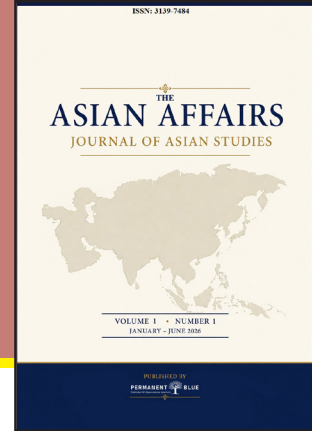




Rural Women's Livelihood Security as a Foundation for Sustainable Peace in South Asia

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Abstract: Gendered livelihood security is an area that is not covered entirely in the pursuit of sustainable peace in South Asia. The rural women, key players of agriculture and informal economies, have structural obstacles to resource access, decision-making, and opportunities. The paper examines how the improvement of the livelihood security of women can contribute to long-term peace based on the secondary qualitative data obtained by the World Bank, UN Women, FAO, UNDP and BRAC. As seen through the framework of the Research Onion with the interpretivist and inductive approaches, the analysis explores four themes, which are the livelihood deficits as structural violence, insecurity as a conflict multiplier, programs as micro-peace mechanisms, and digital and legal barriers to inclusion. It is found that the exclusion of women from assets, education, and technology perpetuates poverty and instability. On the other hand, SHGs of India, SACCOs of Nepal and the model of BRAC demonstrate that economic empowerment brings togetherness, inclusiveness and reconciliation. New exclusions are created in the form of the digital divide and discriminatory laws. There is a financial and peace imperative of women's security of livelihood. Gender-sensitive land, finance, climate, and digital reforms should be a top priority among policymakers in order to have a chance at inclusive peacebuilding.

Keyword: Peacebuilding, Rural Women Livelihood, Sustainable Peace, women Empowerment, Sustainable Peace, Justice and Social Inclusion.

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Introduction

Political settlements will not bring sustainable peace in South Asia, but instead have to be based on economic justice and social inclusion. In Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, or Sri Lanka, the overwhelming rural women population comprises agricultural and informal workers. Yet, they are discriminated against in various aspects, including income, assets, and decision-making (Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO], 2023). The level of female labour force participation in South Asia is only 25 per cent, as compared to 77 per cent for men, which is one of the largest gender disparities in the world (Direction générale du Trésor, 2019). They also limit the access of women to income-

generating opportunities as they spend 6.5 times longer on unpaid care work than men in the region (The Financial Express, 2017). They even have to deal with sharp pay gaps when they have a job; they earn 34-35 per cent lower than men (Pakistan Ministry of Finance, 2024). In Bangladesh, 63% of the rural women are engaged in agriculture, where most of them are not under formal contracts or social protection (FAO, 2023). The effects are manifold: low savings, ill health, low mobility, and economic reliance, all of which make a person more vulnerable to the conflict and exploitation.

Insecurity in livelihood is a principal cause of social unrest. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016), the gender-based economic marginalisation creates horizontal (between groups) and vertical (within household) inequities, which cause tensions in resource allocation and decision-making. On the other hand, as women become economically self-reliant, there is evidence that the local governmental priorities will shift to sustainable development goals like water, sanitation, and education (UN Women, 2025).

According to a study conducted by UN Women, regions with women in Panchayats in India had 62 times higher drinking water projects, and this is a direct response to resource-related stressors that tend to mobilise local conflicts. This kind of evidence highlights the fact that the livelihood security of women is not a mere social justice concern, but a peacebuilding approach.

Although interventions have been done on a large scale to empower rural women economically, the legal, cultural, and technological barriers that exist within the system remain a hindrance. The issue is that there are no policies that incorporate gender equality and peace, and development together.

Research Objectives

1. To find out the key livelihood shortcomings among rural women in South Asia.
2. To analyse the role of these deficits in the social instability and the conflict.
3. To exam the contribution of livelihood programs and digital inclusion to the establishment of sustainable peace.
4. To present policy ideas on ways of improving the livelihood security of women as a peacebuilding tool.

Research Gap and Significance

The available peacebuilding research in South Asia mostly focuses on the issue of state security and political negotiations and fails to address the economic aspects of normal peace. There is very little research that associates women's livelihoods with sustainable peace structures, even when increasing amounts of empirical evidence are accumulating that women's financial participation enhances stability in the community. This paper bridges that gap by making a combination of socioeconomic data, gender studies, and conflict analysis to give a comprehensive perspective of peace via livelihood security.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of livelihood deprivation of women in rural areas in perpetuating structural violence and instability in South Asia?

2. Which data is associated with the linkage between economic empowerment programs and the results of peacebuilding?
3. What are the effects of climate, health and digital inequalities as a threat multiplier on the livelihood security of women?
4. What are the reforms in legal and policy to empower women economically to promote sustainable peace?

Literature Review

Research on the security of rural women's livelihood and its contribution to a sustainable peace is not so broad in the literature and, in particular, in South Asia, where gender inequality is deeply rooted in socio-cultural and economic frameworks. Nevertheless, the current literature provides useful information about the economic issues women in rural areas have to deal with and their involvement in peacebuilding and social stability. This review analyses theoretical premises, facts on the ground, and the conceptual framework of the relationship between livelihood security and peace.

