

Advancing gender-just food system through scalable solutions, collective learning and strategic advocacy



PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

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Submitted To:
HUAIROU Commission

January 2026

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Project Title: Advancing gender-just food system through scalable solutions, collective learning and strategic advocacy

Implementing Organization: Community Women Forum (CWF), Kathmandu, Nepal

Project Period: March 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025

1. Executive Summary

The project "Advancing gender-just food systems through scalable solutions, collective learning, and strategic advocacy" was carried out in Khokana (Lalitpur Metropolitan City-21) and Thankot (Chandragiri Municipality-Wards 3 and 4) to address the challenges posed by rapid urbanization, loss of agricultural land, climate change, and increasing gender inequality in Nepal's urban and peri-urban food systems. As traditional farming practices become fragmented due to water scarcity, environmental issues, and insufficient institutional support, women, who are vital to food production and family nutrition, face significant obstacles related to land ownership, access to finance, training opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes.

The project aimed to promote gender-equitable food systems in urban Nepal by empowering grassroots women as leaders in innovation, collaborative learning, and policy advocacy. It combined practical interventions at the household level with market connections, peer exchanges, and engagement at multiple policy levels to enhance and acknowledge women's vital roles in food systems.

Under the objective of promoting women-led innovations, the project adopted a systematic and participatory selection process, identifying 60 grassroots women (30 from each location) from over 200 surveyed participants through collaboration with local women's cooperatives. A sixteen-week structured kitchen and terrace gardening training, followed by 16 sessions of innovative organic farming training, equipped 61 women with technical skills in composting, seed management, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), climate-resilient practices, and sustainable water use. The establishment of demonstration tunnels and comparative IPM plots strengthened experiential learning and reinforced adoption.

To address water scarcity and model climate adaptation, model rainwater harvesting systems were installed at key community and demonstration sites in Khokana and Thankot, benefiting hundreds of community members and ensuring year-round gardening. These installations also served as practical models for replication.

Economic empowerment was further advanced through a one-day Exhibition and Sales Fair (Pradarshani Tatha Bikri Mela) at Kalimati Vegetable Market, where 13 cooperatives and one women's group showcased locally produced goods. The event generated NPR 159,870 in direct sales, strengthened market confidence, and enhanced women's entrepreneurial visibility. Complementary marketing training

improved women's knowledge of business planning, financial management, and revenue generation, building a stronger foundation for sustainable livelihoods.

Participants engaged in collective learning through peer exchange visits to Sankhu and Chitwan, where they interacted with successful women entrepreneurs involved in commercial organic and integrated farming. These experiences turned theoretical concepts into real-life inspiration, showcasing how small-scale agriculture can develop into profitable businesses and create local job opportunities.

To consolidate learning and amplify grassroots voices, the project documented and published ten case studies of successful women farmers in a Nepali-language booklet. These narratives serve as powerful peer-learning tools, reinforcing confidence, social recognition, and the legitimacy of women's leadership in food production.

At the policy level, the project organized a national workshop and two policy dialogues examining food security through gender and climate lenses. These platforms brought together policymakers, local governments, academics, and civil society to address continuing gaps between constitutional guarantees of food sovereignty and lived realities. Discussions emphasized the need for gender-transformative budgeting, institutional accountability, multi-sectoral coordination, and structural reforms to move beyond token participation toward genuine power shifts.

Overall, the project demonstrated that women-led kitchen and terrace gardening, when combined with climate-resilient infrastructure, market access, peer learning, and policy engagement, can contribute meaningfully to urban food security, economic empowerment, and gender justice. The integrated approach strengthened household-level resilience while influencing broader governance conversations, positioning Khokana and Thankot as emerging hubs of women-centered, climate-responsive urban agriculture.

2. Project Overview

The rapid urbanization in Nepal has led to a significant decrease in the availability of agricultural land, rising the challenges faced by urban and peri-urban food systems. In Khokana and Thankot, traditional farming methods are becoming increasingly marginalized due to land fragmentation, environmental pollution, water scarcity, and inadequate support from the local government. These issues have created a pressing need for innovative solutions to enhance food security and nutrition in urban areas. In response, kitchen and terrace gardening have gained popularity as feasible and available alternatives, allowing households to grow their own food. This practice not only contributes to improved nutrition and food security but also supports local livelihoods. By integrating these gardening techniques into urban lifestyles, communities can mitigate some of the adverse effects of urbanization while fostering a greater sense of self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Women play a key role in food production and household nutrition, yet they face continuing gender-based barriers, including limited access to land, financial resources, training, and decision-making spaces. In urban contexts, these challenges are compounded by unpaid care work and exclusion from agricultural extension services. Strengthening women's leadership in urban food production is therefore essential for building fair, inclusive, and locally grounded food systems.

This project was intended to address these challenges by promoting women-led kitchen and terrace gardening as a pathway to advance gender justice, climate-resilient food production, and community-level food sovereignty, while also influencing policies and governance structures that shape urban food systems.

Project Objectives

The overall objective of the project was to advance gender-just food systems in urban Nepal through women-led innovations, collective learning, and strategic advocacy.

The specific objectives are to:

- Demonstrate grassroots women-led innovations in kitchen and terrace gardening that contribute to food system transformation in Khokana and Thankot.
- Facilitate collective learning and knowledge sharing among grassroots women farmers, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Strengthen advocacy and policy engagement to promote gender-just food systems and amplify women's voices in food governance and decision-making processes.

Progress Against Objectives & Activities

3. Project Achievements

Objective (i): Women-Led Innovations

1.1. Identification of the grassroots women for kitchen and terrace gardening

To identify authentic grassroots women for kitchen and terrace gardening, the project team has developed targeted questionnaires and created a Google Form for data collection. This approach aims to ensure that the selection process is both systematic and effective in reaching the intended participants.

The team has established specific indicators to guide the selection of these grassroots women. Priority was given to those who have previously participated in terrace gardening training, possess land or terrace space for gardening, and were involved in agriculture with a desire to enhance their

knowledge of organic farming. Additionally, women from Janajati communities received extra consideration, as those with basic farming knowledge who express a keen interest in agriculture.

To facilitate the survey, the project team collaborated with local women's cooperatives in Khokana and Thankot. Orientation sessions were conducted for women leaders from these cooperatives, empowering them to lead the survey efforts. Data was successfully collected from over two hundred grassroots women, resulting in the identification of thirty participants from each area for the project.

Following is the list of identified grassroot women from Thankot and Khokana.

S.N	Thankot	Khokana
1	Sunakesari Shrestha	Krishna Shova Dangol
2	Surja Maya Maharjan	Sharmila Maharjan
3	Laxmi Paudel	Maiya Shrestha Dangol
4	Namrata Shrestha	Ritu Dangol
5	Sarita Shrestha	Maya Dangol
6	Krishna Kumari Tamang	Sarina Dangol
7	Sarita Shrestha	Ratna Devi Maharjan
8	Hasana Shrestha	Lila Maharjan
9	Harsha Maya Maharjan	Heera laxmi Maharjan
10	Shanti Gopali	Dashmaya Maharjan
11	Yogmaya Gopali	Yog Maya Maharjan
12	Anju Gopali	Bimala Dangol
13	Ishu Vadel	Sanu Dangol
14	Kabita Shrestha	Sharmila Shakya
15	Shova Shrestha	Shanti Maharjan
16	Suryaswori Shrestha	Chankeshwori Maharjan
17	Ratna Devi Manandhar	Gyani Maharjan
18	Saru Shrestha	Nanimaya Maharjan
19	Ratna Devi Shrestha	Kalpana Kapali
20	Anita Shrestha	Punyawoti Maharjan
21	Anu Gopali	Mana Keshari Dangol
22	Sarita Shrestha	Man Devi Maharjan
23	Durga Gopali	Changkeswori Dangol
24	Lalita Gopali	Tridevi Dangol
25	Gun Maya Gopali	Nistha Dangol
26	Shanti Shrestha	Ratna Maya Maharjan
27	Jharana Shrestha / Gopali	Jagat Maya Dangol
28	Kanchi Gopali	Muna Dangol
29	Pramila Maharjan	Nanda Maya Maharjan
30	Krishna Devi Shrestha	Arna Maya Maharjan
31	Surja Maya Gopali	

1.2. Business Fair for grassroots women to develop linkage with the market

The Pradarshani Tatha Bikri Mela (Exhibition and Sales Fair) was organized as a one-day market promotion event to enhance the economic empowerment of women through improved market access for locally produced goods. The event was organized by Community



Women Forum with financial support from the HUAIROU Commission on 17th October 2024, Thursday in the premises of Kalimati Vegetable Market. It was organized as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen women's entrepreneurship and local economic development. The venue was selected due to its high consumer flow, enabling effective exposure and sales opportunities for participating women. The fair served as a platform for women-led cooperatives and groups to showcase, promote, and sell their products directly to consumers.

The key objectives of the exhibition and sales fair was to promote products produced by women-led cooperatives and groups and to provide direct market access and income-generating opportunities for women entrepreneurs. It was also intended to enhance visibility of locally produced, traditional, and value-added products and to strengthen women's confidence and skills in marketing and business interaction.

A total of 13 women cooperatives and 1 women's group participated in the fair. Women entrepreneurs from different communities actively engaged in displaying and selling their products.

