



## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON **GENDER-JUST CLIMATE SOLUTIONS:**

Building Urban and Rural Women's Resilience to Climate Change

Conference Proceeding

## Member Organizations



### Climate and Development Dialogue

Climate and Development Dialogue is a vibrant civil society platform that is engaging and influencing policy processes on climate change to make it participatory, transparent and accountable. It aims to build knowledge on climate change and together with Nepali Civil Society Organizations influence the governments at all levels. It's members include 11 civil society organizations with long track record of working on climate change, women rights and development sector in Nepal.

# Foreword

As climate change is accelerating, the world is increasingly seeing its effect everywhere, with mainly women and girls as one of the most vulnerable groups to its impacts. Studies have revealed that events of climate change disproportionately impact women. The climate reality is worse for women as it exacerbates existing inequality and gender disparity. Thus, in the growing climate discourse understanding the link between climate change and women has become indispensable, especially because women and girls are often overlooked in devising climate solutions. In many parts of the world, the most vulnerable women are also less likely to be educated about climate change and solutions and represented to address their vulnerabilities to climate change.

But as we address our future with climate actions and solutions, it is crucial that women are part of the transformation we need in the world. To address gender inequities and achieve a gender-just transformation in the community, it is crucial to integrate and tackle climate change, gender, and vulnerability issues through an intersectionality lens. Recognizing women and their role in addressing climate change is critical for empowering women as change agents and changing gender stereotypes that overburden and discriminate against women.

Although Nepal's constitution provides equal rights to all citizens and envisions an inclusive state, in practice, women across Nepal are still marginalized, and the patriarchal values of our society still undermine their engagement in climate action plans and solutions. Therefore, it is crucial that we have gender-responsive policy measures and women's equal and equitable participation to ensure the exercise of women's democratic rights guaranteed by the constitution of the country. It is vital that we ask and make way for more women's participation through the National Climate Change Policy 2019 and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan on Climate Change.

Additionally, it is equally imperative to hold the three tiers of our government accountable to work towards gender-just climate solutions together.

This year, PRC and Tewa jointly commissioned a discussion paper on 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions' to build a shared understanding of the term itself. The paper highlights nine key principles that can help realize climate actions with gender sensitivity. We believe the nine fundamentals can also assist in devising and achieving gender-just climate solutions. On 28 December 2022, as part of the National Conference on Gender-Just Climate Solutions: Building Urban and Rural Women's Resilience to Climate Change, we also launched the discussion paper digitally for public access. The event saw diverse and meaningful participation and attempted to build momentum among women, women groups, development organizations, and governmental institutions.

The dialogue program brought together participants to enhance their understanding in specifically three areas: 1) gender-specific vulnerabilities to climate change through intersectionality, 2) women's agency role in building community resilience for addressing climate change, and 3) claiming gender space in climate discourse in Nepal.

Climate and Development Dialogue is grateful to all guests, panelists, moderators, experts, and participants for their meaningful engagement in the discussions led by the program. We thank our participants for sharing their experiences and opinions on gender justice and climate change through the platform. The dialogue will take the findings of this discourse ahead by engaging more stakeholders across all three levels.

*Prakriti Resources Centre  
On behalf of Climate and Development Dialogue*

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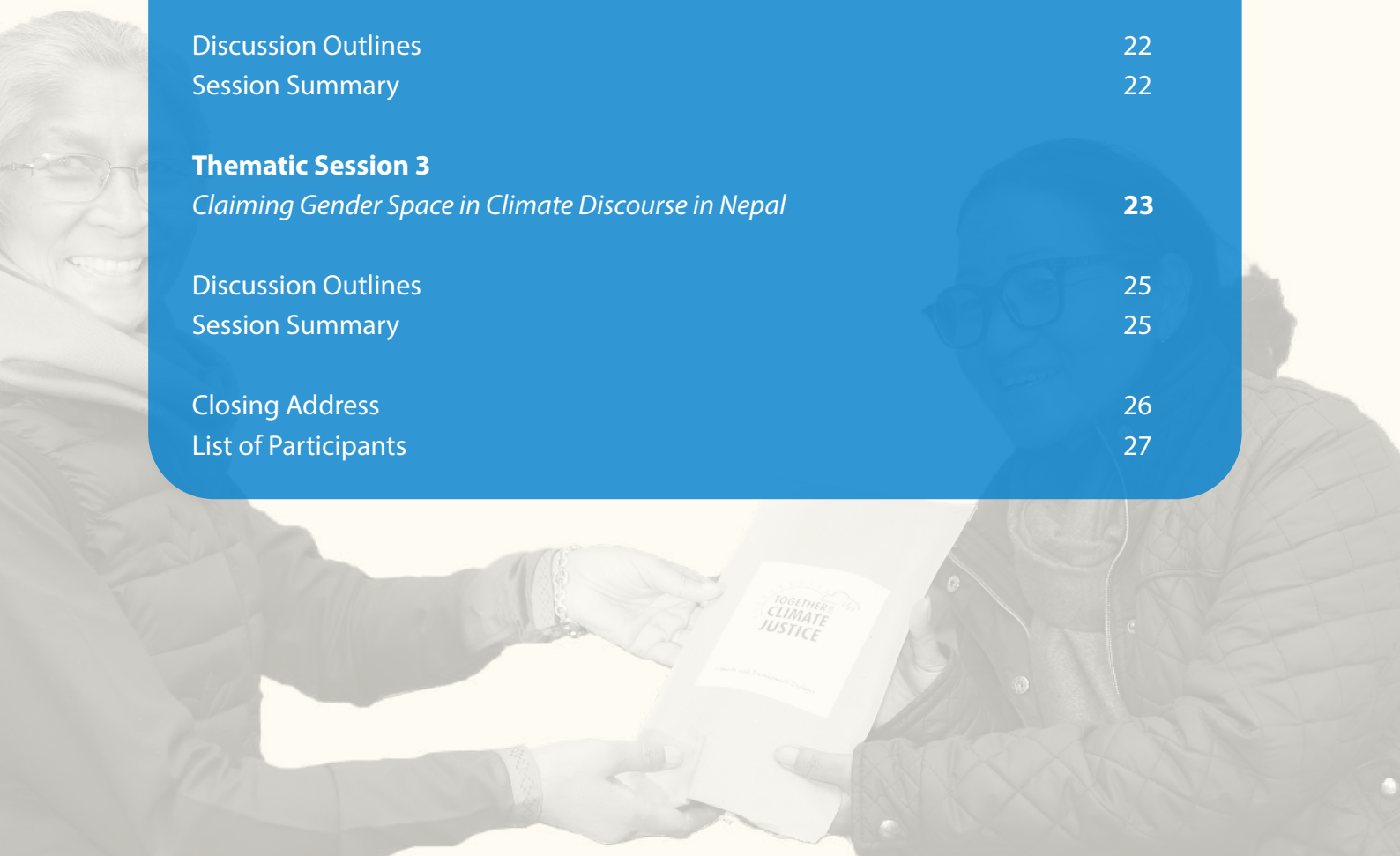
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## Background

