

NEW ANGLE

Nepal Journal of Social Science and Public Policy

Volume 5

Number 1

2019

ISSN 2565-5124

Water Security and Inclusive Water Governance in the Himalayas



- ✓ How does a social justice framing help understand local peoples' claims over natural resources?
- ✓ How do power relations shape water access and distribution between core and fringe areas in Nepali towns ?
- ✓ What dynamics of conflict over water resources are emerging in the urbanising mid-hill towns of Nepal?
- ✓ How are civil-society groups responding to large dam projects in the Eastern Himalaya region of India?
- ✓ What issues and opportunities the newly formed local governments in Nepal are facing in implementing inclusive water governance ?
- ✓ How can participatory community engagement transform gender relations in agriculture and water management?
- ✓ How do agrarian structures affect groundwater access for irrigation in Nepal's Tarai Madesh?
- ✓ How can local experts contribute to inclusive water governance?

Published by

**Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) on behalf of
Nepal Policy Research Network (NPRN)**

NEW ANGLE

Nepal Journal of Social Science and Public Policy

Volume 5 Number 1
2019

Chief Editor

Dil Khatri, *Southasia Institute of
Advanced Studies (SIAS)*

Special Issue Editors

Dil Khatri

Stephanie Leder, *Swedish University of
Agricultural Sciences (SLU)*

Hemant Ojha, *University of Canberra*

International Advisory Board

Hemant Ojha

Andrea Nightingale, *University of Oslo*

Fraser Sugden, *University of
Birmingham*

Siri Eriksen, *Norwegian University
of Life Sciences*

Jon Ensor, *University of York*

Managing Editors

Suchita Shrestha, *SIAS*

Gyanu Maskey, *SIAS and Kathmandu
University*

Design and Layout

Sanjeeb Bir Bajracharya

Front and Back Cover Photo

Toby Smith (panipahar.com)

Notes to Contributors

New Angle: Nepal Journal of Social Science and Public Policy is an internationally peer-reviewed journal published by Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) on behalf of Nepal Policy Research Network (NPRN). We welcome articles which are based upon concrete data as well as analysis of secondary and historical sources. We encourage articles which record the results of completed investigations and raise questions emerging from on-going work.

Articles must subscribe to the following format:

1. Research articles: should be roughly 6000-7000 and include an abstract of 250-300 words.
2. Opinion pieces can be between 2000-3000 words with summary of 100 to 150 words [key message].
3. Spelling should be in the UK English.
4. Articles should be in an MS Word compatible format, with a font size of 12, and 1.5 line spacing.
5. Short quotations should use single quotation marks, while longer quotes should be indented.
6. Photos can be included, but should be no more than 4×6 inches, and will be published in black and white.

For further information, please visit:

www.nepalpolycynet.com

Or

Contact:

The Editor, New Angle
NPRN Secretariat
Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS)
NK Singh Marga-304, Minbhawan-31
Kathmandu, Nepal
PO. Box 23499
Telephone: 977-1-4469801
E-mail: sias-info@sias-southasia.org

Contents

EDITORIAL

- Water Security and Inclusive Water Governance in the Himalayas**
Stephanie Leder, Dil Khatri and Hemant Ojha 1-6

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLES

- Natural Resources and Social Justice Agenda in Nepal: From Local Experiences and Struggles to Policy Reform**
Hari P. Dhungana and Gyana Maskey 7-31
- Water Security in Urban Water Governance: A Case Study of Dhulikhel Municipality, Kavrepalanchowk, Nepal**
Kushal Pokharel, Tikeshwari Joshi, Jagannath Adhikari and Kaustuv Raj Neupane 32-48
- Water Conflicts in Urbanizing Regions in the Himalaya: Case Studies from Dhulikhel and Bidur in Nepal**
Kamal Devkota, Dil Khatri and Kaustuv Raj Neupane 49-73
- The Consensual Politics of Development: A Case Study of Hydropower Development in the Eastern Himalayan Region of India**
Deepa Joshi, Joas Platteeuw and Juliana Teoh 74-98
- Water Security and Social Inclusion: Local Governance within the Newly Established Rural Municipalities in Nepal**
Pamela White and Juho Haapala 99-127
- Transformative Engagements with Gender Relations in Agriculture and Water Governance**
Stephanie Leder, Gitta Shrestha and Dipika Das 128-158

COMMENTARY PAPERS

- Enhancing Water Access in Nepal's Terai-Madhesh**
Fraser Sugden 159-164
- Local Experts as the Champions of Water Security in the Nepalese town of Dhulikhel**
Hemant Ojha, Eszter K. Kovacs, Kamal Devkota, Kaustuv Raj Neupane, Ngamindra Dahal and Bhaskar Vira 165-178

TRANSFORMATIVE ENGAGEMENTS WITH GENDER RELATIONS IN AGRICULTURE AND WATER GOVERNANCE

Stephanie Leder¹, Gitta Shrestha² and Dipika Das³

ABSTRACT

Despite frequent calls for transformative approaches for engaging in agrarian change and water governance, we observe little change in everyday development and research praxis. Empirical studies on transformative engagements with gender relations among smallscale or tenant farmers and water user groups are particularly rare. We explore transformative engagements through an approach based on critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996) and transformative practice (Leder, 2018). We examine opportunities to promote empathy and critical consciousness on gender norms, roles and relations in agriculture and resource management. We developed and piloted an innovative “Participatory Gender Training for Community Groups” as part of two internationally funded water security projects. The training consists of three activities and three discussions to reflect on gender roles in families, communities and agriculture, to discuss the gendered division of labour and changing gender relations over time and space, and to create empathy and resolve conflicts through a bargaining role play with switched genders. The approach was implemented in twelve villages across four districts in Nepal and India (Bihar, West Bengal). Our results show how the training methods can provide an open space to discuss local gender roles within households, agriculture and natural resource management. Discussing own gender norms promotes critical consciousness that gender norms are socially constructed and change with age, class, caste and material and structural constraints such as limited access to water and land. The activities stimulated enthusiasm and inspiration to reflect on possible change towards more equal labor division and empathy towards those with weaker bargaining power. Facilitators have the most important role in transformative engagements and need to be trained to reinterpret training principles in local contexts, and to apply facilitation skills to focus on transforming rather than reproducing gender norms. We argue that the gender training methods can initiate transformative practice with the gender-water-agriculture nexus by raising critical consciousness of farmers, community mobilisers, and project staff on possibilities of social change “in situ”.

Keywords: gender, transformative practice, critical pedagogy, agriculture, water, participatory action research, social learning

¹ Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden.
Corresponding email: stephanie.leder@slu.se

² International Water Management Institute, Kathmandu, Nepal.

³ University of Southern Queensland, Australia.

INTRODUCTION

Participation in resource governance has been considered highly important but the literature has not been short on demonstrating failures (Agarwal, 2001; Mosse, 1994; Mosse, 2004). Gender and other social inequalities remain in access to and control over natural resources such as water and land, and agriculture more broadly (Sultana, 2011; Zwartveen and Meinzen-Dick, 2001). Feminists, researchers and policymakers have long been advocating for the greater inclusion of women in decision-making processes on natural resources (Agrawal, 2000). Several developing countries such as Nepal introduced a women quota in water user groups at the local level. However, there is a rising concern if gender equality could be achieved by simply adding women to user groups as this might not address power relations and structural inequalities (Shrestha and Clement, 2019). There is even a danger of antagonistic attitudes among community members and aggravated inequalities (Ahlers and Zwartveen, 2009; Cleaver and Hamada, 2010; Zwartveen and Neupane, 1996; Harris, 2008). In South Asia, gender relations are set within axes of other social and economic differences such as class, age, ethnicity and caste, which shape water access and irrigation management (Panta and Resurrección, 2017; Leder et al., 2017). These complex social relations are often hidden in mainstream water and agricultural research, government schemes and development projects. However, these are vital to understand in order to move towards greater inclusion in water resource governance and to address the

unequal division of agricultural labor and decision-making (Leder et al., 2019). This is particularly of importance in contexts of climate change and rural out-migration of mostly young men, with an increase in labour burden for women accompanied by limited access to and control over water and other resources (Sugden et al., 2014). Addressing gender inequalities through open dialogue is essential for small-scale agriculture, water security and more inclusive water governance.

