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Our Cover

A woman doing her daily household chore in a rural village of Kavre. Photo by Rahul Karki

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Interim Report on Gender Empowerment

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Executive summary

This report presents brief summary of the activities undertaken within the domain of gender empowerment work that explores how decision-making process in community forestry can be improved to overcome gender inequality. Within this stage, the major steps taken are reported; literature review, development of Women's Empowerment Index in Forestry (WEIF) framework and ongoing data collection in the field. Hence, the field insights and data are yet to be reported systematically on the report. WEFI consists of five major domains of measuring empowerment which are; a) decisions about community forestry, b) access to and decision-making power over forest resources, c) control over use of CFUG income, d) leadership in the community, and e) time use. To generate the evidence from the field, Key Informant Interview (KII) are ongoing, while Focus Group Discussions and household survey are yet to be done.

Introduction

The aim of this report is to briefly outline what has been undertaken within the domain of gender empowerment work in Objective 2 of the EnLift2 and what has been ongoing and planned for the future work. This report is an output 032 under objective 2 (Develop and institutionalize equitable community forestry planning and governance frameworks within the new local government system). This output mainly responds on how decision-making process in community forestry can be improved to overcome gender inequality.

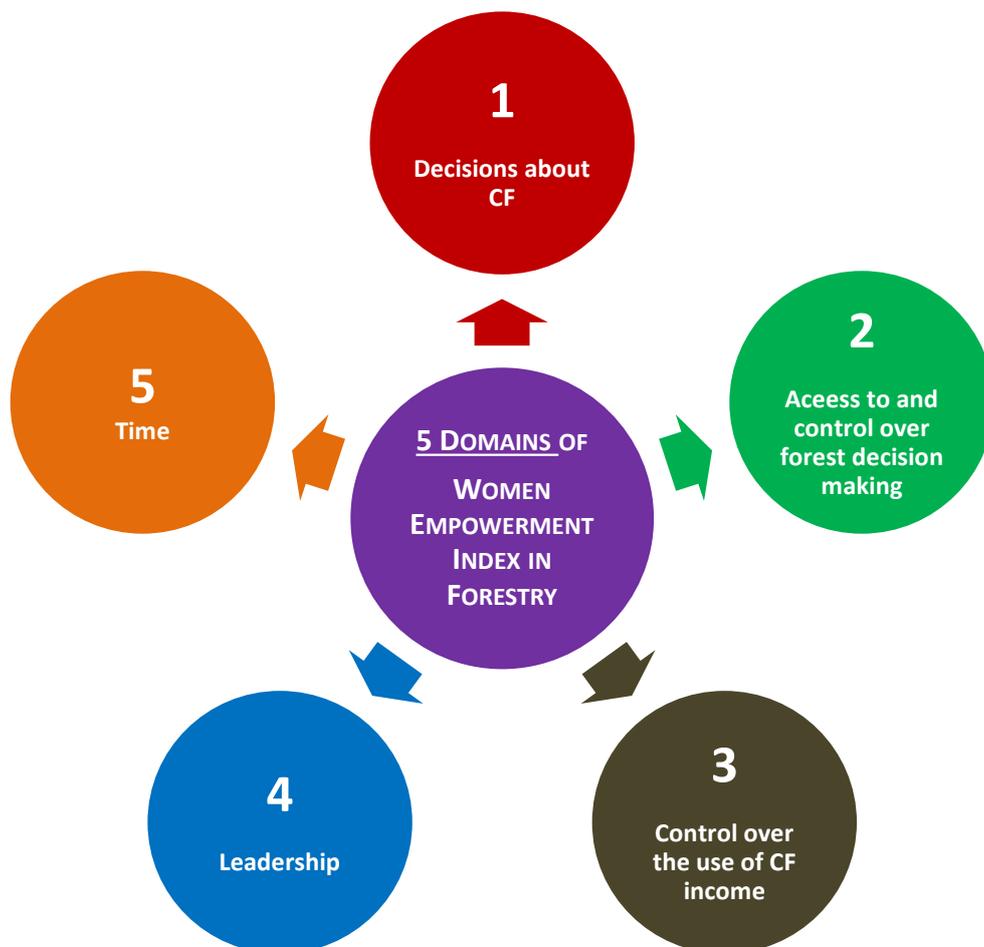
Considering an important role of women in community forestry and as a commitment of EnLiFT2, the gender focus of the project is made around the participatory decision-making in community forest. With the aim to document the experiences of women and also adapt some strategies to make the decision-making process equitable, several activities were conducted.

