



📍 NEPAL



WATER FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN NEPAL

PROJECT FEATURES

Year: 2006-2022

Benefiting zone:
Karnali and Sudurpashchim
provinces in Nepal

Implementing agency:
Ministry of Federal Affairs and
Local Development,
local authorities and civil society.

Total cost of the project:
€110.3 million

EU contribution:
€20 million

Partners contribution:
Government of Finland:
€42.6 million
Government of Nepal and users'
contribution: €47.7 million

Type of EU support:
Grant

The challenge: water supply and sanitation for Nepalese families in remote areas

'We used to fill water in jerry cans and bottles and carry them in bamboo baskets. It used to take us two hours to go fetch water,' says Parbati Kuwar from Darchula district, in Nepal. 'We used to put aside other work and spend the whole day trying to get the water home.'

Ms Kuwar, like many other people living in Sudurpashchim and Karnali provinces in Nepal, suffered the lack of clean water and basic sanitation services for many years. *'During the monsoons, especially, we caught flu, cold, fever, diarrhoea and other infections,'* adds Rewati Bhatta, from Baitadi district, recalling the hardships they faced as a community.

Nepal has made great strides in water and sanitation. Today, officially 90 % of the population has access to an improved water source and approximately 85 % have latrines — following the government's declaration of Nepal as an open defecation-free country on 30 September 2019. However, in practice the numbers are less due to damage from landslides and problems with maintenance.

Also, the current challenge is to ensure equal access to water and sanitation facilities regardless of income or gender, as well as addressing geographic disparities. The mountainous area of western Nepal receives the least amount of rain in the country, suffering from water shortages especially during periods of drought. Women and young girls, who are traditionally in charge of fetching water, must often trek long distances and have thus for many years been deprived of going to school. They also suffer segregation and isolation in unsanitary conditions when they are habitually banished to huts outside their homes during menstruation and sometimes even during childbirth.

KEY INDICATORS



611 827 inhabitants
supplied with clean
drinking water



462 335 people
with access to hygienic
sanitation facilities



316 385 beneficiaries
with home gardens and
nutrition activities



344 271 people
benefiting from sustainable
energy sources



All schools (203)
provided with toilets
benefiting 25 256 girls



Girls' attendance rate
in primary school
increased by 50%
and in secondary
school by 30%

The solution: Partnerships for integrated water resources management

The European Union, the Government of Nepal and the Government of Finland joined forces to provide access to safe water and basic sanitation to 100% of the population of Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces in Nepal, through the 'Rural Village Water Resources Management Project'. The project covers integrated rural water resources management and livelihoods development. It improves nutrition and livelihoods of local people through home gardens, income generation assistance and local cooperatives. It provides renewable energy for the people, with a focus on micro hydropower, mini solar grids, improved cooking stoves and improved water mills.

Gender equality and social inclusion, local ownership, transparency and accountability are core values of this initiative. They are integrated into every implementation effort for the sustainability of the project.

The project focuses on the most vulnerable, especially women, children and persons with disabilities. It involves local authorities and the community through every stage of planning and execution: Local authorities make a significant contribution to the project costs and, depending on their possibilities, households contribute in cash and kind to the construction and maintenance of sanitation facilities and water supply systems.

This 'long non-stop water sector collaboration', launched in 2006, is currently in its third phase, in which the European Union has participated since 2017.

Impact: Water for human development and gender equality

Thus far, more than 600 000 people have benefited from clean drinking water, basic household sanitation facilities, and home gardens.

The project has played an important role in declaring Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces open defecation-free in 2018. This accompanied the protection of freshwater sources and watersheds through community Water Safety Plans and prevention of water contamination by faeces.

Another key achievement of the project has been the success of raising awareness about the importance of personal menstruation hygiene and the gradual overcoming of social taboos and cultural beliefs that stigmatise and exclude menstruating girls and women, preventing them from going to school and doing their daily work and activities. To date, the attendance rate of girls in primary school has increased by 50% and in secondary school by 30%.

Gita GC, a Field Coordinator in the Doti district of Sudurpashchim, describes the process at the local level: *'We organized training for local healers and priests on social taboos and malpractices of the community. School girls and local women learned to make reusable sanitary pads. The project also constructed menstruation-friendly toilets in schools with a lockable door, water, and a place to dispose of commercial pads. Menstruating girls are no longer skipping school. Menstruating women maintain their personal hygiene, and they can now attend public meetings and training workshops. There are a lot of positive changes in the community!'*