

GENDER

JUST CLIMATE SOLUTIONS:

Principles and Indicators, Volume 2

Women
Feminism
Gender
Inclusion Mindset
Recognition Justice Diversity
Empowerment Revolution Action
Liberty Respect climate
Meaningful Leadership Participation
Equality Representative
Intersectionality
Decision-making
Equity Engagement
Rights

GENDER-JUST CLIMATE SOLUTIONS: PRINCIPLES AND INDICATORS, VOLUME 2

Published by

Prakriti Resources Centre and Tewa, April 2026

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Authors: Sneha Shrestha, Pragya Sherchan and Prabin Man Singh

Editor: Heemani Mukhia

Reviewers: Dibya Gurung and Bimal Raj Regmi, PhD

Acknowledgement

Prakriti Resources Centre (PRC) is thankful to Heemani Mukhiya and Binay Dhital for editing and to Pragya Sherchan for helping in the designing of this paper. It acknowledges the contribution of Dibya Gurung and Bimal Raj Regmi, who worked on the publication and all the participants who contributed in the discussion. PRC also expresses gratitude to Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) and Both ENDS for engaging PRC in the project. PRC is thankful to Tewa for collaborating and providing financial contributions.

Disclaimer

The findings and indicators proposed in this paper are grounded in consultations and research conducted primarily with women and marginalized groups in Nepal. While they reflect a strong intersectional lens that includes caste, class, geography, and other identities, they are not intended to represent a comprehensive or universal gender framework. Rather, the approach emphasizes women's lived experiences and leadership in Nepal's climate context, and should be understood as a contribution toward broader, inclusive, and locally grounded gender-just climate actions. Any part of this publication may be cited or utilized in any form- electronic or mechanical including photocopying for information storage purposes without prior permission of Prakriti Resources Centre (PRC) provided the source is duly acknowledged.

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Background



The climate crisis is not “gender neutral”. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted due to the compounded effects of historical inequalities and situational context, which climate change further exacerbates. Socio-economic factors and reliance on natural resources increases their vulnerability. For example, women are more affected during floods as they often stay behind to care for dependents, lack survival skills like swimming, and face restricted mobility (Ahmed & Fajber, 2009; Sultana, 2014). In patriarchal societies, social norms and power dynamics further limit women’s ability to adapt to or mitigate climate impacts (Bee, 2013; Ahmed & Fajber, 2009).

Recognizing these challenges, Prakriti Resource Centre (PRC) and Tewa in Nepal, in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Actions (GAGGA), initiated discussions in 2022 to develop a framework for gender-just climate solutions. This initiative aimed to address gender in climate actions and ensure women’s active involvement in developing effective solutions. The resulting discussion paper presented nine key principles for gender-just climate solutions (PRC, 2022). These principles do not directly align with the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), which aims to enhance adaptation efforts and resilience, as well as the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, which underlines the need for more funding effective action on adaptation, currently underfunded compared to mitigation. However, through this discourse, PRC and Tewa aim to develop indicators that can contribute to mapping the GGA indicators, making it more gender-responsive.

The GGA, part of the Paris Agreement, aims to elevate global adaptation efforts through evidence based guidance inclusive country-driven processes, support to stakeholders in climate negotiations, and emphasizes pragmatic Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system, with equal focus on adaptation and mitigation. Gender considerations within the GGA are crucial for inclusivity, addressing gender disparities, and ensuring adaptation actions empower women and deliver sustainable outcomes (Beauchamp and Józefiak, (2023). Gender just climate solutions are necessary to move away from treating women as vulnerable victims, positioning them instead as active agents of change. These solutions involve building environments where women can lead, own, and devise responses to climate challenges with an emphasis on meaningful participation and decision-making by gender-diverse people.

Current national goals often lack measurable outcomes and accountability mechanisms. The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2021 – 2050, which outlines priority programs across nine thematic sectors, sets targets but lacks the indicators necessary to track progress as highlighted in the National Climate Change Policy (2019). This paper proposes gender-responsive metrics to fill that gap, ensuring effective monitoring and alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 13 on climate action.



Out of the above nine principles, this paper focuses on the five principles from 5 to 9. The earlier four principles, closely related to these, were covered in the Vol I publication. Drawing on insights from PRC, Tewa, and GAGGA, this paper outlines both quantitative and qualitative indicators related to the five principles to ensure climate actions are responsive to women's unique needs and challenges.

Principle 5: Enforces Gender Responsive Budgeting



Introduction

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a strategy and process that integrates gender perspectives into all stages of budgetary processes such as planning, allocation, implementation, and monitoring to ensure that public resources advance gender equality and address the specific needs of women, men, and marginalized groups (UN Women, 2023). In the context of climate finance, GRB ensures that climate investments are equitably targeted to those most vulnerable to climate impacts, particularly women and marginalized communities (Koirala, 2023). Nepal institutionalized GRB in Fiscal Year 2007/08 through Ministry of Finance directives, making it mandatory for all ministries to assess and tag their budgets based on gender impact (Ministry of Finance, 2008). The Gender Responsive Budgeting Committee, established within the Ministry of Finance, oversees the process. GRB is embedded in several frameworks:

- a. National Adaptation Plan (NAP):** The NAP (2021) includes a dedicated GESI chapter, requiring gender analysis and GRB in climate adaptation measures. For example, NAP prioritizes women's participation in adaptation planning and mandates budget earmarking for gender-targeted actions. It mandates integration of gender and social inclusion (GESI) in all climate adaptation planning and budgeting (Ministry of Finance, 2021).
- b. Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA):** LAPAs operationalize GRB at the local level by requiring at least 33 percent representation of women in planning committees and setting minimum budget quotas for women and marginalized groups in adaptation projects (MoFE, 2019).
- c. Climate Budget Tagging:** Since 2013, Nepal has implemented climate budget tagging, requiring ministries to classify and report climate expenditures, with specific tags for gender and social inclusion. Climate budget tagging enables tracking of climate-related expenditures with GESI disaggregation. The Climate-Resilient Planning and Budgeting Guidelines require all climate-related projects to conduct gender analysis, set gender-responsive targets, and report on gender-disaggregated beneficiaries. (MoFAGA, 2021)

Despite the institutionalization of GRB, evaluations have found that GRB allocations in Nepal's climate budget are often minimal (sometimes less than two percent of total climate spending) and frequently unmonitored or diverted to non-transformative activities (CDKN, 2021). Reports highlight that gender-tagged funds are sometimes used for routine administrative expenses or symbolic events rather than substantive climate adaptation for women (Shrestha et al., 2024). Frequently, gender-specific allocations in climate investments are small, underutilized, or repurposed without accountability, reflecting a

persistent gap between policy intentions and implementation (Khatri, 2023). All the more, the absence of meaningful monitoring mechanisms (The Kathmandu Post, 2022) makes it challenging to assess whether the resources allocated under GRB frameworks effectively reach marginalized women or enhance their leadership in climate decision-making. The problem is exacerbated by a top-down approach where women from privileged backgrounds are often the primary beneficiaries of GRB initiatives, rather than those most vulnerable to climate impacts (Acharya, 2021). Moreover, documented examples include GRB funds being allocated for tailoring, knitting, or Women’s Day celebrations, which do not address structural vulnerabilities. In several districts, a review of local budget documents found that funds marked as gender-responsive were spent on traditional “women’s activities” with limited climate relevance, while pressing issues such as flood preparedness or access to climate-resilient infrastructure were sidelined (Sijapati, 2023). Thus, while Nepal has institutionalized GRB within its public financial management systems, its enforcement in climate governance remains partial and struggles to achieve genuine gender-transformative outcomes.



Good Practices

There have been several good practices from civil society, government, and multi-stakeholder collaborations that highlight pathways to make GRB more effective in the climate finance. The following practices discussed in the PRC-Tewa stakeholder dialogue were identified for comprehensive gender assessments:

- a. Localization of GRB through participatory budgeting:** Some municipalities in Nepal have piloted participatory budgeting processes that engage women and marginalized groups in identifying and prioritizing climate adaptation needs. Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City, and Tulsipur have piloted participatory budgeting, engaging women and marginalized groups in climate adaptation planning. Project such as the *Cities4Women Nepal* project in Dhangadhi enabled grassroots women to conduct safety audits and advocate for budget allocations to address flood risks and safe public spaces. In Nepalgunj, participatory action research facilitated women’s budget tracking, leading to increased funding for water access and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- b. Climate-smart adaptation funded through GRB frameworks:** The integration of GRB into local adaptation frameworks such as LAPAs has allowed the allocation of public funds for women-targeted adaptation measures. For instance, climate-smart agriculture, clean energy solutions, and water resource management projects have been designed with specific input from women farmers and community leaders. In Bardiya, GRB frameworks funded women-led climate-smart agriculture, including drought-resistant crops and solar irrigation. Likewise in Sindhupalchok, GRB allocations supported women’s cooperatives in clean energy and water management (Sijapati, 2023).
- c. Civil society-led accountability and advocacy platforms:** Network like the Women Network for Energy and Environment (WoNEE), alongside international partners such as UNDP and CDKN, have advocated for transparent GRB practices. WoNEE’s advocacy led to the adoption of GESI-sensitive budgeting in local climate adaptation plans in Makwanpur and Chitwan. UNDP/CDKN supported training for local officials, resulting in increased transparency and public disclosure of GRB allocations in climate projects. The 2025 inter-ward GRB dialogue



in Arghakhanchi also resulted in a municipal resolution to increase women's representation in budget committees and earmark at least 20 percent of adaptation funds for women's priorities (Social Science Baha & SIAS, 2025).



d. Application of GESI budgeting principles in disaster risk sectors: GRB has also been applied in disaster risk reduction (DRR) through targeted investments in early warning systems, women's leadership in local DRR committees, and post-disaster recovery initiatives. These ensure that funding reaches women who are disproportionately impacted by climate-induced disasters. In Sunsari and Udayapur, GRB was applied to fund women's leadership in DRR committees and early warning systems, ensuring that disaster preparedness resources reached women-headed households.



e. Mock sessions and coaching for local governments: Organizations such as SAHAS Nepal and TEWA have supported local government representatives in 22 districts through simulation exercises and training to help them understand different stages of climate-related development and integrate GRB into budget cycles. They have conducted GRB simulation workshops in multiple districts, training local officials and women leaders on climate budgeting. These sessions improved understanding of GRB processes and increased women's participation in budget hearings.



f. Learnings from adaptation projects

Implementation of GRB is exemplified by adaptation projects in Nepal that have integrated gender and social inclusion into their planning, budgeting, and implementation frameworks. These initiatives demonstrate how aligning resource allocation to the needs of women and marginalized groups can lead to equitable climate resilience outcomes.

i. NCCSP Phase I and Transition Phase

- NCCSP Phase I: Benefited 376,400 direct beneficiaries, including nearly 50 percent women, 27 percent Indigenous groups, and 22 percent Dalits. Projects included water access, food security, alternative energy, and flood-resilient shelters.
- Transition Phase: Reached 71,143 people (51 percent female, 17 percent Dalit, 30 percent Indigenous). Local adaptation actions were prioritized based on participatory needs assessments, ensuring more equitable benefit sharing.

ii. ASHA Project and BRACED Program

- ASHA Project: Involved 93,695 households in 200 LAPAs, with at least 50 percent female beneficiaries and 35 percent from disadvantaged groups. Over 91 percent of beneficiaries were from the most vulnerable categories.
- BRACED Program (January 2015 to April 2019): Reached 612,850 people in Lumbini, Karnali, and Sudurpaschim Provinces, with 15 percent Dalit and 43 percent Janajati beneficiaries. Supported climate-smart agriculture and diversified livelihoods for the most deprived communities

Gaps and challenges in GRB enforcement

Individual level

While some female representatives at the local level have access to GRB information, few receive tailored training to implement or influence budget decisions. This limits their ability to advocate for gender-responsive climate allocations. For example, a 2020 government assessment found that while gender-

tagged funds were allocated, only a fraction reached community-level climate adaptation programs targeting women, with many funds expended on general administrative costs rather than direct climate resilience actions (International Budget Partnership, 2021). Reports further highlight that gender-tagged funds have at times been used for symbolic events such as Women's Day celebrations or distributing sewing machines, activities with limited impact on climate vulnerability or empowerment (Sandal, 2021). Similarly, many women at the local level still lack tailored training and do not receive follow-up support after initial orientation. Moreover, the implementation gaps are worsened by a predominantly top-down approach where women from relatively privileged urban or elite backgrounds disproportionately benefit from GRB initiatives, leaving out women from Indigenous, Dalit, or remote mountainous communities who face the greatest climate risks (Acharya, 2021).

