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Gender and Social Inclusion in Climate Change Issues and Opportunities in Federal Nepal

Srijana Shrestha¹ and Dibya Devi Gurung

Abstract

Though climate change impacts everybody, it is important to understand the differential social, economic and gender impacts of climate change. It is important to be gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) responsive and integrate it in climate change planning, programming, policy and decision-makings. With these considerations two specific objectives of this paper are: 1) To review, assess, analyze and synthesize GESI and climate change related issues and opportunities at the institutional and community levels in the context of federalism (federal, provincial and local governance) in Nepal; and 2) To make recommendations for further mainstreaming GESI in climate change at the institutional and community levels in federalism in Nepal. This paper reviews four studies on GESI and climate change carried out by the authors focusing on issues and opportunities for mainstreaming GESI in climate change in the context of federal Nepal. Findings of the studies were reviewed, assessed and analyzed to synthesize common findings in terms of issues and challenges. The findings, synthesis and conclusions of the four studies form the narratives of the paper identifying the issues and opportunities regarding mainstreaming GESI in climate change and makes recommendations for institutional and community level actions.

Key Words: Gender equality, social inclusion (GESI), marginalized groups, climate change, federal system, institutions, and community.

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1. Introduction

Nepal is one of the most climate change impacted countries in the world. In fact Nepal is ranked as the fourth most climate change affected country by The Climate Risk Index for 2017.² Despite its negligible contribution to total global emissions of greenhouse gases, Nepal is one of the countries that have high risks of adverse effects of climate change. Topographical diversity, fragile geological structure, sensitive ecosystems and diversity of climate and micro-climate zones are the main reasons for it. In addition to these, poverty, illiteracy, social disparity as well as high dependence of community on natural resources for livelihood have made Nepal more sensitive towards the impacts of climate change. The negative effects of climate change have been directly experienced in forest and biodiversity, energy, human health, tourism, habitation, infrastructure development as well as in the areas of livelihood, while there has been a huge loss of lives and property due to climate induced disasters such as flood, landslide, and windstorm and wild fire every year.³

Although climate change affects all the people, many studies have shown that it has differential impacts gender and social-economic group wise. While men and women are likely to face many common challenges due to climate changes, in many communities, climate change will have a disproportionately greater effect on women and historically and social marginalized caste and ethnic groups. Women are often poorer and less educated than men and often excluded from decision-making processes that affect their lives. Despite these challenges, women also have a rich knowledge and skill set in managing and making wise use of natural resources and biodiversity. Although their knowledge and skills contribute to adaptation in extreme situations such as conflicts, disasters or displacement, they are not adequately acknowledged, valued and documented. These challenges vary widely depending on the circumstances, and our evidence base on the gendered interaction between livelihoods, natural resource management, poverty and resilience is still weak.⁴

Similarly men and women from historically, socially and religiously discriminated caste and ethnic groups such as Dalits (caste) and Janajatis (ethnic) will have differential impacts of climate change due to their historical marginalisation from or non-inclusion in the mainstream social, economic and political functions of the state. Against these gender, social, economic and political perspectives of impacts of climate change in Nepal this paper has been prepared with the primary objective to assess and review the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) issues and opportunities in the context of federalism in Nepal. The specific objectives of the paper are basically two pronged as:

1. To review, assess, analyze and synthesize GESI and climate change related issues and opportunities at the institutional and community levels in the context of federalism (federal, provincial and local governance) in Nepal; and

² The Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) developed by Germanwatch, analyses quantified impacts of extreme weather events – both in terms of fatalities as well as economic losses that occurred – based on data from the Munich Re NatCatSERVICE, which is worldwide one of the most reliable and complete databases on this matter. David Eckstein, Marie-Lena Hutfils and Maik Winges, Briefing Paper, Global Climate Change Risk Index 2019, Who Suffers Most From Extreme Weather Events? Weather-related Loss Events in 2017 and 1998 to 2017, Green Watch.

³ MoFE, Government of Nepal, Nepal Climate Change Policy 2019.

⁴ Gurung, D. Dibya, Bisht, Suman, Women's Empowerment at the Frontline of Adaptation; Emerging Issues, Adaptive Practices, and Priorities in Nepal - ICIMOD Working Paper 2014/3, ICIMOD. (<https://lib.icimod.org/record/29811>)

2. To make recommendations for further mainstreaming GESI in climate change at the institutional and community levels in federalism in Nepal.

