

Stories of Women Embarking on the Path of Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Adaptation



Success Stories

GAGGA GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR GREEN AND GENDER ACTION



Prakriti Resources Centre

Acknowledgement

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About this Book

Prakriti Resources Center, with financial support from Both Ends and Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) has implemented the project entitled '*Increasing Women's Influence in Local Governance for Gender and Climate Smart Plans and Programmes*'. The project is directly engaging with five women's groups working in the areas of environment conservation and women's rights in five Palikas of Bagmati Province. The groups include Ojaswee Women's Development Group, Nagarjun Municipality; Pragatisheel Women's Multi-Purpose Agriculture Group, Kageshwori Manahara Municipality; Saraswoti Nari Chetana Saving and Credit Cooperatives, Bethanchowk Rural Municipality; Maiti Manch Dolakha, Bhimeshwor Municipality and Karambot Krishak Mahila Samuha, Manthali Municipality.

With a focus on empowering the women's groups to work in the areas of environment conservation and protection of women's rights in the face of growing climate change impacts, the project provided tailored capacity building support. The women have now increased knowledge of climate change, climate finance, environment protection, and disproportionate impact of climate change on women, climate change adaptation, municipal level planning and budgeting process, advocacy and lobby, and leadership skills etc.

They are currently engaging with their respective municipalities, seeking their say in planning and budget preparation processes, and advocating for making municipal policies, plans and budgets climate change and gender responsive. All the women's groups are undertaking various activities on their own and, in some cases, also by accessing municipality grants support. They are collectively discussing plans and projects that benefit the women and the entire community; proposing the projects to the municipalities seeking grants assistance or asking the municipalities to incorporate the projects in the overall municipal plans and programmes.

The efforts and commitment of the women's groups have already led to impressive results. This book is an attempt to bring to light the stories of the potentials the women have demonstrated and the achievements they have made in a short span of time. The stories are expected to inspire other women's groups working or planning to work in similar areas. This book also captures some important work done in collaboration with Prakriti Resources Center and Tewa, and Climate and Development Dialogue's contribution to the field of climate and development in Nepal.

CONTENT



Barren land becomes green

1



When training became eye opener

4



Municipality becoming greener

7



Cooperatives with social responsibility

10



Applying learning in practice

14



When Tewa and PRC met

17



Networking with purpose

21



Barren land becomes green



Padam Kumari Shrestha
President,
Karambot Agriculture
Women's Group
 Manthali Municipality-2,
 Ramechhap

One and a half years back

There was the field but one could see nothing except a few birds perching on the surface and the kids playing football on it. The field looked like a playground and everyone thought of this land as such. Mostly dry, only one season of crops was grown here—that would be maize. Rest of the year, the field remained barren and uncultivated.

Now

It's a different story now. No kids play on this field. You do not see the cattle grazing or birds and insects flying over. Now, one can see the varieties of crops and vegetables growing. While this has contributed to the rising income of farmers and peasants it has also restored greenery in the surrounding and made the environment healthy. The wayfarers who used to pass through this field have begun to remark: "So, they have begun to cultivate in barren land too?" Indeed, this is a huge change.

Reality on the ground

Was this field always an abandoned grazing ground? It was not. Nor was it a public land. Truth of the matter is the land lay barren due to the lack of irrigation facilities. And as the land lay barren, kids played on it and cattle grazed. The land about 2.54 hectares is four kilometers away from Manthali, the district headquarters of Ramechhap district and it belonged to 16 members of Agriculture Women's Group based at Karambot. It was not that there was no source of water nearby. Tamakoshi River flowed right past this field but as the field is in higher altitude, it is difficult to channelize the river water onto it. As a result, the field remained dry, nothing could be grown. And most of all, these women were clueless to do anything about it.

What brought about the change?

"We got association with Prakriti Resource Center (PRC) through HIMAWANTI, the organization

which has been assisting us,” said Padam Kumari Shrestha, the president of Karamkot Agriculture Women’s Group. “Then we participated in a training organized by PRC. The training was about climate change, environment protection and disaster management. We learned from where we can bring financial resources for such works and what are the processes involved in it. We were informed about these issues.”

Padam Kumari and women like her then stood up for the cause. They went to their municipality and told the officials that their land has remained barren even though it is right by the side of Tamakoshi River. After the first phase of talks with the Municipality, they made a plan for pumping up the river water and irrigating the field and thus also starting the vegetable farming. Then they demanded the budget to implement their plan.

Local governments often have budget constraints. Thus these women had to take quite a while to convince the municipality officials about the need for budget for their plan. Thanks to the ward chair who had also participated in the

training organized by PRC and understood the importance of target group budget and women’s rights, helped them get their concerns heard by the officials. Then the villagers purchased water pumping machine and pipes with the budget allocated by the municipality, PRC and their own contribution as well. With this they have been able to bring greenery back to the field. The barren land has now become crops and vegetable fields. “This has provided irrigation service to the land of 16 members among us,” said Padam Kumari. Now that they do not have to worry at all about irrigation, everyone has become industrious and it has made earning livelihood easy as well.