Community level

Critical and complex gender issues are sometimes trivialized, with climate budgets allocated for symbolic activities rather than transformative adaptation. For example, in some municipalities, budget hearings prioritized sewing training over flood mitigation for women-headed households. Patriarchal norms that are deeply entrenched, such as early marriage, mobility restrictions, and the undervaluing of women's opinions, impede meaningful participation in GRB processes, especially among rural and indigenous women (Gurung, 2021). The patriarchal norms also prevent them from influencing budget priorities and accessing GRB-related resources.

Institutional level

'Historical expenditure' refers to using past budget allocations as the basis for new budgets, often perpetuating gender-blind spending. In Nepal, this practice is common, resulting in minimal increases in gender-responsive allocations every year (Shrestha et al., 2024). Cross-cutting sectors like agriculture, DRR, and water often lack gender analysis in climate budgeting, leading to missed opportunities for transformative investments (Bhul, 2022). Moreover, the shortage of GRB-capable personnel is most acute at the local level, where technical capacity and understanding of GRB principles remain limited (Sijapati, 2023). Lack of intersectional analysis and weak monitoring and evaluation systems result in misaligned spending and limited accountability in how GRB funds are used (International Budget Partnership, 2006).

Indicators for Measurement

Quantitative Indicators

Quantitative data enables tracking of budget allocations and measurable outcomes for gender-responsive climate investments. These indicators help assess whether resources are equitably distributed and whether GRB is improving access, agency, and adaptive capacity for women in all their diversity.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Allocation and targeting of budget</p> <p>To assess how public climate finance is allocated to address gendered vulnerabilities and target women and marginalized groups.</p>	<p>1.1. Percentage of total climate and development budget explicitly earmarked and/or allocated for gender-responsive climate programs or services.</p> <p>1.2. Proportion of budgeted climate adaptation/mitigation programs allocated to address gendered vulnerabilities and target women and marginalized groups.</p> <p>1.3. Percentage increase (or decrease) in gender-responsive climate allocations over time at federal, provincial, and local levels.</p> <p>1.4. Proportion of public climate finance targeted to intersections of GESI (ethnicity, age, geography, disability, LGBTQI+).</p>
<p>2. Participation in budgeting processes</p> <p>To measure the degree to which women and marginalized groups participate in climate-related budget planning, implementation, and oversight.</p>	<p>2.1. Number and percentage of women and marginalized groups members in leadership positions within climate-related and GRB-related decision-making bodies (such as, DRR committees, climate planning units).</p> <p>2.2. Proportion of local climate-related budgets mobilized and implemented with direct involvement of women and marginalized groups.</p> <p>2.3. Number of women and marginalized group members employed in GRB-funded projects, disaggregated by type of role and level of decision-making.</p> <p>2.4. Number of GRB sessions (such as trainings, planning, discussions) conducted with women, marginalized groups, and local governments, including their influence on session design.</p>
<p>3. Access and benefit sharing</p> <p>To monitor the extent to which gender-responsive budgeting translates into equitable access to climate-resilient services and benefits.</p>	<p>3.1. Proportion of diverse GESI groups receiving GRB-funded climate services, disaggregated by intervention type, scale of benefit (such as, land irrigated, energy accessed), and extent of use or realized impact (in income gains, disaster preparedness, etc.).</p>

<p>4. Transparency and accountability To track efforts to institutionalize GRB and enhance government and community capacity for its implementation.</p>	<p>4.1. Number of local and provincial governments that have budgeted GESI Action Plans for their climate related projects.</p> <p>4.2. Number of public officials and elected representatives trained on GRB, GESI Analysis and integration in climate change-related planning cycles.</p> <p>4.3. Number of GRB audits conducted on climate-related budgets, with findings made publicly accessible in local language, with systematic mechanisms established for learning and future planning.</p>
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Qualitative Indicators

Qualitative indicators capture lived experiences, perceptions, and institutional dynamics that quantitative metrics cannot. Such indicators deepen understanding of how GRB is experienced by diverse groups and whether it genuinely promotes gender equity in climate governance.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Budget responsiveness to gendered climate risks To understand whether climate budgets reflect and respond to the differentiated vulnerabilities and priorities of women and marginalized groups.</p>	<p>1.1. Narratives from women and marginalized group members on whether GRB-funded initiatives address their specific needs (like water and food security, energy, livelihoods etc.).</p> <p>1.2. Perceptions of community, particularly of women and men from marginalized groups regarding the relevance and usefulness of GRB-supported trainings (such as, cattle-farming, climate smart agriculture, alternative energy technologies, etc.).</p> <p>1.3. Narratives from women and marginalized groups reporting improved wellbeing or resilience due to GRB-funded interventions, including evidence of equal or higher income through.</p> <p>1.4. Number of community feedback on barriers to accessing GRB-funded services or programs.</p>

<p>2. Experience of participation and influence</p> <p>To capture how women and marginalized groups perceive their participation and influence in GRB processes.</p>	<p>2.1. Number and proportion of reflections from women and CSOs on access to information and influence over budget priorities, with documented cases of their contributions to GRB decisions or reforms.</p> <p>2.2. Number of stories of shifts in power dynamics or confidence among women engaged in GRB platforms or consultations.</p> <p>2.3. Degree of accounts (number or percentage of participation) from local officials on how women’s participation shaped budget priorities and delivery.</p>
<p>3. Transformation and accountability in budgeting culture</p> <p>To explore whether GRB has fostered a shift from tokenism or cosmetic budgeting to meaningful structural change.</p>	<p>3.1. Number of examples of traditional or symbolic gender allocations (like tailoring training) being replaced by strategic investments (such as land access, green technology).</p> <p>3.2. Women’s and civil society’s perceptions of transparency and accountability in GRB mechanisms.</p> <p>3.3. Reflections from number of women and marginalized groups on institutional willingness to incorporate GRB into climate governance across departments.</p> <p>3.4. Case studies of GRB allocations being enforced or diverted, and lessons from both.</p>

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Nepal has institutionalized GRB within its federal system and climate governance frameworks, the gap between policy design and implementation remains significant. Good practices, such as participatory budgeting and community-led advocacy, show that gender-sensitive approaches can lead to more inclusive and equitable climate resilience. However, persistent challenges at individual, community, and institutional levels, ranging from limited investments, to entrenched patriarchal norms, continue to hinder the transformative potential of GRB. Strengthening monitoring mechanisms, enhancing quantitative and qualitative indicators, are critical to translating budgetary commitments into tangible outcomes. For GRB to drive gender equity in climate action, it must move beyond tokenistic allocations and promote systemic shifts that empower women as active agents of climate resilience and governance. This means GRB must go beyond allocating minimal funds for superficial activities and instead ensure meaningful budget allocations that address the specific needs and barriers faced by diverse women. It requires embedding women’s leadership and decision-making power in all stages of climate finance, alongside comprehensive accountability mechanisms to track real impacts. Only through such systemic changes can GRB transform power relations and enable women to actively shape resilient and equitable climate action.

Principle 6: Assures Equitable Benefits Sharing



Introduction

Equitable benefit sharing is central to climate justice in Nepal, ensuring that those most affected by climate change, particularly women in all their diversity and intersectionality, receive fair and just access to resources, opportunities, and services generated from climate finance, adaptation, and mitigation programs. Nepal's policy framework strongly highlights this commitment. For example, the Climate Change Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy and Action Plan (2021) mandates the integration of gender equality and social inclusion in all climate actions, promoting meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups in decision-making and equitable access to benefits (MoFE, 2020). The Gender-responsive National Climate Change Policy (2019) prioritizes gender considerations across all climate programs and advances women's roles in planning, decision-making, and benefit-sharing mechanisms (MoFE, 2019). Nepal's Second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) explicitly integrates GESI in both mitigation and adaptation efforts and has been recognized as the top-ranked NDC under UNFCCC's gender sensitivity analysis (UNFCCC, 2020). Locally, the Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPAs) institutionalize inclusive adaptation planning by engaging women from marginalized communities in vulnerability assessments and solution design (UNFCCC, 2012). The Gender component within Nepal's REDD+ Emission Reduction Program (ERP) further foregrounds gender equitable forest governance and benefit-sharing as a cross-cutting priority (FCPF, 2020). Despite these progressive policies, persistent structural inequalities and implementation challenges mean that benefit sharing risks reinforcing existing disparities if intersectional differences (such as caste, ethnicity, disability, and geography) are not explicitly addressed. Without deliberate design and accountability, climate interventions may neglect the needs of landless women, single mothers, people with disabilities, and marginalized ethnic groups, undermining the core justice goals these policies envision.

Over the last 15 years, Nepal has significantly expanded its commitment to gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), with direct GRB allocations increasing from 11.03 percent in 2007-08 to 40.25 percent in 2022-23, while indirect GRB reached as high as 48 percent of the total budget in 2016-17 and stands at 34.95 percent for the upcoming fiscal year (Gender Climate Tracker, 2021; Koirala, 2023). Budgets allocating over 50 percent of their resources directly to women are considered directly responsive, those between 20 to 50 percent indirectly responsive, and below 20 percent neutral, indicating that Nepal is moving toward more responsive budgeting. This financial progress parallels improvements in gender equity indicators, with Nepal advancing 6.7 points from 58 in 2015 to 64 in 2020, reflecting gains in women's land rights, political representation, sanitation access, workplace equality laws, and transparency in budgeting (UN Women, 2021). These developments provide a growing institutional foundation for equitable benefit sharing, a core climate justice principle that ensures diverse women and marginalized groups receive fair access to climate resources and opportunities.