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the livelihood security, gender equality, and peacebuilding theories. The framework of livelihood outlined by Chambers and Conway (1992) offers a background picture of how individuals gain their sources of existence by accessing a number of assets such as natural, human, social and financial capital. The livelihood strategy puts a strong focus on the necessity of resource accessibility, income-generating opportunities, and support networks for attaining sustainable livelihoods. Among the rural women of South Asia, however, a lack of resources can be a given because of the gendered power relations that predispose women to lack access to land, formal employment, education, and financial services.

Women's economic empowerment is also essential in preventing and recovering post-conflict in gender and peacebuilding. Shyamalie and Saini (2010) suggest that gender equality leads to social cohesion, which is the key to long-term peace. Empowerment of women economically puts them in a better position to be able to take part in the decision-making process, fight discrimination, and development of the community. This is in line with gender and peacebuilding theories that propose that economic engagement empowers women to be more agency and they can further demand peace, solve resource struggles and seek social justice.

Another theoretical framework that is relevant in this study, as explained by Putnam (2000), is social capital theory. It focuses on the importance of social networks and community involvement towards stability. The engagement of women in South Asian rural society in self-help groups (SHGs) and other grassroots organisations can build stronger social trust and collective bargaining power, which is vital in resolving conflicts and restoring peace within the community. Social capital is hence considered one of the major processes that link economic empowerment and peace.

Empirical Evidence

The connections between women's economic empowerment and peacebuilding in South Asia have been proven through empirical literature. A strong example is the Self-Help Group (SHG)

movement, institutionalised and organised under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), and mobilising more than 80 million rural women in India (Bajpai and Awasthi, 2025). The SHG model had the mechanism of women's political participation, whereas Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) investigated the influence of political reservations on women. These organisations not only enhance financial autonomy with a sense of saving and credit together, but also experience great social capital and leadership. This is directly connected to peacebuilding since SHG-trained women resort to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment that reserved 33% of the seats at the Panchayat (local council) to women (Brahmanandam, 2018). This increased political involvement helps them resolve resource-based conflicts. The most visibly notable of this is that in a UN Women (2025) report, it was discovered that women-led Panchayats invest in 62% more drinking water projects, which is a direct intervention that alleviates a major cause of local conflict (Cabalion and Guetat-Bernard, 2025). Additionally, as it was mentioned by Shah (2025), the bargaining power within the household has also been found to be heightened by the economic agency belonging to SHGs, which results in the decrease of domestic violence and enhanced family stability. SACCOs (Savings and Credit Cooperatives) have been very influential in the peacebuilding post-conflict in Nepal. SACCOs offered financial resources to marginalised women in the society, which had been severely divided by the civil war, to empower them to take part in income-generating ventures (Tamang and Chattopadhyay, 2025). Ramnarain (2013) reveals that these cooperatives were inclusive and, therefore, they widened the definition of peace to incorporate social justice. They turned out to be social forums, especially about caste and ethnic matters, which were the causes of the conflict. SACCOs also help to decrease ethnic tensions and gender-based violence by allowing women to discuss the issue of equality. This is in tandem with Coomaraswamy's (2012) argument that women's economic participation is the key factor in peacebuilding due to its ability to deal with structural violence and discrimination that contribute to conflict. BRAC has been a pioneer in Bangladesh regarding the combination of livelihood security and peacebuilding. Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) program, known as asset transfer and intensive training, is aimed at a population in which 63% of women in rural areas are employed in the agricultural sector (FAO, 2023). Through this program, women have been able to come out of abject poverty and become literate. Hashemi et al (1996) claim that the holistic approach of BRAC, where economic empowerment is coupled with legal rights education on inheritance, divorce and land rights, has transformed the fate of women who resist exploitation and seek to take part in local government. Addressing economic marginalisation and discriminatory norms of the society that result in a child marriage rate of 51 per cent (UNICEF, 2025), programs of BRAC bring in social justice and peace. The fourth and highly critical example is that of Progressive Sri Lanka after the war ended; there were left behind close to 20,000 households headed by women in Jaffna alone. One UN (2018) project indicated that support in the livelihoods of former female combatants could be viewed as a direct technique of peace-making. The aim was to empower economically not only to earn money, but to decrease the stigma and change the local attitudes (Rao et al., 2025) 4. Being turned into entrepreneurs, previously a symbol of the conflict, women became a crucial part of the community, productive and well worth their existence, which made a significant step towards healing social fractures and ensuring a sustainable, positive peace. This literature analysis reveals

the theoretical and empirical links between livelihood security and sustainable peace. The analysed literature implies that economic empowerment is one of the determinants of increasing women's agency, social stability, and eliminating the conflict of resources. Although the case studies have abundant evidence, especially the SHGs in India and SACCOs in Nepal, there is a substantial gap in the systematic analysis of empirically relating livelihood security to peacebuilding in South Asia. This paper fills this gap by considering the role of economic insecurity among rural women in promoting social stability and long-term peace in the area.

