



# GENDER EQUALITY RESULTS CASE STUDY

## NEPAL

COMMUNITY-BASED WATER SUPPLY SANITATION  
SECTOR PROJECT

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AND SANITATION SECTOR PROJECT**



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# Nepal: Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project

## Summary

**DEVELOPMENT AIMS AND IMPACTS.** The Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project aimed at expanding the coverage of improved water supply and sanitation facilities to poor and remote areas, and improving health and hygiene practices related to waterborne and sanitation-related diseases. Key project results were (i) water supply services provided to 90,397 households, covering 716,542 people; (ii) water supply coverage increased from 72% (2002) to 89% (2010) with marked decrease in the time spent by women and girls in transporting water; (iii) latrines constructed in 44,768 households, of which 8,909 were in ultrapoor households and 354 were school latrines—contributed to the safety of women and girls; (iv) sanitation coverage among the rural population increased from 20% (2002) to 33.5% (2010); and (v) a total of 690 water users' committees were formed with 52% of women members—Dalits and ethnic minorities—represented almost proportionately to their percentage in the general population. The participation of women in decision making in water users' committees contributed to the sustainability of the water systems and changed the status of women in communities.

**ADB PROCESSES AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS.** A specific project component addressed gender and social inclusion objectives. Also, gender, caste, and ethnicity considerations were incorporated into all other project components, and corresponding strategy was developed. This strategy was based on earlier evaluations and policy dialogues with local authorities that noted the need for specific measures to address gender and other inequalities. Gender and social development specialists were included in the project team—at both central and regional levels. These specialists also participated in the monitoring and evaluation team, strengthening attention to gender, caste, and ethnicity issues. Specific participation targets were set at the outset. Sex- and caste-disaggregated data were collected, analyzed, and included in the project performance management system.

## Main Aims and Approaches of the Project

Recognizing the need to improve water supply, sanitation, and community health services in the more remote and poorer areas of rural Nepal, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided assistance for the construction and rehabilitation of rural water supply and sanitation (RWSS) facilities along with related health services. The project aimed to promote human development through sustainable improvement of the water supply and sanitation (WSS) sector in the western, midwestern, and far-western regions of Nepal. ADB worked with the then Ministry of Physical Planning and Works acting as the executing agency. The Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS) executed the project at the central level, managing, monitoring, supervising, and coordinating all project activities. A project management unit was established under the DWSS, and the district development committees (DDCs) of each participating district acted as the implementing agencies at the district level. See Box 1 for basic facts about the project.

### Box 1: Project Basic Facts

Loan approval number:	2008
Loan approval:	September 2003
Closing date:	April 2011
Executing agency:	Ministry of Physical Planning and Works
Overall project cost:	\$36.9 million
Financing	ADB Loan: \$24 million Government of Nepal: \$7.6 million Local government/water users: \$5.4 million
Gender classification:	Gender equity

In this report, “\$” refers to US dollars.

Note: Project overview and ADB documents are available on the ADB website: [www.adb.org/Projects](http://www.adb.org/Projects)

The expected outcomes of the project were

- (i) strengthening the capacity and capability of participating communities to plan, cofinance, implement, manage, operate, and maintain improved WSS facilities;
- (ii) increasing participation of all castes, ethnic minorities, and women;
- (iii) increasing hygiene education through awareness campaigns;
- (iv) developing the capacity and capability of a wide range of sectoral support organizations, such as nongovernment organizations (NGOs)/community-based organizations (CBOs), to provide efficient and cost-effective support to communities and local authorities aimed at improving RWSS delivery;
- (v) supporting the implementation of the 1998 National Water Supply Sector Policy and the draft Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Strategy and Action Plan; and
- (vi) supporting and strengthening the government’s decentralization efforts by focusing on project activities and decision making at the local authority and community levels.



The project used a community-based, demand-driven approach to extend water supply and sanitation facilities to 1,200 communities in 21 districts—2 districts from western, seven districts from far-western, and 12 districts from midwestern regions of Nepal. It also facilitated capacity building of the district and village development committees and strengthened decentralized decision making at the district level.