One of the main challenges in implementing gender-responsive budgeting at a local level in Nepal is the knowledge gap among policy makers and decision-makers (Sandal, 2021). This directly impacts planning and budgeting, integrating a clear gender perspective within budget allocations, effectively transferring knowledge, and spreading awareness about gender-responsive techniques and approaches. In addition to the gender-responsive budget code, a climate budget code was introduced in 2012/13 to channel funds to climate actions under the LAPAs (CDKN, 2021)

In Nepal, despite increasing investment in climate adaptation and resilience-building programs, benefit distribution mechanisms remain largely inequitable. For example, a watershed management project supported by the Asian Development Bank improved water management in nearly 1,200 communities and engaged women in planning. However, deeply embedded exclusionary social norms and poverty in certain regions like the lower West Seti and Budi Ganga basins limit equitable access to these climate-resilient water services, disproportionately affecting marginalized women's livelihoods (ADB, 2022). Climate finance delivered through state mechanisms or development partners often privileges male-headed households, dominant caste groups, and those with stronger socio-political networks, sidelining climate-vulnerable groups such as landless women (who face both historical marginalization due to exclusion from land ownership and situational vulnerability exacerbated by poverty and lack of assets), single mothers, people with disabilities, and marginalized ethnic communities (DoLMA, 2024). For example, despite the National Adaptation Plan of Action and related investments, benefits are often skewed towards more privileged groups while lesser-resourced women and marginalized communities remain underserved (Rai, 2023; Prakriti Resource Centre, 2024). Moreover, while Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles are formally embedded in key national frameworks including Nepal's Climate Change Policy (2019), Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), and the GESI and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, implementation has often emphasized procedural inclusion, such as representation targets, without achieving substantive redistributive outcomes that address intersecting marginalization. Additionally, although broad GESI and gender-responsive budgeting mechanisms exist in the wider development sector, their translation into meaningful benefit-sharing in climate finance remains limited, highlighting a persistent gap between policy intent and on-the-ground equity. This disconnect between policy intent and the lack of adequate and relevant investments in the ground/beneficiary levels benefits highlights the need for stronger accountability mechanisms and equitable planning processes that place justice and redistribution at the core of climate governance.



Good practices

There have been several good practices from government, civil society, and community-led initiatives that demonstrate ways to make benefit sharing more equitable in Nepal's climate programs. The following practices discussed in the PRC-Tewa stakeholder dialogue were identified for comprehensive gender assessments:

- a. **Mandatory allocation for marginalized groups in community forestry:** Nepal's Community Forestry Guidelines require that at least 50 percent of the executive committee members of Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) be women, representing a strong commitment to gender-inclusive natural resource governance (RECOFTC, 2013). This policy has significantly increased women's leadership and participation as recent data show women



constitute approximately 42 percent of CFUG executive committee members, with several groups achieving or exceeding the 50 percent quota (Giri et al., 2022). In practice, many CFUGs have utilized this governance structure to allocate at least 35 percent of their income toward activities benefiting women, Dalits, Indigenous groups, and poor households, such as low-interest loans, scholarships, and forest-based livelihoods support (RECOFTC, 2013). Furthermore, women-led CFUGs have demonstrated improvements in forest management transparency and sustainability, underscoring the efficacy of gender-friendly governance (Timilsina et al., 2024). These advances underscore Nepal's approach as a notable example of embedding gender equity into community natural resource benefit sharing.

b. Equity goals in Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA): LAPA frameworks require the inclusion of women and marginalized communities in climate planning and budgeting (MoHP, 2021). In some municipalities, this has led to the prioritization of locally identified needs such as water access for women farmers, small-scale irrigation, and agricultural subsidies targeted toward landless women or households without male representation. Importantly, Nepal's climate finance policy requires that at least 80 percent of total climate funds be channeled to the local level, strengthening resource access for vulnerable communities and enabling local adaptation priorities to be addressed effectively (MoFE, 2022)

c. Gender quotas and inclusive targeting in climate finance projects: Projects funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) are mandated to conduct rigorous gender assessments and develop budgeted Gender Action Plans, reflecting a strong institutional commitment to gender-responsive climate action. These requirements ensure that at least 50 percent of beneficiaries are women and create formal spaces for women's participation through legal mandates, such as the 33 percent quota for women in decision-making bodies (BRCRN, 2020). Examples from Nepal's National Climate Change Support Programme (NCCSP), Climate Adaptation Framework in Karnali (CAFS-Karnali), and ASHA project demonstrate how such gender-responsive approaches, combined with community consultations and targeting tools, have empowered single women, Dalits, and persons with disabilities to benefit from climate-resilient agriculture and infrastructure investments. When coupled with leadership and capacity-building training, such quotas have led to stronger claims over climate resources by women-led groups.

d. Institutional representation and affirmative action at the local level: Nepal's constitutional provision for gender quotas in local governance has led to increased women's representation in decision-making bodies. In the 2022 local elections, women constituted approximately 41 percent of elected representatives across 753 local bodies, with 14,466 women elected, reflecting strong institutional backing through quotas embedded in the Local Level Election Act and the Constitution (Devpolicy, 2025). Importantly, the Act also requires that each local ward committee include at least one Dalit woman, acknowledging intersectional representation of marginalized groups (Equal Measures 2030, 2024). Despite this progress, women disproportionately occupy deputy mayor or vice-chair roles (about 75 percent), with only about four percent of mayoral positions held by women; male dominance persists in top leadership positions, reinforcing ongoing challenges in political power (Devpolicy, 2025). Moreover, Dalit women's representation, though constitutionally mandated, remains limited in decision-making influence, highlighting the continued need to focus on intersectional equity (Equal Measures 2030, 2024). Women leaders elected at the local level have increasingly advocated for gender-equitable climate adaptation funding and expanded access to services



for vulnerable communities, illustrating the importance of these affirmative policies for equitable benefit sharing in climate governance.

e. Women-led and Indigenous initiatives: Emerging women-led collectives have not only participated in but also spearheaded climate-resilient agricultural practices and local energy projects. The Center for Indigenous Peoples' Research and Development (CIPRED) has conducted extensive research and hosted workshops on Indigenous women's knowledge and leadership in climate action, highlighting the vital role of traditional knowledge and cultural practices in climate resilience (CIPRED, 2024). Meanwhile, the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal (NIDWAN) has focused on the intersection of disability and climate vulnerability, advocating for inclusive policies and capacity building to ensure that women with disabilities access climate adaptation resources (NIDWAN, 2023). Other organizations such as the Nepal Women's Indigenous Forum (NWIF) similarly champion women's leadership in sustainable natural resource management and community energy solutions. While some Indigenous communities are integrating their knowledge systems into climate solutions, this is yet to be recognized formally in mainstream benefit-sharing mechanisms.

f. Project learning on targeting and benefit sharing: The Nepal Climate Change Support Programme (NCCSP) exemplifies effective equitable resource allocation by channeling 80 percent of financial and human resources directly to local-level implementation, ensuring climate-vulnerable households benefit concretely (UNDP, 2019). NCCSP supported diversification of livelihoods through climate-resilient agriculture, job-oriented skills training, and participation in community infrastructure activities, such as gabion wire installation and bio-fencing, generating new income streams and employment opportunities for marginalized groups. For instance, a farmer in Kudari VDC, Jumla, reported earning around NPR 50,000 per season from vegetable sales, while creating 80 days of local employment annually. Similarly, BRACED and ASHA projects delivered targeted agriculture and forest-based income packages to poor and vulnerable households, focusing on commercialization, animal husbandry, and nursery management with deliberate support for women and marginalized communities (CARE Nepal, 2023). BRACED beneficiaries saw a rise in annual household incomes by an average of GBP 231 and a drastic improvement in resilience indices (from 1.7 to 3.6) showing tangible gains in livelihood sustainability through climate-smart interventions, including essential oil crop distillation units that generated additional incomes of GBP 229 per household (BRACED, 2022). Together, these interventions reflect good practices of equitable benefit sharing under Principle 6 by prioritizing local empowerment, diversified income, and inclusive resilience building.

Gaps and challenges in ensuring equitable benefits sharing

Individual level

Women from marginalized communities particularly from Dalit, indigenous, landless, and person with disabilities, who are also economically and politically disadvantaged continue to face limited access to climate finance, technologies, and livelihood programs. Based on the findings of Shrestha and Gurung (2022), Dalit and Indigenous women in the Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces face systemic exclusion driven by entrenched caste discrimination and poverty limiting their participation in forest-based climate adaptation programs. Similarly, Manandhar et al. (2023) document how limited literacy and lack of awareness among marginalized women hinder their ability to claim entitlements within Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA) frameworks. Moreover, a critical yet often overlooked barrier is self-censorship among women leaders from marginalized backgrounds. Deeply rooted socio-cultural norms

socialize many women to perceive themselves as subordinate or less capable, causing them to refrain from voicing concerns or challenging decisions in governance forums (Acharya, 2021). This internalized restraint limits the effectiveness of women's representation, often reducing leadership roles to symbolic participation without substantive influence. These barriers collectively contribute to persistent inequities in benefit sharing, emphasizing the need for targeted capacity-building, awareness-raising, and culturally sensitive empowerment initiatives that address both external constraints and internalized norms.

Community Level

Benefit-sharing mechanisms within community-based institutions often reflect existing power structures. Local elites, frequently from dominant caste and male-headed households, disproportionately benefit from community forest revenues or cooperative funds, excluding poor and landless women (Manohara et.al, 2014). In many cases, even when women are physically present in community meetings, their voices are sidelined, and their concerns dismissed. The paper by Regmi et al (2016) show that, due to issues related to the local structure and governance of community-based organizations, the benefits of climate change adaptation support were enjoyed mostly by elites and powerful individuals. Furthermore, caste-based discrimination persists, limiting access to decision-making platforms and economic opportunities for Dalit and indigenous women. It is also important to highlight that many intended beneficiaries such as daily wage-working women and men from Dalit communities, often lack a clear understanding or complete information about the value of engaging in forums created by development or climate change agencies. This limited awareness leads many to opt out of participation, thereby missing critical opportunities to claim available benefits and further exacerbating exclusion. As a result, participation remains shallow and unrepresentative of women in all their diversity due to a lack of deliberate inclusion mechanisms.

Institutional Level

The institutionalization of gender-responsive budgeting and benefit-sharing frameworks remains limited (CDKN, 2021). Institutional barriers to adaptation are observed in Nepal such as caste related political neglect by community leadership, government and NGO sources alike is observed. The hegemonic dominance of political authority, and the channels through which aid/resources are allocated by the upper caste stratum, are identified as key barriers in responding to shock and stress. In particular Dalit and Janajati sessions identify clear cultural obstacles to spaces of political power due to social status and political discrimination (Jone and Boyd, 2011). While GESI principles are present in national climate policies, execution plans often lack clear accountability structures, measurable targets, and sufficient financial allocation (Governance Lab, 2023). Disaggregated data, by gender, caste, age, and ability, are rarely collected or analyzed, which impedes effective monitoring and adaptive planning (Shrestha and Gurung, 2022). Moreover, existing accountability and grievance redressal mechanisms are either absent or poorly enforced, limiting women's ability to challenge unjust practices or claim redress when excluded from benefit streams. Another significant institutional gap is the limited capacity of technical and professional staff, including extension workers in both government agencies and NGOs or CSOs, to conduct thorough social and GESI analysis. Even with strong intentions and a commitment to support marginalized groups, the absence of adequate skills, knowledge, and specialized methodologies leads to the unintentional exclusion of these populations. This capacity gap reduces the effectiveness of policies and interventions, as staff may not fully recognize or address the intersecting barriers faced by women and marginalized groups, thus perpetuating inequitable outcomes. Improving institutional effectiveness will therefore require not only stronger policies and accountability systems, but also targeted investments in building the technical and analytical capacity of all staff involved in climate and development initiatives, ensuring they are equipped with the tools needed to enact inclusive, equitable benefit-sharing in practice.

