

**Report on  
Two-days Training for Community Forest leaders with Knowledge-Based  
Exposure Visit**

**Submitted by**

Women Rights and Resources Network (WRRN)

Madhya Marga, Kathmandu



**Submitted to:**

Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)

Washington, DC, United States



2026/02/12

**Date: 2082/09/12-2082/09/14**

**Program Venue: NGO Federation Hall, Hetauda, Makwanpur**

**Background:**

Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) in Nepal's Bagmati Province represent a cornerstone of participatory forest governance, where local communities manage forest resources sustainably while promoting social inclusion and biodiversity conservation. These groups often face challenges in leadership transitions, legal awareness, and enterprise development, particularly among



*Figure 1: Two-days training for community forest leaders*

women leaders who play pivotal roles in decision-making. The two days training for Community Forest leaders with Knowledge-Based Exposure Visit brought 20 participants together including women leaders and members from different CFUGs of eight districts to exchange knowledge, understand their rights under forest laws, and build collective strategies for local advocacy and economic empowerment.

**Objective:** The objective of the workshop is to enhance the legal literacy, leadership capabilities, enterprise skills, and understanding of the forest resource rights handover process among chairpersons and women representatives of Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) from Bagmati Province's three geographical regions.

**Program Description:**

**Day 1:**

On 2082-09-12, the training program titled "2-days Training for Community Forest Leaders with Knowledge-Based Exposure Visit" commenced at NGO Federation Hall in Hetauda. The majority of participants were women chairpersons or representatives of Community Forest User

Groups from different districts of Bagmati Province. In addition, four women representatives from different patch lands leased within Community Forests were specially identified and invited, as they have been actively managing those areas. Board members of WRRN were also present throughout the training. The program was graced by the presence of Member of Bagmati Provincial Assembly, Hon' Bharati Kumari Pathak, and the Chairperson of WRRN, Ms. Aarati Pathak. Deputy Chairperson of FECOFUN Bhaktapur, Mrs. Ramila Karki, also attended the event. The training session was moderated by Ms. Binita Karki, Program Officer of WRRN.

The session began with Ms. Binita Karki formally welcoming all guests and participants and ensuring they were comfortably seated. She briefly introduced WRRN, its mission, and the objectives of the program, emphasizing that the training aimed to strengthen women's leadership in community forestry and enhance their understanding of relevant policies and provisions. Following this, Mrs. Anjana Nepali, Secretary of the WRRN Board, delivered a welcome speech, highlighting the importance of women's participation in forest governance. This was followed by welcome remarks from Mrs. Shanti Bidari, Treasurer of WRRN, who encouraged participants to actively engage in discussions and learning throughout the program.

A major introductory session was then conducted, where each participant shared about the Community Forest or leased patch land they represented, how they became involved in community forestry, and their key contributions. In summary, most participants initially joined CFUG activities with limited knowledge but gradually gained understanding and confidence over time. As they attained leadership positions, they actively used their



*Figure 2: Sharing experience on community forest*

roles to protect and sustainably manage forest resources. One representative proudly shared that she had played a key role in stopping illegal logging in her forest. Another participant from Ghyampe Community Forest explained that despite her efforts in managing the forest, she was sometimes excluded from important information regarding activities conducted in the CF. Many participants also mentioned their involvement in tree plantation and conservation efforts. Overall,

the discussions clearly reflected that participation in community forestry had significantly contributed to women's empowerment and leadership development. Notably, Chitrepani Community Forest in Hetauda had an entirely women-led CFUG committee, ensuring women's full participation in decision-making processes.

After the introductory session concluded, Ms. Binita Karki invited Mr. Ghanshyam Pandey to the podium to deliver his presentation on Sustainable Forest Management, marking the beginning of the technical training segment of the program. Mr. Ghanshyam Pandey delivered a presentation on Sustainable Forest Management to the participants. In his session, he explained that sustainable forest management means using forest resources in a way that meets present needs without harming the ability of future generations to use them. He highlighted the importance of protecting forest biodiversity, maintaining soil and water resources, and ensuring that forest use does not lead to degradation. He also discussed the role of Community Forest User Groups in managing forests responsibly through proper planning, regular monitoring, and equitable benefit sharing. Mr. Pandey emphasized that when communities follow scientific and participatory management practices, forests can provide continuous environmental, social, and economic benefits while remaining healthy and productive in the long run.