It was planned to complete this output by reviewing different social science and gender related literature in relation to natural resource management, regulatory arrangements of community forestry followed by generating evidences from the field. To generate the evidence from the field, it was planned to prepare case studies and adopt Women's Empowerment Index in Forestry (WEIF). Specific data were collected using different tools with these two major activities.

The end result we expected were not only the report and scientific outputs but also anticipated to have reduced gender imbalance in decision-making in community forestry and empowerment of women. As part of the Planning Studio, this stream of work is progressing well, and we are pleased to report that our initial intent of advancing the Women Empowerment Index in Forestry is making a good head start on the ground.

Gender equity is a key dimensions of analysing and improving forest planning and governance, and policy, and it also has implications to silviculture interventions and entrepreneurship activities. Equity, as part of the fairness debate (Jones 2009; Koehler 2016), is concerned with the need and voices of women, poor and marginalised communities. Within this project we take equity in two ways: fairness in decision-making processes (i.e. procedural equity) and fair consequences of such decisions (i. e. distributional equity). A question then: when are the processes and consequences fair in hierarchical and unequal societies of Nepal in relation to forest planning and management, and marketing of products? In Nepal, fairness may require unequal processes and unequal distribution of benefits and costs. In other words, equity may need positive discrimination, or priority, to the poor, women and other disadvantaged groups (Shrestha 2016). The issue of equity is important because the poor, women and other disadvantaged groups in Nepal are socio-economically and politically worse off than other sections of the society. This means that there are both moral and practical rationales for their concerns to be prioritised.

Research in gender is quite advanced. We will draw a range of insights from the existing literature and advance knowledge. A gender research cycle model (European Commission 2009; Njuki 2016; ACIAR Gender Guidelines 2017) is helpful to investigate participation and voice of women and men in CFUG decision making processes, focusing on CFUG planning and governance system, and in policy and practices affecting active and equitable forest management and entrepreneurship development. We will review current social science in gender and natural resource management, analyse regulatory arrangements affecting gender equity in Nepal's community forestry, and gather evidences on issues, options and challenges of gender equity in Nepal's forest management. Then it documents case studies of gendered social relations and roles of women and men in decision-making process concerning the planning and governance of community forestry. Building on literature and policy review focussed on gender, Women Empowerment in Forestry Index is adopted from IFRI's Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (IFRI 2012) to measure the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the forestry sector. It has following five domains:

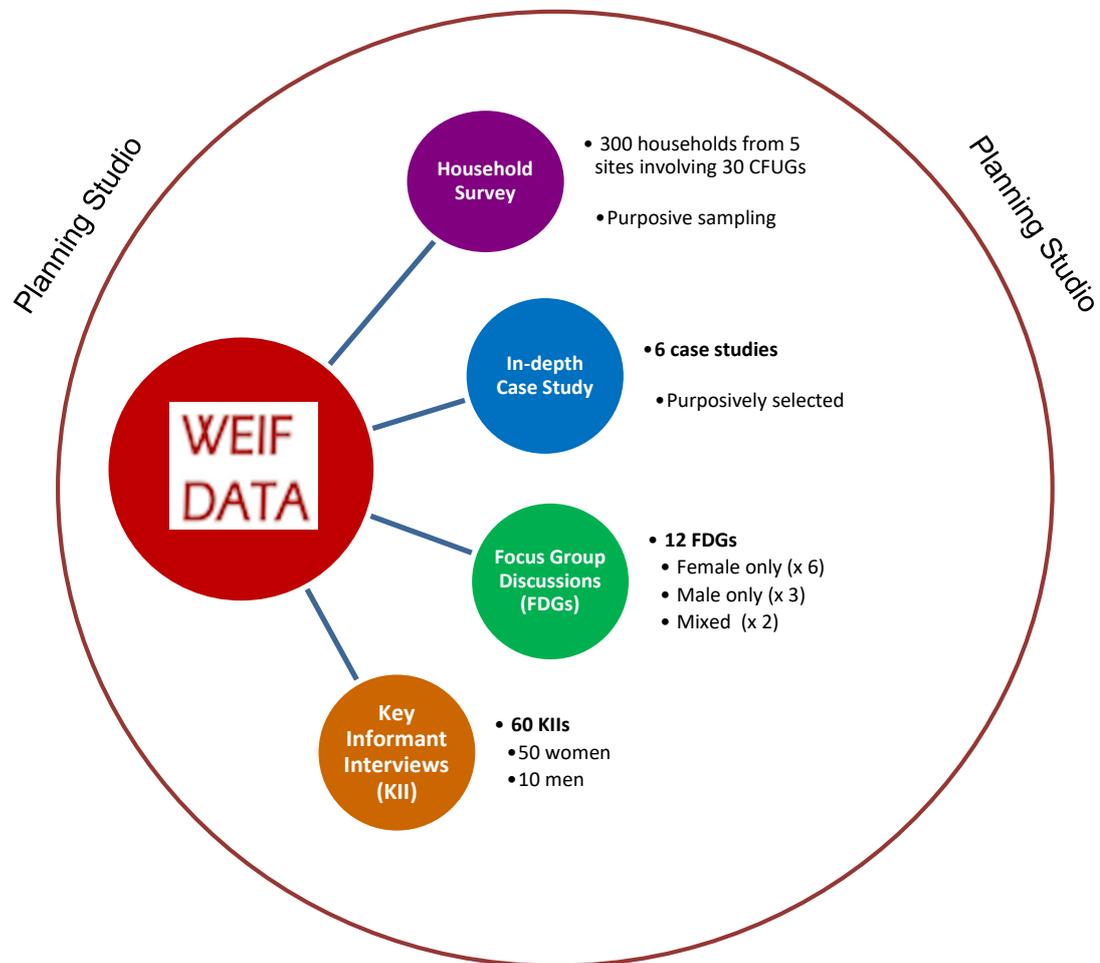


Our purpose here is to advance IFRI (2012)'s framework by adapting as Women Empowerment Index in Forestry (WEIF) and then further developing this framework that can be applied in a varied contexts of community forestry in Nepal and beyond, enabling policy makers and communities to monitor and improve gender equality in the forestry sector.

Research method

A mix method of social enquiry will be used to gather qualitative and quantitative data about the above five domains from the 5 project sites involving 30 Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs) of Kavre and Sindhupalchowk districts of Nepal's Province 3.

Four research methods will include, and these are illustrated below:



Data collection is in process. Majority of the KIIs are conducted and it is planned to conduct FGD and household survey after completion of KIIs and field notes.

Adaption of Women Empowerment Index (Wei) In Agriculture to the Community Forestry Sector

We have pursued a series of works to understand, test and adapt the WEI into the context of community forestry, using a methodology of Planning Studio. These steps include:

- a) Literature review: Based on the literature review we developed a set of draft criteria for forestry.
- b) Indicator setting workshop: We adopted all five domains to measure empowerment used in WEAI which are; a) decisions about community forestry, b) access to and decision-making power over forest resources, c) control over use of CFUG income, d) leadership in the community, and e) time use. However, we set the indicators that are more relevant and appropriate in relation to community forestry and forest management. Therefore, we organized a workshop to share and get feedback on the indicators. The workshop was organized on 12 December 2019 at ForestAction Nepal. The experts on gender and social inclusion in forestry sectors engaged in both the government and non-government sectors were invited. They provided their feedbacks on each and every indicator we set. The final version was revised based on their inputs in the workshop itself.
- c) Sharing in gender in CF workshop: March 2020
The presentation based on the revised WEIF framework was given in 'Gender Integration in Forestry' workshop held on 29 February-2 March 2020 in Godawari Nepal. The presentation helped in gathering wider attention as well as collecting fruitful feedbacks. The framework was then revised based on the feedbacks received. To test the framework and collect data, team have been doing KII and in-depth case studies in the field, which will be followed up by FGDs and household survey.
- d) Revision and Finalisation of WEIF criteria: Following the workshop, we further developed the criteria and indicators of both 5 domains (5 DE) and Gender Parity Index (GPI) will be adopted to capture the empowerment index in community forestry. A revised criteria and indicators for five domains along with the weight given to each indicators are as follows:

Criteria (5DE)	Indicators	Weight
A. Agency 1/5	Participation in CFUG decision making process	1/15
	Autonomy in HH decision on forest management	1/15
	Influence in decisions related to CFUG	1/15
B. Resources 1/5	Access to and control over CF products	1/15
	Voice and/or influence in the distribution of forest products among the CFUG members	1/15
	Voice and/or influence in the sale of forest products to market	1/15
C. Income 1/5	Access to and control over use of CFUG fund	1/5
D. Leadership 1/5	Membership in social and economic groups	1/15
	Position held	1/15
	Speaking in public	1/15
E. Time 1/5	Workload in forest management activities	1/5

We have discussed and developed a through household questionnaire and is outlined below.

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INDEX IN FORESTRY (WEIF)

Survey HH No.