Indicators for Measurement

Quantitative Indicators

Quantitative data helps measure the distribution and impact of climate benefits, ensuring women are not left behind and able to contribute meaningfully to adaptation and mitigation processes.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Access to climate finance and services</p> <p>Measures the proportion of adaptation funding, services, or materials (such as, drought-resistant seeds, water infrastructure) received directly by women and marginalized groups.</p>	<p>1.1 Percentage of total budget targeting women/vulnerable beneficiaries for climate adaptation services such as irrigation, renewable energy).</p> <p>1.2 Number of climate projects with at least 50 percent of beneficiaries identified as women or vulnerable groups.</p>
<p>2. Inclusive participation in benefit-sharing decisions</p> <p>Tracks the percentage of participants from these groups involved in the design, decision-making, and implementation of adaptation strategies.</p>	<p>2.1 Percentage of women/vulnerable individuals in community adaptation committees or local adaptation planning processes local DRR, farmer groups,</p> <p>2.2 Number of their issues/demands raised by women and marginalized groups that are incorporated into benefit-sharing plans and policies.</p>
<p>3. Equity in distribution of resources</p> <p>Measures the equity in distribution of adaptation benefits (such as funding, tools, training, or infrastructure) among women and marginalized populations.</p>	<p>3.1 Proportion of Climate Adaptation Resources Accessed by Women and Vulnerable Groups (disaggregation by gender, age, disability, socio-economic status) percent.</p> <p>3.2 Percentage of women from marginalized households/communities receiving direct benefits (subsidies, grants).</p>
<p>4. Accountability and monitoring</p> <p>Measures the presence and functionality of mechanisms to report, track, and redress unfair or corrupt distribution practices.</p>	<p>4.1 Number of recorded grievance redressal cases related to benefit exclusion, disaggregated by type and resolution status, resolved annually.</p> <p>4.2. Number of public audits and public hearing as well as GESI Assessment conducted and budgeted GESI Action Plan in place.</p> <p>4.3 Availability of publicly accessible disaggregated data on climate benefit recipients.</p>

<p>5. Transparency and data Examines the availability and accessibility of publicly disclosed, disaggregated data that allows for tracking equitable benefit sharing.</p>	<p>5.1 Availability of publicly accessible, disaggregated data on climate benefit recipients (by gender, caste, geography). 5.2. Number and frequency of public data releases on climate benefit sharing, disaggregated by gender, caste, and geography.</p>
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Qualitative Indicators

Qualitative indicators help assess how climate benefits are experienced by women and marginalized groups and whether their needs are meaningfully addressed. They help evaluate the depth of participation, power dynamics, and actual control over benefits.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Perceived access and fairness Explores how women and marginalized groups perceive their ability to access benefits and whether they feel the process is just.</p>	<p>1.1 Perceptions of fairness in how climate-related benefits are distributed within communities. 1.2 Experiences of women in navigating and claiming benefits or accessing services.</p>
<p>2. Inclusion and voice in planning and decisions Assesses whether women and marginalized groups feel heard and respected in benefit-sharing and resource planning processes.</p>	<p>2.1 Reflections from women and marginalized individuals on whether their inputs during planning processes are taken seriously and lead to action or change. 2.2. Evidences of whether safe, inclusive, and enabling spaces are provided for marginalized women to participate in planning processes, along with perceptions of their ability to express views freely and confidently.</p>
<p>3. Impact on wellbeing and resilience Captures the ways in which equitable benefit sharing influences livelihoods, climate resilience, and dignity.</p>	<p>3.1 Stories of improved resilience or livelihood from beneficiaries of equitable benefit-sharing schemes. 3.2 Testimonies on how targeted benefits addressed gendered climate risks, including coping strategies and perceptions of their effectiveness over time.</p>
<p>4. Transparency and accountability Assesses trust in institutions distributing benefits and perceived levels of corruption or elite capture.</p>	<p>4.1 Individual and community trust in institutions managing climate finance and resources. 4.2 Community perceptions of corruption, favoritism, or exclusion in benefit-sharing, including views on whether safeguards (such as, quotas or prioritization of vulnerable groups) are effectively applied.</p>

Conclusion

Assuring equitable benefit sharing is not merely a technical goal but a justice imperative in Nepal's climate governance. Nepal's commitment to allocate at least 80 percent of climate finance to the local level is fundamental to ensuring that resources reach the most vulnerable communities in a timely and responsive manner (MoFE, 2023). This allocation rule embeds equity as a guiding principle, mandating local empowerment and proximity of funding to grassroots beneficiaries. To fully realize this commitment, reinforcing Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA) and other investments with explicit equitable principles are essential. These frameworks must include specific allocations and incentives targeting women and marginalized groups, ensuring their prioritized access to benefits and decision-making spaces (UNDP, 2019). Additionally, strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms are critical to track the operationalization of these allocations—measuring disaggregated impacts and enforcing transparency to prevent elite capture or exclusion (Governance Lab, 2023). Only by integrating these pillars, allocation rules rooted in equity, targeted investment frameworks, and rigorous accountability, can climate action genuinely uphold justice and fulfill the principle of leaving no one behind.

Principle 7: Gender Sensitive Climate Actions



Introduction

Climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities by disproportionately impacting women and marginalized groups in Nepal, due to entrenched social norms, unequal access to resources, and limited participation in decision-making (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). Recognizing this, Nepal has progressively advanced gender sensitivity in its climate policies, evidencing a clear trajectory from the largely gender-neutral first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2016 toward more explicitly gender-responsive frameworks in the second (2020) and third NDCs (2025). While the first NDC made limited reference to gender, the second and third NDCs integrate Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) as cross-cutting priorities within mitigation and adaptation goals, emphasizing gender-sensitive implementation, monitoring, and budgeting (MoFE, 2020). This shift also reflects broader policy progress, including the Climate Change Policy (2019) and the GESI Strategy and Action Plan (2021), which embed gender equality and social inclusion across sectors critical to Nepal's climate resilience.

Complementing these national policy measures, Nepal's flagship climate adaptation projects demonstrate practical efforts to realize this principle's aims. The Nepal Climate Change Support Programme (NCCSP) has incorporated gender mainstreaming in local adaptation planning and livelihood diversification, actively targeting women and marginalized groups for capacity building and equitable benefit sharing (UNDP, 2019). Similarly, the ASHA project has emphasized gender-responsive agricultural and forest-based livelihoods, fostering women's agency in climate-resilient practices (CARE Nepal, 2023). The Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EBA) initiative has integrated traditional knowledge systems, with active participation of women and Indigenous communities to address climate vulnerabilities (FAO, 2022). Lastly, the Climate Adaptation Framework in Karnali (CAFS-Karnali) prioritizes inclusive planning processes that ensure marginalized women's voices shape community-level adaptation priorities (Prakriti Resource Centre, 2024).

Despite such advances, evidence points to uneven implementation, persisting gaps in intersectional inclusion, and limited capacity for gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation (CDKN, 2021). These highlight the critical importance of gender sensitive climate actions as a foundational approach to climate action that recognizes and responds to the differentiated needs, roles, and contributions of all genders, thereby enhancing effectiveness, justice, and resilience and not merely as a policy commitment.



Good Practices

There have been several good practices from national policies, local mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder frameworks that highlight efforts to make climate actions more gender sensitive. The following practices discussed in the PRC-Tewa stakeholder dialogue were identified for comprehensive gender assessments:

a. Nepal's Climate Change GESI Strategy and Action Plan (2021): This strategy mandates the integration of gender equality and social inclusion in climate action, requiring the meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups in decision-making and ensuring equitable access to benefits (MoFE, 2020).



b. National Adaptation Plan (NAP): Nepal's NAP explicitly integrates Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) as a cross-cutting theme, embedding gender-sensitive approaches in adaptation planning and implementation at national and local levels. It mandates participatory processes ensuring marginalized women and men are meaningfully engaged in vulnerability assessments and priority setting, thereby promoting equity in resource allocation and resilience-building (MoFE, 2020)



c. National Climate Change Policy (2019): This policy recognizes gender equity and social inclusion as a cross-cutting issue and mandates that at least 80 percent of climate finance be allocated to local levels, where women and marginalized communities reside. It promotes women's participation in all stages of climate governance and explicitly calls for gender-responsive programming and budgeting to ensure equitable outcomes (CDKN, 2021).



d. Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 2025): Building on earlier NDCs, Nepal's third NDC places strong emphasis on gender-transformative climate action. It integrates GESI principles throughout mitigation and adaptation targets, including gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation systems. This NDC also prioritizes capacity building for women and marginalized groups to enhance their leadership and decision-making roles, reflecting Nepal's increasing commitment to gender-sensitive climate governance (MoFE, 2024)



e. Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPAS): Engage local women from marginalised groups in identifying vulnerabilities and designing adaptation solutions, ensuring their perspectives shape the outcomes. (UNFCCC, 2012)



f. REDD+ Strategy: The Emission Reduction Program (ERP) under REDD+ includes gender as a cross-cutting issue, focusing on gender-equitable participation in forest governance and benefit-sharing (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility [FCPF], 2020).



g. Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) policy and plans: The National DRRM Policy (2018) and the Strategic Action Plan (2018-2030) focus on inclusive disaster risk governance by requiring representation and meaningful participation of women, children, seniors, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups at all levels of disaster preparedness and response. These policies mandate gender-inclusive infrastructure design, use of sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data, and address gender-based violence (GBV) risks in disaster contexts, thereby linking climate-sensitive disaster management with gender equity (UN Women, 2021).





h. Integrative Multi-Stakeholder Models: The Tewa-PRC model brings together uncommon sectors such as climate experts (technical) and gender activists and experts (humanitarian) to discuss and come up with viable solutions that addresses both scientific and sociological aspect of issues. This grassroots approach demonstrates the value of collaborative, collegial partnerships. It encourages ownership, continuous learning, and deeper intersectional analysis through sustained mobilization and multi-stakeholder platforms. It has received formal recognition from local municipalities.



i. Flagship Projects and Programs:

Significant donor-funded projects such as the Nepal Climate Change Support Programme (NCCSP), Climate Adaptation Framework in Karnali (CAFS-Karnali), Adaptation for Smallholders in Hilly Areas (ASHA), Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED), and initiatives by BCRN, UN Women, and UNICEF have embedded gender-sensitive approaches. They emphasize:

- Incorporation of GESI-responsive guidelines, manuals, and indicators.
- Appointment of gender experts to guide implementation and monitoring.
- Ensuring at least 33-50 percent participation of women, including representation from Dalit and ethnic minorities.
- Focused livelihood diversification, climate-smart agriculture, and capacity building targeting women and marginalized groups (CDKN, 2021).

For example, the ASHA project developed specific GESI action plans from inception, promoting 50 percent representation of marginalized groups and women in program activities, leading to measurable resilience improvements. Similarly, the Jalabayu Maitri Krishi Pariyojana has improved women's groups' adoption of climate-smart agriculture technologies, contributing to "climate-smart villages" with inclusive governance structures (Prakriti Resource Centre, 2024).

Gaps and challenges in planning and implementing gender sensitive climate actions

Individual Level

Women often lack technical knowledge and access to climate information due to lower literacy and mobility (UN Women, 2021). Gender roles and domestic responsibilities further limit their time, mobility and opportunity to engage in and contribute to climate-related activities. Many women are also excluded from participating in local climate programs and policy processes due to a combination of socio-cultural, economic, and structural barriers. Exclusion is perpetuated by patriarchal gender norms and stereotypes that limit women's confidence and perceived legitimacy in public or technical decision-making spaces (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). There is a general lack of skills and limited internalization of the value of gender-sensitive approaches among both community members and climate professionals. Alluding to the literature, low literacy, digital exclusion, mobility restrictions, internalized beliefs, lack of awareness on climate action are further major factors towards significant barriers faced by women in accessing and utilizing climate information and services. Lack of access to and control over agricultural services and technology and limited influence over adaptation decisions may further increase women's workloads and widen gender inequality (MoFE 2021).

