

Report on

Importance of Women in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

**Organized by: Smart WASH Solutions with the Support of Gender,
Energy and Water Network (GEWNet)
Centre for Rural Technology, Nepal (CRT/N)**

**Mode of Conduction: Virtual Platform using Webinar via Zoom
August 25, 2020**

Executive Summary

The webinar on “Importance of Women in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)” was conducted with the objectives to enhance the knowledge of the participants and to figure out the importance of women in WASH. Experts from different fields, academicians, GEWNet members and consortium partners with the number of 63 participants (32 female and 31 male) participated in the webinar. The webinar provided a platform for participants including GEWNet members to discuss and enhance their knowledge regarding the importance of women in WASH sector. The webinar has been observed to be very productive and fruitful as expressed by all the distinguished participants.

Webinar on “Importance of Women in WASH” was organized as a part of GEWNet’s regular interaction programmes. These programmes have initiated in the process of strengthening and creating the Network as a "knowledge platform" and facilitate in sharing of information, development and transfer of knowledge appropriate to the agenda of the network.

Background of GEWNet

The Gender Energy and Water Network (GEWNet) was established in Nepal as an output of the National Consultative Workshop held in August 2002. It was initiated with support from the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA) and the Centre for Rural Technology, Nepal (CRT/N) hosts the Secretariat of the Network as the National Focal Point of ENERGIA. Driving the Network are the Advisory Group and Resource Team and its individual and institutional members.

The present activities of the network are being implemented with support from the Green Inclusive Energy (GIE) Programme in Nepal. These activities are being undertaken to contribute to the sustainable and integrated rural development with on-going and upcoming initiatives. The network is one of the members of the GIE programmes in Nepal which is supported by ENERGIA/Hivos and is being implemented by Consortium of Partner Organizations led by CRT/N. The programme also has received policy support from the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPCC). The other members of the consortium are Indoor Air Pollution and Health Forum (IAPHF), Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), Renewable Energy Confederation of Nepal (RECoN), National Association of Community Electricity Users Nepal (NACEUN) and Practical Action Nepal.

The programme, built on the current development discourse on sustainable energy and development, emphasizes the need for green and clean energy systems for ensuring inclusive and sustainable development. Global Commitment to Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) is a testament to the growing realization that not just any energy, but clean energy system is what we need to ensure prosperity and inclusive development in Nepal. In order to contribute to this initiative, CRT/N is undertaking the facilitative role in bringing inclusivity, renewable energy and productive use of energy for various development sectors contributing to the forefront of the national development discourse in Nepal.

The transition of a society towards green, inclusive and accountable energy system entails a strong partnership between key stakeholders (decision makers, private sectors, and other non-governmental entities including civil society organizations (CSOs). This partnership is crucial for documenting best practices and evidences and to influence policies for conducive business environment for affordable, accessible, modern and cleaner energy systems for sustainable development.

The strength of this partnership is contingent on CSOs ability to come in the forefront and meaningfully participate in the policy-making and implementation processes as advocates, innovators and brokers of new, innovative partnerships between governments, private sector and other allies. Therefore, GIE programme aims to strengthen the lobby and advocacy capacity of CSOs to voice their concerns and meaningfully participate in the SEforALL process.

This network focuses on specific lobby and advocacy goals (influencing policies and practices of market and government actors) as well as on strengthening advocacy capacities of civil society actors. It will also contribute in increasing gender inclusive use of renewable energy and water including appropriate technologies which will complement and contribute to Government of Nepal's initiatives like Clean Cooking Solution for all by 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Nepal, there have been steps towards gender equality. However, Nepali women still do not have equal status as their male counterparts. This can be addressed by implementing fair, inclusive and evidence driven policies. To carry forward the agenda on gender, energy and water, it is necessary for the GEWNet partners and members to understand and interact on the importance of women in water, energy, sanitation and hygiene.

