



Towards Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Energy Utilities: Approaches, Methods and Results from Nepal



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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank	IPP	Independent Power Producers
CRED	Community Rural Electrification Department	JFPR	Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction
CREE	Community Rural Electrification Entity	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CREP	Community Rural Electrification Programme	NACEUN	National Association of Community Electricity Users Nepal
CRT/N	Centre for Rural Technology, Nepal	NEA	Nepal Electricity Authority
EDFs	Enterprise development facilitators	NSMs	Mobilization of National Social Mobilizers
ENERGIA	ENERGIA - The International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy	PAC	Practical Action Consulting
ESSD	Environment and Social Studies Department	PMSD	Participatory Market System Development
EUCs	Electricity User Cooperatives	PPMS	Project Performance Monitoring System
FIs	Financial institutions	PTDEEP	Power Transmission and Distribution Efficiency Enhancement Project
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent	PUE	Productive use of energy
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion	RMA	Rapid market assessment
Hivos	Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ILO	International Labour Organization	Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
		ToT	Training of Trainers
		WEs	Women entrepreneurs

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Introduction

The project, 'Strengthening the Capacity of the Energy Sector to Deliver Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Results', piggybacked on the loan project 'Power Transmission and Distribution Efficiency Enhancement Project (PTDEEP)', was implemented from January 2019 until December 2021. This project ensured gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) mainstreaming in the loan project. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) administered the project with support from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR). It was further complemented by ENERGIA's 'Empowering Women Engendering Energy' project, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida).

ENERGIA, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, implemented the project as a partner hosted by the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with developing Countries (Hivos). ENERGIA did so in collaboration with the Centre for Rural Technology, Nepal (CRT/N), Practical Action Consulting (PAC) Nepal, and Ricardo. The National Association of Community Electricity Users Nepal (NACEUN) was the strategic partner.

The project's ultimate goal was to mainstream GESI in the program and project cycles of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA). The NEA is responsible for generating, transmitting and distributing power by planning, constructing, operating and maintaining all facilities in Nepal's power system. The NEA

decided to act and play its pivotal role in developing a more sustainable and inclusive energy sector. This entails: training staff on GESI and on new energy technology applications; reviewing their internal operations, procedures and manuals to make them more gender-sensitive and gender-responsive; promoting the access to and productive use of clean energy technologies and services, by and for women, the poor and vulnerable. This project has primarily involved the NEA and its Environment and Social Studies Department (ESSD), the National Association of Community Electricity Users Nepal (NACEUN) and Electricity User Cooperatives (EUCs). EUCs are community-based entities that purchase electricity from the NEA and distribute it to remote areas. They are united under NACEUN.

Partners carried out different activities to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. The key three expected outputs were the: 1) Strengthened capacity of the NEA, NACEUN and EUCs to mainstream GESI in energy projects and programs; 2) Enhanced productive use (PUE) of clean energy technologies and services by and for women from poor and vulnerable households; 3) Developed capacity of NEA staff in new energy technology applications.

Why this document

This document provides an overview of the objectives, methodologies and project results. The document is structured in four parts: Chapter 1 gives an overview of the context in which the project operates. Chapter 2, 3 and 4 detail approaches, methods and results of the three project outputs. Lastly, Chapter 5 reflects on the main outcomes and outlines a way forward.

It is our hope that this document will emphasize the importance of GESI capacity building among utility staff, highlight how gender assessments and actions can benefit the outcome of energy projects and programs, and improve the working environment for staff. These approaches, paired with continuous support to women entrepreneurs, ensures the creation of a just and stimulating environment. We hope this report will also encourage more local, regional, and national organizations and institutions to invest in knowledge sharing and capacity building opportunities as well as support current and potential women to unlock their entrepreneurial potential. Elevating and opening up opportunities benefit women, both on a personal and business level, but also the communities around them. The women become role models and communities gain better access to new services and technologies. This generates greater awareness and new approaches to overcoming gender barriers and norms.



1 Context

In a national context characterized by recurring political and economic upheaval, Nepal's new constitution in 2015 marked a moment of change, of openness to new possibilities in the country. Since then and despite the frequent political challenges, the constitution has facilitated the design of gender-sensitive policies, more social inclusion and a reduction in social disparities based on gender, caste and ethnicity, religion, language, and geography. In the energy sector, for instance, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) reviewed its internal gender policies and incorporated gender equality and social inclusion strategies in their programs and project cycles to benefit the whole population, and without discrimination.

Gender and energy in Nepal

Nepal is a highly diverse country and the issue of social exclusion/discrimination based on ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion or an overlapping combination of these, are as important as gender. Social exclusion is a phenomenon that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights. It is dynamic and driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four dimensions – economic, social, political and cultural – and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels (SNV, 2012).

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Despite women and girls' crucial roles in their families and business activities, discrimination and violence against them still exists. Nepali women are still underrepresented and undervalued in their communities. They are excluded from participating in all levels of public life and have lower access to education, health services, property, social security and freedom, as well as decision-making processes. Among women, widows, separated and women-headed households are particularly disadvantaged. According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey (2010/11), Nepal has an adult literacy rate of 56.6% (National Planning Commission, 2011). However, the male and female literacy rates stand at 71.6% and 44.5% respectively, pointing to a disparity between the two genders.

Alongside women, other groups including those who are commonly landless and marginal farmers living below subsistence level as well as most of indigenous people Adivasi/Janajati, and Dalits are also disadvantaged (ESSD, 2016). These people have no or limited access to resources and have limited representation and influence in decisions made by government agencies, users' committees and private sector companies.

These inequalities are also reflected in the energy sector, where existing entrenched gender norms and traditions contributed to an unequal access to and benefits from energy resources for women, the poor, and people from excluded groups. Women and other disadvantaged groups discriminated by gender, caste and ethnicity, religion, language, and geography are disproportionately affected by energy poverty. This situation is exacerbated in rural communities, who live far from the grid and have limited access to information, knowledge and finance. Despite women's crucial role in the household's management, the possibility that they can emancipate themselves is low.

Affordability is one of the multiple barriers. In electrification, poor families are unable to bear the increased installation costs related to the distance of their houses from physical infrastructure. Women's dependence on male family members or technicians for even small repairs to their energy technologies restricts their control over such technologies as well (Mahat, 2006; ADB, 2018). Another limiting factor is the intermittent availability or complete lack of power for social uses. This includes electricity for drinking water, lighting for education, media for information, and refrigeration for health clinics, and for productive uses as in water pumping for irrigation, agro-processing and income-generating applications. Women and disadvantaged groups have limited opportunities to express their needs and actively contribute to the energy transition. Fewer economic assets, a lack of finance opportunities, illiteracy and poor knowledge of their rights result in a higher rate of people experiencing energy poverty and major socio-economic disparities.

Table 1: Structural barriers experienced by disadvantaged groups

<u>Social Group</u>	<u>Nature of Barriers</u>
Women	<i>Patriarchal values; social stigma, discriminatory practices impacting women of diverse social groups; limited access to land and other economic assets, violence, Including domestic violence, restrictions on mobility limited voice and agency and low decision-making authority</i>
Janajatis	<i>Language and culture not given due recognition, especially of the more disadvantaged Janajati groups; remoteness and geographical isolation discrimination due to different culture, traditions, and practices higher levels of poverty, negative perceptions about Janajati women's comparatively higher mobility and voice</i>
Dalits	<i>Continued practice of "untouchability" deeply entrenched caste-based discrimination influencing interpersonal relations, social stratification, and occupations; low resource endowments; high levels of poverty; extremely high Illiteracy rate, especially of Madhesi Dalit women</i>
Madhesis	<i>Unequal citizenship rights; language and cultural barriers; treated as non-Nepalis; differences across various Madhesi groups, with the situation of Madhesi Dalits being the worst; severe social restrictions on women of Madhesi subcaste groups</i>
Religious minorities	<i>Religious discrimination in a Hindu-dominated society, language barrier, low resource endowment, high rates of poverty, especially among Muslims; and gender discrimination, particularly prevalent among Muslim women</i>

Note: In the context of Nepal, the hill "upper-caste" groups consisting mainly of Baluns and Chhetris are considered advantaged

Sources: World Bank. 2006. *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal*. Kathmandu, L Bennett et al 2013 *Gender and Social Exclusion in Nepal: Update*. Kathmandu: Himal Books

Power Sector in Nepal

Nepal has one of the highest hydropower potentials in the world with an electricity generation capacity of 83,000 MW, of which 42,000 MW is said to be economically feasible. However, by the end of 2016, existing hydropower stations had a total installed capacity of only 802.4 MW, or less than 2% of the total commercially exploitable generation potential (ADB, 2017). Hydropower projects in Nepal are generally undertaken through the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Independent Power Producers (IPP), or micro hydro projects wherein the private sector and local communities work towards generating electricity. The NEA is a major player in the electricity sector, owning 65% of the hydropower projects in operation. IPP's accounted for 37.9% of total installed capacity in FY2016, and 23.0% of the country's power supply¹.

The strategy for the hydropower development has been directed to: (i) provide clean energy to enhance economic and social development in the rural and urban areas, and (ii) enable Nepal to generate revenue from exports of excess energy to neighboring countries. The primary energy consumption in Nepal is mostly derived from traditional biomass which constitutes 80% of the mix, followed by petroleum products at 11.2 %, coal at 2.9 %, electricity at 3.3% and stand-alone renewable energy resources at 2.6 %. Despite a large hydropower potential of 42 GW, Nepal has a low per capita electricity consumption, averaging 102 kWh/person annually compared to the South Asian average of 517 kWh/person. The current level of household electrification is at 76%. About 97% of the urban population, but only about 72% of the population in the rural areas has access to electricity².

To address the lack of rural electrification and extend electricity supply in remote areas, the NEA works with the Community Rural Electrification Programme (CREP), which is managed by the Community Rural Electrification Department (CRED) as a part of the Distribution and Consumer Services Directorate. This program enables community-based organizations, called Electricity User Cooperatives (EUCs), to establish a grid connection, purchase electricity from the NEA, and distribute/sell to members of the cooperative. The operations are conducted through a Community Rural Electrification Entity (CREE), which is a legal entity, and is required to raise 10% of the project cost to build the required network infrastructure, with the remaining 90% funded by the Government of Nepal. The responsibilities of the CREE include building and maintaining all network infrastructure on the low-voltage side of the distribution transformer (i.e. the 230V/400V network); managing power distribution within the EUC; controlling non-technical losses; purchasing power, in bulk, from NEA and selling to the users. The National Association of Community Electricity Users-Nepal (NACEUN) offers a range of other services to their members, including micro-financing loans, facilitation of productive use of electricity and financial support for the poorest members.