Community Level

Climate interventions frequently treat households or communities as homogenous units, without recognizing and addressing the distinct needs, roles, and vulnerabilities of women and men within them (Bhandari et. al, 2017). This lack of gender-disaggregated analysis results in climate actions that may inadvertently overlook women's specific challenges and contributions, thus undermining the effectiveness and equity of adaptation efforts. Gender-sensitive climate actions require deliberate identification and integration of gender-specific needs and capacities, ensuring that interventions empower all genders (particularly marginalized women) to access resources and participate meaningfully in decision-making processes (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). Without this nuanced approach, climate programs risk reinforcing existing gender inequalities rather than promoting transformative, inclusive resilience.

Women's participation in Nepal is often symbolic or limited to implementation rather than planning stages (CIF & PROFOR, 2017). Cultural norms in rural and indigenous areas further limit women's voices in climate-related decision-making. There is also a lack of gender-sensitivity during program design and implementation from a woman's perspective and an intersectional lens. Participation of women is often symbolic, with few opportunities to influence planning or design stages of climate action. For example, the research paper of Regmi et al (2016) shows that the Nepal's LAPA implementation have been constrained by socio-structural and governance barriers that have failed to successfully integrate local adaptation needs in local planning and increase the adaptive capacity of vulnerable households.

Moreover, while LAPAs typically engage a wide array of stakeholders in their planning processes, there is a concerning trend of overlooking the voices and needs of specific vulnerable populations. Groups such as children, elderly, LGBTQ+ communities, and individuals with disabilities, who face compounded vulnerabilities, are often marginalized further in the adaptation planning process and older children have distinct needs regarding health, education, and safety during disasters, necessitating more nuanced approaches to ensure their protection and well-being (Practical Action, 2024).

Interventions frequently lack an intersectional lens, leading to tokenistic inclusion and failure to reach the "leave no one behind" population. Community-level engagement is often shallow, with limited follow-up, leading to a devaluation of participation and consultation fatigue.

Policy level

The national policies fail to adopt an intersectional approach. It is not informed by the specific problems, challenges and opportunities faced by different groups of women and men in the context of climate change. Even though the GESI policy (inter-thematic area) mentions different vulnerable groups, the sectoral policies within it considers 'the community' and does not take into consideration historical discriminations, situational vulnerabilities, and the differential impacts of climate change on different social groups. This can pose problems in addressing GESI issues through the sectoral policies and isolate GESI policy and strategies (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021).

Institutional Level

Although many climate projects express strong intentions to integrate GESI, these intentions often do not translate into concrete actions. This is due to a lack a dedicated gender budget; skilled human resources, gender-responsive monitoring mechanism in Nepal (Gurung, 2025). Significant capacity gaps exist between the government and implementing partners in understanding and applying gender sensitive approaches (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2013). Climate and gender remain siloed domains with limited cross-disciplinary understanding among implementers. Moreover, partnerships within climate justice initiatives are frequently contractual and short-term, lacking the trust, mutual

learning, and shared ownership necessary for sustainable impact. The absence of sex-disaggregated data and comprehensive GESI impact assessments further weakens accountability and undermines effective policy implementation. For example, Nepal is struggling with institutional barriers, contested interest between key authorities, limited capacity, and unequal distribution of resources to support LLA. The LAPA analysis shows the priorities and investment plans are mostly intended to continue business as usual practices addressing bio-physical and natural hazards rather than properly understanding and addressing underlying, pre-existing, and structural causes of vulnerabilities (Gentle and Mainaly, 2024).

Indicators for measurements

Quantitative Indicators

Quantitative data helps to measure gender sensitivity in climate actions through budget allocation, participation levels, access to services, and institutional commitments.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Policy and institutional framework Measures the extent to which climate policies and institutions integrate gender-sensitive objectives and structures.</p>	<p>1.1 Number and provisions within national and local climate policies that include gender equality and social inclusion/equity objectives.</p> <p>1.2 Number of climate projects and programs with dedicated gender-responsive Action Plans with budgets.</p> <p>1.3 Proportion of ministries and local governments with trained GESI focal persons and technical staff on GESI and climate issues.</p> <p>1.4 Number of technical staff, decision-makers, and implementers trained on GESI analysis and integration in climate action.</p>
<p>2. Participation and decision-making Assesses the inclusion and influence of women and marginalized groups in climate-related projects and programs decision-making processes.</p>	<p>2.1 Percentage of women in leadership roles within climate-related project committees (such as in NCCSP, BRCRN, Gandaki river basin).</p> <p>2.2 Number of GESI-related issues/demands raised by women and marginalized groups during climate consultations that are incorporated into climate change-related plans.</p> <p>2.3 Number of climate change related actions/projects led by women and marginalized groups.</p>
<p>3. Access to and control over resources and technology Evaluates whether women and marginalized groups equitably access and benefit from climate technologies and resources.</p>	<p>3.1 Percentage of allocation to gender sensitive activities within the on-going climate change projects.</p> <p>3.2. Number of climate-resilient technologies and budget mobilized with implementation and monitoring led by women leaders/women's groups.</p> <p>3.3 Proportion of female-headed households receiving and made use of adaptation funding or climate services.</p> <p>3.4 Number of women and gender-diverse individuals trained and applying climate-friendly practices at the household and community levels.</p>

<p>4. Capacity building and knowledge sharing Measures gender responsiveness in climate education, awareness, and training initiatives.</p>	<p>4.1 Percentage of budgeted climate training programs that include gender modules and implemented as a structured series with follow-up and mentoring support.</p> <p>4.2 Percentage increase in self-reported knowledge or confidence among women participants following training.</p> <p>4.3 Number of climate change-related formal and informal events and training sessions organized by the trained women leaders and women’s groups.</p>
<p>5. Gender-responsive implementation and monitoring Measures the qualitative monitoring mechanisms to ensure proper and effective implementation of programs for optimal impact.</p>	<p>5.1 Existence of gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks within climate projects and programs or monitoring system for measuring gender-responsive and transformative outcomes institutionalized and operationalized.</p> <p>5.2 Number of publications, case studies, or knowledge products related to GESI-responsive climate actions and lessons learned.</p>

Qualitative Indicators

Qualitative indicators help explore how climate actions are perceived and experienced by women and marginalized communities, highlighting barriers, agency, and institutional responsiveness.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Policy and institutional framework Assesses how inclusive and gender-sensitive climate policies and institutional mechanisms are perceived by communities and stakeholders.</p>	<p>1.1. Perception on the degree to which gender is mainstreamed in climate governance documents.</p> <p>1.2. Perceptions of inclusivity and responsiveness of institutional climate strategies among women, marginalized groups and other stakeholders (via interviews or focus groups).</p> <p>1.3. Case studies showcasing implementation of gender-sensitive climate policies.</p>
<p>2. Participation and decision-making Explores experiences of agency and participation in formal and informal climate-related decision-making spaces.</p>	<p>2.1. Number of occasions women and marginalized groups are invited as members, speakers, local resource persons for climate resilient training, and serving as technical advisors at local and sub-national levels.</p> <p>2.2. Number of households where men share care-work and participate in Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention & awareness.</p>

<p>3. Access to and control over resources and technology Assesses how communities perceive equity and inclusiveness in climate benefit distribution.</p>	<p>3.1. Narratives on effectiveness of funding for GESI responsive climate actions. 3.2. Perceived fairness in resource distribution (from focus groups and community feedback). 3.3. Case reflections on barriers and enablers to accessing services among 'leave no one behind' populations.</p>
<p>4. Capacity building and knowledge sharing Captures the effects of training, awareness programs, and knowledge dissemination efforts on individual and collective empowerment.</p>	<p>4.1. Self-reported confidence in the ability to explain and orient family, women's groups or other stakeholders on simple climate change and GESI-related issues and solutions. 4.2. Perceptions of training participants on the gender sensitivity and inclusiveness of training settings, including timing, location, and caregiving support.</p>
<p>5. Gender-responsive implementation and monitoring Evaluates perceptions of whether institutional climate actions meaningfully address gender needs and power imbalances.</p>	<p>5.1. Narratives from women and marginalized groups if their needs, priorities and interests are meaningfully integrated in the implementation and monitoring of climate initiatives. 5.2. Perceived accountability of institutions to deliver on gender-sensitive climate commitments.</p>

Conclusion

Ensuring that climate actions are gender responsive and sensitive goes beyond representation, it requires meaningful investment to transform decision-making structures, funding systems, and accountability mechanisms so they recognize and respond to the diverse experiences of women and marginalized groups. Nepal has made commendable progress through numerous projects and programs aimed at enabling gender-sensitive climate action. However, implementation remains uneven, and, in many cases, gender responsiveness is superficially treated as a checklist to fulfill formal requirements rather than embraced as a core guiding principle. This leads to tokenistic participation, limited resource allocation, and missed opportunities to address systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality.

To unlock the full potential of climate action, gender analysis and GESI principles must be embedded throughout the entire project cycle (from planning and budgeting to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation). Such comprehensive integration enhances resilience and also advances equity by ensuring that those most affected by climate change are meaningfully involved and prioritized in solutions. In this way, gender-sensitive climate action can uphold the principles of justice, inclusivity, and sustainability necessary for Nepal's climate resilience and development goals.



Principle 8: Promoting Accountability to Safeguard Women's Rights and Ensure Transparency

Introduction

Climate change disproportionately impacts women and marginalized groups, amplifying existing inequalities rooted in social, economic, and political structures (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). Accountability in climate action must not only include these groups but actively empower them to shape decisions, access resources, and hold institutions responsible for equitable outcomes (Rai et. al, 2021). Effective accountability requires transparent governance, legally binding Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) mandates, participatory mechanisms, functioning grievance redress systems, and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks that embed intersectionality (Gentle & Mainaly, 2024). These mechanisms help to redistribute power to historically excluded groups, enabling them to influence climate resilience strategies in Nepal, where vulnerabilities are entwined with caste, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and socio-economic status (Pettersson, 2023).

Promotion of accountability to safeguard women's rights and ensure transparency in climate action is fundamentally linked to the effectiveness of Nepal's existing national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks, comprehensive databases, and reporting systems. Nepal's M&E frameworks, such as those under the REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), the Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA), and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), establish structured procedures to track climate-related interventions, governance safeguards, and social inclusion dimensions (REDD+ R-PP M&E Framework, 2013). These frameworks employ participatory and multi-level monitoring systems that collect sex, caste, ethnicity, and disability-disaggregated data crucial for transparency and inclusivity.

Additionally, Nepal has institutionalized databases that facilitate the aggregation and verification of climate adaptation and mitigation efforts alongside social safeguards (MoFE, 2023), contributing to reliable, transparent information sharing. Access to disaggregated and verifiable data supports evidence-based decision-making and enhances the ability of marginalized groups, including women, to hold institutions accountable. At the national level, reporting mechanisms such as Nepal's National Communications (NCs), Biennial Transparency Reports (BTR), and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) incorporate gender and social inclusion indicators, thereby linking accountability directly to international climate commitments and obligations under the UNFCCC framework (UNFCCC, 2018). These reports ensure that gender-responsive climate actions are not only planned but also transparently tracked, inspected, and communicated to stakeholders domestically and globally.