Many have done vegetable farming in this field and earned their livelihood. Tika Bahadur Karki is an example. He used to work in India. He returned home and was staying idle, jobless. He had no source of income either. But when he came to know about how the members of the women’s group had become able to irrigate the field with the help of the municipality, he also started vegetable farming—which is the only source of income for him at the moment. And



Member of Karamkot Agriculture Women Group working on their agricultural field.

this has become a major source of livelihood for him and his family.

And then there is Chitra Bahadur Magar, who is known in the community as a farmer producing the highest amount of vegetables in this field. According to Padam Kumari, people from as far as Manthali come to this field to purchase organic and fresh vegetables. “During the lockdown (COVID 19 pandemic), they would drive all the way from Manthali and other places to purchase the vegetables. And then even those who were not into vegetable farming in the past started to grow vegetables,” said Padam Kumari.

Before the irrigation system finally materialized, they were considering giving this land on lease to someone. Some had already taken the decision. “But then when the irrigation started, they all changed their minds. They work on the fields themselves now and they are not ready to even listen to those who are seeking to lease this land,” said Padam Kumari.

With this change, the members of this women’s group have become excited and happy. Then they immediately demanded budget for constructing a building for setting up a vegetable collection center. The representatives of the municipality have said that they were provided budget for irrigation last year, they will support Tamakoshi Agriculture Women’s Group of Karambot this

year and the municipality would provide budget for collection centre building next year. “We have clearly told them that less than Rs 500,000 (app. USD 5,000) would not suffice for constructing the building. They can allocate that budget next year but they need to provide sufficient amount. They have given the positive response,” said Padam Kumari.

This is one example of how women of this group feel so confident. The source of this confidence is the training provided by PRC. Apart from the members of this women’s group, Deputy Mayor Maya Kumari Karki, Ward Chairperson Janak Khatri and Mamata Shrestha had also participated in that training. These representatives also had sound understanding of climate change and environment protection. They helped the members of the women’s group.

Padam Kumari says that she learned to write proposal in the training and she knows how to make a demand for the budget. “We discuss the problems in our meetings and then we identify the main problems, we figure out the estimated budget for our proposal and submit that to the municipality or other agencies by following the due process. We also inform the concerned officials about our problems verbally and convince them why those problems need to be solved,” Padam Kumari spoke of the changes that came to her after the training in this way.

I am immensely impressed

After I participated in the environment related training organized by PRC, I felt immensely benefitted from the training. Environment conservation is something that one needs to start by oneself and from one’s own surrounding. So I tell every group, not just the members of Karambot Women’s Group, about the insights I gained from the training. I tell them to keep interest and follow the issue of environment protection and budget for target group.

Janak Khatri, Ward Chair, Manthali Municipality-2, Ramechhap

When training became eye opener



Saraswati Nepal

Chairperson,
Pragatishil Multipurpose Women
Farmers' Group
Kageshwari Manohara
Municipality-3, Kathmandu

Pragatishil Multipurpose Woman Farmers' Group was established nine years ago at Thapadanda of Kageshwari Manohara Municipality-3 in Kathmandu. For a long time, this group was content with some seeds and agricultural equipment support from the government. It had received from the now defunct district agricultural development office a tractor to plough fields.

As a farmer group, it is natural for its members to think about the ways to increase agriculture production and work for that. They, however, didn't know that organic fertilizer, water source protection and environment conservation are related and essential too for agriculture production. Chairperson of the group Saraswati Nepal recalled an incident. "A year ago, HIMAWANTI helped our group contact

Prakriti Resources Centre (PRC). After our association with PRC, we started participating in various activities such as three-day training on municipality level planning and budget preparation process. She said, "Four members of our group including myself learnt not only about climate change but also about its impact on food production. We knew about the inter-links between environment and agriculture and also became aware about the importance of tree plantation."

After training they shared their knowledge and experience with other members of the group and other participants in various meetings and interactions. Participation in activities organized by PRC helped them learn that climate change is the major reason behind excessive or low rainfall, too hot weather and long drought and

that there are ways to reduce the impacts of such abnormal climatic conditions.

Saraswati and other members have been able to revive and protect the natural drinking water source at Thapadanda and siphon the water down to the road level. They have a plan to store the water in a reservoir and distribute it in the village. They are seeking budget for that. The group has also planned to protect another water source in the community. They have also planned tree plantation along the Mahadevkhola river bank to prevent erosion. Saraswati also said that they are looking for the kinds of plants that help check erosion and also become a source of income. As uncontrolled sand mining is another reason behind environmental degradation they have decided to stop people from sand mining in the local river.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the members of the group are emerging as environment activists. And, the training was the turning point. At their request Under Secretary at the Ministry of Forests and Environment Purushottam Nepal, who is from the same area, conducted training for them on environment protection. Now one cannot see plastic bags littered in the area. All the 40 members of the group have made it a regular practice to clean up the litter. "Earlier, we used to either neglect such plastics or burn them," said Saraswati. "After we learnt that both of these ways are detrimental to environment, we started to collect and dispose it of properly."

