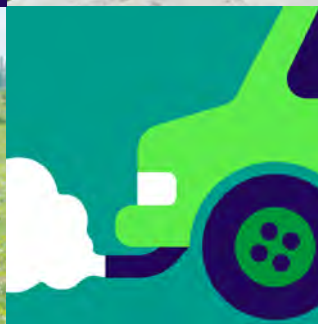


Climate Change in Nepal:

Women's Leadership and Voice in Public Discourse



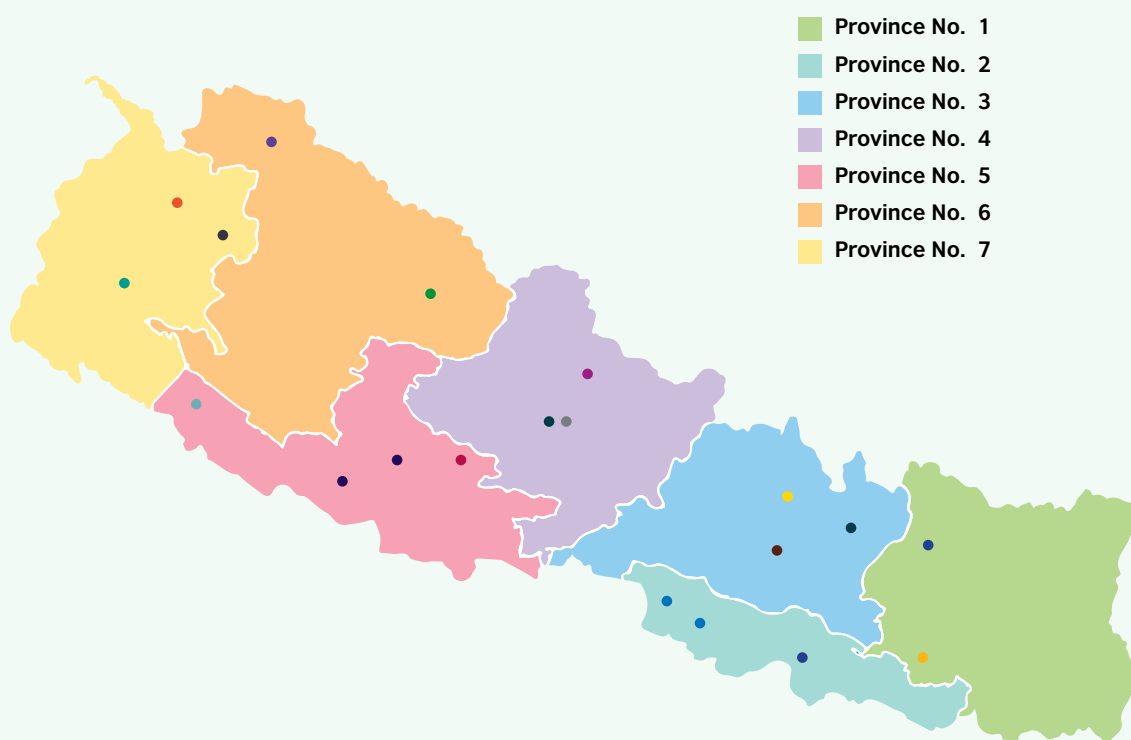
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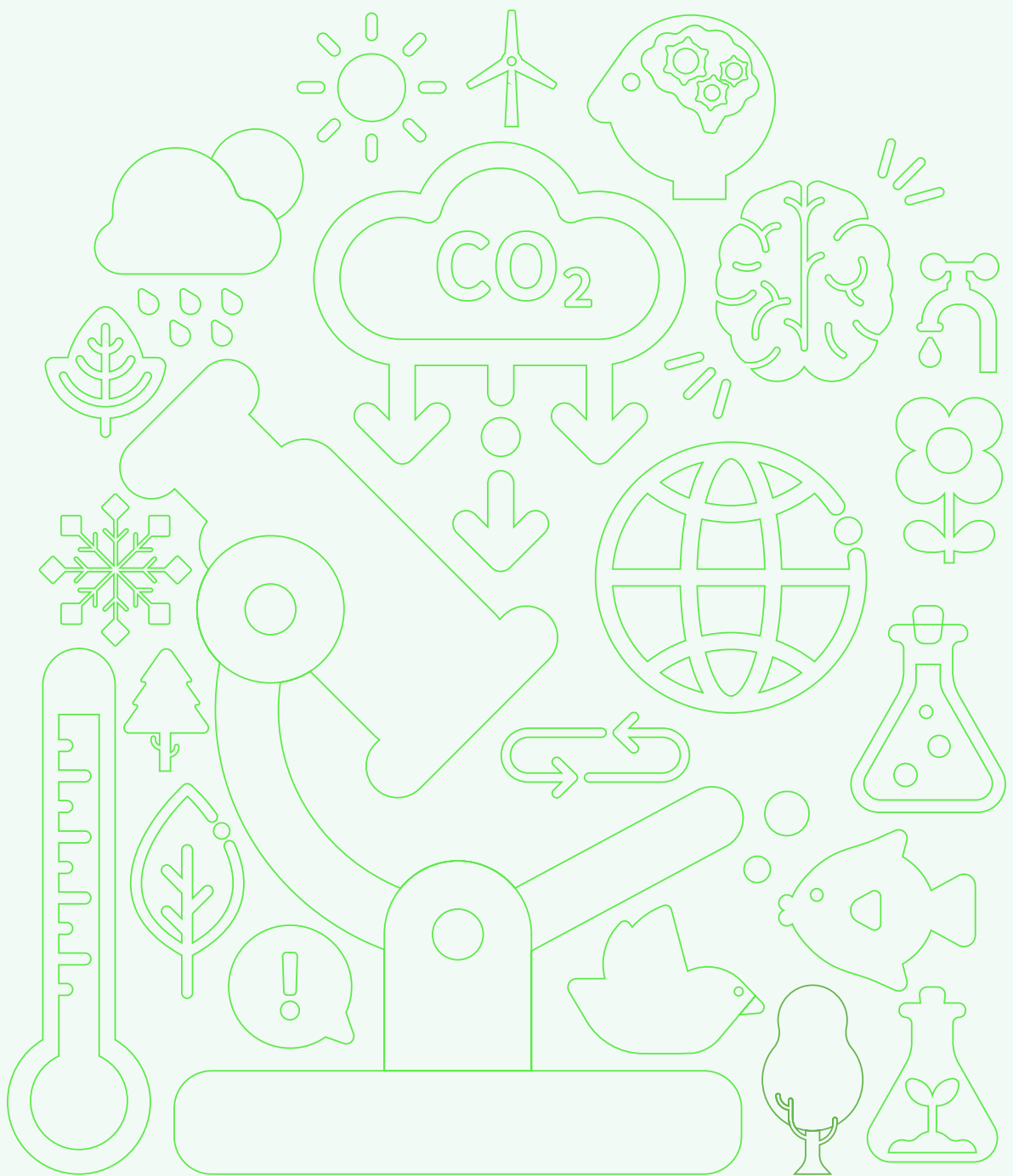


NEPAL MAP



● Apsara Samal	Udayapur, Province.1
● Bidhya Rai	Bajhang, Sudurpaschim Province
● Gaganshila Khadka	Gulmi, Lumbini Province
● Kabita Shrestha	Manang, Gandaki Province
● Krishnamaya Upadhayay	Jumla, Karnali Province
● Madhuri Mahato	Parsa and Bara Districts, Province 2
● Marissa Leena Taylor	Solukhumbhu, Province 1, Mahottari, Province 2
● Nirmala Khadayat	Doti, Sudurpaschim Province
● Nisha Rai	Kaski, Gandaki Province, Kathmandu and Dolakha, Bagmati Province
● Nitu Ghale	Kavre, Bagmati Province
● Sabitri Giri	Pyuthan and Dang districts Lumbini Province
● Sonam Choekyi Lama	Dolpa, Karnali Province
● Sonam Lama	Bajura, Sudurpaschim Province
● Sujata Karki	Kaski, Gandaki Province
● Sunita Sakhakarmi	Sindupalchowk, Bagmati Province
● Urmila Gamwa Tharu	Kanchanpur, Sudurpaschim Province

The journalists who participated in this program reported from various parts of the country, include many remote locations. The journalists were spread all over Nepal, from Udaypur in the east to Kabhre, Sindhupalchok, Gulmi and Kaski in central Nepal and Dang, Pyuthan, Bajhang, Bajura and Doti in the west; from Parsa, Bara and Mahottari in the Terai to Jumla, Dolpa, Solukhumbu and Manang in the mountains. The locations of journalists' field reporting are marked in this map.





Preface: **Shahida MacDougall**



Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to adverse climate change impact. Nepalis have already experienced reduction in agricultural production, food insecurity, strained water resources and loss of forests among many other challenges. Climate change affects everyone, but women and girls, especially in underserved areas and those at living on margins of society, are affected more. A host of reasons encompassing socio-cultural, historical and economic barriers exacerbate this disproportionate effect. And while women are championing efforts and actively contributing to climate change actions, their voices, and perspectives are still not visible in public discourses (mass media).

To enhance women's agency ahead of COP26, the British Council developed two platforms to support Government of Nepal and UK's inclusion goals. These included a TV/radio series hosted with women leaders working across sectors on climate change, and a professional development opportunity for youth journalists on gender and climate change intersections reporting.

Communicating the urgency of climate crisis is important but climate representation is challenging, the search for facts and data is not easy and finding a gender balance in the narrative is also a task. To better profile leadership and contributions from women, our Women's Leadership in Climate Action series produced for national broadcast on Nepal Television and Radio Kantipur reaching audiences in

September and October 2021 with a clear message on the women's exemplary role in climate action.

Similarly, together with UK, Nepali and international media and climate science experts, we trained 16 journalists from across Nepal's many provinces. This cohort of emerging professionals received mentoring and grants to work on stories of their choice. Between September and December 2021 more than 30 articles, hours of multi-media content including TV documentaries and radio shows were published by our grantees with national and regional media outlets. Collectively, these presented critical narratives from the ground and platformed rural voices highlighting ground-level realities and gender intersections of climate change impact.

As a cultural relations organisation, we see immense potential and value in the outcomes media representation can inspire. Gender equality is an indispensable ingredient to effective climate change action and we hope to continue support increased presence of women's narratives in the public sphere supported by robust communication and perspective change campaigns.

We hope readers appreciate this compilation's diversity and depth courtesy of the amazing women who will continue to represent overlooked and marginalised voices in their journalism.





Foreword: Jocelyn Timperley



With every year I spend as a climate journalist, I discover more ways in which climate change overlaps and connects with a huge number of other crucial concerns. Addressing it will require questioning and sometimes overturning many of our norms and assumptions.

The climate intersection with gender is just one of these aspects, but we can expect to hear more and more about it in the coming years. Giving impacted communities a space to share their own experiences is another huge priority as we work out how to build resilience against climate change, as is the need for local, well informed and scientifically literate journalists to tell their stories.

Nepal has low greenhouse gas emissions compared to other countries on the global stage, but it is among the places expected to be most impacted by climate change. Indeed, as the reporting done by the women in this programme shows, there is much evidence today that many people's lives are already being affected by the changing climate, whether through flooding, water shortages, agricultural changes or a myriad of other impacts.

Through this workshop and grant opportunity, we aimed to support women to strengthen their reporting on the intersection between gender issues and climate change.

Designing an in-depth reporting workshop in the middle of a global pandemic is no trivial task, and the need to deliver the workshop online required us to think hard about how to avoid digital fatigue and create meaningful engagement. But it also offered opportunities, including the ability to space out sessions and training in smaller doses and support the participants' learning through the course of several months. We worked hard to ensure sessions were engaging and interactive, delivering practical workshops using tools such as breakout rooms and live Google slides. We also provided plenty of space for discussion within the group so that participants from around the country had the opportunity to learn from each other.

We brought in diverse guest speakers from both Nepal and the UK who challenged the journalists on how to think about their own roles. They offered insights and training on everything from community radio and video editing to climate disaster reporting and investigative journalism.

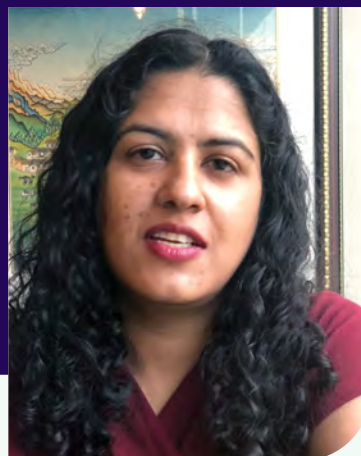
The grant we gave to all participants allowed them to put these new skills into practice, with the journalists reporting untold stories from all corners of Nepal. We also provided several one-on-one mentoring sessions to all participants, allowing us to provide individual support for their grant reporting as well as a space for journalists to reflect on their own career paths and wider goals.

Feedback from the participants indicates that several of them found the programme to be a turning point in their careers, in particular in their understanding of climate change and how it impacts women differently. All said they plan to continue to report on gender and climate. The world needs these stories, and these women should be the ones telling them. I count myself lucky to have played a small part in supporting them in their important work.





Foreword: Sewa Bhattarai



This collection of stories about climate change from women journalists of Nepal is the result of a fellowship awarded by British Council Nepal, after research that pointed to a gap in Nepal's media for such stories. In the run up to COP26 in 2021, British Council Nepal, with support from the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office Nepal, created the Road to COP26 campaign which conducted various activities that would help Nepal strengthen its voice in climate negotiations. One of them was a desk research I conducted in 2020 to find the intersection of climate and gender in Nepal's media.

The research found that stories about climate change are mostly published when there is high-level news concerning the subject. For example, public statements by high level officials like the President or the Prime Minister, publication of reports by famous organizations working in this sector, or occurrence of high-level events like COP 26, prompt a flurry of reports in the media, but the impacts of climate change in the lives of people in Nepal rarely make news. International interest is piqued by the Everest or Himalayas, but is otherwise silent. At other times, the terms climate change are rarely heard in the media. The impacts of climate change do make the news often, especially in the case of natural disasters like floods and landslides, but they are usually not explicitly linked to climate change. Considering the fact that Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, this was a woeful state of affairs. One of the reasons the voices of Nepal's most affected people are



Dalit settlement in Mukhtikot of Bajura district. *Photo Credit: Soman Lama*

rarely taken into consideration in high-level climate negotiations is because they are rarely heard in national or international media in the first place.

The research found that the language of the media is also a deciding factor: while English language media contained more detailed articles about climate change with technical information, Nepali language media contained less of technical information and explanations. Words like adaptation and mitigation, thus, are not generally understood by consumers of Nepali media. Many researches have shown that women are disproportionately impacted by climate change, but the media coverage of the issue rarely reflects this. Also, the writers on the subject are disproportionately male, especially in mainstream Nepali language media.

These insights from the research into Nepal's media coverage of climate change and gender issues directly pointed to a need for in-depth stories written from the field containing information about climate change in Nepali language. The fellowship given to sixteen women journalists in 2021 aimed to fill that gap and to build the capacities of women reporters from all over the country.

The fellowship succeeded in including a wide range of women journalists from as far apart as Birgunj in the Tarai plains to Jumla and Dolpa in the mountains, and from a wide range of ethnic



communities. The fellowship offered several capacity-developing opportunities to the journalists. In July 2021, British Council Nepal conducted a 5-week workshop facilitated by environment journalist Jocelyn Timperley. National and international experts informed the workshop, and press tours were held for five journalists. Along with speaker engagements in podcasts, TV series and panel discussions with NYCA (Nepalese Youth for Climate Action), the journalists also had networking opportunities with Youth Climate Café and other occasions. Grants of up to 220,000 NPR (1357 £) were awarded to the journalists to produce multi-media outputs and original reports on climate change and gender intersections. Blogs by three of the journalists appeared on the global Parliament of Mayors blogs.

The journalists worked on various mediums, from newspapers to radio and television, and in both English and Nepali languages. The resulting stories cover a wide range of the impact of climate change on Nepal's women: food insecurity, change in crop cycles, displacement of indigenous crops, drying springs, etc. The stories shed light on the plight of women who are at the forefront of fighting climate-induced disasters: from women who wake up at nights to dig canals when it starts raining, to the women who stand in line overnight for their turn to collect drinking water.