The synergy between these national M&E and reporting frameworks and international commitments elevates accountability as a cornerstone of this principle by enabling systematic verification of whether

women's rights are protected and transparent climate finance is used equitably. However, findings from recent assessments indicate that while systems exist, challenges remain around capacity, consistent data disaggregation, and meaningful incorporation of locally grounded accountability feedback, issues that must be addressed to fully realize gender-just climate governance (REED+ R-PP M&E Framework, 2013).



Good practices

Effective accountability mechanisms are essential to protect women's rights and foster transparency in climate action. The following practices discussed in the PRC-Tewa stakeholder dialogue were identified for comprehensive gender assessments. They highlight Nepal's pathways to operationalize this principle through policy, institutional arrangements, community engagement, and innovation:

a. Dedicated gender focal points and multi stakeholder coordination: The MoFE (Ministry of Forest and Environment) has taken initial yet meaningful steps to integrate GESI within climate governance structures. Notably, senior officials, such as the Chief of the Planning Division, have been appointed as Gender Focal Points, reflecting a commitment to institutional accountability. These focal points have played a key role in organizing targeted consultations with GESI-related groups and convening residential write-shops with gender experts to review major policy and programmatic documents, including the Emission Reduction Program Document and the GESI Strategy.



Further efforts to embed gender perspectives include the formation of a multi-stakeholder gender group that draws participation from both government and civil society. Membership in high-level bodies such as the National REDD+ Coordination Committee has been expanded to include GESI experts and representatives from marginalized communities. Although these mechanisms are not yet fully institutionalized, they have improved the visibility and voice of women and excluded groups in climate decision-making spaces, marking important progress toward more inclusive and accountable governance (Rai et al., 2021).

b. Participatory platforms for monitoring and redress: Accountability has been strengthened at the grassroots through public hearings, grievance redress mechanisms, and transparent information boards in climate projects, which empower women and marginalized groups to raise concerns and seek redress. Some Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) have innovated by adopting signatory-based governance models that promote collective responsibility and reduce exclusionary decision-making hierarchies (ICIMOD et al., 2021).



c. Gender assessments and action plans in climate finance projects: Green Climate Fund (GCF) projects currently require gender assessments followed by the development of budgeted Gender Action Plans, ensuring that project design and resource allocation respond directly to the needs and priorities of women and marginalized groups (GCF, 2023). This mandatory practice enhances transparency on how gender is integrated and monitored in large-scale climate finance initiatives.





d. Innovations supporting demand-driven gender accountability: Emerging innovations are enhancing accountability through a demand-driven approach that incorporates:

- **Local Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** Valuing women's and marginalized communities' traditional ecological knowledge and integrating it into climate solutions fosters culturally appropriate and accountable interventions (UN Women, 2021).
- **GESI-Sensitive Technologies:** Deployment of climate-resilient technologies designed with gender considerations in mind (such as, improved cooking stoves, solar irrigation pumps) ensures usability and ownership by women, enhancing equitable benefit sharing (CARE Nepal, 2023).
- **Institutional Linkages and Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** Creating formal linkages among government, civil society, gender experts, and indigenous organizations promotes inclusive oversight and shared accountability (Tewa & PRC, 2023).

Gaps and challenges in promoting accountability to safeguard women's rights and ensure transparency

Effective accountability mechanisms are critical to ensuring that climate actions benefit women and marginalized groups equitably. However, persistent barriers at multiple levels hinder transparency and meaningful participation, undermining accountability to safeguard women's rights and ensure transparency.

Individual Level

At the individual level, many women (especially from rural, Dalit, Indigenous, persons with disability, and sexual and gender minority communities) lack awareness of their rights and entitlements within climate programs. This information deficit is compounded by low literacy, limited access to timely and accurate climate information, digital exclusion, and social dependency (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). For instance, studies in Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces report that Dalit and Indigenous women often do not know about available climate adaptation resources or grievance mechanisms, preventing them from holding institutions accountable (Rai et. al., 2021). Additionally, fear of retaliation amid entrenched political power dynamics discourages individuals from voicing concerns or seeking justice, reflecting critical gaps in individual-level accountability (Gentle & Mainaly, 2024).

Community Level

Community-level platforms intended for participatory decision-making and grievance redress often fail to translate into real influence for women and marginalized populations. Elite capture of climate governance forums by dominant caste and male actors remains widespread, constraining equitable access and reinforcing social hierarchies (Regmi et al., 2016; ICIMOD et al., 2021). Many participatory platforms provide tokenistic roles for women rather than genuine power-sharing. Moreover, transparent, disaggregated community-level reporting mechanisms largely do not exist, or remain poorly institutionalized. Without open records or accessible reporting on who benefits from climate projects, marginalized women and communities cannot monitor or verify the fair distribution of resources (Pettersson, 2023). This opacity creates accountability gaps where abuses, exclusion, or misallocation persist unchecked, preventing communities from collectively demanding fairness.

Institutional Level

Institutionally, accountability is constrained by insufficient investments in capacity development for GESI analysis and integration, with a shortage of trained gender experts and staff at federal, provincial, and

local levels (CDKN, 2021). Gender-responsive budgeting exists in policy but is often poorly implemented due to limited resources and weak enforcement (Rai et al., 2021). Grievance redress systems at local and provincial levels are frequently tokenistic or non-functional, lacking accessibility, awareness, or independence, thus failing to provide effective avenues for marginalized groups to seek redress (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2021). Furthermore, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems inadequately track GESI outcomes, rarely disaggregating data by sex, caste, ethnicity, disability, or intersecting identities, limiting the ability to identify exclusion or measure impact comprehensively (MoFE, 2020; ICIMOD et al., 2021).

Nepal’s key frameworks, including the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA), and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), mandate gender integration and some use gender indicators to track progress (MoFE, 2020; UNFCCC, 2020). However, analysis shows these indicators often fail to capture true GESI impacts or intersectional vulnerabilities due to limited disaggregation, inconsistent data collection, and absence of qualitative monitoring (ICIMOD et al., 2021). For example, the LAPA framework integrates gender and social inclusion but lacks systematic reporting on how benefits are distributed and whether marginalized groups, especially women, effectively access those benefits (Pettersson, 2023).

Similarly, at the national and international reporting levels, mechanisms such as Nepal’s National Communications, Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs), and NDC submissions do not yet systematically include gender-disaggregated data on fund allocation or beneficiary outcomes (UNFCCC, 2018). This absence limits the accountability and transparency needed to assess whether women and marginalized groups are equitably benefiting from climate finance and programs, a core requirement of Principle 8.

Indicators for Measurement

Quantitative Indicators

Quantitative indicators enable the tracking of gender-equitable outcomes in climate action, offering concrete measures of institutional accountability, transparency in benefit distribution, and equitable access to fiscal and resource-based mechanisms.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Gender-responsive monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems Assesses the existence and inclusiveness of M&E frameworks that embed GESI-disaggregated data and participation in climate programming.</p>	<p>1.1 Number of climate-related programs with gender-responsive M&E frameworks, including GESI-disaggregated indicators and targets.</p> <p>1.2 Percentage of programs with mandatory GESI assessments and budgeted GESI Action Plans at design stage.</p> <p>1.3 Proportion of women and marginalized groups represented in M&E oversight bodies (such as, monitoring committees, third-party audits).</p> <p>1.4 Number of climate adaptation or mitigation projects that produce publicly accessible, GESI-disaggregated progress reports.</p>

<p>2. Ownership, access, and use of productive resources</p> <p>Evaluates whether women and excluded groups equitably own, control, and benefit from climate-linked assets and financial services.</p>	<p>2.1 Proportion of climate-related land titles or user rights registered to women (individually or jointly).</p> <p>2.2 Number of women from marginalized groups receiving and utilizing green technologies (such as, solar pumps, improved cook stoves) aligned with value chains and long-term use.</p> <p>2.3 Percentage of women from excluded groups accessing and actively using climate finance (for example, microcredit, subsidies) for livelihood diversification.</p>
<p>3. Inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and participation in benefit distribution</p> <p>Measures the representation of women and marginalized groups in benefit-sharing structures and the quality of participatory decision-making processes.</p>	<p>3.1 Proportion of benefit-sharing decision-making bodies (such as in, CFUGs, irrigation committees) with at least 33 percent women and marginalized representation.</p> <p>3.2 Number of consultations or community dialogues on benefit distribution held with sex, caste, ethnicity, and disability-disaggregated participation data.</p> <p>3.3 Percentage of women and marginalized participants reporting satisfaction with inclusion in monitoring, reporting, and evaluation mechanisms related to benefit-sharing.</p>
<p>4. Gender-responsive fiscal measures and data systems</p> <p>Captures institutional efforts to support women’s economic empowerment and ensure transparency in climate-related budgeting and data tracking.</p>	<p>4.1 Percentage of municipalities adopting gender-responsive climate budgeting tools for climate planning, with reported benefit data disaggregated by gender, caste, and geography.</p> <p>4.2 Number and percentage of women and excluded group beneficiaries accessing tax exemptions or subsidies under climate-related economic policies.</p> <p>4.3 Number of functional, gender-responsive climate databases at municipal/provincial levels that track access, allocation, and results disaggregated by gender, caste, ethnicity, disability, and geography.</p>

Qualitative Indicators

Qualitative indicators explore community narratives and lived experiences, revealing whether climate benefits are truly inclusive, empowering, and accountable to women and marginalized groups.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Perceptions of fairness and inclusivity in climate benefits</p> <p>Explores whether climate benefits are experienced as equitable and just by diverse social groups.</p>	<p>1.1 Women’s and marginalized groups’ reflections on whether they receive a fair share of climate program benefits.</p> <p>1.2 Community narratives on disparities or improvements in access to climate-resilient services and resources (such as by Dalit women, Indigenous groups, persons with disabilities).</p> <p>1.3 Accounts of excluded or vulnerable groups identifying gaps or biases in benefit-sharing mechanisms.</p>

<p>2. Experience of empowerment, control and influence</p> <p>Assesses shifts in autonomy, leadership, and decision-making capacity among women and vulnerable communities.</p>	<p>2.1 Stories of increased Self-determination or confidence among women accessing and controlling climate-related assets or services.</p> <p>2.2 Narratives from women leaders or group members who influenced and led the process of how benefits were shared within their communities.</p> <p>2.3 Evidence of shifting power dynamics, such as men supporting women’s leadership or redistributing care work in response to women’s enhanced roles in climate action.</p>
<p>3. Institutional responsiveness and accountability</p> <p>Captures whether institutional mechanisms are responsive to community feedback and build trust with marginalized populations.</p>	<p>3.1 Community experiences with complaint mechanisms (e.g., exclusion from benefits, misallocation), and whether grievances were addressed satisfactorily.</p> <p>3.2 Self-reported confidence of local officials and implementing partners in their ability to design and deliver equitable benefit-sharing plans.</p> <p>3.3 Women’s and marginalized groups’ perceptions of transparency, monitoring, and responsiveness of climate benefit frameworks.</p>
<p>4. Economic recognition and valuation of women’s contributions</p> <p>Explores whether women’s roles in climate resilience are valued and supported through economic and social recognition.</p>	<p>4.1 Reflections from women on being recognized as key contributors to household and community resilience.</p> <p>4.2 Community narratives of changes in social perception regarding women’s right to inherit, own, and benefit from productive assets.</p> <p>4.3 Testimonies on whether fiscal incentives or policy changes (such as tax exemptions, budgeting reforms) increased women’s agency or control over resources.</p>

Conclusion

Promoting holistic accountability to safeguard women’s rights and ensure transparency in climate action demands more than policy inclusion; it requires concrete commitments encompassing investment tracking, inclusive monitoring and evaluation (M&E), comprehensive data systems, and transparent reporting mechanisms that are gender-responsive and intersectional in nature (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). Accountability must translate into clear, enforceable commitments that ensure gender-equitable resource allocation and the fair distribution of climate finance to women and marginalized groups, alongside mechanisms for these stakeholders to participate meaningfully in decision-making, monitoring, and redress (Rai et.al., 2021).