Literature Gap

The literature on the same is bifurcated. One of the tracks is on development literature, where women are empowered economically through mechanisms such as SHGs. Although it is strong in the economic outcomes, such as income, it always fails to relate these gains to peace outcomes, such as improved social cohesion or the reduction of local conflicts. The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda (UNSCR 1325) on the parallel track is concerned with the position of women in formal, high-level peace negotiations, and pays little attention to the economic basics of their agency and its role in preventing conflicts, which is carried out at the grassroots level. This paper falls right at this gap of trying to bridge these two disciplines on a functional basis. It concerns the inability of the development field to approach peacebuilding and vice versa.

Conceptual Framework

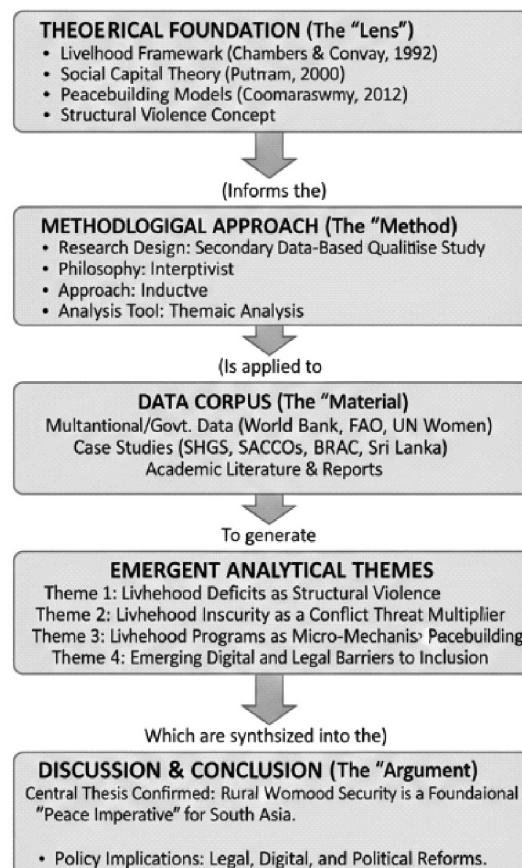


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the research

Methodology

This study assumes a secondary data-based approach and takes a thematic analysis to review the available literature, case studies, and reports. The study is conducted in accordance with the Research Onion approach by Saunders et al. (2019), which presents a systematic way of designing studies and includes the research philosophy, method, strategy, data collection, and analysis. Its research onion framework assists in structurally collecting, analysing, and interpreting the research data, without losing sight of the research problem and aims.

Research Philosophy

The research philosophy adopted in the current study is interpretivism, which is based on cognisance of the subjective meanings and social situation that rural women live in security of livelihood and peacebuilding processes. Interpretivism helps in highlighting how people live, how they interact with one another, and the cultures are important in explaining complex phenomena. The philosophy which best fits in this study is the interpretivism philosophy due to its ability to permit a finer understanding of the livelihood security influence on the role of women in peace-building activities in rural South Asia. This perspective is a contrast to positivism, which would emphasise objective data, since the significance in this context is to grasp social constructs (gender roles, economic vulnerability, and peacebuilding) through the lens of rural women and communities. It will aim to discover the patterns of social behaviour, cultural norms, and institutional mechanisms that influence the livelihood of the rural women and how they can address the idea of sustainable peace.

Research Approach

The research follows a deductive approach, and this is designed to test the existing theories and apply them in particular cases. Using a deductive approach, hypotheses formulated around a theoretical framework can be tested with the help of secondary data obtained in the form of case studies, reports, etc. Such a method is suitable for the Research Onion because it enables the study to be based on the existing literature and theoretical knowledge in the field of livelihood security and peacebuilding. This study's hypotheses are mainly based on the existing gender empowerment theories and models of peacebuilding, as argued in the literature review. Through the deductive approach, the research study seeks to prove or refute these theories in the case of rural South Asia, where problems such as poverty, gender inequality, resource scarcity, and post-conflict recovery are widespread.

Research Strategy

The type of data analysis strategy adopted in this study is the secondary data analysis strategy, which involves the utilisation of existing data already collected to serve different purposes. The approach is quite useful in comparison analysis where resources are limited. These data are varied, synthesising: (1) government documents on gender and peacebuilding; (2) major case studies of initiatives such as India's SHGs, Nepal's SACCOs, and BRAC; (3) journal articles on economic empowerment; and (4) fixtures by supranational bodies, chiefly UN Women, the World Bank and

the FAO. The examination of such a body of secondary data will employ the thematic analysis approach to determine and provide information on the recurrent patterns and insights that can be helpful in answering the research questions.

Data Collection

The data supporting this research were gathered through various sources, which include secondary data, both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data comprises national and regional data about the participation and participation of women in the labour force, gender pay gaps, and land ownership by women and maternal mortality rates, which serve to give a quantitative background to the discussion of livelihood security. The qualitative data consists of case studies of the programmes like SHGs, SACCOs and BRAC that give more detailed information about the effects of economic empowerment on women's agency and community-level peacebuilding. Such a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data will give a holistic picture of the subject, and the multifaceted nature of the relationship between livelihood security and peace can be fully understood.

