive Health Status of WR

Indicator	WR	National
Neonatal mortality rate:	35/1,000	33/1,000
Infant mortality rate:	56/1,000	48/1,000
Child mortality rate:	18/1,000	14/1,000

Source: Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2006

health statistics below. Although centrally supplied medicines and essential drugs are generally available in urban and Tarai health institutions, villages and even district headquarters in remote hills and mountains often suffer from a lack of trained health personnel, infrastructure and equipment.

Access to safe water and sanitation remains limited in absolute terms in the WR (see below), although it is better than the rest of Nepal (see table below), further affecting public health.

Indicator	WR	Nepal
Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation	51.5%	38.7%
Proportion of population using an improved drinking source	86.8%	81.1%

Sources: Nepal Living Standard Survey 2003-2004

Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever in the Western Region

Dengue fever (DF) is a mosquito-borne disease increasingly affecting Nepal in the last few years, particularly in the Tarai districts of the Western and Central regions. As with many other vector-borne diseases, outbreaks of DF are linked to travel and the frequent movement of people across the porous border between Nepal and India. In 2006, clinical observation and pathological and laboratory investigations results showed the existence of DF in Banke, Bardiya, Dang, Kapilbastu, Parsa, Rupandehi, and Jhapa districts. A total of 32 of DF cases were recorded.

Source: WHO, www.searo.who.int/EN/Section10/Section332/Section2277_13402.htm

Education

In the WR 7,367 public schools provide education services up to higher secondary level to 1,518,585 students. The student teacher ratio is 25 in primary, 37 in lower secondary, 25 in secondary and 15 in higher secondary⁸.

Adult literacy rate (15 years and above) in the WR is nearly 56%, which is above the national literacy rate of slightly above 52%⁷. The literacy rate amongst the population of 6 years and above is 62%, which again is above the national average of 51%. However, a gap of 17% can be observed between male and female in the literacy rate of 15 – 24 years old⁵. In addition the data⁶ for the literacy rate of people 15 years and above reveals disparities between the three eco-zones (mountain 50%, hill 55% and Tarai 50%) in the WR. Nationwide there are big differences in the literacy rates across different social groups (Brahmin/Chhetris 64%, Tarai/Madhese/Other caste 42%, Dalits 38%, Newar 68%, all Janajati excluding Newar 52% and Muslim 30%⁷) and it is reasonable to suspect that similar disparities exist in the WR.

Educational Demography and Infrastructure in WR

Higher Secondary:	604
Secondary:	1,592
Lower Secondary:	2,488
Primary:	7,275
Total:	7,367

Source: Flash Report 1, MoES, GoN, 2009/2010



A public school in the Western Hills – Syangja District

Targeted scholarships for girls, children from Dalit and Janajati communities and children with disabilities have been administered by the Government of Nepal to increase the particularly low enrollment rate of these groups. As of 2009, the net enrolment ratio in the WR is 95% in primary schools and 72% in lower secondary schools⁸.

⁵ Nepal Living Standard Survey 2003/04, CBS, Nepal, 2004 (NepalInfo 2010 database)

⁶ Census 2001, Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal (NepalInfo 2010 database)

⁷ Nepal Human Development Report 2009, UNDP Nepal

⁸ Education Statistics of Nepal 2009, Flash Report 1, Statistics Section, MoES, Government of Nepal, 2009-2010

Economy, Agriculture and Food Security

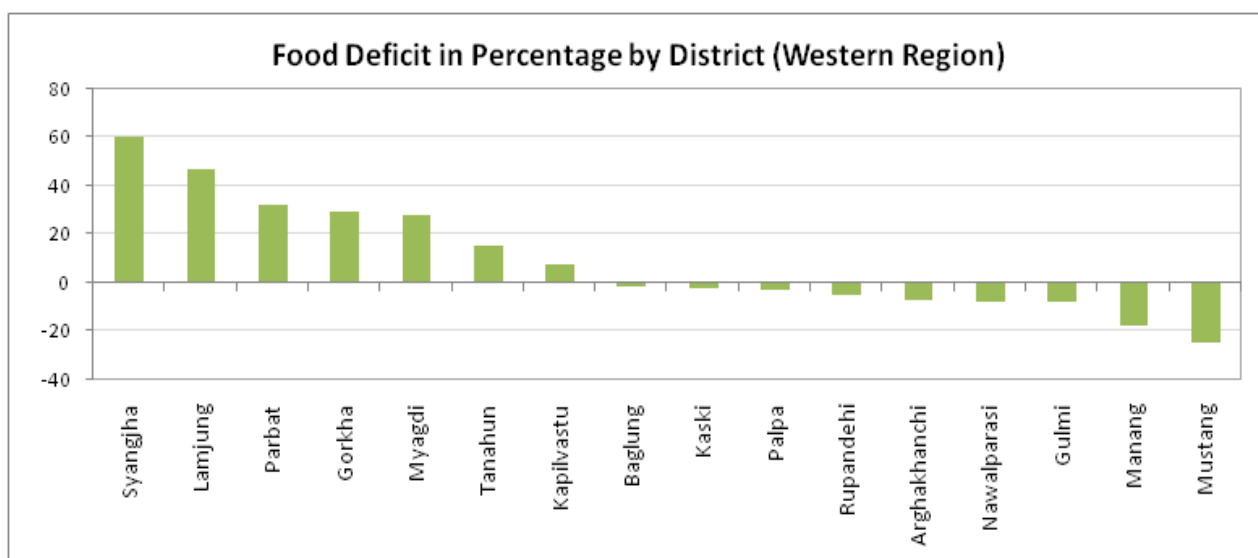
Nepal is a predominantly agricultural country with agriculture contributing 33% of Nepal's GDP and 51% of the usually economically active population being employed in the agriculture sector. In the WR this share is higher with 57% of the usually economically active population working in agriculture and some districts being particularly famous for their products: Mustang for apples, Syangja for oranges and Palpa for coffee.