Climate crisis's impact on the world is not neutral to everyone, especially in terms of gender. It impacts women disproportionately and also reinforces and escalates the existing gender discrimination. Women and girls worldwide from different intersections face the impacts of climate change more severely. This is so because they comprise a larger population still fighting for access to basic life needs due to existing social inequalities and because they depend on natural resources for their livelihood.

According to the United Nations, women comprise 80 percent of people displaced by climate change. In Nepal, climate-induced disasters have affected more than thousands of women--their socioeconomic stability and quality of life. The existing gender inequalities and the climate crisis have aggravated their vulnerability and marginalization. Women in particularly remote areas, need more resources, information, and skills to adapt to climate change. Moreover, while they share the burden of the climate crisis, they are yet to understand 'what is climate change' and 'what climate solutions they can be part of to help and enable them to be part of a better future which is just.'

Since 2012, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has also made it mandatory for governments to embrace gender balance in national delegations and climate policy and action.

In this overview of addressing the climate crisis through inclusive gender participation, Climate and Development Dialogue, a civil society platform on 28th December 2022, organized a national conference to address 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions.' The platform consists of 11 civil society organizations, namely ActionAid Nepal, DanChurchAid Nepal, HiMAWANTI, Tewa Philanthropy for Equitable Justice and Peace, The Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS), Practical Action Nepal, DidiBahini, KIRDARC, Helvetas Nepal, CARE Nepal and Prakriti Resources Centre (PRC).

Through the initiation of these 11 organizations, the conference discussed the impacts of climate change on women and girls from across Nepal to understand ways to work on gender-just climate solutions. The program reflected on women's experiences at different tiers of social structures, their challenges in tackling climate-induced disasters, and the social inequalities of their world. The discussion program also attempted to build momentum among stakeholders to collaborate and work on gender-just climate solutions and realize and revise climate change policy and practices.



## Participants

A total of 71 participants attended the conference, of which only 12 were men. The conference saw participation from government agencies such as the Ministry of Forests and Environment and the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens. It also saw the engagement of elected representatives from Bagmati Province's Provincial Assembly, Lalitpur Metropolitan City and Tarkeshwor Municipality. The conference also saw the presence of representatives from different women's groups, organizations, and networks, and staffs of Climate and Development (C&D) Dialogue member organizations.



## Opening Session

**Pragya Sherchan**, Programme Officer, Prakriti Resources Centre

On 28th December 2022, Pragya Sherchan, Programme Officer and researcher at Prakriti Resources Centre, commenced the national conference by welcoming participants from diverse community-based women groups, non-governmental, governmental, and media organizations. In her welcoming remarks, she acknowledged the participation of Honorary Bharati Pathak, a Member of Bagmati Province's Provincial Assembly; Manjali Shakya, the Deputy Mayor of Lalitpur Metropolitan City; Sirjana Burlakoti Aryal, the Deputy Mayor at Tarkeshwor Municipality; Laxmi Kumari Basnet, the Joint Secretary at Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens; and Deepa Oli, the Gender Focal Point at Ministry of Forests and Environment.

Sherchan discussed the beginning of the Climate and Development Dialogue as a platform to work with different climate and gender stakeholders to address climate change and climate action plans through a gendered lens. Sherchan also introduced the theme of this year's national conference as 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions: Building Urban and Rural Women's Resilience to Climate Change' and declared the program as their 4th iteration to understand and learn the way forward for scaling up climate actions in Nepal. She also invited Honorary Bharati Pathak to officially launch the digital version of 'Gender-Just Climate Solution', a discussion paper developed by researchers at Prakriti Resources Centre and Tewa, including Sherchan herself.



## Welcome Address

### **Sunny Rajopadhyaya, DidiBahini**

In his introductory address, Sunny Rajopadhyaya from DidiBahini, a women's organization, welcomed participants of the conference. Rajopadhyaya expressed gratitude to participants of the conference and guest professionals participating in the panels for a meaningful discussion about 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions.' He opened the floor for the program by expressing his excitement for the commencement of the program. He also shared his gratitude with the audience for an opportunity to learn about gender-just climate solutions together through the discussions led in the event.



## **Presentation of ‘Gender-Just Climate Solutions’ Discussion Paper and Launch**

As part of the gender and climate discourse, Prabin Man Singh, Programme Director and researcher at Prakriti Resources Centre, presented the discussion paper, ‘Gender-just Climate Solutions.’ Prabin Man Singh, Preema Ranjitkar, and Pragya Sherchan conducted the research in collaboration with Tewa-Philanthropy for Equitable Justice and Peace. The presentation by Singh attempted to set a background for the conference by defining how the climate crisis is related to gender and disproportionately impacts women and girls. It also highlighted why women need to be forerunners of climate solutions and how they can be part of the just solution.