Members of Pragatishil Group proved that even a short training can be fruitful if the subject is relevant to the participants, and is of their interest. The training focused on environment protection and budget preparation process at the

municipal level. They also learnt how to develop a project proposal seeking funding from the local government. They were taught how to write a proposal and how to implement the project after getting financial support. After the training, they understood how the local municipality prepares and allocates its budget and how the group can access fund. "After the training, when we went to the municipality, we found that it has allocated five per cent of its budget for disaster management," said Saraswati. "But even that money wasn't properly utilized. So, we have been pressurizing them to make best use of that money."

The municipality officials were taken by surprise, when local women went there and enquired about the budget for disaster management. It was something unusual for them. Then the officials told the women that they will soon start with identifying and maintaining safe open spaces for use during the times of disaster. They have also committed to developing parks and plant trees in public lands. The women representatives were encouraged as municipality officials also proposed them to join hands in these environment protection disaster preparedness programmes.

With the support of PRC the group organized an interaction also involving parliamentarian Sarita Neupane. They discussed target group budget, its utilization and disaster management at the programme. The women also took up these issues with the municipality officials. These initiatives show the women's keen interest in environment protection. The knowledge and ideas they gained from these training and interactions have boosted their confidence to approach and discuss with the government officials issues affecting them and demanding actions.



Member of Parliament Sarita Neupane, second from right, participating at an interaction organized by Pragatisheel Multi-Purpose Agriculture Group.

As they knew that the municipalities allocate budget for agriculture, activities benefiting women specifically, and disaster management, among other areas, they are now demanding municipal funding for making organic fertilizer and pesticides and seeking municipal funding to buy a machine to plant and harvest paddy.

After they knew about the government sources of funding for development activities, they took the initiatives to access such funding. Their initiative led to the provincial government providing them NRs 480,000. With this support, they distributed one buffalo calf each to 22 poor families in the

community. The group Chairperson said that they took this initiative with a view to improving the livelihood of the poor families by supporting them to produce milk and use buffalo dung as manure for better agriculture.

PRC also organized training on environment and target budget. During that programme, the women's group members shared how they have been using the knowledge they gained from the previous training and the results they have brought about. Saraswati said that they are further encouraged to work together with municipality officials and other farmer groups.

Both the objective and initiative are good

The Pragatishil Multipurpose Woman Farmer Group is very active. During an interaction with them, I found them very serious and dedicated to agriculture, environment protection, disaster management and poverty reduction. Therefore, I provided some financial support from the provincial government so that they can contribute to improve the poor families' situation by helping them to produce milk and fertilizer. I found their objective and initiative good.

Rameshwar Phuyal, Minister for Physical Infrastructure Development, Bagmati Province

Municipality becoming greener



Parbati Khadka
Chairperson,
Maiti Manch Dolakha
Bhimeshwar
Municipality-6, Dolakha

Have you recently travelled to Charighyang from Satdobato at Charikot, the district headquarters of Dolakha? If yes, you can notice a pattern of attractive scenes near the houses along the roads. One can see orange-coloured plant pots with plants of dhupi and other plants that remain green round the year. Such a scene can be seen in front of not only few but 250 houses. These plants have improved the greenery in the area and turned the area into a beautiful place.

Once you see this, one question may immediately arise in your mind as to how could it have been possible. You may assume that it might have been done by the municipality, ward office or a horticulture firm. But these assumptions prove wrong when you know the reality. Yes, it was done by Maiti Manch Dolakha.

Chairperson of the organization Parbati Khadka said, "We have been working for children and women's rights for a long time and we will

continue our work in those areas but when we learnt that human life cannot be easy without greenery and clean environment, then we started to work in the field of environment well."

Maiti Manch was jointly working with Tewa – Philanthropy for Equitable Justice and Peace (Tewa) since 2008 AD (2065 BS). But it is also working with Prakriti Resources Centre (PRC) for the last one and a half years. It came into contact with PRC through Tewa. It was due to Maiti Manch's association with PRC that made it aware about the importance of environment. Then, Parbati and some other members of the Manch participated in two different training events organized by PRC.

After the training, they realized that they are missing something important in their life and that was environment. Then, they started discussions with their municipality and other concerned offices on the issues of environment



Parbati Khadka, sharing her organization's initiatives as part of a radio programme on Kalinchowk FM .

protection, disaster management and climate change impacts and adaptation measures. They also inquired about the municipality level budgetary allocation for these areas. They asked the officials specific questions like how much money they have allocated to address these issues. Where is it going to be spent? What are other plans and programmes?

"Environment/climate change was a new subject for us. Therefore, we had to do something to prove ourselves before we demand municipal budget to work in this field," Parbati said. "In this context, PRC came forward to guide us by organizing training for us."

PRC also provided some financial support for the Manch to proceed with their idea of placing the plant pots in front of their houses. Initially, Maiti Manch planned to place the plant pots in front of 72 houses. People in the area knew about this initiative. As the message spread, many people showed interest in it. The initial plan to place the plant pots in 72 houses was later extended to 250 houses. The organization mobilized additional support and managed to

support 250 houses. This is the story behind the beautiful scene that one can see now while travelling along Satdobato-Charighyang section. Aristotle is often quoted as saying that any task that is well begun is half done. Maiti Manch Dolakha does not want to exaggerate it as a big achievement. Parbati explains that whatever it has done is a good beginning.