Despite frequent calls for transformative approaches for engaging in agrarian change, water governance and climate change by feminist and critical development scholars (Sultana, 2019; Nightingale et al., 2019) there are only few theoretically and empirically grounded approaches to transformative engagements which open up spaces to discuss opportunities for greater inclusion in water governance and agriculture more broadly. The literature on social learning is in particular insightful. Social learning is taking place through deliberative interactions amongst multiple stakeholders in which participants learn to work together and build relationships that allow for collective action (Cundill and Rodela, 2012; Rodela, 2013). The promotion of social learning in forest management groups has shown positive effects on multi-directional information sharing and collective action (Hegde et al., 2016). Creating 'contact zones' between different groups to meet and engage can reduce conflicts or redress asymmetrical power relations (Hegde et al., 2016). Furthermore, particularly gender-responsive participatory approaches have been considered as promoting socially-

inclusive and sustainable natural resource management practices (Elias et al., 2016). Morales and Harris (2014) suggest to draw attention to subjectivity and emotion for meaningful participation. Knowledge co-creation, empathy and a shifting sense of own subjectivities can promote new ways of relating to water resources and water infrastructures (Tremblay and Harris, 2018). Building on these insights, we see the need for empirically tested methods to deeply engage with context-specific gender relations in resource governance which address the unequal division of agricultural labour and gendered norms on mobility, speaking up and being heard.

We argue that approaches that build on critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996) and transformative practice (Leder, 2018) can initiate transformative engagements with gender relations in agriculture, natural resource governance and research. Critical pedagogy was developed by the Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire (1996) and builds on the concept of *critical consciousness*. Freire's pedagogy is oriented towards promoting social justice in which marginalised individuals can become transformative democratic citizens through reflection and dialogue and thus contribute to national development (Freire, 1996). We also draw on principles of *transformative practice* for sustainable development based on democratic and visual learning methods as developed by Leder (2018). The approach promotes critical thinking on controversial human-environment relations through visual methods and a weak framing in which the facilitator has less control over the communication of participants in order to encourage participation.

This paper explores opportunities for transformative engagements through the development, piloting and implementation of a "Participatory Gender Training for Community Groups" (Leder et al., 2016). The training methods are derived from principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996) and transformative practice (Leder, 2018) in order to promote empathy and critical consciousness on the role that gender plays in communities' everyday lives, and to create opportunities for reflections on how to transform towards more equal gender and labor relations. The training aims at openly engaging with gender inequalities in small-scale agriculture, domestic labor and resource management institutions, e.g. in irrigation systems, or collective farming. We will exemplify how gender-focused activities and discussions provide valuable space for encouraging farmers to bring their own ideas and stimulate critical reflections and dialogue on gender perceptions and practices in their particular cultural setting while avoiding prescriptions based on particular "Western" view on gender relations.

In the next section, we review recent literature on gendered struggles in agriculture and water resource management. In section three, we address the importance of bargaining in the context of gender inequalities in natural resource governance. We then introduce in section four the approach of the "Participatory Gender Training for Community Groups", and outline our methods in section five. We will then present participants' response to the different training methods which 1) reflect on gender norms, 2) discuss

the gendered division of labour 3) create empathy through a bargaining role play with switched genders. We then discuss the role and perceptions of the community mobilisers and the process of facilitating and reinterpreting training principles in local contexts. Finally, we reflect on the opportunities and the challenges around shifting and reproducing gender norms through such social learning engagements.

GENDERED STRUGGLES IN AGRICULTURE AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The influence of gender norms and relations in managing natural resources such as agriculture, forests and water has been widely recognised in the literature (Meinzen-Dick and Zwartveen, 1998; Agarwal, 2001). On the one hand, gender norms attach particular traditional feminine and masculine roles for women and men, on the other hand, changing rural dynamics such as male out-migration reconfigure gender roles and added responsibilities to women which were previously performed by men. While women carry a triple labour burden of reproductive, productive and community work in the absence of men in the villages, unequal resource access and exclusive spaces of decision-making hinder equitable use and management of natural resources. In opposition to men, women often have lower mobility and limited access to their husbands' social networks, and women receive lower recognition as irrigators than men. Thus, women have to repetitively request the pump owner for water and spend more time arranging irrigation than men.

One major policy measure to tackle gender inequality in agriculture and water resource management is the 33 percent reservation in water user associations in Nepal. However, evidence suggest limited impact of such policy due to failing to take into account social and cultural factors that largely shape an individual's access to resources and decision-making spaces (Shrestha and Clement, 2019). Feminists further stress the need for an intersectional analysis to demonstrate how differentiated access, use and control over water is conditioned by poverty, livelihoods, and landlessness (Harris, 2008). A gender analysis of the Chhattis Mauja irrigation scheme in Nepal shows that some women, despite being excluded from the management of the scheme's organisation, use the prevailing perception of women as physically weak to develop a privileged position for getting their irrigation needs accommodated without spending time participating in maintenance and meetings (Zwartveen & Neupane, 1996).

Gender norms vary over time and space, and often put women at disadvantaged position affecting livelihood and well-being of women farmers adversely. Intra-household relationships have important implications on who takes part and who benefits from agriculture and water interventions (Leder et al., 2017). The exclusion of women from decision-making bodies has severe consequences in how interventions are shaped and resources allocated (ibid). Gendered vulnerabilities increase during water scarcity for household or agriculture use as women have to travel longer distances to collect

water which increases their workload (Gurung and Bisht, 2014). In the context of increasing male migration from the rural areas, research indicates increasing reliance of the left-behind women on male relatives to access information, services, and opportunities (Shrestha and Clement, 2019).

THE IMPORTANCE OF BARGAINING IN AGRICULTURE

Agriculture and the management of natural resources are linked with bargaining relations on and beyond the farm. Bargaining is an act of negotiation that uses power to achieve an outcome (Martin, 1992). At the intra-household level, bargaining power depends on an individual's fallback or a breakdown position (Agarwal, 1997). The fall-back position is determined by how well-off someone would be if the cooperation failed. A person having stronger fallback position has better bargaining power and often receives a better choices in the family (Agarwal, 1997). The process of bargaining can involve discussions, logic and arguments as well as comprises of subtle resistance such as emotional manipulation (Locke and Okali, 1999).

In agriculture, the meaning of bargaining power can be described as the ability of a person to use their agency to make a fair share of farm income or crop produce, as well as the ability to make choices related to it. Bijman et al. (2012) argued that

agricultural value chains have persistent bargaining imbalances between farmers with their upstream and downstream partners. Farmers, particularly women smallholders, often have low bargaining power due to a lack of productive resources and low levels of literacy and numeracy knowledge (Dorward et al., 2003). In the Tarai area of Nepal, for example, traders who visit smallholders' farm to collect vegetables also allocate the price of agricultural products which has the effect that smallholders often bear a loss due to the traders' stronger bargaining power (Bastakoti et al., 2017).

Bargaining power is vital for both women and men farmers in their everyday activities. In farming, bargaining power becomes essential to manage tasks like the allocation of labour to various activities, including household, agriculture and wage work (Doss, 2013). Despite its importance, Agarwal (1997) noted bargaining power is subjective to individuals based on their gender and age, caste and experience. Women's bargaining power within a household is influenced by her education level, health, education of children and general wellbeing. In addition, women's active participation in agriculture is steered by socially constructed gender norms (Farnworth, 2011). Hoyt and Murphy (2016) explain that men tend to have better bargaining power while women feel less comfortable when it comes to bargaining. Hence, it is important to consider bargaining against the background of existing gender norms and power imbalances in particular contexts.

A NEW APPROACH: PARTICIPATORY GENDER TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

As researchers of an international research organisation⁴, the first and third author developed a “Participatory Gender Training for Community Groups” (Leder et al., 2016)⁵ to inform an internationally funded action research project⁶. The approach was developed to be used by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) staff to hold discussions with community members and fellow colleagues on gender norms and relations. Furthermore, methods were used by researchers for a gender analysis.

