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International Water Management Institute



Bridging Gaps in Groundwater Governance: A Woman Leader-Led Multistakeholder Platform in Barahathawa Municipality, Nepal

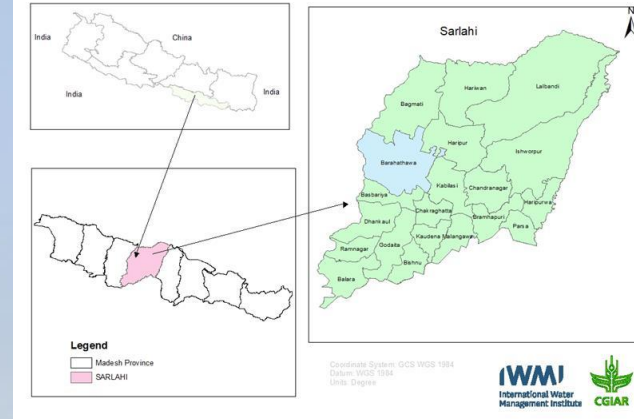
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International Conference
Accelerating Equality in food, land and water systems : Driving Solutions through Evidence and Learning
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Context

- **Groundwater** is vital for **agri-food system transformation**
- **Groundwater governance** is a multi-actor process that takes place at multiple scales; robust evidence and knowledge enable informed decision-making (Villholth et al., 2018).

CHALLENGES

- The three-tiered federal governance structure, institutionalized by the Constitution of Nepal, 2015 has resulted in **a complex water governance trajectory**
- **Gap in evidence and knowledge** on sustainable extraction thresholds and equitable access
- **Technical and silos approaches** coupled with the absence of long- term planning for **sustainable use**.

What's needed:

- ✓ Urgency to bring **natural resources stakeholders** together for **integrated planning for sustainable and inclusive groundwater use**
- ✓ IWMI – as part of the CGIAR NEXUS Gains Initiative and Policy Innovations Program – co-designed **groundwater governance research** with Barahathawa Municipality, led by a woman leader, in the southern plains of Nepal



Woman mayor speaking at the groundwater dialogue

Multistakeholder platform journey: From scoping visit to operationalization



A woman participant in groundwater game



Consultation with farmers during well inventory

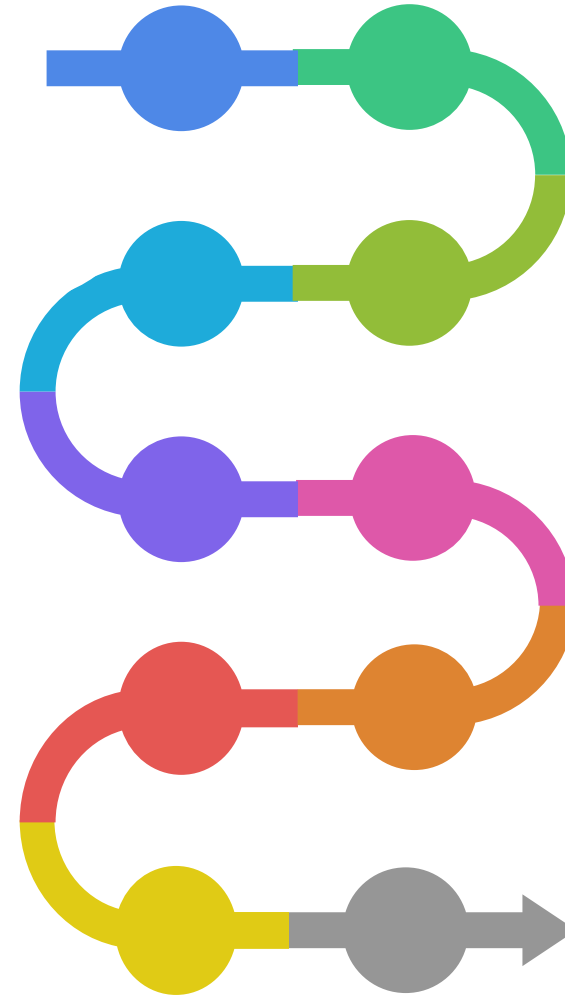
September 2023
Scoping visit

February 2024
Training and mobilization of young researchers and citizen scientist for groundwater inventory and groundwater monitoring