The project had two major components:

- (i) **RWSS component**
  - a. **Community mobilization and capacity building for sustainability.** Organization of beneficiaries into water users' groups (WUGs) and capacity development for these groups to plan, construct, manage, operate, and maintain water supply schemes and sanitation facilities.
  - b. **Construction of community WSS facilities.** Construction and rehabilitation of water supply schemes such as gravity pipe systems, rainwater harvesting, piped systems with overhead tanks, and groundwater wells with hand pumps by WUGs. A sanitation revolving fund provided credit to poor beneficiaries for the construction of individual family latrines. WUGs contributed 20% of the actual costs, with at least 1% of the cost in cash and 1 year's estimated maintenance cost.
  - c. **Health and hygiene program.** Support and training for District Development Committees (DDCs), Village Development Committees (VDCs), and community leaders in planning, monitoring, and evaluating sanitation and hygiene improvement programs, including gender-sensitive hygiene awareness campaigns.
  - d. **Gender, caste, and ethnic minority program.** Training and raising awareness to support the active participation of disadvantaged groups and women in all project activities. Formation of water users' and sanitation committees, with at least 50% representation for women in both the executive and general membership, and proportional representation of the poor and castes/ethnic minority groups as a condition for funding.
- (ii) **Institutional strengthening component**
  - a. **Strengthen the capacity of DDCs to provide RWSS.** Training and technical support to develop materials, training packages, and manuals focused on community participation, operation and maintenance of RWSS, and on gender, caste, and ethnicity issues to participating DDCs.
  - b. **Support the decentralization policy and DWSS.** Technical assistance to develop and implement the human resource strategy of DWSS as per RWSS sector strategy.

## Key Gender Equality Issues Related to the Aims of the Project

Promoting equality between women and men and gender relations is relevant to the main aim of the project as well as to the project strategies. In this initiative, the focus was on gender equality and social inclusion, with an emphasis on inequalities among women and men, and among people from various castes and ethnic minorities.



Key issues include

- Women and girls are the primary collectors, transporters, and managers of household water supply. In rural Nepal, women and girls spend up to 4–5 hours daily fetching water, which is often of poor quality.
- Construction of family latrines contributes to overall hygiene and improved health, in particular that of women and girls. This provides a safer environment, as they no longer have to go to the fields after dark to relieve themselves, and the regular use of latrines result in improved health outcomes.
- Women are often responsible for family hygiene practices and attitudes. In order to be effective, education and messaging has to reach women. Currently, innovative efforts also look at increasing the involvement of men in improving family hygiene practices.
- To date, women and representatives from marginalized castes have been excluded from community resource management and decision-making processes. Given women's interests in improved water supply, their participation in water users' committees can support sustainability.

## Project Plan for Involving Women, Excluded Castes, and Ethnic Minorities

Given inequalities in Nepal, the project developed a gender, caste, and ethnicity (GCE) strategy (see Table 1). The strategy drew on findings from national gender and social analysis, previous evaluations, and policy dialogues with the government. The GCE strategy sought to ensure the participation of women and ethnic minorities in decision-making processes, as well as their increased representation in leadership positions. It encouraged user committees led or owned by women and CBOs to participate in project activities for making positive changes in the lives of women and for their empowerment. It focused on (i) raising awareness of gender, caste, and ethnic issues in participation, access, and benefit-sharing among stakeholders and communities; (ii) training in skilled work with equal participation of both genders; (iii) health and hygiene awareness and equitable access to sanitation facilities for women and the disadvantaged; and (iv) capacity building for DDCs and partner NGOs in implementing the strategy.

The project set concrete targets for the participation of women and ethnic minorities in committees and in training and capacity-building events. The target was 50% representation for women in both executive and general membership in water users' and sanitation committees (WUSCs) and proportional representation of all castes and ethnic groups (proportional to their actual distribution in the specific population). The project also required that 50% of newly trained village maintenance workers (VMWs) and sanitation masons be women. Also, all health and sanitation training sessions were to have 50% participation of women. The project also required participation of women in decision making on issues related to the number, location, and position of water points considering the fact that design modifications will have direct implications for women in meeting their practical needs, such as washing and bathing.

In the health and hygiene component, there were specific provisions to address the practical needs of girls and women, including separate toilets in schools. Specific provisions for the poor were included in the sanitation component. For example, a community-based revolving fund was established to offer affordable loans for the construction of latrines, with repayment schedules that facilitated greater access by poor men and women.

The GCE strategy also encouraged participation of remote, inaccessible, and poor communities. For these communities, the minimum cost-sharing contribution toward the capital costs of construction of basic water and sanitation services was reduced from 20% to 10%.

