

# WHAT'S UP

NEWSLETTER | OXFAM IN NEPAL



OXFAM



Members of Women Empowerment Center participates in their regular meeting. Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam

## INSIDE

- 2 THE FUTURE IS EQUAL
- 3 DIALOGUE TO SAVE MAHAKALI RIVER
- 4 A CITIZEN SCIENTIST ADVOCATES FOR WATER QUALITY
- 5 ENDORSING SAND MINING GUIDELINES
- 6 ACCESS TO SAFE WATER
- 7 SOCIAL AUDITS/MONITORING VISITS
- 8 CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS
- 8 SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM
- 9 HOW IS CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTING NEPAL
- 10 FINANCIAL LITERACY/IRA TRAINING
- 11 TRAINING WOMEN LEADERS

## THE FUTURE IS EQUAL

Every society is transformed by powerful ideas that are driven by consistent action. At Oxfam, we dream of a world where everyone has equal rights and opportunities that provides everyone a chance to thrive, and not just to survive. Oxfam tirelessly works across the globe in 68 countries, together with millions of people, to save and improve their lives.

In Nepal, Oxfam has been working since 1980, partnering with local NGOs, and working with local government, local groups and community members.

Oxfam's vision for Nepal is a just society without poverty, in which all women and men live a life of dignity, enjoy their rights, and assume their responsibilities as active citizens of Nepal. Oxfam works in three thematic areas which are Water Governance, Gender and Social Justice, and Resilience and Climate Justice.

Oxfam's Water Governance programme works to achieve sustainable solution to community water management. The objective of Water Governance programme is to enable Communities in Nepal to have strong governance of water and capacity to address environmental management and climate emergency.

Similarly, the objective of the Gender Justice programme is to reduce Violence Against Women and Girls and Child, Early and Forced Marriage, and create an enabling environment for women and girls to have free choice, equal opportunity and to be in leadership decision-making position across different sectors.

Likewise, the Resilience and Climate Justice Program works to strengthen communities and institutions' capacity to cope with disasters, improve their livelihoods, and build resilience. The objective of the programme is to enable young men and women from poor, marginalized and excluded groups, both in urban and rural areas, to have resilient livelihoods, income, and food security.

Oxfam will seek integration and synergies across different thematic areas and will work in poor communities, with a focus on socially and economically disadvantaged people.

## DIALOGUES TO SAVE MAHAKALI RIVER

A large number of people living in the riverbanks of Mahakali river depends on the river to sustain their livelihood. However, with more human activities, the river is gradually depleting, threatening access over valuable resources like sand, stones, and water.

Thus, the only way to save Mahakali river is by involving local communities and governments to work for the conservation of Mahakali river.

In this context, Oxfam's Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA) project has been regularly facilitating dialogue among local stakeholders through a platform called Mahakali Sambad. At Mahakali Sambad, the local community members, representatives of civil society, local government, and private sector come together for a construction discussion on saving Mahakali river and expanding livelihood opportunities for riverine communities.

Since December 2021, Oxfam has organized Mahakali Sambad twice in Baitadi and Kanchanpur district of Nepal. During these two sessions, the participants discussed resolving various issues faced by riverine communities in the district. Among the major discussion during the event, was to reduce pollution in Mahakali river. The participants in the event suggested promoting Citizen Science, which is an innovative approach implemented by Oxfam to train local communities to test the quality of river, and advocate for effective policies using the data generated by the tests.

Besides, during the event, the representative of the local government from Bhimdutta municipality in Kanchanpur district appreciated different initiatives undertaken by local women groups and committed to support the issues raised by local communities during Mahakali Sambad.



Participants attending Mahakali Sambad. Photo: Grishma raj Aryal/Oxfam

## PEBBLE ART EXHIBITION

During Mahakali Sambad in Kanchanpur district, the riverine community members displayed their artistic talents through pebble art. With the pebble art training received from Oxfam's TROSA project, the community members are exploring additional income generating opportunities by pursuing creative endeavours. Oxfam has been promoting these arts in various events conducted by the project and organizing dialogues with the local government to find market to sell pebble art.