The exhibition featured a wide range of locally produced and value-added goods, including processed food items (spices, lentils, pickles, beaten rice, popcorn, and traditional snacks), Household and cleaning products (soaps, detergents, incense, candles), Handicrafts and decorative



items (crystal malas, garlands, handicraft

products), Clothing, footwear, bags, and accessories along with agricultural and organic products, including fresh vegetables. All products were produced and processed by women affiliated with cooperatives and groups.

The fair generated encouraging financial results. According to the sales records maintained during the event, the total sales volume amounted to NPR 159,870. The direct sales model enabled women entrepreneurs to retain full earnings from their products, contributing positively to household income and cooperative sustainability.



This event has helped to improved market access for women-led cooperatives and groups increasing income-generation opportunities for participating women. It has also enhanced visibility and recognition of locally produced and traditional products strengthening marketing confidence and customer interaction skills among women entrepreneurs. The event has also fostered collaboration and networking among cooperatives.

However, the limited display space during peak hours affected product visibility. It is also realized that some products required improved packaging, labeling, and branding to better compete in the market. Similar product categories among participants created competition, highlighting the need for product diversification

In conclusion, it is realized that the Pradarshani Tatha Bikri Mela successfully met its objectives of promoting women's entrepreneurship and enhancing market access for women-produced goods. The strong participation, active consumer engagement, and satisfactory sales outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of such initiatives in supporting women's economic empowerment. Continued donor support for similar market linkage activities, combined with capacity-building interventions on product development and branding, will further strengthen the sustainability and impact of women-led enterprises.

1.3. Installation of Model Rain Water Harvesting model System in Khokana and Thankot

As part of the Grassroot Leadership for Food Systems Transformation Project, the installation of model rainwater harvesting systems was undertaken to address water scarcity challenges faced by communities engaged in kitchen and terrace gardening. Reliable access to water is essential for sustaining food production activities, community gatherings, and capacity-building initiatives. The intervention aimed to demonstrate practical, low-cost solutions for water conservation while directly benefiting community members.

Rainwater harvesting systems were installed in two locations: Thankot and Khokana, serving both community infrastructure and training sites.

Thankot (Chandragiri Municipality, Ward No. 4):

The system was installed at Sajha Ghar, a community hall where various programs and gatherings are regularly



organized. On average, 300–400 community members use this facility every month. The installed system now provides a sustainable water source for the hall, directly benefiting all users and supporting community activities.

Khokana:

Two separate rainwater harvesting systems were installed:

At a training tunnel located on Sarmila Maharjan's Tahara land, where a 16-week organic farming training was conducted. The land was provided free of cost for the training period, and the system ensured uninterrupted water supply throughout the training.

At Lila Maharjan's Tahara, the system was installed as a demonstration model to showcase rainwater harvesting techniques to training participants and the wider Khokana community.

Through these installations, the project not only addressed immediate water needs but also promoted awareness and replication of rainwater harvesting practices.

The installation process was conducted in a clear and methodical manner, beginning with the identification of potential vendors capable of executing the rainwater harvesting system installation. Following this, quotations were solicited from several vendors to ensure a competitive selection. Each quotation was carefully reviewed and compared to assess the various offerings. After careful consideration, a vendor was selected, and a coordination meeting was held to discuss the next steps. This was followed by an approval process involving Chandragiri Municipality Ward No. 4 and the broader Chandragiri Municipality, ensuring that all necessary permissions were secured.

A joint field visit was then organized, where representatives from the selected vendor and members of the CWF visited Sajha Ghar to finalize the installation sites. Subsequently, a formal agreement was established between CWF and the chosen vendor, paving the way for the installation to commence the very next day, with a projected completion timeline of one week.

Regarding CWF rule, above Rs 50,000 must have to bit quotation. For the installation rain water harvesting at Thankot the quotation verification and vendor selection phase, three vendors submitted their proposals for the installation work. The quotations received were as follows: YUPIBIDI Services Pvt. Ltd. quoted NPR 233,310.00, All Traders provided a quotation of NPR. 148,246.96, and Nepal MEP Services submitted the most competitive bid at NPR 131,192.00. After evaluating the quotations based on cost efficiency and overall suitability for the project, Nepal MEP Services was ultimately selected as the vendor for the installation. This decision was made with careful consideration of both financial implications and the vendor's capability to meet the project requirements effectively. Regarding Khokana installation of rain water harvesting cost was below NRs. 50,000 so the quotation was not referred.

1.4. Khokana and Thankot as the Kitchen and Terrace gardening hub for demonstration

Khokana and Thankot have established themselves as exemplary centers for learning about kitchen and terrace gardening, as well as organic farming, through a well-organized, community-driven capacity-building initiative. A comprehensive sixteen-weeks training program has empowered 60 grassroots women, 30 from each locality, with essential practical knowledge and hands-on skills. This training encompassed various aspects of gardening, including terrace and kitchen gardening techniques, organic cultivation practices, composting methods, seed management, and efficient water usage strategies. The structured approach not only provided these women with the

tools they needed but also fostered a sense of community and collaboration among participants.

The impact of this training is evident as these women have begun to implement the skills they acquired in their own homes, transforming their terraces and available spaces into flourishing green gardens. Their ongoing involvement has effectively illustrated that organic food production is achievable, even within the constraints of urban and peri-urban environments. By actively engaging in these practices, they are not only enhancing their own food security but also contributing to a broader understanding of sustainable agriculture in densely populated areas. This grassroots movement has the potential to inspire others, demonstrating that with the right knowledge and resources, urban residents can cultivate their own food.



In addition to their personal gardening efforts, the trained women have taken on the roles of local resource persons and peer educators within their communities and beyond. With increased technical confidence and leadership skills, they are now equipped to share their knowledge, mentor other women, and facilitate the growth of organic kitchen gardening practices beyond the initial group. This peer-to-peer learning model not only ensures the sustainability of the initiative but also fosters a sense of ownership within the community. To further enhance resilience and promote environmental sustainability, model rainwater harvesting systems have been installed in both Khokana and Thankot, supporting year-round gardening and showcasing climate-adaptive solutions for household-level organic farming. Collectively, the combination of skilled local trainers, active demonstration gardens, and supportive infrastructure has positioned these communities as practical learning hubs, where visitors and neighboring groups can observe and learn about organic farming practices led by grassroots women, highlighting the effectiveness of women-centered, locally grounded initiatives in advancing sustainable food systems and urban agriculture.



1.5. Publication of Case Studies of 10 successful grassroots women

A total of 10 case studies of grassroots women from Khokana and Thankot have been developed. The compilation of all 10 stories has been published as a booklet in Nepali version for the community readers.

These case studies provide learners with practical insights that extend beyond theoretical knowledge. They illustrate how grassroots women in Khokana and Thankot engaged in terrace and kitchen gardening through hands-on experience, experimentation, and mutual support. Readers can easily identify effective strategies, understand the gradual development of skills, and appreciate the innovative use of local resources, making the learning process both experiential and relatable.



The context of these stories, rooted in the local climate, land conditions, family dynamics, and social norms, fosters a strong connection for readers. This familiarity enhances comprehension, builds trust in the shared information, and instills a belief that if these women can succeed in their environment, so can others. Witnessing women from similar socio-economic backgrounds take initiative and navigate challenges serves as a powerful source of motivation, particularly for female readers, as it bolsters their confidence and promotes the idea that farming knowledge is accessible to all.

The booklet also serves as a valuable peer-learning resource for the community, encouraging dialogue among neighbors, women's groups, and cooperatives. By stimulating conversations and facilitating the exchange of practical tips, it strengthens collective learning and solidarity. Furthermore, the documentation confirms the significance of women's contributions to food production, which is crucial for enhancing respect for their work within families, influencing local leadership, and reinforcing their vital role in food security and nutrition.

(Please refer to annexes for case studies)

Objective (ii): Collective Learning & Knowledge Sharing

2.1. Marketing Training for grassroots women

A training program on market dynamics and marketing strategies was successfully conducted with the objective of strengthening women's

understanding of business principles, market practices, and sustainable income-generation approaches. The initiative aimed to empower women participants by equipping them with practical knowledge and skills to navigate market complexities, manage businesses effectively, and enhance their economic resilience.

The training was conducted in two locations to ensure participants from both the project intervening areas. The first training was conducted in Thankot while the second was conducted in Khokana. A total of 60 grassroots women participated, with 30 women from Thankot and 30 women from Khokana. The high turnout and active participation reflected strong interest among women in learning about market systems and entrepreneurship.

The session commenced with a presentation by Ms. Binita Shrestha, who introduced the core concept of business as a profit-oriented activity driven by customer satisfaction. She highlighted that business fundamentally involves investment risks and often requires collective efforts among multiple individuals. She emphasized the importance of sustainability in business operations, explaining that a successful enterprise must follow a structured framework that supports income generation, employment creation, and long-term viability.



She presented a four-tier business framework consisting of:

- Revenue Generation
- Income Creation
- Self-employment
- Overall Business Management

These tiers were explained as interlinked components essential for building a strong and sustainable business model that contributes to individual and community-level economic empowerment.

The sessions enabled participants to understand critical elements of successful business management, including:

- The importance of preparing a clear business plan
- Maintaining proper financial records
- Managing personal and household expenses within business earnings
- The habit of saving and avoiding unnecessary expenditures

Participants also learned that increased production leads to higher sales and greater profit, reinforcing a fundamental market principle essential for business growth.