2. Approach and methods

This paper is based on the assessment and reviews of four qualitative studies related to GESI and climate change⁵ conducted by the authors between 2014–2019 and both the authors' extensive experiences and observations working on GESI and climate change issues within the government and beyond. The methodology and the approach of all the studies were participatory. These studies covered more than 16 districts in mountain, hill and tarai regions of all the seven provinces in the federal governance structure of Nepal. The studies primarily used desk reviews and field work for information and data collection. Desk reviews of national policies, plans, strategies and others related to forestry sector, climate change and federal system, such as the National Climate Change Policy 2019; National Adaptation Programme of Action 2010; Nepal National REDD+ Strategy 2018; National Self Governance Act 2017 were carried out. In addition GESI and climate change related national and international literatures published by government and non-government institutions such as I/NGOs and academia were reviewed.

In all the studies field work for qualitative information and data collection included interviews, focus group discussions and consultations at the community, provincial and national levels. The participants in these processes were inclusive of diverse groups in terms of gender (men and women), caste, ethnicity, marital status, disability, geographical locations, decision-making (national and local authorities), historically discriminated, and the poor and marginalized communities. Some of the key informant at the national level included Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE), Department of Forests and Soil Conservation (DoFSC), REDD Implementation Centre (REDD-IC), Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Forests Research and Training Centre (FRTC) and their respective gender focal points. In addition, national and international NGOs working on GESI and climate change issues in Nepal were consulted. At the provincial level provincial governments, local governments (municipalities and wards), related district level NGOs and projects, community based organizations and their stakeholders (communities) were consulted.

Key issues and opportunities related to GESI and climate change at the national and provincial/local levels at the institutional and community levels in the studies were assessed by applying combination of several participatory methods, such as activity profile, access and control profile, and elements of the 9-box framework analysis⁶ used for the assessment of technical, political and cultural dimension of organization which explores key policies/ strategies

⁵ 1) Gurung, DD; Bisht S, 2014, Women's empowerment at the frontline of adaptation: Emerging issues, adaptive practices, and priorities in Nepal, ICIMOD Working Paper 2014/3. Kathmandu, ICIMOD; 2) Assessments - REDD-IC, Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, World Bank, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and NRM (WOCAN), 2017; 3) Gender Assessment and Action Plan for integrating Gender in Emission Reduction Programme Document; Government of Nepal, Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, Kathmandu, Nepal, REDD-IC, 2018; 4) Forest Investment Program Forest Investment Program: Investment Plan for Nepal, Government of Nepal, Ministry of Forests and Environment, REDD Implementation Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal; 5) REDD-IC, 2019, Preparation of Advanced Draft Benefit Sharing Plan for Emissions Reduction Programme in Nepal's 13 TAL Districts (Draft), Government of Nepal, Ministry of Forests and Environment, REDD Implementation Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal.

⁶ Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee & Steehouwer, G. & Wong, Franz. 2006: Politics of the possible: gender mainstreaming and organizational change: experiences from the field. (<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237142255>)

of the organizations used to integrate a gender perspective in their field programmes/ projects and outcomes, issues and challenges at institutional and programme/community levels. Findings of all the four studies related to GESI and climate change were reviewed, assessed and analyzed to synthesize a common findings in terms of issues and challenges.

3. Assessments, analysis and findings

3.1 Institutional level

3.1.1. Prevalence of plans, policies, strategies and guidelines at federal level

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has made substantial progress in integrating GESI in climate change through sectoral and provincial plans, policies, strategies, programmes and mechanisms. The 14th plan (2073/74-2075/76) recognizes that improving gender equality and addressing issues of “backward” regions, classes and communities and excluded groups requires conscious efforts, such as targeted programmes, equitable distribution of resources, and social security for poverty reduction and set goal of implementing the environment friendly and climate change adaptive development programme and strategy to integrate national and international climate finance in the national budget and increase the investment in this sector for minimizing the impact of climate change. Similarly, 15th plan (2076/77-2080/81) approach paper has a strategy of gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming in forests, biodiversity and watershed management and equitable sharing of benefit.

Some of the key policies of the government related to GESI and climate change are assessed in the following table.

