

Economic Empowerment of Women through Forest Solutions

A women led low carbon resilient building initiative



IDRC · CRDI

Canada





Economic Empowerment of Women through Forest Solutions

is a 30 months' action research project funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada and implemented by a consortium of ForestAction Nepal, The Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI), Association of Family Forest Owner's, Nepal (AFFON) and Federation of Forest-based Industry and Trade, Nepal (FenFIT-Nepal).

The project aims to develop business models and scalable solutions to increase women's access and control over forest resources and forest-based enterprises; enabling them to make economic decisions.

Project Context

Approximately 45% of Nepal's land is covered by forest which offers ample opportunities for forest-based business towards a low-carbon economy.

Rural livelihoods has been challenged by the negative effects of climate change, which has differential impacts on women and men, and exacerbates women's vulnerability.

While women play a pivotal role in forest conservation, they are marginalized or excluded in exercising their rights, accessing resources, and enjoying the benefits of forest management. This is more so to the Indigenous Peoples, *Dalits*, the land poor and landless, women with disabilities, single and widowed women.

Despite having some affirmative policy statements, women have suffered from patriarchal and discriminatory socio-cultural norms, legal and institutional structures. Women's ownership over productive resources and their decision-making remain minimal.

In this context, enhancing women's role, leadership and economic opportunities through forest based enterprises would provide them stable income and ensure their safety net to absorb climate shocks and build resilience.

WEE-FS Framework

Identity and Dignity

- Decision making
- Access and control
- Collective actions
- Knowledge, skill and attitude

Ownership: Land, Enterprises

- Resources
- Forest
- Farm (land)
- Forest enterprise



Intersectionality

- Social norms and values
- Local government
- Sectoral authorities
- Financial institution
- Market/trade/industries
- Technology
- Policies

Transformations

- Gender relations
- Low carbon economy
- Resilient community

- Mutual trust and respect
- Freedom of mobility
- Work sharing/unpaid care work
- Household economic decisions
- Violence free environment
- Leadership

Approaches

- i. **Intersectional** approach is used to assess intersecting factors and sub-groups of women that often face compounding forms of discrimination including gender-based violence.
- ii. **Participatory Action Research and Learning (PAL)** approach with feminist lens is employed via (i) power-sharing between project team and targeted stakeholders; and (ii) a conscious strategy of mitigating unequal power relationships and risks through critical reflexivity and consciousness in project design, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
- iii. **Women's Economic Rights** approach is the central to this project's methodology that focuses on removing structural barriers that hinder women's access to and control over resources and opportunities.



Objective

The main goal of the project is to fill the knowledge gap pertinent to women's economic empowerment through improved management of private, leasehold and community forestry regimes in Nepal.

- i. To understand constraints and opportunities for women's economic empowerment in a forested landscape in Nepal by undertaking gender and intersectional analysis of policies, institutions, and practices in the forestry sector.
- ii. To generate innovative approaches and strategies that increase and sustain women's income and economic resources through enhanced collective agency, entrepreneurial capacities, and transformative power relations.
- iii. Develop and pilot inclusive models of sustainable, low-carbon, nature-based solutions through forest management and forest-based businesses.
- iv. Contribute to an enabling policy and institutional environment that supports women-led forest management, trade and enterprises and communicate knowledge products to wider stakeholders and epistemic communities.



Support provided to small forest based enterprises, using raw materials from community managed forest

Bio Bowls and Plate (Duna-Tapari)

- Built on traditional and cultural practices and skill
- Rooted in religious rituals
- Women are the primary users and producers
- Sustainable products
- Strong local demand and value chains
- Environment friendly
- Replaces plastic plates and bowls
- Provides jobs even to differently abled and elderly people



Bamboo Items (*Baskets Nanglo, Dalo, Thunse*)

- Eco friendly, bamboo based indigenous products
- Women and men do bamboo weaving traditionally
- Essential items for rural Nepalese household
- Biggest and even growing market in construction sector
- Sustainable local market



Nepali Handmade Paper

- Handmade artisan paper indigenous to Nepal
- Mandatory use for legal documents
- Handmade paper falls within the Government's high priority sector
- Demand in both local and international market





**Diverse
innovations
suitable to
the local
context**



Use of local knowledge and resources



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