**Table 1: Summary of Gender, Caste, and Ethnicity Strategy Design Features**

GCE Strategy	GCE-Specific Elements
GCE-sensitive consultative and participatory processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness orientation to user committees, communities, and community-based organizations with participation from women, Dalits, Janajati, and other ethnic minorities</li> <li>• Awareness and confidence-building training with water users' and sanitation committees on issues related to gender equality and social inclusion</li> <li>• Participatory approaches to identify households by gender, caste, ethnicity, and socioeconomic group</li> <li>• Gender analysis and consultation with women in all subproject activities</li> </ul>
Concrete targets for participation by women, Dalits, and ethnic minorities in committees and in training/capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fifty percent women members in both executive and general posts of water users' and sanitation committees and proportional representation of all castes and ethnic groups that reside in the community</li> <li>• One out of two (50%) village maintenance workers trained as paid workers are women</li> <li>• One out of two (50%) sanitation masons trained are women</li> <li>• Fifty percent participation by women in health and sanitation training</li> <li>• Women participate in decision making on the number, location, and position of water points, and design modifications to meet practical needs for washing and bathing</li> </ul>
Specific provisions built-in to address practical needs of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School water supply and sanitation construction to include separate toilet cubicles for boys, girls, and teachers</li> <li>• School hygiene and sanitation promotions extended to out-of-school boys and girls</li> </ul>
Specific provision for the poor people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable sanitation options available to all socioeconomic groups and subsidies to 10% of the poorest households</li> <li>• Subsidies to poor communities in remote and mountain areas for rural water supply and sanitation</li> <li>• Community-based revolving funds for sanitation offered as loans for affordable latrines, with appropriate repayment schedules to enable greater access by poor men and women</li> </ul>
Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GCE impact monitoring</li> <li>• Collection of GCE-disaggregated data for project performance management system</li> </ul>

GCE = gender, caste, and ethnicity.

Source: ADB. 2003. Report and Recommendations of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Kingdom of Nepal for the Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project, Appendix 5. Manila.

## Key Results

The project was successful in achieving results related to gender, caste, and ethnicity objectives. Table 2 shows the project outputs for set of key activities and indicators. Overall, below are the key outcomes of the project.

**Table 2: Reported Project Gender, Caste, and Ethnicity Outputs**

Key Activities/Indicators	Project Outputs
<b>Participation and representation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fifty percent representation of women as executive and general members in WUSCs, and proportional representation of all castes and ethnic groups in the community</li> <li>Representation of women ensured the selection of sites for structures and other activities</li> <li>GCE awareness training provided to user committees, communities, and community-based organizations having women, Dalit, Janajati, and other ethnic minority participation linking project activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved participation of women in WUSCs both in number and frequency of attendance</li> <li>Women are more confident in articulating their demands and opinions</li> <li>Out of 6,265 members in 690 WUSCs, women comprise 52% of the general positions and 51% of the key positions (chair, treasurer, and secretary)</li> <li>The representation of Dalits and ethnic minorities on WUSCs is proportionate to their populations in the project areas with 19% Dalits and 14% ethnic minorities</li> <li>41% of the 3,020 people that participated in meetings related to selection of sites and structures were women</li> <li>GCE awareness provided to 23,967 members of user groups, communities, and local community-based organizations; 52% participation rate by women from all caste and ethnic groups</li> </ul>
<b>Community mobilization and capacity building</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orientation program provided to GCE groups</li> <li>Capacity development training on preconstruction, account management, and postconstruction (50% female participation and proportional representation of Dalits and ethnic minorities in training)</li> <li>Nonformal education program for women, poor people, and disadvantaged beneficiaries</li> <li>Orientation to male and female staff of DWSS, WSSDO, DDC/CWSSUO, and NGO on the GCE approach</li> <li>Training on health and sanitation for WUSC ensuring 50% participation by women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women, Dalits, and ethnic groups received orientation on the project. Out of 23,967 people that received this orientation, 50% were women</li> <li>Close to half the trainees were women (49% of 6,827 in preconstruction training, 40% of 2,985 in account management training, and 48% of 3,012 in postconstruction training)</li> <li>Increased literacy level of 15,769 poor people, women, and other disadvantaged groups</li> <li>Increased awareness and capacity of 607 staff of DWSS, CBWSSP, DDC/CWSSUO, and NGOs—unit chief, engineer, sociologists, and technical experts</li> <li>Increased awareness of 6,585 WUSC members and GCE groups on health and sanitation related to behavior and practice (50% women)</li> </ul>

*continued on next page*

Table 2 continued

Key Activities/Indicators	Project Outputs
<b>Benefits to the poor people</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific provision for the poor people for sanitation/construction of latrines—10% of the poorest households covered by sanitation subsidy and 10% by revolving funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved sanitation through construction of 19,036 latrines 10% of the poorest households covered by sanitation subsidy and 10% by revolving funds</li> </ul>
<b>Skills training</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One male and one female selected in each subproject as paid workers and trained as VMWs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced skills of 1,463 participants (45% women) in sanitation mason training</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two sanitation masons (one male and one female) selected and trained in each subproject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced skill of 1,115 participants (48% women) in VMW training</li> </ul>

CWSSUO = Community Water Supply and Sanitation Unit Office; DDC = District development committee; GCE = gender, caste, and ethnicity; NGO = nongovernment organization; RWSS = rural water supply and sanitation; VMW = village maintenance worker; WUSC = water users' and sanitation committee; WSSDO = Water Supply and Sewerage Divisional Office; CBWSSP = Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project.