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- 1 For more information, see Institutional and Training Needs Assessment Report, 2019.
 - 2 Ibid.

Commitments to GESI in Nepal

Over the last two decades, the government of Nepal has been committed to integrating GESI approaches in all programs and policies, to enhance the welfare of women and disadvantaged groups. Nepal has also made significant effort to implement international conventions and treaties related to gender equality and social inclusion. This includes international instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989 (No. 169), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Platform for Action. Additionally, the government has enacted several laws like the Gender Equality Law, 2006 and the Good Governance Act, 2008, and amended the Civil Service Act, 1993, to promote non-discrimination, equity, and inclusiveness while also guaranteeing human rights and promoting local participation.

The new Nepali constitution: A historic turning point

With Nepal's new constitution in 2015 and its transformation into a federal structure, Nepal committed to achieving "*gender equality, proportional inclusion, participation and social justice.*" The new constitution provides a list of economic, social and cultural rights, highlighting the need to take action against historically prejudiced or disadvantaged groups, including women and underrepresented castes, ethnic groups and minorities. In line with these ambitions, it is a governmental priority to implement policies and programs that involve these groups, and mainstream gender in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of sectoral policies, plans and programs. The strong commitment to GESI reflects the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG5 on gender equality which sees gender equality and equity as key to sustainable development.

The new constitution also emphasizes the need to develop energy for economic development, recognizing its role in meeting the needs of its population, including living in a clean and healthy environment and ensuring access to light, clean cooking services, drinking water, and irrigation. These actions are complemented by approaches aiming to reduce the burden on forests and to promote the conservation of natural resources.

In line with these commitments, several sector ministries embarked on a process of addressing persistent gender barriers and promoting inclusion of

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vulnerable and excluded groups. However, while a legal, political and institutional framework for GESI was in place, a lack of human and financial resources resulted in weak implementation. Even where there were designated gender focal points within government entities, there was often no institutionalized linkage between their gender mandate and the main work of the concerned organization. As a result, the performance on socio-economic indicators varied across regions, caste and ethnic groups and economic status³. And this is what the project has sought to rectify.

The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) was one of the sector agencies that took the opportunity to review its GESI approach, particularly related to the construction of hydropower plants and transmission lines, distribution lines, and the construction of electricity substations and rehabilitation of existing power sector facilities – all of which have several environmental and social impacts. The impacts include loss of land, loss of residential and commercial structures, loss of crops, trees, community forests and other resources, involuntary resettlement affecting income, livelihoods and peoples' living standards. If not adequately addressed, these impacts could affect the project's sustainability itself.

Through the 'Strengthening the Capacity of the Energy Sector to Deliver Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Results' project, the NEA aimed to incorporate GESI strategies in their program and project cycles, and mitigate the potential negative environmental/social impacts of projects by implementing social safeguards procedures. The NEA also addressed the gender issues of poor and vulnerable households belonging to the Electricity User Cooperatives (EUCs) under the National Association of Community Electricity Users Nepal (NACEUN), by promoting and supporting women and disadvantaged groups' access to and control over energy services and technologies. This entailed planning and conducting training sessions to enhance women's business and leadership knowledge and their agency, as well as training people who could support the women entrepreneurs along their journeys.

3 For more information, see Institutional and Training Needs Assessment Report, 2019

This was achieved by working on three key outputs:

- *Strengthened capacity of the NEA, NACEUN and EUCs to mainstream GESI in energy projects and programs. This output included trainings and the development of a GESI strategy and operational guidelines;*
- *Enhanced productive use of clean energy technologies and services (PUE) by and for women from poor and vulnerable households. This output included supporting women's entrepreneurs from poor and disadvantaged groups in 15 EUCs across 7 districts. The activities included enhancing their business skills and raising awareness on how access to energy can increase their income and productivity.*
- *Developed capacity of NEA staff in new energy technology applications. This output included management and technical training courses aimed at strengthening staff members' capacity.*

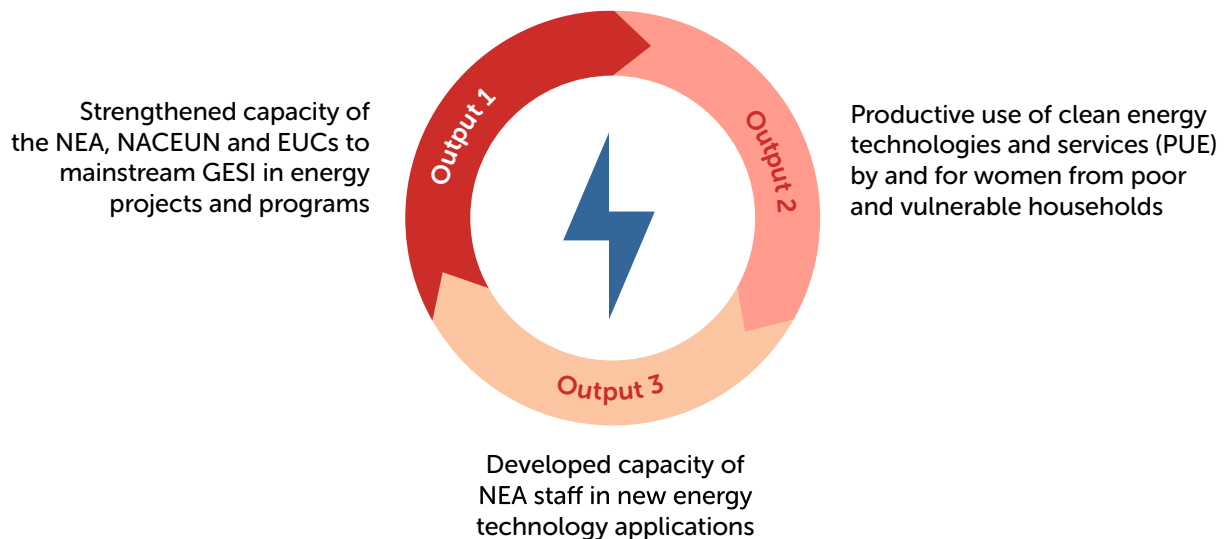




Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

2 Capacity strengthening within the NEA, NACEUN and EUCs to mainstream GESI

Within Output 1, the NEA, NACEUN and EUCs were supported on two fronts, namely to mainstream GESI considerations into their functioning and to mainstream social safeguards in energy programs and projects. This was done through a consultative process that included: i) understanding the needs and expectations of the key players within the NEA, NACEUN and subsidiary agencies; ii) developing and institutionalizing a GESI strategy that builds the NEA's capacities on gender equality, women's empowerment and social inclusion.

Partners discussed the main GESI issues in the NEA’s hydropower and electricity projects that frequently have environmental and social impacts and require social safeguard procedures, construction/mitigation work, and employment approaches. This also led to a review and analysis of the NEA’s institutional practices, gender and diversity ratios, recruitment procedures, and access to management roles.

Mainstreaming GESI in energy programs and projects

These activities ensured a better understanding of the needs and expectations of the key players within the NEA, NACEUN and subsidiary agencies. Activities included the development of the ‘Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy and Operational Guidelines’ for mainstreaming and institutionalizing GESI considerations in the NEA’s overall portfolio and operations.

ENERGIA’s GESI mainstreaming trajectory encompasses three phases:

- *Phase 1: Institutional assessment and development of the GESI Strategy and Operational Guidelines;*
- *Phase 2: Training needs assessment and curriculum development;*
- *Phase 3: Delivery of the Training of Trainers and awareness raising trainings.*

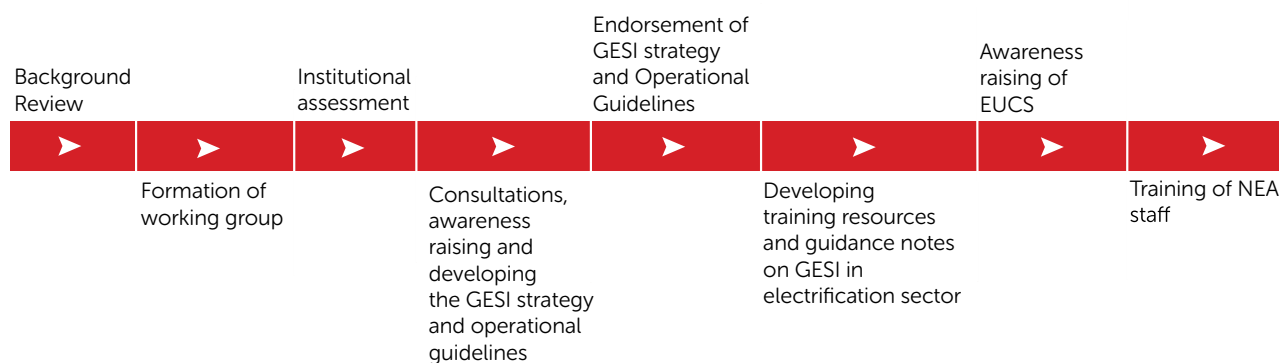


Figure 1: Technical GESI approach for Output 1

GESI Strategy and Operational Guidelines

With support from the ADB and ENERGIA, the NEA developed a ‘Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy and Operational Guidelines’, accompanied by a GESI Manual and Guidance Note. These documents provide specific instructions and guidelines for operationalizing the GESI strategy, including questionnaires, reporting formats, as well as good practice examples from around the world.

Capacity strengthening within the NEA, NACEUN and EUCs to mainstream GESI

Operationalizing the GESI strategy requires implementing the guidelines in full. From the preparatory phase, which includes feasibility, technical, environmental and social impact assessment studies, to project planning, implementation and post-implementation, the GESI strategy and its operational guidelines are designed to ensure the continued involvement of the communities and project-affected people. The NEA implemented the inclusive process in its institution. In the gender-responsive program and project cycles, it consulted with and welcomed the participation of marginalized groups of people. They took the peoples' needs and potential project impacts and benefits into account, such as different employment terms and livelihood opportunities, job and land loss, land compensation, increased workloads, human trafficking, and gender-based violence risks.