Bhimeshwar Municipality Mayor has now decided to replicate the Maiti Manch initiative. He has already announced that the municipality will place plant pots on both sides of the road. In the second phase, he wants to place similar plant pots in all the houses in the municipality. He has asked members of Maiti Manch to go to Sindhuli and explore the suitable plants for this purpose.

They have not limited their work just to the distribution of a number of plant pots. With PRC's support they coordinated with local Kalinchowk FM Radio to air weekly programme aimed at raising public awareness on environment and climate change has become equally fruitful. The radio programme has become a common platform for discussion on issues such as

importance of environment protection, risks of environment degradation, ways to address the impacts of climate change etc. Local representatives of political parties, elected officials, environment experts, representatives of concerned organizations join the discussions in the radio programme. Prior to its association with PRC Maiti Manch Dolakha used to visit local government offices to inquire mainly about women and children. It was natural because it was their core area of work. But now they have changed a lot. They still inquire about municipal plans and budget for women and children but, unlike before, they take up the issues of environment and disaster management with the municipality officials. "For the first time I learnt about our Ward Committee's decision to allocate Rs 1.5 million for environment protection and

disaster management," said Parbati. We have also included these issues in our organization's regular activities."

In the past, the municipality did not have environment in its priority list; it used to set aside a small amount only if there is a strong demand for it for environment related activities. But recently, the mayor has committed to regularly include environment in the municipality plan and budget. Members of Maiti Manch claim that it is the result of their advocacy and lobbying. "These days our voices are heard and actions taken by the municipality also because the deputy mayor understands the environment-related issues quickly as she had previously worked in forest and environment sectors for a long time," Maiti Manch Chairperson Parbati observed.

The programme is effective

We run a weekly radio programme on environment with support from Prakriti Resources Centre and in coordination with Maiti Manch Dolakha. After we started broadcasting this programme, the municipality has increased budget for environment protection, which is also being included in their policy and programmes. Also, common people have become more aware. Given its popularity and usefulness, we have realized the need for giving continuity to such programmes.

Jiban Lama, station manager, Kalinchowk FM, Dolakha

4

Cooperatives with social responsibility



Sharada Shrestha

Manager,

Bethanchok Saraswoti
NariChetana Saving
and Credit Cooperative
Limited

Bethanchok Rural
Municipality, Kavre

(Far Right in Photo)

Bethanchok is around 13 kilometers from Panauti, historic city of Kavre. One can reach here in one and a half hours ride from Panauti. This is a village adorned with natural beauty and this is where Bethanchok Saraswoti Nari Chetana Saving and Credit Cooperatives Limited is also located. The cooperative has 2,000 members, all women, and it has the savings of Rs. 70 million (App. USD. 700 thousand). It provides various kinds of loans to its members.

But what does the cooperative normally do? It collects deposits from members and non-members alike and lend that money in loan with interest. The profit is shared by the shareholders and the depositors, which is why cooperatives often go with

the tag of saving and credit. Bethanchok Saraswoti Nari Chetana Saving and Credit Cooperatives Limited had not been any different in this respect for years. But for the last one and a half years this cooperative has been doing things to make a difference. Apart from regular saving and providing credit, the cooperative has been providing training to its members in organic farming and encouraging members to partake in it. The cooperative trains them how to prepare bio pesticide, compost and manure. It informs them that this will contribute to maintaining bio-diversity and thus encourages the members to do organic farming.

Under this campaign, the cooperative demanded and got the budget from the

municipality and with this assistance it trained its members on organic farming. Of the participants, 60 have already actualized the skills received from the training in practice. “They have started to apply the learning in practice. Others have also shown interest in this. So we will manage more budgets and provide similar training to others,” said Sharada Shrestha, the manager of the cooperative.

this assistance, we have been constructing a strong four-room house for the cooperative. With this service delivery will be easier,” said Sharada Shrestha.

The cooperative has been enabling women to work in climate change, gender equity and environmental protection. They are also advocating for other issues and raising voice for the better society. The women have become more confident.



Sharada Shrestha sharing her views in a municipal dialogue organized by Shree Saraswati Nari Chetana Credit and Cooperatives Limited.

Apart from conducting training with the budget support from the municipality, they also demanded budget for constructing the building of the cooperative. They had demanded Rs 500,000 (app. USD. 5,000). But to their surprise, the municipality gave them Rs 1,200,000 (app. USD 12,000) saying that half a million rupees would not be adequate for building construction. Basundhara Humagain, the Member of Parliament, has also provided Rs 1,500,000 (app/ USD 15,000) for the purpose. “With

The cooperative, in coordination with the municipality, has been working in the field of waste management as well. They have been segregating degradable and non-degradable wastes. Apart from that the cooperative is engaged in tree plantation as well. “Earlier we did not know about climate change. Nor did we know about the adverse impacts of plastic use. Now we have understood everything about such issues and therefore decided that we should not limit the role of the cooperative to saving and credit. We have

focused our concentration on environment conservation and disaster management as well,” said Sharada Shrestha.