Objectives of the Interaction

In Nepal, women bear the major social burden of inadequate WASH services and are under-represented in WASH-related policies and programmes. In this context, four themes emerge: gender and water projects; lack of equal female participation in WASH policy development and implementation; women's access to water; and menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Many cultural barriers embedded in Nepali society limit women's access, agency and participation in WASH-related policy and practice. The objective of the interaction is:

- To enhance the knowledge and to figure out the importance of women in WASH

The Interaction Modality

Due to Covid pandemic situation restricting in-person contacts, interaction programme adopted a modality combining virtual presentations and floor discussion session. The programme followed formal approach. This session included:

- Welcome and Objectives of the Webinar: Er. Hari Prasad Sharma, CEO, Smart WASH Solutions
- Opening Remarks: Er. Ganesh Shah, Former Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Government of Nepal
- Presentation on "Role of Women in Water and Sanitation": Dr. Tista Prasai Joshi, Senior Scientist, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST)
- Presentation on "Climate Change and WASH": Ms. Kribina Pathak, Knowledge Management & Research Officer, Nepal Water Conservation Foundation
- Presentation on "WASH for Health, Economic and Educational benefits of Women and Girls": Mr. Nabin Bogati, ME/MS in Sanitation Technology, Kathmandu University (KU)
- Presentation on "Gender and Water – A Justice Approach": Dr. Indira Sthapit Shakya, Gender and Energy Expert, Independent Consultant
- Questions & Answers
- Remarks: Dr. Purushottam Shrestha, Senior Director, CRT/N
- Conclusion & Vote of Thanks: Er. Ram Deep Sah, Chairman, Smart WASH Solutions

Proceeding of Programme

Welcome Remark: Er. Hari Prasad Sharma, CEO, Smart WASH Solutions

Er. Hari Prasad Sharma, CEO of Smart WASH Solutions welcomed all the participants and presenters for participating through virtual platform. He stated that there is a close relation between women, water and sanitation. He further stated that according to the Hindu religion women's role is to do the household chores and nurturing of the family members but now women are coming out of the private spheres and are working in public spheres. He pointed out that the government is also giving several quotas to bring women forward. Even though the women are coming in public sphere, they still have direct relation with water and they face many difficulties regarding water.

Opening remarks: Er. Ganesh Shah, Former Minister of Environment, Science and Technology

Er. Ganesh Shah, Former Minister of Environment, Science and Technology thanked everyone for participating in this webinar. He informed that the webinar on "Importance of Women in WASH" is organized on the occasion of WASH week and highlighted the points on inclusion of women in WASH, awareness on personal hygiene and water treatment, sanitation for all. He stated that the collaboration between Smart WASH and GEWNet is very encouraging.

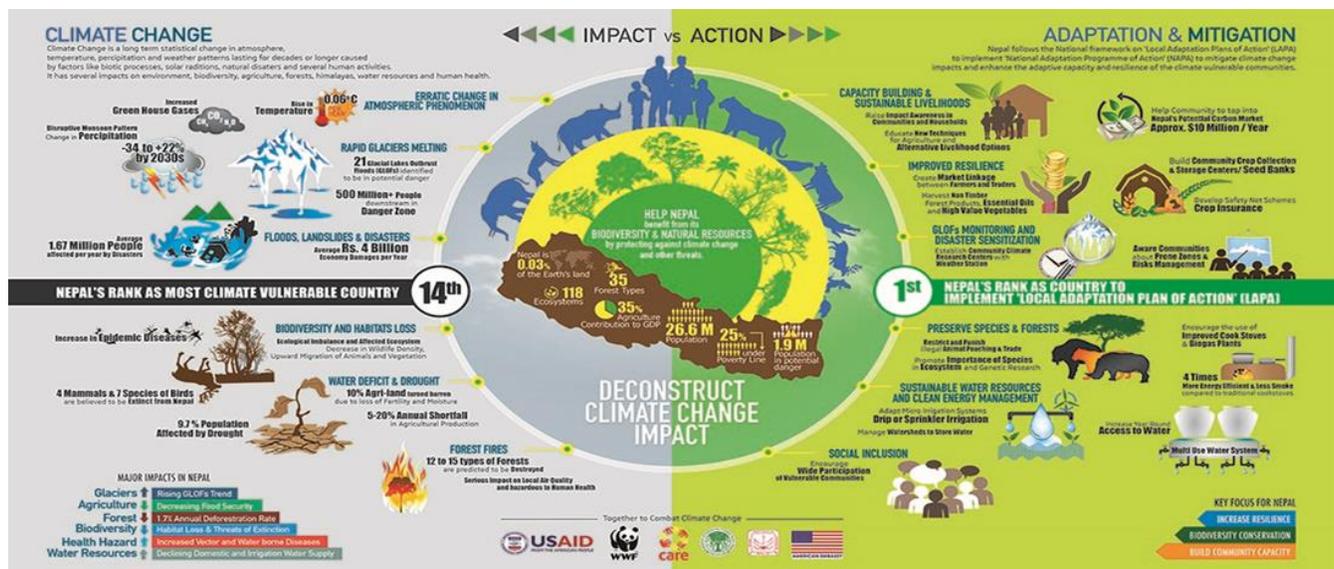
Presentation on "Role of Women in Water and Sanitation": Dr. Tista Prasai Joshi, Senior Scientist, NAST