The stories paint a vivid picture: of women who are forced to migrate because drying springs take away their livelihood, women who feel their uterus dropping in their body as they strain to hoist water containers on their hips, and girls who are married off early so that they don't have to be fed by drought-stricken families. Combined, the stories give a detailed picture of how climate change phenomena like erratic rain, drought, floods, drying water sources, and disasters are impacting the everyday lives of women in Nepal. The stories are reported with compassion, but also with due diligence and verified data, citing historical anecdotes to chart climate change when data is not forthcoming.

The stories also give a picture of how the people of Nepal are adapting to climate change in their own ways: whether it is by replacing famous Marsi rice with apples in one area, or replacing apples with kiwi in another, or building organic embankments to contain floods. The stories tell us how much there is still left to be done so that Nepal can adapt to climate change, and how woefully inadequate the efforts at present are.

As part of Road to COP26, British Council Nepal had produced a TV Series, Women Leadership in Climate Change. The TV series centered on various climate change issues was broadcast from Nepal Television and Radio Kantipur on September-October 2021. This collection includes summaries of the TV program episodes.

Frequent communication of such stories is important because climate change is the most pressing issue of our times, and only by recognizing the scale and diversity of the problem can



People walking their way home across the steep terrain, Mukti Kot *Photo Credit: Soman Lama*

we hope to address it correctly. Media coverage is a way of raising these issues, drawing the attention of the government, experts and activists, and eventually influencing government policy to improve the people's lives. Very few national or international policies address Nepal's climate change victims, and these stories are a way of drawing attention to their plight.

This collection is a step towards bringing more visibility to diverse impacts of climate change felt by the disproportionately impacted women of Nepal. The collection includes stories by the sixteen women journalists, and also their personal insight into the experience. These essays will be a handy resource for students, researchers, civil societies, organizations, governments and policy makers, and all those interested to understand Nepal's climate change issues and actions.





Personal Experience

I made a six-episode radio program on the subject of the severe impacts of climate change on the women of Bairagi in Udaypur, and what they are doing to adapt to it. Through this program, I got the opportunity to inform local women about climate change. I also talked to Nepal's COP attendees for the program, so the audience is now informed about COP 26. Governments at local, provincial, and central levels are now aware of how women are more affected by climate change. I hope such information will help promote women's equal access to resources.



Apsara Samal

Ripe paddy destroyed due to lack of weather forecast information

UDAYAPUR – Maya Sarki, who lives near the Bairagi River in Triyuga, got up suddenly one night this October. "There was a sudden downpour as we were sleeping. When we woke up, the water had reached our bed. We walked out in a panic, and saw that the flood had taken our verandah already. We ran away to a safer location. When we came back, the flood had destroyed our house. Everything was buried in sand, we couldn't remove anything," says Sarki.

Locals say that they have never seen such a flood in Bairagi river. "This rivulet used to flow all the year round, we used to irrigate our

fields with this. Nowadays it is mostly dry, and floods in monsoon," says Chandimaya Nepali.

Worldwide, such unexpected weather events are increasing. Experts say that climate change is causing it. "Greenhouse gases increased in the atmosphere due to the use of fossil fuel, which is raising the earth's temperature," says agro economist Daya Bajracharya. "It impacts the all the living beings."

Nepal is severely impacted by climate induced disasters. In October this year, unseasonal rains twice destroyed much of the harvest-ready paddy crops. Triyuga farmers Keshav



Adhikari and Krishna Bahadur Ramtel say, "the paddy was just ripe in the fields. Because of Dashain festival, we put off harvesting, the flood drowned it all. The rain came before we were able to store what we had cut, destroying everything."

Such disasters appear to impact women even more. "I am the only person in the house who works. I could not put in strong beams when I was building the house, Maybe because it was built by a lone woman, the house wasn't strong and was washed by the flood," says Maya Sarki, the sole breadwinner for her sight impaired husband, disabled son, and six year old daughter.

"Women and other marginalized groups have to expend more time and effort on tasks that

took less time and effort previously, so they are more impacted," says Radha Wagle from the Ministry of Forests and Environment.

"For example, they have to walk farther for water when water source dry due to climate change."

"Greenhouse gases increased in the atmosphere due to the use of fossil fuel, which is raising the earth's temperature,"

Local level governments are beginning to manage such disasters in their own way. "We have collected around four hundred thousand rupees

(2468 £) in a disaster fund. We distributed relief materials like tents to flood victims," says Ghaman Singh Khatri, chair of ward 2.

However, such relief materials are not enough for farmers to earn their livelihood in the long term. The question of how farmers can live sustainably in the face of such disasters has



come up. There are two ways of addressing climate change, mitigation or the reduction in the factors causing climate change, and adaptation or the reduction of its impacts. "To mitigate climate change, we need to reduce the use of fossil fuel and increase tree plantation," says Daya Bajracharya. "Adaptation is even more important in a country like Nepal. Farmers should plant climate resilient crops."

The impacts of climate change are most severely felt by women in rural areas, because they do not have the knowledge of climate change or the resources to adapt to it. The floods were so destructive this year because farmers lacked weather forecast

information, according to Krishna Prasad Panta, Climate Change expert at Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "Today Nepal has the technology to forecast weather for up to three days. The heavy downpour this October was predicted in advance, but the information did not reach farmers. If they had known about it, they would harvest their paddy early, and store

what they had harvested," says Panta. "So now we should work on making weather forecast information available to farmers on time, and increasing their capacity to understand it."



<https://fb.watch/asGSpMAN33/>



https://fb.watch/asGTU6Ds_E/



Nepal's priorities in COP 26

UDAYAPUR - Environment experts say that climate change was caused by the use of fossil fuel, in which Nepal's contribution is very low. Yet, Nepal suffers severely from the negative impacts of climate change. Nepali experts believe that since climate change was caused by the industrialization in developed nations, they should address it. COP 26 is the appropriate forum for developing nations to put pressure on developed nations to address climate change. Since 1995, representatives from most countries all over the world meet to discuss how the world and each country should address climate change. Nepal has made detailed preparations for the 26th edition of COP to be held in November 2021 at Glasgow, Scotland.

"COP is an important forum for countries like Nepal to put forth their views. Nepal has made its adaptation plans, which requires a huge budget to implement. We will ask that we get that budget as well help in technology," says Radha Wagle from the Ministry of Forests and Environment, who is leading the preparations. "Also, countries like Nepal are facing huge losses of life and property due to climate change. There should be a separate mechanism to address such losses."

But it is not easy for Nepal to get the help and the finances that it is asking for. Environment expert Raju Pandit, who is attending COP, has given some information about the proceedings.

"There is discussion about reducing carbon emissions to limit temperature rise, but there is no agreement yet," says Pandit. "Also, developed nations are hesitating to commit to the financial aid that they had promised to developing nations."



Developing nations are demanding that all countries should commit to reducing greenhouse gases to 45% by 2030, but the draft declaration of COP26 does not fulfill that demand. Also, since

rural women in developing nations are most impacted by climate change, women's issues are also a priority of Nepal. "There are discussion regarding the differential impacts of climate change on women. But it has not been centralised as much as it should be," Pandit informs.

With a large percentage of indigenous population, Nepal is also interested in the impacts of climate change on indigenous community. "Since indigenous communities live in close communion with water, forests, and land, imbalance in these elements also misbalances the economic, social and cultural feelings of indigenous peoples," says Tungabhadra Rai, coordinator of climate change project in Nepal's Federation of Indigenous People. "And that is true for indigenous communities all over the world."

Since policymakers may not be aware of such experiences of indigenous experiences, Rai,



who is attending COP 26, believes that it must be articulated in such forums. A Forest and Land Rights Action Plan had been published prior to COP 26, but Rai is not sure about its proper implementation. "All around the world, modern development has taken away the water, forest, and land of indigenous people. In Nepal too, construction projects like hydropower have displaced indigenous peoples, and the nation has grabbed indigenous people's land. So the question is how documents like this address the concerns of indigenous people. If they are implemented well, they may benefit indigenous people. Or else they may even have a negative impact," Rai says.

Rich nations have become more aware of such experiences of indigenous peoples, and have begun giving ensuring indigenous people's right to independence and participation, but that is not the case in Nepal yet. Indigenous people's skills and knowledge have been mentioned in the Paris Agreement from COP 2015. Rai informs that the rights of indigenous people must be included in the draft for the implementation of that agreement.



<https://fb.watch/asGNGri9Ip/>



<https://fb.watch/asGCZgbS-B/>



<https://fb.watch/asGr2vzdDT/>





Personal Experience

When I travelled to Bajhang in 2076 BS, I had noticed Badi and Haliya settlements eroded by landslides, the suffering of women and children, and men needing to go to India for work. After participating in this training, I learnt to write on these issues. I learnt to raise subjects trailing behind political issues. I learnt to link scientific facets of climate change with gender. I realized that I too was a victim of climate change. Covid-19, floods and landslides posed a challenge to reporting. With permission from the British Council, I sought help from Bajhang's journalist Basanta Pratap Singh. I liaised with various commissions, ministries and organizations for access to studies, reports, and focal persons. I have expanded my network by working on this fellowship.



Bidhya Rai

Fourteen thousand families in Bajhang suffer from extreme food crisis, women and children worst hit

BAJHANG - Devaki BK of Parakatne in Thalara Rural Municipality's fields used to produce good yields of paddy, wheat, horse gram, black gram, peas, and split red lentil. Her kitchen garden would flourish with seasonal vegetables. The family fed themselves on their own produce without any problems. After an incessant drought since a few years, the yield has depleted.

"We have to purchase everything like lentils, rice and vegetables to feed ourselves," said Bika. These days, she engages in daily wage labor like building roads and carrying stones, pebbles and sand instead of farming. Her husband started working as a laborer in India ten years ago, all because it was difficulty to feed themselves.

Thirty-three-year-old Bika has aches in her back and hips, her limbs swell up, and her vision is blurred. Health workers told her that this happened because of a lack of food and care after childbirth, and suggested that she eat vegetables and fruits. But these things do not grow in Bika's fields.

Almost 500 ropanis (around 63 acres) of land belonging to 150 families has not been cultivated in the winter since more than 15 years. "Even till 1994, there would be enough snowfall to drown a person," said 70-year-old Relkala Singh. The reduction in the snowfall directly impacts agriculture.



According to Tek Bahadur Bista, Chief of Agriculture Knowledge Center Bajhang, 14 thousand households are facing extreme food insecurity this year because of drought. Last year, as the districts' food grains were inadequate, 7,000 metric tonnes had to be imported.

"In an agriculture-dependent country, climate change plays a significant role in food insecurity," Radha Wagle, Chief of Climate Change Management Division under the Ministry of Forests and Environment, says, "When rainfall patterns change, we cannot adapt to climate change."

Bajhang is not only troubled by drought, but also floods, landslides, and hailstones. In April-May last year, a huge hailstorm badly damaged crops including wheat, barley, apple, pear,

mango, and peach. There is also an increase in the outbreak of diseases and insects in the crops. "Thriving chilies suddenly shrivel up and die. When we dig into the soil, we find black

insects. Pesticides were no help. We stopped planting chilies ten years ago," Mansara Khadayat of Bitthadchir Rural municipality said. Because of climate change, indigenous crops go extinct, and it is estimated that over 50 percent of indigenous crops in Nepal have been destroyed.

**"Even till 1994,
there would be
enough snowfall
to drown a
person,"**

"This highly impacts women and marginalized communities that are dependent on farming. They have less ownership over land. Their farms are also near rivers, and in slopes and difficult places," says Agriculture and Food Security Researcher Sujata Tamang.

The United Nation Children’s Fund (UNICEF)’s “The State of the World’s Children 2019” has said that drought causes 80 percent loss in agriculture, and also impacts the amount, quality, and price of food. “Only 1 out of 5 members among the poorest families get adequate food,” the report says. In the Global Hunger Index of October 2020, Nepal is placed 73rd out of 107 countries with a score of 19.5, which means that there is starvation in Nepal.

“Only 1 out of 5 members among the poorest families get adequate food,”

According to Doctor Yogendra Khati at the Bajhang District Hospital, especially pregnant women, new mothers, children under five years and adolescent girls in Bajhang are suffering from malnutrition due to a lack of nutritious food. The Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 conducted by Central Bureau of Statistics states that in the Far Western Region, there is a 5 percent increase in stunting and 5 percent in low weight and malnutrition among children under five.

Risk Mitigation and Climate Change Expert Krishna Karki says that the government needs to study solutions to climate change and implement them in the agriculture sector. “We have to spread the knowledge about and institutionalize information on developing crops that can endure drought and rainfall, protecting water sources, planting trees, saving indigenous seeds, collecting rainwater, and rotating crops,” she says. “Sometimes it rains a lot and sometimes

there is drought, we must teach them to farm according to these conditions. We must relay the weather forecast information to farmers. Insurance must be arranged for. Agricultural machinery like hand tractors should be women-friendly and less expensive.”



<https://bit.ly/34hGbPY>





Personal Experience

In 16 years of journalism, I never had the chance to participate in any training regarding climate change. This workshop by British Council has established me as a journalist interested in climate change. I am grateful for the information given which allowed me to do in-depth reporting on how much climate change impacts us. I chose a difficult subject, because I wanted my story to make the authority accountable. It took me nearly seven months to prepare this report. Going to remote villages of Gulmi amidst incessant rain was difficult. An achievement of my inquiries for information is that the local level governments in Gulmi regret building roads without Environment Impact Assessment.



Gaganshila Khadka

Roads built without Environmental Impact Assessment destroy forests

GULMI - Local level government had promised to bring "Singhadurbar's development to the village." With the establishment of local level governments in 2017, villagers had hoped for sustainable development. But after local governments started destroying forests to build roads without any assessment, the people are suffering.

In the past five years, Dhurkot rural municipality of Gulmi cut down 9,249 trees and Ishma rural municipality cut down 7,635 trees to build roads. Statistics show that 28,518 trees have been cut down just to build local roads in 12 local units of Gulmi.

Nepal signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992, and has since embraced the policy of reducing deforestation. Nepal's laws state that a "mini Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)" must be conducted before building local roads, and that local levels should make their own Environment Conservation Acts. No local level of Gulmi has made such an Act, and all are destroying forests in defiance of central and provincial laws.

Shankar Prasad Gautam, information officer of Resunga municipality, said that the assessments were not conducted because



no new tracks had been opened. "We are only expanding existing tracks, so EIA is not needed," he said.

Resunga municipality, Malika rural municipality and Chandrakot rural municipality, but no local level has planted trees.

But according to the municipality spokesperson Padam Prasad Aryal, up to twenty new tracks have been dug in every ward. "But no EIA has been conducted," said Aryal.

According to Batu Krishna Upreti, expert of environment laws, such an act warrants jail time. "You need the cabinet's permission to cut down trees. Otherwise it's a criminal act," he said.

Nepal's Environment Protection Act states that if one tree is cut down, ten trees should be planted in its place, and 25 if it is in a protected forest area. There are protected forest areas in

"After our farm was buried, we need to work for others to survive. Since there is no hay, we need to cut grass all day to feed the cattle."

After the roads have been built, more than 200 water springs have dried up, according to the local levels. Resunga municipality and Chhatrakot rural municipality have not kept any record of this, but the residents say that most springs have dried up in Resunga. In the past

five years, there have been 2,968 landslides just in the areas with road construction. Thirty-six people have lost their lives, 210 livestock have died, and 247 houses and 165 cattle sheds destroyed in the landslides, according to the District Police Office.

Krishnakumari Kunwar of Bhadagaun, Resunga complains that her workload has increased



after the springs have dried and her farm was buried. "We used to grow bushels of rice, wheat, and maize. With wheat we planted lentils and peas. The hay was enough for 3-4 cattle," she says. "After our farm was buried, we need to work for others to survive. Since there is no hay, we need to cut grass all day to feed the cattle."

Laxmi Kunwar, another local resident, complains that she has to spend a lot of time carrying water, when she should be doing other work. The government has issued a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan for Climate Change, which states that gender responsive and inclusive strategy will be employed in eight sectors. But the local levels have ignored it.