After Mr. Pandey's informative session, Ms. Binita Karki took the podium to share about the baseline survey we have done prior to organizing this training. It will make it easier for the participants to understand about the provision related to leasehold within Community Forest (Patch Land).

Ms. Binita Karki, Program Officer of Women Rights and Resource Network (WRRN), delivered a presentation titled "Women's Leadership in Community Forestry: Possibilities, Opportunities, and Challenges." She began by introducing the concept of Community Forestry (CF) as a participatory forest management model that has been practiced in Nepal for around four decades. She then presented findings from baseline data collected by WRRN across eight districts. According to the data, there were a total of 2,709 Community Forests in the target districts. However, the proportion of women-led Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) varied significantly across districts. For example, Rasuwa had the highest proportion of women-led CFUGs at 11.26%, followed by Makwanpur at 7%, Dolakha at 6.26%, and Nuwakot at 5.8%.

Other districts such as Ramechhap and Sindhuli had very low representation of women-led CFUGs, at less than 1%. This showed that although women's leadership exists in community forestry, it is still uneven and limited in many areas. Ms. Karki highlighted several opportunities and potentials within community forestry for women. She explained that community forest resources can be better mobilized for income generation, especially through forest-based enterprises led by women.

Additionally, the law allows small portions of community forest land to be allocated to poor households and women under leasehold arrangements for economic activities. Despite these opportunities, she also discussed key challenges faced by women in community forestry. She noted that there has been limited investment in leadership development and enterprise-related programs for women. In her future action plan, Ms. Karki emphasized the need to strengthen women's leadership through capacity-building programs, legal awareness training, and mentorship. She suggested that women-led CFUGs should be supported to develop eco-tourism initiatives and forest-based enterprises. She also stressed the importance of raising awareness about existing policies and ensuring their effective implementation so that women can fully benefit from community forestry provisions.

Finally, she shared examples from field discussions with women's groups in Chelibeti Community Forest (Chitwan) and Amritdhara Community Forest (Makwanpur). She mentioned that small areas such as Chuli Dada (0.2 ha) were being explored as potential picnic and tourism sites, while People's Park (5 ha) and fruiting areas within Amritdhara CF were in the initiation phase of women-led management. These examples demonstrated practical steps toward women's economic empowerment through community forestry.

Overall, Ms. Karki's presentation clearly showed that while Nepal has strong policies supporting women in community forestry, greater effort is needed in awareness, capacity building, and practical implementation to ensure that women at the grassroots level can fully utilize these opportunities.

One question was raised by Mrs. Namita Thapa Magar, representative of Chundevi Mahila CF, Kathmandu. "We have many policies that say women should get 50 percent of benefits from

Community Forest income and that poor women can get leasehold land within Community Forest. However, in practice, many women at the grassroots level still do not know about these provisions. How can WRRN or concerned stakeholders ensure that such policies actually reach women at the community level and are properly implemented?"

In response, Ms. Binita Karki agreed that this is a serious issue. She explained that Nepal has progressive and women-friendly forest policies on paper, but the main challenge lies in their effective implementation at the local level. She emphasized that merely having laws and provisions is not enough unless they are actively practiced by Community Forest User Groups, local governments, and forest authorities. She highlighted that there is a strong need for better awareness dissemination, regular monitoring, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that policies truly reach grassroots women. She also encouraged women leaders to actively raise their voices within their CFUGs and local institutions so that these provisions are not just written in documents but are actually put into practice for real economic and social empowerment of women.

After this, Mrs. Parbati Nagarkoti, Vice-chairperson of WRRN, concluded Day-1 of training.

## **Day2:**

Day 2 began with a short opening speech delivered by Ms. Aarati Pathak, in which she outlined the types of sessions planned for the day and the expected learning outcomes from the presentations. She also briefly shared the day's schedule. The program was initiated in an informal and participatory manner, creating a comfortable environment for discussion. She then invited Hon' Bharati Pathak to take the stage. Before starting her formal



*Figure 3: Ms. Aarati Pathak shared outline of session*

presentation, Hon' Pathak facilitated a brief introduction session where all participants were encouraged to share their experiences as community forest representatives. As all the attendees

were women, they spoke about how they attained their positions in the Community Forest User Group (CFUG) committees through their continuous involvement in forest-related activities in their respective communities. Many participants highlighted their efforts in promoting rule compliance within their community forests and preventing illegal tree cutting. Some women also shared challenges they faced in leadership roles. A