Dr. Tista Prasai Joshi, Senior Scientist, NAST delivered a presentation on the topic "Role of Women in Water and Sanitation". She stressed that only 29 percent of the world's researchers are women and in Nepal it is less than this. She explained that the women have to struggle a lot to reach to the goal. She focused on the role of women in water and sanitation where she said that women are the most responsible for the use and management of water resources and sanitation at household level both in cities and rural areas. She added that women spend around 2.5 times more time on unpaid and domestic work than men.

She further clarified that for solving the sanitation problem for women there should be a toilet with dignity, a hand washing facility, safe water source and menstruation hygiene management. She explained that to fulfill the water demand of a family, women have to be actively involved either travelling a long distance or waiting for long hours in the water source. Additionally, they are the one who suffer from water borne diseases. She mentioned that impact of climate change on water resources are also observed by women. She emphasized that in the current state of water crisis, the role of women is also equally important in the water conservation. She stressed that women should stand for water and sanitation by providing opportunities. She clarified that when a woman is empowered, the whole society is empowered.

Presentation on “Climate Change and WASH”: Ms. Kribina Pathak, Knowledge Management & Research Officer, Nepal Water Conservation Foundation

Ms. Kribina Pathak, Knowledge Management and Research Officer, Nepal Water Conservation Foundation gave a presentation on “Climate Change and WASH”. She explained that WASH condition of Nepal is very poor and there is no sufficient data of WASH in school areas. She said that climate change is showing its impact more on water resources. Even in Nepal, due to climate change, there is increase in temperature and change in the precipitation pattern. She mentioned that pollution, scarcity of water, water source conflict, water & vector borne diseases and increased poverty are results of climate change which indicates the climate change impact on WASH sector.



Ms. Pathak said that only two percent of climate finance goes to WASH adaptation and Nepal’s Water related policies merely includes Climate Change and WASH. She mentioned that women education help to decrease the incidence of diarrhea by 30 percent in low and lower-middle income countries. She explained that most of the water supply systems in Nepal are placed near to the bank of rivers which are damaged when there is flood or landslide or other disaster, so there is fragile water supply system. She suggested on rethinking of placing water supply system considering climate hazards. She emphasized that climate change is increasing the burden on women for the access of water. She stressed that there is need of R & D on climate change and WASH, climate risk assessment in WASH services, policy integration of WASH and climate change in climate change and disaster risk management (DRM) policies.

**Presentation on “WASH for Health, Economic and Educational Benefits of Women and Girls”:
Mr. Nabin Bogati, ME/MS in Sanitation Technology, Kathmandu University**

Mr. Nabin Bogati, ME/MS in Sanitation Technology, Kathmandu University delivered a presentation on “WASH for Health, Economic and Educational Benefits of Women and Girls”. He gave a brief definition on sex and gender. He explained that women/girls suffer disproportionately from unsafe WASH access. He added that the provision of hygiene and sanitation are usually considered women’s task and lack of women participation is leading to unsuccessful WASH projects.

Women/Girls Suffer Disproportionally From Unsafe Wash Access



Societal barriers often restrict women’s involvement in decision-making processes.