Another part of data collection consisted of collecting the policy reports of major international bodies such as UN Women and the World Bank that would provide the global perspectives regarding gender inequality and its connection with economic insecurity among the rural populations. Such reports provide the big regional view of the problems of rural women, which will be necessary to place the case studies within the broader international context.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis is the most popular qualitative technique used to define and examine patterns in the data that will be used to analyse the secondary data (Terry et al., 2017). This qualitative research method is the most appropriate in this study since it makes it possible to identify repetitive themes associated with livelihood security, gender inequality and peacebuilding. The process is performed in several major steps, where the first step is the familiarisation of the data that will be achieved by a careful reading of all case studies, articles, and reports in order to know the emerging patterns. After this, codes are created first to mark essential data aspects, which indicate economic empowerment, peacebuilding, and livelihood security. Codes related are then clumped together in a search for larger themes such as social capital or resource conflict resolution, which are then thoroughly revised and edited to make them reflective of the information. Lastly, the definition and naming of each theme will enable an effective report of the findings that will establish a linkage between the subject under study and the research questions and theoretical frameworks, in the case of the SHG and SACCO.

Ethical Considerations

As the study is secondary research, no direct ethical issues arise when it comes to data gathering. Nonetheless, the ethical issues are solved by obtaining the information sources that are recognisable, valid, and referenced. The study also adheres to the principles of academic honesty, where all the secondary sources are utilised in an ethical manner with due attribution and reference.

Analysis

Thematic analysis of the secondary data is an interpretivist philosophy that results in four major themes that give a direct answer to the research questions. All these themes illustrate that livelihood security among women in the rural areas is a very important multi-dimensional aspect of sustainable peace in South Asia.

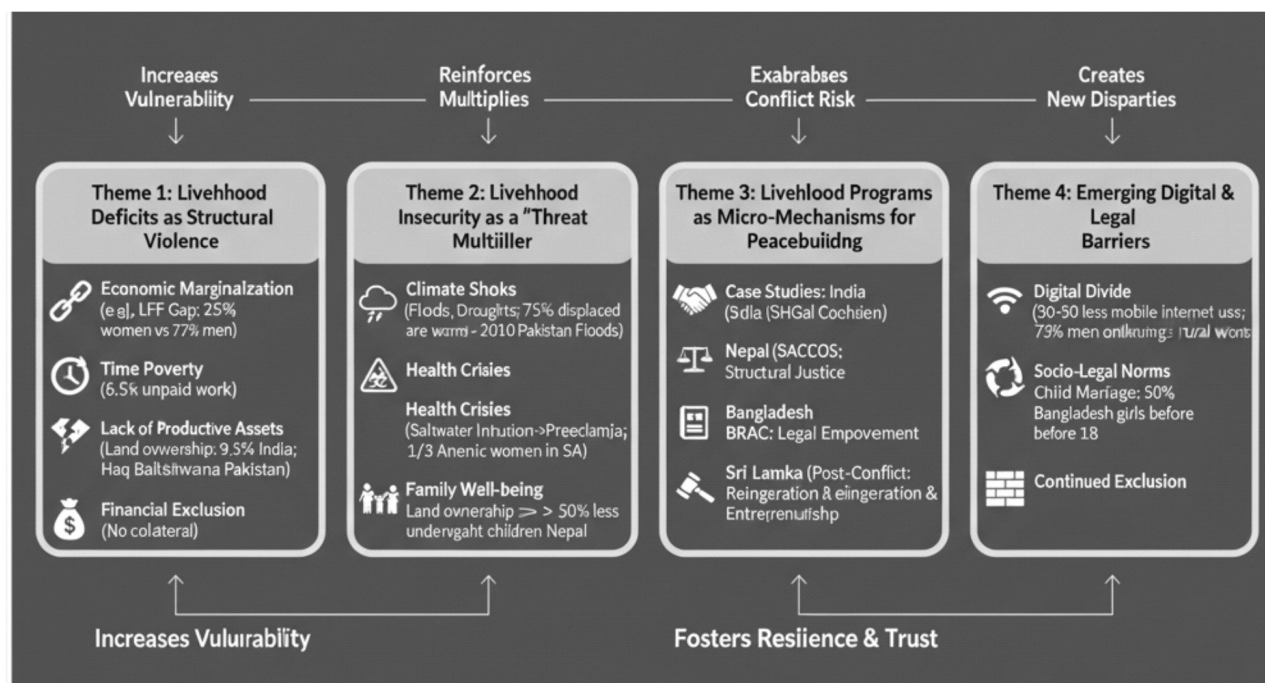


Figure 2: Analytical Themes Pathways to peace

Theme 1: Livelihood Deficits as Structural Violence

The information demonstrates that the economic marginalization of rural women is not a passive process but a kind of structural violence, as it is characterized in the theoretical framework. This theme is aided by the clear quantitative inequalities in labour, assets and time. The most notable figure is the gap in labour force participation (LFP), with the women's LFP in South Asia being 25 per cent as opposed to 77 per cent in the case of men (Direction générale du Trésor, 2019). This economic marginalization is made even more complex by a strong barrier of time-poverty: women do the unpaid work 6.5 times more than men (The Financial Express, 2017), which directly prevents their education and formal jobs. To this end, this shortage is applied to vital productive resources, as stipulated in the Livelihood Framework (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Women are deprived of natural capital (land) systematically. In India, the percentage of land owned by women alone is only 9.5 (World Bank, 2024), whereas in Pakistan, the customary haq bakhshwana (relinquishment) puts pressure on women to transfer their inheritance to the male members of their family (UN Women, 2025). This absence of collateral bar entry to "financial capital" (credit). Such systemic marginalization that conditions an everlasting condition of economic precarity is a textbook case of structural violence, and it is the instability of the household and lack of resources that offer a fertile environment to conflict.