Source ADB. 2012. Completion Report. Nepal: Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project, Appendix 9. Manila.

## Reduction in Time Required to Transport Water

One of the significant project results was the reduced time required to fetch water. This was of primary benefit for women and children, as water was brought near their houses. The average time saving per household in 14 subprojects surveyed was estimated at 1.8 hours per day. The average time for fetching water before the project was 3.8 hours, which was reduced to 2 hours. With this time saving, women had more time for other activities, including household chores, child care, and income-generating activities. According to the field assessment findings, women also had more leisure time and rest. With water available near their houses, contributions of women in farm-related activities, off-farm income-generating activities, and vegetable gardening have increased. Moreover, it is reported that security risks to women and girls, who were required to fetch water before dawn and after dusk, have been eliminated. Girls had more time to study. The increased water supply also meant more water for daily use, thereby improving sanitation.

## Improvements in Sanitation

The project provided a direct sanitation subsidy to 10% of the poorest households. With this support, 8,909 poor households constructed latrines. Access to latrines near their homes reduced both women's time for defecation and security risks, as they no longer were required to resort to open defecation in the fields, which was especially risky at night. Latrines near the houses also meant a clean environment, which reduced the incidence of waterborne diseases, such as dysentery, cholera, and typhoid, especially among children. This reduced not only the burden of women and the time spent in caring for the sick members of the family but also the medical expenses.

## Achievement of Participation Targets for Women and Disadvantaged Groups

The project achieved the targets set in the planning documents for representation of women and ethnic minorities in water users' committees. Women held 51% of key positions (chair, treasurer, and secretary) of WUSCs. Women were also active as general committee members (making up 52% of overall committee members). Women, Dalits, and ethnic minorities played active roles in community activities and in decision making due to their involvement in WUSCs. The involvement of women in decision making related to the location and design of water points and latrines ensured that the design and development of these systems considered the most urgent practical needs and priorities of women and girls.

There were exemplary cases of Dalit and women-only user committees managing subprojects on their own (see Box 2 for related story). Management committees led by women were highly motivated, and were able to establish higher social capital and better cohesiveness among the users. Committees led by women were also proactive in providing support to their members to link up with other development opportunities and resources.

### Box 2: Women Managing Water Users' and Sanitation Committees on Their Own

The Kuirepani subproject provided water and sanitation facilities to 115 households with the establishment of 19 community water taps in ward No. 1 of Laxmipur Village Development Committee (VDC), of the Dang district. The water users' and sanitation committees are managed by nine active women members. The project provided training in management and maintenance of water systems. The women on the executive and general membership of the water users' and sanitation committee were the real initiators of the subproject and were instrumental in ensuring that the subproject was completed on time. They are leaders in the true sense.

In the beginning, it was very difficult for women to initiate subproject activities on their own. In a highly male-dominated society, the men often did not feel comfortable seeing women take active roles. The men were of the opinion that it would be impossible for women to carry out the activities on their own. The women took it as a challenge and moved forward with full dedication and commitment. As a result, men who originally doubted the women's capacities eventually ended up supporting the women after witnessing their success.

Source: Field visits done for this case study.

There were visible increases in the participation of Dalits and ethnic minorities in WUSCs. The WUSCs reported that their membership reflected the profile of the community with 19% Dalits and 14% ethnic minorities. With this increased representation in user committees, members from previously excluded groups had more visibility and access to project benefits. This also contributed to addressing the inequality in access to water related to caste and ethnicity, which is still widely prevalent in the country. There were reports from project areas of previously marginalized groups being allowed to use water taps that, in the past, had only been used by other caste groups.

## Improvements in Women's Status and Empowerment

Participation of women in training events, maintenance of pipes, checking of water quality, and collecting of water revenues from the users increased their management capacity and enhanced their leadership qualities. The reports from the field mention improved capacity of women users to voice their demands without hesitation to the relevant authorities such as VDC, WUSC, and others. This has strengthened the bargaining position of women both within the household and at the community level.

The training provided during the development, construction, and postconstruction phases to WUSC members improved their ability to participate in project activities, such as selection of project locations, design of water taps, setting of water tariffs, and maintenance of the system. Training was useful to women participants as it not only gave them the required expertise to fulfill their roles more responsibly but also provided them with status and visibility, whereby their confidence and self-esteem as community leaders increased significantly. Women members of the project committees demonstrated strong commitment to sustaining the project benefits and were active in ensuring regular monitoring and technical support from the DWSS.

GCE sensitization training provided to WUSC members, users, beneficiaries, women's groups (for example, mothers' clubs), CBOs, and DWSS helped to shed light on the gender roles, relations, and power structure within the society. There were discussions on gender roles within families and WUSCs. There were a few examples of increased household work sharing between husbands and wives. Sharing of other responsibilities and increased mutual understanding among family members were also reported.

