

## Travelling Seminar: Action for Strengthening Elected Women's Leadership in Local Government for Scaling-Up Climate Smart Village Approach in Nepal



Travelling seminar participants in action – Observation of water use efficiency technology adapted by local farming communities in Rajabas, Mahottari district.

### Report prepared by

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## SUMMARY

As part of Gender, Agriculture and Climate Change (GACC) project activity, a travelling seminar was organized jointly by Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) and a local NGO partner- Community Development and Advocacy Forum Nepal (CDAFN) - in Mahottari and Dhanusa district, Nepal in 9 June 2018. The GACC project is funded by CGIAR Research Programme on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), Borlaug Institute for South Asia. The main goal of the project is to enhance awareness, knowledge and capacity of newly elected leaders, especially women leaders, on gender, agriculture and climate change, so that they are better informed and able to actively advocate for climate and gender sensitive agriculture policies, programmes and plans in their constituencies.

Travelling seminar was used as a tool to build awareness and capacity building of women leaders. A total of 33 women leaders representing the House of Representatives, the Provincial Assembly, Municipality and Rural Municipality, including local government representatives, civil society actors and media personnel participated in the travelling seminar. Participants observed and interacted with the beneficiaries of various climate smart technologies piloted in Climate Smart Village (CSV) sites in Mahottari and Dhanusa district, Province 2. Farmers exchange their experiences among leaders on the usefulness of the CSV approach in addressing climate change for improved livelihood outcomes.

This initiative forms part of the action for strengthening newly elected women's leadership in local government for decentralized climate and environmental governance and for scaling up CSV approach in Nepal. The objectives, methodology (preparation, organization and management of travelling seminar) and initial participant's reflection with regards to the effectiveness of travelling seminar is presented in this report.

# 1 THE CONTEXT

Agriculture is among the most affected sector due to climate change. In the context of Nepal, women are integral part of agriculture. The high rate of male migration, especially youths, in search of overseas employment, is leading to increased feminization of agriculture. In the last few years, the issues surrounding climate change, agriculture and gender has received attention from all quarters, including the Government of Nepal (GoN), as evidenced by several policies and strategies formulated to respond to the issues. However, these policies and strategies often lack inter-sectoral coherence and adequate level of reflection and integration into local government policies, programmes and plans.

The newly enacted federal governance system in Nepal provides ample opportunity for local governments to develop and implement policies and programmes that addresses local needs and priorities for improved public service delivery and sustainable management of the environment. However, studies show that newly elected leaders and local government institutions have limited capacity of delivering their leadership functions. Therefore, enhancing awareness, knowledge and capacity of newly elected leaders, especially women leaders representing women, disadvantaged groups and minorities, at the local government level (municipal and provincial) through travelling seminar (i.e. on-site field visit to demonstration sites, direct observation and interaction with the beneficiaries, on-site assessment of climate smart technologies and practices tested and adapted by local farmers, on-site interactive dialogues and exchange of ideas among leaders, etc.) can be a powerful tool to bring about desirable change e.g., local leaders as facilitators and change agents.

Currently, LI-BIRD is implementing two projects entitled 'Climate Smart Village (CSV)' and 'Gender, Agriculture and Climate Change (GACC)' in Mahottari (Province 2), Nawalpur (Province 4) and Bardiya (Province 5) districts, with financial and technical assistance support from the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). The goal of the GACC project is to enhance awareness, knowledge and capacity of newly elected leaders, especially women leaders, on gender, agriculture and climate change, so that they are

informed and able to actively advocate for climate and gender sensitive agriculture policies, programmes and plans in their constituencies.

Against this backdrop, LI-BIRD in partnership with local NGO partner - Community Development and Advocacy Forum Nepal (CDAFN) - organized one day travelling seminar in two pilot CSV sites at Rajabas and Bahunmara in Mahottari and Dhanusa district respectively. The programme was designed and targeted for newly elected municipal, provincial and federal level women leaders, including representatives of the District Coordination Committee (DCC), civil society actors and media personnel from Mahottari, Dhanusa, Siraha and Udaypur districts. The objectives, methodology (preparation, organization and management of travelling seminar) and initial observation with regards to the effectiveness of travelling seminar, including reflections/commitments of some of the participants are presented in this report.

