

HARIYO BAN: REDD+ FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL

A NATIONAL, LOCAL-LEVEL INITIATIVE
GENDER & REDD+ CASE STUDY SERIES



HARIYO BAN'S MISSION:

To reduce adverse impacts of climate change and threats to biodiversity in priority landscapes of Nepal.

INTRODUCTION:

Forests, which comprise a total of four billion hectares of land cover worldwide, are one of nature's greatest assets—while, at the same time, effective and sustainable forest managements poses one of the global community's biggest challenges. Forests have the ability to absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂), a potent greenhouse gas and primary component of anthropogenic emissions, and act as carbon sinks. However, when forests are destroyed, they release CO₂ into the atmosphere, contributing to climate change. Forest loss produces 12-15% of total annual greenhouse gas emissions, which is why it is essential that forest management be integrated into effective climate change solutions.

REDD+, which stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation plus conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, is a framework that seeks to provide financial incentives for developing countries that are making those reductions and conserving forests. The ultimate aim of REDD+ is to foster sustainable forest management, which is not only a smart economic decision, but a smart decision for the environment and the people who depend on it.

Women from forest-dependent communities—communities that are often among the poorest—play an integral role in the management of forests, yet are frequently sidelined in decision-making processes and leadership roles. This exclusion is detrimental, as gender equality is essential for undertaking sustainable forest governance and achieving the goals of REDD+. In order for REDD+ to become a successful mechanism to combat climate change, and in order for it to provide concrete environmental solutions, gender-responsive standards and safeguards that incorporate gender equality and women's rights must be at the core of REDD+ policies and programmes.

Integrating gender considerations into REDD+ policy, planning, and implementation is a key issue for numerous countries. Leveraging learning and knowledge sharing for gender and REDD+ is essential in moving toward harmonized policy reform across relevant sectors, including natural resource management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, land use and tenure reform, and benefit sharing. This case study identifies and consolidates existing tools and best practices for greater access and applicability in mainstreaming gender considerations into REDD+.

WHY GENDER MATTERS IN REDD+:

Every day in their roles as farmers, foresters, fishers, caretakers, and household providers, women use and manage natural resources. Women have unique experiences and knowledge with respect to their environments and offer important perspectives in natural resource governance. Specifically, women and men from rural communities often have differentiated knowledge of forest resources and diverse roles in its management. Given their responsibility for meeting food, water and energy needs for the household, women's work and time burdens are increased by the depletion of forest resources. Not only does women's equitable participation and representation in REDD+ uphold commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality, it also makes for better development, more effective and efficient climate change solutions, and stronger sustainability and livelihood outcomes.

In Nepal, forests are significant contributors to national economic development. According to the National Planning Commission (2002) the agriculture and forestry sectors accounted for 39.3% of the Gross Domestic Product of the country, with forestry contributing 15% itself.

FORESTS IN NEPAL:

Nepal is a landlocked country located in Southern Asia between China and India. With diverse landscapes including the Himalayan Mountains, forest cover in Nepal is most extensive in the far west and middle regions, however a study by the Food and Agriculture Organization showed that Nepal's forest area decreased from 4.8 million hectares to 3.6 million hectares from 1990 to 2010. Unsustainable harvesting practices, forest fires, encroachment, overgrazing, infrastructure development, resettlement and expansion of invasive species are the main contributors to deforestation and land degradation; in addition to the over-extraction of medicinal and aromatic species and a lack of cheap energy sources which has driven unsustainable fuelwood removal. Illegal logging and other broader causes of deforestation have also been attributed to governance issues, unclear land tenure and land use rights, and leakage along borders.

HARIYO BAN BACKGROUND:

The Hariyo Ban project—which is named after the Nepali saying “Hariyo Ban Nepal ko Dhan” meaning “healthy green forests are the wealth of Nepal”—is a five-year initiative (2011-2016) that aims to reduce the adverse impacts of climate change and threats to biodiversity in Nepal. Beginning in 2011 and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Hariyo Ban is designed to reduce threats to the country's vast physical and biological diversity, build resilience to climate change in communities and ecosystems, and improve the livelihoods of Nepal's most impoverished communities by emphasizing the links between people and forests. The project intends to ensure meaningful engagement of women and socially excluded groups in REDD+ initiatives by building their knowledge and capacity, as well as increasing gender-responsive REDD+ policy design.

