

WWF POPULATION-HEALTH-
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM
LEARNING AGENDA

***Engendering Conservation
Constituencies:
Understanding the Links
between
Women's Empowerment
and Biodiversity
Conservation Outcomes
for PHE Programs***



WWF- NEPAL CASE STUDY



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**Author:
Nancy K. Diamond, Senior Gender Consultant
Diamond Consulting (nk_diamond@yahoo.com)**





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2. Study Background

2a. Consultancy Objectives

With the assistance of a senior gender consultant, WWF planned two PHE case studies as part of the learning agenda on women's empowerment for the global Population-Health-Environment (PHE) Project. The key research questions focus on how PHE activities have contributed to women's empowerment and how empowered women contribute to conservation outcomes. In addition to a review of the literature and WWF country documents, the consultancy included the development of a methodology, referred to as the WWF Women's Economic, Social and Political Empowerment Tool (see Annex C). The tool will enable conservation staff to conduct a self-assessment, over time, of how their PHE or other conservation activities are contributing to women's empowerment, the conservation impacts of these efforts and how women's empowerment could be enhanced (i.e., increasing women's participation in different types of conservation activities, expanding the types of women's empowerment outcomes (i.e., social, economic and political) from PHE activities and expanding the proportion of client women in project communities who become empowered as a result of their involvement with PHE activities. The Nepal research, conducted over a ten-day work period in February 2010, included the piloting of the WWESPE Tool and field data collection. In response to staff interest, the consultant also added gender training activities for WWF and partner organization staff (i.e., ADRA, Department of Forestry). These staff learned how to conduct a gender analysis of project activities and implementing institutions, as well as developing a gender action plan for the Terai Arc Landscape PHE Activities (Annex E).



2b. Literature Review

2b.1. Overview

- The conservation community has had a major paradigm shift in the past twenty years. While still focused on achieving biodiversity-related outcomes, these projects are increasingly recognizing that the sustainability of conservation efforts depends upon supportive local constituencies and effective resource governance. To expand constituencies, conservation projects have experimented with providing additional incentives (e.g., economic livelihood alternatives, health, family planning and educational services, etc.) to local communities and creating or improving local institutions for resource governance. To engage and empower women as conservation constituents, the conservation community has expanded its efforts over the past 10-15 years to collect social and gender-related information about resource access, use, and control so as to develop tailored gender strategies for incorporating men and women into conservation decision-making and planning processes.¹ As part of these endeavors, organizations engaged in conservation have also looked at the gender dimensions of their own staffing patterns and practices (e.g., recruiting, hiring, training, promotion). While significant progress has been made in some places with including and benefiting women, conservation activities related to livelihoods and governance still tend to be dominated by men, apart from areas of high male out-migration.
- Seeking to provide other types of incentives which could engage women conservation constituents and foster more sustainable development in remote rural areas, the conservation community paired with family planning, reproductive health and other health service providers and funders to develop Population-Health-Environment (PHE) projects. There is already demand for family planning and health services in rural areas. Family planning and health service activities often have an additional advantage for conservation projects because their staff and clients are mostly women. The PHE projects have provided new opportunities to expand PH services in remote rural locations, work with more couples and attract more men clients. Both sectors (conservation and PH) have hoped that when local people gain a better understanding of PHE linkages and have improved access to family planning services that both families and the environment will benefit.
- In addition to observing environmental, land management, capacity, family planning and health changes, the PHE community has anecdotally noted that some of their more significant impacts are the empowerment of women project clients and women PHE staff. The changes related to women's empowerment include those related to protecting resources (i.e., patrolling, reporting poaching violations), increased income from livelihood activities, increased time, increased social networking and improved confidence and self-esteem.² Anecdotal evidence points to

¹ Many conservation projects focused primarily on men's economic activities and male-dominated community participation. Conservation field staff, who were mostly men, obtained information from male informants, leaders, resource users and producer groups. Women's resource use, value chain activities and organizations were invisible to the conservation community in some places. For example, fisheries activities focused on boat fishing for men while ignoring women's fish processing, marketing and gleaning activities.

²Oglethorpe, J., Honzak, C and C. Margoluis. 2008. Healthy People, Health Ecosystems: A Manual on Integrating Health and Family Planning into Conservation Projects, WWF, Washington, DC.; Margoluis, C. and M. Thaxton,.



additional gender-related changes within rural communities resulting from PHE activities, including changes in household and community gender relations, increased women's involvement in civic life and increases in women's status and leadership roles from economic and political activities.

- What has been missing from these discussions, found in the nascent body of literature about PHE activities, is clarity and rigor about the types of empowerment which are occurring or hypothesis testing about which PHE gender strategies are more effective. PHE projects have not used control communities to determine if women's empowerment changes are attributable to PHE activities as opposed to other factors such as the presence of particular gender-sensitive staff, other projects in the area or broader social changes. In general, women's empowerment has been viewed as a positive outcome, either because it is assumed to be an intermediate outcome which will lead to desired conservation, family planning and health outcomes for women and their families or because it is seen as an important end in itself (a human rights-based approach).³
- What have been the gender strategies used by PHE projects which appear to have led to women's empowerment? WWF's 2008 review of 13 WWF and non-WWF PHE projects (WWF 2007)⁴ indicates that these projects have not generally had gender integration plans or gender-related indicators but still observed some women's empowerment impacts. Conservation International (CI) initiated three flagship PHE activities in Cambodia, Philippines, and Madagascar and conducted staff and partner gender training in 2004 (Edmond 2008).⁵ This capacity building led to increased attention to gender issues in PHE outreach, educational and monitoring activities. For example, CI/Cambodia embarked on a deliberate women-focused strategy to economically empower women and bring them into conservation governance. They formed livelihood-oriented Women's Associations in two communes. They promoted the political empowerment of women via inclusion of women participants on the Commune Natural Resource Management Committees. In terms of organizational gender strategies, CI/Cambodia hired one female community development outreach worker with a gender background and conducted a gender analysis to improve project strategies. CI/Philippines adopted a gender-balanced approach which included political empowerment of women via their participation in

2008. Exploring Gender and PHE (consultant report). WWF, Washington, DC; Conservation International. 2008. Incorporating Gender into PHE Strategies: Experience from Conservation International. CI, Washington, DC.; Montebon, R., D'Agnes, L., Castro, J. and C. Aquino. 2004. IPOPCORM Behavioral Monitoring Surveys: Consolidated Report 2003-2004. PATH Foundation Philippines Inc., Makati City.; D'Agnes, L., Oglethorpe, J., Thapa, S., Rai, D. and T. Prasad Gnyawali. 2009. Forests for the Future: Family Planning in Nepal's Terai Region. Focus on Population, Environment and Security, Issue 18. WWIC, Washington, DC; D'Agnes, H. et al. Environmental Degradation also Affects Women Disproportionately to Men. Coastal Management Journal 33 (4): 13.

³ For the latter, proponents believe that empowered women are valuable to society for their own sake and because every human being deserves equal rights and opportunities.

⁴ In 2007, WWF used USAID and Johnson and Johnson support to conduct a literature review and analysis of more than 50 WWF and non-WWF PHE projects to determine the added value of integrating family planning and health for conservation. These findings are discussed in Oglethorpe, J., Honzak, C. and C. Margoluis. 2008. Healthy People, Healthy Ecosystems: A Manual on Integrating Health and Family Planning into Conservation Projects. WWF, Washington, DC.

⁵ Conservation International's September 2008 report, "Incorporating gender into PHE strategies: experiences from Conservation International"



natural resource management committees and providing family planning/parenting capacity building for men clients.

2b.2. The WWESPE Tool – Changes in Women’s Empowerment, Changes in Women’s Conservation Involvement and Organizational Capacity for Gender Integration.

- The case study research in Nepal was organized around the piloting of a new methodology, the WWF Women’s Economic, Social and Political Empowerment Tool. The tool was designed to help conservation and other PHE practitioners to identify, over time, how they are empowering women and how they can modify their organizational strategies to increase the types of empowerment achieved and to expand benefits to more women. Data are collected through interviews with groups and individuals. The Tool provides a typology of empowerment in three scorecards which are intended to be used as index indicators for Economic Empowerment, Social Empowerment, and Political Empowerment. A fourth scorecard, the Organizational Gender Scorecard, helps implementing organizations to understand their staffing and other practices and how these can be more gender-equitable. Each scorecard is derived from both the empirical observations about women’s empowerment from other PHE projects and the larger body of literature which has looked at women’s empowerment in conservation, family planning, health and other development sectors. Although designed for PHE projects, the scorecards could also be adapted to conservation projects without PHE components.
- To measure, report and increase impacts on women’s empowerment, the PHE community needs clear definitions of empowerment which can be made operational and measured. Most conservation and PHE project reports do not carefully define empowerment.
 - One of the few definitions in the PHE literature can be found in Margoluis and Thaxton’s 2008 gender review of WWF PHE activities.⁶ Drawing from work by PACT-Tanzania, empowerment is defined as, “the process by which women and men achieve the skills, confidence and support to determine their own lives and make their own choices.” Areas of “women’s empowerment” include making decisions about their own fertility and reproductive health, higher household status and changing gender relations, literacy/numeracy and education, economic options yielding greater income or employment, changes in NRM practices, access to productive resources such as land, greater engagement in natural resources governance structures and other types of community governance.
 - While the family planning and health literature offers more definitions and elaboration of women’s empowerment outcomes, they tend to place more emphasis on the psychological and social dimensions of empowerment (e.g., greater confidence, changed gender relations at the household level)⁷ rather than economic and political empowerment changes for women.

⁶ Margoluis, C. and M. Thaxton. 2008. Exploring gender and PHE. Unpublished WWF-US paper.