In the subsequent session, Mrs. Sarala K.C. expanded on the lessons learned the previous session. Her facilitation was focused on practical application, encouraging participants to reflect on their own experiences and discuss effective marketing and business strategies. This interactive and participatory approach strengthened participants' understanding and promoted peer learning. The open discussions helped clarify concepts and increased participants' confidence to apply the knowledge in real-life business settings.

The training sessions helped to enhance understanding of market dynamics and business sustainability among women participants improving knowledge of profit generation, financial management, and savings practices. It also helped to strengthen confidence to engage in self-employment and small business activities fostering a collaborative learning environment encouraging experience-sharing and collective problem-solving. This initiative contributes meaningfully to women's economic empowerment and lays a strong foundation for sustainable livelihood development in the participating communities.

2.2. Peer learning exchange visit for grassroot women

As part of the project initiatives, the Community Women Forum, with financial support from the HUAIROU Commission, organized two learning visits to expose women participants to successful models of commercial organic farming. These visits aimed to transform classroom learning into real-life inspiration by connecting participants with experienced women farmers who have built sustainable livelihoods through agriculture.

First Learning Visit: Sankhu – Learning from a Leading Organic Farmer

On 13 October 2025, a total of 56 women participants from Chandragiri Municipality (Wards 3 and 4) and Lalitpur Metropolitan City Ward 21 (Khokana) visited Sankhu to observe the commercial organic farm of Ms. Tara Sherpa.

Ms. Tara Sherpa shared her inspiring journey of becoming a successful organic farmer after being motivated by an exposure visit to India in 2017. Starting with just 20 ropani of leased land, she gradually expanded her work to nearly 150 ropani, integrating vegetable farming with cow and goat rearing. Today, she is recognized by the Government of Nepal as a farmer producing over 90% organic vegetables and earns a sustainable income through advance market orders.



Participants observed modern and climate-resilient practices such as tunnel farming, drip irrigation using cow urine, mixed cropping, compost preparation, botanical pesticides, and seed conservation. The visit highlighted how organic farming, when combined with innovation and perseverance, can generate income and employment locally.

Second Learning Visit: Chitwan – Integrated Farming for Sustainable Income

The second learning visit took place on 30-31 January 2026 in Rapti Municipality Ward 8, Chitwan, with 28 participants from women's cooperatives and CWF. The group visited the commercial farm of Ms. Somi Darai, an experienced cooperative leader turned agripreneur.

Ms. Darai demonstrated how integrated farming, combining vegetable production with cow and goat farming, supports organic agriculture while ensuring regular income through dairy products. Participants learned about mulching technology, raised-bed farming, fencing, mixed cropping, and market-oriented crop selection such as fast-yielding hybrid capsicum.

Participants from both visits discovered several important insights. They found that livestock and organic farming are complementary practices that can enhance sustainability. Additionally, the adoption of climate-resilient technologies is crucial for adapting to the challenges posed by climate change. Furthermore, small-scale farming has the potential to evolve into profitable ventures over time. Lastly, agriculture led by women can foster local job creation and diminish the reliance on foreign labor migration.



Participants described the visits as highly motivating, noting that seeing real success stories renewed their confidence and commitment to continue farming. Many expressed plans to start small, work collectively, and share their learning within their communities.

2.3. Distribution training materials

S.N	Name of community	Materials distributed	Nos.
1	Khokana	Liquid Composting Drum	30
2		Grow bags	300 pcs
3		Vermi Compost	60 kg
4		Coco pit	165 kg
5		Seeds	Different 9 seeds to 30 participants.
1	Thankot	Liquid Composting Drum	31
2		Grow bags	310 pcs
4		Vermi Compost	62 kg
5		Co-copit	170.5 kg
6		Seeds	Different 9 seeds to 31 participants.

2.4. 16 sessions of Innovative Organic Farming Training

CWF organized 16 sessions of Innovative Organic Farming Training targeting grassroot women from Khokana and Thankot who are actively involved in agriculture. The sessions were conducted in Chandragiri Municipality (Wards 3 and 4, Thankot) from June 11 to November 3, 2025, and in Lalitpur Metropolitan City (Ward 21, Khokana) from June 7 to October 31, 2025. A total of 62 grassroot women involved in agriculture were engaged in the

training session. The training was facilitated by Pushpa Mishra as the Lead and Vidya Laxmi Manandhar as the Co-facilitator, in collaboration with local partners, including the Thankot Mahila Jagaran Saving and Credit Cooperative and the Khokana Mahila Saving and Credit Cooperative. The training program focused on sustainable kitchen and terrace gardening, gender justice in food systems, climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture. The primary goal was to increase food security and reduce dependence on chemical fertilizers and pesticides.



The primary goals include enhancing skills and knowledge in organic farming practices, particularly through the implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Additionally, there is a focus on minimizing the reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Furthermore, efforts will be made to promote awareness regarding nutrition, sustainable agricultural practices, and the importance of food security.



The training process commenced with thorough planning and coordination, which involved organizing meetings with local cooperatives to identify potential participants. A comprehensive training schedule was crafted, including a total of 16 sessions designed to cover various aspects of agricultural practices. To facilitate effective learning, training materials such as seeds, tools, grow bags, and compost drums were prepared and distributed to participants. Additionally, a plastic tunnel house was constructed to serve as a venue for practical demonstrations, allowing participants to engage directly with the materials and techniques being taught.



The training methodology was structured to maximize both theoretical knowledge and practical application, with each session comprising two hours of theoretical instruction followed by two to three hours of hands-on fieldwork. Participants were organized into five groups, fostering an environment of teamwork and peer learning. The sessions incorporated participatory discussions, group activities, games, and field demonstrations to enhance engagement. To provide a tangible learning experience, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plots and traditional farming plots were established for direct comparison. To assess the effectiveness of the training, pre- and post-tests were administered to evaluate knowledge retention, while home visits were conducted to ensure individual follow-up and mentoring. The program concluded with a closing session that involved local leaders, during which participants were awarded certificates recognizing their achievements.



Objective (iii): Advocacy & Policy Engagement

3.1. A local-level workshop on Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice

The Community Women Forum (CWF) successfully organized a national workshop titled “Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice” on 11th August 2025 in Lalitpur. The event brought together policymakers, local government representatives, agricultural experts, and community leaders to examine Nepal’s food security challenges through a gender lens.

Although Article 36 of Nepal's Constitution guarantees the right to food sovereignty, participants highlighted persistent gaps between progressive policies and their implementation. Climate change, declining agricultural productivity, weak institutional coordination, and structural barriers continue to threaten sustainable food systems. Women, Dalits, indigenous communities, and marginalized farmers, who form the backbone of agriculture, remain excluded from land ownership, financial services, markets, and decision-making spaces.



In her keynote address, consultant- Ms. Goma Sigdel, an agricultural expert and researcher in Development Studies and Climate Resilience, emphasized that without gender-responsive monitoring, accountability, and budgeting, food security policies will fail to deliver equitable outcomes. Panelists, including representatives from Chandragiri Municipality and Lalitpur Metropolitan City, acknowledged budget limitations, procedural hurdles, and patriarchal norms as key obstacles to effective implementation.

CWF also highlighted its grassroots initiatives in women's health, livelihood development, and sustainable agriculture, including HPVDNA testing, entrepreneurship training, and promotion of eco-friendly Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices.

The workshop concluded with strong commitments to strengthen inclusive participation, improve women's access to resources and subsidies, promote climate-resilient technologies, and institutionalize gender-responsive planning and budgeting. Participants agreed that empowering women is not only a matter of social justice but essential for achieving resilient and sustainable food security in Nepal. *(The detailed report of the workshop is attached as the annexes)*

3.2. Policy Dialogue on Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice

On December 30, 2025, a Policy Dialogue on Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice was held in Lalitpur, bringing together policymakers, government officials, academics, researchers, civil society representatives, and community leaders. The dialogue examined Nepal's food security landscape through a gender lens, aiming to bridge the gap between policy commitments and lived realities.

Although Nepal's Constitution guarantees the right to food sovereignty under Article 36 and progressive sectoral policies are in place, food insecurity and malnutrition persist, particularly among women, Dalits, Indigenous peoples, and marginalized farmers. Discussions underscored that food insecurity in Nepal is deeply gendered. Women, who form the backbone of agricultural labor and household nutrition management, continue to face unequal access to land, credit, markets, technology, and decision-making spaces.

Participants highlighted key barriers including unpaid care work, male outmigration, tokenistic participation of marginalized groups, unequal land ownership, weak inter-ministerial coordination, and gender-blind budgeting. While many existing programs adopt gender-responsive approaches, such as providing training or subsidies to women, they often fail to challenge underlying power structures and social norms that perpetuate inequality.

The dialogue emphasized the need to move beyond symbolic inclusion toward genuine, transformative participation. This requires normative



change to address discriminatory social norms, institutional reforms that embed gender-transformative objectives into policies and budgets, and stronger accountability mechanisms to track shifts in power and agency. Stakeholders also stressed that gender equality is central to food security, not a secondary concern.