The members of this cooperative have understood the importance of clean environment and they are doing homework for maintaining clean environment. So far, they have already cleaned three sources of drinking water. They have been running the campaign of replacing chemical fertilizers with compost or organic manure. They have been educating the people that chemical fertilizers are harmful. “This is the reason why we have been providing them training to teach how to make organic manure and bio-pests,” said Sharada.

How did this change start? How did the cooperative involve in environmental matters and disaster management? How did it increase access to the municipality for budgetary support while it has its own share of resources? How did the cooperative, which is usually focused on saving and credit, feel the need for encouraging women for organic farming and waste management? How did they know that economic empowerment can lead to reduction on violence and greater enjoyment of rights? Indeed, what is the game changer? These are natural questions. But Sharada Shrestha, the manager of the cooperative, has convincing answers for all such questions.

An organization called Tewa had been providing us support for the last few years, she said. And with the support of this organization we came to be associated with PRC around one and a half years ago. PRC imparted a lot of technical knowledge to us.

It provided training. Then we realized after receiving the training we should not limit the role of the cooperative to saving and credit and that we need to go beyond these issues and widen the scope of our work. It is this realization which changed the modality of work of the cooperative,” explained Sharada.

Sharada explains that she and other members of the cooperative did not know anything about climate change and its adverse impacts and how to save people and environment from such impacts. “But we have the basic knowledge of environmental protection and disaster management. We have also applied this knowledge in practice. And we are going to expand our programs to all the members of the cooperative in the days to come,” said Sharada.

Sharada and her colleagues from the cooperative also learned a lot from the PRC training about plans and budget of the local government, how to access this budget, how to design a project, how to write proposal, making budget estimation and complete the project by securing funding. These women learned these skills from the PRC training and Sharada says that they have been applying this learning into practice.

It could be the result of growing confidence of women that they have been able to secure some budget this year as well as per their demand. “We demanded budget to conduct training in vegetable farming and livestock management for the members of the cooperative. We have learned that the municipality has included our plan in this year’s budget,” said Sharada. “We

will be working further actively to ensure environmental justice to all the women members of this cooperative by identifying other possible authorities.”

Bethanchok Saraswoti Nari Chetana Saving and Credit Cooperative Limited was merged with Saraswati Saving and Credit

Cooperative recently. The cooperative has been providing loans to its members for the purpose of agriculture, to send children abroad for further studies or jobs, animal husbandry and house construction. Now, says Sharada Shrestha, the cooperative will link every activity of its members to environmental issues.

Environmental concerns: rising issue among members

The activism of the members of Bethanchok Saraswoti Nari Chetana Saving and Credit Cooperative Limited for environmental protection inspires hope. They have been planting grass which has helped to prevent erosion of land and is also being used as fodder for the cattle. They have been working in waste management in coordination with the municipality. They are raising awareness about nutrition. They are also working with schools for waste management. As a result of this, all the village and entire settlement have started to look fresh and clean. On the whole, members of this cooperative have started to show increased concerns about matters of environment conservation.

Ram Krishna Shrestha, Outgoing Principal, Saraswati Secondary School, Bethanchok



Jwala Basnet

President,
Ojashwi Women's
Development Center
Nagarjun Municipality-5,
Kathmandu

The Ojashwi Women's Development Center (OWDC) based in Sitapaila of Kathmandu is working to raise living standards of not only 40 members associated with the Center but all women of the community. For this purpose, it organizes various types of training and orientation programs for them. It also helps the women to apply the learning of the training in practice.

Many organizations impart various knowledge and skills to their members and people associated with them through training and orientation programs. But many of the participants of such training do not have the resources and opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills in practice. Some participants forget what they had learned in the training soon after returning home or they simply may not care. In most cases, the participants attend the training, listen, have

lunch, receive allowance (if any) then return home.

But OWDC is different in all these matters. It organized an interaction program on women centered environment preservation and waste management on February 14, 2020. In the interaction, the participants were familiarized with various aspects of environment conservation and waste management. When the participants were told how they could make compost from the waste generated inside their homes, they were pretty much excited. "Given their enthusiasm, we provided a compost bin to each of the participants," said Jwala Basnet, the president of OWDC.

Similarly, the Centre organized a vegetable farming training at ward number 7 and 8 of Nagarjun Municipality. The participants learnt how to grow organic vegetables. They were taught how to make bio-manure and bio-

pest, and what it takes to ensure high yielding vegetable farming etc. At the end of the training, when the participants (45 in total) were about to leave for their homes, they were provided with seasonal seeds and compost. They were also given watering pots and spray pumps.

In ward 5 and 8, the Centre provided self-defense training to adolescent boys and girls. The training had imparted lifesaving skills and messages among the participants. It is believed that such training can contribute on controlling mental and physical violence against women and young girls.

