

Project Information

- **Country:** Nepal
- **Project Name:** The Community Development and Forest/ Watershed Conservation Project (CDFWCP) I & II, Participatory Watershed and Management and Local Governance Project (PWMLGP) (Technical Cooperation)
- **Cooperation Period:** 1994 - 2005 / 2009 - 2014
- **Implementing Organization:** Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation

1. Forest Conservation from the Gender Perspective

Men and women have different knowledge on forest resources and play different roles in the management of trees and forests. While men's and women's roles in forest management may differ according to socio-cultural background, generally women practice traditional agroforestry, establish home gardens, collect firewood and gather native grass as food and medicine for self-consumption. Sometimes they collect firewood and fruits for sale to earn additional income for the household. In contrast, men engage in economically valuable activities such as cutting and transporting timber. Women suffer more negative impacts from deterioration of forest resources than men as they collect the firewood in many societies. Women's roles as players in forest conservation activities are recognized as larger as they play a determinate part in forest management and suffer the negative impacts from the deterioration of forest resources.

2. Background and Project Summary

In Nepal, where about half of the population lives in mountainous areas, productivity has been reduced by slope failures in steep and rugged mountain landscapes as well as soil erosion of farmland. Additionally, unplanned logging of forests has reinforced soil erosion against a backdrop of poverty.

Within this situation in mind, SABIHAA model was developed during 11 years of implementation of the Community Development and Forest Watershed Conservation Project (CDFWCP) I & II. SABIHAA stands for *Samudayik Bikas Tatha Hariyali Ayojana*, or community development and greenery project in Nepali. The model was disseminated by the Participatory Watershed and Management and Local Governance Project (PWMLGP). The SABIHAA model is a mechanism for enhancing community participation in all processes of natural resources management and community development for forest conservation. The model fosters the people's interest in reforestation through community development. Efforts include soil conservation activities such as protection of water sources, construction of foot paths, and prevention of landslides. The SABIHAA model, which has been disseminated to other areas in Nepal by the Government of Nepal, is taken up officially as the strategy of the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation with the budget for dissemination in the fiscal year 2014.

3. Gender-responsive Activities

While the daily users of the forest in the project

area are women, it is very difficult for them to participate in and make decisions on community activities, especially for those marginalized economically and socially. At first, to ensure an opportunity for women to participate in project activities, literacy programs for women are conducted and regulations are established to ensure that women make up more than half of the members of a community group. However, as their participation did not become as active as expected, the following activities were implemented for full participation of women into the Project activities.

(1) POWER Program

To implement livelihood improvement activities utilizing local resources by women, a POWER (Poor, Occupational caste, Women's Empowerment for Resource Management) group is formed in each Ward with a maximum of 30 members. Poor, Dalit, or Janajati women are given priority in forming a group. The POWER group implements income generation activities such as stockbreeding of goat, poultry, pig, etc. and cultivation of vegetables, ginger, cardamom, and fruits with financial support from the Project.



Apiculture Training for POWER group

Through activities of POWER groups, women could present their opinions on community activities in addition to gaining means of income generation. Additionally, they have become able to get support by themselves from outside of the project.

Through the POWER activities, women acquire self-confidence and social power which encourage them to participate actively in community meetings with men.

– Thil Kumali Thapa, Representative of POWER group

(2) Ward Coordination Committee (WCC)

The Ward Coordination Committee, a community group which lies above the POWER group, is a core of the SABIHAA model. The main role of the WCC is to plan and implement integrated community resource management activities by mobilizing local communities and taking the overall initiative of Ward development works. There is a system to reflect women's voices by choosing women as more than one-third of the 9 members of the WCC, including 2 POWER members.

(3) Training to Support Activities

To support POWER activities effectively, the training on "Gender and Social Inclusion, Conflict Sensitive Development" were conducted for local government officers.

Through gender-responsive activities, the SABIHAA model has become a model of effective forest conservation with participation of both women and men. With the dissemination of the model, it is expected to contribute to forest conservation in Nepal more widely.