Concluding with a strong call for collaboration, participants committed to strengthening coordination across sectors and governance levels. The dialogue marked an important step toward aligning policy intent with practice and advancing inclusive, resilient, and gender-just food systems in Nepal. *(The detailed report of the workshop is attached as the annexes)*

3.3. A Policy Dialogue on Climate Change, its impact on Food Security and its challenges

On 25 January 2026, the Community Women Forum (CWF) organized a Policy Dialogue on Climate Resilient and Gender Transformative Food Systems in Lalitpur. The event brought together representatives from federal and local governments, civil society organizations, academia, development partners, and community leaders to address the growing intersection of climate change, food insecurity, and gender inequality in Nepal.



Nepal remains one of the world's most climate vulnerable countries, with floods, droughts, and other climate-induced disasters threatening agricultural productivity and household nutrition. Although the Constitution guarantees the Right to Food and the Right to a Clean Environment, women, Dalits,



Indigenous Peoples, and marginalized farmers continue to face structural barriers in accessing land, credit, technology, markets, and decision-making spaces. Participants emphasized that while existing policies are largely gender-responsive, they fall short of transforming the unequal power relations embedded within food systems.

The dialogue highlighted practical solutions already underway at local levels, including women targeted agricultural grants, climate risk mapping, community seed banks, water harvesting systems, and promotion of climate smart practices such as drought tolerant crops and raised bed farming. However, significant gaps persist in coordination, gender analysis in budgeting, outcome-based monitoring, and integration of research evidence into policy processes.

Key recommendations called for institutionalizing gender- and climate-responsive budgeting, strengthening multi-sectoral coordination, formalizing research entry points into planning cycles, and investing in women's leadership and market access. Participants stressed that empowering women in agriculture is not only a matter of equity but a prerequisite for sustainable food security and climate resilience.

The workshop concluded with a shared commitment to move beyond token participation toward genuine transformation, ensuring that food security in Nepal is grounded in equity, accountability, and inclusive governance. *(The detailed report of the workshop is attached as the annexes)*

4. Key Learnings and Challenges

The Constitution of Nepal, through Article 36, guarantees every citizen the right to food security; however, the practical implementation of this right remains incomplete and uneven. Despite the legal framework in place, various factors hinder the effective realization of food security for all citizens. The challenges are combined by climate change, which adversely affects agricultural productivity, as well as geographical obstacles and weak institutional mechanisms that create significant barriers within the food system.

Women, Dalits, indigenous peoples, and marginalized farmers are the backbone of agriculture in Nepal, yet their contributions are often overlooked in decision-making processes. The lack of access to resources, technology, markets, and financial systems further worsens the challenges they face. This exclusion not only undermines their potential but also effects food insecurity, making it a continuing issue that requires urgent attention and action from policymakers.

A notable gap exists between policy provisions and their practical application, largely due to budget constraints and insufficient information dissemination. Women, in particular, struggle to access available resources, often burdened by dual responsibilities of household chores and agricultural work. This dual burden significantly hampers their ability to make progress, as evidenced by instances where training sessions intended for 15 participants have seen 30 attendees, highlighting the overwhelming demand for support and the need for more inclusive and effective training programs.

6. Conclusion

This project emphasizes that improving food security in Nepal goes beyond just implementing agricultural techniques. It requires a fundamental change that focuses on gender equality, resilience to climate change, and inclusive governance.

At the community level, the project demonstrated that grassroots women are not passive beneficiaries but capable innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders. Through targeted training, practical demonstrations, peer exchanges, and infrastructure support, women in Khokana and Thankot strengthened their technical capacity, enhanced household nutrition, and increased their economic participation. The installation of rainwater harvesting systems and adoption of climate-resilient practices provided practical responses to water scarcity and environmental stress, reinforcing sustainability.

The market fair and marketing training sessions demonstrated that women's economic empowerment improves when they have direct access to markets, financial education, and confidence in their entrepreneurial skills. Although the sales outcomes were promising, the experience highlighted areas needing enhancement, such as packaging, branding, and product variety. This indicates a clear need for ongoing capacity-building and consistent support for market connections.

Peer learning visits and documented case studies proved particularly transformative. Exposure to successful women agripreneurs expanded participants' aspirations and demonstrated that organic farming can evolve into commercially viable enterprises. The publication of grassroots stories strengthened collective identity and reinforced social recognition of women's contributions to food systems.

The discussions at the policy level highlighted a significant detachment between Nepal's progressive constitutional promises, especially regarding the Right to Food Sovereignty, and the actual implementation on the ground. Although there are frameworks aimed at addressing gender issues, deep-rooted obstacles persist, such as unequal land ownership, unpaid caregiving responsibilities, limited access to financial resources and technology, poor institutional collaboration, and budgeting that overlooks gender considerations. These issues emphasize the need for policy inclusion to evolve from mere symbolic gestures to genuine transformative actions that tackle power disparities and structural inequalities.

A key lesson emerging from the project is that food insecurity in Nepal is deeply gendered and climate-sensitive. Addressing it effectively requires integrated action across community, market, and governance levels. Women's empowerment in agriculture is not merely a social equity issue; it is central to sustainable food systems, local economic resilience, and climate adaptation.

The project also revealed strong demand for training and institutional support, as participation often exceeded planned capacity. This signals both the relevance of the

intervention and the need for scaling up similar initiatives. Sustained investment in women's leadership, climate-resilient technologies, market access, and gender-transformative policy reform will be essential to consolidate gains and expand impact.

In conclusion, the project has laid a strong foundation for women-led, climate-resilient urban food systems in Khokana and Thankot. It has strengthened grassroots capacities, enhanced economic opportunities, fostered collective learning, and stimulated policy dialogue. Continued partnership and donor support will be critical to deepen these outcomes, institutionalize gender-transformative practices, and scale this model to other urban and peri-urban communities across Nepal.

Annexes

Case Studies

Growing Confidence Through Rooftop Farming

Ratna Devi Maharjan, a resident of Ward No. 21 in Khokana, Lalitpur Metropolitan City, has transformed her rooftop into a kitchen garden while continuing her regular household responsibilities. Her journey into rooftop farming began after the devastating 2015 earthquake (B.S. 2072), which left her home dilapidated. After rebuilding her house in 2017 (B.S. 2074), she started something meaningful from her own rooftop.



Inspired by photos and videos of rooftop gardening on Facebook, Ratna Devi initiated her farming journey using broken and unused household utensils as planting pots. In the beginning, she lacked technical knowledge. She collected soil from nearby construction sites and planted whatever seeds she had available. “Some crops grew well, some did not. I did not know what soil mixture to prepare or how to manage the plants properly,” she recalls.

In 2018 (B.S. 2075), Ratna Devi participated in a five-day rooftop farming training and exposure visit organized by the Community Women Forum. After receiving essential materials and practical guidance, she began managing her rooftop garden more systematically. Although her vegetables initially grew well, productivity declined after one or two harvests. Despite such problems, she continued her work.

Her dedication inspired her sister-in-law, and together they expanded their rooftop farming activities. Seeing their success, neighbors also began planting vegetables on their rooftops. Ratna Devi found joy in sharing her knowledge and supporting others in starting their own gardens.

With strong family support, she became even more motivated. Today, her rooftop produces leafy greens, green onions, garlic leaves, chayote shoots, green chilies, and some fruits. She proudly shares, “Now I do not even know the market price of vegetables. I rarely need to buy greens from the market.” Rooftop farming has reduced household expenses and ensured fresh, chemical-free produce for her family.



In 2021 (B.S. 2078), Ratna Devi enrolled in a 16-week rooftop farming training conducted by a local organization in Lalitpur. Although she could not complete it due to health issues, she continued learning through Facebook and YouTube, where she shared her produce and received valuable suggestions from fellow gardeners.

Recently, she completed a 16-weeks professional rooftop farming training organized again by the Community Women Forum. This time, she fully participated and gained in-depth technical knowledge. Reflecting on her journey, she says, “This training has awakened the confidence in me that I can become a skilled rooftop farmer. I want to share my knowledge with others and continue this work.”

Ratna Devi’s story highlights how access to training, community support, and personal determination can empower women to transform limited urban spaces into productive, sustainable food sources. Her journey from uncertainty to confidence demonstrates the potential of rooftop farming in strengthening household food security, reducing expenses, and fostering women’s leadership in urban agriculture.



Rooftop and Kitchen Gardening Improving Household Food Security

Maiya Shrestha, a resident of Khokana in Lalitpur Metropolitan City, has been successfully doing rooftop and kitchen gardening works for the past seven years. What began as a small experiment has now become an important part of her daily life, contributing to her family’s food security and healthy lifestyle.

Maiya started rooftop gardening after rebuilding her house following the 2015 earthquake. Her new house construction was completed in 2017, and she moved into it the following year. Soon after settling in, she began planting flowers in five pots on her rooftop. Over time, her interest in gardening grew, and she gradually expanded her rooftop farm. Today, she manages nearly 100 pots on her rooftop, cultivating a variety of vegetables and fruits.



Alongside rooftop farming, Maiya has also developed a small kitchen garden. She grows a wide range of seasonal crops including dragon fruit, garlic, onion, cauliflower, beans, chili, pumpkin, cucumber, tomatoes, coriander, potatoes, and several other vegetables and fruits.

These products now supply vegetables for her family of six, significantly reducing the need to purchase vegetables from the market.