Table 1. Key national policies, strategies and guidelines

SN	Key policies and strategies	GESI provisions and assessments
1.	Forest Sector Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on GESI sensitive policy and guidelines, good governance and GESI sensitive organizational development, GESI sensitive budget, program and monitoring and equitable access in resources, decision-making and benefits. The GESI strategy envisioned four distinct organizational structures from central to community levels but this structure exists only at the central level.⁷ • It gets success in terms of women participation in planning and decision making at community level in comparison to institutional level. But its strategy lacks implementation action plan, not systematically disseminated and easily available within sectors at national and sub-national levels and low focus on GESI incorporation in institutional mechanism (functional/structure, budget, programme).
2.	National Adaptation Programme of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihood, governance gender and social inclusion is identified as cross-cutting theme in NAPA and gender

⁷ Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme (MSFP), 2014: Assessment of Implementation Status of Forestry Sector Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy 2065.

	(NAPA) to Climate Change 2010	sensitivity analysis of climate change impacts on six thematic sectors (water and energy, agriculture and food security, forestry and biodiversity, urban settlement, public health and climate induced disaster) ⁸ are done but the results are not well incorporated in the document and instead are parked as annex.
3.	Community Forestry Development Programme Guidelines 2071 (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This guideline has provision to have at least 50% women in CFUG and at least one of the two decision-making position holders be woman (chairperson or secretary) and ensures that at least one woman should hold a signatory post to ensure the women participation and 35% of the income should be spend on target program for pro poor identified by participatory wellbeing ranking.⁹ • But women who are strong and confident are usually not given key positions in the main committees, unless they have political affiliations. Women with less experience and confidence may be deliberately chosen to fill the quota. Regarding allocated budget for poor, target programme for them is not implemented effectively.
4.	Forest Sector Strategy (2016-2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its third outcome is about inclusive forest sector organizations and institutions and focuses on increasing participation, competency and leadership of women, indigenous nationalities and other poor and socially excluded groups and individuals. • It promotes gender equity, inclusive development and economic uplift of the poor, women, Dalits, Janajatis, Adibasi and other marginalised groups of people. • Gender equality, social inclusion and poverty reduction is identified as seventh strategic pillar. However, this strategy is not implemented effectively.
4.	Nepal National REDD+ Strategy 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two objectives mention about the GESI; to increase livelihood assets and diversify employment opportunities of women, indigenous peoples, Madhesis, Dalits, local communities and forest-dependent poor and strengthen governance, gender equality and social inclusion of the forestry sector to improve and harmonize policy and legal frameworks, in line with national and international requirements and standards, to harness carbon and non-carbon benefits. • Promoting people-centric, gender and socially inclusive practices and approaches, as well as equitable benefit sharing and social justice is the guiding principle. • Provides for safeguard measures on forest tenure security,

⁸ Ministry of Environment, 2010: National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change, Kathmandu, Nepal.

⁹ http://dof.gov.np/image/data/forest_act/samudayik%20ban%20bikash%20magadarshan.pdf

		<p>vocational and skill based training, increase access and develop mechanism to alternative technology for women, indigenous peoples, Madhesi, Dalits, local communities, and forest-dependent poor and also ensure their adequate representation and meaningful participation in forestry decision-making processes through policy provisions, institutionalization and capacity development, improve management and leadership competency, GESI responsiveness, commitment and morale of forestry personnel.¹⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But, it does not mention how the social position of women and socially excluded groups can be strengthened to benefit from REDD.
5.	National Climate Change Policy 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy has recognized the need to integrate GESI through its Objectives, “To mainstream GESI into adaptation and mitigation programs”, and as cross cutting-thematic area with GESI related 6 key strategies and working policies. • However, the policy is not informed by the specific problems, challenges and opportunities faced by different groups of women and men in the context of climate change. • Even though the GESI policy (inter-thematic area), mentions about different vulnerable groups to be addressed, the sectoral policies within it considers the community/citizens as a monolithic groups and does not take into consideration their historical discrimination, situational vulnerabilities, and hence the differential impacts of CC on these groups. This can pose problems in addressing the GESI issues and opportunities within/ and through the sectoral policies and isolate the GESI policy and strategies. • The policy (GESI chapter) focuses on addressing the vulnerabilities of women and marginalized groups and does not consider these groups as contributors and agents of change.
6.	National Forest Policy 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisions for social security, inclusiveness and good governance; mention about to increase access on benefit with ensuring right of forests labor, management community, women, indigenous peoples, Madhesi, Tharu, Muslim, minority, Dalits, disabilities, marginalized and backward classes community. • Forest sector institution, policy, program and budget will formulate on the basis of GESI principle, 50% women participation with decision making responsibility in all

¹⁰ MoFE, 2018: Nepal National REDD+ Strategy (2018-2022), Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal.