## Increased Opportunities for Women to Earn Income

The project generated employment opportunities for women and men of excluded groups (see Box 3). Specific efforts were made to include them in training as sanitation masons and VMWs. Women were ensured pay rates equal to men.

Although most of the women trainees remained active and continued to earn through the construction of toilets, there were some instances of women mason workers who had discontinued the work due to lack of support from family and lack of acceptance by the community of their technical expertise.

Also, the income-generating program integrated into the project allowed the WUSC members, especially the poor, women, Dalit, and other ethnic minorities, to initiate productive economic activities. The efforts of the project toward linking water beneficiaries with other organizations resulted in many users engaging in income-generating activities such as making candles and growing vegetables in their kitchen gardens using water from hand pumps and taps installed near their houses. The kitchen gardens enabled the users to consume fresh, nutritious vegetables and also to save money that would otherwise have been spent on buying vegetables from the market. Furthermore, it helped to generate funds needed to pay for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the water and sanitation facilities in the long run.

### Box 3: Stories on Project Benefits

Sushila Pun is a water users' and sanitation committee (WUSC) member and village maintenance worker (VMW) of Kuirepani subproject in Dang. Apart from being active and enthusiastic, the training of VMW has also instilled a sense of self-confidence in her, and she says that she is capable of providing the services of VMW as required.

Abdul Wafa, a WUSC member, belongs to the Muslim community. After the sanitation mason and VMW training, Abdul grew in confidence and he started building toilets in the subproject area. He started making a living through this work. Abdul expanded his work as a mason even outside the subproject area and thus increased his income. He was recently able to earn Rs10,000 by assisting in the construction of a cemented canal to divert water for irrigation in a nearby village.

Similarly, Sabitri Kori, a Dalit and a landless woman, is also earning a living after being trained as sanitation mason and VMW. She is also the vice-chair of the WUSC, and she actively engages in the construction of household toilets. Both Abdul and Sabitri are happy to recount that the subproject has not only provided them with improved and easy access to water supply and sanitation facilities but also has boosted their confidence and enabled them to earn a living.

Tulsa Giri, a sanitation mason, also a secretary of WUSC, Niglihawa, Kapilvastu, received 10 days of training. After the training, her confidence increased, and she engaged herself in the construction of household toilets. When asked about the benefits of becoming a sanitation mason, she replies that the project has provided her with a skill to earn a living. She further adds that she deposits her earnings in a savings bank account. In her own words, Tulsa explains the change she has witnessed after the initiation of the subproject in her village:

"Before the project started, no one in the village had a toilet at home. As people had never seen a toilet before, they did not even know how to use it. Open defecation was very rampant in the village, and human feces littered all over was a common sight. After the construction of the toilets, nobody defecates in the open anymore. After the installation of the hand pumps, everyone is enjoying easy access to drinking water. Villagers only have to walk a little to reach the hand pumps. As a result, there is plenty of water to wash clothes, bathe, and water plants and vegetables. The women have also become more aware about maintaining personal hygiene and sanitation. Earlier, the children would defecate around the houses, and the women disposed of the feces with their bare hands. Now, the children also use the 17 toilets, and the women have also learned to wash their hands with soap water after defecating, before cooking, and before feeding the children."

Source: Field visits done for this case study.

## Institutionalization of the Gender, Caste, and Ethnicity Approach by the Government of Nepal

Drawing on the experience of the project and a workshop on GCE participation, the Government of Nepal adopted a GCE participation strategy for the WSS sector. The GCE participation strategy was incorporated into the 2004 National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Policy and Strategy and the 2004 Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sectoral Strategic Action Plan. This was a major milestone in GCE mainstreaming in the RWSS sector in Nepal, as it required all ensuing WSS projects to ensure the participation of women, Dalit, and ethnic minorities.



## Increased Literacy of Women

The project provided nonformal education programs to illiterate women from poor and vulnerable households with the aim of imparting basic reading and writing skills. Women attendees reported an increase in confidence, voice, and understanding of development projects alongside an increase in basic reading and writing skills.

## Features that Contributed to the Gender Equality Performance of the Project

The project adopted the following approaches to facilitate the implementation of the GCE strategy and to meet the targets set out in the strategy:

- **Participatory consultative process during the design phase.** Numerous studies in the RWSS sector have emphasized that without targeted interventions, women and minority groups are often excluded from decision making in WUSCs. This has adverse impacts on planning, resource utilization, tariff collection, and maintenance of the system in the long run.