A national-level research has also shown an increase in the instances of water springs drying and shifting. A study by Nepal Water Conservation Foundation and International

Centre for Integrated Mountain Development found that 74% of the springs have dried, and 58% have shifted in 300 municipalities. In another study by the Ministry of Forests and Environment, people from hill and mountain districts like Gulmi, Panchthar, Udayapur, Kabhre, etc have been forced to migrate due to lack of water and other environmental disasters.

Local levels have been found lax in keeping records of these subjects. Resugna municipality and Chhatrakot rural municipality did not provide any statistics, and apart from Dhurkot, Ishma, Ruru and Madane, the other six local levels only provided partial or estimated figures. No local level has implemented any program to decrease the impacts of climate change.



<https://bit.ly/346D79b>





Personal Experience

The training was professional and well-presented, the issues raised were thought provoking and eye opening. Jocelyn was an engaging trainer and covered a range of topics which appealed to everyone. I enjoyed every moment of it. The workshop and materials helped us know the importance of gender-sensitive investments in climate change programmes for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building. Women should be part of the decision making regarding allocation of resources for climate change initiatives, and their priorities and needs reflected in development planning and funding. I tried to portray this learning in my radio programmes broadcast from six radio stations of Gandaki Province.



Kabita Shrestha

Torrential floods in Manang, what is the solution to climate change?

MANANG - Manang, the beautiful district beyond the mountains, is in a ravaged state at present. The floods that hit Manang on June 15 have wreaked havoc in the region. There is no management of food, clothing, and shelter for Manang residents, while the women are suffering even more.

Paru Gurung says, "We lost everything. My 82-year-old aunt says that she only has a bakkhu (traditional attire) left in the name of property."

**"We lost everything.
My 82-year-old
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property."**

Scientists consider these events increasing around the world to be impacts of climate change. Lekhnath Gautam, Chief at Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) Manang, says, "In our camera traps, we can see a leopard of lower hills at Tilicho Lake, situated at an elevation of 4162 meters. This means that vegetation and wildlife are moving upwards due to a rise in temperature. For the same reason, there were torrential rains in Manang, the district beyond the mountains where it traditionally did not rain."



Local residents of Manang have noted the rise in temperature. “The snow has melted off the 6000-6500 meter-tall mountains here, and we can see black rock,” says Karma Tshering Gurung. “We never knew such a flood, not even in the time of our forefathers.” A glacial lake photographed on Mount Gangapurna in 1950 has melted and nearly disappeared, while a new lake has formed due to the melted water.

Women are found to be impacted more by climate change. “As women have the dual burden of household chores, they are impacted more. Dalit women are impacted even more. As they are not allowed to touch the water

sources near them, they have to work harder to fetch water,” says Dr. Nani Rawat, a teacher of Environment at Kathmandu University.

Manang’s Chief Health Officer, Badri Prasad Acharya, says that women’s condition has become even more hazardous after the flood, “There are difficulties in taking children for vaccinations due to damaged roads. As food has been swept away, women are more prone to malnutrition. When a pregnant woman suffers from malnutrition, it impacts the baby, and there the cycle of malnutrition continues.”

This also affects women’s mental health. Jyoti Bhandari, Advisor to the Provincial Ministry of

Social Development, says, “The loss of lives of family members and the dual or triple stress of responsibilities causes depression, stress and anxiety in women. We have to create an open environment where they can talk, and allocate work according to responsibilities.”

Kamala Maya Gurung, Vice Chairperson of Nasung Rural Municipality, says that women have to be kept under consideration while distribution relief. “We are receiving relief materials through helicopters, we called women to the ward office to distribute them. We have arranged for separate tents for men and women.”

Experts state that women can get climate justice if there is women’s participation at the policy making level, and not only after a disaster. Out of Nepal’s seven policies related to climate change, only three acknowledge the fact that climate change can have a disproportional impact on women, and only one offers measures of adaptation. National Adaptation Plan of Action has listed women among the groups vulnerable to climate change, but has not offered adaptation measures. The

latest Climate Change Policy has mentioned that women are at a higher risk, but has not drafted an implementation plan.

“Women are highly vulnerable because they are involved more in daily agricultural activities but have little ownership over land, and also have less access to education and language. Along with a participation of climate victims in policy making, the issues of climate change should also be integrated into other sectors such as water and agriculture,” says Environment Expert Bikas Adhikari, “And these issues must be explained to women in their own language.”

For a long-term solution to climate change, Adhikari says that these issues must be raised at international forums. “Nepal does not contribute to climate change, in fact, our forests help decrease the greenhouse gases emitted by others. These facts must be presented alongside data in international platforms. Developed countries have expressed a commitment to help countries like ours, we should put pressure to implement this.”



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Personal Experience

When farmers saw the stories I published under this fellowship, they were happy. There have been discussions about accountability in relevant bodies, and there has also been an increase in support from local, provincial and federal governments. There was only one pond built to collect snow in Tatopani of Jumla. Now, I feel elated to hear that out of eight local units in Jumla, six have made policy-level decisions to replicate this. The facilitation and advice of British Council helped me write this story, and also supported me in furthering my journalistic career. In future, I will keep trying to write stories related to climate change and women, and make an effort have it implemented.



Krishnamaya Upadhyaya

Fields in Jumla that produced kali marsi now have apple farms

JUMLA - In recent days, apples are being grown in the fields in Jumla that earlier yielded kali marsi, a paddy species that only grows in Jumla. After the river started eroding paddy fields and turning them into sandy banks, farmers began opting for apples. Farmers say that this has not only stopped the river expansion, but also decreased women's workloads and increased economic standards.

"In 2011, almost-ripe kali marsi paddy was completely submerged by the river. Tears still fall from my eyes when I remember that day. Today, when I see bunches of apples in those very fields, it is a way for me to forget my woes," says Padmi Nepali from Til

Rural Municipality-4, Nuwakot.

A farmer from the village informed that members of 80 households have come together to farm apples commercially in these fields. Each farmer has planted 50-150 seedlings.

Every year, from March to November, women had to work hard to farm paddy. "Sowing seeds during March-April and harvesting the seedlings in May-June, weeding them from June to August, and harvesting them in November-December, it was laborious for women," says farmer Supadhara Nepali. According to her, apple farming has lightened



women's workload. From managing the orchard to picking apples and transporting them to the market, men and women do it together.

As roads have reached the village, the apples have started fetching a good price. Another farmer Kali Khode Nepali said that after she started earning cash by selling apples, she did not have to seek support from anyone else, and it was easy to provide for her children's education. "As traders have begun reaching the orchards to buy apples, they are now sold from NPR 50 to 60 (0.31-0.37 £) per kilo," says Nepali. The rural road is 10 minutes and the Karnali Highway is an hour's walk away from the orchards, so the apples have started finding a market. Farmers say that each of them is earning between NPR 100,000 -400,000 (617-2468£) per year through apple sales.

"Even though it is difficult for the first three years, they start bearing fruit from the fourth

year on. We are also benefitting well from the other legumes such as beans and black gram, vegetables including potatoes, cauliflower, radish, carrot, tomatoes, and other plants like peach and walnut which we have planted in the same field," said farmer Nira Upadhyaya.

Local resident Krishna Kanta Chaulagain says that the decision to plant apples has changed

"In 2011, almost-ripe kali marsi paddy was completely submerged by the river. Tears still fall from my eyes when I remember that day. Today, when I see bunches of apples in those very fields, it is a way for me to forget my woes,"



the lives of the farmers. “As we did not even have the funds to buy apple plants, in 2011 we requested a non-governmental organization working in the sector of flood and landslide mitigation to support us. We planted 500 apples after receiving them free of cost, now they are bearing fruit,” he said.

In Jumla, apples are planted in 9,000 hectares. Khem Raj Shahi, Agriculture Officer at the District Agriculture Development Office, said that out of them, apples in 7,500 hectares are bearing fruit, while the rest of the plants are growing. “In 1,000 hectares, high-density Fuji apples have been planted, while we have planted local varieties of Royal, Red, and Golden Delicious apples in the remaining area. If we are able to plant trees in all the barren areas, we can upgrade the life standard of farmers,” he said.

As there is no technology for storing apples for a long time, farmers are still forced to sell apples at the buyer’s price. Farmer Shanti Nepali says, “If there was a storage facility, we would probably sell the apples at higher rates. We do not have that at present.”

Agriculture Development Office, Jumla has informed that their office, along with provincial and federal government, is aiding the cooperatives and groups founded by the women to farm apples by offering support for orchard management, irrigation, plants, and manure through grants and other support. This exemplary practice has also motivated farmers to plant apples in other riverine fields.



<https://bit.ly/3qDIExA>



Snow collection ponds, an alternative to water canals

JUMLA - As escalating climate change has caused water sources to dry up and displaced irrigation channels, the farmers of Jumla have opted for snow ponds as an alternative.

“After we began farming apples in the south-facing field, we had to carry water for hours in a pot because of a lack of irrigation. We haven’t had to bear such hardship after building the snow collection pond,” said Basmati Thapa of Chandannath Municipality.

Water flows straight from the tin roof into the 5,000 liter pond during monsoon, while in winters, the snow needs to be collected and taken to the pond. Farmers say that they put in the snow from December to February and use

it from March to May, and use monsoon water for irrigation in the months from September to December.

Thapa, who says that she has been using this technology since seven years, mentioned that she has been profiting from the apples, and it has helped her meet costs for her children’s education and household expenses. “It used to snow a lot more in the past, but we did not know about this technology. Even though it snows less these days, we are collecting water during the monsoon and winter season,” she added.

Farmers also say that these ponds and water tanks lessen women’s workload. “We had to



walk on foot for three hours and queue up at a single source to fetch water. We had to stay overnight just for water. Now, we are free from that hardship,” Ummakali Dharala from Ranka of Tatopani Rural Municipality said. “The water is now enough for drinking, bathing, and feeding the cattle. We had never even imagined that there would be a settlement here, and that apples would bear fruit. Now, when we see the bunches of apples, it has become a platform for us to forget our woes.”

“This concept was introduced in Jumla with the aim of mitigating the impacts of climate change,” Ghanshayam Nagarkoti, Chairperson of Surya Samajik Sewa Sangh (Four S Jumla) said, “When we learnt snow pyramids were built to irrigate fields in Ladakh of India, we also began it here. Although we built the pond from plastic, mud and cement in the first few years, we have now modified it to mud and ferro cement tanks.”

After a joint research team comprising of scientists from the Horticulture Research Station Rajkot, experts from SNV, and agriculture technicians from Agriculture Development Office Jumla pronounced this technology successful, it has also been included at the policy level. This technology is being implemented since 2014 by the District Agriculture Development Office, and an organization named SNV Nepal.

“Budget has already been allocated for construction of 50 ponds last year, and 25

this year. Out of them, 12 are plastic ponds and 50 are cement and mud tanks. We also aim to include this technology though annual plans in places that have no alternative for irrigation,” Dhan Bahadur Kathayat, the Agri-extension Officer at the provincial Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives said.

“With a 75 percent grant from the provincial government, and 25 percent voluntary labor by the farmers, it cost NPR 150,000 (925 £) to build a cement ferro tank,” Ganga Devi Upadhyaya, Vice Chairperson of Tatopani Rural Municipality, said.

“Even though this technology was initiated by a non-governmental organization, it gives me great pleasure to see it at the government’s policy level,” says Basanta Kumar Chalise, Senior Scientist at Nepal Agriculture Research Centre. “When we compare apples, the ones that have been irrigated have bigger fruits, with more weight, and an adequate amount of sugar compared to the ones that haven’t been irrigated. If we can irrigate apples when they are ready to bud, flower, bear fruit, harvest, and lose their leaves, we can produce very good and quality fruits.”

Experts say that this technology can be used in other mountainous districts too.



<https://bit.ly/3KkEW2u>



Seed banks in the villages of Jumla to save indigenous crops

JUMLA - In order to support the preservation and expansion of indigenous crops like hog millet, fox millet, kali marsi paddy, horse gram, black soybean, tilkhudo (Bambax malabaricum) and maimas, a cooperative and women's group in Jumla has established a seed bank. The seed bank is established by local cooperative organizations and village groups with support from the District Agriculture Development Office.

"We have collected seeds of crops such as hog millet, fox millet, buckwheat, marse (a species of paddy), kali marsi paddy, tilkhudo, soybean, and maize. The bank has been helping out anyone in need in the village by providing

seeds when required, and supporting farming. This has also helped conserve indigenous crops," said Bishnu Rawal, Chairperson of the seed bank established in Jarmi of Tatopani Rural Municipality under the Lachhal Agriculture Cooperative Organization.

From September to November, the seed bank collects seeds of indigenous crops found in the village. From November onwards, it invests in the farmers of the group, cooperative and village, and also sends seeds out of the district as per requirement.

"As we provide seeds to poor farmers as per their requirement, and take back the borrowed



seed with some addition after harvesting, it has become easy to conserve seeds in the village,” Rewati Rawal, member of the seed bank established in Tatopani Rural Municipality, says.

For example, a farmer who has taken 10 kilos of seeds will give back 11 kilos the next year. This arrangement has been made for farmers associated with the cooperative, and nearby farmers. Farmers outside the rural municipality are sold seeds for money.

There is a growing market demand for indigenous crops in recent times, but as the

number of people engaged in farming is decreasing, the produce is depleting. Local women opine that as the prices for these crops are also satisfactory at present, selling superfluous produce would be a good source of income. “The millet found in our village is helpful for people with anemia. As other crops are also used as medicines for various illnesses, we have begun expanding their farming,” Farmer Kisannani Dangi from Tatopani Rural Municipality said.

Among the eight seed banks in Jumla, a few banks store seeds using mud and wood bins

For example, a farmer who has taken 10 kilos of seeds will give back 11 kilos the next year.

available at the local level, while other seed banks are of a more modern kind. For quality assurance, the seeds are graded, packaged, and labeled.

“As women have better experience in collecting, grading, packaging and labeling seeds in comparison to men, there is a higher participation of women here,” said Kamala Thapa, Agri-extension Officer at the District Agriculture Development Office.

Why did the women here show an interest in this? “After a profusion of white rice in the market in recent times, people stopped farming indigenous crops. There was a danger of indigenous crops disappearing, so we decided to save them,” said Dangi.

The Agriculture Development Office not only provides technical advice to those who are collecting and storing seeds in a scientific

manner, but has also supported some essential containers for seed storage. The members of the seed bank established in Jumla participate in the agricultural exhibitions and fairs held by the governments at the local, provincial and federal level. Thapa says that Jumla’s products have also found a good market in exhibitions conducted at the national level.

“There is a growing market demand, but as the yield has decreased, we have to focus on its conservation and farming expansion. For that, we need the support of the federal and provincial government. If a seed bank is established in every village, or at least each ward, then we can preserve crops and produce enough to meet demands,” Thapa says.



<https://bit.ly/33HZGk0>





Personal Experience

In the Terai-Madhesh region of Nepal where I live, it is not easy for women to work freely, though this situation is improving. In this fellowship, the mentoring sessions were impactful, as was the discussion. The suggestions and support I received when needed have helped my writing. My writing has improved after I started collating data, expert comments, and local experiences. I also received this feedback from my editor and readers. Mountain issues are raised in climate change discussions, so I was happy to have mentioned its impacts in the Terai Madhesh region. I could present local issues on a matter of international concern. I am committed to continue writing about climate change.



Madhuri Mahato

Use of plastic is taking on frightening proportions – but we can manage it with know-how

SARLAHI - In Hariwan, a group of women is operating a business by making soles of footwear from plastic waste. The 15 members involved in this work say that they make 1,000 soles per day, and earn NPR 100,000 (61 £) per month. This has also helped keep the environment clean.

“When we looked at options for plastic management, I found out that we could make footwear,”

“When we looked at options for plastic management, I found out that we could make footwear,” Nirmala Devi, an entrepreneur from Sarlahi, said, “We provide a certain amount for collection of waste plastic. We are also

relieved from the burning of plastic wastes.”