The training methods are rooted in principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996) and transformative practice (Leder, 2018). The key objective of critical pedagogy is individual liberation through promoting capabilities for individual development and the collective struggle for social justice (Freire, 1996). Freire considers transformation as a praxis which combines both reflection and action. Through dialogue, education becomes a democratic and emancipatory process, in which the oppressed are freed

from their “culture of silence” (Freire, 1996, p.12). He suggests countering the social reproduction of inequalities through reflection and dialogue for an educational awakening. Freire developed teaching methods concerned with the actual experiences of rural peasants in Brazil and available material from their cultural background. This approach led to an influential social and educational movement to create empowerment through critical consciousness, “*la conscientização*” (Freire, 1996, p.17).

Transformative practice describes an intermediate, transitional form of engagement which aims to shift practices of social reproduction to practices of transformation (Leder, 2018). Unequal power relations such as gender can be addressed by drawing on principles of democratic learning theories (Dewey, 1916), participatory approaches (Bunch, 1995; Chambers, 1994) and network thinking (Vester, 2002) to develop a visualising and communicative approach to promote the interlinkage of diverse knowledge (Leder, 2018).

In this spirit, the training methods were developed to provide a space for farmers and staff to share their perceptions, to learn from another, and to engage

⁴ The authors worked with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and the CGIAR research program “Water, Land and Ecosystem”.

⁵ The participatory gender training manual is published by Leder et al. (2016) and includes step-by-step descriptions for each activity and discussion, as well as tips for facilitation and pictures to use in the training. A 12’ film documentary, webinar slides, and an interactive homepage of the implemented training can be found at <https://wle.cgiar.org/solutions/participatory-gender-training-community-groups> (last checked 8 Jan 2020).

⁶ The research project was funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, and was called “Improving dry-season irrigation for marginal and tenant farmers”.

in a dialogue. To avoid imposing pre-determined social and gender values, space is provided for participants to come to their own conclusions by guiding them through reflections on gender and activities which promote empathy. This can lead to collective ideas evolving and a critical consciousness (Freire, 1996), which contributes to social change.

The objective of the Participatory Gender Training is to create a space for critical discussions on gender norms, roles and relations in agriculture and water and natural resource management groups. Participants are encouraged to reflect around their capabilities, value and belief systems in regard to existing gender relations in agriculture. The training aimed at bringing the fluidity of gender as a rather academic and development-oriented discourse into discussions with marginalised community groups.

The training is designed to be culturally grounded and regionally adaptable through using local examples and pictures. The training provides methods

- to reflect on gender roles in families, communities and agriculture,
- to discuss the unequal division of labour and changing gender relations and across time and space, and
- to create empathy and resolve conflicts through a bargaining role play with switched genders

The development of the activities was guided by specific principles, objectives and methods (cf. Table 1). We developed three activities and three discussions for a three-hour gender training workshop for approximately 5 to 12 participants, which we will shortly introduce in the following sections.

Table 1: Principles, objectives and methods of the training activities

Principle	Objective	Method	Activity
Network thinking (Vester, 2002)	Extending and sustaining knowledge	Photo networks as visual input	1 - Boy or Girl 2 - Gender Position Bar
Identifying social constructions (Chambers 1994, Leder, 2017)	Demystifying ascribed gender traits and roles in the community (e.g. women's triple work)	Discussing reasons for boy or girl preferences	1 - Boy or Girl
Thinking on a Continuum (Leder, 2017)	Demonstrating the relativity of gendered labor division	Arranging agricultural labor on 5 varying degrees of women and men's involvement	2 - Gender Position Bar
Role switching	Raising empathy and awareness for the other gender's constraints	Switched gender role play with own bargaining story	3 - Bargaining Role Play
Participation and farmer orientation (Bunch, 1995, Chambers, 1994)	"local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge and conditions, to plan and act" (Chambers, 1994)	Farmers' choice of pictures, space for discussing own reasons, spontaneously integrating farmers' issues in the training schedule	1 - Boy or Girl 2 - Gender Position Bar 3 - Bargaining Role Play

The first activity “Boy or girl?” enables farmers to understand and discuss their own gender constructions. We build the idea on a similar activity in a gender training by the non-governmental organisation iDE (2015). Participants have to choose between a boy or a girl picture if they could decide their offspring’s gender – given an imaginary medical condition which allowed them to have only one child. By giving reasons for their gender choice to the group, the activity promotes reflecting on own gender assumptions within the personal sphere as per “the personal is political”. Ascribed gender traits and roles can be demystified through those participants who chose the other group, and a discussion may evolve.

In the second activity, the gendered division of labour was discussed with photos of different types of labour as visual input (Vester, 2002). The photos should reflect the local context so that the participants can relate their everyday life activities to it. The photos had to be placed along a “Gender Position Bar” (cf. Fig. 4). In the Gender Position Bar, pictures of different types of labour shall be arranged along a continuum of labour attributed as “only female”, “mostly female”, “both male and female”, “mostly male”, or “only male”. This demonstrated the relativity of and changing gender divisions in reproductive and productive labour as well as community roles (triple work load), reflecting on women’s tasks with a life cycle approach (Chambers, 1994). Participants are encouraged to describe, explain, discuss and arrange visual inputs in the form of pictures (Vester, 2002). The idea of a visual continuum builds on the

didactic teaching method developed for a doctoral dissertation on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for India’s formal educational system (Leder, 2018).

The third activity is a “Bargaining Role Play” to encourage bargaining between male and female farmers in switched roles. The role play challenges farmers to represent the other gender in a humoristic manner, and to act and speak like they perceive the other gender. Themes covered are balancing domestic tasks such as cooking and fetching water with agricultural tasks, landlord-tenant negotiations or in-law’s working demands on daughter-in-laws. Participants are encouraged to opt for any situation, problem or story relevant to them to act on. Role-switching can promote empathy and awareness of the other gender’s constraints without directly criticising current gender roles and relations.

Guided discussions help connect the activities and provide participants space to ask questions and talk about gender norms and gender roles in their households and community. These spaces for discussions allow to spontaneously integrate any issues which farmers might bring up during the activities of the training (Bunch, 1995).

While the Participatory Gender Training laid out in a detailed manual (Figure 1) can be used any time to generate discussion and reflection on the role of gender in a community, there are four times when this specific training may be particularly necessary. First, when new projects are starting in villages and community groups are formed. In this case, the training can be used to sensitize field staff and farmers on

gender relations in communities. Second, when there are gender-related tensions in a community. This may happen often in communities where men are out-migrating and women are left behind. Third, when conducting participatory research to understand how gender effects community relations and practices in villages. Lastly, when project staff is working with communities. It can help to reveal one's own gender perceptions before addressing those directly or indirectly in villages.

After the implementation of the activities and discussions, facilitators and farmers can discuss opportunities to repeat these activities to observe whether their perceptions have changed. It is important to view this workshop as an initial engagement tool within a greater development process which can be linked to other project interventions. For this purpose, the approach can identify community-specific challenges regarding gender relations which shape developmental interventions in unpredicted ways.

Figure 1: The Participatory Gender Training Manual (Leder et al., 2016)



METHODS

The training activities were piloted and modified by two researchers in collaboration with project field staff and farmers in six villages in the Eastern Tarai of Nepal and Bihar and West Bengal in India. In these villages (Table 2), groups were formed by local partner NGOs as part of a larger action research project, and we were asked by the project team to develop a gender training for the groups to accompany other technical trainings which promoted horticulture, solar irrigation and other improved agricultural techniques. The trainings were conducted twice per village, twelve times in total. The training was tested with both female only (4 groups) and male only (1 group) as well as mixed gender (7 groups). Each group had a maximum of 12 farmers, whereas we noted

much better communication happening in smaller groups of 6 to 8 farmers.