⁷ “Empowerment focuses attention on the degree of control individuals are able to exert over their own lives and environments and over the lives of others in their care, such as their children. Generally, women are less empowered than men at the household and community levels and beyond. Efforts to clarify the meaning of women’s empowerment should be gathering data on women’s participation in making decisions within the



- Others writing about empowerment and poverty note that empowerment is an incremental and reversible process rather than an irreversible outcome.⁸ There is a strong capacity building aspect to empowerment, including knowledge, skills and attitude changes. The aim is to help women and men learning to critically assess their own situations and shape their own futures and power relations.⁹
- Drawing from Eyben *et al.* (2008)¹⁰ and empirical experience from the PHE sector, the WWESPE Tool focuses on three major dimensions of women's empowerment (i.e., *social, economic and political*) which are achievable and measurable with the timeframes, staff resources and budgets available to PHE projects. Table 1 has the scorecard elements for the three indices of empowerment. Both economic and political empowerment criteria capture changes in women's on-farm and civic conservation involvement:
 - *For women who are economically empowered by PHE activities, we expect to see:* 1) improved access to paid work; 2) improved access to the means of production for existing or new businesses, and/or 3) greater food security (i.e., increased yields and adoptions of conservation practices).
 - *For women who are socially empowered by PHE activities, we expect to see:* 1) improvements in marital relations; 2) improvements in family well-being, 3) improved personal access to help from outside the home; and 4) improvements in time and skills related to literacy and math.
 - *For women who are politically empowered by PHE activities, we expect to see:* 1) improved skills and confidence for civic engagement; 2) more knowledgeable about women's rights; 3) improved household or community support from others for civic engagement; 4) improved participation and leadership in community-level

household, women's control of income and assets, spousal/partner relations, and attitudes that reflect self-efficacy, self-worth, and rejection of rigid gender-based roles." (Kishor 1998)

⁸ Since empowerment is a process, it is also reversible. For example, women's gains in access to land can be undermined in the future unless there are more systemic shifts in political, economic and social relations.

⁹ Oxaal, Zoe with Sally Baden. 1997. Gender and empowerment: definitions, approaches and implications for policy. BRIDGE, Sussex; Eyben, R., Kabeer, N. and A. Cornwall. 2008. Conceptualising empowerment and the implications for pro poor growth: A paper for the DAC Poverty Network, September 21, 2008. IDS, Sussex.

¹⁰ Eyben, R., Kabeer, N. and A. Cornwall. 2008. Conceptualising empowerment and the implications for pro poor growth: A paper for the DAC Poverty Network, September 21, 2008. IDS, Sussex.



conservation activities; 5) improved participation and leadership in other types of civic affairs.

Table 1. Scorecard Criteria for the WWESPE Tool (See Annex B)

A. Women's Economic Empowerment	B. Women's Social Empowerment	C. Women's Political Empowerment
A1. More paid work A2. More women's businesses started A3. More women's businesses expanded A4. More material resources provided to wives by their husbands A5. More access to or control over land and/or property A6. More access to or control over technology A7. More access to credit A8. More access to market channels A9. More travel outside the community, either alone or with other women A10. More food security in their households A11. More adoption of conservation practices on their farms	B1. More respect and moral support from their husbands B2. More access to help from outside the household B3. More knowledge of self-improvement resources B4. More control over pregnancy timing decisions B5. More power in household decision-making B6. More access to contraceptives B7. More knowledge about family health care B8. More knowledge about conservation and well-being linkages B9. Lower rates of domestic violence B10. More participation in all types of training B11. More free time for women B12. More literacy skills B13. More mathematics skills	C1. More knowledge about their legal rights as women C2. More support from their families for engaging in community decision-making C3. More support from their communities for engaging in community decision-making C4. More confidence talking to groups C5. More participation in voting in local or national elections C6. More representation in local elected office C7. More negotiation skills C8. More elected leadership roles in CFUGs C9. More organizing of community initiatives C10. More participation in community-based organizations C11. More participation in community NRM or conservation planning activities C12. More participation in patrolling activities for conservation areas C13. More participation in reporting of illegal or unsustainable resource use

- For some PHE projects, women clients and/or women staff (both volunteer and paid local staff) of PHE projects have engaged more in conservation activities at the household, resource user group and community level. Examples of involvement include the following but the level of impact on areas under improved management, bio-physical changes or policy implementation have not been analyzed:
 - At the community level, the most noted changes by “empowered women” have been greater involvement in conservation/natural resource governance institutions (e.g., committees, etc.), developing plans which reflect women’s inputs and increased reporting by women of illegal activities.
 - At the household and individual level, there have been changes in practices to more sustainable livelihoods which are compatible to conservation objectives and reductions in illegal activities by both men and women. More areas, including lands or coastal areas managed by both women and men, are under improved management. At an



individual level, there has been an expansion in the critical mass of people with conservation-related knowledge and skills.

- There are also perceptions that PH staff transmitting integrated PHE messages are affected by what they have learned; Conservation International/Philippines noted that the female *barangay* health workers and midwives “demonstrated their commitment to the environment” by also reporting on illegal resource use activities. There are many assumptions about how the empowerment of women leads to positive conservation but none of the cross-project comparative studies of PHE projects explain how, when and why some empowered women are contributing to positive conservation outcomes and the extent of the conservation changes which result.
- The conservation and PHE literature has generated several inductive hypotheses based on PHE project experiences. Margoluis and Thaxton (2008)¹¹ link women’s empowerment to conservation outcomes through a conceptual framework which posits that the main means of empowerment from PHE projects are *increased skills* (e.g., livelihood, formal education, literacy) and *reduced time demands* (e.g., new water and energy technologies, improved family health). Women’s empowerment is linked to positive conservation outcomes through the assumption that empowered women (i.e., those with improved capacities) make better decisions for themselves. Margoluis and Thaxton assume that empowered women are likely to use their increased time and new capacities to become involved in community institutions, including community management of resources. Experience from WWF-Nepal’s PHE activities, including the installation of biogas digesters and improved cookstoves, as well as zero grazing, resulted in more time for women. They no longer had to spend time on fuelwood collection or health care for family respiratory problems. The Nepali women reported being able to participate in forest management and PHE activities organized by their community forest user groups because they have more time and less work (WWF-Nepal 2008).¹² However,

Box 1. PHE and Women’s Empowerment

“... many conservation project managers hypothesize that one of the greatest benefits of including family planning is the positive effect it has on the empowerment of women – a human welfare outcome that they consider crucial for long-term conservation success. In a study carried out by WWF, the majority of PHE project managers cited this as a key benefit of adding family planning. According to these managers, women who effectively manage the timing and spacing of their births are more motivated and better able to be stewards of natural resources.”

The WWF value-added study of 50-plus PHE projects in 2007 found “strong conviction but limited evidence of value-added” for the hypothesis that PHE Integration “empowers women, thereby increasing conservation capacity through increasing women’s involvement in natural resources management, conservation and the formal economy.” Examples of behavior changes by women health staff trained in PHE include increased reporting of illegal resource use and increased interest in running for office.

Oglethorpe, Honzak and Margoluis (2008) Healthy People, Healthy Ecosystems: A Manual on Integrating Health and Family Planning into Conservation Practices. WWF, Washington, DC

¹¹ Margoluis, C. and M. Thaxton. 2008. Exploring gender and PHE. Unpublished WWF-US paper.

¹² WWF-Nepal. 2008 (Oct.). Second annual report on the PHE Project in Bardiya Corridor, Terai Arc Landscape. WWF-Nepal, Kathmandu – cited in D’Agnes *et al.* 2009. Forests for the future: family planning in Nepal’s Terai Region, Focus on population,



there are other women who may opt to use their increased time for more leisure or more individual or group economic activities. More research is needed to determine why some women use increased free time for community benefit and conservation issues and why others continue to focus on individual well-being and household welfare.

- It seems likely that differences among community women will also influence their level of empowerment and involvement in conservation activities. Apart from personality differences, education, age, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and length of residence are all important variables and influence which women will self-select or be noticed for selection for project involvement and/or employment. For the IPOPCORM PHE project in the Philippines, it was the women who were selected as peer advisors on family planning and reproductive health education and as community based distributors of contraceptive products who more often participated in CRM forums, multi-sector development committees and volunteering to guard a fish sanctuary or mangrove forest.¹³ Another set of women targeted by the IPOPCORM project for economic empowerment were the wives, sisters and daughters of fishermen. IPOPCOM provided access to credit by extending training opportunities and small-scale loans to traditional users of coastal resources for environmentally friendly enterprise development activities, e.g., hog raising, seaweed farming, and small retail operations. Some of the businesses were able to reduce the family's dependence on fishing or other marine resource extraction activities. Women's economic empowerment led some women to greater social empowerment within their households.^{14 15}
- While information about how and why some women become more involved in conservation activities after participation in, and empowerment contributions from PHE activities, this story could give the impression that women's empowerment is a necessary precondition for women's participation in activities which further sustainable NRM/conservation objectives. Women's empowerment is a laudable outcome and should be encouraged. However, most conservation and PHE projects can, and should do more to strategically understand what constrains women's participation in their activities and in the Natural Resources Management (NRM)/conservation sector. In terms of staffing, PHE programs do help NRM/Conservation projects provide a short-term solution to a long-term problem which is a shortage of women in project countries who choose to study NRM/Conservation topics, find employment with governments or NGOs and live comfortably in remote rural conditions. In terms of clients, PHE activities and add-on women's livelihood activities cannot remedy conservation approaches in which the majority of funds are spent on male resource users and male resource user groups. Even simple, on-going constraints for women such as inconvenient meeting locations, timing and invitation procedures will not be remedied by increased personal self-esteem, social networks, income or political skills and confidence.

environment and security, Issue 18. Woodrow Wilson International Center Environmental Change and Security Program, Washington, DC.