Jwala Basnet believes that no training, interaction and orientation become fruitful if the learning from these are not applied in practice. "This is why whatever we do, we link it with practice," says Jwala. This is the reason the Centre provided dustbins to every participant of waste management training organized with assistance from Prakirti Resource Center (PRC). The result has been quite rewarding. There is a compost bin in the house of every participant and they have been making composts out of the waste generated in their households. The compost they produce is used in the vegetable field. One can see greenery around vegetable fields at the moment. "They don't have to buy fertilizer. It saves money and it also keeps one's yard and house clean," this is the change Jwala has felt after providing compost bins to the training participants.

Many organizations tend to think organizing programs is the end of the goal. "But for us it is not like that at all," said Jwala Basnet. "We keep the record of each participant including their phone numbers. We call them time and again asking how they have been applying the knowledge of

the training in practice. And then we also tell them to ask us if they encounter any difficulties or confusion. We also ask them whether they are using the tools we have provided. We offer them solutions to the problems they raise. If the households are nearby we even get into their houses for monitoring."

During the household monitoring, when Jwala and other members of her organization reached the houses of the beneficiaries or OWDC members then look into the following things: How have they managed waste generated from their households? Have they applied skills and knowledge gained from the training? Is the dustbin provided at the end of the training in use? For every answer, they ask the reason and offer solutions if they have any problems. If the participants are found not to have used the tools given to them they encourage them to use them.

"When we come to know from training and orientation programmes organized by PRC about the municipality level programmes, policy and budget provisions in the areas of our interest, we approach our municipality and inquire about these things. If they don't have programme and budget for environment protection, women's rights etc, we lobby them for such programme and budget.

If we learn that the municipality has some unspent budget, we demand the budget for our programmes, This helps in proper utilization of allocated budget on the one hand and, while on the other the budget really reaches the targeted people," added Jwala. She happily shared that the municipality and PRC is supporting the Centre with financial and technical back up to implement activities of the Centre.



The Deputy Mayor of Nagarjun Municipality making her in an event organized by Ojashwi Women Development Centre.

Ojashwi Women's Development Center has been encouraging us to work in the field of environment conservation and disaster management time and again. We have also launched some programs in coordination with them. OWDC's approach of working in coordination with the ward committee is good. We are considering giving more priority to agriculture, tourism, environment, legal awareness etc. and coordinating with organizations like OWDC in implementing programmes in these areas.

Sukra Bahadur Tamang, Ward Chairperson: Nagarjun Municipality-8

6

When Tewa and PRC met



Tewa, a Women's Fund that has been working for the cause of women's rights and empowerment, realized that if it were to make its programs more sustainable and effective it must take into account environmental concerns as well. When the environment degrades, women are the ones to suffer the most and no assistance can be sustainable if environmental issues are ignored. But Tewa has limited in-house capacity to support the women's groups associated with it to understand environmental issues and integrate them into their regular programmes. So they were looking for collaboration with an organization that is actually working in the environment field.

On the other hand, Prakirti Resource Center (PRC) is working in the field of building knowledge and capacity of civil society organizations and other actors in the areas of

environment and climate change. PRC was of the conviction that if environmental concerns are not addressed properly and on time, it is the women who will suffer first and the most. Therefore, it was looking for an opportunity to work with women's groups or women's right organization.

It could begin by constituting women's groups itself or work with some existing women's groups. The former could take a lot of time and after the end of the project those groups could find difficulties in continuing the activities. If it worked with the already formed women's groups, with years of experience, working with such groups could be much more effective and sustainable. But then where would it find such women's groups? Which could be such organizations to work with? The members of PRC also began to explore.

Collaboration for Women's Rights and Environment Justice

We worked in the field of women's rights with women's groups across the country. We gave them grants and provided them capacity enhancement training but none of these included the issue of environmental justice. As a matter of fact, we had not thought that issue of environment preservation is vital for women's empowerment. We realized this only around five years ago.

This inspired us to include environmental aspects in our program. But we had limited technical knowledge of the issue. We did not have human resources with the expertise. So we were looking for an organization or a group which has the expertise and practical experience so that we could enhance our own and grantee partner's knowledge on environment issues. It is around this time that we met PRC. We have been supporting women's groups from the community level since long and we found that PRC was also looking for an opportunity to work with the kinds of women's groups we have been supporting. And then we agreed to work together.

When the interests of two organizations matched it became easier to work. We, who had been working to promote women's rights from feminist perspective, realized that women's rights and environmental justice are very much interconnected. Thus meeting and subsequent coordination with PRC proved very fruitful for us and our grantee partners.

Anuja Shrestha, Grant Making Manager, TEWA

It is often said humans only has to keep the will, God will help them fulfill it. Three years ago, these two organizations— Tewa and PRC— while they were looking for partner organizations to work with for greater good of the society— met. They held discussions and after few rounds

of it, they agreed to work together. There were many women's groups associated with Tewa. They were provided grants and capacity building trainings on women's rights issues by Tewa. On its part, PRC was also looking for a partner organization with similar track record. It took two to tango. They agreed to work together.

Then, Tewa started to include sessions on environmental justice in trainings organized for its grantee partners. In the same way, PRC started to include in its training syllabus issues of women's rights, target group budget of the local governments, participation of women in budget planning etc apart from the issue of environmental preservation. In other words, in the programs of both PRC and Tewa the issues of women's rights, empowerment and environment conservation started to be taken together. Since the programs covered burning issues of environment and local resources women groups also started to take interest in these subjects.