We employ action research methods in order to promote the co-creation of knowledge. We involved local field assistants and social mobilisers as supporting facilitators in the training. Before we conducted the training, we met with four support facilitators to prepare their roles in the training as well as to integrate their views on the training and modify it accordingly. During and after every training, modifications and variations were incorporated in the training structure, e.g. timings per activity were adjusted and instructions were changed or specified. The data collected was transcribed, summarised and paraphrased for each activity and discussion relying on principles of a qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2002).

Table 2: Characteristics of the 12 groups in 6 villages in which the training was piloted (DSI4MTF Census Survey, 2015)

	Khoksar Parbaha, Saptari, Nepal	Koiladi, Saptari, Nepal	Bhagwatipur, Madhubani, Bihar	Mahuyahi, Madhubani, Bihar	Dholaguri, Cooch Behar, North Bengal	Uttar Chakowakheti, Alidurpur, North Bengal
Caste and gender composition of groups	1 x Tharu women group 1x Dalit and Muslim women group	1x Mixed caste groups women only 1x mixed caste mixed gender (Castes: Singh Mandal, Mukhiya, Dalit, Muslim)	1x Mixed caste Women only 1x Mixed caste Men only (Castes: Yadav Mandal Mukhiya Jha (upper caste))	1x Dalit group mixed gender 1x Mixed caste group mixed gender (Castes: Mandals, Brahmin Muslims)	2 x Rajbanshi mixed gender	2 x Scheduled Tribes (SC) mixed gender
Education	Mostly illiterate	Illiterate	Illiterate	Illiterate	Mostly illiterate	Mostly Illiterate
Age	35-49 years	25-55 years	30-62 years	18-58 years	18 – 60 years	24 – 55 years
Social structures in the village	Lower inequality among landlord and tenants, more equal community in terms of gender and caste	High inequality among landlord and tenant, Caste system Strong Patriarchy	High inequality among landlord and tenant Caste system Strong Patriarchy	High inequality among landlord and tenants Caste system Strong Patriarchy	Inequalities in landowners, tenants and agricultural wage workers, gender and caste inequalities	Lower inequalities in terms of gender and landownership, tribal village

Village remoteness and market access for women	Close to highway, periodic market at 10 minutes walk	Remote from highway, periodic market 15-20 minutes walk	Remote from highway, market and periodic market 20-25 minutes	Close to highway, Periodic market 15-20 minutes walk	Close to highway	Remote from highway
Women involvement areas	Household, Farm, market (home, farm and haatiya)	Household, farm, selling produce from farm and home	Household, farm, selling produce from farm and home	Household, farm, marginally also in selling to local traders	Household, farm, marginally also in selling to local traders	Household and mostly subsistence farming
Mobility opportunities for women	Independent and open: bicycle, motorbike, within the village and to the market	Partly Restricted: bicycle, city rickshaw	Partly Restricted: bicycle	Partly restricted: Bicycle autorickshaw	Partly restricted: Bicycle autorickshaw	Partly Restricted: bicycle
Irrigation access	Mostly ground water irrigation, tubewell and pumpset, solar	Canal irrigation, ground water using pumpset	Mostly ground water irrigation, tubewell and pumpset, solar	Mostly rainfed, lower level of ground water resources	Mostly rainfed, lower level of ground water resources	Mostly rainfed

After several modifications of the pilot version, the training was implemented as part of a different international development project⁷. 36 community mobilisers were trained for a day by two research consultants who were experienced in gender research and training. Afterwards, in two consecutive days, the community mobilisers conducted the training themselves in pairs with three mixed farmers groups in two villages in the Far-Western Nepal districts Dadeldhura, Kailali and Baridya. The implementation process was documented by the research consultants. In total, our empirical material draws from both project implementations totalling in 24 conducted trainings with 65 community mobilisers and field staff of 15 staff of different NGOs and government organisations in 12 villages, and approximately 200 farmer participants.

ENGAGING WITH GENDER NORMS IN A PARTICIPATORY TRAINING

In the following sections, we will present our observations of the training process and present results of farmers response to each activity.

Activity 1: *Boy or Girl?* Creating awareness on gender norms in the community

At the introductory state, the training aimed at creating a safe and comfortable space, and to raise awareness on local gender norms in the community. The

training starts with an ice-breaker in which the participants sit in a circle on the ground and introduce the person next to them to the group. A few minutes are allocated to discuss in pairs. The pairs then introduce their partners to the wider group by name, age, number of members in the family, and the types of crops they grow. This interaction created a positive atmosphere, and first giggles were heard.

Figure 2. Step-by-step guide to the training activity “Boy or Girl?”

ACTIVITY 1: BOY OR GIRL? (30 MIN)

WHAT IS THIS ACTIVITY?
Participants describe why they would rather have a son or a daughter.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?
Participants discuss their own values that are attached to having sons and daughters. These will be critically reflected upon and explained as socially constructed gender perceptions in the discussion following this activity.

WHAT DO I NEED?
Pictures of man and woman (Appendix II), cardboard/index cards and markers for note-taking.

STEPS:

Step 1: Hold the picture of the woman at one end of the circle, while the other facilitator holds the picture of the man at the other end. The two pictures are shown here, and larger versions can be cut out in Appendix II.



Step 2: Explain: “Imagine that you spoke to a doctor and due to a medical condition, you can only have one child in your life. Would you prefer a boy or a girl?” (represented by the pictures of the man and the woman).

Step 3: Participants move and stand by the picture of the child that they want: a son or a daughter.

Step 4: The girl group and the boy group separately sit down in small circles. The facilitator asks them: “Why did you choose a girl/boy?” This discussion can be led by a facilitator, but make sure that you also pick someone to take notes of the discussion, ideally on a big piece of cardboard.

Step 5: Each group presents the reasons they picked a girl or boy to the rest of the participants.

© CGIAR RESEARCH PROGRAM ON WATER, LAND AND ECOSYSTEMS

For the first activity “Boy or Girl?” (Figure 2), farmers chose whether they prefer a boy or a girl, if they were able to have only one child and were given the choice for the sex. This imaginary task required some effort to explain, as farmers initial reply

⁷ The DFID-funded Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) “Anukulan” in Far Western Nepal.

often was: “God will give”. In all groups, the farmers almost equally divided and moved to the two pictures of a boy and a girl which were placed at different ends of the room. In those two groups, local facilitators encouraged a discussion on the reasons why they prefer to have a boy or a girl. We found that the reasons mentioned

for a particular gender could be organised into the four categories: financial security, lineage, gendered tasks and gendered traits. The examples (Table 3) demonstrate valuable insights how relevant the role of gender is within a specific community’s beliefs.

Table 3: Reasons for participants’ son or daughter preference

Category	Reasons for son preference	Reasons for daughter preference
Financial Security	<p>Income/remittances through migration</p> <p>Sons can migrate abroad and bring good income.</p> <p>Son earns and supports parents during emergencies such as natural disaster (e.g. earthquake), they can migrate and send remittances, whereas if daughter opt for migration for job, she can fall prey to sexual and physical violence.</p> <p>Dowry</p> <p>The dowry of the son’s bride contributes to the family’s welfare.</p>	<p>Religious belief</p> <p>Daughters are regarded as goddess of Laxmi, so having girls, is considered as good source of income.</p> <p>Education</p> <p>If girls are educated, they can bring money like sons.</p> <p>Gifts</p> <p>Whatever is given during the wedding ceremony, this will come back to us during marriage, we will receive gifts from others during marriage and the daughter receives wedding presents.</p>
	<p>Lineage</p> <p>Race</p> <p>Sons continue the race as they stay in the family and pass on the family name.</p> <p>Social tag of ‘<i>aputro</i>’ (those who cannot bear son)</p> <p>Discrimination within family and by the society in case there is no son at home.</p> <p>Heritage/Property</p> <p>Property is passed to the son and therefore it stays within the family; sons can buy land and build a house</p>	<p>Developing Relations</p> <p>Having a girl creates, extents and strengthens relations with another family</p> <p>Daughters are important to bear children</p> <p>Receiving family honor</p> <p>By marrying a daughter to another family, the in-law family will be honored for giving their daughter</p> <p>Marrying = soul cleansing</p> <p>When we marry daughters to a man, our (parents) soul will be cleared, as marrying is one of the best things to do in life.</p>

Gendered tasks

Ploughing, building, managing

Male manpower is required to work on the field. Ploughing can only be done by male, as a drought will come if female plough (based on a legend). Similar activities such as livestock management and building houses are considered male tasks.