March 2024
Stakeholder Consultation

June 2025
Formation of local government led MSP

August 2025
Capacity building of MSP stakeholders



September 2023

Groundwater games

January 2024

Letter of Intent with Local Government- led by woman leader

April-August 2024

Assessment of stakeholder driven Groundwater Governance

November 2024

Dissemination and stakeholder consultation

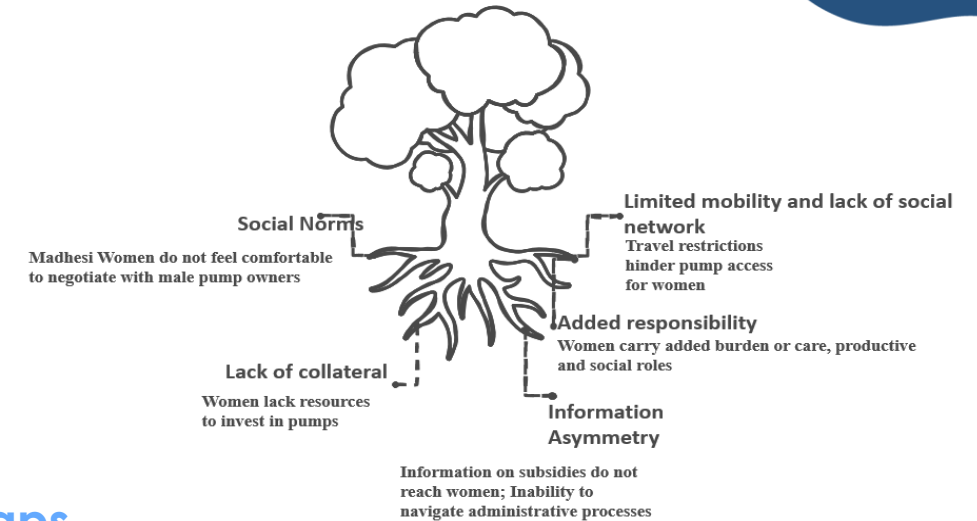
October 2025

Formalization and operationalization of Local Government led MSP

Who has access to groundwater?

- Who receives subsidies for water pumps?

- **Pump ownership is lower among female-headed households**
- Historically marginalized groups (e.g. Terai Dalits) **own less borehole and pumps** with respect to their population size.
- The **absence of equity provisions** in pump subsidies, along with lack of land prevent Dalits and women from accessing pumps.
- Female farmers, Dalits, small landholders and landless farmers are **vulnerable to high rental prices** in informal water market.



Policy Gaps

- **Overlapping roles** of multiple government agencies from federal, province and local government
- **Lack of**
 - dedicated **national policy** and **policy coherence** for groundwater management
 - integrated **planning** and **budgeting**
 - **local policy** for groundwater management

Solution: Formation of Local Government led multistakeholder platform

Expected outcomes:

- **Strengthened collaboration** and cooperation between actors and stakeholders of water, agriculture, energy and environment sectors
- **MSP guides decision making**, coherence in policies and programs for **sustainable** and **equitable** management of natural resources including groundwater by breaking silos and enhancing **inclusion, collaboration and cooperation**
- MSP functions **independently** in the municipality
- **Scaling** MSP to other municipalities
- **Share and learn** about the impacts of MSP

बुढासरोकार मन्च कार्यविधि - २०८१

प्रस्तावना

बाह्रथुवा नगरपालिकामा प्राथमिक स्रोतहरूको दिगो व्यवस्थापन, संरक्षण र उपयोगका लागि कार्यविधि आवश्यक छ। मेयलको संविधान र स्थानीय सरकार संवैधानिक ऐन २०७४ को दफा १०१ (१) को अधिकार प्रयोग गरी यो कार्यविधि तयार गरिएको छ। यस कार्यविधिले स्रोतहरूको न्यायोचित वितरण, दिगो उपयोग, क्षातदरणीय सन्तुल्य र स्थानीय समुदायको हित सुनिश्चित गर्न उद्देश्य राखेको छ।

परामर्शक

DRAFT

१. दक्षिण नाम र प्रारम्भ

(१) यस कार्यविधिको नाम बुढासरोकार मन्च कार्यविधि, २०८१ रहेको छ।

(२) यो कार्यविधि रिपब्लिक भएको प्रतिष्ठिति प्रारम्भ हुनेछ।

२. परिभाषा - विषय वा परामर्श अर्को अर्थ नलाग्दामा यस कार्यविधिमा,

(१) "संविधान" भन्नाले नेपालको संविधान, २०७२ लाई सम्झनुपर्नेछ।

(२) "ऐन" भन्नाले स्थानीय सरकार संवैधानिक ऐन, २०७४ र

(३) "कार्यविधि" भन्नाले बुढाथुवा नगरपालिकाद्वारा जारी गरिएको बुढासरोकार मन्चका कार्यविधि, २०८१ सम्झनु पर्नेछ।