Singh started the session by questioning women’s engagement in climate discourse and emphasized that their participation is necessary for climate change adaptation and mitigation actions, especially to achieve ‘Gender-Just Climate Solutions.’

He addressed how although ‘Gender-Just Climate Solutions’ is a widely used concept in the climate change discourse, is a notion yet to be agreed upon in Nepal. In his keynote presentation, Singh mapped out their research findings, mainly nine principles that need to be integrated into Gender-Just Climate Solutions practice. They are as follows:

### **1. Gender Assessments**

Studies have shown that women are more vulnerable to climate change impacts. In many parts of the world, the predominant social gender inequalities still deprive them of access to basic life needs. In addition, their direct relationship with natural resources- whether for household, agricultural or traditional purposes-makes them more vulnerable to the climate crisis. Therefore to work on climate solutions, gender assessments must be carried out to understand the different ways women are experiencing the impacts of climate change.

### **2. Address Girls’ and Women’s Needs and Vulnerabilities**

The assessments must be followed by action plans to address girls’ and women’s differentiated needs and vulnerabilities. Climate solutions cannot leave out women and communities, and these solutions must be sensitive to all gender variances to be practiced and continued. It needs to acknowledge women’s multiple factors of vulnerability in terms of gender, caste, class, sexuality, religion, race, and social, political, and economic background. It should carefully recognize intersectionality.

### **3. Women’s Participation and Leadership in Decision-Making**

Climate change impacts are not gender-neutral; therefore, it is important for women to participate and lead decisions for climate solutions. It is crucial for gender-just climate solutions to also focus on building the capacities of women from different intersections to enable them to be part of solutions that can help mitigate and build resilience to climate crises.

### **4. Women as knowledge partners**

It is unimaginable to work on climate solutions without understanding climate change problems first. In many parts of the world, women exposed to climate crises are unaware of how they can help their situation. These women need more access to information about climate change, adaptation, and mitigation. But what can also not be undermined is their knowledge of local resources and traditional practices to address climate solutions. It is, therefore, crucial to inform women through active dialogue practices to help them be part of climate solutions.



***Climate solutions cannot leave out women and communities, and these solutions must be sensitive to all gender variances to be practiced and continued.***

*-Prabin Man Singh*

## **5. Gender-Responsive Budgeting**

Gender-just climate solutions require financing, and these finances need to mark budgets to address gender issues in relation to climate change-induced vulnerabilities. Gender-responsive budget allocations must disseminate equal and fair resources for gender-just climate solutions.

## **6. Equitable Benefit Sharing**

Any climate solution needs to be equitable to all people. All gender variances, including women and girls, poor and marginalized, should share and have access to the benefits of climate actions.

## **7. Gender-Sensitive Climate Actions**

Climate actions need to adhere to gender sensitivity. It must provide solutions that can enable and benefit women, girls, and all genders. These climate actions should not reinforce existing social inequalities and stereotypes. They should create prospects for access to information, resources, and opportunities.

## **8. Accountability Toward Girls and Women**

Climate actions need mechanisms to ensure and safeguard the rights of girls and women. It must follow transparent and responsive strategies/ approaches that hold climate actions accountable to share information and see the proper budget allocation for gender-specific climate solutions. There should be mechanisms to address/guarantee the participation of women, equitable benefit sharing, and budgeting. In addition, institutions leading projects must assess their programs to see that climate actions don't negatively affect women, girls, and children.

## **9. Transformation through Positive Change in Gender Power Relationships and local gender roles**

Climate action plans should help women transform the gender power imbalance in society. It needs to allow them to practice their democratic rights and break existing social barriers impeding the growth of women, girls, and children. In addition, climate solutions should encourage women's agency and mobility.



*We need an informed society that can ask for accountability and demand actions toward gender-just climate actions from different systems.*

- Deepa Oli

## Guest Remarks

**Deepa Oli**, Gender Focal Point, Ministry of Forests and Environment

In her commentary, Deepa Oli, the Gender Focal Point at the Ministry of Forests and Environment, praised the 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions' discussion paper, which she had received for review before the conference. She extended her gratitude to the team of researchers for highlighting the necessary principles that institutions, organizations, and civil society can work on to address gender-just climate solutions. Oli remarked how in recent years, many projects adhere to gender-related programs and climate change adaptation and mitigation programs separately but, in essence, have failed to address the vulnerability of women and girls to climate change and help and enable them. She delineated that many such failures resulted because they needed more attention to the subject, were more budget-oriented, and chased after issues without the insight of tackling the real problems.

She commended PRC's discussion paper for bringing forth different spectrums to work on climate solutions and for underlining methods to address gender gaps that are created formally and informally in our current social power structure. She talked about the necessity of enhancing women's agency and the need to make them part of climate solutions.

In her address, Oli also mentioned the misconception that follows every gender discussion--that it is women-specific. She pressed the urgency to change that mindset and to understand that gender is not just for women to discuss but for everyone.

In her concluding remarks, she called upon the conference participants to work on making an informed society and developing a critical mass that can ask for accountability and demand actions toward gender-just climate actions from different systems. The onus of working on gender-just climate solutions is not just of any ministry, she said, but everyone. She pressed that the way forward now would be to create more opportunities for the exposure of women in the climate actions to enable their agency and impact change in the existing women-discriminating social structures.



***Works to address climate crises and adaptation must be integrated with women empowerment programs. Addressing climate problems in isolation from gender issues will not help bring efficient solutions.”***

**- Laxmi Kumari Basnet**



**Laxmi Kumari Basnet**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens

Laxmi Kumari Basnet, The Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, in her address acknowledged how different women’s experiences shape vulnerabilities and why climate solutions must address them. Explaining the intersectionality of women to address gender-just climate solutions, she identified the need to address the vulnerabilities of women from different life backgrounds, such as women with disability, women who have been victims of violence, women who are marginalized, and women who come from so-called lower caste groups.