Cremation (Daagbathi)

Sons can cremate parents and perform funeral rites.

Household help through daughter-in-law

The son will bring a daughter-in-law who will take care over cooking

Household work

Daughters are responsible and help with all household work (cooking, washing, cleaning etc.)

Daughter-in-law

The son will bring a wife and they are disrespectful in behaviour, and the relationship between son and family gets worse

Caring/Devotion to parents

Daughters are caring and look after their parents. Daughters bring happiness and brightness at home.

Daughters carry motherly love; they understand problems of the family, problem of other people.

Obedience/ Responsibility

Daughters come when we call them. Even if they are married, they come to their parents if they are old or called.

Daughters respect culture. Daughters are important for Tihar, Teej and other cultural festivals.

Daughters make family lively, son could not be trusted, he never stays at home.

Gendered traits

Security and safety

Sons will stay with the family and look after the parents when they are old

Son has strong physical built up so they can do hard work, whereas daughters have weak physical built up

Society prefers son, it brings family honour. If son spent a night outside the house, it brings no shame. However, if daughters spend a night outside home, it defames the family.

Daughters are soft in nature, become easily nervous; son can handle everything by ease.

Discipline, honesty

Girls have discipline, boys quarrel and create conflicts. Daughters are important for positive society/cleanliness/education. The house with daughters are well managed, well decorated, they keep relations.

They play important role and voice against negativities widespread in the society. Daughters are very honest.

Compared to sons, daughters are more tolerant and patient. They can endure more hardships.

Looks and Decoration

Daughters look cute and can be decorated with ornaments and jewellery, and the sound of jewellery is a pleasure.

A range of disagreements between the “boy” and the “girl” group came up, and sometimes a discussion generated, if supported through good facilitation and open questions. Participants disagreed: “Girls can also earn!”, “My son takes very good care of me!”. This was the very intention of this activity: to shed light on the diverse gender norms on traits and roles perceived in the community, but also to generate an awareness that these are not generalisable and can be contradictory. The danger of this activity is that particular gender traits or roles become manifested instead of critically reflected upon. However, with appropriate facilitation and critical questions, these norms can be destabilised and reflected upon collectively. Respondents shared their experiences on how gender norms in communities have been gradually changing. For example, one participant shared how men who would help women at home are tagged ‘*jaitingre* [nepali version of *henpecked*]’, which is slowly changing now. Similarly, women participants shared how changing gender and cultural norms such as disregarding ‘Chhaupadi’, the practice of untouchability during menstruation, is allowing more women to participate in education and economic activities. It was also shared that in few places women

have also started challenging rigid norms and activities by engaging in ploughing, funeral rites, migration etc., which traditionally is performed by men. The discussion on the variability and change of gender perceptions promoted critical consciousness on gender norms.

Discussion 1: Sex vs. Gender

To generate further reflection on those gender norms, a short lecture of 5 minutes and afterwards a discussion was held on the differences between the biological “sex” and the socially constructed “gender” (cf. Table 4). As a response, several farmers shared their own perception why girls should be educated like boys, or how they can fulfill the same role as boys. The farmers were well-aware of the gendered restrictions to women and the need to challenge these, but the recurring reason named for this was social pressure and that “people will talk”, and that it takes a long time to change the community’s mindset. Examples to explain gender norms and roles by participants during the discussion were: “women are kind-hearted”, “women milk cows and buffaloes”, “men sit in the tea shop and chat” and “men plough, break stones and paint houses”.

Table 4: Training guidance to explain the difference between biological sex and socially constructed gender

SEX	GENDER
Biological—Male and Female Inborn/innate cannot be changed	Social—Masculine and Feminine Not inborn/innate, can be changed
<u>Examples:</u>	<u>Examples:</u>
Only women can be pregnant and give birth	Women do domestic chores
Only men can supply sperm.	Men are breadwinners of the family
Only mother breastfeeds her child	Women wear sari/kurta
Only women menstruate	Men plough agricultural land, drive tractor
	Women cut and collect grass

Activity 2: Gender Position Bar: Imagining shifts in the gendered division of labour in agriculture

The activity “Gender Position Bar” focuses on the gendered division of labour in domestic or reproductive tasks as well as agriculture, water and forest management. To understand and work with the gendered perceptions associated with particular tasks in these domains, every farmer chooses one picture of a particular labor being performed, describes it in front of the group and places it along a position bar below one of the five varying degrees over women’s or men’s involvement (Figure 3): either as female only, mostly female, male only, mostly male, or conducted by both gender equally. The farmers had also to give a reason for their choice. This was particular

important, as farmers were challenged to think beyond “it has always been like this”. Most attributes given for male labour were “heavy/hard”, “technical”, “dangerous”, “income-generating” and “energetic”. Female labour was remarked as “low in production”, “no skill needed”, “caring”, “cleaning”, “better concentrating”, “better vision”, “time intense”, “not difficult”, “at home” and “calm”. The reasons given for particular agricultural activities are listed in Table 5. This activity demonstrates valuable insights how relevant the role of gender is within the community’s beliefs. Farmers were well-aware of the gendered restrictions to women and the need to challenge these, a recurring was theme of social pressure and the slow change of community’s mindset.

Figure 3: Gender Position Bar activity



Table 5: Farmers response to the Gender Position Bar

Agricultural Task	Gender	Farmer's reasons for the task being gendered
Livestock	Mostly female	not hard work for female
Ploughing	Male	Not allowed for female, too technical, to respect women
Digging	Male	Now allowed for female, too hard, women are busy with household work
Irrigation/ Pump handling	Male	Too heavy, women are not strong enough to rotate the handle and its operation, too technical, only male have knowledge on electricity and current flow, it is too dangerous, an electric shock may happen, women's sari will get rolled into the wheel and this could lead to the death of a women
Transplanting	Both/ Mostly female	Men do not take care of plants, they are busy with other work
Weeding	Both	Only labour, no skill required
Harvesting	Mostly female	When production is less, female will do
Drying harvest	Female	Not much power and physical labour required, women have a better vision, it is related to caring and cleaning, women can better concentrate
Selling vegetables at the market	Both	if crop good, man sells, if not good and we have to sit for a long time, women do, mostly women, as they save money, men waste money, if they are free at home, some men engage
Money handling	Both	women sell, but women often can't calculate, then men
Buying seeds	Both	men used to go, sometimes if easily available, women also go, Women select well because they are working in the field
Tractor Driving	Male	rule by society, but it is driven by women in other countries, e.g. in Punjab, women can drive a small tractor and replace male farmers, do all their labour
Applying Fertiliser	Male	Difficult for women
Storage of crops	Female	Men are busy with income generating work, women work at home, women as they are more at home
Pesticides	Mostly male	Men have more freetime
Cleaning crops	Female	Male do not do the cleaning grains work because they are not good at concentration, they are 'Chanchal' highly energetic in nature so cannot stay still doing one thing. Women are by nature very calm and can do such things easily

Reproductive Tasks	Gender	Farmer's reasons for gendered tasks
Childcare	Mostly female/ both	Woman do it because they are more kind to children, men slap them. Such type of love and affection is not seen in a man; women are kind-hearted, when children are small, women show more affection to baby
Healthcare	Mostly female	smaller things women do, bigger outside travels men; men are mindless and not caring
Cooking	Female/ mostly female	Women do, because husband says: I married you, so you have to cook for me, men cook only outside or in exceptions, e.g. when wife is sick; women do rotis at home
Washing	Female	Male can only wash their own clothes if needed, but not wash for others
Vegetable garden	Both	Whoever is free

Discussion 2: Challenges for female and male farmers

Based on activity 2, farmers discussed in group work the challenges and opportunities for becoming successful male or female farmers (cf. Table 6). The prior mentioned gendered division of labour seemed to be a major problem for female farmers, as they have limited opportunities to plough, apply fertilizer, pesticides or irrigate. For male farmers, mostly structural constrains such as limited access or lack of irrigation, pesticides, fertilizers, crop choices, market prices etc. were listed. Opportunities were seen in trainings, group savings, discussions and learning from each other, and provided

inputs such as seedlings, irrigation. This task showed that the farmers were well aware of the objectives of the projects, and the addressed challenges help being tackled through project interventions.