## 1.1 Objectives

The overarching objective of the travelling seminar was to enhance awareness and knowledge of newly elected women leaders about the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on the livelihoods of predominantly agrarian population in Mahottari and Dhanusa district, Province 2, Nepal by providing them an opportunity to directly observe and learn from climate smart actions undertaken in pilot CSV sites, so that they are able to apply learning to make informed decisions in public policy making in their constituencies. The specific objectives included the following:

- » Provide an overview of global and national climate change scenario and gender dimensions in agriculture; and
- » Introduce the CSV approach by showcasing various approaches and models, including climate smart technologies and practices that are successfully tested and adapted by farmers for replication in other parts of Province 2 and beyond.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology and process adopted for planning and managing travelling seminar is briefly described below

### Target participants

Initially, the target participants of the travelling seminar were women members of parliament and high-level government officials from the central government, but with the promulgation of the new federal governance system in the country, greater emphasis was given to include newly elected women leaders from local government, i.e. municipal and provincial. This amendment was necessary because under the new federal governance system, local government has the authority to develop and implement policies and programmes that support good governance and addresses local needs and priorities in areas where there is a lack of local level policies, programmes, plans and guidelines.

A total of 33 participants representing the federal, provincial and local government participated in the travelling seminar. These included, one woman member of the House of Representatives (representing Province 2), four women members of Provincial Assembly, five women Deputy Mayors of Dhanusa and Mahottari districts, women and men Ward Chairs and members of the municipality and rural municipalities, representatives from DCC, NGO Federation, media house and National Farmers Group Federation (NFGF) of Nepal.

### Site selection

Province 2 is the smallest province of Nepal, with the highest population density. The Nepal Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) shows that Province 2 is home to the largest number of multi-dimensionally poor people of any province. The province is highly prone to natural disasters and the adverse impact of climate change and environmental degradation. Women, marginalized groups and minorities are the most affected due to their low adaptive capacity. The Chure hills that spread as a contiguous landscape across 36 districts from east-west of Nepal also cut across all 8 districts of Province 2 and represents the upstream watershed and provides

watershed services to the downstream Terai. The Chure region is endowed with rich biodiversity and serves to recharge the ground water for lowland Terai. In the past two decades, increased human settlement, forest encroachment (clearance of forest for agriculture), over-grazing and uncontrolled use of resources in the region is rapidly eroding the natural resource base causing serious environmental degradation. As a result, rivers originating and flowing from Chure deliver and deposit large amount of sediments in the lowland Terai that causes a rise in river beds, which in turn causes flash floods (displacing hundreds of families each year) and riverbank cutting that destroys hundreds of hectares of fertile agriculture land in downstream Terai. Increased environmental degradation in Chure region is also receding water table in the lowland Terai.

To enhance the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities in Mahottari and Dhanusa district, LI-BIRD piloted climate change activities since 2012 in partnership with local NGO - CDAFN. In 2015, with financial and technical support from CCAFS, a pilot project on CSV approach was also initiated. Since then, significant results in adoption of CSA technologies such as water smart technologies, carbon smart technologies, livelihood improvement interventions, reclamation of degraded land, capacity building and mobilization of local institutions and resources have been achieved. The selection of two CSV pilot sites, i.e. Rajabas and Bahunmara for travelling seminar was therefore the obvious choice to showcase and demonstrate successful pro-poor gender friendly adaptation technologies, practices, approaches and models to inspire local leaders and emulate some of the learning in public policy making and planning process in their constituencies.

### Participant selection process

**Database:** The first step toward the participant selection was to organize a database of elected women parliamentarian members. The information of elected women leaders from the National Assembly, House of Representatives and Provincial Assembly was collected

using official portal of Government of Nepal (GoN). Name list and contact number of 334 members of the National Assembly and House of Representatives was collected. We gather information of 43 Assembly Members of Province 2 from municipal and political party offices.

**Women parliamentarian members:** Mahottari and Dhanusa (Province 2) was pre-selected site for the travelling seminar, so the elected women parliamentarian members from Province 2 were selected from the roster. It was further narrowed down to elected members from Mahottari and Dhanusa district. Altogether seven members (one out of eight members of the National Assembly, two out of eight from House of Representatives, and four out of 43 from Provincial Assembly) representing Mahottari and Dhanusa were selected to participate in the travelling seminar.

**Local government:** A total of six women Deputy Mayors, two Dalit women members, two DCC members,

three Ward Chairs from Mahottari and Dhanusa were identified and invited to the seminar. In addition, the Ward Chair of adjoining Rural Municipality from Siraha district was also invited to the seminar.