Haphazardly thrown plastic waste had clogged the river, due to which floods entered the village, inundated and swept away crops. The entire village had started looking polluted. But this year, even though it rained more than average, the

water was not obstructed. Local resident Umesh Mahato says, “Bins have been placed in front of each house to collect plastic waste. There has been an improvement in haphazard plastic waste disposal. The biggest benefit



is that we did not suffer from floods, even though it rained a lot.”

In this way, an entire village has become plastic-free. “The villagers have become aware of plastic waste, and concerned about environment and climate change,” says social leader Krishna Lal Karna. According to another local leader Keshav Raj Thapa, even after burning, plastic still retains toxic elements that harm the soil. “This campaign has helped reduce the effects of burning plastic, such as plants being unable to grow afterwards,” he says.

Women, who were limited to household chores, are happy to be working for the community, and for themselves. “In the Terai region, where a daughter-in-law is not allowed to venture out of her home, I am elated that I can work in an enterprise right in my village,”

said Sunita Shah. She also shared that it was easier to complete household chores and protect cattle when the water did not enter the village.

According to the World Bank, Nepal emits 234,000 tonnes of plastic-based waste annually, or 637 tonnes per day. A survey conducted in 271 municipalities and rural municipalities by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2019/20 found out that plastic waste was managed in three ways: 48.6% buried in soil, 32.1% burnt, and 27.4% thrown into the river.

Arpan Acharya from Doko Recyclers says that in Nepal, plastic is burned, and the problem considered solved. “But this creates holes in the ozone layer, raises the earth’s temperature, produces harmful gases, increases problems in oceans, and so on,” says Acharya.



In various parts of Nepal, one can find plastic even after digging for three meters. This plastic pandemic is a global challenge. It has been said that by 2050, 12 billion metric tonnes of plastic waste will be produced, and the oceans will have more plastic than fish. It takes 200-500 years for plastic to decay, and it emits harmful greenhouse gases in this process.

Plastic is produced out of petroleum and gas, major sources of greenhouse gases. To reach a zero-carbon emission goal, developed nations have committed to the use of electric vehicles instead of petroleum by 2030. However, there haven't been many voices raised about plastic waste.

It has been seen that rich countries export plastics and benefit economically. Those in the know say that the issue of plastics minimization has been purposely concealed, at national and international levels. The Government

of Nepal has imposed a ban on the use of plastic bags thinner than 40 microns. But what alternative do we have? "If we can introduce something instead of plastic, then we can ban it. At present, the government does not have an alternative," says Radha Wagle from the Ministry of Forests and Environment.

Entrepreneurs have also not been able to understand their responsibility. Sharad Sharma, the Chairperson of Nepal Plastic Manufacturers' Association, says, "Who will bear the expenses of thousands of employees and laborers, along with the investment and loans worth millions in plastic industries? There is plastic even in imported goods, the government has not been able to regulate that. The government should give us an alternative for this."



<https://bit.ly/3MjKage>



Amlekhganj compelled to drink polluted river water

BARA - Almost 10,000 residents of Amlekhganj, at the foothills of Chure, are compelled to drink murky river water since three decades. Some villages do not even have access to this water. It takes one-and-half to two hours to carry water home.

“I’ve been battling the problem of water shortage since I was married into this village 28 years ago. As the women suffer from lower backache, knee pain, and uterine issues, we even need to send little children to procure water,” Ramita Thapa expresses her desolation.

Women conserve rainwater in small pond-like structures, but that is not potable. “We are compelled to drink polluted water since

a young age,” says Nishan Thapa. “We have to buy and drink jars of packaged mineral water. This not only puts us under financial strain, but also forces us to miss school and college when we go to collect water.”

“I’ve been battling the problem of water shortage since I was married into this village 28 years ago.”

This region, which was known as Bhikshakholi, has a history of being named Amlekhganj after Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher eliminated slavery and settled emancipated (amlekh) slaves

rehabilitated here. But locals say that they feel discriminated against, as the state has been unable to provide them with the most basic need, water.

Water expert Dr. Rajan Thapa says, “Global temperature rise, along with the exploitation





of the Chure region, has caused the water shortage. Even when it rains heavily, the water will flow away, but does not enter the ground to recharge ground water.”

The women say that they are unable to rear cattle and poultry due to the water shortage. Sunita Devi says, “We have no cattle or farming.” Rajendra Shahi Thakuri says that his 38 bigaha (around 23.5 acres) of land is barren because of the lack of water. The men travel to other districts or countries for livelihood.

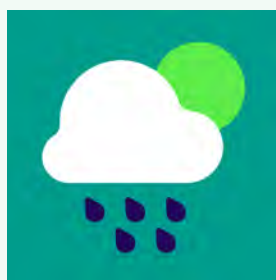
The tourism industry of this region, which includes the Parsa National Park, various lagoons, elephant safari, jungle safari, and temples such as Churiyamai and Thanimai, is endangered due to the lack of water. Mohan Sharma Lamichhane, from Hotel and Tourism Entrepreneurs’ Association, says, “There has been an investment of around NPR 1 billion

(6 million £) in the hotel business alone in Amlekhganj. But there are challenges to running the business because we need to purchase water.”

The lack of water has also impacted biodiversity. “There are problems caused by water shortage in the park that is the habitat of animals including elephants, tigers and deer,” Manoj Shah, Chief Conservation Officer of Parsa National Park, says. “After wildlife began coming near the villages, there has been a rise in instances of poaching, and the conservation campaign has been threatened.”

The Park is rebuilding an artificial pond for the wildlife. “We have to transport water through tankers for 25 artificial ponds,” says Shah.

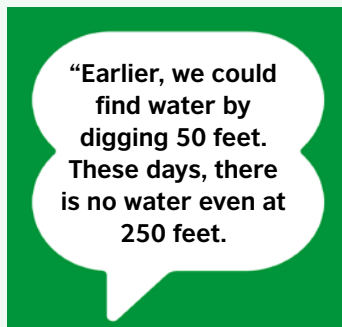
Jaki Ahmed, Chief at Office of Water Supply and Sanitation Bara, says that geologists



have also found ground water shortage in Amlekhganj. “They have concluded that there is no alternative to bringing in piped water, or ensuring long-term management by conserving river water,” Ahmed says.

The National Water Plan active in the area has not solved the problem. Local residents say, “We can bring in fuel underground from India, but why can we not transport water from neighboring village Pathlaiya? The government spends millions on large infrastructures, but why can’t it manage water, which is essential, for Amlekhganj?”

Narayan Lamichhane, Chairperson of the Amlekhganj Drinking Water Users’ Committee, says that there was an attempt to bring in piped water in 1997, but this did not materialize. “Earlier, we could find water by digging 50 feet. These days, there is no water even at 250 feet. The machine broke when it hit the bottom.”



An expert team from Province 2 government and Ministry of Drinking Water returned without being able to find a solution. Jitpur Simara Municipality claims that there are attempts to get the provincial government to endorse

a plan to bring in water from Pathlaiya. Om Prakash Sharma, Minister of Drinking Water and Energy Development, Province 2, said, “An expert team from the Nepal Engineers’ Association is conducting a study.”

Forty-seven percent of Nepal’s population lives in the Terai region. Ninety percent of the people here are dependent on ground water. According to experts, all the districts in this region might face this problem of soon. Expert Thapa says that it is essential to conserve the Chure region to ensure adequate water for the Terai region. It is also necessary to raise a voice about the drought affecting Terai due to melting mountains caused by climate change.



<https://bit.ly/3FCTdnM>





Personal Experience

This fellowship gave me a chance to travel solo for the first time, which was incredible. Travelling to Mahottari and Solukumbhu, so different geographically and culturally, gave me a chance to witness Nepal's diversity. It helped change my perspective as a journalist and a person. I also witnessed the injustices climate change is imposing on people who have done nothing to cause it. The workshop was a great opportunity to deep dive into the realities that women in far flung villages of Nepal face. It helped me understand intricacies linked to global climate change. I thank Jocelyn Timperley for her mentorship that helped shape my articles.



Marissa Leena Taylor

In Mahottari, reclaiming riverbeds for farmland

MAHOTTARI - At a field near the river Marha in Gaushala Municipality, Ragina Khatun will be harvesting rice for the first time in her life this year.

"It won't be much but it will help feed my family," said 60-year-old Khatun, with 15 family members.

Just a few years ago, Khatun didn't even have that field. The land was filled with rocks and sediment. With the help of the local government, almost 60 hectares of Marha's riverbed have been converted into agricultural land for over 300 households. To ensure the land is not washed away again, embankments have been

built and bioengineering methods employed by planting mango, litchi, lime, papaya, and bamboo in multi-layer farming.

The Marha once flowed year-round, but over the years, cut into its banks and its bed expanded. New farms on the riverbed face a constant threat of flooding. "Right now, the

river is completely dry, but once it rains, the water rises without warning," said Khatun.

Environmentalists attribute such flooding to the degradation of Chure.

"Deforestation of fragile Chure hills has increased sediment loads of seasonal rivers, causing them to flood downstream," said

"It won't be much but it will help feed my family,"



Arun Bhakta Shrestha, senior climate change specialist at the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). "Extreme precipitation is another reason."

According to a report by the government's Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, Mahottari is among four districts reporting a significant increase in precipitation. Environmentalists believe this is the result of climate change.

"IPCC report shows a direct correlation between floods and global warming around the world," said Vijaya Singh, resilience advisor at UNDP.

Such events will impact poorer countries like Nepal more, which ranks 10th in climate risk globally. The Nepal Disaster Report 2017 states that "more than 80 percent of Nepal's population is at risk from natural hazards such

as floods, landslides, windstorms, hailstorms, fires, earthquakes, and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods". Those who depend solely on natural resources, particularly women who remain in villages, are the most vulnerable.

Though there are other weather anomalies like rising temperature, the primary issue remains rain, which is inconsistent. Only people who can afford to bore deep wells can plant rice. "Every Asar, it rained enough to plant

"Deforestation of fragile Chure hills has increased sediment loads of seasonal rivers, causing them to flood downstream,"

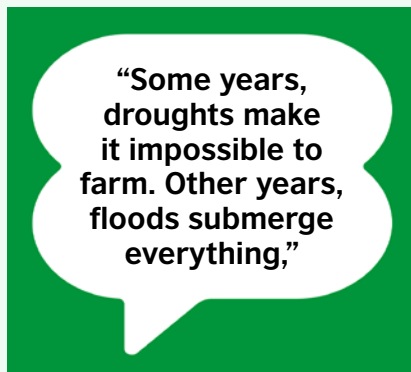


rice. But last year it rained a little in Bhadra and then directly in Baisakh,” said Sukuri Maya Balampake in nearby Kusmadi. She planted maize which did not grow.

This year, she is more hopeful. Here too, the local government has converted 50 hectares of riverine land into fields for brinjals, okra, tomatoes, and bitter gourds, etc. Balampake has already earned Rs 40,000 from brinjals.

But such measures are not enough in the long term. “Riverbed farming gives additional

income, but it is unsustainable,” said Abid Hussain, food security economist at ICIMOD. “Rivers change course every year. Farmers with fields next to rivers will always be vulnerable.”



For families in Gaushala though, this is their only option. “Some years, droughts make it impossible to farm. Other years, floods submerge everything,” said Balampake. “If we had an option to move somewhere, we would. But we have nowhere to go.”



<https://bit.ly/3KlrH1G>



How climate change is affecting Solukhumbu's potatoes

SOLUKHUMBU — The rain starts pattering just as Purna Maya Magar heats up rilduk, a traditional Sherpa dish where potatoes are cooked into a warm, hearty stew.

“Almost every family makes rilduk. The potatoes fill you up and the thick soup and timmur keeps the body warm,” said 46-year-old Magar, a resident of Pattale, Solukhumbu.

Magar uses potatoes in almost everything: from meat and vegetables to potato flatbread. The importance of potato in the Himalayas cannot be stressed enough. Potato grows

easily, providing steady nutrition throughout the year. Beyond 3500 metres, where a single crop is grown annually from April to October, only potatoes grow.

**“Erratic
rain is
responsible
for this,”**

In recent years, locals have been having problems with potato production.

“Last year almost 90 percent of the potatoes were destroyed,” Magar said. “They cost around Rs 300 per kilo, almost triple the usual price.”

Magar attributes it to a lack of rain. That could be part of changing climatic conditions,



say experts. Extreme weather events like droughts, erratic rain, and floods are becoming frequent. While the impact of such changes on indigenous communities in this ecologically fragile zone relying directly on their environment remains to be seen, it's certain that the consequences will be grave.

“Too much rain fosters a fungus that causes late blight disease, destroying the crop,” said Durga Bahadur Tiruwa, chairperson of Solukhumbu Agriculture Knowledge Center. “The frequency of this disease has increased.”

Despite being under the shadow of Everest, the mean temperature rise in this region is higher than the global average. According to a report by ICIMOD, from 1951 to 2010, the average temperature rise was 1.5 degrees Celsius in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region, while the global average was 0.6 degrees.

Says 72-year-old Doma Lama, who has never left Phaplu, “when I was little, there was so much snow that we couldn't step outside, not even to feed our cattle. I don't remember the last time it snowed that much.

These changes impact agriculture. In Solukhumbu, potato plantation is in November-December and harvest is in June. A 2008 study found that the harvesting season had shifted in Ghat (from mid-March to mid-January) and Phakding (from mid-March to mid-December).

Apples have almost been eradicated in the district, only a handful remain of the orchards of the past. Lacking color and lustre, the fruits are small and sour, only good for making alcohol.

“Erratic rain is responsible for this,” said Tiruwa. “There was reduced fruiting, early growing, dying, and drying of apple plants, which led to economic losses.”

Five years ago Jangbu Sherpa, 67, from Garma, started planting kiwi instead of apples. “One kiwi tree produces around 15-40 kgs of fruit,” said Sherpa, who has around 300 trees. It fetches a decent price in the market.

But switching from one crop to another is not sustainable.

“Switching crops or relying on one crop heavily is dangerous, it makes communities vulnerable. The best way is to build resilience by introducing varieties that can thrive in marginal soil and water,” said Abid Hussain, food security economist at ICIMOD.

Also, not all farmers have the option of switching. “We must farm potatoes,” said Suma Sherpa. “What do we eat otherwise?”



<https://bit.ly/3AhNVgw>





Personal Experience

The Far-West has always suffered from water shortage. Maybe because I grew up here, this seemed normal to me. But after participating in this workshop, I conducted in-depth reporting. When I heard about the hardships of women here, I realized that while we talk of big things, matters we consider negligible are creating a dangerous situation. Prior to this, climate change had not found a place in my stories – not because I did not want to, but because I did not have the information. My stories on water shortage used to be simple. In this fellowship, I got a chance to converse with experts and scientists. I saw dangerous facets of things that seemed unimportant, and I felt it was necessary to inform people about this danger. I will orient my journalist friends about things that I have learnt.



Nirmala Khadayat

Half of a woman's life is spent in fetching water

DOTI - Bishna Khadka, from Tikha of Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality-1, begins her morning by worrying about leaving her one-year-old behind to fetch water. Bishna's husband is in India for employment. She has an elderly mother-in-law and two daughters. "The responsibility of fetching water from an hour away is on my shoulders," Khadka shares her experience.

"However sick I might be, I have to leave home at five in the morning and fetch water in a 30-liter pot from Dwarigad, 1.5 hours away,"

The sorrows of Anita Kathayat, from the same place, are no less. "However sick I might be, I have to leave home at five in the morning and fetch water in a 30-liter pot from Dwarigad, 1.5 hours away," Kathayat says.

Selina Parki from Tikha also leaves behind her six-month old breastfeeding daughter alone in a room to fetch water. As her husband has gone to India in search of employment, only Selina and her infant daughter are at home.

Fetching water in the mornings, and again in the evenings if the water finishes, going to a bigger river farther away to bathe, are

the daily chores of women in this region. The river water begins depleting from October, and there is a complete crisis during by April. "Sometimes, we have to spend our nights at the water source waiting for our turn,"



local resident Gauradevi Bhul shared her woes. Local residents also say that there are disputes as the households near water sources refuse to let others fill water easily.

According to the World Health Organization, a healthy person needs around 7.5-15 liters of clean water each day for drinking and hygiene. But this is not fulfilled in Doti. Health personnel say that many people fall ill due to the water shortage and polluted water.