The challenge in this activity was to challenge participants to think beyond "it has always been like this" when they describe why a certain labour activity is a challenge for the other gender. Participants argued, for example, male tasks to be too "dangerous" and "heavy", while women's tasks "take time" and are "safe to do at home". Here is again a danger of reproducing existing gender roles which the facilitator can avoid by giving space for contradicting opinions within the group.

Table 6: Challenges and opportunities for female farmers

CHALLENGES FOR FEMALE FARMERS	OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE FARMERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not being allowed to plough • Household workload results in coming late to meetings • Not allowed to start water pumps • Lack of confidence • Lack of technologies • Illiteracy • Knowledge on market rates, crop insurance, access to local services • Work load 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective labour support through other farmers • Confidence to speak up in groups • Increasing cropping areas • Exposure visits, trainings and workshops • improved nutrition • access to government services, e.g. subsidy from District Agriculture Office

Activity 3: Bargaining Role Play: Switching gender roles to create empathy

The final activity was a creative role play in which some farmers took the role of the opposite gender in a bargaining act. The aim was that farmers become more conscious about the feelings of the other gender and thus create empathy for someone else’s struggles. This activity was perceived as the most entertaining, and several farmers enthusiastically started to dress up as the opposite sex through shawls and headcovers. The farmers imitated typical dialogues, which would present the opposite gender in a stereotypical manner. For example, male farmers (played by females) were complaining that women were late to bring food, and yelling at them to quickly and nicely serve plates and water, while the female farmer (played by a male) was shy, excusing herself for being busy with a lot of household work and child care, and then quickly fulfilling the demanded

tasks. The scenes the farmers played also indicated which aspects of behavior and communication they consider relevant to address, and the role play provided a safe space to do so.

Once farmers are sensitised on gender issues through prior activities, the bargaining role play gives them an opportunity to think about how do they perceive their opposite gender as a farmer and perform gender roles according to it. This has as a mirror effect because farmers can see how they are dealing with their partners when the group switches their gender and perform. This spontaneous role play of the training challenges farmers to think of and react to gender distinctive behaviours. The role play promotes creativity and fun by demonstrating asymmetrical gender roles on farms.

There are few requirements for a successful bargaining role play. First, as the role play is a spontaneous activity, farmers must be given sufficient time to develop their script

and plan their dialogues. In case the time to think the script is not adequate, it may lead towards less interesting or ineffective role play as the farmers might not be able to identify and prioritise the important gender issues. Second, not only identifying the gender issue becomes critical for farmers but also they must think on how the role play session could be an excellent opportunity for them to bargain on the gender issues they are suffering since a long and they had barriers to convey and discuss on it. The group role play gives farmers more autonomy particularly to women farmers to bring out important issue that would not be possible for them to speak up alone. Third, farmers may also bring upon the feel by using some props

in the role play. For example, the role play in Kanakpatti village, women farmer when played a male farmer they had a *feeta* that is a long shawl on their head and to become a women they used their towel to cover the head as a symbol of *purdah* that women usually do to bring actual feel of changed gender roles.

On other side, as this role play is considered to bring out gender issues on farm, it might bring out some gender sensitive issues to the context. Such topics might involve challenging any gender taboos or religious belief on farm. Hence, facilitators of the training must play important role to become aware of the issue that is being brought up and take the time to discuss it afterwards.



Photo 1: Role play with changed gender roles

With a little help from the facilitators, this seemed the participants' favorite activity. Having random props (such as farm tools such as a spade, kitchenware, like plates and cups, vegetables etc.) may help generate

ideas. In our workshops, women were excited to get a chance to tell men to bring them food and tea constantly, while men enjoyed covering their heads with a scarf and playing an obedient housewife. We

found that participants have lots of ideas once they realise that this is supposed to be a fun and light-hearted exercise. At the same time, some important realisations seemed to trigger thinking:

“It felt weird to play a landlord and harass people older than me, it was good to have that power but at the same time he was an elderly person and I played a younger person’s role.” – Birkuti agriculture group, Gulariya, Bardiya, 14.11.2016

“It’s the first time playing a woman (for me), I didn’t know how to speak as a woman, as a daughter-in law, it’s difficult to attend meetings and walk in a saree as well.” – male community mobiliser, Gulariya, Bardiya, 12.11.2016

After one bargaining role play, an elderly woman started to spontaneously sing a traditional Maithili song, and participants joined in or listened in awe (translated from the local language Maithili):

“Your wife, son, is much bad-mannered; she broke her water pot and left for her mother’s place.(...)”

“She had slipped out and broke the water pot, what is the crime of my wife here?”

“I saw a lady pouring tears from her eyes under the Bel Babur tree.(...)”

“Come back my lady! Let’s return home, let’s return home. My mother has become old, will die shortly, sister will get married to her

home, remaining will be my brother, I will separate him, we both will rule our regime.”

This unexpected but deeply meaningful song revealed cultural connotations participants drew to the gender engagement on the ground – that is, injustices felt by a husband towards his wife, reproduced through his mother.

At the end of the training, participants are requested to reflect on their day long involvement in the training and if this discussion has succeeded to meet their expectations. The feedback should be reflected upon collectively and consider how to integrate ideas in future trainings.

THE ROLE AND PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY MOBILISERS

Community mobilisers and project staff have the key role to facilitate the trainings, and more generally, are important for reaching out and interacting with the communities in rural areas, whether it is for mobilising farmers for collective action in farming, technology adoption, or knowledge sharing. However, community mobilisers rank lowest in project hierarchies, and often have to ‘deliver’ results such as functioning user groups or accompany project’s technological implementations, often without having been trained on gender and social relations in communities. While being close to communities, there is a danger that they may reinforce existing gender and social inequalities in rural communities as they

are unaware of how power relations shape everyday lives. Limited gender awareness among staffs have been documented in many sectors including water and irrigation ((Udas and Zwarteveen, 2010).

During the training of community mobilisers on the principles and methods of the “Participatory Gender Training”, all community mobilisers acknowledged that this was their first platform to be introduced to basic concepts around gender and intersectionality, and the practical implications of it on their everyday work. The majority of community mobilisers, both male and female, expressed positive learnings from the day long discussion. Many shared that they learned about the distinction between gender and sex for the first time. Such discussions, as the majority of community mobilisers shared, enable them to provide an understanding of why understanding gender relations is important for increasing agriculture productivity. For example, one community mobiliser shared:

“I learnt about sex and gender [...] that gender is culture specific and its impact in agriculture sector. I feel that if both male and female should divide work equally, more benefits could be derived.” (male community mobiliser, Gulariya, Bardiya)

“I learnt that change is possible. We have unequal workload and it should be shared equally. I will share this in community. I had the understanding that men and women share workload equally, I realised today that women bear more responsibilities.” (male community mobiliser, Dadeldhura)

Some also reflected how the training helped them to reflect on their own positionality in relation to the farmers.