To work on gender-just climate solutions, she said we need to work to eradicate the ingrained gender and social inequalities in our communities and our own homes. Basnet brought to the fore ill traditions like chhaupadi, daijo pratha that have been working to maintain the patriarchal hierarchy in our societies by objectifying women and inferring their natural menstrual cycle as impure.

In her address, Basnet pressed that our climate solutions should increase women’s economic empowerment. She also stressed that women’s household roles should not be overlooked because they have more influence over creating a behavioral change regarding mitigating and adapting to climate change. Basnet said works to address climate crises and adaptation must be integrated with women empowerment programs. She said addressing these problems in isolation from gender issues might not help bring efficient solutions.

Basnet pointed out that development plans often fall short of budgets focusing on women. In addition, she also highlighted that some budgets, although marked for women in existence, aren’t necessarily used for women.

Further deconstructing the reach of women in decision-making roles and their participation in different institutions, Basnet said it is important to observe if women in these positions have been allowed to practice their agency. Although different ministries appoint a gender-focal person, not all women in these positions are given capacities to drive initiatives that make fundamental developmental changes. Basnet discussed that sometimes positions are used as political tokens and agendas; therefore, there need to be mechanisms of investigation and evaluation to hold authorities accountable.



***“Tarakeshwor is looking forward to collaborating with organizations in gender-just climate solutions-related works.”***

***- Sirjana Burlakoti Aryal***

**Sirjana Burlakoti Aryal**, Deputy Mayor, Tarakeshwor Municipality

Sirjana Burlakoti Aryal, The Deputy Mayor at Tarakeshwor Municipality, commenced her speech with a congratulatory note to Climate and Development Dialogue for successfully organizing their fourth conference and launching the ‘Gender-Just Climate Solutions’ discussion paper. Reflecting on the environment and development of Tarakeshwor Municipality, Aryal said that the municipality, with its new leadership, has been realizing the importance of working on climate change. And in recent times, they have been gradually taking steps to mitigate its impacts. But these steps still need to be more effective.

Aryal said that today in Tarakeshwor Municipality, many women are approaching roles that can empower them. These women also have been at the forefront of environmental campaigns. As an example of women’s increasing participation in environmental-related works, Aryal presented Tarakeshwor’s women’s engagement in managing waste and developing fertilizers. Women in Tarakeshwor have also been leading advocacy programs for waste management and teaching locals how to segregate their waste.

Aryal also noted that Tarakeshwor needs a good budget to plan and execute climate actions and shared that the institution is ready to collaborate with organizations in gender-just climate solutions-related works. For her concluding remarks, Aryal said that women should not be excluded from developmental programs, and their participation and views should be given space. She also noted that discussion programs should not just end in dialogues but should follow necessary actions toward goals determined by the program.



***Women participation in the climate action is not just about their rights but also about their responsibility to build a worthwhile future for everyone because they are part of the climate problem and, thereby, their solutions.***

*- Manjali Shakya*



**Manjali Shakya**, Deputy Mayor, Lalitpur Metropolitan City

Manjali Shakya, The Deputy Mayor of Lalitpur Metropolitan City, commenced her speech by acknowledging the need to start working on gender-just climate actions immediately. She also stated that Lalitpur Metropolitan City has already been taking the necessary steps to work on climate actions that are gender sensitive. She emphasized that the beginning of work on gender-just climate solutions should start by expanding on the participation of women. When women's engagement and participation increase in climate actions, she said achieving climate solutions will be more accessible, efficient, and sustainable.

Shakya highlighted the strength of women in terms of their resilience, accountability, responsiveness to duty, and ownership. Shakya stated that their participation in the climate action is not just about their rights but also about their responsibility to build a worthwhile future for everyone because they are part of the climate problem and, thereby, their solutions.

Shakya identified that local governments, such as the Lalitpur Metropolitan's role, would be valuable in catalyzing and supporting the movement of achieving climate solutions that are equitable for all. She also emphasized that governments and institutions need to draw their attention to smaller, subtle steps that work on creating transformative changes inside conventional systems to make way for climate solution opportunities both for women and men.

Reflecting on the nine principles of the gender-just climate solutions discussion paper, Shakya also discussed the need to plan resources and execute them to cover all aspects of gender-just climate solutions. In her address, Shakya emphasized the need to focus on the sustainability of our environment and natural resources. "If we don't work on preserving our environment's ecosystem, no wealth will be able to ensure a better life for us," said Shakya.



***It is important to localize climate change information for knowledge sharing at the grassroots to encourage women's participation in gender-just climate solutions.***

*- Honorary Bharati Pathak*



**Honorary Bharati Pathak**, Member of Provincial Assembly, Bagmati Province

Hon. Bharati Pathak, a Member of Bagmati Province's Provincial Assembly, discussed how women could play critical roles in executing climate solutions. Pathak expressed that although the road to gender-just climate solutions is full of uncertainties and questions, there are opportunities to look forward to. She also emphasized that the conference discussions will be the beginning of planning necessary actions toward achieving gender-just climate solutions.

Pathak said in terms of working for women's empowerment and their engagement in climate actions to achieve gender-just climate solutions, there are mainly three areas that institutions and civil societies need to observe and work on:

- 1) Firstly, they need to see how they can address problems/ issues through policies and bring them into implementation.
- 2) They must ensure women's participation through policies and institutional regulations.
- 3) Thirdly, they need to have mechanisms to provide women with information; they need to build women's access to information.

Pathak stated that it is only possible to imagine just social change, especially in mitigating and adapting to climate change, by having women in decision-making places. In her address, to improve the dissemination of information, especially about climate change, Pathak encouraged and emphasized that knowledge sharing at the grassroots should happen in diverse local languages to help women share knowledge among their communities as well as to work on their agency.

Addressing the nine principles presented in 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions', Pathak said we need to work on mechanisms to ensure women's participation and create ecosystems that promote equitable benefit sharing of climate actions. In concluding remarks, Pathak said that achieving gender-just climate solutions will be tricky and an overhauling journey. But she noted accomplishing those targets will be possible if we work together.