“The number of patients with diarrhea, kidney issues, stones, constipation, headache, exhaustion, lack of appetite, dry skin, burning of the eyes, chest and throat, yellowed and burning urine are increasing,” informed Manisha Khadka, Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) at the Tikha Health Post.



The women are tasked with water management, due to which many of them cannot go to school, and are married off and become mothers early. Due to the water shortage, women cannot maintain adequate cleanliness during menstruation, leading to complex reproductive health problems. As women are not prioritized in healthcare, many lose their lives early while others face physical and mental issues.

Water had always been in short supply in Doti. But the problem has compounded in the last two decades, when water sources began drying up. “Earlier, there were several water sources and rivers. But since a decade, a lot of these rivers and water sources are drying,” opines 70-year-old Tara Khadka.



“According to a study conducted by the Rural Village Water Resources Management Project, every year, 50 percent of water sources have been drying up at a rate of seven percent,” informed Pallav Raj Nepal, Climate Change Researcher.

“Since a decade, there have been instances of unexpected torrential rainfall in Doti. When it doesn’t rain, there is drought. This has impacted the water reservoirs, they are unable to recharge,” says Ganesh Tripathi, Soil Conservation Officer at the Soil and Watershed Management Office in Doti. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority has also confirmed this trend.

“Rainfall is also erratic because of deforestation. In many places, construction is also impacting water sources,” says Ram Babu Mishra, Meteorologist at the Office of Hydrology and Meteorology, Kohalpur.

Madan Thapa, Secretary General of Punarjagran Samaj Nepal, that works in this sector, says that this is an alarming stage.

“If we do not pay attention to conserving water sources, we will face dangerous circumstances in the future,” Thapa says.

In four wards of Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality of Doti, urban drinking water projects are being implemented with the support of Asian Development Bank.

“Even if the projects are completed on time, the local residents will have to wait for three-four years to get water,” Hari Dhakal, Chief of the Project’s Far-Western Region Office, informed. At the municipality, seven projects by the Far-western Provincial government are in operation, and are also prioritized in this year’s budget. But local residents are unaware of these projects.

**“If we do not
pay attention to
conserving water
sources, we will
face dangerous
circumstances in
the future,”**



<https://bit.ly/3qCw94b>





Personal Experience

Mostly men report on science in Nepal. This program, exclusively for women to engage in climate reporting, was thrilling. Our facilitator Jocelyn introduced different topics, exercises, and discussions. We fellows learned so much from each other. In particular, I learned about solution journalism which I had never heard of before. We only hear of climate change related problems, so I worked on positive narratives around climate change. The field visit was exotic and wonderful. With what I have learned from the workshop, I am eager to build my career in environment reporting and encourage young women to do climate reporting.



Nisha Rai

The entrepreneur who engages women in waste management

KATHMANDU - Women often work as recyclers inside homes, but their participation in public waste management remains low. Avni Ventures, a waste business where 50 percent of the employees are women, is working to change that. The women at Avni help address climate change by sorting, cleaning, separating, and sifting through recyclable material.

In Nepal, men account for 76 percent of formal waste collection workers. Men earn more because they are more likely to work at night when most of the waste arrives. Men dominate not only in the informal waste economy by dealing and owning recycling businesses, but also in the formal one by owning and managing companies.

“We need to bring more women into decision-making positions in this sector to create climate-friendly environments and combat gender inequality,” says Shilshila Acharya, founder and director of Avni Ventures. Acharya started out as an activist, participating in demonstrations against climate change. Before long, however, she decided that whatever she did had to improve the environment. Her organization, Avni Ventures, focuses on climate education awareness among young people, women, and politicians through campaigns and training.

Acharya draws a parallel between misogyny in society and how humans treat the environment. “The way men dominate women is exactly how humans dominate nature. We



must view climate issues through the lens of social perspectives,” she says. “The solution to climate change and to gender discrimination is the same. Understanding the role of women and nature is important.”

To achieve that goal, she thinks several strategies must be employed, including media advocacy, policy guidance, day-to-day activism and entrepreneurship. Moreover, the meaningful participation of women in every aspect of processing waste is a must.

“Men say women can’t be decision-makers because it is too difficult a task for them. How could women ever make decisions about the environment?” says Acharya. Of course, this attitude clashes harshly with reality. Women

have traditionally been waste managers—usually for free at home.

At Avni, Sushila Kathyat Giri from Jumla works as a waste entrepreneur, as CEO of the Harit Nagar Abhiyan waste management program. Kahayat did not know much about waste management, but she learned at Avni and now heads an association of 14 women that advocate for better waste management in their community. Dozens of women in the association make and sell products from collected plastic waste. Others have recently been trained in making compost from organic waste.

“The way men dominate women is exactly how humans dominate nature. he lens of social perspectives,”


Avni has supported 27 waste entrepreneurs. Purnima Sherpa, a deaf-mute woman, is proud of the impact she is



having. “She works better and harder than the men,” Acharya explains.

The government is not helping the private sector as much as it could, says Acharya. “Although advances have been made in training and enabling women to benefit more fully from the waste management sector, obstacles still remain,” says Acharya.

One of the biggest problems is the lack of women leadership in politics. Because all the decision-makers are male, they don’t understand why they need more female waste managers to address climate change, Acharya points out.



"Although advances have been made in training and enabling women to benefit more fully from the waste management sector, obstacles still remain,"



<https://bit.ly/34C6oJn>



Planting indigenous crops to build climate resilience

KASKI - Kushal Poudel often thinks about a dinner conversation with his father about how different farming was just a decade ago. Poudel's village, Annapurna Gaunpalika-3 in Kaski, was famed for its fertile land; in fact, the name Annapurna means an 'abundance of food'.

Poudel's father told him about the many indigenous crops that used to grow in the village when he was younger, rice with medicinal properties and sweet finger millet. All these species are now lost. "According to the Department of Customs, of the total seeds planted in Nepal, 80 percent is imported, costing the country billions of rupees worth of chemical inputs that harm our soil and environment," said Poudel, an agriculturalist.

"More than 50 percent of Nepal's agriculture biodiversity is lost."

Poudel started farming indigenous crops such as gittha bhyakur (bitter yam) and sweet potatoes after finishing his bachelor's degree in agriculture.

"Every year, thousands of students get a degree in Agriculture Science, but they either look for jobs or go abroad," said 24-year-old Poudel. "But if my generation doesn't take the initiative, what's the point?"

By planting indigenous crops, Poudel also wants to dispel common misconceptions around indigenous foods in Nepal. "Isn't gittha bhyakur Raute food?', people ask, associating



such crops with poorer, marginalized communities,” said Poudel. “But these foods have nutritional value, are climate-friendly, and can contribute to mitigating climate change.” Such crops do not require much water or nurturing and can grow even in barren land.

Poudel traveled from village to village collecting tuber crops, and chose a neglected, sloping, rocky area with thin soil, covered in small trees and grass. He deliberately undertook the challenge of regenerating this marginal land to show that anything is possible. He planted tubers in this area

using a bioengineering technique that utilizes bamboo to make a terrace. The terrace is then filled with soil, manure, and dried leaves. In areas with no soil, he planted crops in sacks filled with soil and manure.

Poudel is currently growing more than 30 varieties of crops. He has also saved seeds, tubers, and other materials needed to propagate more than 80 species of indigenous and neglected crops.

“These crops have immense potential to reduce hunger and malnutrition, and

help smallholder farmers adapt to climate change,” said Chinimaya Majhi, chairperson of the National Indigenous Women’s Federation. Majhi advocates for land and indigenous foods issues.

Majhi grew up eating tuber crops. Her mother taught her traditional methods for saving plants and seeds. Chinimaya once traveled to the Philippines and saw that every meal had sweet potatoes. “I also heard that when the typhoon hit the Philippines, thousands of people ate sweet

potatoes until international relief reached them,” said Majhi. “Sweet potato is nutritious and valuable in disaster recovery, especially in rural communities. Such indigenous food can benefit Nepal as well, where disasters and food crises happen every year.”

Recent disasters such as landslides and heavy rainfall have highlighted the importance of growing climate-resilient crops. In 2017, Nepal endorsed the Indigenous Crops Promotion and Conservation Execution Work Plan. In the first phase, the government implemented a three-year program in Humla, Jumla, and Lamjung.

“Every year, thousands of students get a degree in Agriculture Science, but they either look for jobs or go abroad,”



<https://bit.ly/340JloH>

A place to call home, away from home

DOLAKHA - For the households in Chhemawati VDC in Dolakha, rain always rings an alarm: the villagers fear for their lives. Almost all the houses in the village were reduced to rubble in the devastating 2015 earthquake. For months they lived under tarpaulin tents next to their ruined homes.

And then, a group of women decided to relocate to Bhimeshwar Municipality nearby for the safety of their families. They have not been able to move back to their village, but every day they go to cultivate their land.

“Our farmland is here,” lamented Sunita Thami. “We can’t leave this place because we need the food, even though you never know when there will be a landslide.”

Thami remembers the tragedy that destroyed her house six years ago. “It was an enormous landslide that took many lives. Then we decided to move to Bhimeshwar,” she said.


A group of engineers and geologists came to her village and advised them to leave the place. “But we didn’t have anywhere to go until the government arranged somewhere for us to relocate,” Thami says.

“We can’t afford to buy land elsewhere,” said Masini Thami, another woman who relocated. “All my life, I have been moving from place to place to avoid the danger of landslides.”

A decade ago, when landslides engulfed her house, Masini had fled into the forest with her family, where they grew potatoes. “I grew potatoes for food,” she said. “Women can do anything for survival.”

56 families in this Thami village reached out to the District Administration Office, urging officials to assist them in resettling. After several months of discussions, the government finally provided a place for them in Bhimeshwar, Masini said.

It was especially the women who wanted to relocate, as they had infants and small children. “Women are more likely than men to be affected by disasters. Our roles as primary caregivers and providers of food and fuel make us more vulnerable. We must take the initiative for our family’s safety,” Masini said. “Here I can sleep without fear. I feel safe.”



“All my life, I have been moving from place to place to avoid the danger of landslides.”

So far, this is the only community that has been successfully resettled by the government.

Following the assessment by geologists and engineers, a team of experts made a similar recommendation for Chhemawati. The government finally relocated them to Bhimeshwar Municipality.

It has been six years since a landslide swept away Sarita Thami’s house. She has since been

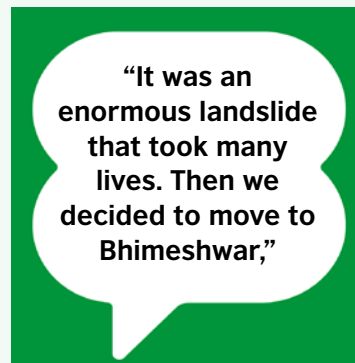


relocated to Bhimeshwar. Leaving their old house was very difficult for her: she had many happy memories there. However, moving has many positives too: her children's school is nearby, as is the health post and the market.

"We had been awaiting the promised help to reconstruct a house in a safer location," Sarita said. "The government gave us 3,00,000 rupees (1851 £) for reconstruction."

A majority of the 56 displaced families are now living in the new settlement. The local government officer has promised that they will get land deeds within six months. Sarita brims with hope. "We will make good memories

here," she said, "because my children will not have to suffer from landslides anymore."



<https://bit.ly/3JypmiN>





Personal Experience

This is my first reporting in the climate change sector. I am happy that I got to understand the challenges through field reporting. But I witnessed a completely different situation from what I had expected, which disturbed me. I saw a severe water shortage in four villages of Panchkhal Municipality. Well-off people migrate to developed countries and Kathmandu. But poor people, marginalized communities and women are forced to sell their labor at cheap rates in India and the Gulf countries, which saddened me. After this opportunity provided by The British Council, I have begun to report in the climate beat. I have done dozens of reports. In the future, I will continue doing investigative stories. I am enthused to continue in-depth investigations.



Nitu Ghale

Villagers head towards Lebanon after the village dries up

KABHRE - Statistics from the Department of Foreign Employment show that in 2012 and 2013, 317 women travelled from Kavre to the Gulf region for employment. Tshering Tamang, from Hokse of Paanchkhal Municipality-8, reached Lebanon during that period. She had migrated abroad due to severe water shortage that made farming difficult. After her monthly salary of NPR 10,000-20,000 (61-123 £) was inadequate even to pay the loan that she took to build her home, she came back to Nepal. "Women have not received the cost of their labor. I was compelled to work for 10,000 rupees (61 £). I am nearing old age, how long can I work?" 51-year-old Tamang said with tears in her eyes.

The Gulf counties have been a destination for labor migration for Nepalis since the mid-80s. The World Bank has estimated that by 2050, over 216 million people could migrate within or outside their own counties. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report 2021 has estimated that 40 million people will be displaced only within South Asia, and many from countries like Nepal will opt for foreign employment.

According to Regan Sapkota from the Ministry of Forests and Environment, the residents of Dhe village in Mustang had migrated to Thangchung in 2009, after the area started receiving less than 200 ml



annual rainfall. A preliminary study by Nepal Water Conservation Foundation in 2016 identified the need to migrate from places such as Manungkot of Tanahu, Ramprasad Rai Municipality of Bhojpur, Shahidbhumi and Mahalaxmi Municipalities of Dhankuta, Dalome of Mustang, and Chhatreshwori of Salyan. Around 1.5 million people have migrated from the mountains and hills to the plains. People have migrated to the plains due to disasters, hazardous events, difficulty in farming due to water shortage, and depletion in crop yield.

After the earthquake destroyed her home, Tamang has built a home on a slope, as she does not have land in a plain area. Even though there is electricity, there is no road or water. She lives with her 84-year-old mother. Her two daughters are married.

As the wells and taps of the village have dried up, farmers here grow a single crop annually,

maize. The locals collect rainwater, but Tshering does not even have an appropriate vessel for that. Sanjay Tamang, Chairperson of Ward No. 8, claimed that the ward was distributing deep boring water to the villagers. But months go by before Tshering sees water in her tap.

Tamang has sown tomatoes in the monsoon, but she is losing sleep after incessant rain has turned her tomatoes black. Tying up the tomato plants with a rope, she said, “The rainfall is quite unexpected. It is incessant once it begins, or else there isn’t a single drop. It wasn’t like this earlier.”

The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology has also informed that rainfall has been above average in the area this year. The department’s Senior Divisional Meteorologist Indira Kandel says, “From 1976 to 2019, there has been an annual decrease of 7 percent in rainfall in



Panchkhal. But there seems to be torrential rainfall some years.”

According to a recent report released by the Ministry of Forests and Environment, rainfall patterns have changed due to climate change. In the hilly region, within a span of 30 years, water sources have decreased by 30 percent. It has been estimated that water hazards will keep growing in Nepal till 2030, and will exacerbate even more by 2050. The World Migration Report 2020 has analyzed that the remittance received by Nepal will be expended towards mitigating climate change induced hazards.

In Bhetwalthok, 6-7 kilometers away from Hokse, people have to make do with one pot of water for two days in March-April. In the Dalit settlement with 70 households, each

house has someone in India. Thirty-one-year-old Sanumaya Pahari from Ward No. 9 got married to a Lebanese man and settled there. Her sister, 21-year-old Sashina Pahari, said, “She doesn’t have these hardships there. She has enough water to use.” After failing the Secondary Education Examination, Pahari says that she is also opting for foreign employment.

Kiran Shrestha, Chairperson of Ward No. 9 of Paanchkhal, informed that over 50 percent of the population was engaged in foreign employment. He said, “There are no alternative opportunities. Many have shifted, a lot more migrated abroad. Those who have remained are living here bearing hardships.”



<https://bit.ly/3uTugCP>





Personal Experience

Even though I have been doing environment reporting since 2017, I feel capable of conducting even more in-depth work after this training. In the workshop, we not only learnt about women combating environmental challenges, but also learnt to compare issues in their entirety. We also went through the safety and security measures to be followed during news reporting, risks faced by women, and possible solutions. We learnt how to reach the depth of an issue and conduct effective analysis. I enjoyed learning in a group using technology. This learning will be useful for me in the long term, as climate change has already become my reporting beat. I got an opportunity to identify the real challenges of the community while reporting.



