

**Report on**  
**Baseline survey on assessing the status of women-led CFUGs**

**Submitted by**

Women Rights and Resources Network (WRRN)

Madhya Marga, Kathmandu



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**Background:**

Nepal has 23,026 community forest representing the dominant forest regime. In Bagmati Province, Nepal, the Forest Act 2019 allows community forest groups to allocate forest land patches to women's committees for livelihoods and small businesses. However, this is rarely implemented due to low awareness and poor tracking. Women must comprise over 50% of these groups per guidelines, yet they mostly hold minor roles without real



*Figure 1: Conducting baseline survey with CFUGs*

economic benefits. The main objective of this baseline survey was to assess the status of women-led Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs). It covered eight districts: Makwanpur, Sindhuli, Chitwan, Ramechhap, Nuwakot, Dolakha, Rasuwa, and Sindhupalchowk. These districts span mountains, hills, and Terai regions, reflecting realities for indigenous women from diverse communities and providing data for improved policies, training, and scalable models.

**Data Collection Process**

Data on community forests and women-led groups was first obtained from Division Forest Offices through direct visits, followed by community-level verification. Notably, the team successfully gathered comprehensive records starting from Division Forest Offices and extending to local communities. For district-wise data collection, the team visited several District Forest Offices (DFOs) across Bagmati Province to gather information on women-led Community Forests and leased patch lands managed by women's groups. The process began in Chitwan, where the team met with the DFO, Mr. Bishnu Prasad Acharya. He assured that Mr. Sujin Goley would be responsible for collecting the required information and sharing it with the team. A formal letter requesting data was also submitted to the DFO.

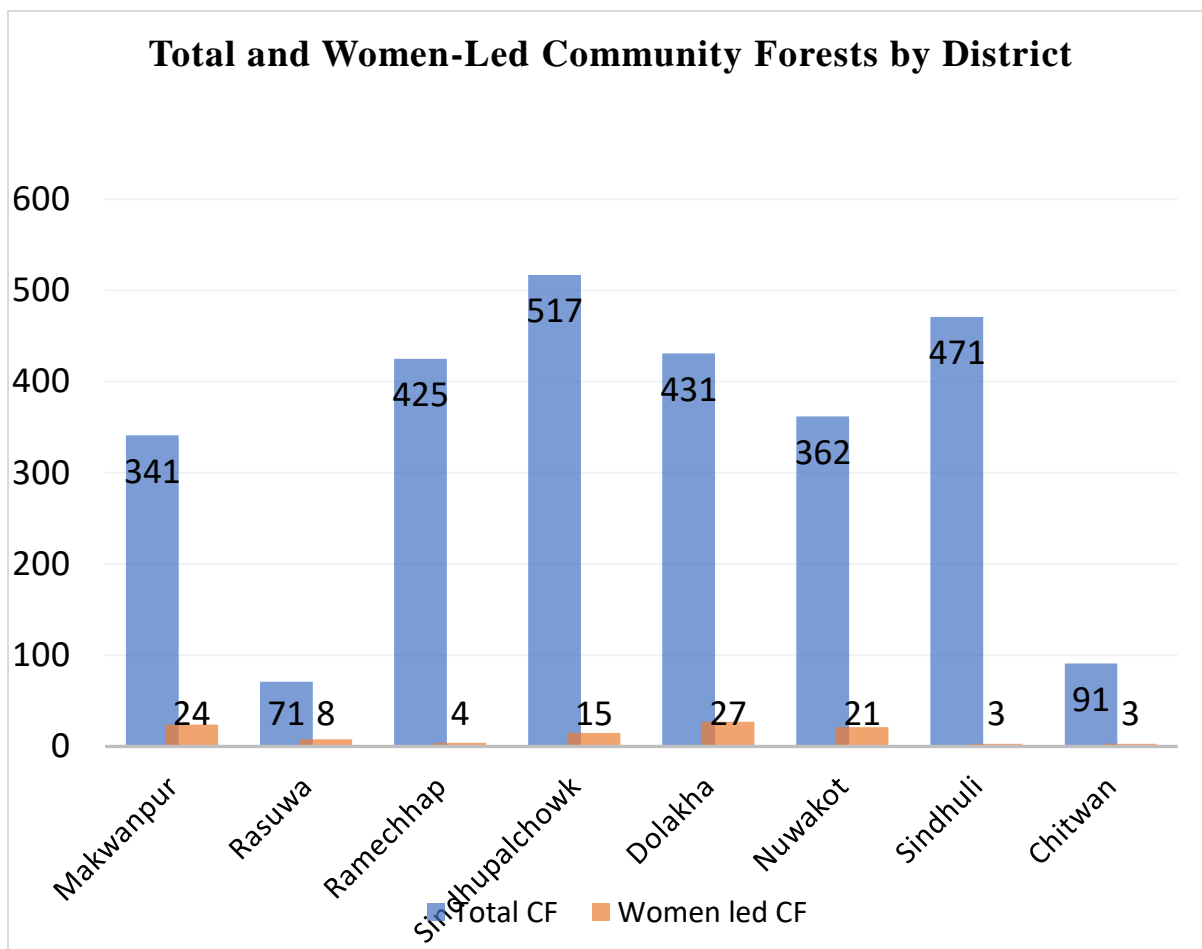
In Makwanpur, the team met with Mr. Bishal Bhattarai at the DFO and inquired about women-led Community Forests and leased patch lands allocated to women's groups. As the information was