By adopting and implementing gender-sensitive policies, the NEA strengthened its internal processes to create an inclusive and secure working environment for all employees and ensured equal opportunities and open discussions. They also firmly condemned sexual harassment and other forms of discriminatory behavior based on social identities, caste or ethnicity.

The NEA integrated GESI accountability indicators within its overall monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress within the NEA and its project cycle to ensure the GESI outcomes. The monitoring framework for GESI was integrated into the regular project monitoring system, using responsive indicators and data disaggregated by sex, caste, ethnicity, and economic status. To do this, all NEA progress reports specifically assessed whether (or not) women, the poor and the excluded benefitted from the project, as well as how to improve their access to resources and benefit accordingly.

"Trainings are crucial to deepen the knowledge of gender issues. Procedures and manuals provided a structured mechanism, enabling specific and driven implementation processes. This awareness helped to make the services more effective. But it also highlighted the need for leadership trainings for female staff and the excluded staff, and the urgency to create a space for women to prove their capability as well as increase their representation at the decision making level and in the various working committees."

Ranju Pandey, Manager, Load Dispatch Centre, Siuchataar

GESI training sessions

Once the GESI manual and operational guidelines were approved, the NEA, NACEUN and EUC's staff members attended various training sessions to strengthen their capacities to mainstream GESI in all aspects of their energy projects and programs. Due to the travel limitations following the COVID-19 pandemic, the trainings were held partially online. This exceptional situation limited the participation of some of the staff members due to internet connectivity issues and movement restrictions. Two sets of Training of Trainers (ToT) were organized: one for the NEA's staff and the other for the NACEUN and EUCs' management.

"NEA is a technical organization, led by technical staff, who focuses more on technical issues. These training sessions have increased awareness and dialogue on the need to address GESI issues across projects and within the organization itself. The experience made it clear that everyone within the organization must work together to promote and advance the integration of a GESI strategy."

Mita Acharya, Assistant Manager, Social Safeguard and Environment Management Department, Mid-Baneshwor

The Training of Trainers (ToT) for the NEA focused on analyzing GESI concepts, learning GESI strategies and how to apply them, and discussing case studies. They also analyzed how to mainstream GESI in the project preparatory phase. They further learned how to manage projects within the NEA and how to integrate GESI considerations in HR strategies. Lastly, there was a module on training and communication techniques.

The ToT for NACEUN and EUC Management consisted of six modules, each focusing on a specific topic. The goal was to enhance the background knowledge, skills and practical experience on providing inclusive energy services and addressing persistent gender challenges. During these meetings, participants discussed the gender terminology and examined the gender relations that keep women and marginalized groups in subordinate positions. They discussed how to promote the use of energy for productive purposes in a safe and secure manner. They furthermore analyzed the effective management of EUCs, and how to engage with local communities and organizations. The training also focused on engendering planning, monitoring and evaluation, and on formulating gender work plans.

"NEA is a governmental utility organization, following the national GESI norms and regulations since 2010. Training sessions, strategies and manuals have opened the opportunity to discuss and address existing discriminations within the organization and across projects. To achieve our goal, it is important to understand and abide by the code of conduct, laws and policies."

Rajan Rishi Kadel, Director, Social Safeguard and Environment Management Department, Mid-Baneshwor

Capacity strengthening within the NEA, NACEUN and EUCs to mainstream GESI

A staff orientation training on the use of the GESI strategy and operational guideline was organized separately for 150 NEA staff members. Overall, this training focused on gender inclusion in processes at the organizational, implementation and monitoring levels. A module focused on understanding the ways to support the overall energy needs of women and marginalized groups. Participants also learned more about the opportunities within the energy sector, including women's empowerment and business growth through productive uses of energy. The program included technical sessions on the importance of public hearings, how to develop inclusive planning processes, how to set up gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and evaluation, and how to formulate a GESI action plan.

"When we started this program, we focused on the GESI strategy and how to make it work in the programs and projects. We developed a clear manual and a guidance note to address the existing gender inequalities. We reviewed documents and policies, and interviewed staff from all layers in the targeted organizations, including women engineers within the NEA to take stock of the situation. Based on that overview, we developed this practical manual and guidance note with concrete actions towards a more inclusive sector."

Soma Dutta, ENERGIJA's Energy and Gender Technical Advisor

In parallel, we conducted a training on mainstreaming the GESI approach with 15 EUCs and their respective stakeholders, covering aspects of planning, implementation and monitoring in the organizations. The training strengthened the skills of the management and operational staff within the EUCs on providing inclusive energy services to communities in a participatory and inclusive manner.

"The NEA's adoption of the Gender Strategy and Operational Guideline is an important move towards equality in this male-dominated sector. It shows that the organization is on the path to declaring that it is culturally acceptable to allow even women to succeed in the energy field. I strongly believe that with the gender-sensitive regulatory policies, the utility will attract more women into the sector, build up their agency, and give voice to those who have not been heard until now."

Indira Shakya, Gender and Energy Expert at CRT-Nepal



Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIJA

Capacity strengthening within the NEA, NACEUN and EUCs to mainstream GESI



Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

"I have been working at the NEA for two and half years. I am now in the Baneswor Distribution Centre, where I have to deal with consumer service complaints related to electricity poles. I have to solve electricity pole issues in my day-to-day office work. This workshop on GESI was a great opportunity for me to understand the issues. We were informed about GESI but this workshop also empowered me. Now I will share this empowerment with all the women around me to make them aware about GESI. I will make sure no one is harassed in my circle. In my workspace, I will raise voices for women-friendly and socially inclusive policies and working environments. In my work space, I will be proactive in providing services to differently abled consumers in my office."

**Sonu Dhakal, Forewoman,
Baneswor Distribution Centre**

"I have been working at the NEA for 3 years. I currently work as a Senior Meter Reader in the Balaju Branch. My day-to-day work is to deal with any issue related to the electricity meter, like damage to the meter, or changing a meter, etc. This workshop gave me an eye for looking at the issue of GESI from different angles - in my family, society and in the office. Now, I will deal with my consumers in a different way according to their needs. In my work space now, I will use a different approach to give services to the elderly and illiterate people, so that they do not have to run from one room to another for the services that we provide."

**Kamala Subedi, Senior Meter Reader,
Balaju Branch office**



Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA



Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

"I have been working at the NEA for 28 years. As an Assistant Law Officer, my main job is to look after the tender evaluation, legal cases and land pooling. I find this workshop really important for me. The training has provided education about GESI, in the family as well as at the office level. It taught us that we should not discriminate on the basis of gender and social background in our families or in the work space. The training gave me an eye-opening message that males and females are two wheels of a cart, so both wheels should get equal opportunities to roll so that we can build a prosperous society. As a law officer, I will implement the learnings in law enforcement in my workspace."

Nilkhanta Sharma Katel, Assistant Law Officer, Project Management Directorate, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)

"I have been working at the NEA for 19 years. I have experience with people not accepting a female as an officer or chief in the working sector. This workshop encouraged me to say, "yes, women also can do any work and we can be officers too." As an Administrative Officer, I will now listen to the issues of GESI with priority in my workspace. I will also raise voices in my organization for equal opportunities for women and other needy people. From now on, as an Administrative Officer, I will provide equal opportunities in different kinds of trainings for all the staff. I will demand free sanitary pads for female staff in my office and also demand a child care center in our office."

Nirmala Paneru, Administrative Officer, Baneswor Distribution Centre, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)



Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

Capacity strengthening within the NEA, NACEUN and EUCs to mainstream GESI



Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

"I have been working at the NEA for 12 years. Now I am working as a Senior Assistant Officer in the Baneswor Distribution Centre. My main job is to keep records of customers' electricity meter boxes. This workshop encouraged me to raise up my voice against any discrimination and for equal opportunities in my workspace, and in society. It also helped to understand the ways to make my work and working space more socially inclusive. That's why this workshop was valuable for me. I learned that if there is any issue of gender and social discrimination, we should not hide it or keep quiet, rather we should raise our voices against such discrimination. In my work, there are customers who are disabled, pregnant, elderly and illiterate, and this workshop helped me to understand the need to offer services to these people in an inclusive way. For example, my office structure is not disabled friendly. I will try to provide services to disabled people from the help desk on the ground floor."

**Sujata Thapa, Senior Assistant Officer,
Baneswor Distribution Centre**

Mainstreaming social safeguards in energy programs and projects

In addition to mainstreaming GESI in energy projects and programs, Output 1 also raised the topic of social safeguards and the issues that women and disadvantaged groups experience when new energy projects and electricity infrastructure are developed. Several factors impede their access to and control over energy services and technologies. Among the main challenges are: the loss of agricultural land resulting from land acquisitions and displacement; inequitable compensation during resettlements; gender-based violence linked to the migration of workers, and exposure to health risks. The participation of women and indigenous peoples in the initial phase of the project was limited due to the challenging mobility in rural areas. Moreover, the social norms that constrain their level of engagement and inclusion, combined with their limited understanding of their rights, made the process (and need) even more critical to address. Therefore, social safeguards procedures and manuals relevant to the NEA's energy projects had to be put in place to mitigate the aforementioned barriers.

ENERGIA's mainstreaming social safeguards in energy programs and projects encompasses three phases:

- *Phase 1: Institutional assessment of the NEA and ESSD, and the capacity to deliver the GESI and safeguards mandate.*
- *Phase 2: Development of guidelines, manuals, and training modules for mainstreaming social safeguards in the NEA's energy projects.*
- *Phase 3: Training NEA staff on tested approaches and global best practices of social safeguards in energy projects.*

Social safeguards

To develop the guidelines, manuals, and training modules, a number of field visits were conducted to observe the following social safeguard activities: (i) status and perception of local authorities on social safeguards of the project activities; (ii) grievances and its resolution process; (iii) role of local government on compensation determination and distribution; (iv) status of land acquisition and resettlement; (v) status, procedure and effectiveness of project support programs (Project Support Program, Community Support Program and Corporate Social Responsibility), and (vi) views of affected people on social safeguards including on land acquisition, compensation, resettlement and organization structure, line of communication and role and performance of

ESMUs at the field level. The collection of primary data was done between 1 February 2019 and 18 February 2020.⁴

In the second phase, partners reviewed documents from the government, the NEA and ADB, as well as past studies available from the internet. The government documents included the laws relevant to social safeguards. The NEA's documents included its bylaws and guidelines relevant to safeguards management. The ADB documents included the 2009 Safeguards Policy Statement, social safeguard documents, project evaluation reports by ADB and its relevant publications.