Reflecting on her early days of gardening, Maiya explains that she initially lacked technical knowledge. She did not know how to properly prepare soil or manage crops, and pests often damaged her plants, resulting in poor yields. However, after participating in training programs on rooftop and kitchen gardening, she gained valuable knowledge about soil preparation, seed selection, crop timing, and plant care.



Through the training, she also learned how to prepare organic liquid fertilizers and natural pest-control solutions, which have helped improve her production. Previously, she relied heavily on chemical fertilizers, but now she prepares her own organic fertilizers at home. This has reduced her expenses on agricultural inputs while ensuring that the vegetables grown for her family are fresh, healthy, and chemical-free.

Maiya believes that practical experience combined with training has strengthened her confidence and skills. She has realized that with dedication and proper techniques, rooftop and kitchen gardening can be highly productive even in limited urban spaces. The knowledge she gained has not only benefited her family but has also encouraged her to support others who are interested in gardening.

She shared that the 16-week rooftop and kitchen gardening training organized by the Community Women Forum in collaboration with a local women's cooperative in Khokana was particularly beneficial. The training equipped her with practical skills such as seedling production, compost preparation, fertilizer application, preparing organic sprays, soil preparation for grow bags, and identifying pests and diseases.



Today, Maiya feels confident that she can also guide others in starting their own gardens. Looking ahead, she plans to continue rooftop and kitchen gardening to produce fresh, organic, and healthy vegetables for her family, while promoting a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle.

Rooftop Gardening Training Enhancing Skills and Personal Development

Kanchi Gopali, a resident of Ward No. 3 of Chandragiri Municipality in Thankot, has experienced remarkable personal and practical growth through rooftop gardening training. What began as a simple curiosity after seeing vegetables growing on other rooftops gradually transformed into a productive activity that strengthened both her skills and confidence.



Before joining the training, Kanchi had never practiced rooftop gardening. However, she often noticed vegetables growing on the rooftops of neighboring houses, which sparked her interest. She wanted to try it herself but did not know where or how to begin.

Her opportunity came when she learned about a rooftop gardening training program organized by the Community Women Forum in coordination with the Thankot Women's Savings and Credit Cooperative. Motivated to learn, she filled out the application form and joined the training program.

After being selected, Kanchi enthusiastically began preparing the necessary materials to start rooftop gardening. At the beginning, she arranged seven to eight grow bags and essential supplies and started planting vegetables following the instructions provided during the training sessions. With continued practice and learning, her confidence grew steadily.



Today, at the age of 49, Kanchi manages more than 60 grow bags on her rooftop. She cultivates a variety of vegetables including spinach, radish, coriander, cauliflower, cabbage, cucumber, chili, pumpkin, and okra, among others. These vegetables not only provide fresh produce for her household but also bring her great satisfaction.

Kanchi shares that the training did more than just teach her gardening techniques. It also helped improve her self-confidence, knowledge, and personal development. Through the training, she gained practical skills in planting, managing crops, and maintaining a productive rooftop garden.

Her experience demonstrates how community-based training programs can empower women by providing practical skills, encouraging productive use of limited urban spaces, and strengthening their confidence. For Kanchi, rooftop gardening has become not only a source of fresh vegetables but also a meaningful activity that contributes to her personal growth and well-being.

Rooftop Gardening Increasing Household Savings and Healthy Food

Sarita Shrestha, a resident of Ward No. 4 in Thankot of Chandragiri Municipality, has experienced meaningful changes in her daily life after participating in rooftop gardening training. The knowledge and skills she gained have enabled her to grow fresh vegetables at home, reduce household expenses, and promote healthier food consumption for her family.

Before receiving formal training, Sarita had already begun experimenting with rooftop gardening on a small scale. She used about ten pots on her rooftop and planted vegetables using her own methods. However, due to limited technical knowledge, the results were not very successful. Out of ten plants, only four or five would survive and produce vegetables. Since her farmland was located far from her home, she still had to rely on purchasing vegetables from the market, which increased household expenses.



Sarita later got the opportunity to participate in a 16-week rooftop and kitchen gardening training organized by the Community Women Forum. The training significantly improved her knowledge and skills in urban agriculture. She learned about proper soil preparation, seedling management, crop care, pest and disease control, and the preparation of organic fertilizers.

After completing the training, Sarita expanded her rooftop garden to 30–40 grow bags. She now cultivates a wide range of vegetables including cauliflower, cabbage, spinach, radish, coriander, tomato, cucumber, carrot, okra, chili, beans, pumpkin, garlic, and onion. These vegetables are mainly used for household consumption, allowing her family to enjoy fresh and healthy produce directly from their rooftop.

Sarita shares that rooftop gardening has now become a part of her daily routine. She spends much of her time caring for her plants and maintaining her rooftop garden. The practice has not only reduced the need to buy vegetables from the market but has also brought satisfaction and motivation to continue the activity in the future.



She also shares her harvest with friends and neighbors, while her family members are happy to eat fresh vegetables grown at home. Sarita emphasizes that she does not use chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Instead, she

prepares organic compost and liquid fertilizers, using the knowledge gained during the training.

Reflecting on her learning journey, Sarita explains that before the training she had little knowledge about plant diseases and pest management. Whenever problems appeared in her plants, she would simply buy whatever pesticide was available in the market. After the training, she now understands the causes of plant diseases and pests and knows how to manage them using safer and more sustainable methods.

Sarita Shrestha's experience demonstrates how practical training in rooftop gardening can empower urban households, especially women, to produce healthy food at home, reduce expenses, and develop confidence in sustainable urban agriculture practices.

Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice

Date: 11 August 2025

Venue: Alice Conference, Bakhundole, Lalitpur

Organizers: Community Women Forum

Background:

Food security is enshrined as a fundamental right in Nepal's Constitution (Article 36), guaranteeing every citizen's right to food sovereignty. Despite this constitutional provision and a series of progressive laws and policies, Nepal continues to face serious food security challenges. The country is highly vulnerable to climate change, declining agricultural productivity, geographical constraints, and weak implementation mechanisms.

Women, Dalits, indigenous groups, and marginalized farmers are the backbone of agriculture and household food security. Yet, they are often excluded from access to land, resources, credit, technology, markets, and most importantly, decision-making processes. At the local government level, progressive programs are in place, including subsidies, crop diversification schemes, and women-targeted training. However, procedural hurdles, lack of outreach, and insufficient budget allocations mean that women and marginalized groups still are not fully included. Climate-induced disasters, migration, and urbanization further worsen these vulnerabilities, threatening sustainable and equitable food systems.

In this context, the Community Women Forum (CWF) found it necessary to organize a workshop entitled "Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice," by bringing together policymakers, local governments, experts, and community representatives. The program schedule includes the inauguration, welcome remarks, a presentation from CWF, and a keynote presentation on "Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice," followed by a panel discussion with open floor discussions, and a closing. The program was chaired by Ms. Sarala K.C., president of CWF, with Honorable Bindu Shrestha, Member of Parliament, serving as the chief guest. Likewise, distinguished guests from local government, policy experts, and community leaders also attended.

This event aimed to discuss the current food security situation in Nepal, with a focus on the gender aspects of policies and practices, and to bridge the gap between policy and practice. It provides a platform to explore opportunities, challenges, and strategies for increasing the involvement of women and marginalized groups in the food system. The objectives of the program were:

- To discuss the current policies on food security in Nepal and the programs carried out at the local level.
- To deliberate on the state of gender equality regarding these policies and programs and their practical implementation.
- To advocate for gender-friendly and practical policies and programs at the university.

The opening session has emphasized CWF works related to food security, highlighting the urgency of addressing both structural and gender-related challenges. The CWF's work has been explained in detail by project coordinator Ms. Vidya Laxmi Manandhar.

CWF Introduction:

The CWF is a grassroots organization established in 2067 B.S. with the vision of empowering women through health, livelihood, and sustainable agriculture. Founded by women and led by women, the organization works to strengthen community resilience by integrating health awareness, skill development, and eco-friendly farming practices. It has introduced its project and has implemented it in the Chandragiri Municipality and Lalitpur Metropolitan City. The objective of the project is to promote women's health through awareness, prevention, and access to essential services, to enhance income-generating opportunities for women through training and entrepreneurship, to strengthen sustainable agriculture practices with a focus on agro-ecosystem management and integrated pest management (IPM), and to build networks and partnerships for collective action and knowledge sharing. The activities highlighted were,

1. Women's Health
 - Organized HPV DNA testing to promote early detection and prevention of cervical cancer.
 - Conducted awareness programs on women's reproductive and general health.
2. Livelihood and Skill Development
 - Training programs on soap and detergent making.
 - Capacity-building workshops for women to develop small-scale enterprises.
3. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security
 - Agro-ecosystem analysis (AEA) sessions were conducted with community farmers.
 - Introduced Jholmal and Bokashi mal to promote the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system, which has proven to be more productive and environmentally sustainable compared to conventional farming.
 - Facilitated capacity building trainings and linked with farmer networks and organizations for knowledge sharing.

The major achievements highlighted were,

- Increased health awareness and access to preventive services for women.
- Developed women entrepreneurs skilled in local product making.
- Strengthened community-level adoption of eco-friendly farming practices.
- Built strong women-led platforms for collective action in agriculture and food security.