***PRC and Tewa have been working to strengthen women's participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation-related works for some time now.***

*- Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan*

**Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan**, Vice-President, Tewa

As final remarks for the opening session, Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan, the Vice-President of Tewa, discussed the importance of the Climate and Development Dialogue as a platform to bring together people from different organizations to share their experiences and knowledge to address climate change. She said the forum has been enabling a network that can provide technical assistance and information on climate change at the grassroots, especially to women. In her address, Pradhan also shared her happiness in seeing Nepal's progress in making evidence-based policies through discussion and research based-programs.

In hindsight, Pradhan said, she had never imagined Tewa's collaboration with organizations like Prakriti Resources Centre that works for sustainable development and environmental justice in Nepal. Through these years, the two organizations have been working to strengthen women's participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation-related works.

Pradhan also admired the findings of the 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions' paper that identified fundamentals that civil society organizations could focus on to achieve gender-just climate solutions. She said this initiative as learning would be of inspiration for future collaborations between organizations.

In her final remarks, Pradhan called upon the program participants to recognize the knowledge of women, their participation, and how that capacity will be meaningful to making necessary developmental changes. Pradhan also discussed that it is essential to acknowledge indigenous women's knowledge to address climate solutions to mobilize and enable their agency.



# Thematic Session

## **Thematic Session 1:** Gender-Specific Vulnerabilities to Climate Change through Intersectionality Lens in the Urban and Rural Context

The session, moderated by Kriti Shrestha, a Knowledge Officer at Practical Action Nepal, discussed the importance of understanding and tackling gender-specific vulnerabilities related to climate change through intersectionality. The session attempted to break down the idea of intersectionality to highlight that many vulnerabilities to climate change will be interconnected to different social categorizations that carry their own set of discriminations to maintain social/ power hierarchy. Shrestha invited Dharam Raj Uprety, Anju Chaudhary, Bhagwati Shah, and Manika Shrestha to discuss and highlight the unique experiences of intersectionality from different regions in Nepal.

The speakers also talked about how different developmental programs have attempted to involve women at the grassroots for disaster management and climate change adaptation and have helped them address the problems in their community, especially those concerning floods induced by climate change. The session stressed the need to address intersectionality to work on gender-just climate solutions.

### **Dharam Raj Uprety, Thematic Lead for Climate and Resilience, Practical Action Nepal**

Dharam Raj Uprety from Practical Action Nepal discussed the growing number of women participating in climate actions. Uprety said although the participation of women is increasing, their involvement still needs to be improved, especially at the grassroots, where women are more vulnerable. He also emphasized that there need to be more mechanisms to ensure women's participation, especially in the political sphere. He shared that today, the UNFCCC and different governmental and developmental institutions have been encouraging women's participation by having mandates for their engagement in their organizational structure. He also talked about the growing awareness of gender sensitivity and how gender and development are integrated subjects.

Uprety also pointed out that the discussion of gender entered the climate scene not too long ago and that it took years and years of hard work and women's voices just to introduce gender as a subject of climate discourse. He also noted the arduous journey of the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC), one of the prime stakeholders of the UNFCCC, to make the Conference of the Parties (COP) address the concerns of gender in climate policy and action.



### **Anju Kumari Chaudhary, Social Mobilizer, Center for Social Development and Research, Bardiya**

Anju Kumari Chaudhary discussed how climate-induced floods have displaced many families and communities in Karnali. She also highlighted how these disasters bring about financial loss and push their vulnerabilities almost yearly in monsoon. Chaudhary discussed how in these disasters, the vulnerabilities of women from different social backgrounds are different. She pointed out that during disasters, many women, especially new mothers and pregnant women from lower-income families, suffer because they don't have access to health facilities and shelter homes immediately.

Chaudhary also acknowledged the strength of women in bringing people together during disasters and helping them manage and access resources. She said today, many women from their community have been engaging with locals to make them better prepared for disasters. These women have also been sharing information and knowledge to cope with disasters and access relief and finance led by the government and organizations. They have also been helping communities address disaster conflicts and directing the grievances of the flood victims to the necessary stakeholders.

Chaudhary also pointed out that in these years, Kailali is gradually seeing more women participation in community development works. And although women are challenged by gender discrimination, they have been eager to learn and play their part in developing their communities. She said, however, that more voices need to come together to enable women to lead dialogue on development and climate actions. She also pointed out that the participation of women is increasing, but the involvement is still less in decision-making roles.

### **Bhagwati Shah, Sharad Sanakishan Sahakari Sanstha Limited, Rajapur Municipality-1, Daulatpur**

Bhagwati Shah, a leader of a women's group, introduced herself as a person who was limited to her household until a few years ago. In her address, Shah highlighted the vulnerabilities of women at the grassroots, who are still unaware of their democratic rights and the roles they could play in developing their communities. Shah stressed that women in rural areas still are challenged by the notions of a patriarchal society. In these rural regions, women still don't have access to education, information, and resources to build their capacity.

Shah also talked about the importance of being informed and how the reach of information through leadership, training, and developmental and disaster programs has helped women cope with disaster-induced losses. She also highlighted the importance of knowledge-sharing to build access to opportunities. "A lot of times, people at the grassroots are unaware of how they can help their situation, especially women. But development programs targeted towards women are enabling women to reach access," she said. Shah also talked about Practical Action Nepal's advocacy and insurance programs that have helped farmers (both women and men) access insurance for their agricultural land to help cope with losses caused by monsoon floods and be better disaster-prepared.

### **Manika Shrestha, Mahila Ekata Samaj**

Manika Shrestha from Mahila Ekata Samaj discussed that Nepal lacks climate policies that address people's vulnerabilities based on intersectionality. Shrestha discussed that although the country has been boasting diversity in terms of geography and cultural demographics, it has not been able to include people from diverse gender and communities in its guidelines for development. She also pointed out that these developmental policies leave out many intersections of people. And therefore, the country needs to address policies through the lens of intersectionality.