After a final institutional assessment of the NEA's structure and capacity to deliver its mandate on safeguards, the partners developed social safeguards, operational guidelines and manuals. The guidelines comprise social safeguards actions and the prescribed activities for NEA project preparation, as well as for the implementation and monitoring at all levels of the project cycles. The guidelines also indicate which processes to adopt depending on the differing project modalities within the NEA, i.e. Nepal government's funded projects, IPP funded projects, ADB/WB funded projects. The social safeguards manuals included involuntary resettlement and indigenous peoples' manuals and contain practical tools and step-by-step actions, along with roles and responsibilities to follow while implementing those specific social safeguarding activities.

Safeguards training sessions

Next to the institutional assessment, a Training Need Assessment was prepared in consultation with the NEA and ADB to identify training needs and gaps. Subsequently, training sessions were conducted with the NEA at two levels: a training of the Trainers (ToT) for resource persons, and an orientation training for broader NEA staff members. In compliance with health and safety measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, physical training sessions were organized with national consultants and local resource persons taking the lead in delivering trainings. International consultants participated virtually.

Both training sessions focused on developing a common understanding about social safeguards issues, particularly those related to indigenous peoples. Partners analyzed why these social safeguards concepts are valuable and discussed how to apply them. The ToT provided insights on land acquisition, stakeholders' communication, database management, grievance redress mechanism, and meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples. It also examined related issues, particularly Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes to avoid and resolve conflict between project management and indigenous communities. The orientation training focused more on the key safeguards policy, principles, issues, process in the NEA project cycles and included an analysis of case studies and global best practices on social safeguards.

⁴ Field visits to project areas where indigenous peoples live were undertaken between 12-18 Feb 2020.

“The gender component is an integral part of the social risk management tasks. In fact, gender and social inclusion go hand-in-hand in addressing social risks. Training on social safeguards is considered essential to be fully equipped with the knowledge and skills to handle gender, as well as social issues.”

Arati Nandi, International Social safeguards Expert

Output 1 Results





Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

3 Enhancing the productive use of clean energy technologies and services

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) make it clear: Gender equality (SDG 5) and universal access to energy (SDG 7) are crucial to building a sustainable and just future. Less obvious are the linkages between these two goals. As agents of change, women's economic participation in the decision-making process can contribute to speeding up development, reducing energy poverty, increasing the delivery of energy services in hard to reach areas, and accelerating a transition towards universal energy access. Likewise, the women's involvement in energy supply chains as entrepreneurs and employees – particularly in non-traditional roles – contributes to women's

economic empowerment, agency and independence. Their engagement enables them to pursue income-generating activities, contribute to their families' welfare and challenge persistent gender norms. When it comes to productive uses of energy, the use of appliances not only contributes to reducing women's drudgery by replacing their need to do manual labor, but it also transforms gender roles and relations. ENERGIA's research study (ENERGIA, 2019) showed that enabling women's access to appliances empowers them to undertake roles that are traditionally male-dominated and share household responsibilities with their male counterparts.

In the 'Strengthening the Capacity of the Energy Sector to Deliver Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Results' project, Output 2 focused on the promotion of GESI by supporting the access to productive use of clean energy technologies and services, by and for women, the poor and people in vulnerable households. The target groups were households served by EUCs under NACEUN. Alongside multiple technical trainings, partners strengthened the women and marginalized groups through a complete support package, including business and leadership assistance.

This output consisted of six activities:

- *Developing capacities of, and mobilizing, the National Social Mobilizers (NSMs)*
- *Enabling the EUCs as the focal institution for supporting women entrepreneurs (WEs)*
- *Enhancing the understanding of the entrepreneurial ecosystem to develop WEs*
- *Collaborating within the entrepreneurial ecosystem to promote women's entrepreneurship and leverage support*
- *Empowering WEs*
- *Monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management*

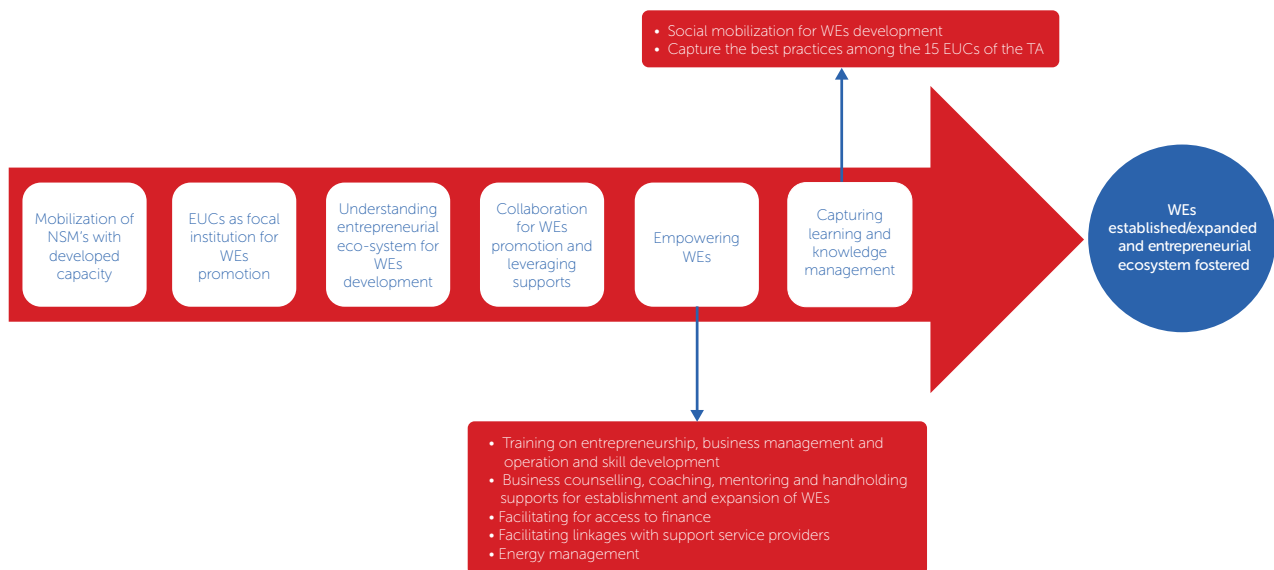


Figure 2: Output 2 implementation approach

Mobilization and capacity enhancement of National Social Mobilizers (NSMs)

The National Social Mobilizers supported the implementation of the project by identifying and addressing underlying vulnerabilities and needs of women entrepreneurs. Their role was to provide guidance to WEs given their good understanding of productive energy use promotion, women's entrepreneurship development, and of project implementation. Based on the identified capacity development needs of NSMs, partners planned a combination of training, exposure visits and regular mentoring, coaching and handholding support to strengthen the NSMs' capacities. The goal was to enhance their knowledge and skills on how to give trainings and facilitate enterprise development activities.

"From the ToT on Business Advisory Mentoring and Coaching provided by the project, I benefited enormously by gaining new knowledge and techniques in counseling for business management, market mechanisms, handholding support, effective counseling, mentoring, and a systematic way of counseling, by using the right technique and right formula at the right place. This knowledge helped me a lot in winning the confidence of WEs with whom I worked."

Likhram Chaudhary, NSM, Dolakha

Two Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops took place. The first one focused on enterprise development and enhancing NSMs' knowledge and skills on training delivery, agency-based empowerment and new approaches for entrepreneurship promotion and business management. The training included sessions on:

- *Entrepreneurship, including creativity and innovation;*
- *Understanding markets, including market mapping and growing enterprises;*
- *Developing a business model canvas;*
- *Agency-based empowerment;*
- *The GESI concept and its application in entrepreneurship development;*
- *Energy management;*
- *Facilitating access to finance;*
- *Monitoring and evaluation.*

The second ToT, focused on enhancing the NSMs' business advisory skills and their abilities to facilitate linkages to finance, market and other ecosystem stakeholders. The training included sessions on:

- *The theory behind counseling;*
- *Self-assessment of learning style;*
- *Self-assessment of communication style;*
- *Tips for effective questioning;*
- *Tips for effective listening and hearing;*
- *Tips for providing effective feedback;*
- *Counseling on marketing and financial management, specifically on costing, pricing and calculating breakeven point;*
- *Mapping of ecosystem stakeholders using a coverage matrix.*

These training sessions highlighted the critical issues that need to be addressed in order to provide quality support to women entrepreneurs (WEs). WEs in the program often live in rural areas, hence accessibility in terms of public transportation and geographical location is sometimes a challenge. One of the main lessons learned was that this must be taken into account when assigning a mobilizer to mentor a number of WEs. After the assessment and training sessions, partners agreed that one mobilizer could effectively mentor about 25-30 WEs, as long as accessibility allowed for that.

Rapid Market Assessment

Using the Participatory Market System Development (PMSD) approach, NSMs carried out a rapid market assessment (RMA) in all selected EUCs to identify the existing market systems. The RMA report helped in identifying: synergies with local government plans and other line agencies, the existence of banks and financial institutions (FIs) for easy access to finance, the existence of other similar development projects for collaboration, existing businesses and types (including their use of electricity) for potential upgrading, local or indigenous skills and their current status for promotion, existing service sectors for value addition, available local resources for potential businesses, local commodities trading in and around market centers for value addition through the use of electricity, etc.⁵

During this phase, partners also analyzed the market environment to assess opportunities and barriers. Based on these findings, market opportunities were identified for the following livelihood activities: i) agriculture and food processing (milling, vegetable farming, baking); ii) animal husbandry (dairy, commercial beekeeping, poultry farming, pig keeping, goat keeping); iii) fishery; iv) forest-based products/resources; v) the service sector (hotel, homestays,

5 For more information, see Final Reporting Output 2.

beauty parlors, tailoring and cosmetic shops); vi) manufacturing (Lapsi processing; noodle making). The assessment proved to be very effective despite the limited amount of time, which was identified as one of the major challenges in the project.