Nepal has made important strides through gender-transformative policy frameworks such as its Climate Change Policy (2019), the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy (2021), and progressive Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that institutionalize gender focal points and gender-sensitive budgeting (MoFE, 2019). However, gaps remain in the operationalization of accountability: monitoring systems often lack sex and intersectional disaggregated data; national and international reporting mechanisms, such as National Communications and Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs), still do not systematically disclose gender-differentiated allocations or beneficiaries (UNFCCC, 2018).

These reporting deficits hinder transparency and limit the capacity of women and marginalized communities to hold authorities responsible. Meaningful accountability requires integrated databases that capture gender-specific participation and benefit flows, coupled with transparent M&E frameworks that track both intended and unintended gendered outcomes throughout the climate project cycle (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2021). It also demands legally binding gender and social inclusion mandates, sustained capacity-building for stakeholders to interpret and use gender data, and inclusive platforms for marginalized voices to influence climate governance continuously (ICIMOD et al., 2021).

Ultimately, to build a climate-resilient, just, and inclusive Nepal, accountability systems must move beyond rhetoric and checklists. They must institutionalize gender-responsive investment tracking, data transparency, participatory monitoring, reporting accountability, and grievance mechanisms that protect women's rights and elevate marginalized perspectives at all government levels. Only through such strengthened, integrated, and enforceable accountability can Nepal ensure that climate actions promote equitable resilience and truly leave no one behind.

Principle 9: Promoting Transformative Change



Introduction

Promoting transformation through positive change in gender power relationships refers to deliberate efforts to alter unequal social norms, structures, and dynamics that constrain women's agency, leadership, and control over resources within their communities, particularly in the context of climate change solutions. Transformation in this context is defined as a fundamental shift that dismantles entrenched patriarchal and caste-based power hierarchies to redistribute power equitably, promoting inclusive governance that values women's knowledge, leadership, and diverse identities while challenging and changing harmful social norms and institutional barriers (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). These inequalities exacerbate climate vulnerability by limiting women's access to climate information, resources, and decision-making, reducing their adaptive capacities and increasing risks to their livelihoods and wellbeing. For example, in Nepal's Churia region, women's traditional roles in agriculture and natural resource management combine with social exclusion to deepen their vulnerability to flooding and droughts, undermining community resilience (FAO, 2022). When women lack voice and power, climate solutions often fail to address their specific needs, thus constraining collective adaptation and perpetuating inequities (Rai et al., 2023).

Marginalized groups in Nepal typically include women, Dalits, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, Madhesi, Muslims, poor and landless households, and sexual and gender minorities, who face intersecting forms of exclusion and discrimination (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2021). Principle 9 goes beyond participation by demanding intentional, sustained, and systemic shifts in power relations and gender roles, embedding intersectionality and recognizing unpaid care work, dimensions often overlooked in gender mainstreaming but crucial for transformative climate governance (MoFE, 2024)

Nepal's key policies and institutional mechanisms increasingly reflect these transformative goals. The Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) explicitly acknowledges care work and intersectionality, signaling a progressive step towards addressing the structural drivers of vulnerability and empowerment (MoFE, 2024). The National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Climate Change Policy (2019), Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA), and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy and Action Plan systematically integrate elements aimed at shifting gender power dynamics, ensuring women and marginalized groups are involved meaningfully in vulnerability assessments, planning, and access to resources (MoFE, 2019).

Together, these frameworks align with Principle 9's transformative agenda by nurturing environments where women's leadership is normalized, harmful stereotype norms are challenged, and climate resilience is built through inclusive, intersectional approaches.



Good practices

The following practices discussed in the PRC-Tewa stakeholder dialogue were identified for comprehensive gender assessments:



a. Women-led climate action and budget advocacy: Prakriti Resources Centre (PRC) has been instrumental in advancing women's leadership in climate governance through its Gender-Just Climate Solutions model. This approach facilitates women's active participation and influence in municipal planning and budgeting processes, particularly in municipalities such as Ilam, Tarakeshwor, and Banepa (PRC, 2024). Women-led community-based organizations (CBOs) engaged in this initiative include Sahayatra Nepal (Ilam), Srijansheel Mahila Samaj Nepal (Tarkeshwor), and Mahila Jagaran Samuha (Banepa), which mobilize diverse women from Dalit, Indigenous, youth and other minority groups.

Through targeted capacity building, PRC has supported over a dozen women-led CBOs, helping them develop climate advocacy skills and access municipal funds for climate resilience and disaster risk reduction. For example, women's groups in the Kavre and Dolakha districts successfully secured government grants to implement community-level climate adaptation interventions, strengthening their agency and decision-making roles within local governance (PRC, 2024). Importantly, addressing intersectionality, organizations like the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal (NIDWAN) and the Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Research and Development (CIPRED) offer strong complementary examples of inclusive climate action. NIDWAN empowers Indigenous women with disabilities by building leadership capacities and ensuring their voices are integrated into climate adaptation planning, thereby challenging multiple layers of marginalization (NIDWAN, 2024). Meanwhile, CIPRED conducts research and policy advocacy focused on Indigenous women's knowledge and rights related to climate justice, emphasizing the need for intersectional approaches that recognize disability, ethnicity, and gender together (CIPRED, 2025).

Together, these examples highlight how women-led empowerment and collective action grounded in intersectionality can transform local climate decision-making and resource control, ensuring that diverse marginalized groups equitably benefit from climate finance and governance (PRC, 2024).



b. Leadership in Natural Resource Management: Women's leadership development in natural resource management (NRM) and Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) in Nepal has been significantly supported by a diverse range of actors, including bilateral projects such as the Nepal Swedish Community Forestry Programme (NSCFP), multilateral initiatives like the Hariyo Ban Program, national NGOs, civil society organizations, and grassroots community-based groups (FAO, 2022). These collaborations have strengthened women's engagement in executive roles across numerous CFUGs, where women now actively manage funds, drive conservation efforts, and influence local forest governance policies (MoFSC et al., 2018).

Specifically, in districts such as Kavre, Makwanpur, and Lalitpur, women's forest user groups have demonstrated strong leadership capacities, implementing sustainable forest management and benefit-sharing models (Regmi et al., 2019; Hariyo Ban Program, 2020). For

example, the Hariyo Ban Program's gender-inclusive capacity building in Makwanpur enabled women leaders to chair CFUG committees and oversee annual budgeting and conservation plans (ICIMOD et al., 2021). Similarly, in Kavre, women-led CFUGs have successfully negotiated community agreements ensuring equitable access to forest products, challenging traditional male-dominated decision-making structures (USAID, 2023). These initiatives exemplify transformative shifts in local power hierarchies by embedding inclusive governance models that recognize and institutionalize women's leadership, thereby contributing to more sustainable and equitable natural resource management outcomes.

c. From unpaid labor to economic agency: Initiatives led by LI-BIRD (Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development) in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) have empowered women farmers in Nepal's mid-hill districts, such as Lamjung, Palpa, and Kaski, to adopt climate-resilient agricultural techniques, form cooperatives, and access local and regional markets (LI-BIRD, 2021). These programs provide women with skills in improved crop management, use of climate-smart seeds, and value addition activities, enabling them to move beyond subsistence-level farming. This transition elevates women's roles from primarily unpaid agricultural laborers, who traditionally contribute without control or remuneration, to recognized economic actors managing production, income, and cooperative governance (LI-BIRD, 2021). Empirical studies from these interventions reveal that women's increased participation in cooperatives and market activities has strengthened their bargaining power within households and communities, resulting in improved decision-making autonomy over income use and resource allocation (Gurung & Shrestha, 2023). For instance, in Lamjung, women cooperative members report greater influence in household financial decisions and enhanced community leadership roles, challenging traditional patriarchal norms (LI-BIRD, 2021). This shift from unpaid labor to economic agency thus disrupts existing gendered labor divisions, promotes women's financial independence, and fosters more equitable social relations critical for climate adaptation and resilience.

d. Engaging men and boys in norm change: The MenEngage Alliance Nepal has been instrumental in engaging men and boys through gender equality and climate awareness training, encouraging critical reflection on patriarchal norms and promoting shared domestic and caregiving responsibilities (MenEngage Nepal, 2024). These programs have led to transformative outcomes by fostering male allyship, reducing gender-based violence, and increasing support for women's leadership in climate adaptation at the community level (Ibid). Complementing this, the Hariyo Ban Program has promoted male champions who model gender-responsive behaviors in forest governance and climate resilience initiatives (USAID, 2023). These champions actively encourage men to share caregiving roles and support women's participation in community forestry user groups, helping shift restrictive gender norms and power dynamics (ICIMOD, UNEP, & UN Women, 2021). Together, these efforts demonstrate culturally grounded approaches that engage men and boys as partners in gender transformation, essential for reshaping power relations and advancing climate justice in Nepal. By building men's accountability and positive involvement, these initiatives contribute to more inclusive and equitable community governance.

e. Women as leaders in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): In disaster-prone districts such as Bardiya and Sindhupalchowk, UN Women and Practical Action have promoted women's leadership in DRR planning. Women served as first responders during disasters and participated in emergency planning committees, redefining their roles in traditionally male-



dominated spaces and enhancing the inclusiveness of disaster preparedness efforts (UN Women, 2021).

f. Institutional shifts and economic recognition: Nepal has made significant progress in increasing women's land ownership, supported by institutional incentives such as municipal tax exemptions of 25 to 50 percent for land registered in women's names (NSO, 2023). As of the 2021 Agricultural Census, women owned approximately 34.4 percent of agricultural land nationally, with some provinces showing even higher rates due to targeted policies encouraging joint and female land registration (Ibid). Female land ownership has nearly doubled since 2011, reflecting growing recognition of women's economic rights (DoLMA, 2024). These reforms have challenged traditional gender norms and empowered women economically by enabling increased control over land and related resources. However, social barriers and unequal inheritance laws continue to limit women's full autonomy over land despite ownership (Rijal, 2019). Nonetheless, these institutional and economic shifts are critical steps toward gender-transformative change, fostering women's leadership and greater agency in climate-resilient livelihoods and local governance. Supporting women's property rights strengthens their bargaining power within households and communities, advancing equitable climate adaptation and social justice.



Gaps and challenges to achieve transformative change

Individual Level

At the individual level, internalized gender norms and stereotypes profoundly influence how women and girls perceive their roles and capabilities, shaping their confidence and willingness to assume leadership positions in climate governance. These deeply ingrained beliefs often limit women's aspirations by reinforcing traditional expectations that confine them to domestic and subordinate roles, thereby perpetuating power imbalances within households and communities (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). Key gaps include low self-confidence, restricted access to education, skills development, and financial resources, which jointly hinder women's meaningful participation in technical and public decision-making spaces, especially in male-dominated sectors such as forestry, water management, and disaster preparedness (Rai et al., 2023). Furthermore, women who challenge these norms and assert leadership frequently face social backlash, including ridicule, exclusion, and increased caregiving burdens, all of which create significant emotional and practical barriers to transformative change (Gurung & Shrestha, 2023). The cumulative effect of these constraints is a cycle where women's agency is curtailed, reinforcing existing power hierarchies and limiting shifts in gender roles. Additionally, demographic changes and male out-migration increase women's responsibilities for managing both households and farms, intensifying workloads and stress, which further diminishes their capacity to engage actively in climate actions (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2021).

