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# **Community Leadership in Rural Nepal**

**Vijaya Shrestha**



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**The Agricultural Development Council, Inc.  
1290 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, N. Y. 10104, U.S.A.  
and G.P.O. Box 1312  
Kathmandu, Nepal.**



**APROSC**

**Agricultural Projects Services Center  
G.P.O. Box 1440  
Kathmandu, Nepal.**

## **FOREWORD**

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**The Ministry of Food and Agriculture appreciates the efforts of Dr. Shao-er Oag and Dr. Veit Burger, the A.D.C. staff in Nepal, and of Dr. Ram Prakash Yadav, the Executive Director of APROSC, in making the publication of this Research Paper Series possible.**

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# COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN RURAL NEPAL

VIJAYA SHRESTHA\*

## ABSTRACT

It is generally conceded that the introduction of the new development strategy and Panchayat polity, which require that planning and implementation of rural development programmes be done at the initiative of local communities and with their full participation, have resulted in changes in leadership patterns of Nepalese rural communities. The main objectives of the study were, therefore, to identify who the community leaders are in terms of their demographic and economic characteristics, role perceptions, leadership behaviour and social participation, and how leaders differ from non-leaders.

Data were collected through personal interviews with 92 leaders and 400 randomly selected household heads from two village Panchayats that are different socially, culturally, economically and geographically. Community leaders were identified by using positional and issue specific reputational approaches. Analysis of data was done in the following way: first, characteristics of Hill leaders were contrasted with those of Tarai leaders; second, formal and informal leaders were compared and finally, leaders were compared with non-leaders.

The findings of the present study indicate that changes in the political structure and formulation of the new rural development strategy have neither created a totally new pattern of community leadership nor completely dislodged those who enjoy power because of caste superiority, better economic position, seniority in age or ethnic majority. Traditional leadership is still a force to reckon with. Nevertheless, the varied socio-economic background of leaders and the presence of younger and higher educated leaders in substantial proportions in both the Hill and Tarai panchayats provide unmistakable evidence of the emergence of a new pattern of community leadership in rural Nepal.

## INTRODUCTION

In his survey of studies covering fifty years of leadership research Stogdill (1974) stated that research designed solely to determine the characteristics of leaders has reached a point of diminishing returns. This statement is a less accurate assessment of leadership studies in Third World nations than it is for such studies in the so-called developed nations. World-wide experience in rural development activities has led to the realization that "Planning from the top usually means planning for the top". As

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\* Dr. Vijaya Shrestha is a staff member of the Women's Training Centre of the Local Development Ministry, HMG, Nepal. She is presently on deputation as Research and Documentation Officer to the Women's Services Co-ordination Committee. She studied Rural Sociology at Mississippi State University from 1976 to 1980 as an A D C fellow, under the guidance of Dr. C. R. Sollier. This paper is based on her Ph.D. thesis (Shrestha, 1980). The author wishes to express her appreciation to Dr. Vest Burger and Dr. Prodipto Roy who made valuable suggestions on an earlier draft.

**a result, governments in many Third World countries are placing greater emphasis on participation of rural leaders and other citizens in development programmes.**

This emphasis underscores the need for leadership studies in developing countries. Information obtained in such studies is of particular relevance in the Nepalese context since the country has embarked upon an intensive programme of rural development through the involvement of local leaders and other community members. The Panchayat system requires that local programmes be initiated with the fullest cooperation of local people and the total involvement of communities in project formulation as well as execution<sup>1</sup>. The lowest tier of the system, the Village Panchayat, is a medium for making effective use of local initiative and energy for the comprehensive development of rural communities. Accordingly, a number of new social organizations have been introduced into the structure of social life in Nepalese villages, and rural leaders are vested with powers and responsibilities that they did not formerly possess.

Community leaders are the strategic media of change. National leaders and planners have long realized the invaluable role of community leaders in the successful implementation of a country's development programmes. They have repeatedly emphasized this fact in their plans, speeches, and working papers. Mohsin and Rana (1967) believe that no paper plans, no policy objectives, no administrative paraphernalia will succeed in translating the ideas of the system into the real life of the villagers until these local leaders participate in them and interpret them to their fellow villagers. Gurung (1973, 16) firmly states that :

"the purpose of giving recognition to the Panchayat sector in the national development plan is not merely to mobilize cheap labour for achieving certain physical targets but also to encourage mass participation in matters of plan formulation and implementation. The Panchayat development programme lays emphasis on local initiative and leadership rather than imposition from outside (government)."

The village panchayat and district panchayat have been entrusted with the formulation and implementation of development plans. Grass-roots-level planning and a planning process from the village level upwards have become accepted policy. It is thus apparent that panchayat leadership is not only the main source of social change but that leaders are also in complete charge of development activities in the communities. Describing the Fifth Five Year Plan to the members of the National Development Council, Shrestha (1975) emphatically states that actual mobilization of local resources for development projects depends primarily on the effectiveness of local leadership. Change agents are thus advised to concentrate their efforts upon local leaders in introducing their programmes of planned change as these leaders exert much influence over the local acceptance of programmes and in the performance and attainment of development activities.

With the exception of a decade of parliamentary democracy in the nineteen-fifties, Nepal had self-governing local politics all through her history until the introduction of the Panchayat System in 1961<sup>2</sup>. Every village was dominated by a few mem-

bers of the caste or clan wielding economic, social, and political power. Land ownership gave them economic power over the rural mass and their numerical strength and caste superiority gave them political power. Age, accompanied by experience and knowledge about customs and traditions, gave them status in the hierarchy of traditional leadership and their dominance was most commonly accepted in matters relating to village affairs and customs. Hence, for centuries rural leadership in Nepal was informal and undemocratic, primarily based on economic status, ritual superiority of caste or clan, family status and heredity, and age.

The advent of the new political philosophy that led to the formalization of rural leadership by making the village panchayats a statutory body was supposed to change the leadership pattern. Village panchayat leadership is democratic and panchas are representatives directly elected by the people. The roles and responsibilities of Panchas differ from those of traditional leaders. While the prime concern of the erstwhile rural oligarchies was the promotion of personal interest, power and prestige, the Panchas' main concern is with the development of the village panchayat. Decentralization of governmental authority, delegation of substantive power to village panchayats, and the introduction of a development strategy that demands special types of leadership have resulted in changes in leadership patterns. But has the traditional pattern of rural leadership truly become a thing of the past? Knowledge is very limited about the emergent leaders in terms of their social status and role, how they view their role as leaders, their work methods, their pattern of leadership behaviour, their perceptions in terms of community problems and development needs, and how they differ from non-leaders. The present study is intended to answer these and similar questions with the intent of providing information and a interpretation of various aspects of leadership in village panchayats located in two different parts of the country.