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

Supporting women from poor and marginalized communities has been one of the objectives of this project. Women are the backbone of Nepali society, because of their role in the families and communities. However, they are often less able to participate in educational, economic and social opportunities due to social, economic and cultural barriers. Women entrepreneurs must be supported to overcome prevalent social and cultural barriers (such as lower literacy, lower access to finance, education, land and mobility, and a greater burden of care work). Under investment in overcoming these barriers is likely to perpetuate poverty and gender inequality (ENERGIA, 2019). For this reason, part of the mobilizer's work was to mitigate these challenges to ensure a full, equal and just recognition and integration of women in all socioeconomic activities.

The project focused on strengthening new or existing women's enterprises through a comprehensive package of support. This included developing the technical, managerial, and marketing aspects of energy based businesses as well as their leadership skills and strategies to access finance. It supported women entrepreneurs engaged in a variety of businesses, with the common denomination being the use of energy to enhance business and provide a service to the community. Examples of such businesses include an eatery, agro-processing, manufacturing, furniture, grocery shop, tailoring, vegetable farming and livestock keeping. This kind of energy use is referred to as the productive use of energy (PUE).

The Electricity User Cooperatives (EUCs) have been the focal institution for promoting women's entrepreneurship. The EUCs manage electricity access and provision in remote areas, on behalf of the NEA. When women's entrepreneurship is strengthened, it leads to greater electrical demand, benefitting the EUCs' revenues and sustainability. Hence, with the EUCs being the responsible focal point for promoting women's entrepreneurship, there is a two-fold positive outcome: economically empowered women and more financially viable EUCs. This PUE project was implemented in 15 EUCs from 7 districts.

Selection of women entrepreneurs

The selection process included a call for applications, shortlisting, and business orientation workshops. Ultimately, 520 WEs were selected for project support. Of these 520 women entrepreneurs, 65% were from indigenous groups and 6% Dalit. The final selection was done after field verification and after the WEs and

their families signed written commitment letters. WEs committed to participating in the project and family members committed to providing full support to the WEs to establish new enterprises or expand their existing enterprises, respectively.

Access to finance

Finance is crucial for the establishment or growth of any enterprise. However, access to finance is one of the key challenges in the rural areas, especially for women. The reasons for this include social, cultural, literacy (formal education and financial literacy), lack of traditional collateral (such as land or property which is often registered in men's name), women's lower income levels relative to men, and financial institutions' inability (or lack of appetite) to design appropriate products and outreach strategies to reach women. Additionally, women also face discrimination in credit markets, where a family member's signature is required to get a loan. Hence, special facilitation and support is required to select potential and existing WEs so they can secure investment for their new ventures or expand the business.⁶

In order to ensure the family support, NSMs closely worked with the families of women entrepreneurs to advise them on the advantages of equity investment or securing financing from financial institutions. Furthermore, WEs that required financing from financial institutions were supported to become more investment ready, such as through concretizing their business ideas and business models, developing business plans and preparing other necessary documents.

6 For more information, see Inception Report, 2019

Access to finance for business growth: The story of Ram Maya Tamang

Ram Maya Tamang lives in Kavre district, East of Kathmandu, Nepal. When she got married she was not able to continue school, as her husband's income was not sufficient to support the family and her studies. Her education ended at fifth grade. In 2008, Ram Maya's husband went to Malaysia, to seek work and a better income. Upon his return in 2012, they started a small furniture shop with the savings from his years working outside of Nepal. They were getting by until 2015, when a devastating earthquake struck the district.



Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

Turning disaster into opportunity

Ram Maya and her husband lost their house in the earthquake and for months they lived in a small shelter, together with other villagers. In the following months, the reconstruction of destroyed houses in the areas offered them new opportunities for expanding their furniture business and starting a small hardware store. Once the post-earthquake reconstruction was completed, they identified new business opportunities in pig farming and dairy. In 2019, they started with ten pigs in two sheds and a few buffalos in a traditional barn. Nowadays, they have 23 pigs in four sheds and 13 buffalos in an upgraded modern barn. Their earnings from selling buffalo milk surpassed NPR 150,000 (around USD \$1,200) per month. Additionally, they also earned over NPR 100,000 (USD \$800) by selling four pigs in the first half of 2020.

Challenges and mitigation measures

Though they planned to shift from their furniture and hardware business to buffalo and pig farming, it was not easy for them to expand and sustain growth. They required an additional investment of NPR 2 million (around USD \$16,500) for building sheds, purchasing piglets, buffalos and input supplies, such as animal feed and medicine. The project, 'Strengthening the Capacity of the Energy Sector to Deliver Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Results' supported them in getting a NPR 1.9 million loan (USD \$15,500) at a 6% interest rate from the Agriculture Development Bank Ltd. The interest rate is one-third of the one that the local micro-finance institution offered; one from which they had previously taken a loan of NPR 200,000 (USD \$1,600) at the rate of 18%. When asked about their journey, they say: "We are happy that we did not have to pay a high interest rate. It was challenging enough to manage the amount of the loan, but we were able to make the repayments on a timely basis."

Ram Maya also recognized the crucial role that the training provided by the project played for her business. "Thanks to my mentors' support, I was able to expand my business, improve my business skills and get a very good loan." Thanks to the project, Ram Maya is now an empowered woman with business knowledge, making crucial decisions for business expansion.

Serving their community

Ram Maya and her husband are now planning to produce and sell processed milk products such as Khuwa and Paneer, typical Nepali food items. She has asked her mentors to provide her with new skills about processing milk as well as business and marketing skills on how to link with potential buyers. She has also started exploring possibilities of selling dairy products to her existing customers. The businesses have not only provided Ram Maya and her husband with a full-time job and a good income, but allowed them to hire two additional people from their local community. "I received the opportunity to see a lot of people, exchange ideas and learn about how others are doing business. I also learned about entrepreneurial skills, challenges and risk."

"We are happy that we did not have to pay a high interest rate. It was challenging enough to manage the amount of the loan, but we were able to make the repayments on a timely basis."

Access to the market

Any entrepreneurship or livelihood promotion project/program starts with assessing market opportunities in the areas and looks for other aspects of entrepreneurship promotion, like the availability of energy at the later stage. However, it is just the opposite in the case of promoting the productive use of clean energy technologies. Access to market is one of the key bottlenecks in promoting productive use of clean energy technologies, as the community rural electrifications are mostly located in the remote areas. The most common challenges identified for accessing markets in Nepal are: i) failing to meet the market requirements, such as quality, quantity, regularity of supply, branding, packaging, proper distribution networks and ii) an inability to compete with the high cost of production. Similarly, a lack of market information, connectivity and access to transportation services are also major bottlenecks, among others. Access to the market is even more challenging for women due to having limited knowledge and skills on markets and marketing. Additionally, they have to overcome other social and cultural barriers. In order for women to mitigate the aforementioned challenges, multi-pronged strategies were undertaken to support and facilitate WEs' access to the market. NSMs regularly counseled, mentored and provided handholding support to WEs, to devise suitable marketing strategies and meet the market requirements of products. This included through quality production and diversification, proper branding, packaging and labelling, and linking with suitable distribution networks.⁷

7 For more information, see Inception Report, 2019.

Enhancing market access by linking up different actors

Nepal's markets lack competitiveness due to limited collaborative practices and value chain integration. Transparency, mutual trust, collaboration and communication among market actors are the key factors for a thriving market system. The project has worked towards creating a more cooperative, transparent and open market system by facilitating linkages and agreements with buyers and collectors that is more conducive for women entrepreneurs to access and flourish in.



Photo: CRT/N

Example 1: Promoting group approach for collective marketing

Many women in Chauri Deurali Rural Municipality Kavrepalanchowk district, are accustomed to weaving carpets. However, most of them used to weave carpets as a side income and work only in their free time after completing their household and farm chores. They used to take more than a month or two to weave a pair of carpets, and they were all weaving carpets for different carpet manufacturers and exporters in Kathmandu. They had to go to Kathmandu twice: Once to buy yarn and a second time to deliver the carpets upon completion. Each trip to Kathmandu costs over NPR 3,000 (USD \$25).

The design of carpets determines the price that is paid for it (weaving rate), while the quantity of yarn used determines its cost. The weaving rate for a pair of carpets ranges from NPR 30,000 to NPR 32,000 (USD \$245 to USD \$260)

including the cost of yarn, which varies from NPR 5,000 to NPR 7,000 (USD \$40 to \$57). Taking into account all costs, including non-efficient utilization of yarn, and time investment to weave a pair of carpets, the women were making very small profit rates and sometimes they would even lose money. Moreover, most of them were working individually, because they were not aware of the benefits of having a common weaving enterprise.

The project encouraged eight women entrepreneurs to initiate collective marketing of their products. For this, the project mentors and the EUC facilitated an agreement between the group and Jambu Carpet Udhyog, a manufacturer and exporter in Kathmandu. The women received support and mentorship to improve their consistency of quality, quantity, pricing and regular supply of their products. According to the agreement, Jambu Carpet Udhyog would provide raw materials upfront and deduct these costs from the final price of the carpet afterwards. The company also agreed to bear the transportation costs of raw materials and weaved carpets.

Now, thanks to regular weaving, proper utilization of the yarn, and agreement with the company, the women have doubled their earnings. The EUCs' role in the process has been crucial, actively facilitating the effectiveness and sustainability of this initiative. In the negotiations with Jambu Carpet Udhyog, the EUC adamantly demanded the incorporation of procedures that maintain transparency in transactions and decision making.

Example 2: Linkages with anchor companies

Poultry is one of the few self-reliant sectors in Nepal. Commercial poultry farming is growing rapidly because of an increasing consumption rate of chicken meat products and eggs. It is even more popular among rural women, as it seems to be a fairly easy and cost effective business to engage in and does not require hard physical labor, and has an immediate return on investment. However, many women start a poultry business just by copying another, and without understanding the market or investment needs and technical capabilities. As a result, most of them face challenges in procuring regular supply of quality inputs, getting technical support, accessing secured markets for poultry products and fetching fair prices.

To address these challenges, the project implemented two different approaches. At the central level, the project worked with one of the leading agribusiness companies in Nepal, Shreenagar Agro Farm Pvt Ltd. (SAF), by signing an agreement for promoting women entrepreneurs in the poultry business. Following the signing of this agreement, SAF started to provide women entrepreneurs in the Kavre, Lalitpur, Dhading and Chitwan districts with technical assistance, a supply of chicks, chicken feed, medicines and other necessary materials. Additionally, SAF supported women entrepreneurs in Baluwa and Kavre to obtain a subsidized agriculture loan from Global IME Bank Ltd. At the local level, in Sindhuli, an agreement was made between the

Kalpabrikshya EUC and Kamala Mai Hatchery Pvt. Ltd., to promote 13 poultry producing women entrepreneurs.