¹³ Montebon R, D'Agnes L, Castro J and C Aquino. 2004. IPOPCORM Behavioral Monitoring Surveys: Consolidated Report 2003-2004. PATH Foundation Philippines Inc. Makati City.

¹⁴ Montebon R, D'Agnes L, Castro J and C Aquino. 2004. IPOPCORM Behavioral Monitoring Surveys: Consolidated Report 2003-2004. PATH Foundation Philippines Inc. Makati City.

¹⁵ D'Agnes, H. *et al.* Environmental degradation also affects women disproportionately to men. *Coastal Management Journal* 33(4): 13.



2c. Methodology

2c.1 Overview

Each of the countries involved in this phase of the WWF PHE Project (i.e., Nepal, Kenya and Democratic Republic of Congo) participated in the development of a learning agenda; women's empowerment emerged as a priority topic. Nepal and Kenya were selected for case study research about women's empowerment since their PHE activities have already been underway for at least one year and the field staff have anecdotally observed results related to women's empowerment as a result of PHE activities.

Although the PHE activities in Kenya and Nepal were not designed for specific women's empowerment objectives nor did they adopt indicators specifically related to empowerment, they nonetheless provided opportunities to:

- Document women's empowerment in a more systematic manner,
- Compare best practices and lessons learned about women's empowerment and involving women within conservation,

Drawing from women's empowerment methodologies, we opted to design a methodology (the WWF Women's Economic, Social and Political Empowerment Tool) which could be repeated by others to determine, over time, the status of women's empowerment results, best practices and barriers for promoting women's empowerment, as well as strategies for increasing empowerment impacts (i.e., expanding types of empowerment and the proportion of empowered women in communities). Because both country project teams expressed interest in having gender mainstreaming training and technical assistance, these aspects were incorporated into the data collection activities with project staff:

- There are three empowerment scorecards (i.e., economic, social, and political) for programs (Section A) and organizational gender scorecard (Section B). These results were completed by project staff and community service providers and leaders during facilitated workshops that included gender training. These results were compared to data from PHE clients who were queried about what empowerment impact that they had experienced or observed in their communities.
- Project staff workshops included an initial half-day workshop with WWF and ADRA staff and a final full-day which combined gender training, a research debriefing and gender action planning.
- The PHE service providers and leaders, from each of the three research communities, met in a day-long workshop to learn more about gender issues and to discuss and compare empowerment results in their communities.
- Together, these three sources of data (project staff, community leaders and service providers and PHE clients) provide a baseline index number, which can be revisited at a later point, when staff and service providers implement specific strategies aimed at increasing women's participation in PHE activities, increasing types of women's empowerment resulting and increasing the proportion of client women empowered by PHE activities.



The WWESPE Tool, as well as gender training and technical assistance, was piloted in Nepal in February 2010. The Nepal training and research agenda can be found in Annex A. Annex B contains the WWESPE Tool and Annex C includes the interview guides used in Nepal. The methodology calls for interviews to be conducted in three communities. We spent two days in an interview location in each district (i.e., Dang, Bardiya, and Kailali) for a total of six days of community interviews. The interviews were designed to include a mixed sex-group, single-sex focus groups, individual informant interviews, and household visits with an initial interview with a wife followed by a husband-wife combined interview.

However, due to a variety of factors, we made some adaptations to the community methodology:

- The two-day community methodology was designed for interviews with informants in a single community, in each of three districts with a CFCC which was implementing PHE activities. We asked the WWF field staff to select communities which were fairly typical, socially representative and represented different periods of involvement with the PHE activities. Upon arriving in the field, we learned that arrangements had been made for our interview team to talk to people in a central location in each of the three districts. Informants, representing multiple communities and CFUGs, travelled to meet with us. While this methodology had the advantage of minimizing researcher travel time and broadening our exposure to CFUG members represented by the CFCCs, it placed more time demands on our informants and excluded potential informants who could not leave their work during the daytime. It also meant that we could not see our informants in their own community context or understand the particular dynamics and situation of each community and each community forest user group. We also could not obtain reliable estimates of the extent of change (i.e., specifically the percentage of women from each PHE community who have been economically, socially and politically empowered) since we had too few informants from each of the multiple communities coming to the interview location.
- In some instances, there appeared to be miscommunication with the CFCC person in charge of arranging interviews about the interview times and criteria for informants and we had a critical mass of early arrivers or informants who were ill-informed about the PHE activities. For the former situation, we opted to respect people's time and we adapted by interviewing pairs and trios instead of individuals, combining men's and women's focus group and interviewing women without their husbands in places where the husbands were unavailable (Dang District). When rain affected the participation of couples on our second day in Kailali District, we were invited to substitute a nearby household interview but they were not PHE clients.
- The other factor which complicated the methodology was the lack of clear identity of the PHE activities in the communities being researched. For two of the three communities interviewed (Bardiya and Dang), the other activities of the Terai Arc Landscape Program (TAL) predate the initiation of the PHE activities by several years. In addition, there were two prior PHE activities centered in Bardiya. The PHE activities were well-known to the TAL Motivators, who are hired with other funding by the TAL project; the Adult and Youth Peer Educators, who are volunteers trained by TAL in PHE topics; the Female Community Health Volunteers, who are volunteers with the Government of Nepal but have been trained in PHE topics by the TAL project), and the PHE-trained, volunteer Local Resource Persons. However, many of our project client informants did not recognize the PHE activities by any name other



than TAL. We adapted our questions to refer to TAL rather than PHE. However, this client confusion made it more complex to attribute women's empowerment outcomes exclusively to PHE activities versus the other TAL activities which were underway prior to the PHE activities.

3. NEPAL'S TERAI ARC LANDSCAPE

3a. Social and Gender Relations in the Terai

The twenty districts in the Terai area of Nepal are home to approximately half of Nepal's population of 28.8 million people.¹⁶ This lowland, sub-tropical portion of the Gangetic plains straddles the entire border region of southern Nepal and northern India. Fifty percent of the Terai's Nepali residents live below Nepal's poverty line. Poverty and the recent Maoist civil war have driven the migration of upland and Northern Indian families coming into the Terai; there is also an on-going out-migration of Terai males to India and the larger urban areas of Nepal. In 2003, the population growth rates in many Terai districts exceeded the national rate of 2.25 percent, e.g., 3.89 percent for Kailali District.¹⁷

The population of the Terai is very heterogeneous and can be broadly divided into three groups: 1) indigenous groups, who are widely thought to be the original Terai residents (i.e., mostly Tharus)¹⁸ 2) Indo-Nepalese groups with cross-border cultural, kinship and linguistic links with India (i.e., collectively known as *Madhesi* or plains people) who arrived in the Terai in the 19th and 20th centuries from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and 3) large number of hill migrants (including Tibeto-Nepalese and Aryans) who have moved into the area from the 1950s onward and now comprise about one-third of Terai residents. The main Terai religion is Hindu, with much smaller minorities of Muslim, Jain and Christian sects. The social structure of Madhesi caste Hindus is very similar to that of Hindus from the hills. There are Terai and Hill caste systems operating in a parallel way for the Hindus. The top castes are Brahmans and Kshatriya, whereas the untouchables, more commonly referred to now as Dalits, are considered impure under Hindu precepts. Some groups in the Terai, such as the Yadavs, are lumped together as middle castes – groups lower than high caste peoples but above Dalits. Caste plays a major role in governing social relations, influencing local politics and controlling access to economic resources.

Consistent across the different castes is a patriarchal system and conservative family and social structure which is dominated by Hindu values. Pandey et al. (2006)¹⁹ states that there is a core belief that women need to be controlled by men in economic, social, political spheres as well as at different levels of society for every caste and ethnic group. Lack of assets, lower education and the shame felt about their illiteracy, limited work options and mobility barriers have reduced women's status and their confidence to participate in public decision-making. Although equal rights were ratified under Nepal's 1990 Constitution and Nepal has ratified, without reservation, the Convention on the Elimination of all

¹⁶ World Bank. 2009. Nepal at a glance. World Bank, Washington, DC. (http://devdata.worldbank.org/AAG/npl_aag.pdf)

¹⁷ HMG. 2003. Districts of Nepal: Indicators and development update 2003. ICIMOD, CBS/HMGD and SNV, Kathmandu, Nepal.

¹⁸ A commonly used term in the Terai is as a broad grouping known as *Janajatis*. While they mostly Tharus, they also include other groups including some of the Tibeto-Nepalese ethnic groups.

¹⁹ Pandey, T., Mishra, S., Chemjong, D., Pokhrel, S., and N. Rawal. 2006. Forms and Patterns of Discrimination in Nepal: A Report. UNESCO, Kathmandu.



forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1991, there are still many discriminatory laws and traditional practices which effectively limit women's access to economic, social and political resources:

Economic Issues

- With respect to the gender division of labor, women still carry the primary responsibility for domestic duties, including housework and childcare.
- Women can face mobility challenges that are not experienced by men in the same ethnic groups. For example, in some traditional Tharu and Muslim communities and households,, family members restrict women's movement outside their homes.
- Land and property rights in Nepal are patrilineal and unequal. Daughters do not have equal inheritance rights to property as their brothers. Women have a lower status and own less property. The 2001 census data indicated that Terai women's land ownership was 12 percent and population consisted mostly of female-headed households (CBS & UNFPA, 2002).²⁰ With couples, it is uncommon for part or all of the land to be registered in a woman's name (Pandey *et al.* 2006).²¹
- Women have less education and literacy. While the gap between men and women's rates are lowest for the Brahman castes (89.6 percent and 71.4 percent), the Brahman women's rate is more than six times the rate for Dalit Terai women (10.7 percent). For Dalit males in the Terai, their literacy rates are about twice the rate of women (21.2 percent).²²
- While there is a shortage of paid work for most people in rural Terai communities, women have almost no opportunity to earn income outside of occasional farm labor for others and trading; women's wages are often lower than men's. Dalit caste women in the Terai are more often involved in wage labor work in agriculture than women from other castes and ethnic groups.²³

Box 2. Terai Gender Issues through the Eyes of One Woman

Over the past 15-years, Lakshmi (*changed name*) has struggled to earn her family's trust and emerge from the room where she was locked in during the early years of her marriage. She married at age 18 with a seventh grade education. After getting married into a conservative family and having two children, she knew that she wanted more than to stay inside her home. She woke up daily at 3:00 a.m. to do all the house-cleaning and earn some time for other activities. Neighbors noted her hard work and her intelligence. Eventually, other community members pressured her husband and in-laws to allow her more freedom and to support her interest in community affairs. She is now President of a Women's Dev. Committee (Mother's Club) and a Savings and Credit Club, was recently elected as CFUG President and the only member of her ethnic caste in the CFUG and is leading her CFUG's construction of a family planning clinic building. Her husband is now her active supporter and provides help both within the household and with her leadership duties in the community.