**Relevant stakeholders:** Participants from the provincial Ministry of Agriculture, Land Management and Cooperatives, NGO Federation, local/international NGOs working in Mahottari and Dhanusa districts, District Chair of NFGF of Nepal and national and local media personnel were also invited to participate in the travelling seminar.

### Invitation and confirmation

Participants were then consulted through face-face meeting and over the telephone regarding their availability to participate in the travelling seminar. Invitation letter and program schedule was made available to the selected participants in advance.

## 3 THE SEMINAR

The seminar consisted of three-step process, event or sessions: the orientation of the participants; field visit; and reflections.

### Opening and orientation session

The participants gathered in the early morning hour in Bardibas. Balaram Thapa, Executive Director of LI-BIRD welcomed all the participants. He facilitated the introduction of the participants and highlighted the objectives of the travelling seminar. Nagdev Yadav, President of CDAFN provided the overview of the field visit programme, including what the participants can expect to see and learn from the travelling seminar. Bikash Paudel, Program Development Director of LI-BIRD shared the global and national climate change scenario/trends with the participants. He then presented the CSV theory of change and climate smart technologies/practices piloted in Nepal by LI-BIRD with financial support from CCAFS. Paudel also highlighted inter-linkages between gender, agriculture and climate change, and the importance of reflecting these linkages into local government's development policies, programmes and plans.

### Field visit and interaction with local farmers and communities

After the orientation session, participants travelled about 15 km north from Bardibas to Rajabas and Bahunmara CSV sites.

In Rajabas, in the bank of Ratu River, participants observed raising underground seepage water irrigation canal technology, where underground seepage water has been meticulously harvested using indigenous knowledge for irrigating 45.3 ha of land directly benefitting 64 households. Farmers shared their experience on how raising underground seepage water irrigation canal has transformed their cropping pattern by increasing cropping intensity by almost 200%. Beneficiaries of the irrigation canal grow vegetables and some of them have graduated to commercial vegetable

farming. Further walk to upland areas of Rajabas saw the intervention where local knowledge was blended with climate science. Community pond is a local practice for water conservation and recharge. There, the participants observed a community pond integrated with solar power (300 Watt) to uplift 213,000 litre water in 24 hours. Uplifted water from the community pond is collected in conservation tank and is distributed to 56 households for irrigating upland crops. Participants individually interacted with the local farmers. During one of the interactions, Mr. Surya Bahadur Karki, beneficiary of solar irrigation and conservation pond, recalled his past and current income. He said "I had difficulty earning USD 20-30 from 338 square meter of land, this year I was able to earn approximately USD 500 through selling vegetables from the same piece of land." Another woman farmer in Rajabas expressed her satisfaction because the water crisis for crops and livestock is now resolved through the integration of conservation pond with solar technology.

Introduction of climate smart technologies has opened up alternative livelihood options for local farming communities in Rajabas. Traditional crops are gradually being replaced by high value crops. The use of chemical pesticides to control pest and diseases has reduced significantly and is being replaced by increased use of bio-pesticides.

The participants gather near the community conservation pond and Rajabas field visit was concluded with remarks from the Provincial Assembly Members Ms. Sharada Devi Thapa, and Ms. Manju Yadav (see excerpts on page number 5).



*"This is a place for everyone to visit who wants to conserve Chure and protect Terai/Madesh and those who are involved in the formulation of Chure conservation policy."*

**Ms. Sharada Devi Thapa, Provincial Assembly Member, Province 2.**



*"This travelling seminar was fruitful indeed. The field observation has boosted my knowledge on climate smart technologies and practices suitable for plain areas like ours. I will advocate and contribute to integrate climate change and environment in local development policy and programme in my constituency."*

**Ms. Manju Yadav, Provincial Assembly Member Province 2.**

Following Rajabas visit, the participants headed to Bahunmara, Dhanusa district to see various activities implemented and managed by local communities in Bahunmara pilot CSV site. Participants observed ferro-cement water reservoir tank with a capacity of 78,000 liters that supplies clean drinking water for 117 households that has reduced incidence of water borne diseases in the village. Participants also saw community managed small irrigation system that has transformed the entire village. The irrigation system has allowed local communities to grow crops year-round and has increased their food and income security. Mr Tekendra Karki, a local resident of Bahunmara highlighted that communities in Bahunmara are ready to declare Bahunmara as a climate

smart village. He also highlighted the contribution of local communities towards core conservation (zero grazing, community forest management, water source protection etc.). Mr. Karki also shared that their capacity to mobilize communities and leverage resources for the community development activities has enhanced significantly. Local communities in Bahunmara shared their concern with the participants, especially the elected women leaders, on the important issue of land tenure as they have not received land certificate even after paying land tax to GoN since 1969. Villagers submitted a letter to the parliamentarian members to raise the issue of land rights in the federal and provincial cabinets.