(४) "बाह्रथुवा मन्च" भन्नाले नगरपालिका, सिँचाई, वन, विद्युत तथा ऊर्जा समन्वय समिति।

यो कार्यविधिको उद्देश्य बाह्रथुवा नगरपालिकामा विभिन्न सरोकारवालाहरू बीच समन्वय, सहयोग र समावेशी सहभागिता, सहकार्य मार्फत प्राथमिक स्रोत व्यवस्थापनका गर्न वातावरण सिर्जना गर्नेको लागि बुढासरोकारवाला मन्च स्थापना गर्नु हो। यो मन्चले पानी-ऊर्जा-खाद्य-पर्यावरणीय क्षेत्रको अन्तरसम्बन्ध, तैलुतिक तथा सामाजिक समावेशीकरण, दिगो विकास, आर्थिक तथा सामाजिक न्यायकोको सिद्धान्तलाई अङ्गगर्न गर्ने छ।

४. बुढासरोकार मन्चको संस्थागत संरचना

नगरपालिका तरीय बुढा सरोकार मन्च गठन गरिनेछ। यस मन्चको सदस्यमा जलस्रोत, ऊर्जा, खाद्य-कृषि, खानेपानी, सिँचाई, माटो, वन, वातावरण लगायत प्राथमिक क्षेत्रसँग सम्बन्धित सरकारी, गैर सरकारी, अन्तराष्ट्रिय संस्था, स्थानीय समूह, जनप्रतिनिधि, शैक्षिक तथा अनुसन्धान शिवाय, मित्रि क्षेत्र, विविध क्षेत्रको प्रतिनिधित्व रहेनेछ।

(१) कार्य समिति

बुढासरोकार मन्चको कार्य समिति रहेने छ र कार्यसमितिले बुढासरोकारवालाको प्रतिनिधित्व गर्ने छ।

कार्यसमितिलाई देशव्यापीसँग पदाधिकारी तोकिएका-

(क) नगरपालिका प्रमुख वा उपप्रमुख	- अध्यक्ष
(ख) प्रमुख कार्यकारी अधिकृत	- कोषाध्यक्ष
(ग) नगरपालिका, योजना शाखा	सदस्य

MSP working procedure developed by Barahathawa Municipality



Resource mapping exercise during the capacity building of MSP stakeholders

Summary

- ✓ **Fragmented governance:** High dependence on groundwater for irrigation and drinking, especially during droughts but lack of dedicated policy, weak coordination, limited data and limited recharge focus threaten long term sustainability of groundwater
- ✓ **Unequal access and marginalized groups left behind:** Dalits, female farmers, smallholders and landless tenants are **disproportionately impacted** in groundwater access due to fragmented policies, siloed programs and lack of coordination amongst government agencies
- ✓ **Local government on the frontline:** Local government with inclusion of 40% women elected representative are closest to the people and has important role in bridging sectoral gaps and ensuring voices of marginalized are heard in decision making.
- ✓ **MSPs as a solution:** A woman leader-led MSP in local government level can bridge groundwater governance gaps by bringing diverse stakeholders together in making **integrated planning and inclusive decision making** in interconnected sectors of agriculture, energy, ecosystem and water.
- ✓ **Continued engagement** with local government are needed to understand how the MSP can be effectively implemented to strengthen cooperation and collaboration in groundwater management for agri-food system transformation, inclusive development planning, and environmental conservation.

Water solutions for inclusive growth: IWMI's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Portfolio

Thank you
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Updating research findings with Mayor of Barahathawa Municipality

[Link: Water solutions for inclusive growth: IWMI's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion \(GESI\) Portfolio](#)

References

Villholth Karen G.; Conti, K. I. 2018. Groundwater governance: rationale, definition, current state and heuristic framework. In Villholth Karen G.; Lopez-Gunn, E.; Conti, K.; Garrido, A.; Van Der Gun, J. (Eds.). *Advances in groundwater governance*. Leiden, Netherlands: CRC Press. pp.3-31

KC, S., KC, S., Pokhrel, A., Paudel, S., Mishra, A., Buchy, M., Khadka, M., & Aryal, A. (in press). Nexus governance in practice: A stakeholder-driven framework for groundwater sustainability in Barahathawa Municipality, Madhesh Province. *Sustainability Nexus Forum*. Springer Nature.

Groundwater can transform agri-food systems when diverse actors and sectors tackle its complex challenges together. A Woman Leader led Multi-Stakeholder Platforms strengthen groundwater governance, fostering coherence, collaboration, equity, inclusion, and water security.

Manohara Khadka, IWMI Nepal