Social Issues

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Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) & UNFPA. 2002. Population Census 2001 Commission Secretariat. Government of Nepal, Kathmandu.

²¹ Pandey, T., Mishra, S., Chemjong, D., Pokhrel, S., and N. Rawal. 2006. Forms and Patterns of Discrimination in Nepal: A Report. UNESCO, Kathmandu.

²² Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) & UNFPA. 2002. Population Census 2001: National Report. National Planning Commission Secretariat. Government of Nepal, Kathmandu.

²³ Pandey, T., Mishra, S., Chemjong, D., Pokhrel, S., and N. Rawal. 2006. Forms and Patterns of Discrimination in Nepal: A Report. UNESCO, Kathmandu.



- In terms of marriage, social customs for women are different than for men. Child marriage of girls is still more common in the Terai than elsewhere in Nepal. Dowry customs, in which the wife's family makes material and/or cash payments to her husband's family, is prevalent in Madhesi communities but not practiced by Tharus. There is still some social aversion to widow remarriage. Divorce is uncommon.
- Given these conditions, it is somewhat surprising that Pandey *et al.* (2006)²⁴ found that Terai husbands, across all caste-ethnic groups, more commonly consult with their wives about decisions than in other parts of Nepal. However, the final decision will ultimately be made by the man. These household decisions include those related to buying or selling property, borrowing or lending money and arranging marriages for their offspring.

Political Gender Issues

Women have less often been involved in community affairs, including decision-making about natural resources. In general, women have less often been leaders in community organizations. Although there is a minimum women's quota (i.e., at least five percent) for elections related to the Lower House of Representatives of the Parliament and three reserved seats for women in the Upper House, the political parties have failed to nominate women candidates and the percentage has been below the quota for the Lower House.²⁵

- The Local Self-Governance Act of 1997 changed the local government structures (*panchayats*) and ensured that at least one seat was reserved for women at each level of elected office at the District and Village Development Committee levels. Women's participation increased considerably at the ward level but very little in the executive body of the village development committee. It is primarily high caste women who are serving in their position.²⁶
- A new constitution, written by the Constituent Assembly in *June* 2008, enshrines equal rights for women (and minorities) but is yet to be endorsed by the Constituent Assembly. The May 28, 2010 deadline for endorsement is not likely to be met. Advocates for women are concerned that women's and children's rights will be removed during political negotiation.

3b. The Terai Arc Landscape Program

The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) spans a landscape mosaic of 49,400 square kilometers in India and Nepal and includes 11 protected areas and the unprotected corridors between them. Approximately half of this area is in Nepal (i.e., 23,129 square kilometers) and includes over 14 districts. It includes 75 percent of the remaining forests of lowland Nepal including Churia hills, four protected areas and species such as Asiatic wild elephants, rhinos, and tigers.²⁷

There are considerable pressures on the unique biological resources of the TAL. Rural farmers in the areas have low yields from traditional agriculture and rely on non-timber forest products (e.g., firewood, fodder, wild fruits and vegetables), fishing and livestock to supplement their incomes. Combined with a

²⁴ Pandey, T., Mishra, S., Chemjong, D., Pokhrel, S., and N. Rawal. 2006. Forms and Patterns of Discrimination in Nepal: A Report. UNESCO, Kathmandu.

²⁵ Pandey, T., Mishra, S., Chemjong, D., Pokhrel, S., and N. Rawal. 2006. Forms and Patterns of Discrimination in Nepal: A Report. UNESCO, Kathmandu.

²⁶ Pandey, T., Mishra, S., Chemjong, D., Pokhrel, S., and N. Rawal. 2006. Forms and Patterns of Discrimination in Nepal: A Report. UNESCO, Kathmandu.

²⁷ Data source is WWF-Nepal website.



high population growth rate, land scarcities and resource demands from urban centers, the Terai has experienced significant forest encroachment by settlers, timber and wildlife poaching, and overgrazing.

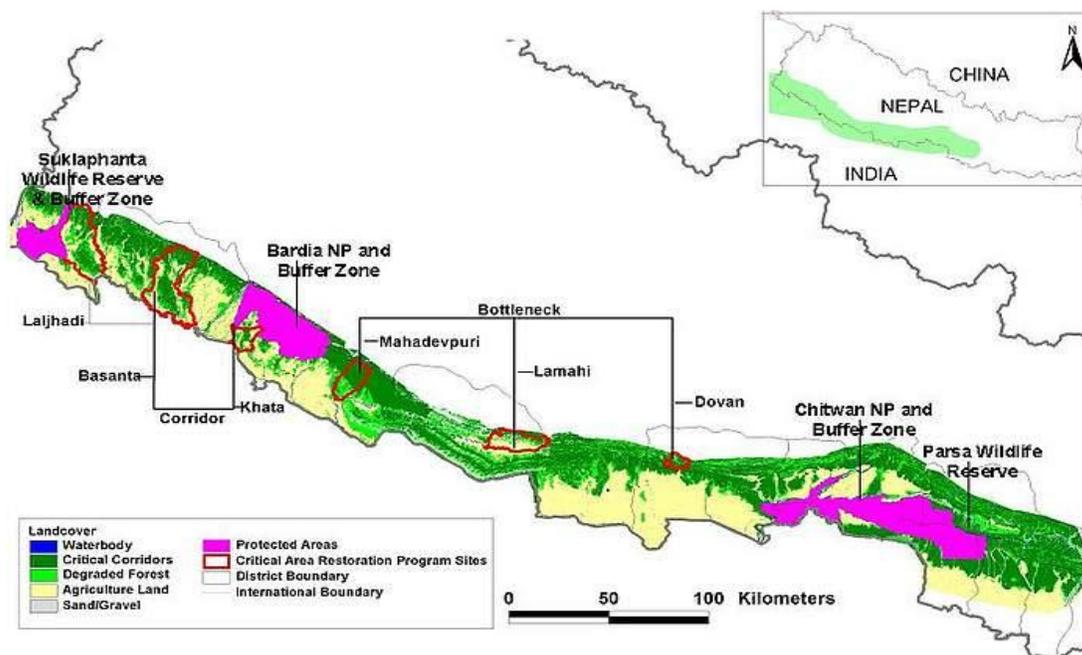
To conserve this unique biological diversity and wildlife habitat and address the region's socio-economic problems, WWF Nepal initiated the TAL Program in 2001. With a range of local, national and international partners²⁸, WWF Nepal has focused TAL on conserving "the biodiversity, forests, soils and watersheds of the Terai and Churia hills in order to ensure the ecological, economic and socio-cultural integrity of the region." To create biological and forest corridors between protected areas²⁹ (i.e., the Kanchanpur-Bardia-Chitwan corridor; the Bardia-Katarniaghat corridor; and the Basanta corridor between India's Dudhwa National Park and Nepal's Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve), WWF Nepal works with communities and community organizations. The community partners are the Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) and the local Community Forest Coordination Committees (CFCCs) which are comprised of CFUG representatives from a defined geographical area. The overall TAL program has community-based activities which include anti-poaching patrolling and reporting in wildlife corridors, sustainable management of community forests, grasslands and protected areas; developing ecotourism opportunities for local communities; reducing and mitigating wildlife damage to communities through restoration and production of wildlife-compatible cash crops and basic agroforestry.

²⁸ Partners and funding for TAL activities has come from governmental agencies (i.e., Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and the Department of Forests), local and international non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and the private sector.

²⁹ www.worldwildlife.org/tigers/pubs/Terai_Arc2004.pdf



Figure 1. The WWF Nepal Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) Program Areas



Graphics: © WWF

3c. Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) and the Community Forestry Coordination Committees (CFCC)

Since 1978, Nepal has been experimenting with the decentralization of national forest management and the devolution of authority to local organizations. At first, entire or portions of national forests were handed over to local governments, subject to a satisfactory management plan and its implementation. These arrangements shifted as new forest laws and regulations were passed in the early and mid-1990s. The new system was intended to give more recognition to the forest use rights of traditional users and capitalize on self-formed groups. Now, forests are handed over Community Forest User Groups or CFUGs. These are not local governments but often, there is still overlap in membership and officers with both coming from local elites. CFUG members may be from the same community or several communities. One of the important rights ceded by government to the CFUGs is their right to exclude non-members or approved users so that the registered members can practice sustainable management and exclude non-member poachers of wood, fodder, animals and other CFUG resources. Once the group has formed, developed a constitution and registered with the District Forest Officer, they work collaboratively to develop a viable Operational Plan for their community forest for timber and fodder harvesting, as well as use of other resources, and the Department of Forestry hands over use rights for the land. Each CFUG is required to report back annually on forest/resource management and the status of their revenues fund. If management is satisfactory, the CFUGs, which are autonomous and self-governing, retain use rights and revenues.