Pebble art exhibition organized in Kanchanpur district. Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam

## A CITIZEN SCIENTIST ADVOCATES FOR RIVERINE WATER QUALITY



*Kabita Lohar conducts water quality test in Mahakali river  
Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal*

Kabita Lohar lives in Pipriya village, a community located at the banks of Mahakali river in Nepal. She is usually seen walking along the riverbank, carrying a blue box which contains equipment and chemicals to test the quality of water in the river. As Kabita carefully collects water samples from the river into her test-tube and observes the color of the water, she says, “Our rivers are getting polluted; we need to raise awareness and involve the community to save our rivers”.

Kabita is one of the many citizen scientists trained by Oxfam. Around five years back, Oxfam started working with the communities living in the riverbanks of Mahakali river through a project called Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA). The project aims to empower riverine community have more access and control over water resources.

Community members like Kabita are trained to collect and test water samples of Mahakali river to generate data on water pollution.

“We use this data to advocate for effective policies and raise awareness about water pollution

with the community members and local government”, says Kabita.

She recalls several initiatives taken by citizen scientists in her community. “Once we organized a door-to-door campaign asking people to filter and boil their water before drinking. People used to believe that the water in Mahakali river contains herb, so it was a common practice to drink water directly from the river. But with the data on water pollution generated by citizen scientist like me, we could raise awareness on the importance of filtering and boiling the water before consumption. Now, we hardly see anyone drinking water directly from the river,” says Kabita.

She further adds, “Few months back, we spoke to our mayor to develop policies to prevent the inflow of waste generated by households and hotels into the river. Our mayor has committed to fulfil our demands. But we don’t just want commitments, we want action, and we will keep following up until the commitment translates to action”.

As Kabita finishes collecting the samples, she tells us she will observe the water for 24 hours before updating the result in a digital device which records the location of the test. Citizen scientists regularly conduct these tests in specific locations to identify changes in pollution level over a period of time.

As Kabita repacks her equipment in the box, she says, “Every resource provided by the river is valuable to us. I feel happy to play a part in conserving our river.”

## YOUTH SUMMIT FOR SUSTAINABILITY



*A participant presenting in the summit*

*Photo: NEEDS/Oxfam*

With an aim for long-term sustainability of trans-boundary water governance issues, organized a youth summit in Baitadi district of Nepal, where youths from 4 districts— Darchula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura and Kanchanpur took part. During the summit, youths were educated about the importance of addressing several issues faced by the riverine communities. The program also shared its lessons on strengthening linkages between local government communities and stakeholders to promote local ownership to address issues of people living in the banks of Mahakali river. Besides, the youth group and Women Empowerment Center (WEC) members who took part in the event shared their success and challenges while working with riverine communities. The participants made several joint commitments to consistently work for trans-boundary water governance issues.

## ENDORISING SAND MINING GUIDELINES

In recent years, rapid urbanization has led to an increased demand for river sand for construction. As a result, sand mining activities have increased to meet the high demand of rapid infrastructure construction. This has resulted in various problems like river bank erosion, river bed degradation, deterioration of river water quality etc.

In this light, Oxfam's TROSA project has been

working with local stakeholders to develop a sand mining guideline for sustainable use of river resources like sand and gravel.

The sand mining guidelines have been endorsed by different local governments at the project's working area. The sandmining guidelines also encourages the contractors to adopt environmental friendly practices and also calls for an equitable sharing of resources for the local community.