During the design of the project, intensive consultations with key stakeholders, including beneficiaries, were carried out. This included a thematic workshop on GCE participation, involving experts with first-hand experience of implementation. Both “gender and poverty problem tree” and “gender and poverty objective tree” were developed to identify key constraints and barriers at different levels. Possible interventions to address gaps were identified, and four key areas emerged from the workshop for consideration in the project design: (i) actions to address equity and social justice, (ii) adequate allocation of financial resources, (iii) priority to address the practical needs of women, and (iv) provision of income generation and livelihood improvement support.

- **GCE-responsive project location selection criteria.** The project used pro-poor, gender-, caste-, and ethnicity-sensitive selection criteria<sup>1</sup> to identify and prioritize project districts and communities. Among other criteria of the project, key GCE considerations were district gender development index based on the human development index (0.330 or less); identification of historically underdeveloped areas with higher population percentage of disadvantaged ethnic/indigenous groups; poverty factors such as identification of poor households,<sup>2</sup> households

<sup>1</sup> Other criteria were (i) water supply coverage of 60% or less, that is, the populations accessing functioning piped water systems or accessing other kinds of drinking water sources; (ii) low sanitation coverage or access to improved latrines of 50% or less; (iii) incidence of diarrheal disease rate of more than 0.1 per 1,000 people; and (iv) willingness of districts to share the cost of at least 10% out of its total fiscal year budget.

<sup>2</sup> Poor households were identified using participatory well-being rankings and Nepal Poverty Assessment 1999 indicators: households having food sufficiency for less than 6 months in a year, households whose major source of income is wage from labor, households with female heads and with differently abled persons, and households with low literacy and health indicators.

headed by females, and households having differently abled persons; and finally, one or more hardship factors<sup>3</sup> in accessing water sources.

- **Separate GCE component.** GCE was identified as one of the specific components of the project. CBWSS was the first project ever to have a separate focused GCE strategy built into the project with specific performance indicators (see Table 3).
- **Development of GCE implementation guidelines.** The detailed GCE implementation guidelines, with measurable monitoring indicators, were an important project element. Gender and social inclusion indicators disaggregated by sex, caste, and ethnicity (Dalit, Janajati, and other groups) were integrated into the outputs and outcomes of the project performance management system. The disaggregated database was included in the management information system, and the results were reported.
- **GCE mainstreamed in other project components.** The project also gave equal priority to GCE mainstreaming in other project components. During the design phase, activities and targets related to GCE were carefully articulated and incorporated into the other components of the project, such as construction of community WSS facilities, community mobilization and capacity building, health and hygiene, and institutional capacity building of executing agencies/ implementing agencies.
- **Human resources supported the implementation of the GCE strategy.** The project design included gender/social development specialists at the central and district levels. An international gender/social development specialist provided technical inputs and guidance for the first 2 years of implementation at the project management unit. This specialist also provided close guidance and support to four regional gender/social development specialists, including other specialists, in ensuring that GCE strategies are well developed and integrated into other project strategies, action plans, and processes. The regional gender/social development specialists, in turn, supported the district-level WSS teams, providing orientation, continuous support, and guidance. The regional gender/social development specialist was also a member of the three-person monitoring and evaluation team. This helped ensure the timely collection of GCE-disaggregated data in the project performance management system and the reporting of the achievements and outcomes in the project progress reports.
- **Community-based, demand-driven participatory approach.** The project considered it critical to have communities on board from the inception of the project. There was a commitment to the government and stakeholders that the project be demand driven. Communities were to identify their specific needs, prioritizing and deciding on their own. Thus, one of the special features of the project was this demand-driven and participatory approach facilitated by NGOs in bringing the beneficiaries on board. The project gave high priority to community beneficiaries having the full authority to select, design, and implement subprojects with support from NGOs, VDCs, and DDCs at the community level.

<sup>3</sup> The hardship factors included access to and reliability of water sources, water quality, and quantity of consumption. Indicators, such as more than 30 minutes of time for fetching water from the existing water sources/points and less than 9 months/a year's access to water sources, were taken to measure access to and reliability of water sources. Significant contamination from the open dug wells, broken-down tube wells, and rivers, which are prone to contamination were taken by the project as indicators to assess the quality of water available in the communities.