In terms of structure, the Executive Committee of the CFUGs includes four officers: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. Some CFUGs also have sub-committees and the heads of these units are part of the CFUG Executive Committee. In addition, there are also “advisors” who are often former Executive Committee members. The government regulations related to CFUGs now specify that at least two of the officers should be women. According to our informants, women who served as CFUG officers in the past did not have much power or opportunities to show leadership but increasingly, women are being nominated to handle CFUG funds and serve as Chairpersons. There are also still some all-men CFUG Executive Committees and now, some all-women CFUGs and Executive Committee. One category of members can vote; others receive forest and grass products but do not vote.

In recent years, a great deal has been written about the successes and challenges of the CFUGs in Nepal. For example, Khanal (2007)³⁰ notes that almost 30 years after the legal recognition of community forestry in Nepal, around 15,000 Community Forestry Users Groups (CFUGs) were registered as of 2007 under the forest legislation. Although interrupted to some extent by the violence of the Maoist-Government of Nepal civil conflict between the Government of Nepal and the Maoists (1996-2006), local CFUG members have met annually in assemblies to make decisions on resource management and community development expenditures (e.g., schools and teacher payments, roads construction, drinking water supply and irrigation, communication, micro-hydro and community electricity). In comparison to the previous local government structures, disadvantaged groups and women have more access to group membership and leadership. The Maoists helped to encourage the CFUGs to not replicate earlier elite power structures and increase representation of, and benefits to disadvantaged groups and women (e.g., small grants or no-interest loan funds, distribution of livestock for income generation activities, scholarships and housing). Further, an umbrella organization for the CFUGs, the Federation of Community Forest User Group Nepal or FECOFUN, has been advocating for the rights of traditional users. In addition to governance benefits, CFUG members have benefited from new forest-based community enterprises, including community cooperatives, companies and producer networks which collect, process and market forest products.

There are also many challenges with the CFUG system. Most of the decisions about the policies and regulations for this system have not been participatory nor involved local users and institutions. In some cases, the rights of indigenous peoples and other local peoples have been violated and this risk is higher with the presence of the military in protected forests. In the Terai, there is pressure from some parts of the Government of Nepal and the private sector logging companies, in both Nepal and India, for the privatization of lowland forests for commercial usage. The CFUGs are often dominated by local elites, who are often richer and literate migrants. Some observers note that the poor, ethnic minorities and low occupational castes have not traditionally been part of decision-making and leadership. Shrestha and Britt (1998)³¹ observed that the situation within some user groups is more similar to “committee forestry” rather than “community forestry.” In some places, the indigenous Tharu forest users have been pushed further away from the community forest sites. The CFUG rules focus more on basic needs and there is no authority for CFUGs to be involved in the commercialization of non-timber forest products. The government mostly hands off low value forests, thereby decreasing the revenues and benefits to CFUGs. There is not much local support for the government policy of claiming 40 percent of the CFUG timber sale revenues to pay for the CFUG services provided by the Department of

³⁰ Khanal, Dil Raj. 2007. Major benefits and challenges of community forestry in Nepal. UNESCO list-serv discussion. (<http://esaconf.un.org/wb>)

³¹ Shrestha, N.K. and C. Britt. 1998. From Pilot to Policy: Community Forestry Comes of Age in Nepal. World Bank/World Bank Institute's CBNRM Initiative. (<http://srdis.ciesin.columbia.edu/cases/nepal-001.html>)



Forestry; it is an unpopular policy. During the armed conflict, government and the Maoists fought for control of forest resources; the Maoist bans on community meetings also reduced the willingness of groups to meet annually, as required by CFUG regulations, during the post conflict period.

For the Terai, community forestry activities began much later than in the Mid-Hill districts of Nepal.³² The highly valuable natural Sal forests of the Terai were protected by the presence of malaria and a sparse population of indigenous Tharus through the 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s, newly resettled migrants and commercial logging reduced the forested areas by an estimated 24 percent of the total area of forest (i.e., 593,000 hectares).³³ The Government of Nepal began to nationalize large blocks of natural Sal forests into protected areas or national forests. Unfortunately, these actions did not stop illegal logging nor export activities. During the Maoist conflict (1996-2006), the movement restrictions on forestry officials opened up more opportunities for illegal loggers and poachers. Community forest user groups did not really get underway until after 2000 and rate of progress has been slower than in the Mid-Hills.³⁴ There are fewer areas of low-value degraded forest for hand-over and the government prefers to control high value forests. With more migrants, the Terai communities are more heterogeneous³⁵ and community forest user group formation has been more problematic. The handover parcels tend to be larger in size than in the Mid-Hills and the temptation is greater to sell timber to the nearby Indian markets. The handover process has slowed down in recent years and is perceived by some to have stalled.³⁶

³² <http://www.forestsmonitor.org/fr/reports/549391/549398>

³³ <http://www.forestsmonitor.org/fr/reports/549391/549398>

³⁴ <http://www.forestsmonitor.org/fr/reports/549391/549398>

³⁵ <http://www.forestsmonitor.org/fr/reports/549391/549398>

³⁶ Springate-Baginski, O. and P. Blaikie. (eds.) 2007. *Forests, People and Power: The Political Ecology of Reform in South Asia*. Earthscan, London; Shrestha, N.K. and C. Britt. 1998. *From Pilot to Policy: Community Forestry Comes of Age in Nepal*. World Bank/World Bank Institute's CBNRM Initiative. (<http://srdis.ciesin.columbia.edu/cases/nepal-001.html>)



are leasing small pieces of land from absentee landlords. In terms of ethnicity, the original Tharu residents share their communities with migrants from a variety of groups. In the following tables (2, 3 and 4), the demographic and other data for the three case study districts are drawn from a WWF publication which summarizes the most recent Government of Nepal data available for the Terai districts.³⁸ Data is primarily from the 2001 census, unless noted otherwise.

Table 2. Comparison of Land Size, Forest Cover, Population Density and Land Holdings for Dang, Kailali and Bardiya Districts (2001 Census)

	Dang District	Kailali District	Bardiya District
Land Area (sq.km)	2,955	3,235	2,025
Percent of Land under Forest Cover	65.74	63.66	54.89
People/Square Km	156	191	189
People/Square Km of Agricultural Land	7.6	9.6`	8.3
Average Size of Land Holdings (sq.km)	0.96	0.87	0.88

³⁸ WWF-Nepal. 2006. Demographic Analysis, Terai Arc Landscape-Nepal, WWF-Nepal Program, Kathmandu.



Table 3. Comparison of Population, Caste/Ethnic Composition and Migration Statistics for Dang, Kailali and Bardiya Districts (2001 Census)

	Dang District		Kailali District		Bardiya District	
Population Size	462,380		616,697		382,649	
Population Size by Sex	M:228,958	W:233,422	M:192,655	W:189,994	M:312,311	W:304,386
Sex Ratios (Males:Females)	98:100		103:100		101:100	
Average Annual Population Growth Rates (1991-2001)	2.86%		3.82%		2.76%	
Major Caste/Ethnicity by % of district population <i>(Note: The Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics lists Muslims as an ethnicity rather than a religion)</i>	Higher Caste: 39.40 Dalit Caste: 11.73 Ethnic: 47.48 Others: 0 Unidentified & Foreigners: 0.37 Muslims:1.0		Higher Caste: 33.42 Dalit Caste: 13.70 Ethnic: 49.04 Others: 0.2 Unidentified & Foreigners: 3.27 Muslim: 0.54		Higher Caste: 28.24 Dalit Caste: 9.75 Ethnic: 58.67 Others: 0 Unidentified & Foreigners: 0.31 Muslims: 3.02	
Total Percentage of District Population with Mountain/Hill Origins	62.46		34.32		46.5	
In-Migrants (% of total) (Most of the in-migrants are from other parts of Nepal)	14.4		28.7		19.5	
Net Migration Estimate as % of Total Population	3.1		14.7		2.7	

Table 2 shows that in 2001, Dang District had the lowest population density (people per square kilometer) and somewhat larger landholdings. For Bardiya and Kailali Districts, there were greater population densities and smaller parcel sizes than in Dang Districts.

Table 3. indicates that the three districts varied considerably in their population size, composition and migration in 2001. By far, Kailali District had the greatest number of people and was growing at a significantly greater rate than the other two districts.³⁹ The sex ratio data indicates that outmigration of men from Dang District was higher than the other two districts. At the time of the last census, Dang District had a much higher population of people originating from the Mountain/Hill districts. With respect to in-migrants, Kailali District was receiving twice as many in-migrants as the other two districts. The net migration estimates, reflecting more incoming than outgoing migrants, were significantly higher for Kailali District than the other two districts. All three districts were characterized by considerable

³⁹ The 2001 Census data indicated a growth rate of 2.25 percent for Nepal overall.



ethnic and caste diversity in the 2001 census. With respect to caste, Dang District had the highest percentage of high castes (Hill Brahmins and Chetris, as well as Terai origin Brahmins and Chetris) and Kailali District had the greatest proportion of low caste peoples, who are known as Dalits.⁴⁰ Bardiya had a much higher percentage of what is categorized by the census as “ethnic,” which our informants are also referred to as *Janajati*.⁴¹ During our case study research, two commonly mentioned Janajati groups were Tharu and Yadav. In total, there are eleven sub-groups of Janajati from the Terai region.⁴² Of the three case study districts, Bardiya had the highest percentage of Muslims at 3.02 percent and Kailali had the most foreigners, perhaps because of its border location and the large town of Dhangadi with international aid organizations.