*Sand Mining Guideline facilitation meeting*

*Photo: NEEDS/Oxfam*

**ALTOGETHER, 6 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS - FROM 3 DIFFERENT DISTRICTS HAVE ENDORSED SAND MINING GUIDELINES FACILITATED BY**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENDORSING GUIDELINES:**

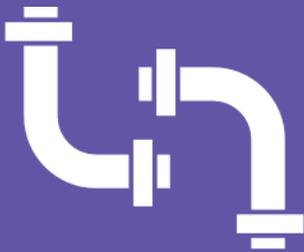
- 1. DODHARA CHANDANI MUNICIPALITY**
- 2. BHIMDUTTA MUNICIPALITY**
- 3. PARASHURAM MUNICIPALITY**
- 4. DASHRATHCHAND MUNICIPALITY**
- 5. SIBNATH RURAL MUNICIPALITY**
- 6. MAHAKALI MUNICIPALITY**

## ACCESS TO SAFE WATER

The safe water project implemented by Oxfam provides piped connection at household level, which delivers safe water to the communities depending on tubewell for their consumption. With access to safe water at household level, Oxfam aims to curb water borne diseases which is prevalent in community due to water consumption from tubewell.



**1300+** HOUSEHOLD PLATFORM  
CONSTRUCTED TO INSTALL WATER  
TAPS IN 3 DISTRICTS



**18+ KILOMETRES** OF WATER  
SUPPLY PIPELINE LAID IN 2 DISTRICTS  
WITH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT



**6 WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM**  
REPAIRED AND MAINTAINED IN  
DHADING DISTRICT

## SOCIAL AUDIT



Participants attending social audit  
Photo: FOCUS/Oxfam

Oxfam's Safe Water project organized a social audit in Rautahat, Sarlahi and Dhading districts. During the program, Oxfam shared about the project activities, progress and expense of project activities. The event was participated by over 50 participants representing local communities, politicians, ward members, water user groups and water supply division members. The participants of the event appreciated the event stating the importance of maintaining transparency and the contribution of the project to provide safe water to the communities. During the program, Rambahadur Puri, Chairperson of Kafalswara Water Supply System expressed his satisfaction with the project, "The organization has got us prioritized among many Water Supply Systems and repaired our water supply system. They have come with a different approach, like implementing board model. I think it is a very unique approach that can manage water problem in the community. We are ready to move forward with the project".



## MONITORING VISITS

With an aim to monitor progress of Safe Water and Alternative Management Model project, Oxfam's partner Rural Development Center (RDC) and Bagmati Welfare Society Nepal (BWSN) and Focus Nepal conducted a monitoring

visit in their respective project sites – Rautahat, Sarlahi and Dhading districts.

The monitoring team interacted with the Water User Groups and received their suggestions for the projects. The monitoring team in all three districts were satisfied with the quality of work from the contractors despite the hurdles created by COVID-19. During the visit, Rajan Ghimire, District Administrative Officer, Gajuri Rural Municipality (RM) who joined the visit with Focus Nepal suggested the Rural Municipality to form Water Management Board, who can establish and Operation and Management fund to conduct regular maintenance of the pipeline. Likewise, during the interaction with water committee users, the members committed to regularly follow up with the contractors to complete the pipeline work on time and also conduct a door-to-door visit to collect water connection charge.

Similarly, a separate monitoring visit by District Project Advisory Committee (DPAC) was also conducted in all three districts. During the visit in Rautahat district, Ramhit Yadav, Central Government Engineer, agreed to support and complete the remaining work of laying pipeline. He has also committed to support in household tap connection and also proposed to install water purification system in Water Supply System.



Participants attending monitoring visit. Photo: BWSN/Oxfam



Local people attending forum theatre

Photo:

## FORUM THEATRE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS

For many years, Oxfam has used Forum Theatre as a tool to raise awareness and mobilize people to influence stakeholders. Forum Theatre is an interactive form of street drama, where audience and actors interact with each other to express their views on the ongoing issue. It has proven to be a powerful tool for raising awareness and mobilizing mass at community level.