She also said information regarding climate change needs to be localized for people to understand what that would mean for them and then to act upon the problem. Shrestha also stressed the need to work on mechanisms to warn people during disasters. She also added that work related to climate change adaptation and mitigation has yet to look into the psychological impacts climate change has on women and communities.

Besides explaining intersectionality, Shrestha also talked about enabling women to realize problems they are surrounded by to be part of their solutions. At present, she said many women at the grassroots still need to learn about climate change and how it has impacted them. The first step to engaging women in climate solutions, she said, would be helping them define the problem to understand their vulnerabilities to climate change. She also stressed that the local government's role in disseminating information about climate change and engaging women in climate action plans would be key.

## Thematic Session 1: Discussion/ Summary

### ***Audience and Panel Interaction/ Discussion Outlines:***

- Gender conversation should observe intersectionality. We must consider the formal and informal identities (multiple) when discussing any vulnerability to climate change.
- Women are unaware of their intersectionality and how those identities affect their lives.
- Workarounds gender development/climate solutions need to encompass the underlying complexities of our social relationships that have been insidiously fostering social discrimination against women.
- We need more studies that can inform people about the risks of disasters, help to manage disasters, and provide the necessary support to the victims of disasters.
- There is a need for more segregated and detailed data from the ground to support developments.

### ***Session Summary***

- Intersectionality approaches add value to climate vulnerability and risk assessments to understand differentiated vulnerabilities and risks among the poor and marginalized communities.
- Access to disaster information and knowledge supports women's preparedness and enhances their adaptive capacity to climate-induced disasters.
- Women's participation is slowly growing from community to the global level on disaster and climate change issues. However, ensuring their meaningful participation requires building the capacity of women and their organizations.

## **Thematic Session 2: Women's Agency Roles in Building Community Resilience for Addressing Climate Change**

The session moderated by Geeta Pandey, Environment, Climate Change, and Advocacy Manager from KIRDARC, discussed building women's leadership and the roles women can play in addressing climate change. The session also emphasized building women's capacity to help them define problems and act upon them. Pandey invited Hem Kumari Siwa, Pragma Sherchan, and Pratima Gurung to share their experiences in building women's agencies in the work they have been doing. The session also highlighted the social scenario challenging women to explore their growth.

### **Hem Kumari Siwa, Chairperson of Sahayatra Nepal, Ilam**

Hem Kumari Siwa, provided an overview of how Sahayatra Nepal has been working to address environmental and climate change issues in collaboration with their local government/ municipality. She highlighted that they have worked to protect wetlands and have undertaken a project that has preserved community waterspouts. In addition, her organization is disseminating climate change-related information in the local languages to sensitize locals and stakeholders on climate change. They have also been heralding discussion programs and promoting organic agriculture. In addition, they have also been providing women entrepreneurship workshops.

Siwa said their programs are focused on marginalized women to encourage women's participation and build their understanding of climate change and how it will impact them. Siwa highlighted that in the beginning, it was difficult for them to reach out to local government/ municipality representatives to talk about climate change and localize climate programs through municipal plans and budgets. But in recent times, the local government's support in their training, advocacy, and programs has helped them to amplify their work on climate change.

Siwa also said in recent times, their successes have drawn more attention toward what needs to be done to address climate change. And this time, after a lot of pressure from their community groups, their municipality has agreed to allocate a budget for climate-change causes. She attributed this success to women's determination and sense of duty and accountability. She emphasized that women have always managed to show results in the work they have done.



### **Pragya Sherchan, Programme Officer, Prakriti Resources Centre**

Pragya Sherchan, from Prakriti Resources Centre, discussed how PRC has been encouraging women's participation and leadership in climate works. Sherchan talked about the importance of women's representation and leadership to work on climate solutions and actions. She said PRC has been involved in climate change research, knowledge sharing, and capacity building at three levels of government. She also mentioned that they have been working closely with Tewa to localize gender and climate change actions together.

Sherchan said PRC has been working with three women groups at three different municipalities (Sahayatra Nepal in Ilam; Sirjansheel Mahila Samaj in Tarakeswor; and Mahila Jagaran in Banepa) as a model to localize climate actions. She shared that their organization believes women are agents of change and have more influence in bringing about behavioral change in people and communities towards their environment and their everyday practices that affect climate. Sherchan said they have been working to build women's capacity and understanding of climate change to help them discuss and work towards climate solutions. In addition, the organization has been reaching out to more women at the grassroots by working with local government and women-led groups and networks to spur more discussion about climate change. Their main goals have been increasing women's participation in climate change discussions and educating awareness about climate change to build upon actions.

Sherchan also said the successes of programs led by these women groups have helped to change people's traditional gendered perceptions. In addition, they have brought positive changes in power relations among the local government, other development agencies, communities, and others. It has also helped to make the implementing entities accountable. She also expressed joy in seeing the growth of people's seriousness in gender-just climate issues.

### **Pratima Gurung, President of the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association-Nepal,**

Pratima Gurung, an activist who has advocated for the human rights of women, people with disability, and indigenous communities--talked about building women's agencies and autonomy and why that is important in addressing climate change impacts and solutions. Gurung said if women want to address their vulnerabilities to climate change, they need to be part of climate change actions to provide solutions to themselves. And to begin towards those solutions, our society must work toward building women's agency.

Gurung also said that there is no doubt that women have produced results in all kinds of works they have touched, and their representation has made way for more changes in our society. Gurung highlighted that the participation and leadership of women in community forests resulted in the success of community forest management in Nepal, which is also evidence of why women's agency is vital to climate causes.

But when discussing women's role and providing space to address issues, she said it is vital for people to understand the underlying complexities and acknowledge intersectionality. She emphasized that all women cannot encompass all issues. Therefore, to address the vulnerabilities of different women, we need to see that participation and representation of women in different spheres of work include women whose voices are marginalized. This could be based on social, educational, and economic background and their physical ability and situations.