		<p>forestry sector institution, strategy, law, program, budget and practice will be followed as strategy and working strategy.¹¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But, working strategy do not clearly speak on capacity building on GESI consideration in forestry, gender responsive budget, gender friendly environment and awareness.
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As far as mechanisms for implementation of the policies are concerned, the government has dedicated institution for institutionalizing climate change at national, provincial and local level. Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE) is the focal ministry for climate change. Establishment of the Climate Change Management Division, REDD Implementation Centre within MoFE Climate Change Council, Inter-Ministerial Climate Change Coordination Committee, provision of the Environment Protection and Climate Change Council in Environment Protection Act 2019, thematic and inter-thematic working groups, designated Climate Change Focal Person and Environment and Climate Change Unit in sectoral ministries are the institutional mechanism and structure for climate change at federal level. At provincial level, Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forests and Environment (MoITFE) is the focal ministry for climate change. Establishment of Environment and Climate Change Division within MoITFE and Infrastructure Development and Environment Management Section¹² are the institutional arrangement for climate change at province level and local level respectively. Gender working group for forests, environment and climate change, gender focal points, GESI, livelihood and governance thematic working groups are formed at federal level for considering GESI in forestry or climate change.

Ministry of Finance (MoF) has adopted climate change financing framework for integrating climate change and climate finance into national planning and budget processing to ensure that climate finance reaches the vulnerable communities, particularly when climate programmes are directly implemented by line ministries.¹³ The climate budget code was introduced in the annual budget of fiscal year 2012/13¹⁴ to track climate public expenditure.¹⁵

3.1.2 Challenges of translating into actions

Although there are ample policy provisions in place to institutionalize GESI in sectors like climate change, the challenges of translating them into tangible actions persist.

Results of implementation of existing GESI policies, such as affirmative action's show that the quota system had a positive effect in bringing women into positions and institutions. High

¹¹ MoFE 2019: Forest Policy 2019, Government of Nepal, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Kathmandu, Nepal (http://www.mofe.gov.np/downloadfile/Ban%20Niti_1554873640.pdf)

¹² <http://tamakoshimun.gov.np/organogram>; Forests, Environment and Disaster Section in Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Rukum west district. Name of the section vary from one local level to other.

¹³ MoF, 2017: Climate Change Financing Framework: A roadmap to systematically strengthen climate change mainstreaming into planning and budgeting. Ministry of Finance, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal.

¹⁴ NPC, 2013: Climate Change Budget Code, Application Review, Published by Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission with support from UNDP/UNEP in Kathmandu, Nepal in November, 2013.

¹⁵ NPC, 2012: Climate Change Budget Code, Documenting the National Process of Arriving at Multi-sectoral Consensus, Criteria and Method, Published by Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission with support from UNDP/UNEP in Kathmandu, Nepal in September, 2012.

percentage of women has been elected as deputy heads in local governments. This could have a positive impact in increasing gender sensitivity in governance. However, providing opportunities for adequate representation is indeed a prerequisite for greater inclusiveness, but does not ensure meaningful participation. Women and Dalit representatives elected to the local governments from reserved seats are not encouraged to participate in decision-making and are deprived of specific roles and responsibilities in local governance. In forest service, there is still a low percentage of female professional staff and no detailed GESI segregated data system. All these affect negatively the efforts for GESI mainstreaming into forestry and climate change programmes and activities.