Survey date:

Surveyor's name:

Research Site:

RESPONDENT DETAILS:

Name of respondent (optional):	Female 1 • Male.....2 •	
Caste/ethnicity of respondent	Brahmin/Chhetri.....1 Ethnic group/Janajati.....2 Others.....3	
Age		
Education		
Employment		

A - AGENCY**A1 - Participation in CFUG decision making process**

Question	Response	
A 1.1 Are you in executive committee of the CFUG?	Yes.....1 → No.....2	A 1.1.1 Which position are you holding?
A 1.2 Do you put your voice in general assembly?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
A 1.3 Do you participate in forest related activities.	Yes.....1→ No.....2	A 1.3.1 List of forest management related works Tole meetings Assembly Trainings Others.....
A 1.4 Have you participated in annual planning process?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

A 2: Autonomy in HH decisions in forest governance

Description		Score
A 2.1 Who makes decision on who should participate in CFUG meetings from your household?	Female.....1 Male.....2 Both	
A 2.2 Do you participate in CFUG activities when your spouse is also available at home?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
A 2.3 Have you participated in annual planning process?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

A 3 Influence in Decisions related to CFUG

Description		
A 3.1 Have you ever been able to influence the decision of regular decisions or strategic decisions of EC of CFUG?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
A 3.2 Who initiates, leads and closes the meetings?	Male.....1 (EC member) Female.....2 (EC member)	
A 3.3 Have your ever been asked to put your thought or voice during formal meetings of CFUG?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

DOMAIN B: RESOURCES

B1: Access to and control over CF products

Description		
B1.1 Have you been able to collect any CF products for household use?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
B1.2 Have you been able to collect any CF products for CFUG to sell?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
B1.3 How do you get those products?	Permits with fee....1 Permits without fee....2 Whenever you need....3 Only during certain months/days....4	
B1.4 Are you easily able to collect these products?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
B1.5 Who makes the decision regarding access to CF products?		

B2 Voice and/or influence in the distribution of forest products among the CFUG members

Description		
B2.1 Are there any products distributed among members?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
B2.2 How is the decision on the distribution made? Are your voice heard?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

B3 Voice and/or influence in the sale of forest products to market

Income

Description		
B3.1 How are the decisions to sell forest products to the markets made? Are you engaged on such decisions?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

DOMAIN C: INCOME

C1 Access to and control over use of CFUG fund

Description		
C1.1 How are the decisions to mobilize funds are made?		
C1.2 Are you involved in decisions related to mobilizing funds?		Yes.....1 No.....2
C1.3 Have you been able to influence the decision regarding investment?		

DOMAIN D: LEADERSHIP

D1 Membership

Description		
D1.1 Are you in key positions of social and economic group/organizations existed in your community?		Yes.....1 if yes..... No.....2
D1.1.1 How did you get that position?	If yes	You had interest but others spoke on your behalf.....1 You spoke yourself showing your interest.....2

D2: Speaking in public

Description		
D2.1 Have you ever spoken in public? Example CF meeting, CF annual assembly.	Yes.....1 No.....2	
D2.2 How frequently do you speak in public?	Rarely.....1 Sometimes.....2 Often.....3	

<u>DOMAIN E: TIME</u> E1: Workload Description		
E1.1 How often are you involved in forest management activities	Everyday.....1 Sometimes.....2 Once in 6 months.....3 Once in 1 year.....4	

We have also discussed a range of possible questions that are important to women in our case study areas and developed a range of questions that can be included as part of our key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

Section 1: Agency

Participation in CFUG decision making process:

1. Women/men ratio in current composition of EC (chair, secretary and treasurer)
2. Are women represented in any forums such as tole sub committees, executive committee of CFUG?
3. What are legal requirements for women participation in CFUGs? Are these being met?
4. Do women voice in general assembly?
5. Men/women ratio of participation in forest management activities. How has it changed in the context of scientific forest management?
6. Are there any other opportunities to participate in CF related matters?
7. Whether and how women and men general members have participated in CFUG's annual planning process?
8. What are the key issues of women participation?

Autonomy in HH decisions in forest governance

1. Who makes the decision on who should participate in CFUG meetings from your household?
2. When did you participate in CFUG activities? Which CFUG activities you normally participate (tole meetings, assembly, training,).
3. Are you also allowed to participate in CFUG activities when your husband or a male member of your household is also available? If yes, how often?
4. Does the household discuss and decide on any CFUG related agenda at home?
5. What type of CFUG related issues do you and your husband (or a male and female member of the household) experience in terms of exercise of agency/power?
6. Has there any changes in these practices in recent years?
7. What shapes women's interests to participate and involve in particular CF related issue?
8. What aspects of support would enable women's freedom from external control in HH decisions?
9. What are the impediments for women to exercise independence in HH decision making practice?