not immediately available, the team submitted an official letter. Later, the DFO shared the contact details of two rangers from the Sub-Division Office, Mr. Nahakul Bhusal and Ms. Bimala Rana Magar, through whom the necessary information was successfully obtained. The team also held a brief meeting with the DFO of Rasuwa, Mr. Shambhu Tamang, and after some time received the required data from his office. In Ramechhap, the team met with the DFO, Mr. Uma.

Similarly, in Dolakha, the team consulted with DFO Mr. Anil Regmi, who took some time to compile the requested information before sharing it. In Sindhupalchowk, the team consulted with DFO Mr. Madan Kandel, who directed them to Ms. Prabha Subedi for data collection, and she provided the necessary details. Finally, in Nuwakot, the team consulted with DFO officials Mr. Pradip Nath Sharma and Mr. Kamal, from whom they also successfully collected the required information. Overall, through formal meetings, official letters, and coordination with DFO staff and rangers, the team was able to systematically gather district-wise data on women-led Community Forests and leased patch lands.

### **District Findings**

From District Forest office, it was found that among 23,026 community forest in Nepal, 2,709 community forest are in the eight surveyed districts. Makwanpur District has two Division Forest Offices: Rapti and Harnamadi. Rapti reports 14 community forests with female chairs. Harnamadi has 10 female-chaired forests and 2 women-only executive committees. Rasuwa Division Forest Office oversees 8 female-chaired forests and 4 patch land allocations managed by both men and women. Ramechhap has 4 female-chaired forests; Sindhupalchowk, 15 women-managed forests; Dolakha, 27 female-chaired forests (some with male committee members); Nuwakot, 21 female-chaired and 2 women-only forests; and Sindhuli, 3 women-run forests.



**Figure 2:** Bar graph showing total and women-led community forests by district

Across all eight districts shown in the below bar-diagram, women-led community forest user groups (CFUGs) make up only a tiny fraction of the total highlighting just how few leadership roles in community forestry are held by women. Whether in districts with hundreds of CFUGs like Sindhupalchowk or smaller ones like Chitwan, the bars representing women-led groups barely rise above the baseline, underscoring a clear and consistent gap in female representation and leadership in this vital environmental effort.