Ms. Indu Kumari Sharma, Member of the House of Representatives (at the centre) in photo shoot after having a lively interaction with local women groups in Bahunmara pilot CSV site, Dhanusa district.

## Reflections and closing

Back in Bardibas participants shared their observation and experience of travelling seminar with each other. Most participants provided positive feedback and showed commitment to apply learning in their constituencies. Field visit and farm walk was challenging due to extremely hot and sunny day. However, participants demonstrated great resolve and continued their travel and interactions with excitement. The session was formally concluded with remarks from Ms. Indu Kumari Sharma, Member of the House of Representatives from Jaleshowre, Mahottari. (see excerpts below)



*"I am delighted to participate in this programme organized by LI-BIRD and CDAFN. I did not know such a good work is going on in the Chure region with active participation of local community. It is very important to support and scale up climate friendly programmes that are favorable for Chure conservation and improving livelihoods of local people. To expand similar kind of activities in other parts of the country, I will discuss with relevant sectors and try to do my best at the policy making level."*

**Ms. Indu Kumari Sharma, Member of House of Representative.**

She was concerned that people living in the Chure are destroying forest, causing flash floods and ground water table receding in the lowland Teri. This myth was corrected by Yam Malla, Natural Resource Management expert and also a member of the GACC Project Advisory Committee by explaining how the conservation activities carried out in upstream Chure, that the participants saw during the travelling seminar, will help recharge the water table in lowland Terai, which was appreciated by the participants.

Reflections and excerpts of some of the participants are as follows:

**Ms. Mina Yadav, Deputy Mayor, Ganesh Charnath Municipality, Dhanusa** - "This is the first time that I have visited Chure region. I found local people hardworking and I found the climate change related activity implemented very useful and replicable in Godar area of my municipality. I will soon discuss in municipality to initiate similar kind of activities in my Charnath Municipality."

**Ms. Asha Lama, Deputy Mayor, Gaushala Municipality, Mahottari**- "Despite the ecologically fragile geography, local people in Rajabas and Bahunmara has worked hard to conserve the environment. It is important to provide continuity to such interventions for the benefit of women in Chure and Terai/Madesh. In short, there is no welfare of Madhes without conserving Chure."

**Mr. Suresh Singh, Chief, District Coordination Committee, Mahottari** - "I found this travelling seminar very interactive. Though I am from this district, I was not aware of Chure conservation and climate change related activities that are conducted in the district. These activities must be continued and scaled up in other part of the district. The District Coordination Committee will support and contribute wherever possible."

**Mr. Indiresch Dahal, Local Development Officer, Dhanusa** - "I really like how transparently the resources leveraged from different partners is presented publicly. It seemed that women in particular have benefitted the most from this pilot CSV programme activities."



## 4 CONCLUSION AND WHAT'S NEXT

- The travelling seminar was designed to provide hands on practical demonstration and as capacity building event for elected women leaders and local government representatives on a range of climate smart technologies and climate smart village approaches. Reflection from the participants indicated that this objective was met with satisfaction.
- The extent to which these elected women leaders are able to advocate for and apply learning from the travelling seminar in their constituencies (e.g., development of gender and climate sensitive policies and programmes, mobilization of local resources and institutions etc.) is yet to be seen. It is recommended that a follow-on workshop should be organized in December 2018 to assess the extent to which these elected women leaders were able to influence local government policy making process, including what worked well for them, what did not, and what support is needed for them to do their job better.
- Maintaining gender balance in travelling seminar event such as this one with a mix of participants from local government representatives, civil society actors, subject matter experts and the media are imperative and can greatly enhance the learning and influencing process on site.
- Participants strongly recommended that a follow-on workshop should be organized before the local government's annual planning and budgeting process, so that climate, gender issues and climate smart village approach can be discussed and incorporated into local government annual work plan and budget.