Mechanism wise there are challenges like institutional mechanism and structure are in place but there is a dearth of actual institutional GESI implementation guidelines. Further challenges have been observed in integrating GESI in forming committees or working groups in forestry and climate change activities or programmes. Increasing trends of gender responsive budget shows institutionalization of budget allocation for gender mainstreaming in all sectors of development. However, Gender Budget Audit of Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (now MoFE) 2006 found low women participation in planning (programme and budget) process (3%). Absence of women in decision-making positions in district planning process though women's participation is said to be comparatively high, particularly in community forestry programme (CFP) and leasehold forestry programme (LFP). There is no clarity on gender sensitivity in the implementation phase, monitoring and evaluation process. Lack of sex disaggregated data or information in the community forestry management.¹⁶ Despite progress made by MoFE in GESI mainstreaming there are still challenges in planning processes like no discussion or preparedness on gender mainstreaming; organizations are less sensitive to mainstream gender in their regular programmes, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation processes; and limited knowledge on how to integrate GESI in planning cycle.

3.1.3 Issue of behavioral change

Nine-box analysis showed that organizations have limited gender friendly infrastructure, like for example childcare center, changing room, rest room, women prison. However, women and marginalized groups have limited participation in sharing information, networking only in personnel relationship, information and knowledge sharing through meeting, website, workshop, seminar, mail and notice and coordination at the central level. Less importance to gender issues, absence of common code of conduct, lack of inter agencies coordination, lack of networking within federal, provincial level, local level and conservation partner, organization and research academia from gender perspective and lack of vertical structure and coordination from field to central level are the gaps identified.

Progressive decision-makers and staff who want to bring change are dominated and influenced by those who are less supportive of GESI policies and practices. Voice raised by women in the meetings or committees are not valued. Although the women participation is ensured in the committee/ meeting, voices/ issues/ ideas raised are determined by the power, politics and education background (whether educated from national or international academia) of the women.

¹⁶ <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/nepal/docs/project-documents--2019/Nepal-Climate-Citizen-Budget-English.pdf>

3.2 Community level

3.2.1 Who are the vulnerable groups and how is community defined?

"In the context of vulnerability assessment, a community can be defined as people living in one geographical area who are exposed to common hazards due to their location. They may have common experience in responding to hazards and disasters. However, they may have different perceptions of and exposure to risk. Groups within the locality will have a stake in risk reduction measures (either in favour or against)."¹⁷ According to National Climate Change Policy 2019, women, Dalit, indigenous people, Madheshi, Tharu, Muslim, oppressed groups, backward class, minorities, marginalized, farmers, labourer, youths, children, senior citizens, persons with all forms of disability, pregnant women, incapacitated and disadvantaged persons or groups are vulnerable groups. But, this definition does not include the intersection of various dimension of discrimination based on them.

The studies found that hill Dalits are considered to be the most discriminated and vulnerable in comparison to tarai Dalits (e.g. Sardar-Bantar, Khang-Khatwe; Chamar, Dom, Musahar), although majority of both inhabit remote areas and degraded lands. Both have been historically discriminated in terms of access to resources such as education, employment and other socio-economic opportunities and services, making them socially, economically, politically and culturally the most discriminated. These multiple layers of discriminations have affected both their material conditions and social status in society. Ultimately, it hinders them from accessing resources, understanding the values of participating in community initiatives and networking. Similarly, poor and highly marginalized Adivasi Janajatis, such as Majhis, Kumals, Botes etc. living near and along the river banks and in landslide and flood prone areas, seemed to be highly affected by the changing climate risks. As these groups live in clusters, in remote areas far from the main villages, which makes them excluded and difficult for them to participate in development interventions, networks, resources and opportunities and easy access to response and information sharing. Women across all these social and economic groups seem to be more excluded as compared to men.

However, the degree of exclusion and vulnerability is highest among the poor single women, tarai Dalit women living in remote and disaster prone areas followed by hill Dalit women (e.g. Gandarvas), poor and marginalized indigenous women (Rajis), single women and poor women from advantaged caste groups (Chettri, Brahmins). Single women, elderly, people living with disability and pregnant and lactating women have problems related to getting timely and complete information, participation and access to resources. Mechanisms or platforms to understand and discuss their special needs and contributions are almost non-existent. Hence, they usually tend to get excluded from participating in meetings, consultations, trainings, and group memberships, such as the ward level planning and budgeting meetings, trainings or exposure visits etc. Due to these limited physical and social assets, the climate change risks have further worsened their conditions and increasing their vulnerabilities. Thus, adopting the intersectionality ('interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the

¹⁷ IUCN, 2011: Terminologies used in climate change, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2011-118.pdf>

outcomes of these interactions in terms of power')¹⁸ lens and understanding the contextual conditions (pre-existing condition) can contribute to deal effectively with impact of climate change.