She also emphasized that different domains need to work on building women's agencies. Gurung highlighted that even after all these years, women have not been able to receive the same respect as men. She emphasized that organizations must work on pre-conditions for equality by working on

4Rs: Rethink, Recognize, Role, and Respect in relation to our social values. And it is also crucial for us to work on building women's agencies by building their capacities from their homes. She also said that development works should no longer work in isolation and address vulnerabilities based on our society's intersectionality.

## Thematic Session 2: Discussion/ Summary

### ***Audience and Panel Interaction/ Discussion Outlines:***

- Development strategies/ climate solutions should not overburden women and reinforce gender discrimination.
- Public and corporate sectors should have mechanisms to address differentiated women needs. A mechanism is needed to recognize and take action against gender discrimination and harassment cases.
- Women's representations and participation need to be further strengthened to enhance women's roles in climate solutions.
- Formal and informal identities of women/people need to be acknowledged and reflected when making policies, development strategies, and assigning platforms.
- Patriarchy has been preventing an equal society. There is a need for deeper reflection on where and how patriarchy is holding back gender equality.
- Gender-just climate solutions must internalize the principles of diversity and inclusivity.

### ***Session Summary***

- Women-led solutions have been proven effective in addressing twin challenges of minimizing climate risks and empowering gender equality. Climate solutions promote women's agency roles in building community resilience in addressing climate crises.
- Prevailing gender stereotypes among policymakers, bureaucrats, and among women themselves is the biggest hurdle to building women's agency roles in climate solutions. adaptive capacity to climate-induced disasters.
- Women's participation is slowly growing from community to the global level on disaster and climate change issues. However, ensuring their meaningful participation requires building the capacity of women and their organizations.

### **Thematic Session 3: Claiming Gender Space in Climate Discourse in Nepal**

The third-panel discussion session, moderated by Anuja Shrestha, the Grant-Making Manager from Tewa, discussed the need for women to participate in the climate discourse and make way for women's participation and leadership. The session emphasized the representation of women in every decision-making space. The discussion also tried to highlight how through time, the inclusion of women, especially in leadership positions, has impacted development. Shrestha invited Shakti Gurung, Indira Kumari Shreesh, and Dr. Nirmal KC to share their perspectives on scaling up women and their organizations' voices and roles in climate discourse in Nepal.

#### **Shakti Gurung, Secretary, Women Humanitarian and DRR Platform**

Shakti Gurung from the Women Humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction Platform stated that the frequency of natural disasters is bound to increase with climate change. Therefore, we need to bring men and women together to address the vulnerabilities of women and marginalized communities to climate change. She said this is necessary because women are one of the people most at risk of climate change. She stated that the hazards are gender-neutral, but their effects are not gender-neutral. She also highlighted that in the 2015 earthquake, 55 percent of women lost their lives.

To reduce the impacts of climate change on women, Gurung suggested building women's leadership and involving them in decision-making processes. She said this would address not just the vulnerabilities of women but also different groups and communities as they will bring more views and experiences to decision-making tables.

Gurung also pointed out that policies targeted at women failed to be implemented because the participation of women in institutions that implement policies into actions is still nominal. She also said that because women are not involved in institutions, organizations, and public discourse, goals and plans for women are rarely realized and achieved. She also discussed the need for disaster finance and human resources at the local level to make women's participation meaningful. Lastly, she also stressed that disaster management and development should not be viewed as different entities, and the two subjects must be integrated with gender issues.



### **Adv. Indira Kumari Shreesh, Chairperson, INWOLAG**

Adv. Indira Kumari Shreesh, the founding member of the Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Group, said that their organization, established in 2000, started focusing on development issues beginning seven years back. She said the organization has been working through the years to voice for issues of indigenous women and additionally have also been working to enforce policies for them. She also pointed out that policies established and implemented to address women's issues still fail to encompass indigenous women's issues.

Shreesh also highlighted how development programs and infrastructural developments have time and again overlooked their impacts on indigenous communities. She shared Tanahu hydropower project, which started in 2014, has challenged the land rights of indigenous women and further marginalized them. She also said although some programs have attempted to understand their impacts on indigenous communities, they have not been able to minimize their adverse effects on these groups.

Shreesh also pointed out that most women don't understand climate change and development programs' goals to understand their impacts on them to manage and tackle them. Shreesh said that the indigenous women involved in farming activities and households fail to interlink their issues to climate change and developmental problems. Therefore, she suggests building their knowledge to enable their participation in climate change issues.

### **Dr. Nirmala KC, Advisory Committee, ActionAid International Nepal**

Dr. Nirmala KC, a member of the advisory committee of ActionAid International, Nepal, illustrated women's roles in environment conservation and climate actions with two examples from Kenya and India. In her address, KC drew examples of how women's participation has benefited different developments. One of the cases she presented in the discussion was of Wangari Muta Maathai, an African woman who was also an environmentalist and political activist. KC said Maathai brought together women to plant trees to fulfill their basic needs. As a result, Maathai initiated the Green Belt Movement (GBM), which has planted over 51 million trees in Kenya.

KC also brought to the fore the case of India's forest conservation movement 'The Chipko Movement' which involved women and communities at the grassroots of Uttarakhand. When the Indian government logging for fuel started clear-cut deforestation, impacting the natural habitat and ecosystem of a region in Uttarakhand, locals came together to protest against the government's mismanagement of the forest which affected their livelihoods. In their demonstration, they hugged trees to prevent officials from cutting trees. KC drew this example to show how participation and leadership of women and locals at the grassroots can conserve and bring solutions to climate change impacts.

Through the examples, she emphasized that our development approach needs to be bottom-up rather than top-down. They should involve stakeholders who will be impacted by systems and developments directly. KC talked about building climate change awareness at the local level and working to build ownership of women and indigenous communities to address climate crises.

Towards claiming gender spaces, KC stressed that we need to educate women and provide them with skills. She said we need to work on building their access to resources. And need to enable them to realize how they can use those resources to develop their strengths.