Community Level

Deeply entrenched patriarchal norms remain a critical barrier to shifting gender power relations in Nepal's communities, where women's involvement in climate and resource governance is often symbolic or conditional, with real decision-making authority overwhelmingly held by men (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). These power imbalances are reinforced by prevailing cultural and religious beliefs that uphold traditional gender roles, limiting women's opportunities to assume leadership or control over natural resources and climate adaptation initiatives (Gurung et al., 2021). For example, in many rural districts such as Kavre and Dolakha, women's participation in Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs)

is often restricted to marginal roles despite formal quotas (Regmi et al., 2019). Additionally, effective participation is hindered by a lack of essential infrastructure including safe transportation, childcare, and protection mechanisms, which constrain women's mobility and their capacity to engage consistently in climate action (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2021). This infrastructural gap disproportionately impacts women in mountainous and disaster-prone regions, where geographic isolation exacerbates existing gender inequalities.

Disasters such as floods and earthquakes intensify vulnerabilities, exposing women and girls to heightened risks of gender-based violence (GBV), trafficking, and sexual exploitation during displacement and recovery phases (CARE Nepal, 2022). Lack of access to reproductive healthcare and support services during crises further compounds these risks (UNICEF Nepal, 2023). Social norms restricting women's mobility also delay evacuation or access to relief services, lowering their survival and recovery prospects (ADB, 2020). In some communities, fear of social stigma and violence deters women from speaking out or assuming leadership roles in disaster governance, perpetuating exclusion and limiting norm change (WOREC, 2021).

Moreover, despite growing investments in women's leadership, significant segments of women (particularly those from marginalized castes, ethnic minorities, and economically disadvantaged groups) remain excluded from mainstream decision-making spaces and resource governance, with their involvement often confined to "women-only" forums that lack influence, leaving them with "crumbs" of benefits (Gurung et al., 2021). The convergence of caste, class, ethnicity, and disability creates additional layers of exclusion for these women, underscoring the need for intersectional and community-wide shifts in power structures to enable genuine transformation (NIDWAN & CIPRED, 2023).

Overall, without community-wide support systems that challenge gender norms, invest in enabling infrastructure, and address intersectional marginalization, the redistribution of power remains elusive. Addressing these challenges is fundamental to fostering meaningful, sustainable change in gender roles and empowering women as equal partners in climate resilience and local governance.

Institutional Level

In the context of this principle, gender transformation refers to systemic changes within policies, institutions, and governance mechanisms that actively dismantle unequal power relations and gender norms, promoting shared leadership and agency for women and marginalized groups in climate decision-making (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2021). A transformative approach goes beyond simply including women, it entails restructuring institutional practices and social norms so that women exercise genuine influence and challenge patriarchal power structures embedded in climate governance (MoFE, 2020). Despite policy commitments, gender transformation remains rarely mainstreamed in Nepal's key climate policies and programs, such as the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the Climate Change Policy (MoFE, 2019). While these frameworks mention gender-responsive actions, they often lack clear mandates, adequate human resources, and technical capacity to implement truly transformative interventions that target power dynamics and norm shifts (Rai et al., 2023).

One major gap is the limited engagement of men and boys in gender norm change initiatives—programs designed to challenge harmful social attitudes and promote shared responsibilities within families and communities (MenEngage Nepal, 2024). Without inclusion of men and boys, changes in social behavior risk being partial and unsustainable. Nepal's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, integrated within the NAP and NDC frameworks, often fail to capture qualitative indicators related to attitude and behavioral changes, such as shifts in intra-household decision-making or transformations in gender

power relations (MoFE, 2020). Data collection mostly centers on quantitative outputs (such as, number of women participating) rather than the depth of empowerment or norm shifts. This focus limits the ability to measure progress on gender transformation comprehensively.

Moreover, institutional capacity is constrained by a shortage of staff trained in gender-transformative methodologies and tools, undermining consistent gender integration across sectors (Rai et al., 2023). Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) units exist but often lack the authority and resources to influence broader institutional policies or budgets (ICIMOD et al., 2021). Consequently, efforts to promote gender transformation remain fragmented, superficial, and difficult to assess, posing a significant barrier to Principle 9’s goal of empowering women to reconfigure power relations and gender roles in climate governance.

Indicators for Measurement

Quantitative Indicators

Quantitative indicators under this principle capture measurable outcomes reflecting structural change in gender norms, redistribution of resources and decision-making power, and institutional commitment to transformation. They help assess whether climate programs are embedding gender justice beyond participation by producing systemic and sustainable shifts in power.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Women’s leadership in transformational climate actions To assess women’s engagement in climate initiatives that challenge unequal gender norms and lead to transformative outcomes.</p>	<p>1.1 Percentage of women and marginalized individuals in leadership positions within climate-related user groups, planning bodies, or institutional committees.</p> <p>1.2. Number of climate initiatives led by women that resulted in community-level transformations (such as., inclusive planning, DRR, sustainable land use, or energy transition).</p> <p>1.3. Percentage of local or national climate programs that include gender-transformative objectives with measurable outcomes and dedicated budgets.</p> <p>1.4. Number of women from marginalized communities who have received leadership training and are applying skills in climate-related planning, coordination, or advocacy roles.</p>
<p>2. Redistribution of resources, power, and capacities To track improvements in women’s and excluded groups’ access to and control over climate-related assets, finance, and decision-making spaces.</p>	<p>2.1. Percentage of women (disaggregated by caste, ethnicity, geography) with secure land ownership or user rights under climate adaptation projects.</p> <p>2.2. Number of women from excluded groups accessing climate finance (like, microcredit, grants, subsidies) for local adaptation or mitigation activities.</p> <p>2.3. Number of trained women and marginalized individuals serving in decision-making roles (such as, planning officers, DRR committees, or technical advisors) at local and provincial levels.</p> <p>2.4. Percentage of trained women applying skills in climate governance, advocacy, or enterprise (such as, budget negotiation, eco-entrepreneurship).</p>

<p>3. Institutional investment in transformative gender roles</p> <p>To evaluate the extent to which institutions are investing in dismantling restrictive gender norms and enabling women’s leadership in non-traditional roles.</p>	<p>3.1. Percentage of total climate budgets at local and national levels allocated to gender-transformative actions (beyond basic inclusion or sensitization).</p> <p>3.2. Number of gender and inclusion audits or GBV risk assessments integrated into the climate project cycle.</p> <p>3.3. Percentage of women occupying non-traditional roles (such as, early warning responders, forest regulators, or budget planners), and percentage of positive community responses.</p> <p>3.4. Number of climate institutions with operational Gender Units or focal points with clearly defined Terms of Reference, authority, and budget.</p>
<p>4. Shifts in social norms and male engagement</p> <p>To measure societal and behavioral changes supporting equitable gender roles and increased male allyship in climate leadership.</p>	<p>4.1. Number of men engaged as champions or active supporters of women’s leadership and equity in climate action.</p> <p>4.2. Number of local initiatives, media campaigns, or school programs aimed at challenging gender stereotypes in climate leadership.</p> <p>4.3. Percentage of community members (disaggregated by gender) reporting supportive views on women taking on public leadership roles in climate governance.</p>

Qualitative Indicators

These indicators capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and narratives that reflect changes in power, gender roles, and institutional responsiveness. They reveal the depth of transformation by examining whether climate interventions challenge structural inequities and empower women and marginalized groups.

Domain	Indicators
<p>1. Shifts in perception and norm change</p> <p>To understand evolving social norms and community attitudes regarding gender roles and women’s leadership in climate action.</p>	<p>1.1. Testimonies from community members reflecting changing perceptions of women’s capabilities and roles in climate decision-making.</p> <p>1.2. Case examples of women taking on non-traditional roles (as disaster responders, forest managers, or budget negotiators) and the community’s response to these roles.</p> <p>1.3. Reflections from men and boys on their evolving understanding of shared responsibilities and gender equity in the context of climate action.</p> <p>1.4. Perceptions of women’s capabilities and decision-making power.</p>

<p>2. Empowerment and resistance</p> <p>To capture changes in women’s confidence, agency, and the societal resistance they may face as they claim leadership roles.</p>	<p>2.1. Self-assessments from women leaders regarding confidence, negotiation skills, and perceived legitimacy in influencing climate decisions.</p> <p>2.2. Case studies showing how women from diverse backgrounds leveraged climate leadership to challenge norms and expand community inclusion.</p> <p>2.3. Accounts of resistance, backlash, or character attacks experienced by women leaders, and strategies they used to navigate or overcome these challenges.</p>
<p>3. Institutional transformation</p> <p>To assess how institutional practices, systems, and actors are embracing and sustaining gender-transformative approaches.</p>	<p>3.1. Case studies of institutional reforms or programs explicitly designed to shift gender power relations within climate action.</p> <p>3.2. Feedback from government and local actors on challenges and successes in implementing gender-transformative actions, including efforts like counter-narratives on women leaders and men’s support for women’s leadership.</p> <p>3.3. Community and stakeholder testimonies on how government programs (such as, affirmative quotas, tax exemptions, or entrepreneurship support) contributed to increased women’s control and agency.</p> <p>3.4. Narratives or examples showing norm-shifting practices reflected in institutional M&E, such as inclusion of indicators on shared care work, GBV prevention, or male allyship.</p>

Conclusion

Promoting transformative change in Nepal requires deliberate efforts to shift entrenched power imbalances and redefine gender roles within communities to foster truly inclusive climate resilience and governance (ICIMOD, UNEP & UN Women, 2021). While localized successes such as women’s leadership in community forestry, climate-smart agriculture, and disaster risk reduction demonstrate progress, broader systemic barriers (like patriarchal social norms, institutional inertia, and exclusion of marginalized voices) continue to impede sustained empowerment (Rai et al., 2023). Overcoming these challenges demands climate actions that are explicitly gender-transformative, combining concrete norm change strategies such as engaging men and boys as allies, addressing unpaid care burdens, and dismantling caste and ethnicity-based discrimination (MenEngage Nepal, 2024). Effective norm change also involves investing in inclusive leadership development, capacity building, and safe, accessible spaces where women from all intersecting identities can exercise agency and influence decision-making (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2021). Equally important is institutionalizing comprehensive monitoring frameworks that track shifts in attitudes, behaviors, and power relations, moving beyond numerical representation to capture real empowerment and participation dynamics (MoFE, 2020).

To empower women to shift power relations and gender roles, efforts must focus on redistributing resources and decision-making authority, including equitable land ownership, gender-responsive budgeting, and legal protections against gender-based violence (Chhatkuli et al., 2019; Wai, 2024). Only through these multilayered interventions, sustained political will, and the centering of marginalized women’s voices can Nepal dismantle patriarchal structures and foster gender-just climate governance that leaves no one behind. In this pathway lies the promise of climate justice, where women’s leadership and transformed gender relations serve as catalysts for resilient, equitable communities capable of facing the climate crisis together.

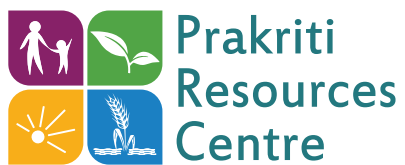
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For more information:

Prakriti Resources Centre

Ghumti Kumari Marg, Mid-Baneshwor,
Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone number: 014533340

Email: info@prc.org.np

Web: www.prc.org.np