3.2.2 Issues of "time poverty"

The impact of changing climate together with the transition from the past governance system to the new federal system has brought both opportunities and challenges in women's leadership and empowerment processes. A large number of women have come into leadership positions. Scarcity of water and firewood has increased threats to the safety of women, poor and marginalized groups; decreased productivity in other areas like farming, and reduce time availability for productivities activities; and emergence of new weeds and pests has increased their workload. This has also contributed in increasing women's time in collection of the forest products, as these are almost exclusively women's traditional work.

Due to increased workload, women's mobility, participation in community initiatives, committees, decision-making processes, and accessing timely and complete information has decreased. Women across all caste and ethnic groups are heavily engaged in their traditional reproductive and productive roles, miss the opportunities to lead and benefits from forest-related resources and activities. This is common even for women in position such as elected mayor, deputy mayor, ward members, community forestry executive members etc. They have to finish their household duties and only then can they participate in planning and implementation of program. Missing the opportunity of active participation in planning cycle, decision-making process and limited access on information sharing directly affect the consideration of GESI issues in forestry and climate change. Ultimately, vulnerable group are adversely exposed and can be a victim of climate change impact. This result that progress made by women in terms of their material conditions (well-being) and social positions or status (leadership, decision-making) in society also seemed to be declining.

3.2.1 Leadership and power politics

Due to inclusive policy and guidelines only a handful of women who are socially, politically and economically advantaged obtain opportunities to participate and take leadership. The studies reviewed indicated that that four different types of leadership have emerged as follows.

i. Educated men from socially, politically and economically advantaged groups

This leadership comprises most powerful with strong political and non-political networks. Usually heads or members of executive bodies of key organizations, federations, alliances and user groups, key players, informants, focal points in forest and other sectoral programmess, key contact points, usually first interface for major and large organizations for advice or spokespersons (man), guidance, and implementation of programs and main influencers and decision-makers for most of the forest-related programs; also capture resources.

¹⁸ Davis, K., 2008. Intersectionality as buzzword: a sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory useful. *Feminist Theory*, 9 (1), 67–85 cited in Anna Kaijser & Annica Kronsell (2014) Climate change through the lens of intersectionality, *Environmental Politics*, 23:3, 417-433, DOI: 10.1080/09644016.2013.835203.

ii. Educated men from socially marginalized but politically advantaged groups

This leadership seems powerful within their communities, but do not have strong political and non-political networks, hence tend to be excluded from key mainstream decision-making processes and benefits. But in comparison to women leaders, these men leaders from socially excluded groups tend to have more access to information and resources.

iii. Literate women from socially, economically, and politically advantaged groups

This women leadership possess intersectionality like practicing male-like leadership patterns, and excluding and resisting the empowerment of other women. But still excluded by men from mainstream decision-making processes and opportunities, even when such opportunities are meant for them and not trusted and respected for their capacities as much as men.

iv. Literate women from socially marginalized and politically affiliated groups

This type of women leadership have intersectionality, such as are members in executive committees or are women representatives in development interventions, but have limited networks, and are usually patronized by advantaged women and men. While looking at these four types of leadership and their intersectionalities, sometimes they are privileged and sometimes marginalized. Women in the leadership positions are members of key committees, but they are usually engaged and responsible for women-centered programmes and committees. They do not have substantial roles in the mainstream planning processes. In most cases strong women leaders were found to be excluded from key technical and local development related committees and from planning and decision-making process as they were perceived as a threat to the local power centers. A trend of selecting or nominating women with limited exposure and experience in leadership was observed, making their participation mere token with no influence in the planning processes and decisions.

2.4 Role of men

Because of socialization, insensitivity, tradition, culture, norms and practice of dominant masculinity in the society, some men have trouble accepting the women leadership and being supportive of GESI in forestry and climate change. Men discomfort in front of colleagues and society while supporting GESI issues. Giving less importance to these matters in front of technical matter and seeing no opportunity and future to carry on with these issues. But, there are men gender champions who support the GESI issues and play key role in the integration of GESI in forestry and climate change.