### ***Audience and Panel Interaction/ Discussion Outlines:***

- Women at the grassroots need to be empowered to build their resilience to climate crises.
- Women should have access to land rights, education, and opportunities to strengthen their autonomy. These are essential prerequisites in building gender-just climate solutions.
- Climate change programs should integrate with gender and vice versa to achieve gender-just climate solutions.
- The local, provincial and federal governments need to show more commitment and accountability to scale up gender-just climate solutions in their development plans.

### ***Session Summary***

- Women's empowerment in climate change and development issues is crucial to building their leadership and making their participation meaningful in decision-making places. It is important for accessing and utilizing resources and claiming their rights.
- Men should not be excluded from women, girls, and other indigenous and marginalized groups' issues. Their participation is essential to creating an inclusive space for all in climate and development discourse.
- Avenues for climate discourse should respect, recognize and address the concerns of the most vulnerable people in the community.



## Closing Address

**Rajan Thapa**, Climate Advisor, DCA Nepal

Rajan Thapa, the Climate Advisor to DCA Nepal, remarking the discussions on 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions' during the program, said conversations that happened in the conference need to transcend the event and need to translate into meaningful actions. He also appreciated the PRC and Tewa-led discussion paper, 'Gender-Just Climate Solutions'. He reviewed that the paper will be significant to developing strategies and programs for addressing climate change. He said the paper's findings are insightful and provide fundamentals for preparing long-term visions for climate change.

He summarized one of the main takeaways of the conference program is understanding intersectionality. He said it is important to discuss the dynamics of our identity. He added it is vital for us to understand their personal identity to comprehend their own gaps and address them. Thapa also stressed that when talking about building women's agencies for climate solutions, we also need to realize what our agents will be. He stressed that to work on Gender-Just Climate Solutions, we need to choose our channels carefully. Thapa emphasized that we must prioritize knowledge transformation and community formation to address climate change. He also said addressing women's issues needs to start from the local level.

He also summarized to achieve gender-just climate solutions we need to advocate to increase ownership of people over issues and continue asking questions to address them. He stressed that we must demand accountability from systems and authorities to work on climate solutions.

## List of Participants

S.N.	Name	Organization
1	Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan	Tewa
2	Hon. Bharati Pathak	Bagmati Province
3	Manjali Shakya	Lalitpur Mertopolitan City
4	Sirjana Burlakoti Aryal	Tarakeshwor Municipality
5	Laxmi Kumari Basnet	Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens
6	Deepa Oli	Ministry of Forests and Environment
7	Dharam Raj Uprety	Practical Action
8	Manika Shrestha	Mahila Ekata Samaj
9	Pratima Gurung	NIDWAN
10	Pragya Sherchan	PRC
11	Hem Kunari Siwa	Sahayatra Nepal
12	Dr. Nirmala KC	ActionAid Nepal
13	Adv. Indira Shreesh Magar	INWOLAG
14	Shakti Gurung	WHDRRP
15	Krity Shrestha	Practical Action
16	Geeta Pandey	KIRDARC
17	Anuja Shrestha	Tewa
18	Jwala Basnet	Ojaswi Women's Development Centre
19	Parbati Khadka	Maiti Manch Dolakha
20	Sharada Shrestha	Saraswoti Nari Chetana Saving and Credit Cooperatives
21	Saraswati Nepal	Pragatisheel Women's MultiPurpose Agriculture Group
22	Sabita Pandey	Sahayatra Nepal
23	Pramila Bhattarai	Sahayatra Nepal
24	Niramala Shrestha	Mahila Jagaran Samuha
25	Dr. Anushiya Shrestha	SouthAsia Institute for Advanced Studies
26	Susma Regmi	Shrijansheel Mahila Smaj
27	Divya Gurung	Gender Expert
28	Preema Ranjitkar	GESI Researcher
29	Pooja Pokhrel	Youth
30	Barsha parajuly	CEN
31	Rachana Poudel	Youth
32	Srizu Bajracharya	Rapporteur
33	Anju Kumari Chaudhary	Center for Social development and Research
34	Bhagwati Shah	Sharad Sanakishan Sahakari Sanstha limited
35	Prabin Man Singh	PRC
36	Niraj Acharya	Helvetas
37	Sunny Raj Upadhya	DidiBahini
38	Urmila Shrestha	Tewa
39	Youth Volunteers	ActionAid

40	Januka Gyawali	Practical Action
41	Rajan Thapa	DCA
42	Bindu Sharma	Helvetas
43	Bharati Ojha	DCA
44	Bidhya Sharma Subedi	PRC
45	Draupata Karki	Saraswoti Nari Chetana Saving and Credit Cooperatives
46	Indira Chaulagain	Maiti Manch Dolakha
47	Geeta Dangol	Women Empowerment Centre
48	Hima Bhandari	Srijansheel Mahila Samaj Nepal
49	Suchana Baniya	DidiBahini
50	Mukesh Pokhrel	Himal Media
51	Jeevan Maharjan	Lalitpur Mertopolitan City, 23
52	Sabina Lepcha	Lapcha Mahila Samuha
53	Mon Kumari Rai	INWOLAG
54	Rima Manandhar	Sahara F. Nepal
55	Radhika Khanal	MPMK
56	Shailaja Kasaju	Tekka
57	Sarah Sigdel	SAHAS Nepal
58	Sudha Deshar	SAHAS Nepal
59	Puneet Singh	Women Empowerment Centre
60	Samita Karmacharya	DidiBahini
61	Bhawani Shrestha	Mahila Jagaran Samuha
62	Samikshya Lapcha	Lapcha Mahila Samuha
63	Ranjana Thapa	Janajati Mahila
64	Muna Pokharel	Tewa
65	Arzoo R. Thapa	INWOLAG
66	Birendra Thapaliya	Srijansheel Mahila Samaj Nepal
67	Sabu Poudyal KC	WE Nepal
68	Laxmi Shova Shakya	Tewa
69	Jamuna Tamang	NIDWAN
70	Raju Pandit Chhetri	PRC
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