*Figure 4: Sharing experience and knowledge on CF*

A few participants expressed that even after reaching prominent positions such as chairperson; they were sometimes excluded from important decision-making processes, including field visits conducted in their own community forests. One participant questioned whether this exclusion was due to her being a female leader. Despite these difficulties, others proudly shared how their dedication to community forestry had earned them recognition, awards, and appreciation for their contributions. Overall, the introductory session was highly inspiring and fostered a more interactive and supportive atmosphere among participants. Listening to their stories of leadership, resilience, and commitment to community forestry was motivating for everyone present. After the short introductory session ended, Hon' Bharati Pathak began her presentation titled "Women in Community Forest". Being a woman who started her leadership journey from community forestry herself, she clearly understood the realities, struggles, and achievements of the participants and expressed this with empathy and encouragement. In her presentation, she highlighted the important role of women in community forest management, emphasizing that women are not only beneficiaries but also key decision-makers, protectors, and sustainable managers of forest resources. She discussed how women's participation has contributed to the better forest governance, increased transparency in user group, and stronger community engagement. She also pointed out that meaningful participation of women in leadership helps ensure equitable benefit sharing, environmental conservation, and long-term sustainability of community forests, while also strengthening women's confidence and leadership capacity at the local level. Throughout her session, Hon' Pathak encouraged women to continue raising their voices in CFUG decision-making processes and to see themselves as capable leaders in natural resource management.

After she concluded, Ms. Aarati Pathak was invited to the stage to present on "Gender Equality and Equity". She explained how the concept of gender emerged and how it has historically contributed to discrimination against women. She emphasized that such discrimination should not be accepted and that meaningful change must begin from within individuals and communities. She further expressed her satisfaction that all participants in the program were women and leaders in community forestry, noting that this itself represented an important achievement in women's empowerment. Lastly, she added a task for all the participants about their thoughts on gender role of men and women. For this, we divided the total participants into 3 groups and gave them some time, chart papers and markers to write down their thoughts and they had to share that to the fellow participants.

After Ms. Aarati Pathak's session, Forest Officer Mr. Hem Pathak delivered a presentation on women's involvement in the forest sector and the existing provisions that support their economic improvement. He explained that women's participation in community forestry has gradually increased due to constitutional and legal provisions that promote inclusion and leadership. He highlighted that the Forest Act and provincial forest policies ensure at least 50 percent representation of women in Community Forest User Groups and require their meaningful participation in decision-making, planning, and benefit sharing. He placed special emphasis on the leasehold provision within Community Forest land, where small portions of forest land can be allocated to groups of women and poor households for a few years on lease. Through this arrangement, marginalized women and economically disadvantaged men are allowed to plant trees, cultivate non-timber forest products and run forest-based enterprises on the leased land to improve their livelihoods and generate regular income. He also mentioned that the government supports such groups through training, technical assistance, and financial incentives for activities such as herbal farming, nurseries, handicrafts, and other forest-based businesses. Mr. Pathak stressed that empowering women and poor communities in forestry is not only about representation but also about ensuring real access to land, resources, and economic opportunities for sustainable development.

Several queries were raised by participants regarding the leasehold provision within Community Forest land. It became evident that many participants were previously unaware of this policy, indicating that although such provisions exist, information often does not effectively reach people at the grassroots level. As a result, many community members have been unable to benefit from opportunities designed for their economic upliftment. Similarly, during the baseline survey conducted prior to the program, it was found that most people had limited or no knowledge about this provision, and only a few Community Forest User Groups were actually implementing it. However, two participants in the program were already part of groups utilizing leasehold forest within Community Forest land. They shared their experiences and explained how this provision had supported their livelihoods through forest-based cultivation. Their testimonies provided practical insight and motivation for other participants. Following these discussions, it can be positively concluded that all participants are now fully aware of the leasehold provision. They also expressed their commitment to make use of this opportunity either for their own economic improvement or to support other user group members in need, particularly those from poor and marginalized backgrounds.

After this session, Ms. Aarati Pathak concluded the day 2 training. Before ending, we informed the participants about the field exposure.

**Photo Plates**