The specific objectives of the study were :

1. To identify and compare community leaders in two village panchayats in the Hills and in the Tarai.
2. To compare leaders and non-leaders in terms of various demographic and economic characteristics i. e., caste, age, education, family composition, economic status, etc.
3. To determine leaders' perceptions of community problems and development needs.
4. To describe leaders' perceptions of their role and work methods.
5. To determine leaders' forms of involvement in various development programmes and their patterns of social participation.
6. To describe non-leaders' perceptions of leaders' roles and work methods, community problems, development needs and their forms of involvement in development programmes.

## DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

This research is an exploratory study in the nature of rural leadership in Nepalese communities. The data reported here were obtained from two village Panchayats, namely, Majthana village (Kaski district) in the Hills and Anarmani (Jhapa district) in the Tarai. The selection of these two village Panchayats from two development regions of Nepal was done in order to represent areas which are different socially, culturally, economically, and geographically. The two chosen Panchayats are briefly described below.

### Majthana Panchayat

Majthana is a highly developed Panchayat situated in the Hills of Nepal, north-east of Pokhara, the district headquarters. In 1963 it has been declared a model village Panchayat. The population of Majthana Panchayat at the time of the survey was 4,777 persons in 728 households. This Panchayat is not connected by road and villagers must walk about 10 miles to board a bus at Shishawa, the adjoining Panchayat. However, most of the villagers make frequent trips to Pokhara on foot along a steep trail, a journey taking 8-10 hours each way.

The Panchayat Office is located at Sarai where there are a Saha Cooperative Office, a health post, a post office, three tea shops, four general stores and a tailor shop. There are nine primary level schools, one in each ward, and a middle school, imparting education upto three years and seven years respectively. The economic base of this Panchayat is agriculture. The principal crops grown are rice, maize, millet and potatoes. Surplus agricultural produce is sold at Pokhara. For meeting their daily requirements, villagers depend upon the four small shops at Sarai, but they also make frequent visits to Pokhara for supplies.

Majthana's population represents the major castes and ethnic groups of the district and of the region as well, with a majority of Brahmins followed by Gurungs, and Chhetris. Table 1 shows the number of households and persons belonging to each ethnic and cultural group. Brahmins rank highest in the caste hierarchy and are one of the influential and wealthy groups of Majthana. All Brahmins of Majthana are engaged in farming. Most of them own and cultivate their own land and several of them are land-lords. Over 70 percent of the school teachers and Panchayat members come from Brahmin groups. A few Brahmins also act as family priests.

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of Majthana Panchayat.

Ethnic Group	Number of Households	Population	Percent
Brahmin	346	2,413	50.5
Chhetri	128	803	16.8
Gurung	152	915	19.2
Magar	23	116	2.4
Lower Castes*	79	530	11.1

Source : Majthana Village Panchayat Office.

\* Lower castes comprise of occupational caste groups such as Kami, Damai, Sarki, etc.

Chhetris are the second highest in the Hindu caste hierarchy and are similar to Brahmins in many ways. They speak the same language and share Brahminic social values and traditions. Their main occupations are farming and government service. Kaski district is the home of the Gurungs, a hard-working hill ethnic group. They practise mixed farming. They live at higher altitudes than the Brahmins and Chhetris, and their villages are closely-knit nucleated settlements. At the time of the survey, 72 per cent of the Gurung households had at least one son or husband currently serving in British, Indian or Nepalese armed forces or had a family member who had retired from service. Gurungs of Majthana Panchayat enjoy fairly high social positions.

The occupational castes are accorded the lowest position in the social hierarchy. Only 12 per cent of them own land. Almost all of them depend on their traditional occupations as tailors, leather-workers, carpenters and blacksmiths. They are given a certain amount of grain at harvest time by the families they serve. A majority of them also depend on agricultural labour.

### **Anarmani Panchayat**

Anarmani is situated in the Tarai, 15 miles west of Chandragadhi, the headquarters of Jhapa district. This Panchayat is connected by the East-West highway and the Chandragadhi-Bhadrapur road. There are frequent bus services on both these roads which makes Anarmani better connected than most of the other Panchayats in the district. The total population of the Panchayat at the time of the survey was 6,466 persons in 1,293 households. Prior to the influx of migrants from the hills in the sixties, Rajbanshis and Tharus were the exclusive inhabitants of Anarmani. They owned most of the land in the area and lived in nucleated villages separated from one another by dense forests.

The economy of the village Panchayat is agrarian. The principal crops grown are rice and pulses and two cash crops, jute and sugarcane. There is no organized industry in the Panchayat. Anarmani village Panchayat owns a Panchayat office building and several government and non-governmental organizations are located in Anarmani. The Panchayat has three private clinics with their own drugstores, five general stores, three small restaurants, a bicycle repair shop, a radio mechanic shop, five tailoring shops, two barber shops, and a book store, all located in the market area. A weekly *hat*<sup>3</sup> is held in the market area where farmers and peddlers from neighbouring panchayats and Indian border towns come to market their products. The villagers buy most of their daily necessities from these *hats*.

Table 2 presents the major ethnic and caste groups in the Panchayat. People who migrated from the Hills constitute 21 per cent of the population. They belong to various castes and ethnic groups, i. e., Brahmin, Chhetri, Newar, Gurung, Rai, Magar and Tamang. Among the Hill population Brahmins form the largest group followed by Chhetris. They are also among the richest people and have much influence in the social, economic and political institutions of the Panchayat.

Out of 11 Panchayat members 7 are originally from the Hills. In the social hierarchy, Hill ethnic groups are considered superior to local ethnic groups.

Table 2. Ethnic Composition of Anarmani Panchayat.

Ethnic group	Number of Households	Percent of the Total
Rajbanshi	705	54.5
Tharu	217	16.8
Brahmin	190	14.7
Chhetri	95	7.3
Hill Ethnic Groups (Gurung, Rai, Magar, Tamang)	43	3.3
Newar	15	1.2
Lower castes*	28	2.2
Total	1,293	100.0

Source : Anarmani Village Panchayat Office.