The table shown further characterizes agriculture in the WR: landlessness of many, small plots of land for others, heavy use of pesticides and scarce use of improved seeds or mechanization. As in the rest of Nepal, irrigation is not universally used. Only 40% of the agricultural land in the WR is irrigated and agricultural output therefore relies heavily on favorable weather conditions.

Although the WR produces an overall food surplus, mountain and flood affected districts are food-deficient (see graph below⁹). These districts are often cash-strapped, remote and the external food supply they rely on is vulnerable to floods, landslides and poor roads.

Indicator		Nepal	WR
Area of Agricultural Land (%)		29.4	19.5
Agricultural Households (HHs) (%)		79.9	84.2
Women headed Agricultural HHs (%)		18.7	27.8
Agricultural HHs with land (%)		77.5	82.6
HHs with owned Agricultural land (%)		92.7	95.5
HHs with renting-in Land (%)		31.4	23.5
Average size of Agricultural land (hectares)		0.8	0.7
Area irrigated (%)		54.3	40.3
HHs using fertilizers (%)	Paddy	66.4	68.7
	Wheat	56	44.3
	Maize	34	30.2
HHs using improved seeds (%)	Paddy	5.4	11.1
	Wheat	5.6	8.4
	Maize	4.3	2
Agricultural equipment ownership (%)	Plough	56.8	49.9
	Tractor	0.6	0.5
	Thresher	0.9	1.4
	Water pump	2.7	2.6
Agricultural HHs having cattle		66.6	54.5

Source: Nepal Living Standards Survey 2003/04, CBS, Nepal, 2004



⁹ Source : FAO/WFP FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT Report, July 2007

Industries, Trade, and employment

In addition to Pokhara, Nepal's third largest city and a major tourism hub, the WR is also home of industrial four plans: Bhairahawa Export Processing Zone (BEPZ), Butwal Industrial District (BID), Chaudhary Industrial Estate and the Lumbini Development Area. Despite this, industry remains a small sector which in the WR employs 37,747 industrial workers (399,086 nationally) in 448 registered industrial companies (4,310 nationally)¹⁰.



Above: Small sugarcane mill in Rupandehi District

Unemployment rates for 15 – 24 year olds

Overall for WR:	10.5% (12.3% Nationwide)
Male:	12.4%
Female:	8.8%
Mountain:	6.1%
Hill:	10.4%
Tarai:	10.8%

Source: CBS_Census 2001

Youth unemployment in the WR (10.5%) is lower than the national average of 12.3%. However, it varies from 6.1 % in the mountains to 10.8% in the Tarai.

Gender Inequality

Child marriage (mostly in Tarai and in rural areas), domestic violence, dowry related incidents (physical and mental torture, beatings, killings) are prevalent abuses against women in the WR and highlight the challenges to ensuring gender equality in the region.

Gender-related development index:	WR: 0.511 (0.499 Nationwide)
Gender Empowerment Measure:	WR: 0.488 (0.496 Nationwide)

Source: UNDP HDI Report 2009

Female ownership (land and house):	WR: 5.09% (4.6% Nationwide)
Female ownership (house):	WR: 5.87% (5.5% Nationwide)
Female ownership (land):	WR: 11.3% (10.8% Nationwide)
Females employed outside agriculture:	WR: 18.7% (Nepal: 17.3%)

Source: CBS – Census 2001

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in the WR (0.511) is above the national average but the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (0.488) is below. There is much intra-region discrepancy in the gender indicators with GDIs of 0.414, 0.547 and 0.455, and GEMs 0.413, 0.518 and 0.391 in the mountains, hills and Tarai respectively⁷.

Although still very low, other gender inequality indicators in the WR are above the national average: female ownership in land and house (5.09% with 4.6% nationally); house (5.87% with 5.5% nationally); land (11.3% with 10.8% nationally) and the share of female employed in non-agriculture sector (only 18.7% with 17.4% nationally)⁶.