There are 520 Tewa-supported women's groups spread in 70 districts. Though it is difficult to reach out to all of them, with the coordination between Tewa and PRC it has been possible to directly or indirectly engage the 32 women's groups of 19 districts. In three years, capacity has been increased and many activities have been conducted, which in turn, has excited the officials and members of Tewa and PRC. They are planning to conduct similar activities in other women's groups and other districts.

Fruits of joint efforts

When the two organizations coordinated with each other and started to organize trainings, workshops, meetings and visits jointly, the women's groups became even more active. But



Members of different women's groups participating at training on municipal level planning and budgeting process.

the scope of enthusiasm also expanded. Earlier, they used to think tree planting is the most effective remedy of environmental problems. They did not know much about the harms caused by use of plastics. They did not realize that destruction of forest would add further burden to women in fetching fodder and firewood. Likewise, if the source of water dries up the women themselves would have to walk all the way to fetch water.

But now these women's attention was drawn toward these pressing issues. These women understood that by turning blind eyes to environmental issues or by allowing the environment to degrade, women's rights cannot be safeguarded and even it can, it will not be sustainable. This is why in every activity and program they organized environmental justice started to feature as a main topic. They also become able to coordinate, advocate for and, influence the local authority and community for women's rights and environmental justice.

There is a women's group in Badhaiyatal Rural Municipality of Bardiya district - Janajagaran Mahila Sangh. After receiving the trainings

jointly organized by PRC and Tewa, the members of the group learned that though they won't be able to avert the disaster, they can minimize the risk of disaster. Then the group advocated for budget from the Rural Municipality as matching fund to the grant from Tewa that they received for training on disaster preparedness and provided the training to women of all the wards of the municipality. The women of this municipality are not only alert about possible disaster, they also keep reminding other people to be alert about possible inundation and floods.

Sirjansil Mahila Samuha of Tarkeshwar Municipality of Kathmandu district has set an example by winning the confidence of local government and worked for conservation of local Kamere River. The group was assigned the responsibility to put up the embankment wall on the river with the budget allocated by the municipality. While they proved their capacity they also won the confidence of local government and local people. Another women's group in Dhading, Didi Bahini Mahila Krishi Sahakari Sanstha Ltd., started to work on plastic management in the village after they took the trainings jointly organized by Tewa and PRC. In

the process, they learned that without alternative it is nearly impossible to stop the use of plastic materials. So they turned to what was going on waste—leaves of *Sal* trees which were rotting in the nearby forest. They started to make duna (leaf bowl) and taparis (leaf plates) from *Sal* leaves. These articles could be used instead of plastic goods and it would also earn them some bit of money. Tewa provided them grant for purchase of the machine and a training to operate it. Now producing dunatapari has almost become like an enterprise for them. During the lockdown (COVID 19 pandemic), with little else to do, many women kept themselves busy in making duna and tapari. Duna and tapari was in great demand in quarantine facilities as well. People there could use these disposable items while eating. They sold dunatapari worth Rs 25,000 (app. USD 250) during the lockdown period. While this encouraged the use of local resource and contributed to lessening the plastic use, it

also gave women a source of income at a time when they had no source of income.

Training and orientation programs launched by Tewa and PRC have benefitted a number of women's groups and they have progressed a lot. These women's groups, usually focused on women's rights, preventing occurrence of gender based violence and income generation, have now reached the conclusion that environmental justice is equally important for women. This is why they raise their problems, step by step as they have learned from the training, as early as planning formulation process of the municipality starts, and demand budget for the programs concerning them. They explore resources and they also convince the officials regarding their programs. They manage to get the budget allocated and help solve problems. The above mentioned cases are only representative stories. They have made a lot of achievements after receiving the training.

These achievements are the result of cooperation

Women's rights and environmental justice are issues generally dealt with in isolation for a lack of knowledge about their interrelation. Thus environment, to many is just related to planting trees, maintaining greenery and so on. There is a need for increasing public awareness about the nexus between environment, health and hygiene, drying up of water sources, floods and landslide etc.

As a matter of fact efforts to address women's rights and environmental justice issues—in isolation, lead nowhere. It is this belief which led to the cooperation and partnership between Tewa—the organization with long experience of working in women's rights—and PRC—the organization with experience working in environmental issue. We both reached the conclusion that it would be more effective to work with the women's groups associated with Tewa. The two organizations worked together with a focus on environmental justice and strengthening women's groups' agency, while facilitating the women's engagement with their respective municipalities. We also provided the women's groups various capacity and knowledge building support through training, orientation and workshops, which enhanced their understanding of environment and thereby led them to taking various initiatives. The women's groups have been doing really fruitful works. All this is the result of cooperation between Tewa and PRC.

Prabin Man Singh, Program Director, PRC

7

Networking with purpose



There are many organizations working in the field of environment and climate change. There is no dearth of non-governmental organizations conducting advocacy for development either. All of them have contributed in their own way and their intervention, in many cases, has become effective too.