Capitalizing on the positive impacts of Forum Theater, Oxfam organized an act to raise awareness about climate change in Chandrapur and Brindaban municipality of Rautahat district. The forum theater was enacted by 12 actors trained by Oxfam. The script of the act was based on the contextual problems faced by locals in the area due to climate change.

During the event, one of the participants cited, "The nature we are living is entirely different from what we have enjoyed during our childhood. We are facing problems like water scarcity and low yields on agricultural products. This act has made us realized the consequences of climate change and encouraged us to control deforestation, promote afforestation and save water sources.

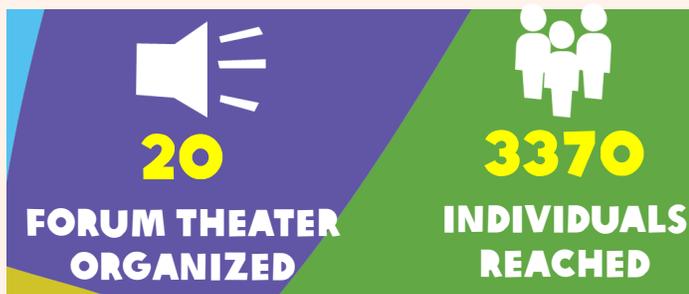
## A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

Oxfam's Sowing Diversity=Harvesting Security (SD=HS) project Project in collaboration with Nepal Food Network and Alliance of Agriculture for Food - Sudurpashchim Province Chapter jointly organized a provincial food system dialogue in Dhangadi district, Nepal.

The workshop was primarily targeted for stakeholders who are working to maintain a healthy and sustainable food system. They include representatives from Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperative (MoLMAC), Provincial Planning Commission, I/ NGOs, farmers groups, Community Based Organizations, universities, etc. The main objective of the workshop was to learn from the experience of stakeholders on how they have built strong food system at provincial level, and apply those lessons to create sustainable food system in Sudurpaschim province of Nepal.

The programme was divided into two sessions - the first session was focused on highlighting the status of the food system of Sudurpashchim Province and second session was focused on group exercise and presentation to reflect on the lessons from the session.

During the workshop, Uddhav Adhikari, Coordinator, Alliance of Agriculture for Food stressed on the collective effort by all stakeholders to build a sustainable and reliant food system. He also emphasized on using the indigenous wisdom of the farmers and protect their sovereignty.



# HOW IS CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTING NEPAL



Warming in Nepal is projected to be **higher than the global average**

By the 2080s, Nepal is projected to warm by **1.2°C–4.2°C**



Climate Change is already having significant **impact on environment**



Species' ranges are shifting to **higher altitudes**



Glaciers are **melting**



The frequency of precipitation **extremes is increasing**



Natural hazards are projected to **intensify**



Drought



Heatwave



River Flood



Glacier lake Outburst



Total number of people affected by climate change will **increase significantly**



People affected by River flooding could be more than **double by 2030**



Economic Impact of River Flooding could **Triple by 2030**



Important facilities might be inaccessible to vulnerable



Irrigation



Water Storage



Crop Variety



*Participants attending financial literacy training*  
*Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam*

## FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING

Natural disaster can often push people back to poverty, because when a disaster strikes, it takes away everything from people. Therefore, a well-crafted personal financing can help communities recover from a crisis. With an aim to educate people on the importance of financial planning, Oxfam's SCOPR3 project organized a financial literacy training in communities prone to floods and landslides.

The participants were taught about group savings, borrowings and record-keeping of personal income and expenses.

During the training, Prayag Raj Regmi, who was the trainer in the workshop, said, " People generally borrow money with local moneylenders who charge high interest rates on borrowing. This training will help break this practice and people can borrow from their own groups at a low interest rate.