**Table 3: Performance Indicators That Directly Benefited Women and Those Socially Excluded**

Project Component	Performance Indicators
(i) Construction of community WSS facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and socially excluded groups participated in site selection and construction of approximately 1,200 WSS schemes and 30,000 latrines, and they collected up-front cash contribution</li> <li>• Sanitation subsidies provided to 10% of the poorest households</li> <li>• Two village maintenance workers (male and female) as paid workers selected and trained in each subproject</li> </ul>
(ii) Community mobilization and capacity building for sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups received orientation on participation</li> <li>• Poor women and disadvantaged groups linked with income-generating activities</li> <li>• Nonformal education provided to women by NGOs</li> <li>• Training on GCE approach to staff of DWSS, DCC, and NGOs</li> <li>• GCE awareness and participation training for WUSCs conducted by NGOs</li> </ul>
(iii) Health and hygiene program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two sanitation masons (male and female) trained in each subproject</li> <li>• Female community health volunteers trained and oriented on health and sanitation in literacy classes held twice a month</li> <li>• Training on health and sanitation for WUSC members ensuring 50% participation of women</li> </ul>
(iv) Strengthened DWSS and DDC capacity to manage community-based WSS projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DDC and WSSDO capable of implementing GCE strategy while managing community-based WSS facilities in 21 districts</li> <li>• DDC capacity to evaluate project requests from communities using social and poverty criterion</li> <li>• DWSS capacity to engage and manage NGOs for community mobilization and participation through tripartite understanding between DDC, NGO, and WUSC</li> <li>• DWSS capacity to integrate GCE in the manuals and guidelines developed/updated</li> <li>• PMU organized GCE sensitivity training to at least 50% of staff of DDCs and CWSS</li> <li>• DDC/CWSSUO maintained a database on beneficiary population and project progress indicators disaggregated by gender, caste, and ethnicity</li> </ul>

CWSSUO = Community Water Supply and Sanitation Unit Office; DDC = district development committee; DWSS = Department of Water Supply and Sewerage; GCE = gender, caste, and ethnicity; NGO = nongovernment organization; PMU = project management unit; WSS = water supply and sanitation; WUSC = water users' and sanitation committee; WSSDO = Water Supply and Sewerage Divisional Office.

Source: ADB. 2003. Report and Recommendations of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Kingdom of Nepal for the Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project. Manila.

#### Box 4: Women, Dalits, and Ethnic Minorities in Water Users' and Sanitation Committee

The water users' and sanitation committee (WUSC) was considered one of the essential organizations at the community level. WUSC was entrusted to plan, manage, construct, operate, and maintain water supply and sanitation facilities with the help of other users. As per Community Based Water Supply and Sanitation Project guidelines, attention was given to ensure proportional representation of Dalits and ethnic minorities along with 50% representation of females in the WUSCs. The participation of women, ethnic minorities, and Dalits in WUSCs was found to be very encouraging in the subproject areas. Equal opportunity was provided to all users to participate in the subproject activities. In addition to strengthening and empowering the WUSCs and the users, capacity building on financial management and account keeping, along with technical training, enabled WUSC members to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.

ADB. 2012. Completion Report. Nepal: Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project, Appendix 9. Manila

- **Social mobilization.** Social mobilization was considered as one of the critical aspects of the project. Priority was given to mobilize women and representatives of disadvantaged minority groups into user committees, ensuring their active participation (see Box 4). Their full ownership of the subproject was enhanced by building capability and confidence. Based on the socioeconomic assessment of the project area during the design phase, appropriate arrangements to form new or to reconstitute already existent WUSCs were carried out to meet the targets for the participation of women, Dalits, and the ethnic minorities. With facilitation support from NGOs, the social mobilizers mobilized women, Dalits, and ethnic minorities for their increased participation in the WUSCs through orientation sessions, one-on-one meetings, and group activities. For increased support and cooperation from the communities on the project-related activities, the Community Water Supply and Sanitation Unit Offices carried out intensive orientation sessions covering beneficiaries, including local CBOs and civil society organizations (CSOs). These were crucial for maintaining transparency at the local level and minimizing possible risks accruing from unmet expectations of the community.
- **Phase-wise capacity development training.** To enhance the capacity of WUSC members, systematic phase-wise training programs and orientation sessions were carried out during the planning, development, construction, and postconstruction phases for increased understanding of project modalities and approaches by the WUSC members and beneficiaries and for their sustained participation, ownership, and maintenance (setting tariffs, maintenance fees) of the system. Technical training on account management system (maintenance of records, bills, and vouchers) to three key members of the WUSCs and two concerned VMWs was provided for their effective role in the systematic maintenance of records.
- **Partnership.** Partnership was instituted with respective ministry, department, local government bodies (in particular DDC and VDC) water and sanitation utilities, and CSOs/CBOs to support program implementation and also to institutionalize accountability, transparency, and participation. Strategic tripartite partnership

was fostered among WUSC, DWSS, and VDC, outlining roles, contributions, responsibilities, and strengths that each entity would bring into the program for future follow-up. This was particularly crucial in remote, inaccessible areas and in locations with more poor people, Dalits, and ethnic minorities. VDCs showed commitment and ownership of the project by providing 2.5% of the up-front cash contribution.