Safety and Privacy are Women’s Main Concerns for Sanitation

Mr. Bogati suggested that easily accessible, child-friendly and gender segregated WASH facilities, hygiene promotion, elimination of social taboos during menstruation is essential to solve women WASH problems. He explained that WASH facilities will provide health, economic and educational benefits to women. He clarified benefits of WASH in health aspect like maternal mortality and child death will be low, birth weight and child growth will be proper, WASH related illness will be less and menstrual hygiene management will be better. Similarly, in girl’s education, WASH facilities bring positive impact on children’s education by creating opportunities and time for learning and decreasing the chance of school missing. He added that WASH facilities will also secure women’s dignity and self-esteem resulting in gender equality, women empowerment and securing women right.

Presentation on “Gender and Water – A Justice Approach”: Dr. Indira Sthapit Shakya, Gender and Energy Expert, Independent Consultant

Dr. Indira Sthapit Shakya, Gender and Energy Expert, Independent Consultant gave a presentation on the topic “Gender and Water- A Justice Approach. She mentioned that in Nepal, efforts have been made in improving the condition of gender and water but those efforts have not, as a whole, profoundly challenged existing gendered patterns of water planning, management and decision-making. She explained that constructions of family latrines contribute to overall hygiene and improves health, in particular of women and girls, women’s participation in water users’ committees can support sustainability in water management. She added that scarcity and unequal allocation of water negatively affect people’s livelihood, ecosystem and health resulting in social and environmental injustice. She said that there are cross-cutting gender-based challenge related to water access which can be achieved by providing water infrastructure and enhancing women’s access to financial services. She emphasized that people need to have access to information about their use of water and sanitation services which can be done by taking affirmative action in land allocation strategies and enhancing women’s capacities in water conservation. She mentioned that projects in WASH have accrued benefits like capacity enhanced, agency building and safety, technical skills improved and income generation opportunities. She suggested promoting multiple water technologies and multiple use water systems and reuse of water, mainstreaming gender for employment, capacity-development among stakeholders, documenting and sharing existing knowledge and from productive uses effort must be made for securing women’s access to land and water.

Remarks:

Dr. Purushottam Shrestha, Senior Director, CRT/N

Dr. Shrestha, Senior Director of CRT/N acknowledged the presence of all the participants in the webinar. Summarizing the whole presentations in details, he expressed that he found all the presentations very interesting and informative. He further shared his experience regarding the scarcity of drinking water in the rural area of Nepal. At last, he thanked the organizers, presenters and participants for participating on the webinar despite their busy schedules.

Conclusion & Vote of Thanks:

Er. Ram Deep Sah, Chairman, Smart WASH Solutions

ER. Sah, Chairman of Smart WASH Solutions expressed his sincere thanks to all the participants, presenters and CRT/N, GEWNet for supporting the webinar. He added that the webinar was organized on the occasion of The World Water Week and Teej festival in Nepal.

Programme Schedule

Time	Activities	Responsible Person
13:30 – 13:35	Welcome and objectives of Webinar	Er. Hari Prasad Sharma, CEO, Smart WASH Solutions
13:35 – 13:40	Opening Remarks	Er. Ganesh Shah, Former Minister of Environment, Science and Technology
13:40 – 14:00	Presentation on “ <i>Role of Women in Water and Sanitation</i> ”	Dr. Tista Prasai Joshi, Senior Scientist, NAST
14:00 – 14:10	Presentation on “ <i>Climate Change and WASH</i> ”	Ms. Kribina Pathak, Knowledge Management & Research Officer, Nepal Water Conservation Foundation
14:10 – 14:20	Presentation on “ <i>WASH for Health, Economic and Educational benefits of Women and Girls</i> ”	Mr. Nabin Bogati, ME/MS in Sanitation Technology, Kathmandu University
14:20 – 14:30	Presentation on “ <i>Gender and Water – A Justice Approach</i> ”	Dr. Indira Sthapit Shakya, Gender and Energy Expert, Independent Consultant
14:30 – 14:40	Questions & Answers	All the Participants
14:40 – 14:45	Remarks	Dr. Purushottam Shrestha, Senior Director, Centre for Rural Technology, Nepal
14:45 – 15:00	Conclusion & Vote of Thanks	Er. Ram Deep Sah, Chairman, Smart WASH Solutions

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