\* Lower castes comprise of Kami, Damai, Sarki, Dom and Chamar castes.

Rajbanshis and Tharus are among the oldest and most dominant groups of people living in Jhapa. In the villages of Anarmani Panchayat, the Hill people live in two-storied wooden houses on widely spaced homesteads, while Rajbanshis, Tharus, and other Tarai ethnic groups live in beautifully plastered mud houses. Wealthy families among the Rajbanshis and Tharus have two-storied houses like those of the hill people. They are fond of music and dance and lead a relatively easy life. They seem to have little interest in Panchayat politics and limited aspirations. They live in villages consisting of a cluster of 15 to 30 households. Villagers are united by close ties of kinship and each settlement is a tightly-knit social unit of cooperation and mutual obligation.

In Anarmani the lower castes own no land and belong to the lowest level of the social hierarchy. They earn their living as farm workers and follow traditional occupations such as sweepers, shoemakers, and blacksmiths.

### SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The sample for the present study is comprised of two groups of respondents—community leaders and non-leaders<sup>4</sup>. 200 household heads of non-leader families were randomly selected from each panchayat, and 42 and 50 leaders were selected in the Hill and Tarai Panchayat, respectively.

Leaders were identified by using three approaches — positional, reputational and issue approaches. Information on the formal leadership structure was gathered from records of the village Panchayat Office. The basis of identifying non-formal community leaders was their participation in development programmes. This was accomplished by asking non-leader respondents "what are the names of the people who have been most active in the community and in development programmes." Persons mentioned five times or more were considered to be non-formal leaders. In total 63 formal and 27 informal leaders were identified (Table 3).

Table 3. Formal and Informal Leaders by Village Panchayat

Type	Hill	Tarai	Total
Formal leaders	30	33	63
Informal leaders	12	17	29
Total	42	50	92

Most of the data for this study were collected by means of a structured interview schedule separately designed for leaders and non-leaders. In total, 92 leaders and 400 non-leaders were interviewed.

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS AND NON-LEADERS

The analysis of the data begins with an examination of characteristics of leaders in the two Panchayats, and is followed by a study of differences between leaders and non-leaders.

### Sex

For centuries leadership has been the monopoly of the male sex in rural Nepal. Since the end of the Rana feudal system in 1951, women are beginning to appear as leaders. However, the percentage of women in active leadership positions is very low, which is not surprising in a tradition-bound society with a 5.8 per cent female literacy rate. Our data show that leadership is still very much a monopoly of the male sex.

Among the 72 leaders there were only seven women. Their presence in leadership positions is due to the fact that the Panchayat system of government requires that women should be co-opted to the local bodies if they are not elected (The Constitution of Nepal 1976). Their presence is largely symbolic. However, it is important to note that the only female appointed leader in the Hill Panchayat was identified as a leader in as many as five out of ten development programmes by a large

number of respondents. The main reasons for low female representation in community leadership are the patriarchal structure of the society, subdued customary position of women and failure to recognize women's important contribution in non-mothering productive tasks such as farming. In the absence of an accepted policy that requires active involvement of women at all levels of programmes of planned change sex might continue to be a determinant factor in rural leadership for many years to come.

### **Caste Position**

The relationship between caste superiority and authority is a long established tradition in the history of Nepal. With the advent of the Panchayat system, which requires rural leaders to be elected on the basis of adult franchise, leadership has been transferred from age-old traditional authority to the local masses. A caste or group can nominate its own candidate for election. This has provided an opportunity to members of low castes and ethnic groups to emerge as community leaders. Hence it is generally conceded that community leadership is no more the monopoly of upper castes. However, in the case of the Hill and Tarai Panchayats under study, we find that in spite of all the changes that are taking place leadership is still predominantly a function of the upper castes.

From Table 4 it is apparent that in both the panchayats, a larger proportion of leaders belonged to upper castes. Formal leaders, more than informal leaders, belonged to upper castes while informal leadership was largely vested in ethnic groups. However, the significant representation of ethnic groups and the however small representation from the lower castes, indicate a changing trend in the community leadership structure of Nepalese villages.

The results of the present study lend support to the findings of other leadership studies. For instance, in their extensive survey of leaders at the zonal, district and village Panchayat level Mohsin and Rana (1967) have made similar observations. According to their findings 60 per cent of leaders belonged to upper castes while 33.3 per cent came from hill ethnic groups. This leads us to conclude that although leadership is no longer the absolute monopoly of the upper castes, there is still a high concentration of community leadership in upper castes who are not only strategically located in the social system with access to power but also enjoy "superiority" which is ritualized and legitimized by age-old custom.

### **Age**

Studies in community leadership have revealed that age is an important characteristic widely attributed to community leadership. This variable is particularly relevant in the Nepalese rural context. In all aspects of Nepalese life seniority has played a very significant role. It is not only *Bukllha-Pakha* (old and experienced) who regard themselves as being head and shoulders above the rest in the community, it is also customary for younger people to show utmost respect to their seniors.

**A number of studies done in community leadership have demonstrated that in**

**Table 4. Selected Demographic Characteristics of Leaders and Non-Leaders by Panchayat and Type of Leader.**

Characteristics	Panchayat				Type of Leader	
	Hill		Tarai		Formal	Informal
	Leader	Non-Leader	Leader	Non-Leader		
<b>Caste<sup>1</sup> :</b>						
Upper caste	69.0	56.5	60.0	43.5	71.5	48.2
Ethnic groups	26.2	9.5	38.0	51.5	28.5	41.4
Lower caste	4.8	34.0	2.0	5.0	—	10.4
<b>Age :</b>						
21 - 30	23.8	15.0	22.0	15.5	28.6	10.4
31 - 50	47.6	53.0	60.0	57.0	58.7	44.8
51 - 70	28.6	32.0	18.0	27.5	12.7	44.8
<b>Education :</b>						
None	7.1	46.5	6.0	30.5	1.6	17.2
Literate	54.8	33.0	30.0	37.5	39.7	44.8
School	26.2	70.0	34.0	27.0	34.9	20.8
College	11.9	0.5	30.0	5.0	23.8	17.2
<b>Family Type :</b>						
Nuclear	52.4	33.5	74.0	61.5	66.7	58.6
Extended	47.6	66.5	26.0	38.5	33.3	41.4
<b>Family Size<sup>2</sup> :</b>						
1 - 4	7.2	—	2.0	—	3.1	6.9
5 - 8	71.4	—	76.0	—	79.4	62.1
9 and above	21.4	—	22.0	—	17.5	31.0
Sample Size	42	200	50	200	63	29

1. Upper caste comprises of Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar. Hill ethnic groups include Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Magar and Tamang. Tarai ethnic groups consist of Rajbanshi, Tharu and Choudhary. Lower castes comprise of Damai, Kami, Sarki, Dom and Chamar.