Out of the eight districts, only four: Makwanpur, Dolakha, Nuwakot, and Chitwan have any CF groups led entirely by women on their executive committees, with each having just 1 or 2 such groups. Notably, Chitwan stands out with 3 patch lands managed solely by women-led groups, the only district with such initiatives and these same 3 patch lands are also formally registered as part of the broader community forest system. Makwanpur shows modest engagement, with 1 women-led patch land that is also registered, despite having 2 all-female executive committees. In contrast,

Rasuwa has no women-led executive committees or women-managed patch lands, yet it reports 4 registered patch land forests within existing CFs, suggesting formal recognition of micro-forests but without women’s leadership. The remaining districts: Ramechhap, Sindhupalchowk, and Sindhuli show zero activity across all three categories, indicating a complete absence of documented women-led forestry initiatives or registered patch lands.

Overall, the data reveals highly limited and uneven participation of women in formal leadership and management roles within community forestry. Even where women do lead (as in Chitwan or Nuwakot), the scale remains small, and in most districts, women’s direct stewardship of forest resources is either minimal or entirely absent. This underscores persistent gender gaps in access to decision-making and resource control in community-based forest governance.

*Table 1: Women’s Leadership in Community Forestry Across Eight Districts*

District	CF with only female executive committee	Patch land of C.F only led by women group	Registered patch land forest within CF
Makwanpur	2	1	1
Rasuwa	0	0	4
Ramechhap	0	0	0
Sindhupalchowk	0	0	0
Dolakha	2	0	0
Nuwakot	2	0	0
Sindhuli	0	0	0
Chitwan	1	3	3

After data collected from Division forest office, we engaged directly with Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) to understand their awareness, experiences, and perspectives on women's participation in community forestry, particularly regarding the forest patch handover scheme designed to empower women. The survey covered key areas such as awareness of the scheme and its eligibility criteria, women's representation in leadership roles, access to forest resources, involvement in decision-making, and perceived barriers to meaningful participation. Through structured questions across four thematic sections; awareness, leadership, resource access, and policy engagement, the survey aimed to capture both quantitative insights and qualitative reflections from CFUG members. The main objective to conduct baseline survey is to identify gaps, opportunities, and entry points for strengthening women's ownership, voice, and agency in community forest governance.

During the field visit, the team observed four different patch land groups operating under the leasehold provision within Community Forest land. Out of these four groups, three were almost entirely managed by women, while one was women-led but included male members in the committee. These visits provided practical insight into how the provision is being utilized at the grassroots level, as well as the opportunities and challenges faced by these groups.

The first site visited was People's Park Samuha, located within Amritdhara Community Forest in Chitwan district. This group has been managing a five-hectare area allocated to them by the Community Forest. The patch land has been developed into a park where people visit for recreation and picnic purposes. The group has created ponds, maintained walking spaces, and kept the area clean and organized. They have also planted various fruit trees in open



*Figure 3: Survey with People's Park Samuha*

spaces within the park. Visitors are required to pay a small entry fee to use the space, which serves as the group's primary source of income. Despite their good management, the group is facing a serious problem of human-wildlife conflict. During the fruiting season, monkeys frequently attack and destroy most of the fruits before they can be harvested for sale. The group has tried multiple

methods to reduce monkey attacks but has not been successful so far. Nevertheless, they expressed strong commitment to continue their efforts and not abandon their work, as selling fruits could have significantly improved their revenue.

The second site also belonged to Amritdhara Community Forest and was managed by Aayearjan Samuha. This group has likewise received five hectares of land and has been actively planting fruit-bearing species such as lemon, mango, litchi, and jackfruit for the past few years. However, their major challenge has been the spread of invasive plant species, which have covered the plantation area and killed many young seedlings and saplings. The group has



*Figure 4: Survey with Amritdhara CF managed by Aayearjan Samuha*

continuously tried to remove these alien plants, but they grow back rapidly. They have consulted several organizations regarding this issue. At one point, NTNC visited the site and suggested a possible solution: purchasing the invasive plants from the group. If this arrangement materializes, the group could earn income from selling invasive plants while also allowing their fruit trees to grow better in the absence of competition, leading to higher quality fruit production in the future.