When some experts outlined the need for increasing discussions on interrelation between development and climate change, it became the beginning point of interface between climate and development. Thus, in their initiatives, was born Climate and Development Dialogue (C&D Dialogue) three years ago. In short, it began to be called C&D Dialogue. A total of 11 NGOs and INGOs are associated with this initiative and it is focused exclusively on climate change and various interrelated development aspects associated with it. As an informal dialogue, C&D Dialogue exchanges learning among member organizations, enhancing capacity and draws the attention of the government to this issue time and

again. Dan Church Aid Nepal (DCA Nepal) is a member organization associated with it. Rajendra Khanal outgoing program manager of DCA Nepal says, "this dialogue provides constructive recommendations to the government, whether related to policies or programs."

C&D Dialogue not only provides suggestion to the government to formulate proper policies, it also helps the government to do so. It works closely with the Ministry of Forests and Environment and National Planning Commission. None of such recommendations are personal or represents some organizations. They are the product of discussions carried out in various programs. "This is why the government authorities positively take many of its recommendations," claims Khanal.

For example, the National Climate Change Policy (2019), which the government itself had formulated, was revised. In the updated version, the issues related to women and climate change have also been accommodated. The



On behalf of C&D Dialogue, Rajendra Khanal (right) submitting the recommendation of a national conference to the member of National Planning Commission.

C&D Dialogue played a major role in drawing the attention of the government toward this matter. Khanal states that the dialogue is focus on addressing risks and impacts on marginalized and vulnerable communities in the meetings, workshops and discussions. He says that the CD Dialogue has been raising the issue of gender-friendly agriculture tools, technology for the deprived and poor, government grants focused on local levels, by keeping women and the deprived people at the center of the focus, among others. According to Khanal, the C&D Dialogue has also been lobbying the concerned agencies for this cause.

The C&D Dialogue submits memorandums, organizes discussions and debates, provides capacity building training and conducts seminars on pressing issues and thus draws the attention of the stakeholders to these issues. The debate is also centered on economic and social aspects of climate change. Thus its importance cannot be described in just a few sentences.

Gita Pandey, advocacy manager for environment and climate change of Karnali Integrated Rural Development And Research Centre (KIRDARC), another member organization of C&D Dialogue, argues that constituting the platform is quite relevant at the time when there is a lack of the organization that looks into the interrelation between climate change and environment and development.

She is of the opinion that the C&D has brought all organizations together and helped raise collective voice at a time when these organizations were focused on sectors of their expertise in various fields and thus the collective efforts for climate change and environment were lacking. She is of the opinion that the C&D has become a platform to gain various kinds of views and insights from each other, discuss those views and apply them in practice. All this has proved that environmental justice plays a vital role in enhancing capacity of any community, building knowledge, reducing the burden and on the whole empowering the community itself. "Every



A Member of Parliament, and the representatives of National Planning Commission and Environment Ministry participating in an event organized by C&D Dialogue .

organization, irrespective of their chosen field of expertise or work, associated with the platform takes into account the issue of environmental sensitivity in their views," says Gita Pandey. All this means that this issue has found a public legitimacy, whether in governmental or non-governmental sector.

Organizations associated with C& D Dialogue

1. Action Aid Nepal
2. Care Nepal
3. Dan Church Aid Nepal
4. Didi Bahini Nepal
5. Helvetas
6. HIMAWANTI Nepal
7. KIRDARC
8. Practical Action Nepal
9. Prakirti Resources Center
10. Sahas Nepal
11. Tewa

KIRDARC is the institution which works in the rural areas, where the poor and marginalized people live in majority. Livelihood and physical development has been the priority issue of this organization. In this sense, environmental justice is a new thing for KIRDARC as well. "This is a new issue even for us," says Gita. "I gained a lot of information after I started to participate in C&D Dialogue programs as the representative of KIRDARC. I have been able to know many things not only about climate finance but also climate policies."

Thus C&D Dialogue has become a platform for those who want to learn new ideas and those who impart new ideas. Gita is of the opinion that it would be appropriate for this initiative to set a goal for a certain time and formulate a strategy to achieve that goal.

Both Khanal and Pandey conclude that government authorities fully trust C&D Dialogue because experts are also associated with it. They

consider this to be the biggest achievement. Government authorities are convinced that the recommendations provided by the C&D Dialogue stakeholders are rational and practical. This is the reason the government officials listen to the C&D Dialogue representatives and they are always ready to discuss the issues related to environmental justice and always ready to follow their advice. This is the conclusion of both Gita Pandey and Rajendra Khanal.

The C&D Dialogue may not have done a lot of work in terms of quantity but whatever it has done have become effective. The best example of this is adoption of recommendation and advice by

the officials in the government documents such as National Climate Change policy. Organizing national level round-table discussion on climate change and development, submitting the recommendations of round-table discussion to the National Planning Commission, holding interaction program on climate finance and climate budget of Nepal, orientation program on climate finance and gender and conducting a national program on practitioners on climate change linking practices to policies—these are some of the important events organized by C&D Dialogue so far. The impacts of such programs have started to become visible in national policies and documents. This speaks of rising success of the platform.



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