## Lessons and Recommendations

The project achieved the majority of targets established in the GCE strategy. During implementation, a number of lessons and recommendations surfaced:

- Affirmative action, such as a quota for women and disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups in the water committees, is an effective strategy when it is mandatory. It was clear from the project that affirmative action can bring positive changes in the society, as it provides opportunities for the disadvantaged to build capacity and confidence to become leaders.
- Involving women in water and sanitation projects can enhance community ownership, as women are primarily responsible for fetching water in households and also because they are the direct beneficiaries of these projects. This engagement could provide a means for the empowerment of women.
- The meaningful participation of women in leadership positions can be achieved through mandatory representation quotas supplemented by tailor-made, capacity-building programs. The training programs are an important support to women in new positions.
- Women from Dalit and ethnic minority groups need additional support to bring them into the decision-making process. Low level of education is a hindrance for rural women and an obstacle to their meaningful participation in decision making.
- Although the project achieved the 50% target for women in masonry and VMW training, due to various sociocultural barriers, not all women trainees, especially from the rural areas, used the skills acquired. Given an opportunity, young rural women can train and find employment as masonry workers and VMWs. However, it is important to provide them with an enabling working environment and incentives. They should be encouraged and trained to work in new areas, such as masonry. Community awareness is equally important to increase acceptance among community members of women working in these nontraditional areas.
- Health and sanitation awareness programs should include men to motivate them to share the responsibility of women in family care and sanitation. With better understanding and education, the household roles and responsibilities can be shared between women and men.
- Very poor and disadvantaged communities cannot afford the time to participate in meetings and training. Thus, efforts to boost participation should be accompanied by income-generating activities. Lack of participation hinders their access to project benefits.
- Projects could also look to expand the involvement of men and boys in nontraditional tasks and to promote shared family responsibility for hygiene improvements. It was noted that even though the women gained new skills, they

sometimes lacked community support to work in a particular field.

Male acceptance of the changing roles of women requires attention. Change in attitudes of the community members is important to sustain the gains.

- To sustain project results, it is necessary to establish institutional structures and mechanisms for mainstreaming gender and social inclusion into the operations of the executing agencies/implementing agencies.
- Collection of GCE-disaggregated data needs to be promoted at all levels to facilitate GCE-sensitive monitoring and evaluation. These data are also important to ensure accountability of institutions in providing equitable access to water and sanitation facilities.
- Participation can take many forms, from merely belonging to a committee to being an active participant leading and owning change. The project noted anecdotal evidence of women becoming leaders and taking on new roles inside their homes and in their communities. Systematic tracking of these changes overtime by developing indicators will allow to measure empowerment.
- Effectiveness of WSS projects in ensuring sustainable services to the poor remains a challenge. The operation and maintenance plan for WUSCs included provisions for the poor people to get subsidized connections and tariffs along with access to revolving funds, and also for the use of the generated revenues to expand operations to other unconnected areas and poor households beyond the project period.
- Community mobilization should be conducted before the formation of WUGs and WUSCs such that beneficiaries are fully aware of project objectives, and their participation is more effective in accessing benefits and opportunities from the project.
- While NGOs were effective in community mobilization and raising awareness, their technical capacity was comparatively weak. Similarly, the technical knowledge and skills of the local-level Water Supply and Sewerage Divisional Office were also relatively weak. The provision of monitoring consultants at the regional level for technical backstopping, supervision, and guidance immensely contributed to and added value in the effective implementation of project activities.

## How Can the Results Be Sustained in the Future?

To sustain the good Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) impacts of the project, it is crucial that the infrastructure built for water supply and the operation and maintenance established by the project are retained in the long run. Organizing communities into WUGs and involving them in WUSCs decision-making process provided a basis for sustaining the results of the project. A number of preconstruction and postconstruction training in developing capacities to plan, construct, manage, operate, and maintain water supply schemes and sanitation facilities with significant participation from women members (>40%) equipped women with necessary skills and knowledge. This enabled them to engage more effectively in committees taking decisions related to the operation and management of water supply systems, undertaking maintenance with support from trained VMWs, and raising monthly tariffs. Orientation and sensitization training provided to men

and other community members on GESI enhanced their support and acceptance of the participation and leadership of women in committees and as masonry and maintenance workers. It is most likely that the positive changes in the gender roles and relations brought about by the project within households and communities will remain beyond the project and continue to influence the daily activities of the people. The cohesion and harmony generated by the project through equitable access to water supply irrespective of caste and ethnic groups will empower communities and enhance social capital.

*This case study was produced by the Nepal Resident Mission in consultation with the executing and implementing agency. It builds on information included in the project progress reports and related gender action plan updates and on direct consultations with the executing and implementing agency and the beneficiaries, as well as inputs from Asian Development project officers.*



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**ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City

1550 Metro Manila, Philippines

[www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org)