Within the EUC, a Management Committee was formed from this group of 13 women, to support and ensure that each entrepreneur produced at least 500 chickens. Kamala Mai Hatchery in turn, provided inputs and technical support as well as buyback guarantee to the women. The EUC, through the Poultry Entrepreneurs Management Committee, ensured that the hatchery provided timely inputs, technical support and payments. The local government monitored effective execution of the agreement. The project supported a significant number of women entrepreneurs, raising flocks that range from 200 to 8,000 chickens.

Example 3: Linkages with local aggregators and collectors

The Fisling village in the Icchakamana Rural Municipality of Chitwan district, is known for vegetable farming. The majority of the households are engaged in commercial farming because of easy access to national markets and favorable climate conditions. However, in spite of a conducive environment, farmers are unable to fetch fair prices for their products.

There are a number of reasons for this challenge, such as unplanned production, limited market information and a lack of consistent connections with the collectors. Seven women entrepreneurs from Chepang Community (one of the most deprived communities) were also facing these challenges. The GESI project stepped in and supported these women, all of whom were part of the local Marsyangdi Multipurpose Cooperative Ltd.

The project facilitated an agreement between the Cooperative Ltd. and the Icchakamana Vegetables and Fruits Collection Centre. According to the agreement, the cooperative would provide necessary support to the women, such as technical training for production and post-harvest management, access to finance, collective production and marketing to ensure quality and quantity. The Collection Centre in turn, ensured market access with appropriate pricing along with advance payment and provision of packaging and transportation materials, such as crates. This agreement became even more useful in the context of COVID-19. The Collection Centre regularly purchased the products from the entrepreneurs, while many other farmers are struggling to sell their products.

Training support for WEs

Due to the several factors that limit women's entrepreneurship, an integrated, comprehensive and multi-pronged approach was needed to support women entrepreneurs through their business journeys. In line with this belief, partners provided:

- **Training needs assessments (TNAs).** TNAs of the WEs were carried out to understand their capacity development needs, to design business development and skill trainings, to identify support services, and to plan counseling and mentoring approaches according to their needs. This was also helpful in creating synergies among individual learning needs and the efforts to promote effectiveness and job performance.
- **Entrepreneurship development and business management training packages,** focused on imparting knowledge and skills on managerial, agency-based empowerment and leadership aspects of energy businesses, including how to identify potential enterprises, understand market opportunities, develop new solutions, business management and business model development, access to finance, and risk identification. Two separate packages for startups and existing WEs were developed and delivered.
- **Customized skills-development training package,** focused on specific skills development on technical aspects of businesses, including operation and management of machinery and equipment, enhancing product quality and diversification, increasing efficiency in production and service, and maintaining hygiene.
- **Regular business counseling, mentoring, coaching and handholding support,** to establish and expand enterprises. Support only in the form of training is insufficient for establishing or growing any businesses, specifically those of women entrepreneurs. They require comprehensive business support services. The regular business advisory helped in understanding the issues related to execution of planned activities and coming up with possible solutions to address the issues. These include: day-to-day operations; business planning; product diversification; financial management; access to finance, supply chains and negotiating with suppliers; inventory management; registering the businesses; relevant regulations and taxation, and strategic advice on new business opportunities.

As of September 2021, 378 WEs received a total of USD \$2.65 million in monetary investments and USD \$1.28 million in equity investments, which they used to expand their businesses. In addition, 99 WEs established new businesses using USD \$266,269 in monetary investments and USD \$194,618 in equity investments. In addition, 435 WEs (87% of total targeted WEs) maintained separate accounting books.

- **Agency-based empowerment sessions** focused on enhancing their individual cognitive capacities to create and focus on their goals. In the first phase, it was integrated in the entrepreneurship and business management training package focusing on knowing oneself, recognizing hopes and

dreams, understanding and overcoming self-limitations, understanding self-acceptance and self-esteem in relation to success and growth, and the importance of one's good health for a productive future. In the second phase, to mitigate COVID-19 impacts on WEs' confidence, trainings focused on issues/challenges faced (personal and business) and mitigation measures undertaken by WEs during the pandemic and refresher sessions of earlier agency-based empowerment trainings. There were additional sessions on negative-to-positive thinking transformations and on leadership skills.

Agency-based empowerment was embedded in regular business counseling, which also helped in increasing WEs' agency. 90% of WEs opened up after taking the agency training. The WEs claimed that they were less hesitant to talk or open up during trainings, workshops, exhibitions, and with stakeholder or in meetings, than before. The business decision capacity of 91% WEs were enhanced, such as on setting up a business, expanding business, keeping employees, making purchases, taking loans, etc. Similarly, 98% of WEs stated that the trainings were helpful to boost lost confidence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Linking with other ecosystem partners.** *The ecosystem for promoting women-led energy-based enterprises consists of enabling the environment to support the growth and development of women entrepreneurs sustainably. This means enhancing their capacities to interact with external stakeholders, in addition to improving access to finance and relevant skills. The enterprises were linked with relevant ecosystem stakeholders including: value chain actors (suppliers, buyers etc); business development service providers (financial institutions, training providers, etc.) and business enablers (local and provincial governments, line agencies, etc.). The collaboration with ecosystem partners started from the beginning of the project, leading to a successful project that leveraged technical and financial support to WEs.*
- **Energy management for women-led productive use activities.** *One of the findings from the needs assessments of WEs was the lack of awareness around energy efficiency, electrical safety, energy resource management, and technology improvements that could be low-cost and locally available. In this regard, the objectives of the energy management interventions were to:*
 - *improve the energy consumption patterns of WEs;*
 - *orient WEs on the safe practices for using electricity, including improvements in electrical systems and equipment/machinery in order to reduce electricity hazards;*
 - *support WEs in identifying appropriate electricity-based technologies and to motivate them to adapt the most efficient technologies to increase productivity;*
 - *enhance the capacity of linespersons and mobilize them to support WEs in energy management.*

The proper business opportunity assessment, rigorous selection process and onboarding of family, capacity needs assessments, networking and linkages with local institutions, as well as the awareness raising programs, capacity development trainings and continued post-training support to WEs – including after the project's completion – have all proven crucial to the project's success.

A large number of WEs and their enterprises are doing well as a result of the project interventions and additional new WEs have shown interest to start a new business after looking at their fellow women in the neighborhood. This is why it was suggested to implement regular programs within EUCs to encourage new potential WEs to join, and to continue collaborating with local ecosystem stakeholders for training and enterprise support. A key takeaway has been the need to increase the project's duration (from four to five years) to strengthen EUCs' skills to assist WEs for PUE, as well as to sustain project interventions and allow time for WEs' businesses to mature.⁸

COVID-19 mitigation measures

COVID-19 hit the world in early 2020 and quickly spread. Countries were forced to take serious measures to curb multiple contagious waves and protect the population. To reduce the chances of being infected or spreading the virus, the Government of Nepal enforced nationwide measures, including banning large social and public gatherings, reducing the capacity of transport services, and introducing compulsory face masks. The prolonged lockdown worsened an already fragile situation for women, poor and marginalized groups, who are more likely vulnerable to extreme poverty, severe malnutrition, infections and health risks, especially in hard-to-reach rural areas. The economic disruption, the sudden loss of income and livelihood affected people's ability to promote and support their businesses. The crisis has also led to changes in the way of working, approaching clients, and building working relations, which are likely to continue beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

WEs received a contribution based on their business size, turnover and losses incurred as per report of COVID-19 Impact Detail Assessment, enabling them for adoption of appropriate technologies for WE's business growth, electrical safety mechanism, purchase of raw materials and/or paying business loan instalments. In addition, they were regularly and remotely supported through counseling, mentoring and coaching, especially in holding and recreating market linkages that have been severely disrupted, accessing loans for working capital, and access to government relief and recovery packages. Lastly, WEs received psychological and moral support through agency-based empowerment training, which helped them to regain confidence and motivation.

8 For more information, see Learning Document Output 2, 2021.

How did Gyan Kumari Shrestha deal with the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women-led small businesses (SMEs). First, the supply chain disruptions have impacted business performance and generating income. Secondly, the pandemic places a significant burden on women, who are generally also responsible for household chores. Women are overstretched both at home and at work, throwing them into financial insecurity. In Nepal, only a few entrepreneurs have been able to cope with this difficult situation and continue their businesses.



Among those few entrepreneurs, Gyan Kumari Shrestha explored innovative ways to remain operational during this pandemic. Gyan Kumari Shrestha is a resident of Baluwa, a small village located in Central Nepal. She has had a poultry business rearing 3,000 chickens for one and a half years. Gyan was earning well and very satisfied with her poultry business until the pandemic hit hard in April 2020 and the Government of Nepal imposed a complete lockdown, limiting movement and travel for over 3 months. This had severe consequences on the supply chains of businesses, including the poultry business. One of the major challenges for Gyan was to compensate for the shortage of poultry feed in her village. The lack of food affected the proper growth of chickens, causing many to die. Moreover, she could not sell her chickens due to travel restrictions. This caused unimagined losses for her business.

Enhancing the productive use of clean energy technologies and services

"I was highly upset at one point in time. I was about to give up when Meena Basnet, Enterprise Development Coordinator of the project supporting my business, encouraged and suggested exploring alternatives for procuring feed. After our conversation, I discussed with my family different options and finally decided to produce the feed myself, starting from raw materials such as maize, wheat and peas, sourced locally."

Gyan bought a machine for USD \$1,867 to start her new activity. Currently, she is producing 1,000 kg of feed per week. The majority of this feed (around 800-850 kg) is used for her poultry farm, while she sells the remaining part to nearby poultry entrepreneurs. Due to self-production, she is saving around USD \$3.40 per 50 kg feed. This has not only reduced the costs of production for her own business, but it has also supported other entrepreneurs, who are benefitting from locally available feed at a lower price than the market price.

"During the lockdown, I faced massive trouble in buying feed and saw other entrepreneurs also facing the same problem. I started producing feed for chickens from locally available products like maize, grain, etc. Nowadays, I don't need to buy it from others. Moreover, I am selling feed to other poultry entrepreneurs in the local areas."