Sabitri Giri

Phopli's women living a fearful life due to landslides

PYUTHAN - Hira GC, from Phopli of Naubahini Rural Municipality, begins praying as soon as it begins raining. After her walking cane was buried in the landslide of 2017 BS, she crawled out of her house with great difficulty. When she came out, the landslide had already buried the entire village including her cattle, house, and farm. "We hadn't had such a huge landslide before 2016. We faced the problem of landslide after bulldozers began expanding roads," she shares her experience. That year, 26 villagers lost their lives in the landslide.

As most of the men here travel to India and third countries to earn money, the women are the ones suffering from the landslides. Due to the problem of rainwater entering their

houses, the women of Phopli head out to dig canals, putting their lives at risk. Laxmi Gharti Magar says, "As soon as it starts raining, we carry our spades and run out to dig canals to divert the water." When landslides bury her food stores, she says her family eats if the neighbors show some mercy. Else, they tie up their stomachs and stay hungry.

When there is a landslide, water sources are buried and water pipes break. Women are forced to use dirty water. Laxmi Gharti Mahar says, "We have to fetch water from afar. As there are many of us, the water is inadequate." Magar fell ill during the landslide, but could not even get her hands on paracetamol. Local residents say that there is added risk because



there is no path to walk to the hospital. We can easily imagine the pain of menstruating women and new mothers.

sweep away mud and inundate houses. The newly dug road tracks mark the whole hills red, adding to this hazard.”

Dumanta Bohora, who saved her four children with great difficulty during the 2017 landslide, still grows somber when she remembers that day. Bohora, a local level public representative, says, “Even though I am an elected ward member, no one listens to my appeal that roads should not be built haphazardly.”

“We hadn’t had such a huge landslide before 2016. We faced the problem of landslide after bulldozers began expanding roads,”

Phopli, that is at a steep incline, has less rocks or stones and more soil, and there is a lot of deforestation. The land here was badly ruptured during the 2015 earthquake. Added to that was the road construction, which negatively impacted Phopli. Says 68-year-old Gopal Ghimire, “Unseasonal torrential rains

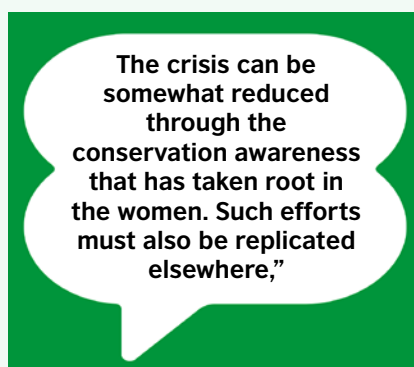
Phopli residents complain that even though they have demanded that the old roads be made safe instead of digging new ones, and appealed for an environmental impact assessment, the local government has not heeded them. A local resident, under

condition of not disclosing their name, said, “The Ward Chairperson makes his own plans, which we do not know of. Then suddenly, we see a bulldozer. If an environmental assessment had been conducted, why would there be a landslide as soon as the road is dug up?”

Geologists had considered the Phopli region unsuitable for habitation. But the locals are



compelled to live here. “Instead of displacing us from the place of our ancestors, this place should be made safe. We require drainage, and a building to take shelter when a landslide takes place,” said local youth Ram Kumar Ghimire.



municipality had allocated NPR 200,000 (1234 £) for landslide mitigation. “Earlier, the amount was not set aside for landslide, but a lump sum was allocated for hazards. This was used to distribute relief materials during disasters. As per the demands of the local

Despite the risk of landslides, there is an increased trend of road construction. This is considered an achievement by the local government. “The road has been expanded according to recommendations by technicians and engineers. We have built a bio embankment, but have taken no other initiatives for landslide mitigation,” said Obiram Bika, Chairperson of Ward No. 8.

residents, we have initiated mesh wires and embankments in landslide-affected places,” he assured.

Shiva Rijal, the Chairperson of Naubahini Rural Municipality, informed that the rural

To reduce the hazards of landslide, women have begun constructing bio embankments, and planting trees. “The crisis can be somewhat reduced through the conservation awareness that has taken root in the women. Such efforts must also be replicated elsewhere,” said Bhaskar Chaudhary, who works in Phopli’s conservation sector.

 <https://bit.ly/34HuulG>

Desolate forest turned into green sanctuary

DANG - There was a time when the villagers herded all the village's cattle towards the forest, and considered the forest as the cattle's grazing ground. Kalapani Community Forest in Ward No. 5 of Rapti Rural Municipality had been ruined due to overexploitation. After the residents of Sishahniya-5, Kalapani, stopped grazing their cattle in the forests, the forest has been transformed.

According to the locals, cattle grazing was banned in the forest since 2001. After cattle grazing stopped, the plants, grass, vegetation such as elephant grass, wildlife, and water sources are being conserved. The desolate hill has changed into a green, alluring forest today.

Locals say that there were many problems when the forest was denuded, and the water sources had dried up. Chhabi Lal Chaudhary, Chairperson of the Community Forest Users'

Group (CFUG), says, "There was little fuel wood in the forest those days. We would collect and burn roots of plants. There was no fodder for cattle. As there was only one well, we had to queue up to fill water. Even that dried up sometimes, and we were forced to drink the river's polluted water."

Dev Prasad Chaudhary, Advisor to the CFUG, says, "This place was a desert. The women would go out to cut fuel wood at the rooster's crow in the morning. The smoke caused a disease that almost left us blind. We are quite comfortable now. When we use the trees and plants from the forest, we forget our past trouble."

**This place
was a
desert.**

What can we not do if we put our minds to it? As if to exemplify this, the women who faced great difficulties in the past are themselves involved in forest conservation today. They make conservation plans as part of the Kalapani CFUG. They hold discussions





and monitor the forest. There is an increase of conservation awareness in the women. Although not everyone was of the same mind in the past about conserving the forest, the local residents are unified now. This has caused many transformations in their lifestyle.

“As there is adequate water now, I have grown vegetables in my land. I grow vegetables not only during monsoon, but during winter, too. With my income selling vegetables, I buy books and notebooks for the children, and have also been able to buy clothes for myself,” Mantunni Chaudhary from Kalapani CFUG says.

“We had to go up to the river to wash our clothes, now that we have water nearer home, it has become easier,” adds Hari Kumari Chaudhary.

“After water sources have increased, we have also been able to sell the thatch grass grown in the forest,” says Belmati Chaudhary.

After water sources dried up due to deforestation, the women initially started preserving the forest at one end, and using it at the other end. After a while, experience taught them that they needed to conserve the forests at both ends. That experience has now matured. Men are also supporting this awareness and initiation displayed by women. “We help the women in many ways. We have placed women at the cooperative and CFUG, because women are needed in these places,

and they need to move ahead,” local resident Bishnu Prasad Pokhrel says.

The major causes of deforestation are haphazard use of resources and wildfire. The users of Kalapani Community Forest have protected the forest from these two things, and have conserved biodiversity alongside. The locals have already realized that conservation will help them solve the crisis, and also ease their daily life.



The local government has also become responsible to ensure continuation of conservation activities. Gowardhan Rau, chair of Ward No. 5 says, “We have taken steps at the ward level to ensure long-term conservation. We allocate a budget of NPR 500,000-800,000 (3085-4936

₹) each year to conserve the Khauraha Baba pond inside the forest. We also set aside a budget for community forest development. To empower women involved in agriculture, we conduct agricultural trainings.”

All the changes in the village have become possible after conservation initiatives. The enthusiasm displayed by locals towards conservation is appreciable. This enthusiasm helped the local residents benefit from the forest. Other CFUGs also need to make an effort like the Kalapani CFUG.



<https://bit.ly/3gNYAXq>





Personal Experience

This reporting grant has exceptionally broadened my perspective on climate storytelling. I especially realized the need to report more on women who are disproportionately impacted by climate change. While reporting in the field, I realized that we need to follow up on stories that we work on. Solutions journalism is something I am really curious about, and something I am interested to pursue more in future. This workshop provided a wonderful opportunity to meet different women reporters from different parts of Nepal. The mentorship from Jocelyn inspired me to work more on this subject as a mountain conservationist and environmental storyteller.



Sonam Choeyki Lama

Climate change is a disaster in the Nepal Himalayas

DOLPA - In the village of Tso in Dolpo of Nepal, Namdak Sangmo watches other women from her village harvest buckwheat. Sangmo, 68, does not have her own crop to harvest because she does not have any land anymore. Her riverside terraces in the remote western mountain district of Nepal were washed away by a flash flood in 2012, and another one in 2019 destroyed what was left. She is not alone, almost half the villagers in Tso lost their fields when mud and boulders raced down from Mt Kanjiroba.

A Himalayan Glacial Lake Inventory by ICIMOD and UNDP mapped 3,624 new glacial lakes and found that 47 of them could burst anytime, with the risk of catastrophic flooding.

Scientists say there is evidence that extreme weather in the Himalaya are a result of a hotter atmosphere. The 2021 monsoon saw freak downpours and unprecedented rainfall in Nepal. A flood in June on the Melamchi River damaged Kathmandu's water-supply project, and there was record-breaking rainfall that unleashed deadly floods in Manang. A 7-month winter drought led to wildfires and floods in Dolpo, displacing farmers and forcing them to migrate.



The Himalayas are warming between 0.3-0.7°C faster than the global average, causing glaciers to shrink, snowlines to recede, and increasing the danger of floods from expanding glacial lakes. A Himalayan Glacial Lake Inventory by ICIMOD and UNDP mapped 3,624 new glacial lakes and found that 47 of them could burst anytime, with the risk of catastrophic flooding.

In Dolpo, most men have left rural areas to work in cities or abroad, and the women bear the brunt—walking farther for water, suffering from failed harvests. Women climb up to the high slopes in spring for yarsagumba, the caterpillar fungus prized in Chinese medicine for its supposed aphrodisiac properties. Sangmo used to collect at least 100 pieces of fungus in the past, two years ago she found only six, and this spring none at all. While over-

harvesting has been a reason for the decline, it should have revived in the past two years of pandemic and lockdown. Unseasonal snowfall, long periods of drought and warmer weather are affecting yarsagumba, too.

“We may have angered the gods of Kanjiroba,”

Without her fields, with no income from tourism due to the pandemic, and a decline in yarsagumba crop, Sangmo is worried. She has fallen back on her faith in the Tibetan animist belief system. “We may have angered the gods of Kanjiroba,”

says Sangmo. “We made the river impure and many outsiders came and polluted the lake.”

Studies have shown that people across the world have been responding to the changing climate with local belief systems and traditions. The monk at the local monastery,



Khenpo Lama, performed a ritual to appeal to Mt Kanjiroba. He believes it worked.

However, the local government and Shey Phoksundo National Park are not relying on prayers. They built an embankment along the river after the 2012 flood, but it was washed away in the second flood in 2019. “We may need a bigger budget to build a proper wall

that will save the village the next time there is a big flood, I am trying to convince the municipality authorities, but we need more help,” says Nima Lama, the ward chair.



<https://bit.ly/3I5iWHi>





Personal Experience

The workshop helped Nepali women journalists including myself build conversations around gender and climate change. Reporting from Bajura was a challenge due to its terrain. It took me two days by air, road and foot to reach Mukti Kot. But the hurdles were worth crossing. The journey from reporting to publishing was time consuming as some organizations seemed reluctant to provide expert opinion and space, given the issue was underreported. I got the opportunity to connect to experts, affected groups and stakeholders, and incorporate scientific and historical evidence to narrate stories, which I treasure. I seek to reflect this learning in future work.



Sonam Lama

How the climate crisis adds to child marriage in Nepal

BAJURA - "Mulai kyai thaa bhayaa nai," murmurs Birjaman, fatigue etched on his wizened face. He has just made a steep 3-hour climb from his village of Mukti Kot to a pharmacy carrying his semi-conscious daughter-in-law Reti.

She has postpartum haemorrhage. The clinic managed to save her life, but not her three-month foetus. "We get miscarriages like this daily. Many do not make it," says Gopal Singh at the pharmacy. "Young mothers are not physically mature for childbearing."

"We get miscarriages like this daily. Many do not make it,"

"My father married me off at 16 saying I would have a good life," recalls Reti, who at 22 already has two children. Marriage before age 20 is punishable by law in Nepal, but is common. Low female literacy, poverty, discrimination and cultural norms play a role, but child marriage has become more prevalent as droughts and floods destroy harvests of subsistence farmers.

"Life here is getting tougher. If we get our daughters married, we do not have to feed them," says Rauthi, who has seven children, two of whom are handicapped.



Nearly 40% of girls in Nepal marry before they are 18, while some 14% give birth to their first child before 19. The rate is higher in Dalit communities. The government plans to end child marriage by 2030, an ambitious target.

At nearby Radhamata Secondary School, only 13 of the 113 students in Grade 10 are unmarried. Says Manshova Buddha, 17: “With so many friends married, I feel the pressure. But I am not going to give up on my dreams.”

The link between drought and child marriage is proven by research in India. Reetika Revathy Subramanian has studied how drought-induced migration in Marathwada has increased underage marriage. “The decision is shaped by intersecting factors including poverty, access to education,

social pressure and norms, harassment and intimidation, which is further exacerbated by disaster,” she explains.

Last winter, western Nepal suffered a 6-month drought followed by wildfires. This year a freak post-monsoon storm destroyed standing crops. Scientists say global warming is triggering such extreme weather. Families in food-deficit western Nepal have been pushed over the edge.

This is evident in Bajura with more than 70% of people below the poverty line, while Nepal’s average is 26%. Only 9% of the land is arable, and 1.42% irrigated. Barley, wheat, maize and millet harvests have dropped in ten years. The district faces a shortage of 11,000 tons of food grain yearly, and a World Food



“Life here is getting tougher. If we get our daughters married, we do not have to feed them,”

Programme (WFP) bulletin classified 85% of the population as food insecure. Muktikot is classified as very vulnerable, the harvest only enough for three months.

30-year precipitation data at the nearby Martadi met station shows that total annual rainfall has fallen. “There is little winter snow that we need for marsi paddy and buckwheat,” says 65-year-old Brija Bahadur Bam.

The answer lies in making irrigation available to farmers. Village officials and locals believe

that relocation is the way out. Plans are afoot for rehabilitation to a place with more rainfall.

Muktikot got its name from Maoists guerrillas who wanted to show that the Dalit village was liberated from caste discrimination. Sixteen years on, life is worse.

(Some names have been changed.)



<https://bit.ly/3LC7EN6>





Personal Experience

Climate change is a technical issue, so not many journalists attempt it. As a passionate environment journalist, this workshop enhanced my confidence to report. After field reporting, I felt that climate change is a cross-cutting issue, touching multiple aspects. Studies linking tourism to climate change are few, which was a challenge. Another challenge was the destination, roads were bad and local businesses had closed due to the pandemic. I learnt that stories should represent the voices of those who are vulnerable: women first face the impacts of climate change, but their voices are ignored as journalists prefer to talk to men.



Sujata Karki

Climate change and pandemic hit tourism hard in Ghandruk

KASKI - Beena Ghale, 30, owns Annapurna Guest House in Ghandruk, a popular hill station along the Annapurna trekking route. In the nine years since she began running the hotel, she has not had it so empty.

With the lockdown due to pandemic forcing the closure of her hotel, Beena feels she should do something else. "But there is no option," said Ghale. Her family depends on the hotel where she used to employ half a dozen people.

Ghale grows vegetables in her garden but it is not even enough for her family of five. Besides

the pandemic, the extreme weather conditions also bother her. "The weather has become warmer. Erratic rainfall and unexpected snowfall has hit trekkers hard," she said. "Less trekkers are venturing into this scenic village."

"Climate change has direct and indirect impacts on tourism,"

Officials agree that climate change has impacted Nepal's tourism. "The topography of this area has become riskier due to increasing landslides and floods. More than 190 people died in these incidents

last year," said Dr. Maheshwar Dhakal, Secretary at the Province Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment.



“Climate change has direct and indirect impacts on tourism,” said Dr Manish Raj Pandey, Climate Change expert of Green Climate Fund (GCF). “Tourism infrastructure may be impacted due to extreme weather events, and there may be losses of biodiversity and increase in natural disasters.”