The future direction of the project was shared as:

- Expand women's health initiatives to reach a wider community.
- Diversify skill development training for income generation.
- Scale up IPM-based farming practices to ensure sustainable food security.
- Strengthen institutional networks at local, provincial, and national levels.

In addition to this, Ms. Goma Sigdel, an agricultural expert and researcher in Development Studies and Climate Resilience, has emphasized Nepal's current food security status in the context of the Global Food Security Index and the Global Hunger Index, highlighting the urgency of addressing both structural and gender-related challenges in her keynote speech.

Keynote Speech

Food security in Nepal is both a constitutional right and a key pillar for sustainable development. Article 36 of the Constitution of Nepal affirms every citizen's right to food sovereignty. However, the realization of this right remains inconsistent and fragmented due to climate change, declining agricultural productivity, geographical challenges, and gaps in policy implementation.

She highlighted Nepal's current food security status in the context of the Global Food Security Index and the Global Hunger Index. She stressed the urgency of addressing both structural challenges (limited resources, geographical barriers, and weak implementation) and gender-related challenges (exclusion of women, Dalits, indigenous groups, and marginalized farmers from decision-making processes). She also emphasized that while women and marginalized groups constitute the backbone of agriculture and household food security, they face persistent exclusion from access to land, resources, technology, and markets. These constraints severely limit their ability to benefit equitably from progressive food security policies and programs.

Against this backdrop, the discussion on "Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice" was organized to bring together policymakers, local governments, experts, and community representatives.

Panel Discussion:

The goal was to provide a collaborative platform to identify opportunities, challenges, and strategies for building gender-just and inclusive food systems, particularly at the local level. This discussion particularly focuses on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in the food system in Nepal. The atmosphere was set for a dynamic, evidence-based dialogue where diverse perspectives from government representatives, agricultural experts, and community voices were shared.

Panelists:

- **Mr. Ghanashyam Giri**, Mayor, Chandragiri Municipality
- **Ms. Sashi Adhikari, Sr. Agriculture Economist**, Agriculture Information and Training Center
- **Mr. Dipak Giri**, Agriculture Officer, Lalitpur Metropolitan City
- **Ms. Ratna Devi Maharjan**, Community Representative

The panel discussion was followed by two rounds of question-and-answer sessions, allowing panelists to present their perspectives on local experiences, policy gaps, and gender dimensions of food security. The first round focused on policy effectiveness and gender inclusion in food security at the local government and institutional level. The second round provided platform for reflections on practical challenges, structural barriers, and recommendations for more gender-just food systems. The dialogue was designed to ensure that community voices were given equal weight alongside government and expert perspectives, reflecting the inclusive spirit of the program, with the following objectives.

- To discuss the effectiveness of existing food security policies and local-level programs in Nepal.
- To discuss the status of gender equality within these policies and practices.
- To advocate for practical, gender-friendly food security policies and programs at the local policymaking level.
- To identify pathways for institutional reforms and greater participation of women and marginalized groups in food systems.

Key message from the panelist:

1. Mr. Ghanashyam Giri, Mayor, Chandragiri Municipality

- Shared that municipal planning attempts to incorporate women's needs, including access to nutritious food, seeds, and training.
- However, limitations in budget allocation, weak monitoring, and entrenched patriarchal attitudes hinder effective implementation.
- Example: Community farming programs led by women's groups improved nutrition outcomes, but sustainability is uncertain due to financial constraints.

Successes: Women cooperatives, nutrition campaigns, and local training programs.

Challenges: Limited funds, climate-induced disasters, and weak inter-agency collaboration.

“Food security is not possible without women's empowerment. Yet, we face challenges in translating policy into practice due to financial and social barriers.”

2. Ms. Sashi Adhikari, Sr. Agriculture Economist, Agriculture Information and Training Center

- Highlighted government-run programs for livestock, fisheries, and crop diversification targeting women, Dalits, and marginalized groups.
- Stressed gaps between policy provisions (like subsidies, reservations, access to credit) and on-the-ground realities.
- Called for improving outreach mechanisms, especially in remote and marginalized communities.
- Despite progressive provisions, women remain excluded from implementation.

Causes: Weak accountability, lack of monitoring, and gender-blind budgeting.

Recommendation: Ensure inclusion at every policy stage from planning to evaluation.

“Policies exist, but without gender-responsive monitoring and accountability, they will not deliver results for women and marginalized groups.”

3. Mr. Dipak Giri, Agriculture Officer, Lalitpur Metropolitan City

- Discussed structural and administrative bottlenecks in operationalizing women-focused provisions.
- Pointed out that subsidy schemes often fail to reach women due to procedural hurdles and a lack of information.
- Suggested gender-sensitive extension services and capacity-building as a priority.
- Ongoing initiatives include kitchen garden promotion, women-led cooperatives, and training for agri-enterprises.

Impact: Improved household nutrition and women's income.

Gaps: Programs lack scalability and financial sustainability.

“Structural and administrative hurdles prevent women from accessing subsidies and support services. Unless these barriers are addressed, inclusion will remain rhetoric.”

4. Ms. Ratna Devi Maharjan, Community Representative

- Shared personal experience on barriers to accessing irrigation, quality seeds, livestock services, and training.
- Highlighted that women face additional burdens of unpaid household care work, which limits their time to engage in productive agriculture.
- Urged local governments to ensure meaningful community participation in program design.
- Community members demanded better market linkages, irrigation facilities, and input support.
- Emphasized that access to subsidies and services should be simplified and transparent.

“Women face double workloads and systemic exclusion from services. Unless local planning includes community voices, food security will not be inclusive.”

Open discussion and remarks

Several critical points were identified that reflect the persistent challenges in ensuring food security and gender inclusion. Participants highlighted that women continue to face heavy workload burdens, with their unpaid care work largely going unrecognized. At the same time, institutional coordination remains weak, and government support is often fragmented, leading to inefficiencies.

Besides these challenges, such as limited access to land, resources, technology, and decision-making power, are equally important to ensure that women are not trapped in the feminization of poverty. Unfortunately, these aspects are often found missing in many local governments (palikas). It was also noted that representation of women and marginalized groups in policymaking and budgeting processes is still limited, which weakens the inclusivity of decision-making.

Although Nepal has progressive food security policies, participants emphasized that these are not fully gender-responsive in practice, as women and marginalized groups continue to encounter barriers in land ownership, financial access, and decision-making spaces. While local governments

are making efforts, they face significant structural, budgetary, and social challenges in implementation. For this, transparent information sharing, proper registration of genuine farmers, avoiding duplication in capacity-building programs, and guaranteeing the active participation of women and farmers are essential. The discussion concluded that policy practice gaps remain a major hindrance, underscoring the urgent need for more localized, inclusive, and gender-just approaches to strengthen food security systems.

Furthermore, the Chief Guest and the Ward Chair highlighted that strengthening food security and GESI integration in Nepal requires **context-specific and multifaceted support** alongside strong policy reforms and inclusive practices. They emphasized the following key points:

- **Technology transfer** to enhance agricultural productivity and resilience.
- Strengthening **market access and marketing systems** for farmers to ensure fair returns.
- Establishing **well-equipped and sophisticated training centers** for farmers' skill development and capacity building.
- Promoting the concept of **"One Village, One Product"** to encourage specialization and sustainable income generation.
- Supporting the **promotion of underutilized crops** and ensuring the **proper conservation of their seeds** for future food security and biodiversity preservation.
- Urging policymakers to **dismantle patriarchal norms** and guarantee equitable access for women and marginalized groups.
- Stressing the need for **evidence-based policies** through stronger partnerships between research institutions and governments.
- Calling for **stronger monitoring mechanisms** and **gender-responsive budgeting** to bridge the gap between policies and implementation.
- Reiterating that **women's representation in planning and policymaking must be institutionalized** to achieve sustainable and inclusive food security.

These remarks show the importance of localized strategies, inclusive governance, and integrated efforts to promote gender equality, strengthen food security, and empower farming communities in long term.

Conclusion

This workshop critically explores Nepal's food security landscape through a gender lens. It highlighted both achievements and persisting gaps while emphasizing the urgency of inclusive transformations for women and marginalized groups in agriculture and food systems. Discussion pointed out that empowering women in food systems is not just a matter of social equity but a prerequisite for achieving sustainable food security and community resilience. The diverse participation of policymakers, local government leaders, agricultural experts, and community representatives enriched the dialogue and ensured that multiple perspectives were reflected.

It concluded with strong commitments from makers and stakeholders to advance security through an inclusive, gender just approach. Hon. Bindu Shrestha stressed the need for stronger research-policy collaboration to effectively address structural challenges, bridge the gap between policy and practice, and dismantle systemic barriers. Moving forward, the way ahead requires concrete actions such as strengthening gender-responsive policies, ensuring women's meaningful participation in planning and decision-making, expanding access to resources and technologies,

and scaling up locally driven innovations. The workshop has paved the way for future partnerships and collaborative efforts to build an equitable, resilient, and sustainable food security system in Nepal.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions, the following recommendations and strategic actions are proposed to strengthen the existing food security system through a gender inclusive lens.