2. Information on family size is limited to leaders only; non-leaders are not included in this analysis.

the past community leadership was the exclusive privilege of elders. However, the present trend is towards younger leadership. For instance, Mohsin and Rana (1967), Mishra (1977), Narain et al. (1976), and Singh and Mishra (1973 a and 1973 b) have revealed that community leadership is fast becoming the domain of youthful leaders.

Our data also support the above findings. Table 4 shows that in both Hill and Tarai Panchayats more than 70 per cent of the community leaders are below 50. Only 18 per cent in the Tarai and 28.6 per cent in the Hill Panchayat come from the older age group i.e. 51-70. A significant difference is noted in age between formal and informal leaders. The proportion of informal leaders in the 51-70 age group is almost four times higher as compared to formal leaders. This leads us to believe that although youthful leaders are coming to the forefront, the traditional leaders are still exercising authority through indirect influence of caste superiority, wealth and advanced age. Lack of education, and new requirements in community leadership may have made the traditional leaders retreat into the back-ground, allowing educated and young youthful leaders to come to the forefront.

The present investigation also indicates that in both Panchayats, community leaders are younger in age than the non-leaders.

### Education

Several studies done in Third World nations have demonstrated the growing importance of education in the selection of community leadership. This could be attributed to changes in political systems and formalization of local self-government in most of these nations, requiring leaders to be educated or at least literate. As a result, the majority of community leaders in rural Asia are today younger in age and higher in educational status than their predecessors (Dev and Agarwal 1974; Frey and Roos 1967; Mishra 1977; Weintraub et al. 1973).

Table 4 shows the educational levels of different categories of leaders and non-leaders in the Panchayats studies. The majority of leaders are literate.

The data indicate a significant difference in educational levels between Hill and Tarai leaders. In the Tarai Panchayat a larger proportion of leaders (64 per cent) have school and college education as compared to leaders in the Hill Panchayat (38.4 per cent). However, it is interesting to note that both Panchayats have almost the same percentage of leaders with no education. This leads us to believe that while education is considered an important leadership characteristic, level of education is directly related to higher economic status and access to education, better transportation and communication facilities and so forth. More facilities and opportunities are available in the Tarai Panchayat whereas few of these exist in the Hill Panchayat.

Likewise, more formal leaders (58.7 per cent) have school and college level education than informal leaders (38 per cent). Informal leaders have more non-literate members (17.2 per cent) compared to formal leaders (1.0 per cent). The basic reasons

for this are that the informal leaders generally come from upper castes and ethnic groups, and belong to the older group for whom education was not readily accessible in childhood. Significant differences in educational levels are noted between leaders and non-leaders. Both the Panchayats have a higher proportion of leaders with school and college level education than the non-leaders. Results of the present study suggest that education is an important attribute of community leadership and that leadership is provided by the educated members of rural communities.

### Family Size

Large family size is one of the characteristics of Third World nations. In Nepal a traditional expression of blessing, "*Santana le Danda Kanda Dhakun*" (may your descendants spread throughout the mountains), for newly weds is still the favourite expression among elders. The importance of family size as a factor in community leadership has been observed by Mishra (1977), Dhullon (1955), Kuroda (1974), Lewis (1965) and others.

Our data suggest that large family size is still the norm among rural leaders. Among the leaders surveyed 71.4 per cent in the Hill panchayat and 76 per cent in the Tarai belonged to households having 5 to 8 members. Similarly, 79.4 per cent of formal leaders also belonged to households having 5 to 8 members. The leaders under study seem to have large sized families. The typical Nepalese family size is 5.5. Results of the present study suggest that irrespective of type of leadership and region leaders belong to large households.

### Farm Size

Land has always been very important to the government and to the people of Nepal. The pattern of land ownership in the Kingdom is such that the largest part of the cultivated area is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of big owners<sup>5</sup>. Big land owners exercise great influence in all aspects of community life.

A great number of previous studies have revealed a positive relationship between leadership and farm size. Mohsin and Rana (1967, 292) have concluded that :

"the total leadership is basically geared to the socio-economic realities of the village community and to its traditional power structure; the dominant factor in determining the micro-leadership more than age or caste is essentially economic power and this is mainly enjoyed by virtue of the ownership of land."

An examination of Table 5 indicates that community leadership is still largely dominated by big land owners. Our findings show that the mean size of farm owned by leaders in both village Panchayats is much larger than that owned by other households<sup>6</sup>. Similarly, a significant difference was found between formal and informal leaders. Informal leaders owned more land than formal leaders. There are significant differences between leaders and non-leaders with respect to land owned by them. In the Hill Panchayat 26 per cent of the leaders compared to 55 per cent of non-leaders owned less than one bigha (0.677 ha) of land. Likewise, in the Tarai Panchayat, 34

per cent of the leaders owned 11 to 50 bighas of land as compared to 18 per cent of non-leaders. This leads us to conclude that economic dominance enjoyed through the ownership of land is still a major determinant of community leadership.

### **Land Tenure**

Three types of land tenure are most prevalent in both the Hill and the Tarai Panchayat: landlord; owner-cultivator; and tenant. The majority of leaders and non-leaders in both Panchayats are owner-cultivators (Table 5). No significant difference was observed between formal and informal leaders, but a significant difference is revealed between leaders and non-leaders in the Tarai Panchayat. The results of the present investigation confirm the findings of Mohsin and Rana (1967) that the majority of leaders are landlords or owner-cultivators.

### **Non-farm Income<sup>7</sup>**

Generally, rich or economically dominant people are influential persons in a community. This is specially true of rural Nepalese communities in the past. *Tithitharu*, or the class of village rich, usually belonged to landed, wealthy, upper caste families of good repute. They served as patrons of the poor majority, presided over community affairs, supervised the political and social conduct of village life and were an important link between the central government and the villages as spokesmen for the community.