She recently attended a training on poultry management and feed production, which has helped her to improve the quality of the feed. "As soon as I am confident of meeting the quality standard of the feed, I will increase the production to meet the demand of 3,000 kg per week in my local area. Over 10 poultry enterprises will benefit from my low cost and locally available feed."

"During the lockdown, I faced massive trouble in buying feed and saw other entrepreneurs also facing the same problem. I started producing feed for chickens from locally available products like maize, grain, etc. Nowadays, I don't need to buy it from others. Moreover, I am selling feed to other poultry entrepreneurs in the local areas."

COVID-19's impact on women entrepreneurs: Kamala Shrestha's experience

Kamala Shrestha lives in Maidi, in the Dhading District, west of Kathmandu valley. Kamala started her bakery in 2007, with the support of her husband Til Narayan Shrestha. They have four children and all are doing very well in study. Til Narayan runs a small hotel, where they sell bakery products too. Kamala and Til Narayan work hard to provide the best education to their children. In the starting days, Kamala used to go to a nearby school carrying a bag full of bakery items to sell to the students. Kamala said that initially they used wood-fired ovens, but due to high flames and drudgery, it was very difficult for them to stay inside the production room. Thanks to electricity, and new electrical machines, the drudgery has been reduced and production has increased.



Trying to cope with the COVID-19 first wave

In Nepal, a countrywide lockdown went into effect on 24 March 2020, and ended on 21 July 2020. As of today, the government has allowed limited long-range public bus transportation and permitted restaurants and hotels to stay open. During the initial lockdown period, Kamala closed her bakery for three months, cutting off her main source of income. She was worried for her children, as all of them are studying outside the village, which requires a lot of money. Now, she is using her previous savings, but she doesn't know how long they can manage with it.

Enhancing the productive use of clean energy technologies and services

The project supported her to make a variety of bakery items by providing skills training. She always wanted to make a variety of bakery items, because she assumed that would attract more customers. Before the first wave, Kamala was planning to construct a building with two rooms, one to host a manufacturing room and another room to offer as lodging. For this, the project facilitated the communication with the bank to obtain a subsidy loan.

Effects of COVID-19 second wave

Before the second wave and announcement of another lockdown on April, 28 2021, Kamala was able to secure the loan from the bank for building the new infrastructure. She took USD \$12,859.60 from the bank at a 2.5 to 3 percent subsidy rate. However, the situation quickly changed. *“Everything was about to start again after the losses due to the first wave. But, again COVID forced me to stop. Transportation is not allowed and I had to close my business as well.”*

“Everything was about to start again after the losses due to the first wave. But, again COVID forced me to stop. Transportation is not allowed and I had to close my business as well.”



Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

Enhanced institutional readiness of EUCs for continuation of PUE promotion

The project designed two focused activities for institutional readiness and smooth phase out of the project to ensure the continuation of the EUCs' PUE promotion activities. NACEUN has taken the lead in implementing these activities aimed at transforming EUCs into social enterprises ready to uptake PUE promotion activities. To be able to undertake this role, the central team supported the NACEUN to acquire the required knowledge and skills to facilitate the institutional capacity development process of EUCs and to replicate the process in other EUCs.

As a first step, workshops were organized to help EUCs to self-assess the status of their governance, GESI, operation and management system, human resources, service delivery, external relationship and financial management. Based on a clear understanding of their organizational strengths and weaknesses, the EUCs formulated three-year business and institutional development plans to transform them into self-reliant social enterprises.

In a second phase, partners discussed how to continue the EUCs' PUE promotion activities. In this case, it is essential to develop local resource persons as enterprise development facilitators (EDFs), who will gradually take over the roles of NSMs as well as provide business advisory support to WEs and other entrepreneurs in the coverage area. The EUCs have shown enthusiasm to mobilize the local facilitators, with their own resources and collaboration with other ecosystem stakeholders, for promotion of PUE activities.

The training content covered include: adult teaching techniques, agency-based empowerment, entrepreneurship development, business management/operation, simple accounting practice and business counseling, mentoring, coaching and providing handholding support to WEs. The EDFs were also trained on understanding financial needs of enterprises, barriers for accessing finance in rural areas, preparing entrepreneurs for investment readiness and financial brokerage, digital financial services, insurance, working capital management and loan policies and procedures of BFIs. They also received on-the-job coaching and mentoring from NSMs during the support process of WEs. While selecting the local facilitators, gender balancing was ensured as much as possible.

The trained EDFs expressed their commitment to work with NSMs, at least once in a week, to reach the WEs and provide support to WEs. The EDFs actively participated in the sessions and found the training to be useful in advancing PUE activities in their area. However, they also mentioned that these types of training sessions should have been conducted in the initial phase of the project so that they could have supported NSMs and WEs during the course of the project.⁹

9 For more information, see Follow-up Planning Interim Report, 2021.

It takes time to become successful but if you try, you definitely will one day

Chini Maya Negi from Manikhel, Mahankal Rural Municipality in the Lalitpur District, Nepal, is 45 years old and used to be a dedicated housewife. She struggled through the worst economic state of her family, caring for a paralyzed brother-in-law and a husband doing nothing. The family was facing difficulty in running the day-to-day life and was deep in debt. The insurgency of 1996 brought additional difficulties to her family. Due to this, her husband Buddha Bahadur Negi left for Saudi Arabia for work. Chini Maya's challenges did not end here. After a few months her husband fell ill and came back; then the family was left again with very limited income.



Today, Chini Maya walks a different path, treading down the hard path full of challenges; she has established herself as a role model in her community. Currently, she and her husband run an oil factory and a paper production company. In parallel, they run two minor businesses. They grow mushrooms on the waste of the oil company, and they grow a variety of herbs in a greenhouse made out of plastic.

Chini Maya's new life

In 1995, Chini Maya initiated a savings group with women neighbors under her own leadership. The group of 28 women started to save small amounts of money on a monthly basis, which allowed them to buy essential goods after some time and to help each other. Coming together as a group also strengthened them to take action against prejudices in a male-dominated society. Saving money has turned out to be a winning choice. The savings group is still running even after 24 long years with Chini Maya as its chairperson.

The group also started to work against gender-based violence, taking action against the perpetrators. She even provided space to the victimized women in her home, while she herself was having a difficult time.

“People called for her help if any men misbehaved with their wives. Within her group, she provided a solution. She has a leadership attitude and has spoken against injustice in society ever since I’ve known her. The family members and society used to talk behind our backs. However, I was always with her because I knew she was not doing anything wrong. After I came back to Nepal, we decided to work here. We supported each other then, and now; and we are here now,” says Buddha Bahadur Negi, husband of Chini Maya Negi.

In 2019, Chini Maya participated in a training on enterprise and business management as part of the project. During the training she learned more about the positive aspects of registering the paper production company in her name instead of her husband’s. Once finished the training, she acquired a Permanent Account Number (a unique identification number issued to all taxpayers) and in coordination with the EUC, in her community, she obtained a grid connection for her two major enterprises.

Alongside the new opportunities and the acquired skills, Chini Maya said that the training has helped build her confidence to scale up her business. She however feels that she needs to learn more about running a business, particularly about accounting systems, maintaining and checking the quality of her products, how to tap into new markets, how to access loans and deal with difficulties in the loan acquisition process, as well as how to deal with brokers who kill the market.

Future plans

With the support of the trainers and mentors of the project, she now has access to electricity and a loan at a reasonable interest rate. Chini Maya plans to buy necessary machinery for processing and improving the quality of her oil and to increase the paper production. This step forward will enable her to create new job opportunities in her community. Around 90 women and 10 men are already involved in the collection of herbs and she plans to engage more employees within her paper company. She is interested in adopting efficient energy systems in this business as well to access new market opportunities.

Social Perspectives

Chini Maya has become a true inspiration to other women in her community. Nowadays, people come to her to ask for advice. She says that women are left behind because of their own poor mentality. They fear what the community, family and neighbors say, worrying for nothing. However, changes are taking place at a slow pace. “While I visit women’s groups, I find women talking about business and career. Before they just used to talk about other people. It takes time to become successful but if you try you definitely will one day,” said Chini Maya.

“The family members and society used to talk behind our backs. However, I was always with her because I knew she was not doing anything wrong. After I came back to Nepal, we decided to work here. We supported each other then, and now; and we are here now.”

Output 2 Results

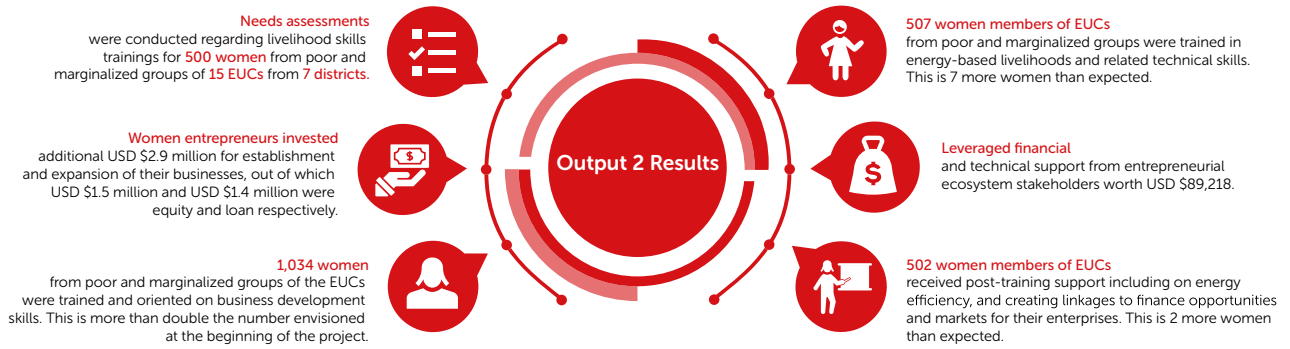




Photo: Nabin Bairel/ENERGIA

4 Capacity development of the NEA staff in new energy technology applications

In an ever-changing world, being up-to-date on the latest and most promising technologies is critical to ensuring that distribution and transmission projects can deliver the best service. One of the key aspects of this project was to train and develop capacity of the NEA staff in new energy technology applications. This was achieved by planning two different training processes based on the inputs of NEA staff, who identified management and technical needs and knowledge gaps required to improve performance.