## INITIAL RAPID ASSESSMENT TRAINING

Oxfam's SCOPR3 project organized a two days Initial Rapid Assessment (IRA) Training to train community assess the situation during disaster. The information generated through IRA helps to assess the impacts and identify immediate needs, which is crucial for planning immediate



*Participants attending IRA training*  
*Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam*

response. In an event of a disaster, it becomes extremely difficult to assess immediate needs as government and aid organizations may not be able to access the disaster hit area immediately. Therefore, this training was provided to community members who can immediately reach the area affected by disaster. This training also taught the participants to record the data on a digital device to prevent errors and loss of data. During the training, Raghunath Bhatta, the facilitator of the training, said, "This training is generally given to government officers and aid workers. I think this is the first time that such

## RISING AFTER FLOOD

Almost a decade ago, a massive flood in Mahakali river rampaged against Khalla Maseti village in Kanchanpur district of Nepal. The forthcoming story intends to shed light on the undeterred resiliency of Anjali Bohora, a local resident of the village, whose house was washed away in the flood, making her family homeless overnight.

Anjali Bohora takes a nostalgic trip of the past as she walks in the arid sand washed by the flood in 2013. Her house, and nine others in the community were swept in the fury of nature, making the entire community inhabitable.

A stark contrast of what the community has become today could be easily imagined when Anjali described her village before the floods.

“The entire stretch of land was painted with little specks of green vegetables that provided livelihood for the families living near the riverbanks”, says Anjali.



*A community Turned inhabitable after flood*

*Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam*

But a fateful night turned everything upside down for Anjali as she narrates the entire incident of the flood in 2013.

“It was a gloomy afternoon with small amount of rainfall which was normal for us. During the daytime we didn’t think anything serious would happen. But at night when we were asleep, I heard people crying for help and shouting to save their lives. I immediately took two of my children out of my house and moved to a higher ground. Within hours, our house, farm, and cattle were washed away in the floods, leaving us with nothing”, says Anjali.

After the flood, she started living with her sister, which provided some respite to Anjali.

“For several months after the flood, I was lost. I had several questions in my mind - how I will educate my kids, how will I start earning again. I was also aware that I cannot stay with my sister

forever and add up to her financial burden. So, one day, I decided to fight back with my fate. I borrowed some money from local people with an intent of starting a general shop”, says Anjali.

Anjali approached a local temple who let her use their land to construct a shop. Within a month, Anjali was able to set up a modest structure where she started a tea shop. Gradually, she expanded her shop and started providing snacks, lunch, and grocery items.

Anjali’s friendly nature started attracting customers, and she started earning livelihood. She tells us that not only has she repaid all her loans, but she also managed to educate her children.

“My son is currently studying in grade 11 and my daughter has finished her high school and has now started her bachelor’s degree in commerce”, says Anjali. She further adds, “My children mean the world to me. My major concern in life now is to provide good education to my children”.

Having lost her house and cattle in the flood almost a decade back, Anjali has gradually picked herself back and has been the breadwinner of her family. Her husband, who left home looking for a job in India 2 decades ago, never came back home.

“My husband probably doesn’t even know about the flood and that our children have grown up. I had to go through all of this alone”, says Anjali while standing on the same spot where her house used to be before the flood.

She grabs a water pipe which is the only remaining structure of her house. “This pipe is the only

memory I have of my house”, says Anjali who was not able to control her tears while saying

these words.

And as she quickly recovers from her tears, she tells us that she does not want the younger generation to go through all the hardships that she has faced. That's why Anjali is actively involved as a Community Disaster Management Committee member established by Oxfam's Strengthening Community Preparedness, Rapid Response and Recovery in Asia (SCOPR3) project.

"As a member of CDMC my role is to organize co-



*Anjali Bohora stands on top of her destroyed house  
Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam*

ordination meetings with the local ward office to prepare crisis management plans and to inform government to conduct rescue operations in case of emergency", says Anjali.

Anjali also received a portable steel container shop as a part of livelihood support from Oxfam's SCOPR3 project. "My shop right now is just besides the road, and I have made it on someone else's land. I might have to evacuate this land anytime. With the portable shop, I feel more secure about my livelihood as I can easily transport this kiosk anywhere I want", says Anjali.