Hariyo Ban supports the broader conservation and development objectives and strategies of the Government of Nepal and works closely with the government in program implementation. Additionally, by working with Nepal's communities, civil society, private sector, academia and media, the program endeavors to empower locals in safeguarding the country's living heritage and adapting to climate change through sound conservation and livelihood approaches. Hariyo Ban is implemented by a consortium of four non-governmental organizations including: Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE); Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN); National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC); and World Wildlife Fund (WWF-Nepal).

CURRENT STATUS OF REDD+ IN NEPAL:

In 2008, Nepal began engaging with the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and in 2010 its REDD Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) was assessed and revised. Today, Nepal is developing its national strategies and engaging in implementation of these strategies and investments through piloting REDD+ activities. The National REDD+ Strategy of Nepal has not been finalized yet, however, with the input of Hariyo Ban and other relevant pilot projects on REDD+ at the sub-national scale, one will be developed in the next few years. In addition, the Nepal government has been involved in the development of a national safeguards system for REDD+. Nepal is also a United Nations REDD Programme (UN-REDD) observer country—one of the few countries in Asia belonging to both the FCPF and UN-REDD global initiatives.

OBJECTIVES:

Forest management and conservation is closely linked with gender roles in Nepal—women are heavily engaged in forest conservation and the migration of men from villages to more urban areas has increased the role women play in the forestry sector. The Hariyo Ban program recognizes this and is focusing on expanding women's presence in forest research, capacity building and knowledge generation related to REDD+.

In Nepal, The Hariyo Ban initiative covers two vast landscapes in Nepal—Chitwan Annapurna Landscape (CHAL) and Terai Arc Landscape (TAL)—and is being implemented within these landscapes in 29 districts. By integrating gender equality and social inclusion into the approach, as well as governance and livelihood improvement, the program aims to achieve its three objectives of biodiversity conservation, promoting sustainable landscapes, and climate change adaptation. Specifically, these objectives have included reducing threats to biodiversity in the TAL and CHAL; building the structures, capacity and operations necessary for an effective sustainable landscape management, especially REDD+ readiness; and increasing the ability of targeted human and ecological communities to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The main goals that support Hariyo Ban activities include:

- Developing enabling policies that addresses issues of gender and social inclusion
- Raising awareness among citizens on fundamental concepts of REDD+
- Enhancing capacity for greenhouse gas monitoring
- Reducing dependency on forests by the poor, vulnerable, marginalized and women
- Identifying site specific drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, their underlying causes, and addressing these drivers
- Improving capacity of grassroots-level people and community organizations for sub-national REDD+ project implementation
- Involving youth in greenhouse gas monitoring

“REDD+ is a new opportunity for Nepal for financial sustainability. Women, poor and vulnerable people and communities are good contributors of forest conservation and REDD+ initiatives offer women, poor and vulnerable community and people economic empowerment.”

SABITRA DHAKAL,

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Coordinator, Hariyo Ban Program/CARE Nepal

OUTCOMES & FUTURE IMPLICATIONS:

The Hariyo Ban project has closely aligned itself with Nepal's broad Three Year Plan for national development, Biodiversity Strategy, and National Adaptation Plan of Action, in order to provide policy support at the national and sub-national levels. From the start, Hariyo Ban has been modeled as a pilot for future replication efforts, including REDD+

social and environmental standards that will be used in upcoming project implementation and best practices for addressing the site-specific drivers of deforestation and forest degradation that will be adopted and duplicated in other areas. Future programs will also use publications and knowledge products produced by Hariyo Ban.

Diverse levels of strategic initiatives are required for mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in REDD+ initiatives, ranging from policy-level influence to community-level sensitization. Several successful tools have been employed by the Hariyo Ban project to engage women and foster diverse voices in decision making. Some of the strategies include:

- Conducting a gender analysis for status of country, for example identifying barriers women face in conservation, finding that 60% of women face gender-based violence in the conservation sector; women can identify more forest species than men while exhibiting more versatility with non-timber forest products (NTFP); and migration of men is leaving women in charge but with the added constraints of barriers to land tenure
- Supporting women's networks and socially excluded groups to enable their involvement in policy development
- Providing community centers (Community Learning and Action Centers) to teach women and socially excluded groups how to be involved in community forestry projects, and also about water use and further education opportunities
- Consolidating social and development actions to strengthen infrastructure, roads and bridges to increase accessibility/mobility around rural communities
- Enhancing community outreach for sensitization and building capacity on gender issues to focus on underlying drivers of deforestation and degradation
- Creating and utilizing a manual of government-approved REDD+ social and environmental standards principles with gender-sensitive illustrations and concepts to more fully engage local communities, especially women that are illiterate or have limited reading abilities
- Building capacity of a local resource person on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in REDD+ and developing a manual for GESI in REDD+ training
- Generating alternative livelihood options for forest dependent people and communities