Our data indicate significant differences between leaders and non-leaders in both Panchayats with respect to income derived from non-farm sources (Table 5). The non-farm income of leaders was three times more than that of non-leaders. No significant difference in income is noted between formal and informal leaders. The findings of the present study confirm those of previous studies, that is, leaders are economically better off than non-leaders.

### **Sources of Income**

A great number of respondents, both leaders and non-leaders, reported having additional sources of income besides farming. It was more so in the Hill than in the Tarai Panchayat. Scarcity of land and low yield due to poor soil conditions in the Hill Panchayat have compelled its people to find additional sources of income.

Examination of Table 5 shows a significant difference between Hill and Tarai leaders with respect to sources of income. While 70 per cent of Hill leaders had multiple sources of income besides farming, 42 per cent of Tarai leaders derived their income from farming alone. No significant difference was found between formal and informal leaders with respect to sources of income. Leaders had more additional sources of income than non-leaders. The results of the present study lend support to the hypothesis that leadership is the prerogative of the village rich. It may be safe to conclude that community leaders in Nepalese villages are economic dominants having multiple sources of income and large farms.

Table 5. Selected Economic Characteristics of Leaders and Non-Leaders.

	Panchayat				Type of Leader	
	Hill		Tarai		Formal	Informal
	Leaders	Non-Leaders	Leaders	Non-Leaders		
<b>Farm size in Bighas* :</b>	%					
None	4.8	—	6.0	5.0	4.7	6.9
Less than 1	26.2	55.0	—	—	14.3	6.9
1 - 4	64.2	43.5	20.0	52.0	47.7	24.2
5 - 10	4.8	1.5	40.0	24.5	22.2	31.0
11 - 50	—	—	34.0	18.5	15.1	31.0
<b>Land Tenure :</b>						
Landless	4.8	—	6.0	5.0	4.8	6.9
Landlord	2.4	6.0	26.0	5.5	14.3	17.2
Owner-Cultivator	88.0	87.0	62.0	68.5	73.0	75.9
Tenant	4.8	7.0	6.0	21.0	7.9	—
<b>Non-Farm Income :</b>						
None	11.9	8.0	42.0	67.0	28.6	27.6
Less than Rs. 1,000	—	15.0	—	—	—	—
1,000-5,499	57.1	65.0	32.0	18.5	41.3	48.3
5,500-11,499	26.2	6.5	14.0	13.5	22.2	13.8
Above 11,500	4.8	5.5	12.0	1.0	7.9	10.3
<b>Sources of Income :</b>						
Farming only	11.9	8.0	42.0	67.0	27.0	31.0
Farming + Service	9.5	25.0	12.0	3.0	11.1	10.4
Farming + Business	33.3	8.5	34.0	7.5	36.5	27.6
More Than 3 Sources	40.5	19.5	6.0	1.0	20.6	24.1
Service	4.8	39.0	6.0	21.5	4.8	6.9

\* One bigha is equal to 0.677 hectare.

## PERCEPTUAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS

The present study has addressed itself to such questions as the way in which leaders view their roles as leaders, their work methods and leadership behaviour, their self perceptions in terms of community problems and development needs, and how they differ from non-leaders.

### **Perception of Community Needs and Problems**

Experience seems to indicate that participation of local people in development activities is best assured when they themselves perceive a need and want to do something about it. One of the concerns of this study is the perception of needs as expressed by rural leaders and non-leaders in the two village Panchayats, i. e., to determine whether leaders and non-leaders perceive the same kinds of needs.

This was ascertained by asking them to identify the five most important needs of their respective communities. As could be expected in an open-ended question like this, a variety of needs — 18 of them — were identified. Included in the list were school buildings, irrigation, roads and trails, bridges, drinking water, cottage industry, electricity, dharmashala (guest house), temple construction, measures to stop land slides, rehabilitation, adult education, dispensaries, cooperatives, seeds, credit, metalled roads, and veterinary services. Needs most frequently mentioned in the Hill Panchayat were drinking water, roads and trails, school buildings, and irrigation. In the Tarai Panchayat, the needs most frequently mentioned were irrigation, roads, culverts, dispensaries, and drinking water. In neither of the two Panchayats were there any significant differences between leaders and non-leaders with respect to perceived needs.

### **Specification of most Critical Needs**

The question on identification of community needs was directly followed by a question asking respondents to list the five most critical development needs. Naturally, perceived development needs for the Tarai were different from those of the Hill Panchayat. While irrigation is the first priority among Tarai leaders and non-leaders, it got third preference among Hill leaders and fourth preference among Hill non-leaders, drinking water being their first priority. In both the Panchayats items like agricultural services (seeds, fertilizers, technical experts, implements) and adult literacy received low priority despite the fact that these inputs are known to be instrumental in improving farming and increasing production. Rank-order distributions were used to compare perceptions of development needs among leaders and between leaders and non-leaders. Table 6 shows how leaders and non-leaders ranked these needs.

No significant difference is noted between formal and informal leaders and leaders and non-leaders with respect to perceived needs. Agreement among leaders and between leaders and non-leaders can be viewed as a positive factor with respect to

**Table 6. Rank-Order of Perceived Developer\* Needs of Leaders and Non-Leaders.**

Development Needs	Panchayat				Type of Leader	
	Hill		Tarai		Formal	Informal
	Leaders	Non-Leaders	Leaders	Non-Leaders		
Drinking Water	1	1	4	3	3	3
Roads and Trails	2	2	2	2	2	2
Irrigation	3	4	1	1	1	1
School Building	4.5	3	5	4	4	4
Cottage Industry	4.5	6	8	7	8	6
Agricultural Services	6	5	6	6	6	8
Adult Literacy Programme	7	8	7	8	7	7
Health Services	8	7	3	5	5	5

development programmes. It signifies a shared awareness of needs. However, since the information collected dealt only with the priorities, disagreements might arise in the implementation of particular development projects, e.g. the location of a drinking water or irrigation project. Given the power and control of resources and the symbolic involvement of the masses in planning and implementing programmes, leaders might be successful in enforcing their decisions in most cases. Should perceptions develop among community members that Panchayat leaders do not really respect their needs and decisions large-scale indifference might develop unless provisions are made to recognize their decisions directly or indirectly.