1. **Inclusive participation:** Guarantee meaningful representation of women, dalits, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups in local planning, budgeting, and monitoring processes. Their voices must be substantive rather than symbolic to ensure inclusivity in decision-making.
2. **Access to resources:** Improve women's access to irrigation, quality seeds, fertilizer, livestock services, and functional market linkages. Transparent farmer registration processes and simplified procedures are critical to ensure genuine farmers, especially women, benefit from government programs.
3. **Financial inclusion:** Expand gender-sensitive loan and subsidy schemes that are affordable, accessible, and tailored to the needs of women farmers and entrepreneurs. Removing procedural barriers and ensuring outreach to remote areas are vital for equity. Collaborate with financial institutions to benefit farmers.
4. **Innovation:** Promote women-friendly, time-saving agricultural technologies and climate-resilient practices. This includes the conservation and promotion of underutilized crops, scaling up Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and advancing eco-friendly farming systems to ensure long-term sustainability.
5. **Coordination, collaboration, and partnerships:** Strengthen collaboration, coordination, and partnerships among provincial and local governments, NGOs, cooperatives, and community groups. Multi-stakeholder coordination is key to ensuring holistic and sustained progress in food security.
6. **Policy reform:** Strengthen gender-sensitive laws and ensure their implementation at the local level with clear accountability mechanisms. Effective monitoring and enforcement are essential to bridge the persistent gap between policy and practice.

Way Forward:

The workshop emphasized that subsidies on agricultural tools, promoting capacity development, increasing meaningful participation, gender-sensitive budgeting, effective monitoring systems, and women-friendly innovations are essential to bridge the gap between policy intentions and ground realities. Moving forward, a strong political vision, community mobilization, and collaborative partnerships with related stakeholders can reduce systemic barriers and build a food system that is inclusive, equitable, and resilient.

Prepared by:
Goma Sigdel

Policy Dialogue on Food Security in Nepal: Gender Participation in Policy and Practice

Date: December 30, 2025

Venue: Alice Conference, Lalitpur

Background

Food security in Nepal remains a persistent development challenge, which is shaped not only by production constraints and environmental risks, but also by deep-rooted social inequalities. Gender inequality plays a decisive role in shaping food systems, especially among those who produce food, controls resources, make decisions, and ultimately benefit from them.

Although, it is constitutionally guaranteed in Nepal Under the article 36, which affirms every citizen's right to food sovereignty. Despite this strong legal foundation and the presence of progressive sectoral policies, food insecurity, malnutrition and inequality remain persistent challenges.

Over the past ten years, Nepal's complex food security issues have been exacerbated by climate change, declining agricultural production, geographical limitations, labor migration, and insufficient policy implementation mechanisms. Women, Dalits, indigenous peoples, and marginalized farmers have a critical role in agricultural output, household nutrition, and the resilience of the food system. However, their contributions are rarely matched by equitable access to markets, money, technology, and decision-making authority.

In order to determine if current policies and initiatives go beyond gender responsiveness to a gender transformative approach, a policy conversation was held in this context to examine Nepal's food security landscape via a gender lens. To minimize the existing gap between research and policy purpose in the real world, the forum brought together policymakers, government officials, academics, researchers, representatives and implementers of civil society organizations, and community leaders.

Objectives

The objective of the dialogue is as follows:

- Identify structural, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers limiting women's participation
- Raise community voices alongside policy and academic perspectives
- Make actionable recommendations for local and national reform

Dialogue Structure

The policy discourse was designed in an inclusive, multi-stakeholder forum. Active participants represented four core groups: policymakers, government institutions, academia, and implementers including civil society and community representatives and were moderated to ensure balanced participation and evidence-based discussion.

The dialogue included opening remarks, thematic discussions across stakeholder groups, which were guided by questions, cross-sector reflections, and a synthesis led by the moderator. The moderator made sure that policy-level conversations were based on lived realities and backed by research findings as the four groups examined ten key questions (annex 1). Ten major questions were discussed among the four groups and the moderator ensured that policy-level discussions were grounded in lived realities and supported by research evidence.

Following evidence was drawn from the discourse during the dialogue, which was synthesized and described below:

1. Gendered Nature of Food Insecurity

Discussions consistently highlighted that food insecurity in Nepal is deeply gendered. Women face unequal access to productive resources, limited control over income, and restricted participation in decision-making spaces. Despite their central role in agriculture and household nutrition, women are often treated as beneficiaries rather than as rights-holders and agents of change.

2. Poverty, Unpaid Care Work, and Migration

Existing poverty, unpaid care work, and male outmigration interact to shape women's food security outcomes. For instance, women carry disproportionate workloads combining agricultural labor with unpaid household and care responsibilities. In addition, migration has increased women's agricultural responsibilities without corresponding increases in rights, services, or institutional support.

3. Policy–Practice Gap

While Nepal's food security policies are progressive on paper, their translation into practice remains fragmented. Weak coordination among ministries and across governance levels, insufficient gender-responsive budgeting, and limited monitoring mechanisms undermine implementation. As a result, women's participation often remains symbolic rather than substantive.

4. Tokenistic Participation of Marginalized Groups

The dialogue confirmed that participation of women, Dalits, indigenous peoples, and marginalized communities in food system governance is often procedural and tokenistic. Genuine participation requires not only representation but also voice, agency, and influence over decisions.

5. Limitations of Gender-Responsive Approaches

Most existing programs were found to be gender-responsive rather than gender-transformative. They focus on supporting women through training or subsidies without challenging unequal power relations, social norms, or institutional structures that perpetuate inequality.

Table 1: Summary of the discussion in nutshell

Issues	Evidence	Consequences
Unpaid care work	Women face problem in time management	Reduce or limit participation in programs
Tokenistic participation	Limited decision power/ even unheard	Weak accountability and ownership
Unequal land ownership	Though increased, still low land registered in women's name	Limit access to credit and subsidies
Weak coordination	Fragmented institutional roles	Ineffective Implementation
Gender blind budgeting	Limited targeted resources	Weak accountability and ownership

The dialogue emphasized that food security policies in Nepal are largely designed within sectoral silos. However, gender considerations are often added as cross-cutting components rather than embedded as core principles. Institutional accountability for gender outcomes remains weak, and monitoring systems rarely track changes in power relations or agencies. Although women constitute the backbone of Nepal's agricultural labor force and play a central role in household nutrition management, their participation in policy formulation, resource governance, and institutional decision-making remains limited. These challenges are disproportionately experienced by women, dalits, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups who form the backbone of Nepal's agricultural and food systems but continue to face structural exclusion from resources, services, and decision making.

Over the past decade, Nepal has introduced several policies and programs aimed at improving food security, nutrition, and agricultural productivity. Many of these policies recognize gender concerns and adopt a gender-responsive approach. However, evidence from research, policy implementation, and community-level practice indicates that these efforts often stop short of addressing the structural and power-related dimensions of gender inequality. As a result, gender gaps in access to land, finance, technology, markets, and decision-making persist, undermining both equity and food security outcomes.

On top of this, academic evidence emphasizes poverty, hunger, and malnutrition as closely linked to gender inequality. Studies highlight a persistent policy gap between policy intent and practice. While policies emphasize inclusion, women's participation often remains confined to beneficiary roles rather than leadership or decision-making positions. This gap weakens the effectiveness and sustainability of food security interventions.

The understanding towards the pathways from gender responsive to gender transformation requires changes across multiple dimensions. First, normative change is essential to challenge social norms that limit women's mobility, leadership, and authority. Secondly, institutional adjustment should embed gender transformative objectives within mandates, budgets, and performance frameworks. Thirdly, it was concluded that gender equality is a core food security issue, not a secondary concern, therefore political commitment is necessary. Finally, stakeholders

such as cooperatives, women groups, civil societies, farmers and private sectors are important for the collection action in these pathways to transform Nepal food System to gender transformative.

Conclusion

Food security in Nepal is not simply a question of production or supply, but it is considered as symbol of equity, power, and governance. Therefore, without addressing structural gender inequalities, sustainable food security and nutrition outcomes cannot be achieved.

Moving from gender-responsive to gender-transformative approaches requires long-term commitment, institutional reform, and social change. This dialogue marked an important step toward aligning policy intent with lived realities creating clear roadmap for inclusive, resilient, and gender-just food systems in Nepal.

The dialogue concluded with strong commitments from policymakers, government institutions, researchers, and civil society actors to continue collaboration, strengthen accountability, and translate dialogue into action.

Food Security and Climate Change: Challenges and the Opportunity

Date: 25 January 2026

Venue: Alice Conference, Bakhundole, Lalitpur

Organizers: Community Women Forum

Summary:

The Policy Dialogue on Climate-Resilient and Gender-Transformative Food Systems was conducted to address the growing intersection of climate change, food insecurity, and gender inequality in Nepal. The dialogue brought together policymakers, local government officials, civil society organizations, academia, and community representatives to generate evidence-informed recommendations for strengthening food security policies and practices through a gender-transformative lens.

The event highlighted that women and marginalized groups remain disproportionately affected by climate-induced food insecurity due to limited access to land, finance, technology, and decision-making processes. While Nepal has adopted several food security and climate policies, these remain largely gender-responsive rather than gender-transformative. Participants collectively emphasized the need for structural reforms that move beyond participation toward transformation of power relations within food systems.