¹⁰ Industrial Statistics (2009/10) Government of Nepal, doind.gov.np/uploads/pdf/industrial_statistics_2066-67.pdf

Social Exclusion

As in the rest of Nepal, some social groups are excluded from formal and informal structures in the society based on for example caste, ethnicity, religion, language, disability or geography. Despite the abolition of caste-based discrimination in 1963, the social hierarchies and divisions remained (see textbox below) and are reinforced by persisting inequalities in land ownership, educational, health and economic status.

Inter-caste Marriage in a hill district of Western region

Mr. Som Nath BK, a 21 years old 'Dalit' and Ms. Chandrawati Acharya (names changed), 18, from a so-called high caste, both legally adults, were romantically involved. When they decided to marry, they ran away to escape the social pressures and humiliation that they would face for trespassing a traditional boundary of the caste system, and took shelter with the boy's relatives in another VDC. Incensed at the idea of their daughter marrying into a so-called "low" caste, the parents reported the case to the Police. The Police arrested the newly wed couple after 22 days and filed a case in the district court, charging the boy of rape of a minor. The parents, allegedly using influence and fake evidence with support from the Police, had the boy convicted for sexual relation with a minor, although the girl is widely believed to be over 18. The district court sentenced the boy to 7.5 years of imprisonment. The local Dalit rights activists say this case illustrate the revenge incurred for daring to cross traditional caste boundary.

Source: Discussions with Western hills NGOs

Different social groups therefore enjoy very different levels of human development. The table below shows HDI values for some social groups in Nepal which are prevalent in the WR and how they compare to other countries.

Human Development Index across social groups (national averages)				
All Brahman/Chhetri	Hill Brahman	All Dalits	Hill Dalits	Madhesi Dalits
0.552	0.612	0.424	0.449	0.383
<i>Countries with HDI similar to Nepal's social group</i>				
India	Egypt	Nigeria	Myanmar	Rwanda
0.519	0.620	0.423	0.451	0.385

Source: NHDR 2009, HDR 2010

Several ethnic minority groups of the WR suffer from almost complete marginalization, among them, the Gandharba and Kusunda communities (see below).

Traditional Musicians: the Gandharba



The Gandharba (or Gaine) is a Dalit group from the western hill districts, especially Kaski, Lamjung and Tanahun. Traditionally musicians, the Gandharba were for centuries the sole organized mean of information and entertainment for remote and isolated communities across the mountains of Nepal. In a time without postal networks, telephones, radios and televisions, the Gandharba travelled from village to village, singing about legendary heroes, ongoing battles and tales of what they saw on their journeys and the lives of the people they encountered on their way. In a society where access to information was considered the exclusive right of the 'high' caste and the wealthy, the Gandharba's function was crucial for the poorer sections of society. Today, the traditional storyteller function of the Gandharba, which was also their sole means of livelihood, has almost disappeared. In addition the traditionally landless Gandharba are also facing exclusion within the Dalit, which has further jeopardized their means of supporting themselves.

Sources: www.socialinclusion.org.np/researchdetail-159.html;
http://hrisouthasian.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=11

Photo: http://indrakilsikkim.blogspot.com/2010_09_01_archive.html

Endangered group – The Kusunda

The Kusunda is one of the most endangered indigenous ethnic groups in Nepal who have traditionally lived separately and alienated from other people by inhabiting secluded forests. Male Kusundas are known as *Ban Raja* (kings of the forests) and the women as *Ban Rani* (queens of the forest). With only 164 Kusundas left (according to the 2001 census), the Kusunda language and culture are on the brink of extinction. Found in the districts of Gorkha, Kaski, Salyan, Pyuthan, Dang, Dailekh and Surkhet the Kusundas do not farm but live mainly on roots harvested in the forest. With almost all of them being landless and illiterate, finding means to support themselves outside of the forests is difficult.

Source: www.nefin.org.np/indigenous-nationalities/hill-in/42.html



Photo: picasaweb.google.com/johan.reinhard

UN presence and programmes in the Western Region

In addition to programmes managed from the capital Kathmandu, development assistance activities of United Nations in the WR include the following:

Agency	Project /Programme	Districts
FAO	Leasehold Forestry and Livestock Development Programme	Palpa, Nawalparasi, Syangjha, Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, Lamagung, Tanahu and Gorkha
UNESCO	Non-Formal Education Management Information System (NFEMIS)	Rupandehi
UNFPA	Population and Development, Reproductive Health and Gender	Kapilvastu
UNICEF	Health and Nutrition; Education; HIV/AIDS; Child Protection; Governance, Policy, Partnership and knowledge; WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene)	All districts of WR
WFP	Food Security Monitoring	All district of WR
WHO	Immunization Preventable Diseases (IPD)	All district of WR

UN Field Coordination Office (UNFCO)

Bharatpur

Email: sylvain.merlen@one.un.org

Phone: +977 (0) 56-525530

United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator's Office

GPO Box: 107, UN House, Pulchowk, Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: rhcoco.nepal@one.un.org

Phone: +977 1 5523200, Fax: +977 1 5523991

Visit the UN Nepal Information Platform at <http://www.un.org.np>