The third patch land visited was managed by Chelibeti Samuha, a women's group responsible for both the Community Forest and the leased patch land. They have developed a picnic-type space in the area. In earlier years, many people used this place for recreational activities, but due to poor maintenance and repeated damage caused by visitors, the space has gradually become less usable. The group explained that they had invested significant effort in improving the



*Figure 5: Visiting picnic spot managed by Chelibeti Samuha*

area, but continuous destruction of infrastructure by outsiders discouraged proper utilization. Despite this, they have not given up and are planning to enclose the area with wire fencing and develop basic infrastructure so that it can be safely and sustainably used again as a picnic spot.

The final patch land was located in Raksirang, Makwanpur, known as Dupcheshwori Leasehold within Community Forest. This area is women-led but managed jointly by both male and female members. So far, the group has mainly been planting and harvesting grasses, which they sell once mature. Although they have not undertaken major initiatives yet, they have plans to plant fruit trees in the future. They also intend to cultivate Amriso (broom grass) as an additional income-generating activity.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, these field observations showed that while the leasehold provision within Community Forest land has created meaningful opportunities for women and poor households, groups are still facing practical challenges such as wildlife conflict, invasive species, and lack of infrastructure. Nevertheless, all the groups demonstrated strong commitment to continue their work and improve their livelihoods through sustainable use of forest resources. The baseline survey confirms that despite Nepal's vast community forests, women-led groups remain scarce, highlighting gaps in leadership and land access.

Annex 2: Questionnaire:

Name of CFUGs:

Location:

Area:

**Survey Section: Awareness of Forest Patch Handover**

1. Are you aware of the forest patch handover schemes for women in your CFUG? (Yes/No)
2. How did you learn about the forest patch handover scheme? (From CFUG meeting, local leaders, forest officials, NGOs, others)
3. Do you know the criteria for women to be eligible for forest patch ownership? (Yes/No)
4. What benefits do you perceive from the forest patch handover scheme?

**Survey Section: Women's Leadership and Participation**

1. Are you a member of the CFUG executive committee or leadership body? (Yes/No)
2. If yes, what position do you hold? (Chair, Secretary, Member, Other)
3. How long have you been involved in CFUG leadership?
4. How often do women participate in CFUG meetings? (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely,

Baseline Survey of Women-Led CFUGs										Date: 04/11/2025	
Anvitatara Community Forest, Chilwan											
Sl. No.	Name	Age	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Membership	Leadership	Participation	Phone No.	Signature	
92	कुशी कुंठ		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9845323926	कुशी	
93	सविता गुमड		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9811245462	सविता	
94	मिखला तामड		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9762217197	मिखला	
95	हेमजा तामड		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		हेमजा	

Never)

5. In your opinion, do women have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making in the CFUG? (Yes/No)

6. What barriers do women face in participating in CFUG leadership and decision-making?

**Survey Section: Access to Forest Resources and Benefits**

1. Do women in your CFUG have access to forest resources (e.g., firewood, fodder, timber)? (Yes/No)
2. If access is limited, what are the reasons? (Customary rules, lack of awareness, gender roles, others)
3. Have women benefited from income-generating activities related to forest resources? (Yes/No)
4. Is there specific support or training provided to women for managing or using forest patches? (Yes/No)
5. Are women involved in monitoring and protecting the forest patch? (Yes/No)

**Survey Section: Decision-Making and Policy Engagement**

1. Are women consulted in decisions regarding forest management plans and resource allocation? (Yes/No)
2. Have you participated in any training or advocacy programs related to CFUG governance? (Yes/No)
3. What changes would you like to see in CFUG policies to enhance women's ownership and participation? (Open-ended)