An unexpected result that has been realized by the Hariyo Ban project is that providing women and poor and vulnerable groups with alternative livelihood options along with capacity building on REDD+ multiplies their motivation and efforts, while capacity building events that do not demonstrate visible benefits of REDD+ do little to inspire these groups to action. Further, the community centers have proven to be an exemplary forum for women, poor and vulnerable groups to discuss and decide on REDD+ related interventions at the local level. Another learning lesson for the project has resulted from the large area within which initiatives are being implemented. It has become clear that site-specific drivers are different and root causes of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are even more varied from one place to another, which demands site-specific assessment and context analysis. Blanket approaches to addressing the drivers in all areas is not possible.

Results to date have included:

- Increased understanding of underlying causes of drivers of deforestation and degradation, highlighting that women's community forest roles and livelihood needs are not the most detrimental driver, and creating community-based measures to address these drivers—people are now motivated to conserve and manage forests not only for fuelwood, fodder and timber but also for forest carbon
- Enhanced communications for information and knowledge sharing to strengthen the active engagement of women in REDD+ interventions and discourse, including a GESI in REDD+ manual that is helpful for future REDD+ related capacity building events
- Developed green enterprises to support alternative livelihoods for women through renewable energy (e.g., biogas and solar) and climate-smart adaptive measures for conservation
- Increased networking and confidence of women through the Community Learning and Action Centers, and using it as a platform at the national level for increasing knowledge with women as climate change agents; strengthened civil society voices in REDD+ discourses
- Government acceptance for mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in REDD+—the Hariyo Ban project has presented as the gender task force to the Ministry of Environment and is represented on different committees to promote the issues and progress gender equality
- Established National REDD+ Social and Environmental standards; the monitoring plan and assessment report preparation is near completion

However, this positive work has not been accomplished without confronting some challenges, including:

- Difficulty influencing REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (SES) without strong civil society or government gender champions and without targeted financial resources
- Focus on gender is usually because women's community roles are incorrectly seen as the drivers of deforestation but instead need to identify what the true underlying causes of drivers are
- Addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in some sites can't address the problem of whole landscapes—thus, the scale of interventions is not always adequate
- Limited action on national standards and frameworks for mainstreaming gender in REDD+; global policy needs to be stronger to influence REDD+ dialogues and integrate gender in the climate change agenda
- Collaboration with government agencies and civil society organizations for REDD+ project implementation has proven difficult, as different priorities conflict
- Conservation organizations need to consider the issue of gender-based violence and work to identify perpetrators; as well as work with community forest groups to take action

NEXT STEPS:

- Continuing to make the GESI Manual more gender- and socially inclusive and participatory for implementation, and for driving forward the implementation process; additional capacity building of community groups on GESI conceptual knowledge and skills is needed
- Organizational capacity needs to be further developed to be more strategic and productive, especially at the community level to engage local people
- Technical content for local communities to understand and engage with needs to be made more relevant and accessible
- GESI-sensitive monitoring and evaluation need to be responsive to measure power gaps based on the principle of equity, besides just measuring inclusive technical performance

CONCLUSION

Poor and vulnerable groups are more dependent on forest resources, so they are considered a driving force of deforestation and forest degradation in Nepal. Capacity building and networking of these groups at the local level is essential for sharing alternative livelihood options and motivating them to conserve existing forests. Community mobilization has been one of the strongest aspects of the Hariyo Ban project, as it seeks synergetic results by integrating nature conservation and community mobilization.

Enhancing meaningful participation and leadership of women, poor and vulnerable people right from the start of a REDD+ project is highly essential. Thus, explaining REDD+ with an eye to including these groups and helping them to understand the nuances and address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation is critical. The newly established community centers are regularly carrying out empowerment and conservation related activities at the local level and can be used as a platform for capacity building events by any organizations in future.

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More information about GECCO can be found on the IUCN Global Gender Office's website at <http://genderandenvironment.org/>; more information about gender and REDD+ can be found on the REDD Desk at <http://theredddesk.org/>; and more information about USAID's climate change work can be found at www.usaid.gov/climate.