The Hudhud cyclone in 2014 left hundreds of trekkers stranded in the Himalayas, and 29 people died in a massive avalanche in Annapurna region.

“The topography of this area has become riskier due to increasing landslides and floods.”

That incident raised questions about early warning. “We need to have proper information system to provide information on weather conditions to safeguard visiting travelers,” said Mandira Singh Shrestha, Program Coordinator at the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

According to Arun Bhatta, climate change expert at ICIMOD, studies regarding timely climate information are not enough. “We do not have scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change on tourism sector. Lack of knowledge about reducing its impacts has hampered this process,” he said.

Before the Hudhud cyclone, 114,418 tourists visited that area, according to Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). After the snowstorm, the number came down to

81,878. The trend began to pick up in 2016, but stalled after the Covid-19 pandemic. This has impacted the livelihoods of people who depend on tourism.

Samita Rana, 26, of Ghandruk used to sell green beans, cucumber, ginger and vegetables. But



with new crop diseases, excessive rainfall and unpredictable changes in temperature, her vegetables don't thrive. "Besides, I could not sell any vegetables to hotels this year as there are no tourists," she said. She is taking loans to survive.

Many people have migrated away from Ghandruk. One of them is Sunita Tamang, 50, who was busy washing her clothes in Fewa lake in Pokhara. She used to work in hotels from Lumle to Ghandruk. "With no job and no people in the villages, I came here looking

for work," she shared. She now works for a hotel in Pokhara.

The province government is implementing the Chief Minister Climate Change Adaptation Program in the area, which aims to help local people adapt to the impacts of climate change and improve their economic status.



<https://bit.ly/3sCcbGs>





Personal Experience

At first, when I queried the people of Sindhupalchowk about the water shortage and the issue of uterine prolapse, they answered about the water shortage, but no one talked about uterine prolapse. Instead, they retorted, “What will happen if we tell you about us? Will our uterine prolapse be cured? Will you bring drinking water to our houses?” In the villages of Nepal, the issue of uterine prolapse is still kept under wraps. Women do not want to speak about it, lest they be socially ostracized or discriminated against. But it was necessary to tell their stories to readers, and notify policymakers. So the next day, I went there along with my friend from the area, Kamala Pakhrin. She counselled the women, and finally they were ready to speak.



Sunita Sakhakarmi

Climate change is leading to an increase in the problem of uterine prolapse

SINDHUPALCHOK - As always, Anita Shrestha walked towards the main tap to fetch water. She filled jerry cans of 20 and five liters, and placed them inside her doko (woven basket with a strap hoisted on your back). As she was about to get up, she felt a sharp pain in her pelvis. She sat down on the ground. There was a bulge-like protrusion. Twenty-nine-year-old Shrestha from Sangachowkgadhi of Sindhupalchowk reminisces about this incident 10 years ago, “I was five months pregnant. I was terrified that I had miscarried.”

The doctor told Shrestha, “You have had a uterine prolapse.”

The doctor informed Shrestha that as it was a first degree prolapse, it had not affected the fetus. “He had told me to rest,” Shrestha says, “But I must fetch water. We need water to feed the cattle, wash clothes, go to the toilet, cook, and mop the house in a traditional manner.”

Three years ago, water was brought to the village in underground pipes from the Balefi River, but the river dries up during winters. According to Water Expert Ajaya Dixit, there are four reasons a water source dries up like this: haphazard road expansion, earthquake, wildfire, and changes in rainfall patterns.



“Earlier, we had substantial rains. The ground was soaked through. Now we have rainfall for two or three hours only. The water cannot permeate the ground, and ground water reservoirs cannot recharge,” says Dixit.

The Central Bureau of Statistics indicates a decline in the rate of rainfall in Sindhupalchowk. In 2013, the area had 2173 ml rainfall, which fell to 1572 ml by 2017. On the other hand, the maximum temperature of Chautara rose from 24.6 degree Celsius in 2016 to 25.4 in 2017. These changes in rainfall patterns and temperature increase are caused by global warming, the effects of which are being experienced in mountainous countries.

“Whoever reaches the source first can drink clean water. The people after them cannot. We extracted the sludge and drank it after letting it sediment,”

In Phulpinkot, Jyamiremane and Sangachowk, around 6,000 people from 1,524 households are facing water shortage. The responsibility of fetching water is implicitly designated to women. Thirty-six-year-old Rashmila Bhandari from Phulpinkot suffered a uterine prolapse

while carrying water as a new mother. Bhandari needs to walk downhill for an hour to fetch water, and she needs to climb up back for 1.5 hours. “I cannot sleep. We don’t have time to cook and send kids to school. We hide ourselves in the fear that someone will come and ask for drinking water,” says Bhandari.

According to Obstetrician and Gynecologist Dr. Jyoti Agrawal, uterine prolapse can occur when weakened or damaged muscles and



connective tissues such as ligaments allow the uterus to drop into the vagina. Once this happens, women suffer aches in the back, waist and lower abdomen. Some of them might have frequent urination while others have white vaginal discharge.

“Women take this as a common problem after childbirth. But it is not so,” she says. “Having children at a young age, manual labor, birthing children at short intervals, straining to eject the umbilical cord, and a lack of adequate pre and postpartum care cause uterine prolapse.

In the winter, Phulpingkot Health Post needs to send post-partum mothers elsewhere. “We recently had two new mothers. The water tank was empty, we managed somehow. When we had a third new mother, we had to send her to Jalbire as we had no water,” says Medical Volunteer Maiya Thapa.

Thapa has placed a ring pessary in her vagina, as she also suffered a uterine prolapse. Her two daughters also carry water. Thapa says, “We do not make them carry water in big pots, as we do not want this to happen to them. But of course, they have to fetch water in small pots.”

The water shortage has also weakened human connections. Thapa says that they can feed their guests but hesitate when they ask for water. “Whoever reaches the source first can drink clean water. The people after them cannot. We extracted the sludge and drank it after letting it sediment,” she says.

According to the Medical Care Association, among the women from the hilly regions who visit health camps, 70 percent suffer from uterine prolapse. But no agency has the data of the number of women with prolapsed uterus in Sidhupalchowk. The Family Planning Association annually sends up to NPR 10,000 (613 £) per patient to hospitals and local bodies to treat uterine prolapse in women. But according to Parshuram Shrestha, Chief of Department of Health at Indrawati, there is no budget allocated to conduct medical camps for women with uterine prolapse.

“As there is no follow-up and data collection on the budget allocated by the Ministry to conduct medical camps, it is impacting women’s health,” says Dr. Agrawal.



<https://bit.ly/3lg9nVI>





Personal Experience

It is scary that a community's traditions, arts and culture are in decline due to climate change. The existence of dhakiya (traditional basket), highly important in the Tharu community, is endangered. I had an opportunity to directly meet women when I worked on this. That was when I found out that many youth cannot weave a dhakiya anymore. I also realized that they did not understand its importance. There is also a decline in the skill transfer of a dhakiya to a daughter. On top of that, vetiver grass is declining due to climate change. The direct and indirect effects will be borne by women. I have yet to do more research, but deduced this from preliminary studies.



Urmila Gamwa Tharu

The Tharu dhakiya (woven basket) is disappearing along with kasungna grass

KANCHANPUR - As the effects of climate change started depleting the kasungna (vetiver) grass, which holds a significant place in the Tharu community, there has also been a decrease in Tharu women weaving the dhakiya out of the grass.

This dhakiya, a basket woven of grass, is used to store grains, make the Tharu dish dhikri, and to dispose of prayer objects after use. Bhaunka to place clothes, dhakiya to store grains, and pain to make traditional cuisine dhikri used in religious rituals are essential objects in Tharu

culture, and all of them are made from vetiver. Dhakiya and pain are indispensable for the worship of ancestors during the festival of

Dashain, and it is also used as a sacred vessel to make dhikri. Only dhakiyas woven out of punja and vetiver grass are used for religious rituals, one cannot use plastic, woolen, or other baskets.

Only women weave the dhakiyas. Says Gulari Devi

Tharu from Kanchanpur, "I learnt to make this dhakiya from my mother and am now teaching my daughter."

"I learnt to make this dhakiya from my mother and am now teaching my daughter."



The dhakiya not only has practical and social uses, but also cultural ones. In the Tharu community, a dhakiya is also related to the love of a mother and parental home. The art of weaving a dhakiya is a skill learnt from the parental home. In the past, women lived in their parental homes and wove dhakiyas year-round. This custom is specially followed by Tharus in Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, and Kanchanpur. This is also considered the skill and token of love of the parental home. Displaying several dhakiyas at her home, Gulari Devi Tharu says, “Some of these dhakiyas have been woven by my mother, and some by my grandmother. I have kept them as tokens of their love.”

This tradition of weaving a dhakiya, which is linked to a woman’s knowledge and skill, is also linked to nature. Only the vetiver, which is called kaans (thatch grass) in Nepali language, is used to weave dhakiyas. As this grass is

also used to mitigate soil erosion, it is highly valued in the Tharu community. “This grass is 7-8 feet tall, and its roots are also as long and widespread. This thrives in any kind of soil, and even binds sandy soil together. So it is grown in areas where flood causes soil erosion. This also helps maintain the soil’s fertility,” says researcher Chhabi Lal Kopila.

After a flood in 2004 caused a great loss of lives and property in Belaury Municipality of Kanchanpur, people have grown vetiver along the riverbanks. This year, after a flood displaced the entire Udayapur Village, 65 households are sheltering in the nearby community forest.

“We have tried to create embankments by planting shrubs. This has helped reduce the impacts of floods to some extent,” says local resident Saitu Kumar Chaudhary.

Such hazardous incidents have increased due to the impacts of climate change. Says Priti Chaudhary from Kanchanpur, “Sometimes it doesn’t rain at all, at other times it rains too much and inundates the crops. This year, the floods swept away thriving paddy crops.”

Thus, climate change is impacting different sectors around the world. The global temperature is rising by 0.17 degree Celsius every decade due to climate change. This change has also impacted vegetation. Vetiver and punja are not found rampantly. They are only found along the edges of the forest or rivers. Rising temperatures have caused a decline in the production of vetiver. “Earlier, the Tharu community used vetiver even to thatch their roofs, and there was a tradition of nurturing an area of thatch grass. But these days, as the houses are built of concrete, there is no need to conserve the vetiver,” says Chhabi Lal Kopila.

Vetiver’s relation with the Tharu women is one of nature, water, land, tradition, emotions and culture. When Tharu women wove the dhakiya, there would be skill transfer, as well as nature conservation to preserve culture. With the depletion of vetiver, climate change has also impacted women culturally.



<https://bit.ly/350GYF0>





As part of Road to COP26, British Council Nepal had produced a TV Series, Women Leadership in Climate Change. The program aimed to raise awareness on various aspects of climate change.

The program included discussions with experts, students, and journalists working in this area, and the discussions were conducted virtually due to Covid-19. Six episodes of the series were respectively focused on climate change and floods, agriculture, tourism, green rehabilitation, glacial lakes, and Nepal's preparations for COP 26, and

every issue was reviewed from a gender lens. Concepts and technical terms around climate change, like loss and damage, adaptation, resilience, mitigation, climate investment, implementation, etc were discussed in layperson's language.

A 2020 research by British Council had found that not only are there few women journalists in this sector, but the women experts quoted in media are also few. Though there are many women experts in this sector, they are barely visible in the media. In this context, women experts are given priority in this TV series.





Episode 1: Climate change, floods, and their impacts on women

The first episode focused on floods and their impact on women. The discussion touched on various aspects of climate change and floods including gender, relief, preparedness, and mental health.



Vasana Sapkota, Natural Resource Management Expert

Climate change is measured at a global level and mapped over decades. It consists of shift in temperature, changes in rainfall, and change in the air temperature. Currently, the fast rate of such changes post-industrialization is impacting global ecology and economy. Climate change is linked with floods, but that is not the only reason for floods in Nepal. Rampant constructions exacerbate floods. Until recently, Nepal's response to disasters was only activated in the aftermath. In 2017 we passed the Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act, moving from relief-oriented to preparedness-oriented approach.

Gita Pandey, Climate Change and Environmental Expert

There are very few researches focusing on the impact of climate change on women. The government's investment in our study and research is inadequate, research gets less than 1% of the budget. The impacts of climate change will be felt more in the future than in the present, so it is important to prepare the youth to address it.



Nisha Pandey, Climate Researcher

In the short term, women are at higher risk of physical harm, disability and death. Women feel insecure due to lack of safe shelter, separate toilets, safe places for children and breastfeeding, and spaces to change their clothes. Relief packages are usually not created with gender in mind. Women also show a lack of confidence in voicing their ideas, believing their thoughts are irrelevant. After crises women's workloads increase immediately and in the long run. Violence against women becomes more prevalent. In the long term they may lose income, incur debt, may be forced to migrate, and have a hard time finding employment. These lead to long term issues of social justice and mental health.

Shreejana Shrestha, Ministry of Forest and Environment official

Our laws to address climate change are ahead of many countries, but the implementation is weak. We have a National Climate Change Policy, Environmental Protection Act, Environmental Protection Regulations, Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Act. There is also a Divisional Council Office Committee, Working Group, and liaison persons. At central level there is an inter-ministerial coordination committee and various working groups. We are preparing ecosystem-based adaptation plans for short, medium and long term.

Recommendations

- Climate change impacts different places differently. So, our programs to address climate change should be context specific.
- The urban poor live in dense settlements near water sources. They are greatly impacted by floods but are overlooked. They should be taken into consideration.
- It is necessary to establish communication between the upper coastal and lower coastal communities to warn them of floods.
- Flood shelters and taps should be built at higher elevations so that they can be accessible during floods.
- Local government has the right to create its own curriculum, it should create curriculum about climate change in the local context.
- Disaster preparedness plans should take mental health issues into account.



<https://bit.ly/3Bpygfv>





Episode 2: Climate change, agriculture, and women farmers

This episode focused on the impacts of climate change on agriculture and women farmers. Agriculture accounts for 33% of Nepal's GDP, and 70% of the people engaged in agriculture are women. However, only 19.7% of women own land. The discussion featured a video from Janakpur where farmers spoke of the impacts of climate change.



Farmers from Janakpur

Our crops do not give fruits on time, or when they do, they are smaller in size. Sometimes they are destroyed by sudden droughts or rain. We don't know what crops to plant or when to plant them to survive these conditions, so we continue our traditional farming. Our men have gone abroad to work because the vegetable farming did not do well.

Dr. Yamuna Ghale, Agronomist, NARC

In our laws, a farmer was defined as a person with land deeds, which was almost always a man. This obviously put women behind. With the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act 2018, we are moving towards defining farmers correctly. Only 21% of the students in agriculture, fishery and forestry are women, while 70% of the population engaged in agriculture is female. If we increase our understanding of agriculture to include environment, climate, market, research, policies, and influential spaces like COP26, the scope of agriculture increases. Students can work at home, in policy making spheres, or in research.



Ramdevi Tamacho Shah, Wetlands Expert

Weather and climate are different things. Weather changes every day, but climate changes over decades. Agriculture is directly linked to the surrounding ecological conditions. Water is essential to farming, and civilizations have developed near water sources. In Nepal we have varied ecologies in a small space. Our ecology, agriculture and lifestyle have a symbiotic relationship.

Angela Mishra, Environment Analyst, World Bank

Many women are unaware of climate smart technologies. For example, if they are facing droughts, they can plant foxtail millet, which is nutritious and requires only 70% of water. But many women do not have access to such information, for example even the weather forecast which is essential to farming. Especially after Covid-19 pandemic, it is not possible to reach women directly. Programs to do so have been insufficient. There are farmer schools where women can investigate ways to be more productive or climate resilient.

Sujata Tamang, Researcher, Forest Action Nepal

Many indigenous communities live around natural resources like water or forest. They are concerned about the impacts of climate change because it is directly linked to their subsistence. They are trying to address it by making little ponds, conserving local lakes, seeds, etc. But they need help. Modern systems have marginalised their traditional knowledge and skills. There is no need to separate women engaged in physical work from educated women.