GDP per capita according to gender inequalities

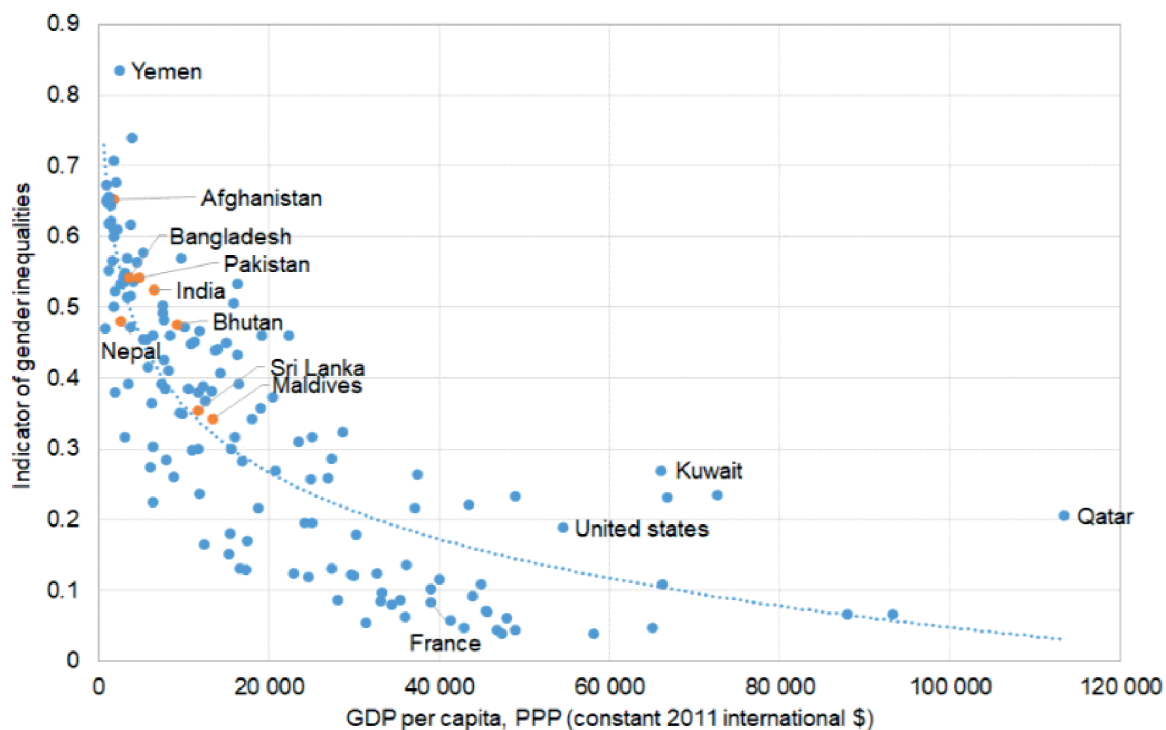


Figure 3: GDP per capita according to gender inequalities (Direction générale du Trésor, 2020)

Theme 2: Livelihood Insecurity as a "Threat Multiplier"

The analysis demonstrates that the weak livelihood foundation of women makes them especially susceptible to external shocks, which acts as a threat multiplier to conflict. The statistics of climate change and health are especially informative (Mohapatra & Sahoo, 2016). Women are disproportionately affected by climate shocks, including floods and droughts, because they rely on the natural resources more in order to earn their living. After the 2010 floods in Pakistan, nearly three-quarters of the displaced people were women and children (Modern Diplomacy, 2023), and this group faced a lot more risk of gender-based violence and human trafficking in insecure camps. One of the direct health-livelihood impacts of rising sea levels has been saltwater intrusion in coastal Bangladesh, which has been found to increase the occurrence of preeclampsia in pregnant women (Modern Diplomacy, 2023). Health insecurity is a multiplier that occurs simultaneously. More than a third of all anaemic women in the world inhabit South Asia (UNICEF, 2018), which, in its turn, leads to chronic fatigue and makes manual work in the agricultural sector less productive. The connection between the livelihood of a woman and the well-being of her family is unconditional: according to the information provided in Nepal, mothers who possess land are less likely to have severely underweight children by half (New Security Beat, 2021). This theme helps to support the hypothesis that peace cannot be sustained when most of the rural people are one disaster (a drought, a sickness) away from losing the ability to sustain their livelihood.



Figure 4: Addressing the impact of Climate on women of South Asian region (Datta et al., 2024)

Theme 3: Livelihood Programs as Micro-Mechanisms for Peacebuilding

In this theme, the case studies are used to demonstrate the application of livelihood programs as a source of bottom-up peace-building.