“I did not have much knowledge on gender. I did not know we also practice this in the community. I learnt that challenges and opportunities are context specific. It is important to understand how change is required and is possible within ourselves. I will share and implement this knowledge in my project activities and with my community.(...) I liked the second activity. I realised that we practice discrimination in our own lives. So, I think I will try to apply this knowledge in my life” (female community mobiliser, Gulariya, Bardiya)

“[...] It felt as if there are many things which I need to improve. So far we had learnt about gender only verbally however, through different activities and through photo activity, we experienced it practically. May be these activities could be effective at the community level.” (male community mobiliser, Gulariya, Bardiya)

However, there were some participants who shared about their unmet expectations. Although they agreed that they gained knowledge on gender, sex and gender relations, their expectations that they will receive gender solutions to the problems they face in the community level remained unmet: *“We thought we will get the solutions of our problems [...] the problems we face at the community level.”*

Especially the discussions helped them to realise how gender shapes their everyday practices and decisions. For example, at the personal level, examples were shared which indicated how gender is socially constructed, and how it is different across spaces and changes with time. Several participants shared these insights during the introductory discussions:

“Change is gradual with increasing awareness. I have seen it in my society. Women have jobs, male do not have. So, in those situations, men are taking care of children and doing household work – may be 25%.” (male community mobiliser, Dadeldhura, 4.11.2016)

“Nature never formed caste division. Caste division was formed on the basis of occupation. For example, I am Brahmin, someone is Chettri and someone is Dalit. These divisions have been formed by the society.” (female community mobiliser, Dadeldhura, 4.11.2016)

“Society is different here. Here male and female both can say ‘no’ to conceive more babies. Couple bear children with mutual understanding.” (male community mobiliser, Dadeldhura, 4.11.2016)

At the professional level, the discussion revolved around the challenges community mobilisers face while ensuring women’s participation in the user groups:

“In the village, it is difficult to convince women to participate in the meetings. They are very busy,

especially in this season.” (male community mobiliser, Dadeldhura, 4.11.2016)

“Community and family support is important to make women successful farmers. Women lack time and income. These are the biggest challenges.” (male community mobiliser, Dadeldhura, 4.11.2016)

Project field staffs are little equipped to address issues related to social and gender inequities, and they seldom receive opportunities to learn such skills through trainings. For instance, community mobilisers receive an orientation on community mobilisation in general at the time of joining but not a specific training on gender norms and relationships:

“This is the first time we have gained this detailed knowledge about gender roles and relations. No one before has helped us to understand the concepts. We have never applied this in our work besides following instructions of including different representatives from different groups in the user groups.” (female community mobiliser, Gulariya, Bardiya, 12.11.16)

Similarly, many shared that they had not realised the relevance of gender to the project beyond women’s involvement in numbers. It was shared that before attending the training, it never occurred to them that gender could be linked to their work in substantial ways:

“I learned that men and women need to understand each other’s needs. I will now ask my husband

to work alongside and help me grow vegetables.” (female farmer, Phulwari village, Kailali)

“I thought we would argue about gender differences but we discussed very specific things that were previously ignored- it forced us to think about it.” (community mobiliser, Gulariya, Bardiya)

FACILITATING AND REINTERPRETING TRAINING PRINCIPLES IN LOCAL CONTEXTS

We observed that successful implementation of the gender trainings depends on excellent facilitation skills, group size and composition, and training locations which encourage a safe space for women and marginalised community members to speak up.

The facilitators should have both conceptual clarity on gender and power relations, and the expertise to adjust the gender discussions and activities to the specific local context. One challenge we observed is to find clear linkages of gender relations to specific agricultural and resource management practices relevant in the community. Most effective tools are pictures of agricultural activities from the community itself. In addition, local words need to be used to explain gender (e.g. “Laingik” in Nepali). Precaution should be taken not to confuse participants by using abstract concepts such as gender equality without referring to specific examples and to demonstrate in the activities and

discussions how gender roles change and shape everyday lives.

In the introductory part, facilitators should clearly emphasise the objective and principles of the gender training. They may explain the training schedule, and the nature of targeted discussions to create a safe space to discuss and understand locally practiced gender roles and its possible impact on agriculture. Training facilitation should aim at minimising power differences in groups and maintain ethical conducts. Discussions on cultural, social and gender norms in any local context are very sensitive topics. Therefore, facilitators should be trained beforehand how to act neutral and discourage conflicts and controversial discussions. Specific facilitation skills to practice are asking open ended question, making appropriate probes, using words and language comprehensible to the participants, using life experiences and local examples, explaining the objective of each activity, linking the activities to discussions, and keeping discussions focussed on agriculture and gender roles.

We observed the important role of group compositions and small-sized groups to encourage good discussions. We experienced that a workshop can be effective with as few as 5 or 6 participants, but recommend a maximum number of 12 participants to ensure for everyone the possibility to participate and speak in the discussions. It is important to allow sufficient time to select participants of different age, caste, and class, as well as to form groups in which all participants feel comfortable speaking. To encourage women’s participation in meetings,

crèches (daycare) for children or similar appropriate incentives may be arranged. The groups should ideally be mixed, but sex-segregated groups often allow for a more secure space to speak. The choice between mixed or single sex groups depends on prior interventions in communities and how much women feel comfortable speaking about these topics in front of men. If there is significant hesitancy among the women to speak up, then single sex groups may provide greater individual participation.

Finally, it is important to choose an appropriate place and time suitable for the diverse participants' needs. A place for the training should be well chosen, and open space with lots of disturbances, e.g. at religious places such as temple or a mosque should be avoided. The props such as clothes and utensils for the role play must be arranged beforehand.

CONCLUSION

Shifting and Reproducing Gender Norms

Gender equality is central to international development agendas such as the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals, both as a goal in itself (SDG 5), and as cross-cutting issue in goals such as "Zero Hunger" (SDG2) and "Clean Water and Sanitation" (SDG6). Yet, studies on transformative engagements with gender relations among smallscale or tenant farmers and water user groups are particularly rare. In this paper, we developed and tested methods based on critical pedagogy

(Freire, 1996) and transformative practice (Leder, 2018). We found that these initiated transformative engagements with the gender-water-agriculture nexus because they raised critical consciousness of farmers, community mobilisers, and project staff on possibilities of social change "in situ".

The development and implementation of the Participatory Gender Training demonstrates that the training methods provide an open space to discuss local gender roles within households, agriculture and natural resource management. Discussing own gender norms promotes critical consciousness that gender norms are socially constructed and change with age, class, caste and material and structural constraints such as limited access to water and land. Visual, interactive and discussion-oriented training methods stimulated enthusiasm and inspiration for participants to further join gender discussions. Sufficient space to reflect on possibilities of change allowed rethinking practices towards more equal labor division and generated empathy towards those with weaker bargaining power. Such knowledge co-creation and empathy may promote new ways of human-environment relations (Tremblay and Harris, 2018). Particularly the bargaining role play activity provides opportunities to bring up relations of dependency and unequal power positions in a humorous manner. What participants and facilitators learn may differ from workshop to workshop, but many participants left with new ideas about how gender impacts their daily lives, and how they might change those impacts.

This approach is different from already existing approaches as it is a theoretically led and empirically guided gender training which combines principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996) and transformative practice (Leder, 2018). The reliance on those principles is important for social learning when it aims at addressing unequal power relations and promoting more socially-inclusive and sustainable natural resource management practices (Hegde et al., 2016, Elias et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, various challenges remain throughout the implementation. We observed several situations in which gender norms were further reinforced rather than critically deconstructed and shifted. To avoid this, a well-trained and skilled facilitator has to guide well discussions. Facilitators have the most important role in transformative engagements and need to be trained to apply facilitation skills to focus on transforming rather than reproducing gender norms. Furthermore, the approach is applicable to different contexts as long as training methods are reinterpreted according to local norms. This can be best done through using photographs of agricultural and domestic labor conducted in the village or region, and collaborating with local facilitators.

Further research is needed on how to build and interact in relationships that result in collective action in diverse contexts of agrarian change or resource management conflicts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We especially thank the participants of the participatory gender training, as well as the local NGOs which helped us facilitate: Sakhi Bihar, CDHI in Jalpaiguri, and iDE Nepal. We would like to thank Anoj Kumar, Prasun Deb Kanugoe, Mithali Ghosh, Emma Karki and Manita Raut who helped us facilitate the gender trainings and provide valuable insights. We also thank two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on the earlier draft. The development of the “Participatory Gender Training for Community Groups” was funded by the CGIAR Research Program “Water, Land and Ecosystems” (WLE) led by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), as well as the Australian Centre of International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) as part of the project LWR-2012/079 “Improving water use for dry season agriculture by marginal and tenant farmers in the Eastern Gangetic Plains”.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, B., 1997. “Bargaining” and gender relations: within and beyond the household. *Feminist economics*, 3, pp.1-51.
- Agarwal, B., 2000. Conceptualising environmental collective action: why gender matters. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 24, pp.283-285.
- Agarwal, B. 2001. Participatory exclusions, community forestry, and gender: an analysis for South Asia and a conceptual framework. *World Development*, 29, pp.1623-1648.