Capacity development of the NEA staff in new energy technology applications

These training sessions turned out to be crucial for senior managers and technical staff at the NEA, who must not only be updated on the latest technologies but also continue to evolve their engineering and managerial skills to efficiently manage the industry. This is pivotal for a sector, such as the power sector, that experiences continuous and rapid development and expansion. Capacity development programs, knowledge sharing through internal platforms, training manuals, mentoring for newer staff and the adoption of an overarching training policy at the company level are needed to enable the staff to design, implement and manage projects more effectively.

Management Training

The management training program for the NEA's senior management was delivered in Kathmandu and Nagarkot, 32 km east of Kathmandu, over a 3-week period. In total, 102 people participated in the training, five times more participants than planned at the beginning of the project, of which 18.8% were women employees of the NEA. The training aimed at enabling senior managers and leadership teams to address some of the most pressing challenges while improving their knowledge. This included preparing for an energy sector restructuring program while continuing to deliver and improve utility performance and efficiency in operations and improving the knowledge on modern utility management practices and tools. The training program was divided into four courses, depending on the target audience, objectives and needs.

Table 2: Structure of the management training program

<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Executive Course (A)</u>	<u>Executive Course (8)</u>	<u>Extended Course</u>	<u>Compressed Course</u>
Target Audience	L12 and L11 staff at NEA. This group represents the senior leadership team at NEA and are likely going to be key focal points of champions of the imminent sector restructuring efforts.	L111 and L10 staff at NEA. This group represents the senior management team at NEA and are actively involved in project implementation or programme delivery.	L1, L10 and L9 staff who are resident within the Kathmandu Valley area. This group comprised of managers who are considered as future leaders at NEA.	L11, L10 and L9 staff who are not resident within the Kathmandu Valley area. Just as the target audience of Extended course these staff are the future leaders who are currently based out of regional offices.
Course Objectives	The key objective of this course was to develop capacity within the NEA senior leadership team in managing imminent challenges in the power sector in Nepal including preparing for a sector sector restructuring programme, managing negotiations and public communications and developing an appreciation of financial governance for improved utility management.	The key objective of this course was to develop the capacity of senior NEA managers to manage a sector reform programme and continue to deliver and improve utility performance and efficiency in operations. The focus here was on the necessary governance and management principles that would facilitate the transition to a new sector structure.	The overarching objective of the extended course was to upskill and provide capacity building to managers at NEA who are involved in day to day operations and project implementation, as well as provide knowledge on modern utility management practices and tools. The course also included sessions on stakeholder management and utility business planning targeted towards future leaders.	The key objective of this course was to upskill project management and contract delivery skills within senior regional managers at NEA with the aim of improving project delivery, implementation and governance practices. The sessions also aimed to disseminate knowledge on modern utility management practices, procedures and tools.
Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiations & Public Communications; Key Performance Indicators; Finance & Tariffs; Sector Unbundling - International Experiences Sector Unbundling - HR Management; Sector Unbundling - Financial Instruments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiations & Public Communications; Key Performance Indicators; Finance & Tariffs; Contract & Project Management (Level 1 & 2); Sector Unbundling - Organisational Change; Sector Unbundling - Financial Instruments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiations & Public Communications; Key Performance Indicators; Finance & Tariffs; Contract & Project Management (Level 1 & 2); Sector Unbundling - Organisational Change; Sector Unbundling - Financial Instruments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Performance Indicators; Finance & Tariffs; Contract & Project Management (Level 1 & 2).
Total Course Hours	35 hours	35 hours	42 hours	28 hours
Number of Participants	25	18	27	32

Technical Training

Alongside the management training, partners organized a technical training program, which focused on specific technical aspects of new and emerging technologies. The course included seven modules, ranging from technical applications and technical understanding, such as how smart grids can improve network operation, efficiency and reliability, to insights on variable renewable energy (VRE) and the ArcGIS freeware. The course training was for experts of the Distribution and Customer Services Directorate. The NEA nominated additional staff from other directorates, such as the Transmission and Project Management Directorates.

More specifically, the course included the following topics:

- **Distribution & Transmission System Planning**, focused on each step of the distribution planning, whether for expansion or rehabilitation, from initial requirements through to final operation. urban and rural distribution.
- **Undergrounding of Utilities**, which included familiarization with undergrounding practices in other countries and the technical and commercial aspects of either outsourcing undergrounding work to contractors and maintaining cost control or doing the work in-house with NEA resources.
- **Monopoles for Distribution and Transmission** on the selection and design considerations, installation and maintenance of multiple voltage poles to assist the NEA, as the need for new types of line construction increases as population density increases.
- **Power and Distribution Transformers**, which included insights on modern transformer developments, transformer management systems, developing and/or updating transformer specifications. This was a major capital expenditure area for the NEA.
- **Smart Grids, Smart Metering, Technologies, and Applications**. As smart grid applications should be able to improve network operation, efficiency and reliability, it was important that NEA professional engineers developed an understanding of how smart grid concepts can be applied to the NEA network. The training course provided an overview of current best practice smart network technologies, trends for the future and how they can be applied in Nepal to the benefit of the NEA.
- **Variable Renewable Energy (VRE)**, which delved into modern transmission theory, design practices, software, documentation and operational behavior with VRE, crucial for professional engineers working in the transmission departments.
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS)**. Some NEA distribution staff are using ArcGIS freeware for limited applications on specific projects. The training course provided an overview of how GIS is used internationally by utilities and its advantages, such as providing accurate mapping of line routes, locations of assets such as distribution transformers and switchgear, which can benefit the NEA.

"In light of the potential restructuring of the sector, it appeared crucial to address management training needs that can contribute to the financial sustainability of the NEA and its potentially unbundled distribution companies. The trainings were designed to provide practical, hands-on knowledge in various areas focusing on the specifics of the power sector. The trainings were well-attended and there was a high level of engagement. The attendees appreciated the usefulness of the sessions and indicated the importance of having the trainings as part of the continuous learning and development process at the NEA, including incorporating it into the career development and promotion policy. The trainings may also have a positive trickle-down effect, improving peoples' general soft skills and management practices and enhancing the senior managers' collaboration with their staff."

Mate Antosik, Principal Consultant – Financial Specialist of the Power Planning & Solutions team at Ricardo Energy & Environment

Output 3 Results

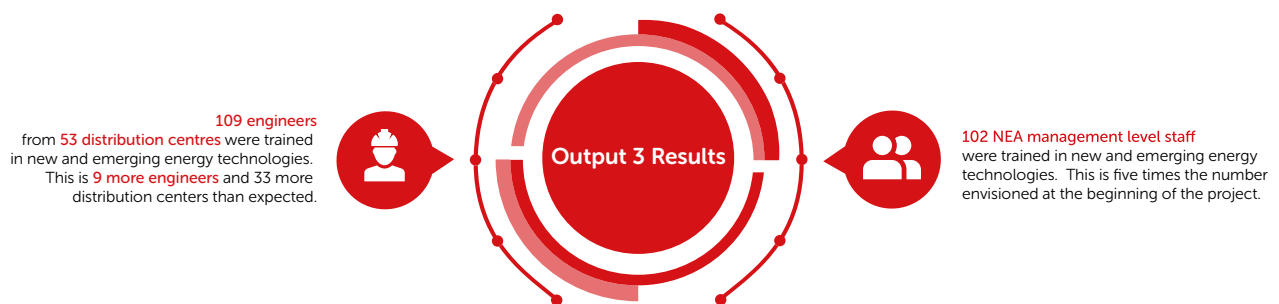




Photo: Nabin Baral/ENERGIA

5 Conclusions

In the 'Strengthening the Capacity of the Energy Sector to Deliver Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Results' project, all activities were executed and the targets reached, or even exceeded. Together, we developed and strengthened the skills of all involved actors. Yet, the project also highlighted the need to invest in further capacity building and bridge the knowledge gap that utilities, institutions, and organizations have on gender equality and its interconnection with the energy sector.

The review of project and program cycles revealed how the gender angle and the associated operations needed to ensure a just, equal and equitable operations and working environment were missing. This is why the GESI guidelines, manuals, and training modules were developed, so they can serve as a pointer for implementing GESI-responsive and GESI-transformative strategies in the energy sector. The project has also shown that it is a successful strategy to pair this GESI mainstreaming approach with continuous, comprehensive support to women entrepreneurs.

Conclusions

Building on this project, the ADB has committed to continuing to promote GESI activities in Nepali energy institutions. ENERGIA and partners will continue to work with government bodies to develop capacities, identify strategies and plans, and draw up guidelines to incorporate and monitor GESI indicators and results in program and project cycles. Specifically, a new project will see a collaboration with the NEA to reinforce and modernize power supply systems in and around Kathmandu Valley, including the area outside Kathmandu, namely the area around Bharatpur and Pokhara, where power supply interruptions are frequent and prolonged. The project will also focus on an area where the quality of electricity supply is poor and around 20 percent of households are still without access to the national grid. Next to this, partners will continue to support current and new women entrepreneurs with a complete package of support. This will include the integration of entrepreneurship and business management training, technical and skills training, follow-up business advisory services, facilitation of linkages to markets and other resources, and the facilitation of financial support for the adoption of energy efficient technologies and maintaining electrical safety. This multi-pronged approach ensures social inclusion while improving the access, reliability, and efficiency of power supply to Nepali women and marginalized groups.

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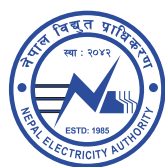
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Partners



Implementing agency of the PTDEEP loan project



Development partners



ENERGIA is an international network of like-minded organizations and professionals, active in Africa and Asia. Our vision is that women and men have equal and equitable access to and control over sustainable energy services as an essential human right to development. To achieve this, we:

- *contribute to energy access for all by scaling up the delivery of energy services through women-led micro and small businesses;*
- *advocate for and provide technical support to mainstream gender approaches in energy policies and programs;*
- *provide the evidence base for improving energy investment effectiveness through research, and*
- *raise awareness and enhance knowledge of issues related to gender and energy through networking and knowledge products.*

Our efforts are consistent with the global agenda on poverty eradication, universal access to energy and gender equality under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ENERGIA is hosted by Hivos, an international organization that seeks new solutions to persistent global issues. With smart projects in the right places, Hivos opposes discrimination, inequality, abuse of power and the unsustainable use of our planet's resources.

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