Recommendations

- Women need to be more active in decision making spheres.
- Government quotas should not be limited to numbers; the women should be truly heard.
- Women should participate more in decision making spheres like forest, water, and school management committees.
- Women should have more rights over land and money, and developing enterprises based on their skills and knowledge.
- Women's access to information needs to be increased, especially through digital mediums.
- More women should enroll in technical subjects like agriculture, fisheries and forestry.



<https://bit.ly/3rwQV4J>





Episode 3: Climate change and tourism

This episode of the series is focused on the impact of climate change on tourism. Nepal's tourism sector is based on nature. Tourists come to Nepal for its mountains, glacial lakes, varied ecosystems, flora and fauna inside nature reserves, and for activities like mountaineering, jungle safari, rafting, etc. Tourism accounts for 7.9% of Nepal's GDP, 25% of exports and 8.1% of employment, which is higher than other South Asian nations.



Nandini Thapa, Tourism Board

Climate change, tourism and women are the golden triangle of Nepal's development. The Himalayas are melting due to climate change, Hilary step that used to be covered with snow is now a black rock. Our glaciers are receding, glacial lakes might burst, and instances of natural disasters are increasing. Along with deforestation, flora and fauna have reduced in our forests. That will discourage tourists who come to see birds, butterflies, and animals. Pollution has increased, the mountains that were visible from Dhulikhel are not visible anymore. Because of all this, Nepal is losing its unique selling points as a tourism destination. Tourism is called an emission free sector, but that is not true. In 2005, tourism accounted for 5% of total global emissions, and that number is expected to go up to 25% by 2030.

Lucky Kshetri, Pioneer Tourism Entrepreneur

Projections of snow melting and glacial lakes bursting have induced terror in the mountain regions. These disasters do not discriminate, but they have higher impacts on women dependent on the tourism sector. Changing seasons have impacted Nepal's tourism sector. Sometimes it snows in summer, and sometimes there is continuous rain in trekking season. Since weather has become unpredictable, tourism entrepreneurs are unable to prepare for the weather. Tourists are decreasing because of natural disasters, which lead to loss of employment for people. Such news discourages women who are entering tourism sector. Climate change has also increased women's responsibilities.



Chinimaya Majhi, President, National Indigenous Women's Federation

When we took a stone from the river to make a pestle, my grandmother said that it must be replaced with mud, otherwise it would invite disaster. That awareness about conservation in the indigenous communities is not there anymore, and researches have shown that disasters have increase because we have ignored such knowledge. Crushers have destroyed our rivers, leaving not even one pestle behind. Nepal is trying to develop homestay tourism. Nepal should keep indigenous communities' faith and spirituality in mind while developing tourism.

Surabhi Chaudhari, Director, CG Foundation

We are operating Unnati Cultural Cillage, which showcases and promotes the arts and crafts of Nepal's indigenous communities, and also promotes and environment friendly lifestyle. For sustainability, we link the arts and crafts to markets, have them participate in various trade fairs, and also consume a lot of the products ourselves. For example, we use natural materials to build homes, where temperature is naturally controlled so they do not require air conditioner. We also use organic cooking styles here. All these help reduce carbon emission. In this way, the lifestyle of indigenous communities itself can be a model of tourism. We have started this initiative from the Terai, but aim to have seven centers around the country.

Recommendations

- Tourism sector should be indigenous friendly.
- Local government and indigenous communities should discuss ways to include indigenous communities' knowledge and environment consciousness in tourism sector.
- We should reduce tourism sector's carbon emissions. Everything should be repurposed and reused. We should use natural materials like soaps, instead of chemical ones.
- Tourism sector should use less water.
- The term environment friendly only seems popular in elite circles. We should make it an inseparable part of daily life.
- It is the government's responsibility to subsidize and distribute gas stoves, electricity and renewable energy all over the country in place of firewood.



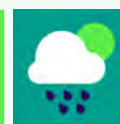
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Episode 4: Green Rehabilitation

This episode of the TV series is focused on green rehabilitation after the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, 98 billion dollars of the world's total GDP will be spent in renewable energy effectiveness by 2050, and 63 million new jobs will be created in the sector.



Sanjeevani Yonzon, Director, Wildlife Conservation Nepal

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the question is whether to rehabilitate the world to its old form, or to make it stronger. In the two years after the pandemic, there has been a lot of research in how to implement green rehabilitation. For that it is necessary to invest in five sectors: clean infrastructure, education and training, natural resources, environment friendly reconstruction, and research and development. The world is eager to return to a new normal. Governments have promised to spend 4.8 billion dollars for this. Most of it will be spent in the health sector. The focus has shifted away from renewable energy, and the signs are not good. G20 countries seem poised to invest in fossil fuel. But if we do not focus on environment in post pandemic rehabilitation, there is no way to save the human civilization.

Bharati Pathak, President, Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal

The term Green Rehabilitation might seem new as it only became popular after the Covid-19 pandemic. But to implement this, we must return to traditional practices. Women should be linked to green jobs. If the primary users of resources are not among the decision makers, that creates problems. So, women should be informed of the impacts of climate change. Women's leadership in community forestry of Nepal is a model practice, which we cannot find elsewhere. It is our campaign to ensure that women as well as marginalized communities should benefit from water, land, and forests



Madhu Ghimire, Ministry of Forests and Environment

45% of Nepal's area is covered by forests, where more than 2.9 million communities are linked to 22,500 community forests. Women entrepreneurs based on these forests must get benefits and facilities. Women are the primary users and conservers of natural resources. To address this, Nepal's constitution is women friendly. Our policies state that women should get the priority in benefits generated through climate change. The government has a strategy of prioritizing forest-based women entrepreneurs.

Sangeeta Singh, Urban Management Expert

Urbanization has a role in climate change. In Nepal, 52 municipalities have grown to 293. Urban ecosystem has begun to replace natural ecosystems. We cannot stop urbanization, but we can make it sustainable. But still, most of Nepal is rural. There should be green development in these areas, based on water, forest, and agriculture. Green development is a subject closely linked with women, worldwide 43% of agricultural force is female. Women manage waste through composting every day, and women's leadership in waste management organisations is important too. Policy intervention in these sectors is required.

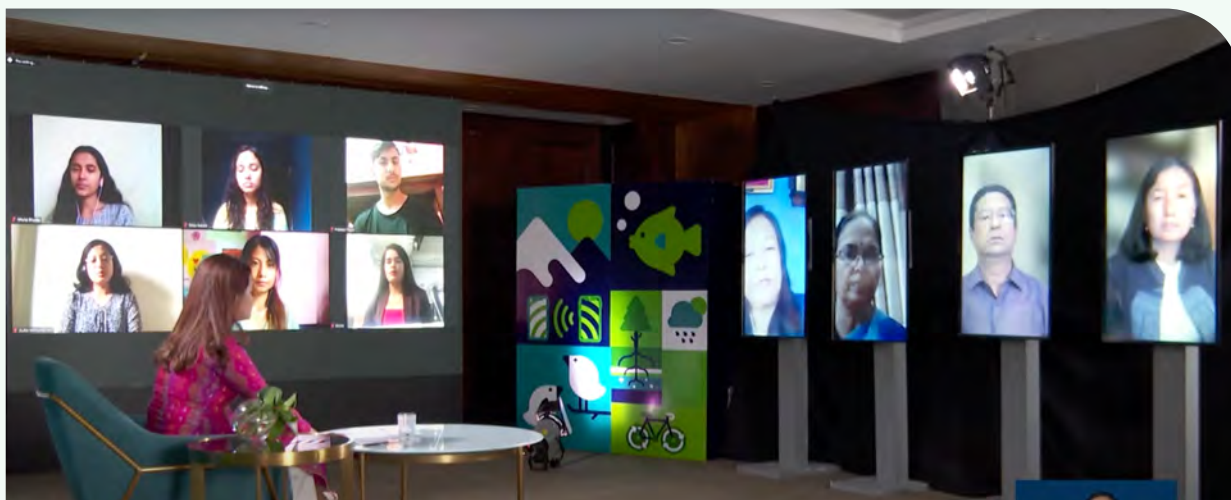
Recommendations

- Nepal should generate forest based employment and develop environment based tourism.
- Women's access to resources should be increased.
- The government must tell banks to invest in green economy.
- The practices of indigenous women who use and conserve plants, forests, water and land should be incorporated in rehabilitation.
- Indigenous women produce medicines and other substances from forests, they should be a part of modernizing the practices through technology.
- Women should be a part of mitigating climate change through tree plantation.
- Urban areas should be expanded as compactly as possible. Forest and agricultural land should be protected, renewable energy should be used in homes, walking or mass transit should be prioritized for transport, rainwater should be collected, permeable materials should be used to pave roads.
- For green jobs, briquettes can be made from devil weed, and organic agricultural products can be marketed in homestay tourism.
- These subjects should be included in the curriculum from a young age.



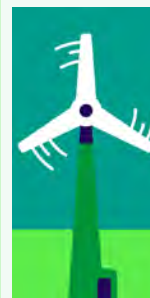
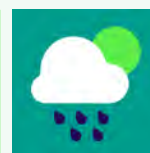
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Episode 5: Climate Change, Glacial lakes and women

This episode of the TV series was focused on the impact of climate change on glacial lakes of Nepal. Himalayas provide water to one fourth of the world's area. Post 1990, glacial lakes have grown by 50% worldwide. There are 3,624 glacial lakes spread over Nepal, India, and Tibet which can impact Nepal. Of these, 2,070 are in Nepal, 509 in Tibet, and 45 in India. According to a research by ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) 1,410 of them are in danger of bursting and 47 are dangerous, of which 42 are in the Koshi region.



Arun Bhakta Shrestha, Climate Change Expert, ICIMOD

Nepal government is proactive regarding climate change. Nepal has made its national and local adaptation plans, and strongly raises its issues in international forums like COP. But for Nepal adaptation is more important than mitigation, because even if we mitigate climate change, its impacts will remain for a long time. There should be qualitative and not just quantitative inclusion in science. This will make the results of science inclusive. Policies based on such results will be inclusive and generate powerful ways of addressing climate change. To reduce the risk from glacial lakes, it is important to have specific actions for each lake, uniform action for all lakes will not work. Women are more impacted by climate change, but women also have more knowledge and skills to deal with it, so it also includes empowerment.

Pasang Dolma Sherpa, Climate Change Expert

Worldwide, 6.2% of indigenous people are contributing 80% to conserving biodiversity and resilience against climate change. After the realization that science is not enough to combat climate change and that indigenous knowledge, skills, culture, and practices are crucial, a forum for indigenous peoples has been created in Intergovernmental Panel on



Climate Change (IPCC). This is in the process of being implemented at national, regional and local levels. But policies are made at the central level, where few indigenous women participate. Nepal raises the issues of its mountains in national/international forums, but not of mountain women. Nepal's adaptation plans are based on secondary data, so there is fear that programs based on such data will be perfunctory. Mountains are linked not just to our tourism and livelihood, but also to beauty, and our future generations should also see them. The role of youth will be important in this.

Lakpa Futi Sherpa, President, Nepal Himal Academy

In Terai people can raise four crops a year, in the mountains it is just one. Even that one crop is impacted by climate change. The lives of mountain women are becoming difficult. Women get up earliest in the morning, and go to bed latest. Women do 80% of the work in rural areas, but most of the people in the top level are men. Trainings and orientations related to climate change happen in five star hotels in the center, very few are held for women. If women were able to receive such trainings, they could play a bigger role in combating climate change.

Bindu Mishra, Ministry of Forests and Environment

Women's knowledge and skills should be used to evaluate and analyse the programs made to identify and address climate change. Even though Nepal contributes very little to climate change, we do emit some carbon, and we should reduce that. Combating climate change requires hybrid knowledge of science and indigenous communities' practices. Nepal has created a database by collecting such knowledge. It cooperates with similar countries by exchanging such knowledge. Nepal has made a Gender Action Plan, which is in the process of being approved.

Recommendations

- Scientific evidence should be used to spread awareness about climate change. If we are able to talk about its economic impacts, we can attract the attention of policymakers. It is important to link climate change with society.
- We should improve our personal habits. Vegetarian diet emits less carbon than a non-vegetarian one. We should use less heating in our home, use energy and fuel only when we need it, reduce use of fossil fuel in transport, reduce flights, use solar and wind energy, ban plastic, and plant trees.
- The government should give women the opportunity to go to forums like COP and UNFCCC.
- Youth should internalize this subject and become change makers, not just study it to pass exams.



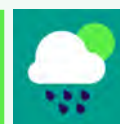
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Episode 6: Nepal's preparations for COP 26

This episode of the program is focused on Nepal's preparations for the 26th COP held in Glasgow on November 2021. Nepal contributes only 0.027 percent to the total worldwide carbon emission. But Nepal is the fourth most vulnerable country to climate change. Nepal aims to raise these issues and ensure UNFCCC's funds and policies support it.



Radha Wagle, Ministry of Forests and Environment

Developed nations should commit to reducing carbon emissions, least developed countries like Nepal should focus on adaptation. We will raise the issues of Nepal's women and indigenous communities who suffer from the impacts of climate change like floods, landslides, droughts, and diseases. We will seek ways to reduce damages, seek compensation for damages, and try to secure finances for our adaptation and mitigation plans. We will also demonstrate our good practices in adaptation. We are working under ten thematic groups, and the groups themselves are inclusive. Nepal's Nationally Determined Contributions Document is considered a model in the world when it comes to inclusion. But the implementation is problematic.

Bindu Bhandari, Youth Climate Campaigner

In the UK, not just the government, but other entities are proactive in climate change. Universities and businesses have their own climate policies, and there is a lot of research and interest in this subject in the academic sector. The UK has also prioritized climate change in its politics and diplomacy. These are things Nepal can learn. At the same time, developed nations can also learn Nepal's lifestyle which emits very little carbon. The role of youth is important, because they are the ones who will face future impacts of climate change. The youth have the right to determine future path. Youth should use their energy, enthusiasm, and access to technology in awareness, business and science sectors to figure out ways to reduce carbon emissions.



Ugan Manandhar, Climate Change Expert

Climate change happened because developed nations used too much fossil fuel, we should not do that. A single person cannot mitigate climate change, but it is possible in a group. The question of gender responsive climate policies was only raised after the 2015 Paris COP. A Gender Action Plan was made after that. But the implementation of the plan should be done at the national level, which is challenging. Nepal has made inclusive policies in sectors like agriculture, forest, biodiversity, energy, health, tourism, culture, and heritage. But it has not even been able to ensure 33% participation of women, let alone 50%. Radha Wagle has been leading on climate change in Nepal, but there is fear of the government transferring her to some other department. Denying women leadership is the trend.

Ayusha Shrestha, Cofounder and Designer, Thum Lam

We learn traditional skills from the nomadic herders of Upper Mustang and adapt it to contemporary lifestyle. The herders make clothes and blankets from Yak hair for personal use. But today, modern materials from China are displacing these crafts. We are trying to restore these items in that community itself too. It is not easy for the youth to learn these skills, because there is little income in it. But entrepreneurs must research traditional skills. Businesses must think not just of getting ahead, but of getting ahead without harming the environment. Consumers should also be aware and use such products.

Recommendations

- To reduce climate change, we should cut less trees, use solar and wind energy instead of fossil fuel, reuse and repurpose things, use agricultural methods that emit less methane, use natural temperature control mechanisms in buildings and reduce the use of heating technologies, and change our clothes less.
- Nepal should be independent in electricity.
- All sectors should bring climate change issues to the mainstream and have women in decisive levels.
- We should learn how people used natural raw materials and harmed the environment less in traditional practices, and adopt those practices.



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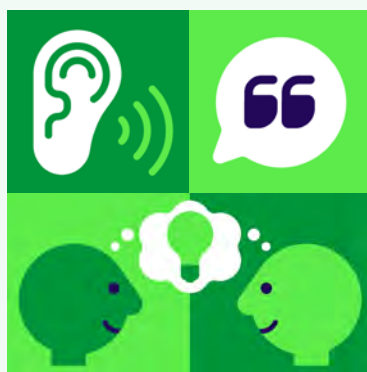
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If you have any comments or feedback,
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