### Leadership Roles

Consensus of role definition among leaders and between leaders and non-leaders tends to minimize conflict on the one hand and to maximize development efforts on the other. That is, if local leaders agree among themselves and with non-leaders on their perceptions of leader roles, development activities can be carried out more effectively.

Perceptions of leadership roles held by leaders and non-leaders were obtained by asking what they felt leaders should do as leaders. Their responses included those shown in Table 7 and indicated that on only two cases were Hill and Tarai leaders significantly different in their perceptions. In the first case, more Hill leaders than Tarai leaders saw promotion of national and local development as a leader role. It is possible that this difference can be attributed to the fact that the national government is less involved in development in the Hill than in the Tarai Panchayat, and that Hill leaders would like to see more involvement of the national government. In the second case, more Hill than Tarai leaders saw the initiation of new ideas and pro-

grammes as a leader role. Hill people, although less advantaged economically than Tarai people, are known to be more aggressive, more forward looking, more widely travelled, and in general less tradition-oriented. These characteristics might explain their greater concern for new ideas and change programmes.

Table 7. Perception of Leader Roles.

Perceived Roles	Panchayat		Type of Leader	
	Hill	Tarai	Formal	Informal
Promote national and local development	92.9	72.0	95.2	51.7
Initiate new ideas and programmes for the betterment of the village people	83.3	77.0	92.1	44.8
Create development awareness among people and involve them in development programmes	92.9	96.0	98.4	86.2
Be honest, hard-working and impartial	78.6	66.0	73.0	69.0
Maintain peace and order	16.7	10.0	12.7	13.8
Be always ready to help	85.7	88.0	82.5	96.6

Significant differences are also noted between formal and informal leaders with respect to four of the roles. Formal leaders, more than informal leaders, perceived promotion of national and local development as a role of leaders. They also were more likely to view the initiation of new ideas and programmes as a leader role, and slightly more inclined than informal leaders to view the creation of development awareness and the involvement of local people as a responsibility of leaders. Informal leaders, on the other hand, viewed the general responsibility of being always ready to help as more important than did formal leaders.

In both the Panchayats response patterns of non-leaders varied from that of leaders with respect to leadership roles. Both groups indicated the same type and number of role items, but in different ways. While leaders mentioned "promote national and local development by initiating new ideas and programmes for the betterment of the village and people" as one of their major roles, non-leaders saw "promote national and local development" as one, and "initiate new ideas and programmes for the betterment of the village people" as the other. Similarly, leaders saw "create development awareness among people and involve people in local development programmes" as one of their important roles; non-leaders viewed "create development awareness among people" and "involve people in local development programmes" as two separate roles of the leaders. Because leaders and non-leaders varied in their response patterns with respect to their perceptions of leader roles, it was impossible to compare them. Since leaders and non-leaders did not really differ in their percep-

tions of leadership roles, we may conclude that, in general, leaders and non-leaders agree on the nature of leader roles.

### **Leadership Behaviour**

In any community development programme, decisions must be made and steps must be taken leading to the solution of problems. Vital to these activities is the way in which leaders function as leaders. Selected for analysis for this study are four aspects of leader behaviour with respect to development programmes. These are: (a) forms of involvement, (b) methods used by leaders to involve community residents in development programmes, (c) social participation patterns of leaders, and (d) participation of leaders in training programmes.

**Forms of Involvement in Development Programmes:** The involvement of leaders in development programmes is analyzed as four different forms: 1) monetary contributions, 2) contribution of labour, 3) planning or executive committee membership and 4) any combination of the first three. Information about form of involvement was obtained by asking respondents to identify development programmes and/or projects they were or had been involved in during the five years preceding the interview and to indicate the nature of their involvement. Their responses were coded according to development programme areas shown in Table 8 and then cross tabulated with responses to the question about forms of involvement.

Hill and Tarai leaders differed in several respects. None of the Hill leaders claimed monetary contributions as their main form of involvement in any of the development programmes. Although contribution of labour was the predominant form of involvement for both Hill and Tarai leaders, this form was much more pronounced in the Hill Panchayat. That is, contribution of labour constituted almost two-thirds of the total number of involvements of Hill leaders, but slightly more than one-third for Tarai leaders (Tables 7 and 8). On the other hand, Tarai leaders were much more involved than Hill leaders as planning or executive committee members, their involvement in that form constituting 25 per cent of their total number of involvements. Another difference between Hill and Tarai leaders is the number of leaders whose involvement in development programmes was in more than one form. The 42 Hill leaders reported a total of 56 involvements as multiform contributions to development programmes; the 59 Tarai leaders reported a total of 27 such involvements. Finally, the average number of involvements for Hill leaders was larger than for Tarai leaders, being 4.8 and 3.3, respectively.

A similar order was also observed when formal and informal leaders were compared, that is the predominant form of involvement for both formal and informal leaders was contribution of labour. The average number of involvements per leader was 3.9 for formal and 3.3 for informal leaders. Formal leaders did report more involvements than informal leaders as multiform contributors. A notable difference

**Table 8. Forms of Leaders' and Non-Leaders' Involvement in Development Programmes in the Hill Panchayat.**

Development Programme Area	Leaders					Non-Leaders				
	Forms of Involvement				Totals*	Forms of Involvement				Totals*
1	2	3	4	1		2	3	4		
Education	16.6	23.8	69.0	23.0	6.5	18.5		18.0	22.4	
Transportation	52.4	2.4	16.7	15.0	1.0	56.5		22.0	17.3	
Water Supply	69.0	2.4	19.0	19.5		66.0	1.5	8.5	16.5	
Beautification	40.5			8.5		43.0			9.3	
Health	57.1	11.9	19.0	18.5		53.5	1.5	17.0	15.7	
Other	64.3	2.4	9.5	16.0	1.5	66.0	1.5	16.0	18.5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>28.0</b>		<b>1.9</b>	<b>66.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>30.9</b>		
<b>Average No. of Involvements :</b>				<b>4.8</b>					<b>4.6</b>	

**Forms of Involvements :**

- 1 - Monetary contribution
- 2 - Labour contribution
- 3 - Committee membership
- 4 - Any combination of above

\* Totals may exceed 100 per cent because more than one project might be undertaken.