Table 4. Reproductive Health and Literacy Statistics for Dang, Kailali and Bardiya Districts

	Dang District		Kailali District		Bardiya District	
Literacy Rate for Population Age Six and Over	M: 69.3	F: 46.9	M: 64.0	F: 41.0	M: 55.5	F: 35.9
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate for % of Married Women (Ages 15-49) (2003/04 data)	37.9		42.4		43.6	
Crude Birth Rate	31		31		34	
Total Fertility Rate	3.38		3.53		3.83	
Infant Mortality Rate	M: 40	F: 49	M: 62	F: 46	M: 63	F: 70
Child Mortality Rate	M: 12	F: 17	M: 21	F: 23	M: 25	F: 32

The 2001 census statistics in Table 4 point to some similarities and differences among the three study districts. Male literacy rates exceeded women’s rates for all three districts, with generally higher literacy for both men and women in Dang District and lowest in Bardiya District. The 2001 Contraceptive Prevalence Rate⁴³ was lowest in Dang District and somewhat similar for the other two districts. For other reproductive health indicators, Dang District had lower rates of infant and child mortality and total fertility. Infant and child mortality were highest in Bardiya District, particularly with respect to girls; Bardiya’s total fertility rate was the highest of all three districts.

⁴⁰ There are also numerous cultural subdivisions among the Dalits which influence social status.

⁴¹ The Janajati are social groups with their own mother tongue and traditional culture but this category does not fall under the conventional fourfold Varna of the Hindu system or the Hindu hierarchical caste structure and there are a variety of religions.

⁴² Source: www.nefin.org.np

⁴³ With PHE funding, WWF collected additional demographic data in 2008 through a baseline survey but this report was not available to the author while this case was being written.



4b. What were the PHE Strategies in the Three TAL Districts

Table 5 below summarizes the history of PHE activities in the three case study areas. WWF has been working with partners in Bardiya District for the longest period of time (2003-2010). It has been conducting PHE activities since late 2008 in Dang and Kailali Districts. TAL has also conducted other activities in the districts prior to the PHE activities.

Table 5. TAL's PHE and Other Activities in Dang, Kailali and Bardiya Districts

	Dang District	Kailali District	Bardiya District
Initiation Year for TAL Activities	Not Available	2001	2001
Initiation Year for TAL PHE Activities under Phase 1	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	2003
Initiation Year for TAL PHE Activities under Phase 3	2008	2008	2008
CFCC	Forest and Environment Coordination Committee Ban Thata Batabaran Sanrakshyan Samiti	Basantha Community Forest Coordination Committee (Basantha Samudayik Ban Samanwaya Samiti)	Bardiya Community Forest Coordination Committee (Bardiya Samudayik Ban Samanwya Samiti)
# of CFUGs in CFCC	56	28	41

For Phase 1 of the PHE work in Nepal, WWF Nepal, together with its local implementing partner in the community of Khata (Bardiya District), the Community Forest Coordination Committee (CFCC), began work in 2003. For the population-health community, the CFCC and CFUG structures were seen as promising platforms for delivery of integrated health services because they had established social networks, existing training programs and their own funds to spend on community development activities (D'Agnes *et al.* 2009). The focus of the work, supported by the Johnson & Johnson Corporation, was health and conservation services. WWF provided conservation expertise and partnered with the Nepal Red Cross Society to provide health expertise and training. With respect to health activities, Phase 1 included first aid training for, and distribution of first aid kits to 28 community volunteers, the establishment of a community-run health clinic, awareness building programs related to HIV/AIDS and family planning, as well as sanitation and drinking water improvements.⁴⁴ These health-related activities were augmented by micro-loans from other donors for biogas units and improved cookstoves. Phase 1 activities also promoted stall-fed cattle systems in lieu of allowing cattle to graze unrestrained in the forests.

⁴⁴ D'Agnes, L., Oglethorpe, J., Thapa, S., Rai, D. and T. Prasad Gnywali. 2009. Forest for the Future: Family Planning in Nepal's Terai Region. Focus on population, environment and security. March 2009, Issue 18. Woodrow Wilson International Center, Washington, DC.



The Bardiya PHE activities entered a second phase from July 2006 - July 2008 and moved from health and environment activities to a more integrated PHE approach. Funders included both Johnson & Johnson and USAID/Nepal. WWF continued to partner with the local CFCC, which represented 32 CFUGs, as of 2007.⁴⁵ During this phase, WWF also added a partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) of Nepal for reproductive health and family planning training and monitoring support, and also teamed with several credit providers, as well as savings and credit cooperatives associated with the CFCC. A total of 181 people, including a few paid staff and numerous PHE volunteers, provided PHE services to an estimated 22,000 people living in just over 3,000 households.⁴⁶ Reporting included numbers of trained participants and service providers, adopters of biogas and improved cookstoves and fuelwood savings, purchasers of solar lamps and kerosene-related savings, health indicators (e.g., acute respiratory infections for under-five children and reproductive health/family planning indicators (e.g., contraceptive use among couples), and the number of CFUGs that integrated family planning and clean energy interventions into their five-year CFUG operational plan amendments.

A 2008 evaluation of WWF/Johnson & Johnson PHE work in Nepal and other countries by Carr⁴⁷ found an expanded community health clinic, with staff funded from the CFCC revolving fund and services provided to nearly 1,700 people in 2006. The Nepal Red Cross Society held three clinics in 2006 which provided physician services to more than 300 people. In addition, WWF also sponsored six health awareness events to disseminate PHE messages via local community organizations and PHE radio programs and seminars in the local language. During Phase 2, WWF and ADRA initiated training and support for volunteer youth peer educators, who were CFUG members, to disseminate PHE information directly to households. ADRA also offered PHE training to 32 of the Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs), who work under a system which was developed by the Ministry of Health and serve as Community Based Distributors of contraceptives. In terms of results during Phase 2, Carr found that contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) increased from 43 to 50 percent from 2006 to 2007. Nearly 300 families benefited from the production of, and subsidies for purchases of locally made toilet pans. Communities and households benefited from supplied water filters, wells and well treatment for arsenic. Adults and children had fewer diarrheal incidents, child mortality was lowered and water sources were protected from fecal contamination. Further health and environmental results were documented for the nearly 13 percent of households who had adopted biogas units and/or fuel-efficient cookstoves.⁴⁸ For HIV/AIDS, USAID funding helped to educate residents about abstinence and condom use to reduce transmission rates, and the increased risks of HIV infection associated with returning migrants. To mainstream PHE into the CFUG and CFCC priorities, WWF encouraged CFUGs to integrate PHE activities into their operational plans and to establish CFCC subcommittees on health and PHE. The CFCC in Khata took over managing health activities as the Red Cross has pulled back. Given the lack of viable local institutions in

⁴⁵ Carr, D. 2008. Population, health and environment in Africa and Asia: An evaluation of WWF's USAID and Johnson & Johnson-supported projects. WWF, Washington, DC.

⁴⁶ D'Agnes, L., Oglethorpe, J., Thapa, S., Rai, D. and T. Prasad Gnywali. 2009. Forest for the Future: Family Planning in Nepal's Terai Region. Focus on population, environment and security. March 2009, Issue 18. Woodrow Wilson International Center, Washington, DC.

⁴⁷ Carr, D. 2008. Population, health and environment in Africa and Asia: An evaluation of WWF's USAID and Johnson & Johnson-supported projects. WWF, Washington, DC.

⁴⁸ D'Agnes (2007) notes a reduction in acute respiratory infections (ARI) from 30 percent in 2006 to 26% in 2007 for residents of households adopting biogas or other improved cookstoves (D'Agnes, L. 2007, *Integrating Population and Health into Forest Management Agendas in Nepal*. <http://www.ehproject.org/phe/wwf-nepalfinal.html>)



much of rural Nepal, the PHE activities helped to build the capacity of the CFUGs and CFCCs to respond to the unmet family planning and reproductive health needs of their members.

Through a public-private partnership known at USAID as a Global Development Alliance, WWF partnered with Johnson & Johnson and USAID's Global Office of Population for Phase 3 PHE activities (2008-2011). Activities continued in Bardiya District and expanded to include CFCC implementers in Dang and Kailali Districts. The two selected CFCCs were headquartered in Gadhwara (Dang District) and Hasuliya (Kailali District) communities. WWF continued its partnership with ADRA for training.

The implementation model for Phase 3 has been quite similar across the three areas:

- Hiring of a PHE coordinator with a health background to oversee all three sites. Working with a well-established Nepal NGO, ADRA, with strong capacities in reproductive health and training.
- Informing local people about the PHE activities via visits to health posts, presentations at meetings of the CFCCs and of the Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs), inviting community members to apply to become trained as Adult and Youth Peer educators or serve as Local Resource Persons. Recruiting Local Resource Persons to train, monitor PHE meetings, and monitor FCHV –run mothers' clubs.
- Providing an initial two-day training in PHE topics and integrated messaging for the existing cohort of Female Community Health Volunteers, who were also community-based distributors of family planning services and products;
- Providing technical assistance and training to government health workers;
- Assessing the needs of, and providing required equipment to the government health centers so as to improve the reproductive health services at health posts and health sub-posts in the project areas.
- Selecting and training two cohorts of volunteer Adult Peer Educators (age 24 and above) and Youth Peer Educators (less than age 24), comprised of equal numbers of men and women, for each district and supporting their work in mixed-sex teams;⁴⁹⁵⁰;
- Selecting and coordinating with Local Resource Persons who supervise the work of the peer educators;
- Teaching people about population-health-environment linkages with study tours;
- Conducting media campaigns related to PHE linkages;
- Promoting household energy efficiency, through use of biogas, improved cookstoves, solar electricity;
- Promoting the integration of selected PHE activities (e.g., peer education and mothers' groups facilitated by FCHVs), and staff, into the CFUG Operational Plans and their budgets, as well as the plans and budgets of the CFCCs.