Background:

Nepal is highly vulnerable to climate change due to its fragile geography, dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods, and limited adaptive capacity. Climate-induced hazards such as floods, droughts, and glacial lake outburst floods are increasingly affecting agricultural productivity, food availability, and household nutrition. Women, Dalits, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalized farmers are disproportionately affected due to limited access to land, finance, services, and decision-making spaces. The interaction of climate risks, structural inequalities, and weak evidence-based policymaking has widened the gap between national policies and local realities.

The Constitution of Nepal provides a strong legal foundation for this dialogue. Article 30 (Right to Clean Environment): Every citizen has the right to live in a clean and healthy environment, with provisions for compensation for environmental damage. Article 36 (Right to Food) guarantees food sovereignty and the right to be protected from scarcity. Despite these rights, Nepal remains one of the top 10 most climate-vulnerable countries globally. The agricultural sector, employing over 60% of the population, is under severe threat.

Women being the backbone of agriculture and household food security they are often excluded from access to land, resources, credit, technology, markets, and most importantly, decision-making processes. At the local government level, progressive programs are in place, including subsidies, crop diversification schemes, and women-targeted training. In addition, climate-induced disasters, migration, and urbanization further worsen these vulnerabilities, threatening sustainable and equitable food systems.

While national policies acknowledge the importance of gender equality and climate resilience, significant gaps persist between policy intent and local-level implementation. Evidence generated by academia and civil society remains weakly integrated into planning and budgeting processes. This policy dialogue was therefore convened to create a structured platform for engagement among researchers, policy makers, implementers, and community representatives to address institutional gaps and promote evidence-informed, gender-transformative food systems.

In this context, the Community Women Forum (CWF) organized a workshop entitled policy dialogue and stakeholder workshop to examine the gendered dimensions of food insecurity and explore ways to bridge gaps between community experience, academic research, local implementation and federal policy.

Participants included representatives from local and federal government institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), academic institutions, development partners, and community leaders, with strong representation of women and marginalized groups. The diversity of participants ensured balanced representation of policy, practice and implementation.

This event aims to discuss the current food security situation in relation to climate change and gender inequality in Nepal. Furthermore, it bridges the gap between policy and practice i.e. implementation. This workshop provides a platform to identify strategies for improving women's participation and leadership in food systems by strengthening linkages between academia, civil society, and government institutions. Finally, it generates actionable recommendations for gender-transformative and climate-resilient food systems.

The opening session emphasized CWF works related to food security, highlighting the urgency of addressing both structural and gender-related challenges in lieu of climate change. In addition to this, another presentation was carried out to link the subject matter for the policy dialogue.

Key Discussion Areas and Findings:

The goal was to provide a collaborative platform to identify opportunities, challenges, and strategies for building gender-just and inclusive food systems, particularly at the local level. This discussion particularly focuses on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in the food system in Nepal. The atmosphere was set for a dynamic, evidence-based dialogue where diverse perspectives from government representatives, agricultural experts, and community voices were shared.

CSOs, Stakeholders, and Implementers

Participants emphasized that women, Dalits, and marginalized groups must be meaningfully engaged in food security and climate programs. Key findings include

- Women-centered agricultural and nutrition interventions such as kitchen gardens, nutrient-rich crops, and small livestock were identified as highly effective.

- Training and service delivery must be accessible, including flexible timing and proximity to communities.
- Cash grants alone are insufficient; they must be complemented with inputs such as tools and required skills.
- Climate-smart practices, including raised-bed farming and drought-tolerant crops, are essential in flood- and drought-prone areas.
- Community needs assessments should be mandatory in project design.
- CSOs play a critical role in institutionalizing women's and marginalized groups' voices within local government decision-making processes.

Academia

a) Structural and Institutional Gaps

Academician/ researchers highlighted that

- Local evidence and experience are inadequately used in policy formulation.
- Horizontal and vertical coordination between agriculture, food security, and climate sectors remains weak.
- Roles and responsibilities across federal, provincial, and local levels are insufficiently defined
- Gender analysis is rarely integrated into planning and budgeting
- Monitoring systems remain output-focused rather than outcome-oriented, particularly in nutrition and workload reduction

b) Evidence-to-Action Processes

Proposed mechanisms include

- Development and dissemination of policy briefs and local planning toolkits.
- Establishment of researcher–local government interfaces through joint workshops and technical clinics.
- Evidence-based budget tagging, particularly for gender and climate priorities.
- Community validation of research findings through CSOs.
- Formal entry points for research evidence within annual local planning cycles.

Local Government

a) Program Implementation

Local government representatives reported

- Ongoing implementation of women-targeted agricultural grants and enterprise programs
- Increased use of climate risk mapping for local planning
- Promotion of community seed banks, water harvesting systems, and flood preparedness measures
- Prioritization of women in training and relief distribution.
- Engagement of female agricultural extension workers.
- Efforts to link farmers to markets and agricultural value chains.

b) Planning and Budgeting

Key improvement areas identified were

- Minimum quotas for women’s participation in participatory planning.
- Stronger application of gender-responsive budgeting.
- Regular coordination mechanisms with CSOs and user groups.
- Climate risk screening during annual planning processes.
- Direct community participation in monitoring and evaluation

Federal Government

a) Institutionalization of Evidence

Federal-level participants proposed:

- Mandatory use of local evidence in national policy reviews
- Establishment of research–policy coordination platform
- Integration of gender and climate indicators into the federal budget framework
- Translation of local best practices into national guidelines
- Long-term partnerships with academia and CSOs

b) Transition to Gender-Transformative Food Systems

To move beyond gender-responsive approaches, participants emphasized;

- Investment in women’s leadership and decision-making roles
- Addressing power relations rather than participating alone
- Outcome-based monitoring focused on nutrition and workload reduction
- Programs targeting harmful gender norms
- Strengthened inter-ministerial coordination

Core Challenges

The challenges highlighted that strengthening food security in the face of climate change and GESI integration in Nepal requires **context-specific and multifaceted support** alongside strong policy reforms and inclusive practices. They emphasized the following key points:

- Dual vulnerability caused by climate risks and microfinance debt burdens, particularly among women
- Continued dependence on traditional farming with limited transition to high-value crops
- Weak coordination between government policies, academic research, and local priorities
- Strengthening **market access and marketing systems** for farmers to ensure fair returns
- Establishing **well-equipped and sophisticated training centers** for farmers’ skill development and capacity building
- Limited land ownership among women, restricting access to credit and technology.
- Heavy burden of unpaid care work
- Tokenistic participation of marginalized groups
- Weak accountability and gender-responsive monitoring systems
- **Technology transfers** to enhance agricultural productivity and resilience
- Promoting the concept of **“One Village, One Product”** to encourage specialization and sustainable income generation

- Supporting the **promotion of underutilized crops** and ensuring the **proper conservation of their seeds** for future food security and biodiversity preservation
- Stressing the need for **evidence-based policies** through stronger partnerships between research institutions and governments

These remarks show the importance of localized strategies, inclusive governance, and integrated efforts to promote gender equality, strengthen food security, and empower farming communities in long term to reduce climate risks.

Proposed solutions

- Productive investment of credit into income-generating agriculture, including vegetables and commercial crops
- Leadership of women and marginalized groups in planning and implementation
- Expansion of climate-smart technologies such as drip irrigation, tunnel farming, and resilient seeds
- Integration of successful local practices into national policy frameworks.
- Implementation of gender- and climate-responsive budgeting at all levels
- Strengthening community-based monitoring systems
- Strengthen vertical as well as horizontal coordination among stakeholders
- Institutionalized bottom-up feedback mechanisms

Key Recommendations

Policy Level

- Ensure meaningful participation of women in policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring
- Strengthening gender-sensitive laws and ensuring their implementation at the local level with clear accountability mechanisms
- Policies must move beyond "supporting" women to "changing" the power structures that marginalize them
- Strengthening ties between federal guidelines and local implementation.
- Effective monitoring and enforcement are essential to bridge the persistent gap between policy and practice
- Formalizing the entry of research findings into the local government planning cycle

Institutional Level

- Strengthening multi-sectoral coordination among agriculture, nutrition, social protection, and local government institutions
- Promote women-friendly, time-saving agricultural technologies and climate-resilient practices
- Institutionalize gender- and climate-responsive budgeting and accountability mechanisms
- Strengthening collaboration, coordination, and partnerships among provincial and local governments, NGOs, cooperatives, and community groups

Program and Community Level

- Invest in women's leadership, skills development, and market access

- Recognize and redistribute unpaid care work through community-level interventions
- Promote collective empowerment through cooperatives, women's groups, and CSOs
- Collaborate with financial institutions to increase financial inclusion

Conclusion

This workshop critically explores Nepal's food security and climate change landscape through a gender lens. It highlighted both achievements and gaps emphasize the urgency of inclusive transformations for women and marginalized groups in agriculture, climate change and food systems. Discussion pointed out that empowering women in food systems is not just a matter of social equity but a prerequisite for achieving sustainable food security by reducing climate impacts, thus increase the community resilience.

The policy dialogue clearly demonstrated that food security is not only a matter of production and supply but also of equity, power relations, and governance. For instance, networking efforts, such as the collaboration with "Shivapuri National Park" and the distribution of "pesticide residue testing equipment", demonstrate that coordinated action is already taken place. Furthermore, without a gender-transformative approach, achieving sustainable food security and nutrition in Nepal will remain unattainable. Coordinated, long-term action across policy, institutional, and community levels is therefore essential.

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