**Table 9 : Forms of Leaders' and Non-Leaders' Involvement in Development Programmes in the Tarai Panchayat.**

Development Programme Areas	Leaders					Non-Leaders				
	1	2	3	4	Totals*	1	2	3	4	Totals*
Education	42.0	2.0	6.0	26.0	23.0	30.5	1.0	4.0	5.0	31.7
Transportation	6.0	60.0	8.0	12.0	26.0	9.0	54.0	1.0	6.0	54.9
Water supply	2.0	54.0	16.0	18.0	27.3	1.5	3.5	—	—	3.9
Beautification	—	6.0	2.0	—	2.4	—	—	—	—	—
Health	—	2.0	22.0	2.0	7.8	—	—	—	—	—
Other	—	4.0	40.0	—	13.3	—	—	—	12.0	9.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>17.6</b>		<b>32.1</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>18.0</b>	
<b>Average No. of Involvements:</b>				<b>3.3</b>					<b>1.2</b>	

**Forms of Involvement :**

- 1 - Monetary contribution
- 2 - Labour contribution
- 3 - Committee membership
- 4 - Any combination of above

\* Totals may exceed 100 per cent because more than one project might be included in a programme area.

between formal and informal leaders is in their contribution of funds as a form of involvement in development programmes. Monetary contributions were reported by informal leaders in the three development programme areas -- education, transportation, and water supply -- that claimed the most involvements of leaders.

Striking differences were noted between leaders and non-leaders in Hill and Tarai Panchayats with respect of their involvements in development programmes. Leaders and non-leaders in the Hill Panchayat were similar in the average number of involvements whereas in the Tarai Panchayat leaders differed significantly from non-leaders. Although involvement of both groups in the Tarai Panchayat was primarily in contributions of labour, leaders were much more active, with an average of 3.3 involvements, while non-leaders had an average of only 1.2 involvements (Tables 8 and 9).

Similarities and differences between leaders and non-leaders in the two Panchayats are not unexpected when viewed in the light of prevalent socio-cultural and economic conditions. Sources of private income in the Tarai Panchayat are more numerous and income levels are higher. A major source of public funds for development purposes in the Tarai is the Panchayat Development Land Tax (PDLT). The PDLT and other taxes have enabled the Tarai Panchayat to finance its development programmes with the minimum involvement of non-leaders.

Grants-in-aid are the major source of funds for development in the Hill Panchayat. These grants-in-aid require a matching contribution and locally available material. Other differences that probably contribute to variations in development programme participation are socio-cultural in nature. Soil, climate and other geographic characteristics of the Hill Panchayat constitute conditions for agricultural production that are less favourable than those of the Tarai. Consequently, Hill people are more aggressive and more hard-working. Life in the Tarai, on the other hand, is more easy going. Aspiration levels are comparatively lower and hard work is not as much a necessity.

**Leadership Methods :** This section deals with methods used by leaders to encourage involvement of community members in development activities. Historically, such involvement in Nepal was the result of coercion by landed gentry and money lenders, and was based on the relationships of landlord-tenant and lender-borrower. Information about methods used by leaders included in this was obtained by asking leaders as to what methods they used for encouraging participation of community members in development programmes. Their responses were classified as shown in Table 10.

Whether a leader resided in the Hill or in the Tarai Panchayat apparently made little difference as far as the methods he used to encourage participation of local residents in development programmes. There may be some significance in the fact that more Hill than Tarai leaders utilized key people in various stages of development pro-

**Table 10 : Methods of Leadership by Panchayat and Type of Leader.**

Leadership Method	Panchayat		Type of Leader	
	Hill	Tarai	Formal	Informal
Mass meetings, inform & involve everyone in the community	90.5	98.0	95.2	93.1
Seek advice and support of people through individual contact and group discussion	88.1	98.0	96.8	86.0
Good implementation of projects, proper supervision, completion of projects on time	85.7	86.0	87.0	82.2
Involve key people in programmes at various stages	90.5	72.0	84.1	72.4

grammes; that is, legitimation of development programmes by key individuals may have been viewed by Hill leaders as instrumental in carrying out various activities. Tarai leaders did not disdain the use of key persons as a method, but they used it less than Hill leaders.

When formal and informal leaders were compared with respect to methods used to encourage participation few differences appeared. This leads us to conclude that all leaders, irrespective of type of Panchayat were in general agreement on the utility of various methods for encouraging participation of community members and for carrying out development programmes. The methods reported by the leaders reflect a commitment to democratic processes, showing a significant shift from traditional methods.

**Social Participation :** Social participation is the extent to which an individual is actively involved in the affairs of the community. Membership and offices held in community organizations, participation in leadership training courses and the extent of contacts form the indices of social participation.

With the advent of the Panchayat system in Nepal several community organizations, such as peasant, youth and women's organizations, Sajha or co-operatives, and other social clubs have come into existence in the villages of Nepal. Our interest here is to see whether there is an association between community leadership and social participation. Data on social participation was ascertained by asking the leaders to name the organizations, clubs, or societies they belonged to.

Hill and Tarai leaders seem to differ significantly in the pattern of their social participation in some respects (Table 11). There is evidence that Hill leaders are more interested than Tarai leaders in organizations that are concerned with development, i. e., cooperatives, health posts and schools. Similar differences are observed between formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders exhibited more interest than informal

leaders in cooperatives and health and school organizations. As Hill leaders averaged slightly more memberships than Tarai leaders so did formal leaders average slightly more than informal leaders. Similar differences were also observed when formal and informal leaders were examined separately by Panchayats - Hill and Tarai.

Table 11. Social Participation of Leaders by Panchayat and Type of Leader.

Membership in	Panchayat		Type of Leader	
	Hill	Tarai	Formal	Informal
Peasant Organization	33.4	30.1	30.2	37.9
Youth Organization	30.1	26.0	31.7	20.6
Social Organization	4.8	20.0	9.5	20.6
Cooperative	42.9	24.2	38.1	20.6
Health Committee	38.1	4.0	24.8	10.3
Women's Organization	2.4	8.0	7.9	—
School Committee	40.4	18.0	34.9	13.8
District Panchayat	2.4	2.0	3.1	—

Another aspect of leadership examined in this study was participation of leaders in various types of leader training programmes. Opportunities for such training were available in several areas; the main areas considered in this study were : Panchayat, agriculture, health, cooperatives and other training.