Prior to the field research, we identified the list of cross-site project activities and confirmed those already underway with project staff, field workers and community leaders. As part of the methodology used in the case study, we grouped the activities into three sets in order to clarify which types of

⁴⁹ The FCHVs started as early as 1990 as volunteers for the Government of Nepal and work continuously full-time. They received two days of PHE training. In contrast, the APEs and YPEs began with TAL PHE activities. They are required to give two classes per month nearby their homes. They received three days of initial training and a one-day orientation. They also received a two-hour monthly topical course during their monthly meeting. The peer educators teach on a broader range of PHE topics than the FCHVs.

⁵⁰ Informants mentioned that some women can feel shy about talking about sexuality, women's bodies and gynecological issues around male APE, YPE and participants but they liked that the joint mixed-sex discussion has increased male knowledge.



project activities might be having empowerment impacts (Figure 3). The three categories were: 1) Population-Health (PH) activities which had no or very limited environmental aspects, 2) Environment activities which had no PH aspects, and 3) Population-Health-Environment (PHE) activities which included combined all three aspects and also some economic and governance-related activities.

There were some activities, of TAL or TAL-PHE, which only occurred in a single community, according to our informants. Bardiya District, which was the site of the Bardiya earliest PHE activities, had instituted a system of subsidies for household purchases of biogas units but subsidy funds were less for the other two communities.⁵¹ Bardiya also had activities related to the construction of improved cookstoves and stall-fed cattle systems. Dang District was the only place where TAL had promoted vegetable farming and marketing activities. Dang informants attributed past literacy training classes to TAL although there had been no recent offerings, according to TAL staff. Only the Dang informants mentioned the TAL CFUG governance training. The WWF-Nepal website mentions some other types of TAL assistance that were not discussed by our informants (i.e., plumbing and bicycle maintenance training, small grants or in-kind support for livestock, and women's legal rights training).

The community informants appreciated TAL's socially inclusive and non-discriminatory approach to providing services and goods. None of the informants felt that TAL was favoring local socioeconomic elites or those with more education. If anything, they thought TAL may be favoring Dalit and ethnic communities (*Janajati*); they suggested substituting a pro-poor approach rather than focusing solely on ethnicity and caste..

Box 3: Lessons Learned about Women's Participation in the Bardiya Study Tour

- *Family support was essential.* Both women informants had supportive husbands. The tours were five to seven days and women had to make sure that family needs were met while away.
- *Seeing is Believing.* One woman participant reported being nervous about TAL's promotion of fencing for communities forests but when she saw how it was working elsewhere, she changed her mind.
- *Spreading the Benefits.* One of the FCHVs, who also trained to be an APE, was invited to go on multiple study tours. While not every woman is able to get away, many are interested.

⁵¹ Revolving funds were available in all three sites for these biogas units.



FIGURE 3. TAL PH, PHE AND ENVIRONMENT ACTIVITIES





5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5a. Staff and Local Leader Perceptions about Women’s TAL Involvement

The WWESPE methodology is a rapid data collection process of qualitative research which uses triangulation to try to compare and determine project participants and beneficiaries. Perceptions about participation, benefit distribution and empowerment by staff and community leaders are contrasted with community perceptions, as well as the actual patterns of participation, benefit distribution and empowerment. For the first step, we used two workshops to compare staff and local leader perceptions about women’s involvement, benefit distribution and empowerment for women with the actual situation. The first comparison is between the perceptions of TAL staff (WWF and ADRA) and local leaders/service providers (CFCC Coordinators, TAL Motivators, FCHVs) about how women were involved in TAL activities (i.e., goods and services)(Table 6).⁵² For some activities, answers were not provided by both groups of informants

- Both informant groups were in agreement that women were involved in most of TAL’s activities.
- In terms of single-sex activities, both groups of informants thought that mothers’ groups and FCHV services were generally all-women activities and furniture making training and grass management tended to be all-men activities.
- There were some differences between the informant groups. Project staff perceived animal control watchtowers as being activities which only men were involved but local leaders said reported that both men and women were involved. For several activities (i.e., APE/YPE class participants, classes about livestock, savings and credit groups, subsidized biogas plants, animal trench digging and revegetation/reforestation), staff perceived these activities as including only women participants but local leaders perceived that both men and women were involved.

Table 6. Differences in Perceptions about Men’s and Women’s Involvement in TAL Activities

Types of TAL Goods and Services	WWF & ADRA Staff	Leaders Bardiya	Leaders Dang	Leaders Kailali
PH ACTIVITIES				
Mothers’ groups	W	W	W	W
FCHV PH services	W		W	W
APE/YPE services	W	W	MW	MW
Water quality testing provided		W	MW	M
PHE ACTIVITIES				
Livelihood training – furniture making	M	-	-	-
Livelihood training – mint (Bardiya only)	MW	MW		

⁵² Informants included the eight project staff present on Feb. 1 and the 12 community representatives participating in the Feb. 2 workshop.



Livelihood training – pigs & goats (Dang)	W		MW	
Livelihood training – cattle (Bardiya, Dang)	W	-	MW	M
Livelihood training – improved cookstove construction			MW	
Savings/credit groups (Dang, Bardiya)	W	MW	MW	
Literacy classes (Bardiya, Dang only) *		W	W	
Manual water pumps	MW	MW	MW	M
Bio-sand arsenic filters (Bardiya only)	MW	MW		
Water quality testing kits	MW	M	-	W
Subsidized biogas plants	W		MW	M
Biogas loan		M	MW	M
Improved cookstoves	W			
Subsidized solar panels or lamps	W			
Study tours	MW			
CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES				
Animal watch towers (Bardiya, Dang)	M	MW	W	-
Animal trenches (Bardiya, Dang)	W	W	M	-
Anti-Poaching Teams	M		M	M
Grass management	MW	MW		
Revegetation & Reforestation	MW	MW	M	
Annual Community Forest Maintenance	W	MW	M	MW
CFUG governance	MW			

CODES: “Leaders” includes the CFCC Chairpersons, the PHE lead for the CFCC FCHVs, APEs and Tal Motivators) who attended the Feb. 2 workshop in Nepalganj. M = All or Mostly Men; W = All or Mostly Women; MW = About 50/50 mix of Men and Women



5b. The Distribution of TAL Benefits for Women

Table 7 summarizes the benefits which were personally received from TAL by the interviewed women clients from the three study areas.^{53 54} Clients were not familiar with the acronym “PHE” so we substituted the more widely known term, “TAL.” Given the duration of PHE and TAL activities in Bardiya, women clients in that area had received more types of goods and services from TAL than in the other two areas (i.e., ten types for Bardiya versus seven types for Dang and eight types for Kailali). Across all three areas, training, biogas units, and savings groups were the most commonly mentioned TAL benefits which women had received. The least common benefits across all three study communities were tree plantings, water filters, water pumps and solar panels/lamps.⁵⁵

Table 7. Number & Percentage of Individual Informants Who Received TAL Goods & Services⁵⁶

	Dang Women Informants (n=14)	Kailali Women Informants (n=17)	Bardiya Women Informants (n=26)	Total # (%) (N=57)
Savings group member	1	8	5	14 (24%)
Loans	4	1	7	12 (21%)
Biogas unit or toilet	4	2	10	16 (28%)
Improved cookstoves	2	1	5	8 (14%)
Water pump	1	1	4	6 (11%)
Water filter	0	0	3	3 (5%)
Solar lamp or panel	0	0	5	5 (9%)
Training	9	2	15	26 (46%)
Participating in APE/YPE classes	0	2	7	9 (16%)

⁵³ As noted in the Methodology Section, each column refers to one of the District where the case study CFCCs were located.

⁵⁴ With limited time in each study area, we opted to intentionally over-sample women informants. Due to communication and logistical problems, the gender balance of the sample was even greater than expected in Dang (i.e., no husbands attended the three couple interviews) and Kailali (none of the originally invited couples attended due to rain).

⁵⁵ We first used an open-ended question about “TAL benefits” to individual, paired and group informants. With individual and paired interviews, it was possible to ask more questions to clarify details about loans but it was The question about TAL benefits was asked as an open-ended question. To save time and group patience, we switched to asking informants about a possible list of benefits, once we understood typical replies. In the case of biogas units, group interview informants generally cited it as a benefit if anyone in the household had received it. When a loan was received, we did clarify if it was from the cooperative or mothers’ groups and who in the household took the loan.



Study Tour	0	2	8	10 (18%)
Tree planting	1	0	0	1 (2%)
Total types of goods & services received	7	8	10	

[Coding: Top three goods and services are **highlighted** in the far right column]

5c. Comparison of Women’s Economic Empowerment from TAL by Study Area

Table 8 summarizes the types of economic empowerment changes experienced by women in the three study areas and attributed to TAL. There are two types of informants for each study area: 1) individual women informants speaking about their own empowerment changes, and 2) men and women focus group informants who provided their opinions about specific empowerment changes for women in their communities. For each area, there was fairly close agreement between the two types of informants about the types of TAL-related economic empowerment experienced and more types of economic empowerment were present in Dang and Bardiya than in Kailali.

Across the three areas, the most common types of women’s economic empowerment were **more new women’s businesses, more material resources from husbands (attributed by informants to TAL and other social changes and referred to as TAL+ in the tables below) more access to technology, more access to credit and more travel outside**. Although the livelihood training offered by TAL was quite limited, expanded access by women to credit through savings and credit groups (i.e., small amounts from the mother’s club savings groups and larger amounts from the CFCC cooperative) has contributed to women’s opportunities to start new businesses. Informants estimated that about 40 percent of the women in Dang now had new or expanded businesses. In general, CFCC cooperative staff and the CFUG leadership play a critical role in determining who is credit-worthy. Women, like men, must be shareholders and savers as part of the loan requirements. To date, land title has been required for loans greater than 15,000 Nepali Rupiahs (about US \$200). For most women, this requirement has meant that women’s husbands need to cosign for these larger loans. For members of mother’s savings group, the scale of savings is much more limited at 250 Nepali rupiahs as the basic amount for group membership.