Case 1 - India (SHGs) and Social Cohesion: Self Help Group model - An example of Self Help Group is Kudumbashree, in Kerala, which gathers 10-20 women together to pool savings, gain social capital, and achieve bank connection. Even the SHG structure itself serves as a peace mechanism, as it necessitates daily cooperation between caste and religious divisions that creates the feeling of trust that was weak previously (Datta and Raman, 2001). With the financial capacity and procedural competence of women, most of them challenge Panchayat seats and facilitate local conflicts of common assets like water, making micro-credit a micro-government to resolve common disputes in everyday life.

Case 2- Nepal (SACCOs) and Structural Justice: In post-conflict Nepal, Savings and Credit Cooperatives had to go beyond transactional finance to incorporate change into the day-to-day economic reality (Nayak and Panigrahi, 2020). It has been documented that such cooperatives extended the concept of peace to encompass transformative objectives like social justice to broaden the opportunity irrespective of caste or ethnicity (Ramnarain, 2015). With underwriting livelihoods across social cleavages, SACCOs were in direct challenge to structural violence; they diminished the incentives to activate the conflicts of the area and normalised inclusive participation in the local economies, through rules.

Case 3- Bangladesh (BRAC) and Legal Empowerment- BRAC's Village Organisations are built around asset transfers with heavy emphasis on capital capacity building, especially legal literacy on land ownership, divorce and inheritance (Harrold, 2007). This combination of means of livelihood and rights education makes women prepared to possess property, challenge predation and struggle against economic exploitation, which are common causes of family and community conflict. VOs convert individual vulnerability to civic voice alongside benefits, security, plus

entitlement knowledge into both reduced domestic violence and mobilising citizens through collective actor activity against corrupted local institutions.

Case 4- Sri Lanka (Post-Conflict) and Reintegration: About 20 000 Jaffna households were headed by females following the civil war. One of the UN programs focused on former female combatants, providing them with livelihood packages to change local attitudes and eliminate stigma by showing entrepreneurship (Dharmawardhane, 2013). With women coming back to markets as producers and employers, they reconstituted trans-community relationships, re-defined identities that were not based on combatancy, and moored reconciliation in daily economic interdependence.

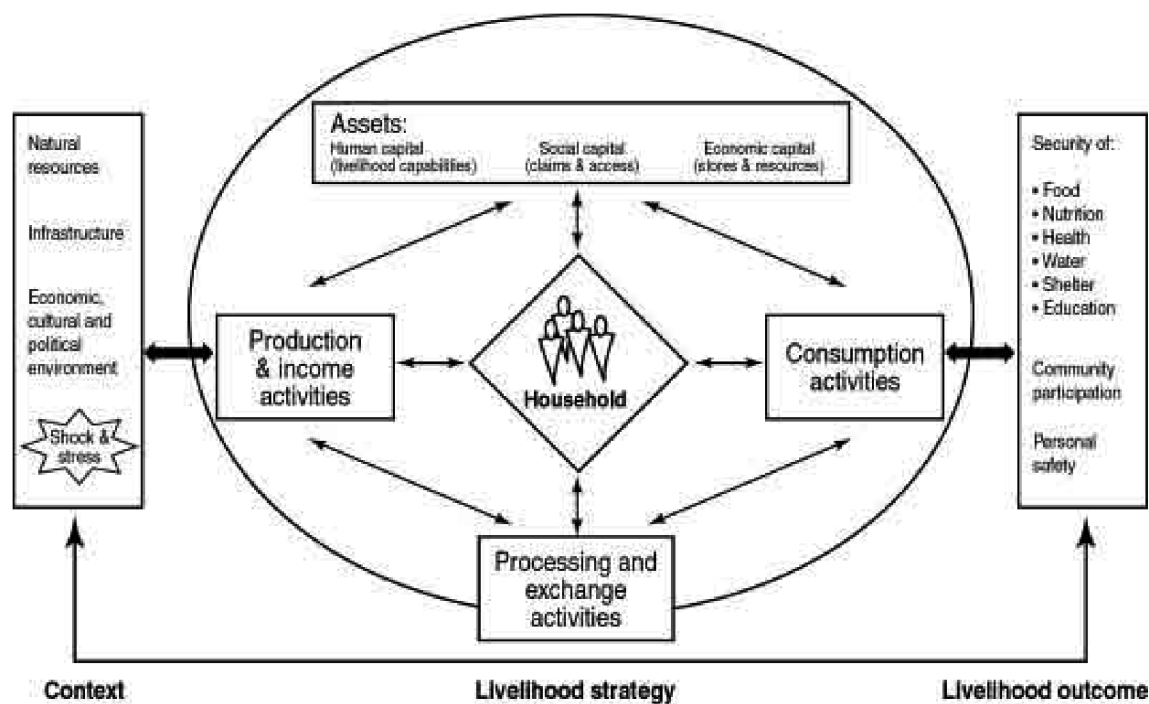


Figure 5: Livelihoods approaches compared for women (Fao.org, 2024)

Livelihood programs are a non-fab wishing engagement in any setting; rather, it is a well-planned arena that is likely to initiate bridging social capital, institutional literacy and equal access to opportunities. Such interventions reduce grievance, seek justice, and break the cycle of stigmatisation by enabling the problem-solving processes of collaborative efforts (India), normalising the right to inclusion (Nepal), securing rights (Bangladesh) and normalising dignified reintegration (Sri Lanka) are micro-foundations that are compounded into positive and sustainable peace.