- Ahlers, R. & Zwarteveen, M.Z., 2009. The water question in feminism: water control and gender inequities in a neo-liberal era. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 16, pp.409-426.
- Bastakoti, R., Raut, M., Kumar, A. & Kanungoe, P.D., 2017. *Assessing value chain opportunities for smallholder vegetable growers in Eastern Gangetic Plains*, Kathmandu, Nepal, International Water Management Institute.
- Bijman, J., Iliopoulos, C., Poppe, K.J., Gijssels, C., Hagedorn, K., Hanish, M., Hendrikse, G.W., Kühl, R., Ollila, P. & Pyykkönen, P., 2012. *Support for farmers' co-operatives*. Final report.
- Bunch, R., 1995. *Two ears of corn: a guide to people-centered agricultural improvement*.
- Chambers, R., 1994. The origins and practice of participatory rural appraisal. *World Development*, 22, pp.953-969.
- Cleaver, F. & Hamada, K., 2010. 'Good' water governance and gender equity: a troubled relationship. *Gender & Development*, 18, pp.27-41.
- Cundill, G. & Rodela, R., 2012. A review of assertions about the processes and outcomes of social learning in natural resource management. *J Environ Manage*, 113, pp.7-14.
- Dewey, J., 1916. *Democracy and education*, New York, The Macmillan Company.
- Dorward, A., Poole, N., Morrison, J., Kydd, J. & Urey, I., 2003. Markets, institutions and technology: missing links in livelihoods analysis. *Development policy review*, 21, pp.319-332.
- Doss, C., 2013. Intrahousehold bargaining and resource allocation in developing countries. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 28, pp.52-78.
- Elias, M., Jalonen, R., Fernandez, M. and Grosse, A., 2016. A gender-responsive participatory research for social learning and sustainable forest management. *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods*, 26, pp.1-12.
- Farnworth, C.R. *Gender-aware value chain development*. UN Women in cooperation with FAO, IFAD and WFP, Expert Group Meeting. Enabling rural women's economic empowerment: institutions, opportunities and participation, 2011. pp.20-23.
- Freire, P., 1996. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, London, Penguin Books Ltd.
- Gurung, D. & Bisht, S., 2014. *Women's empowerment at the frontline of adaptation. Emerging issues, adaptive practices, and priorities in Nepal*, Kathmandu, ICIMOD.
- Harris, L., 2008. Water rich, resource poor: intersections of gender, poverty, and vulnerability in newly irrigated areas of Southeastern Turkey. *World Development*, 36, pp.2643-2662.
- Hegde, N., Elias, M., Lamers, H.A.H. & Hegde, M., 2016. Engaging local communities in social learning for inclusive management of native fruit trees in the Central Western Ghats, India. *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods*, 26, pp.65-83.

- Hoyt, C.L. & Murphy, S.E., 2016. Managing to clear the air: stereotype threat, women, and leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(3), pp.387-399.
- Leder, S., 2018. *Transformative pedagogic practice: education for sustainable development in Indian geography education on water conflicts.*, Singapore, Springer.
- Leder, S., Clement, F. & Karki, E., 2017. Reframing women's empowerment in water security programmes in western Nepal. *Gender & Development*, 25, pp.235-251.
- Leder, S., Das, D., Reckers, A. & Karki, E., 2016. *Participatory gender training for community groups. A manual for critical discussions on gender norms, roles and relations*, Colombo, Sri Lanka, CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE).
- Leder, S., Sugden, F., Raut, M., Ray, D. & Saikia, P., 2019. Ambivalences of collective farming: feminist political ecologies from the Eastern Gangetic Plains. *International Journal of the Commons*, 13.
- Locke, C. & Okali, C., 1999. Analysing changing gender relations: methodological challenges for gender planning. *Development in Practice*, 9, pp.274-286.
- Martin, R., 1992. *Bargaining power*. Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, p.210.
- Mayring, P., 2002. Qualitative content analysis - research instrument or mode of interpretation? In: M. Kiegelmann, ed. *The Role of the Researcher in Qualitative Psychology*. Tübingen: Verlag Ingeborg Huber.
- Meinzen-Dick, R. & Zwartveen, M., 1998. Gendered participation in water management: issues and illustrations from water users' associations in South Asia. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 15, pp.337-345.
- Morales, M.C. & Harris, L.M., 2014. Using subjectivity and emotion to reconsider participatory natural resource management. *World Development*, 64, pp.703-712.
- Mosse, D., 1994. Gender and knowledge: theoretical reflections on participatory rural appraisal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30, pp.569-571+573-578.
- Mosse, D., 2004. Is good policy unimplementable? Reflections on the ethnography of aid policy and practice. *Development and Change*, 35, pp.639-671.
- Nightingale, A.J., Eriksen, S., Taylor, M., Forsyth, T., Pelling, M., Newsham, A., Boyd, E., Brown, K., Harvey, B., Jones, L. and Bezner Kerr, R., 2019. Beyond Technical Fixes: climate solutions and the great derangement. *Climate and Development*, pp.1-10.
- Panta, S.K. & Resurrección, B.P., 2017. Gender and caste relations amidst a changing political situation in Nepal: insights from a farmer-managed irrigation system. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 18, pp.219-247.

- Rodela, R., 2013. The social learning discourse: trends, themes and interdisciplinary influences in current research. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 25, pp.157-166.
- Shrestha, G. & Clement, F., 2019. Unravelling gendered practices in the public water sector in Nepal. *Water Policy*, 21, pp.1017-1033.
- Sugden, F., Maskey, N., Clement, F., Ramesh, V., Philip, A. & Rai, A., 2014. Agrarian stress and climate change in the Eastern Gangetic Plains: gendered vulnerability in a stratified social formation. *Global Environmental Change*, 29, pp.258–269.
- Sultana, F., 2011. Suffering for water, suffering from water: emotional geographies of resource access, control and conflict. *Geoforum*, 42, pp.163-172.
- Sultana, F., 2019. Decolonizing development education and the pursuit of social justice. *Human Geography*.
- Tremblay, C. & Harris, L., 2018. Critical video engagements: empathy, subjectivity and changing narratives of water resources through participatory video. *Geoforum*, 90, pp.174-182.
- Udas, P.B. & Zwarteveen, M.Z., 2010. Can water professionals meet gender goals? A case study of the Department of Irrigation in Nepal. *Gender & Development*, 18, pp.87-98.
- Vester, F., 2002. *Unsere Welt - ein vernetztes System*, München, Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag.
- Zwarteveen, M. & Meinzen-Dick, R., 2001. Gender and property rights in the commons: examples of water rights in South Asia. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 18, pp.11-25.
- Zwarteveen, M. & Neupane, N., 1996. *Free-riders or victims: women's nonparticipation in irrigation management in Nepal's Chhattis Mauja irrigation scheme*. Colombo, International Water Management Institute.





Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) is a Kathmandu based policy research institute, established in 2011, as a platform to undertake research, policy engagement, and scholarly exchange. SIAS operates in research-policy-practice interface, covering various themes: natural resources management; climate change, water, and urban resilience; livelihoods and economic development; and democratic processes and local governance.

For more information, please visit, www.sias-southasia.org



Nepal Policy Research Network (NPRN) is a network of Nepalese organizations established in 2010 that strive to contribute to the development of democratic, inclusive and pro-poor public policies and at the same time safeguard national interest. NPRN brings together research, policy and academic leaders to collectively engage in evidence-based policy development.

For more information, please visit, www.nepalpolicy.net