Besides, Anjali was also involved in lobby meetings organized by the members of Women Empowerment Center (WEC) established by another Oxfam project called Transboundary Rivers



*A portable kiosk received by Anjali from Oxfam  
Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam*

of South Asia (TROSA). The lobby meeting was conducted to demand a telecommunication tower to obtain internet services and mobile network connectivity.

"The members of WEC asked me to join a lobby meeting with the local government to establish a telecommunication tower in the village. "I immediately accepted to join the meeting because having a telecommunication tower in the village meant that we could use our phones to communicate information to differ-



*A telecommunication tower installed by local government after advocacy from local women groups. Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam*



Local Shops in Khalla maseti village displaying the availability of online services.

Photo: Grishma raj Aryal/Oxfam

ent communities in case there was floods". She adds, "If we had a tower back in 2013, we would have received information about floods on time, and I could have salvaged many valuable belongings that I lost in the flood".

The telecommunication tower has not only helped in easing communication in the village but has also germinated new form of online services as internet connectivity has been established in the village.

"The entire world has moved online these days, so I have also included the option of online payment in my shop", says Anjali.

As Anjali serves lunch to her customers in her shop, get keeps getting many visitors from the village greeting her with respect. Most people in the village consider Anjali to be like an elder sister as they look up to her when they are in trouble.

And as she reflects back on her own life and the people who helped her during difficult times, she says, "It's important to help each other out when times are difficult, because we all are vulnerable when we are alone, but when we are together, no one can break our spirit".



Participants of leadership training  
Photo: RUDES/Oxfam

## TRAINING WOMEN LEADERS

Oxfam's Transformative Women Leadership project aims to create an enabling environment for women leaders to fulfill their potential for transformative leadership, meaningful and substantive participation in the governance process. Oxfam targets to reach women leaders in all three levels (federal, province and local) of governance and build transformative leadership of women leaders and elected representatives from marginalised and deprived group.

In this context, Oxfam organized a capacity building training for women leaders on leadership skills, planning political campaigns, advancing women's right, Violence Against Women and Girls and Gender Based Violence etc.

The aim of the training was to enhance the capacity and know of women leaders and improve their knowledge on Gender Based violence, feminist principles and gender inequality in society.

During the training, Anita Gyawali Shah, Chairperson, Women Leadership Platform said "Though we are politically active for many years, we still feel that capacity building on public speaking and leadership is necessary. We are pleased to receive these training from Oxfam and its partner RUDES.

## TRANSFORMATIVE WOMEN LEADERSHIP - PROJECT UPDATES



Network formation of  
39 Young Women



Women Leadership Plat-  
form formed with 113 wom-  
en leaders



91 women leaders partic-  
ipated in a meeting orga-  
nized in Women Leader-  
ship Platform



156 young women  
trained on leadership  
skills



Interaction with 23  
young women for men-  
torship programme



Interaction with 17  
religious leaders on  
Gender based Violence



25 male counterparts  
oriented in Gender  
Based Violence

If you have any concerns or queries relate to programme, please contact the following toll free number 16600122454/ 9801571204. For Safeguarding, please contact 16600150076. You can also raise your concerns via webform by following this link <https://oxfam.clue-webforms.co.uk/webform/misconduct/en> ; or you can directly write to [ois.speakup@oxfam.org](mailto:ois.speakup@oxfam.org)

### FEEDBACK?

Do you have programme updates, stories, pictures, videos to share? Or, any important questions on the newsletter?

Please contact: **Grishma Raj Aryal, Media and Communication Officer at**

**[garyal@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:garyal@oxfam.org.uk)**

[www.nepal.oxfam.org](http://www.nepal.oxfam.org) | [www.facebook.com/OxfamInNepal](https://www.facebook.com/OxfamInNepal) | [www.twitter.com/OxfamInNepal](https://www.twitter.com/OxfamInNepal)