Although mostly men are present in the higher decision-making positions, consideration of GESI in policies, strategy, mechanism and structure to some extent is possible. The studies indicate that presence of few supportive men's effective roles results most of the progress related to GESI consideration which proves that men GESI champions can play effective role for addressing the GESI issues through policies, strategy, activities, programmes and institutional capacity building.

4. Conclusions

- Forest Sector Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy 2008; Forest Sector Strategy 2016; National Forest Policy 2019; National Adaptation Programme of Action 2010; Nepal National REDD+ Strategy 2018 and National Climate Change Policy 2019 are the key policies and strategies with GESI provision related to forestry and climate change at federal level.
- Institutional mechanism and structure are in place but still need GESI implementation guidelines. Balancing the GESI during the formation committee or working group related to GESI, forestry and climate change is challenging.
- There is still a low percentage of female professional staff in organizational structures and decision-making positions, lack of GESI disaggregated data, less clarity on GRB and limited understanding on gender sensitive or responsive planning, programming and budgeting including gender sensitive monitoring and evaluations. No discussion or preparedness on gender mainstreaming, less sensitivity of organization to mainstream gender in their regular programmes, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation process and limited knowledge on how to integrate GESI in planning cycle are the major issues/challenges.
- Existing organizational structures both at central and local levels have limited the space for GESI-responsive decision-making processes or innovation. Progressive decision-makers and staff who want to bring change are dominated and influenced by those who are less supportive of GESI policies and practices. Although the women participation is ensured in the committees or meetings, voices/ issues/ ideas raised are heard, but are biased on the basis of power, politics and education background (whether educated from national or abroad) by the decision-makers.
- The participation and leadership of women and men in the programmes or activities related to forestry and climate change are based on their gender, political affiliation, geographic location, caste ethnicity, age, economic status, literacy and ability. Although, women who are socially, politically and economically advantaged obtain opportunities to participate and take leadership, in most cases strong women leaders were found to be excluded from key technical and local development related committees and from planning and decision-making process as they were perceived as a threat to the local power centers.
- Women's workloads within and outside the household are heavy, and "time poverty" is a critical issue. Due to increased workloads, women's mobility, participation in community initiatives, committees, decision-making processes, and accessing timely and complete information has decreased. There is no progressive change in the material conditions and social positions or status of women.
- Although women across all these social and economic groups are excluded as compared to men, the degree of exclusion and vulnerability is highest among the poor single women, tarai Dalit women living in remote and disaster prone areas followed by Hill Dalit women, poor and marginalized indigenous women, single women and poor women from advantaged caste

groups. They usually excluded from participation and access in the development intervention, network, resources, opportunity and easy participating in meetings, consultations, trainings, and group memberships.

- Role of men presence at decision-making level is also effective for addressing and institutionalize the GESI issues through policies, strategy, mechanism and structure.

5. Recommendations

- Strengthen the knowledge and skills of government staff at federal, provincial and local levels on GESI, for analysis and integration both in the design and planning cycle of project and within their organizations. This would be particularly effective for Gender Focal Points, planners, unit heads and implementing staff at all governance levels. Develop programmes and allocate resources targeting women staff at all levels to improve their leadership and gender analysis skills.
- Awareness to address gender equality and inclusion among the national and local level institutions, identify, name, frame the social aspect, prioritize it, and deal with it.
- Different layers of power structures must be understood, and actions taken to ensure that these mechanisms do not become bottlenecks for reaching women, the poor and socially marginalized groups for forestry and climate change.
- Invest in interventions that reduce workloads for women. Establish and support platforms for women's leadership to allow both men and women to learn about gender and the importance of women's engagement in forest and development related decision-making. These leadership platforms can build the confidence of women -particularly of those from marginalized minority groups - to comfortably voice their priorities in their own language and surroundings.
- Prioritize strengthening the organizational capacities of women-led forest users groups (FUGs) through development of systematic mechanisms that provides regular training and mentoring on inclusive and collaborative leadership, planning and monitoring, networking, through leadership training and coaching provisions.
- Adopting the intersectionality lens and understanding the contextual conditions can contribute to deal effectively with impact of climate change.
- Invest in increasing the number of men gender champions through the awareness, training and creating the mixed platform for sharing the GESI issues in all levels of government.

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