Theme 4: Emerging Digital and Legal Barriers to Inclusion

The analysis indicates that despite the success of the traditional programs, new and ongoing systemic obstacles are posing a threat to a new generation of exclusion.

The most noticeable new barrier is the so-called digital divide, which prevents women access to the 21st-century economy. South Asian women also have a lower probability of using the mobile internet by 30-50% than their male counterparts (WEF, 2024), and this gap increases as

far as 52% in Bangladesh (BRAC, 2021). This is not a comfort, and it is a direct hindrance to economic capital. Online banking is used by 73.3% of the men in India as compared to 30% of the women in the rural locations. This disqualifies women in mobile banking, government transfer of benefits and online markets. The current form of discrimination is forced towards well-established social-legal barriers, such as child marriage. By the time half of girls in Bangladesh are married off before they reach 18th birthdays (UNICEF), some of their future life possibilities of education and livelihood are extinguished before they could even begin (Bajpai and Awasthi, 2025). This theme demonstrates that the security of livelihood is a moving target: the effective intervention of the policy should be not only holistic, that is, covering both the old barriers to access to land and credit, but also new barriers to access to digital access and persistent background barriers to discriminatory social norms (Cabalion and Guetat-Bernard, 2025).

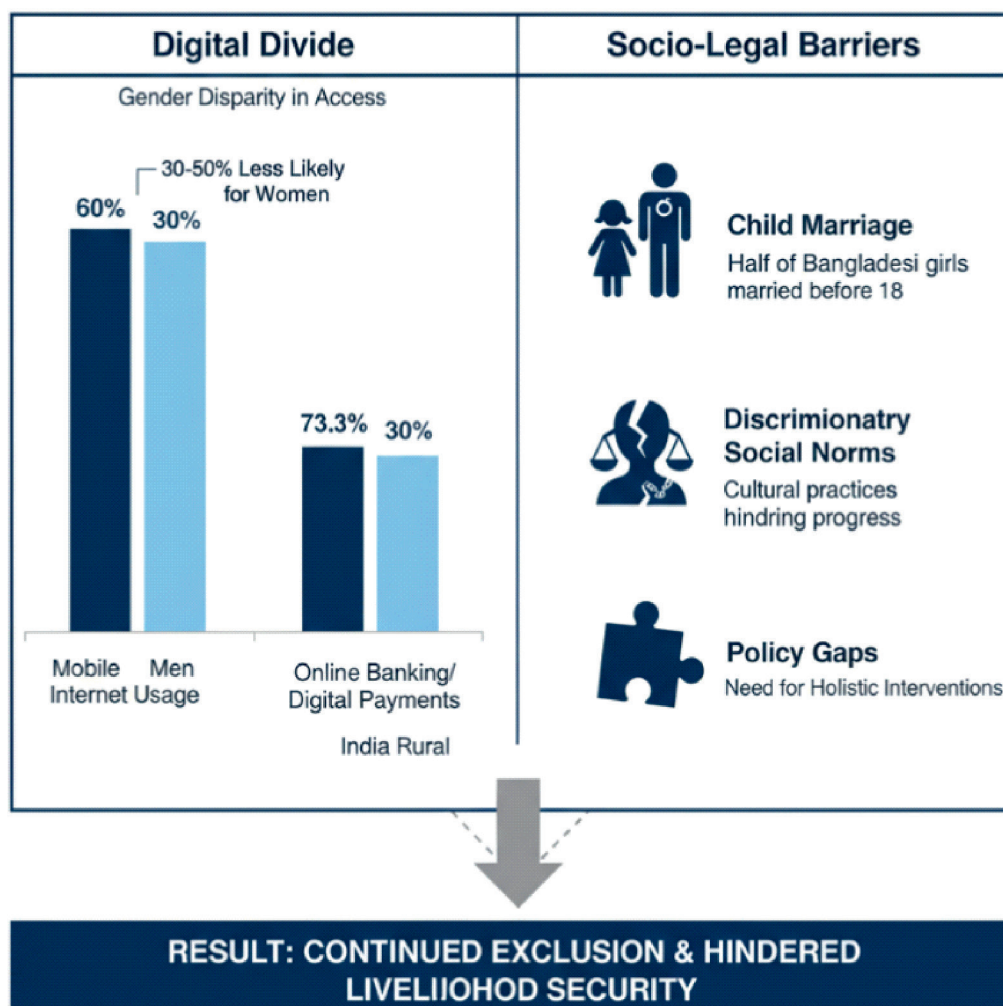


Figure 6: Digital and Legal Barriers to Inclusion (WEF, 2024; BRAC, 2021; UNICEF, 2025)

Discussion

Thematic analysis of the secondary data gives a thorough confirmation of the central thesis of the current study: the livelihood security of the rural women is not just a marginal developmental objective, but a pillar, a pillar of the sustainable peace in South Asia. The four analytic themes

synthesised will go beyond the correlation to demonstrate a clear, functional course of economic exclusion of women to social instability and vice versa, and the empowerment of women economically to concrete peacebuilding.