Travelling seminar participants observing indigenous raising underground seepage water irrigation canal technology in Rajabas pilot CSV site, Mahottari district, and discussing potential for replication in their constituencies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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We would also like to express our gratitude to the newly elected women leaders from Province 2 and representatives from federal, provincial and local governments, including CSO actors and media personnel for their active participation during the travelling seminar.

We received continuous guidance and support from the members of the GACC Project Advisory Committee, and we thank them for their contribution.

## Annex I: List of participants

SN	Name	Designation	Organization	Sex	Address
1	Indu Kumari Sharma	Member	House of Representatives	Female	Mahottari
2	Sarada Thapa	Member	Provincial Assembly	Female	Mahottari
3	Manju Yadav	Member	Provincial Assembly	Female	Mahottari
4	Anita Yadav	Member	Provincial Assembly	Female	Dhanusa
5	Saraswati Chaudhari	Member	Provincial Assembly	Female	Dhanusa
6	Suresh Singh	Chief	DCC	Male	Mahottari
7	Ganga Singh Danuwar	Deputy Mayor	Bhangaha Municipality	Female	Mahottari
8	Aasha Lama	Deputy Mayor	Gaushala Municipality	Female	Mahottari
9	Mina Kumari Yadav	Deputy Mayor	Ganeshman Charnath Municipality	Female	Dhanusa
10	Tara Lama	Deputy Mayor	Mithila Municipality	Female	Dhanusa
11	Mahjabi Khatun	Deputy Mayor	Ekdara Rural Municipality	Female	Mahottari
12	Anita Pariyar	Executive Dalit Female Representative	Mithila Municipality	Female	Dhanusa
13	Chudamani Pokharel	Ward Chairman	Bardibas Municipality-1	Male	Mahottari
14	Rajan Dhungana	Ward Chairman	Bardibas Municipality-3	Male	Mahottari
15	Mukti Narayan Yadav	NFGF	-	Male	Siraha
16	Narad Niraula	NFGF	-	Male	Udayapur
17	Bechan Prasad Yadav	Chair	Bhagwanpur Municipality	Male	Siraha
18	Dhirendra Bahadur Singh	Chair	NGO Federation	Male	Mahottari
19	Indiresh Dahal	Local Development Officer	DCC	Male	Dhanusa
20	Lal Babu Yadav	Chair	DCC	Male	Mahottari
21	Ganesh Basnet	Ward member	Bardibas Municipality	Male	Bardibas
22	Umesh Thapa	Ward member	Mithila Municipality	Male	Dhanusa
23	Chitra Kumar Subedi	Assistant of Deputy Mayor	Ganeshman Charnath Municipality	Female	Dhanusa
24	Indra Bahadur B.K.	Programme Coordinator	Caritas Nepal	Male	Sindhuli
25	Swikcha Dahal	Protection Officer	Caritas Nepal	Female	Sindhuli
26	Ram Prasad Dhungana	Regional Coordinator	Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN)	Male	
27	Nikesh Khanal	Reporter	Janakpur Today Patrika	Male	Dhanusa
28	Sushil Kunsing	Advisor of Deputy Mayor	Bhanga Municipality	Male	Mahottari

SN	Name	Designation	Organization	Sex	Address
29	Kedar Koirala	Shree Deurali Secondary School		Male	Bardibas
30	Rita Bahadur Basnet	Ward Member	Bardibas Municipality-3	Female	Mahottari
31	Toya Nath Gautam	Media Specialist		Male	
32	Gaurav Dhwoj Khadka	Photographer/ Videographer	GrowInnova	Male	
33	Yam Bahadur Malla, PhD	PAC member	-	Male	
34	Balaram Thapa, PhD	Executive Director	LI-BIRD	Male	
35	Bikash Paudel, PhD	Program Development Director	LI-BIRD	Male	
36	Priyanjali Joshi	Compliance Officer	LI-BIRD	Female	
37	Lakpa Sherpa	Team Leader	LI-BIRD	Female	
38	Aastha Bhusal	Programme Officer	LI-BIRD	Female	
39	Shambhu Basnet	Programme officer	LI-BIRD	Male	
40	Nagdev Yadav	President	CDAFN	Male	
41	Menuka Shrestha	Accountant	CDAFN	Female	
42	Niraj Mishra	Project Officer	CDAFN	Male	

For more information

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