Influence in Decisions

1. How functional is the EC? What the general/regular decisions and what are more strategic/significant decisions taken by the EC?
2. How are the meetings conducted? Are there any standard norms? Who initiates, leads and closes the meetings?
3. How many women members are active? In which way? Have they/she been able to make her voice heard/influenced the decision?
4. How often women provide input during the meetings and discussions?
5. Whether women's views were considered during the deliberation (whether their views were discussed and then dropped based on merits if not made to the final decision)?
6. Whether the final decisions were made based on their views/inputs?
7. What factors enable women's capacity to have an effect on the nature and type of decisions made in CFUGs?
8. Which groups of women, in terms of wealth, status and ethnicity, have more power to shape decisions, and why?

Section 2: Resources

Access to and control over CF products

1. What are the key forest products from your CF that are used at your home? e.g. fuelwood, fodder, timber, wild vegetables, other NTFPs.
2. Who collects fuelwood/fodder/leaf litter/bedding material/wild vegetables from your household?
3. Who makes decision within your household on which forest products are bought/collected from the CF?
4. What are the key forest products from your CF that are commercially traded? e.g. fuelwood, timber, NTFPs.
5. Who is involved in timber harvesting activities from your household?
6. Who makes the decision at CFUG level on what products should be collected from the CF?
7. How do you get those products (permits with fees, permit without fees, whenever you need just get to forest, only during certain months/days)?
8. Any challenges in getting particular product (e.g. timber)?
9. Do you think you have been fairly treated in this regard?

10. Do women receive special concession or priority on accessing specific forest products?
11. What are the opportunities for women to use forest products? How has it changed over time?
12. Who controls the decisions on access to use forests?

Voice and/or influence in the distribution of forest products among the CFUG members

1. What are the major products distributed among the members?
2. How are the decision on the distribution made (through GA, EC meeting, Chairperson decides, there are understood rules)?
3. How do you engage in such decisions? Is your voice heard?
4. Are you satisfied what is happening? If not, what should be done differently?

Voice and/or influence in the sale of forest products to market

1. How do the decisions to sell the forest products in the market are made?
2. Whether and how do you engage in such decisions?
3. Are you satisfied what is happening? If not, what should be done differently?
4. Whose voices are dominant in the sale of products and why?
5. What are the ways women's voices can be empowered?

Section 3: income

Access to and control over use of CFUG fund

1. How much does your CFUG earn annually?
2. Where are these funds invested? How are these funds mobilised?
3. Whether and how are you involved in decisions and mobilisation of such funds?
4. Was your voice heard? Have you been able to influence the decision regarding investment?
5. Are you satisfied with current practice? If not should be done differently?
6. What are the opportunities to increase access of women to use CFUG funds?

Section 4: Leadership

Group membership

1. How many social and economic groups/organizations exist in your village?
2. How many of these social and economic groups/organizations are you a member of?
3. What roles do you play with/ what contribution have you made to these organizations?
4. How has your group membership changed over time and why?

Position held

1. Do you assume any important roles in these groups/organisations?
2. What kinds of positions? (chairperson, deputy, member)? How did you get this/these position? Due to leadership quality, interest, through election, picked up by an influential person, through consensus in the group (by contributions and demonstrated leadership), men decided for us.
3. Are you happy with the position? If not why?
4. Did you pursue the leadership position? Or was it given to you? If so, why?
5. What do you actually do as a leader?
6. What leadership aspirations do you hold and how do you think to secure it?

Speaking in public – Do you speak in Public

1. Have you given a public talk/speech in the last 5 years?
2. In which forum? How frequently?
3. Do you get such opportunity easily? Did you have to struggle?
4. How confident do you feel in talking in public?
5. What type of forum do you feel comfortable with while speaking (CF related, women related, saving and credit related...)
6. What type of responses do you receive on your public speeches?
7. What will help you to take such roles more frequently and in larger forums?
8. Who have you received help in performing your role in the public?

Section 5: time

Reduced workload in forest management activities

1. What are the forest management activities you are involved with?
2. How often do you participate in such activities?
3. How much time/effort do you need to carryout these activities?
4. Are there any changes in these activities (reduced time, reduced efforts) in last five years?
5. How has CF development changed these activities?
6. Has the supply of forest products increased after the CF program? If yes, has this reduced your workload in collecting forest products? If yes, how much of your time has it saved?
7. What are the major concerns for you in relation to your workload?

Other Open questions towards the end of the interviews could be:

- What are the major challenges for women to be more active in CF decision making?
- What do you fear most about the role of women in CF? and why?
- What is the future of CF and how do you see it in the next ten year? etc.

We are undertaking a range of activities to gather data from case study sites. Some of the activities completed are outlined in the case study report. We plan to undertake further activities as planned and identify issues and opportunities for enhancing gender empowerment in CF.