The results offer strong empirical evidence for the theoretical frameworks described in the first place. The statistics on Livelihood Deficits as Structural Violence (Theme 1) provide a dramatic example of the malpractices of the Livelihood Framework (Chambers and Conway, 1992) when it is implemented on women. The statistical imprint of a structural deprivation of financial capital, human capital and natural capital is the quantitative data, i.e. a 25% LFP gap, a 6.5-fold unpaid care burden and sub-10% sole land ownership (Tamang and Chattopadhyay, 2025). Moreover, the theme of Threat Multipliers (Theme 2) reveals how this insufficiency in capital renders the lives of women particularly precarious, and climate shocks and inadequate health serve as catalysts to the instabilities that are potentially disrupting peace.

On the other hand, the case studies within the framework of the Micro-Mechanisms of Peacebuilding (Theme 3) offer a solid confirmation of the Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) as well as the Kirby and Shepherd (2021) gendered peacebuilding model. The SHGs in India or SACCOs in Nepal are not mere financial vehicles; they are the social capital factories that form their trust and networks that provide mechanisms to overcome the conflict-based boundaries such as caste and ethnicity (Rao et al., 2025). This conclusion, which answers the purpose of the paper, which is to correlate the empowerment programs with peace, is crucial. It demonstrates that the agency of women in the economy is the tool that transforms their social capital into political action.

The consequences of this relationship are quite dramatic, as seen in the discovery that women-headed Panchayats in India invest 62 per cent more in drinking water projects (Arora, 2020). This is the only statistic that is provided in the background of the paper; the discussion gives a full explanation of this statistic. It is the whole thesis at work: economic empowerment (frequently through SHGs) generates a leadership, which subsequently brings about governance that directly reduces the source-based conflict - one of the leading causes of instability (Gupta and Kiran, 2025). The post-conflict Sri Lanka (reintegration) and Bangladesh (legal empowerment) case studies also validate the fact that both interventions are complex instruments of tackling the underlying cause of the conflict through justice development and breaking down of stigma (Naveed et al., 2025).

Lastly, the paper on the topic of "Emerging Digital and Legal Barriers" (Theme 4) offers an important warning. It meets the objective of the research, which includes establishing systemic barriers, emphasising the fact that livelihood security is a subject of a moving target (Dharmawardhane, 2013). Although traditional models are doing well, new types of structural violence, such as the 52% mobile internet gap in Bangladesh, will make a new group of excluded women (Ahmed et al., 2025). This also means that the policy should be holistic and dynamic, where it facilitates economic access, and at the same time, it should proactively work to break the long-standing legal and social norms like child marriage, discriminatory inheritance laws, etc., which eventually prevent full participation of women in creating a sustainable peace.

Conclusion & Suggestion

This thematic analysis of secondary data proves the primary assumption of the research: the livelihood security of women in a rural area in South Asia is not just a developmental peripheral issue but a peace prerequisite. The results of the research show that there is a clear and working relationship between the economic empowerment of women and the establishment of stable and peaceful societies. The study initially proved the existence of a severe livelihood deficit (Theme 1) in rural women in the form of a 25% LFP gap and a 6.5x unpaid care work burden as a type of structural violence. It was shown how this precarity is aggravated by such threat multipliers (Theme 2) as climate change and ill health, which are accelerants of conflict. On the other hand, the discussion of "Micro-Mechanisms for Peacebuilding" (Theme 3) offered solid empirical data regarding the answer to the question of how in the thesis of this paper. The livelihood programs are complex interventions as shown by the case studies of SHGs in India, SACCOs in Nepal, BRAC in Bangladesh, and post-conflict reintegration in Sri Lanka. They create social capital, seek justice and break the stigma. The nexus between economic agency and peacebuilding was summed up in the result that women-led Panchayats put resources into 62% of drinking water initiatives, a direct alleviation of resource strife.

Contributions to Knowledge

The contribution of this paper to knowledge is that the economic development agenda has been functionally connected with the agenda of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). By following the lineage between economic inputs (livelihood programs) and the actual peacebuilding outputs (social cohesion, conflict mitigation), it re-packages the idea of women not only as victims of conflict or as part of the peace establishment efforts at the high-level, but as the economic architects of sustainable and positive peace at the grassroots level.

Suggestions and Implications

The results, especially the results of the emerging barrier (Theme 4), offer important policy implications. Microfinance is not sufficient, but the programs should be supplemented with legal literacy to enable women to assert their property and combat discriminatory customs. More so, the 52% mobile internet gap detected in Bangladesh should be an immediate policy failure. Rural women are now a requirement in any modern livelihood and must be regarded as vital infrastructure. Lastly, the effectiveness of India's Panchayat reservations in converting the economic agency to political authority ought to be considered as an example to be spread to other regions to guarantee that women have a form of formal decision-making in the government.

Future Research

The qualitative and secondary-data based design of this study can be supplemented by quantitative, longitudinal studies in the future. One of the crucial follow-up actions would be to monitor communities with high SHG engagement in ten years to gauge, in detail, the decline in resource tensions on the local level, cases of domestic violence, and other objective, measurable pointers of sustainable peace. This would also give additional statistical support to the cause and effect relationships of this paper.

Conflicts of Interest: There is no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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