Only one significant difference was found between Hill and Tarai leaders with respect to their participation in these programmes. That difference was in agriculture with more Hill than Tarai leaders involved. Likewise formal leaders were found to be more involved in Panchayat and in agriculture training programmes.

## SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The evolution of centrally planned change programmes, the introduction of new village Panchayat codes requiring formulation of development programmes at the grass-root levels, and the abolition of discrimination against caste and sex have shaken up the social structure and are beginning to reflect fundamental and far reaching changes in rural Nepalese communities. Change is most discernible in the sphere of community leadership. The traditional leadership based on ascribed status due to caste, age, income, land ownership, etc., is undergoing a change and new patterns of leadership are emerging.

The new leadership emerging as a consequence of these changes has certain characteristic features. We found that the new leaders belong to the educated middle or younger age groups and represent various caste and ethnic groups. Even small cultivators were accepted as leaders when they provided initiative for the development of the community. Those traditional leaders who had been influential formerly, lost their influence because of their lack of sincere interest in local development programmes, because of various legislative and political changes, and because of their failure to adapt to new roles. Traditional leadership, however, is still a force to reckon with. Directly or indirectly they have been able to retain much of their former power and enjoy leadership advantages arising out of their relatively superior social and economic status. Some of them have succeeded in adapting to the new leadership roles introduced by changes in the polity and programmes of the government. A pragmatic and practical approach to planning cannot altogether ignore the traditional leaders. Efforts at planned change need to place increasing reliance both on the emerging leadership and on traditional leaders adapting to new roles.

Sex has emerged as the most determinant factor in community leadership indicating that national policy and programme of planned change favour consciously or unconsciously the patriarchal structure of society. In the absence of an accepted policy and programme to integrate women in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development programmes women in rural communities still hold subdued customary positions. Policy-makers, planners and change agents, it seems, have overlooked the fact that rural women spend the bulk of their time in farm work.

"People's participation" has become an accepted policy. But people's participation in actual practice is little more than getting contributions from people in the form of labour, cash and gift of land for various community projects (i.e., roads, school houses, irrigation schemes, etc.). Contributions are given much importance in judging and comparing the performance of village Panchayats. Moreover, grants-in-aid, a major source of funds for development in Hill Panchayats, require a matching contribution and most of this contribution is in the form of free labour and locally available materials. The involvement of community members was found to be very high in terms of making contributions of labour (in both Panchayats) and cash (in the Tarai Panchayat) for carrying out local development projects recommended by the village Panchayats. That they should have a role in the planning of programmes and in formulating their needs for the fulfillment of which they were made to contribute was given little importance. Non-leaders' involvement in the form of free labour and cash and minimum involvement in the form of committee membership supports this fact. As a consequence the idea of people's participation is strictly limited to donations of free labour. The continuation of such practices may result in large-scale indifference on the part of the people and give a major set-back to future programmes of the village Panchayats.

If Panchayat development programmes are to be successfully implemented, the change agent needs to have an understanding of the relationship of authority and

influence as the two main dimensions of community leadership. The finding that most of the formal leaders in each village Panchayat are men of both influence and authority has important implications for the change agent. In such communities, if the change agent legitimates or obtains participation for his programmes only from persons with formal positions, he will include most of the influentials, but he needs to be aware of the informal influence structure as well. Our observations suggest that leadership is also vested in a fairly large number of persons who traditionally exercised influence within their respective groups because of family size, caste and ethnic majority, ownership of land, knowledge of religion and other factors.

The finding that leaders differ from non-leaders on most characteristics has also important implications. The extent to which they differ may vary from one Panchayat to another. Knowledge of this differential characteristics would be helpful to change agents in determining who the leaders are. Accurate identification and effective utilization of leaders who can sponsor, legitimize and execute programmes accelerate the progress of development plans. This type of information would also be crucial for leadership training programmes.

## NOTES

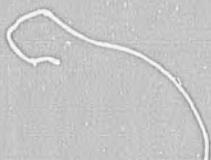
1. In 1960, a national policy was adopted to reflect the Kingdom's political philosophy. This policy, identified as the Panchayat System, contains a well defined political system that embraces the entire social structure of the country from the village to the national level. The basic objective of the Panchayat System is to "promote the welfare of the people by establishing a social order which is just, dynamic, democratic and free from exploitation by integrating and coordinating the interests of different classes and professions from a broad national view point". (Nepal Gazette, 1962).
2. Ancient records describe the village as a self-governing unit conducting its affairs through a council of elders (*Panchali*) or committees (*Gaushika*). (Sinha, 1972). Neither the unification of Nepal by Prithvi Narayan Shah in the mid-eighteenth century nor the establishment of Rana rule in 1846 brought about any significant change in the authority of traditional village leaders such as Mukhiyas, Subbas, Rais, Jimwals and Choudhrys.
3. *Hat* is a open market held once or twice a week where all kinds of goods are sold or exchanged, such as vegetables, meat, dairy products, food-grains, cloth and readymade garments, home and farm tools and implements, cattle, etc. Village Panchayats collect a sizeable amount of money from a *hat* tax.
4. For this study a community leader was defined as a person who exercises influence

over other people of his/her community by virtue of election, or appointment to an office or whose advice is sought by people in matters of personal and general interest. A leader may be formal or informal. Formal leaders have the right and responsibility to act by virtue of the office they hold. Informal leaders are those men and women who are trusted, and whom people consult and listen to with respect. They are called upon to settle disputes and may frequently exert influence over village assemblies and community affairs so as to shape important decisions. For this study a person who was mentioned by five or more respondents was identified as influential. In the present study most of the formal leaders were also identified as being influential.

5. According to Agricultural Census Statistics (HMIG 1971) big owners, accounting for only 26 per cent of all agricultural households, controlled 75 per cent of the total cultivated areas.
6. 70 per cent of the households in the Hills own less than 0.6 hectares and 78 per cent of the households in the Tarai have less than 1.7 hectares of land. (HMIG 1971).
7. Owing to the habit of rural households of not keeping records of their farm income and expenditures and also respondents' unwillingness to disclose the amount of farm income, it was extremely difficult to ascertain data on farm incomes. The present data is limited to income earned from sources other than farming. Thus, we have no information on the income of those whose only source of income was farming. The percentage of such respondents is 11.9 (for Hill leaders), 42.0 (for Tarai leaders), 8.0 (for Hill non-leaders) and, 67.0 (for Tarai non-leaders) (Table 5).

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