Table 9 summarizes staff and client observations about the extent of women’s economic empowerment impacts from the TAL project.⁵⁷ Project staff believed that women in the three study areas had experienced all of the types of economic empowerment but the clients in the three areas observed far fewer types of economic empowerment. The types of economic empowerment results observed for Bardiya and Dang were identical (i.e., more businesses – new or expanded, more material resources from husband, technology, credit, market channels and travel outside). However, in Kailali, clients reported women’s empowerment changes for more new businesses, more technology, more travel outside, more household food security, and more adoption of farm conservation practices. **More new women’s businesses, more access to technology and more travel for women** were observed by both

⁵⁷ The staff group was able to provide estimates of the approximate percentage of women who had benefited from a specific type of empowerment. For the client focus groups, composed of individuals from multiple communities, this type of estimation was less meaningful and too tedious for participants with limited math skills. Based on our discussion of these types of empowerment, we were able to understand if specific types of empowerment were Observed, Widespread or Not Observed at all. A further distinction was made in some cases when the informants stated that the positive empowerment outcome occurred in the context of TAL and other social changes (noted as TAL+).



staff and community informants in their communities. As yet, almost no economic empowerment changes were considered widespread by the community informants, apart from more new businesses for women in Kailali.

Table 8: Women’s Economic Empowerment Changes Attributed to TAL, by District

	Dang Individual Women Informants (n=13)	Dang- Focus Groups (n=9)	Kailali – Individual Women Informants (n=3)	Kailali - Focus Groups (n=10)	Bardiya - Individual Women Informants (n=7)	Bardiya – Focus Groups (n=11)
More paid work	0/13 (Y)	0/9	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	0/7 (N)	0/11 (N)
More women’s businesses – new	0/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	10/10 (Y+)	1/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More women’s businesses – expanded	1/13 (Y)	1/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	0/7 (N)	11/11 (Y)
More material resources from husband	8/13 (Y)	8/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	3/7 (Y+, Y)	9/11 (Y)
More access – land/property	0/13 (N)	0/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	0/7 (N)	0/11 (N)
More access – technology	4/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	1/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	3/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More access – credit	7/13 (Y & Y+)	9/9 (Y)	2/3 (Y)	0/10 (N)	2/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More access – market channels	1/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	0/7 (N)	11/11 (Y)
More travel outside	5/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	1/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y+)	4/7 (Y)	9/11 (Y)
More household food security	2/13 (both Y and Y+ answers)	0/9 (Y)	1/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	1/7 (Y)	0/11 (N)
More adoption of farm conservation practices	1/13 (Y+)	0/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	9/10 (Y)	1/7 (Y)	0/11 (N)
Total # Types of Economic Empowerment Observed	8	7	4	5	7	7

[Coding: No (N); Yes (Y); Yes but not TAL alone (Y+)] [Cell numbers are **highlighted** when 50+% of informants agreed]



Table 9. Observations about the Extent of TAL’s Economic Empowerment Impacts on Women, by District

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	All Areas	Dang	Kailali	Bardiya
	Staff Group Observation	Client Focus Group Observations	Client Focus Groups Observations	Client Focus Group Observations
More paid work	< 1/3 women	Not Observed	Not observed	Not observed
More women’s businesses – new	< 1/3 women	Observed	Widespread	Observed
More women’s businesses – expanded	< 1/3 women	Observed but not common	Not observed	Observed
More material resources from husband	< 1/3 women	Observed	Not observed	Observed
More access – land/property	< 1/3 women	Not Observed	Not observed	Not observed
More access – technology	< 1/3 women	Observed	Observed	Observed
More access – credit	1/3 - 2/3 women	Observed	Not observed	Observed
More access – market channels	>2/3 women	Observed	Not observed	Observed
More travel outside	1/3 - 2/3 women	Observed	Observed (TAL+)	Observed
More household food security	1/3 - 2/3 women	Not observed	Observed	Not observed
More adoption of farm conservation practices	<1/3 women	Not observed	Observed	Not observed
Types of Economic Empowerment Observed	11	7	5	7

[Note: **Highlighted** rows indicate those empowerment aspects observed in all three areas.]

5d. Comparison of Women’s Social Empowerment from TAL by Study Area

Table 10 summarizes the types of social empowerment changes experienced by women in the three study areas and attributed to TAL. The two types of informants were in fairly close agreement about the types of social empowerment resulting from TAL in Dang and Bardiya areas; however, there was a greater discrepancy in the perceptions of individual and focus group informants in Kailali. As with economic empowerment, more types of social empowerment were present in Dang and Bardiya than in Kailali.



Across the three areas, the most common types of women’s social empowerment observed by community informants were **more family health care knowledge, more knowledge about conservation and well-being linkages, more training participation and more math skills**. The first two types of social empowerment changes, for peer educators and those who attended their classes, can be directly tied to the peer education training offered under the TAL PHE activities. The basic training, including topics as diverse as anti-poaching, health, public health, reproductive health, family planning, environment, and savings and credit. Through TAL, local women, their husbands, families and the broader community became more accustomed to the idea of women participating in training on a variety of PHE and economic topics. Those who became peer educators and those who participated in TAL’s forest governance training reported improved math skills from the quantitative reporting requirements associated with their duties. In an area with few employment opportunities for women, particularly work besides manual labor, TAL has provided a rare opportunity for some women to gain job-related skills and increase their status within their families and communities.

Table 11 shows the differences in the extent of types of social empowerment which resulted from TAL in the study areas. Both TAL staff and Bardiya clients agreed that all 13 types of social empowerment could be observed in their communities as a result of TAL. However, for clients in Dang and Kailali, there were fewer observed social empowerment outcomes within communities (i.e., ten types in Dang and only five types in Kailali). In communities across the three areas, the shared social empowerment outcomes were **more control over pregnancy timing decisions, more family health care knowledge, more knowledge about conservation and well-being linkages, more training participation (TAL+ in Dang) and more math skills**. However, none of these social empowerment changes were considered widespread yet by the community informants.

Table 10: Women’s Social Empowerment Changes Attributed to TAL, by District

	Dang Individual Women Informants	Dang Focus Groups	Kailali Individual Women Informants	Kailali Focus Groups	Bardiya Individual Women Informants	Bardiya Focus Groups
More husband respect & moral support	3/13 (Y, Y+)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	6/7 (Y, Y+)	11/11 (Y)
More help from outside household	12/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	1/3 (Y+)	0/10 (N)	5/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More knowledge of self-improvement resources	4/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	6/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More control over PG timing decisions	2/13 (Y)	1/9 (Y)	1/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	2/7 (Y)	9/11 (Y)
More power in HH decision-making	1/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	1/3 (Y+)	0/10 (N)	3/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)



More access to contraceptives	0/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	1/3 (Y)	0/10 (N)	0/7 (N)	11/11 (Y)
More family health care knowledge	11/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	1/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	7/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More conservation and well-being linkages knowledge	13/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	2/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	7/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
Lower rates of domestic violence	8/13 (Y+)	0/9 (N)	1/3 (Y)	0/10 (N)	0/7 (N)	2/11 (Y)
More training participation	13/13 (Y, Y+)	9/9 (Y, Y+)	1/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	7/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More free time	10/13 (Y)	1/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	3/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More literacy skills	0/13 (N)	1/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	5/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More math skills	10/13 (Y)	1/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	10/10 (Y)	1/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
Total # Types of Social Empowerment Observed	11	10	8	5	11	13

[Coding: No (N); Yes (Y); Yes due to TAL and other factors (Y+)] [Cell numbers are **highlighted** when 50+% of informants agreed]

Table 11. Observations about the Extent of TAL's Social Empowerment Impacts on Women, by District

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT	All Areas Staff Focus Group Observations	Dang Client Focus Group Observations	Kailali Client Focus Groups Observations	Bardiya Client Focus Group Observations
More husband respect & moral support	1/3 – 2/3 women (TAL+)	Observed	Not observed	Observed
More help from outside household	1/3 – 2/3 women (TAL+)	Observed	Not observed	Observed
More knowledge of self-improvement resources	< 1/3 women	Observed	Not observed	Observed
More control over pregnancy timing decisions	< 1/3 women	Observed but not common	Observed	Observed



More power in household decision-making	< 1/3 women	Not observed	Not observed	Observed
More access to contraceptives	1/3 – 2/3 women	Not observed	Not observed	Observed
More family health care knowledge	1/3 – 2/3 women	Observed	Observed	Observed
More conservation and well-being linkages knowledge	1/3 – 2/3 women	Observed	Observed	Observed
Lower rates of domestic violence	< 1/3 women	Not observed	Not observed	Observed but not common
More training participation	1/3 – 2/3 women	Observed (TAL+)	Observed	Observed
More free time	< 1/3 women	Observed but not common	Not observed	Observed
More literacy skills	< 1/3 women	Observed but not common	Not observed	Observed
More math skills	< 1/3 women	Observed but not common	Observed	Observed
Types of Social Empowerment Observed	13	10	5	13

[Note: **Highlighted** rows indicate those empowerment aspects observed in all three areas.]

5e. Comparison of Women’s Political Empowerment from TAL by Study Area

Table 12 summarizes the types of political empowerment changes experienced by women in the three study areas and attributed to TAL. The two types of informants were in fairly close agreement about the types of political empowerment resulting from TAL in Kailali and Baridya areas; however, there was a greater discrepancy in the perceptions of individual and focus group informants in Dang. There were fewer types of political empowerment in Kailali than in Dang and Bardiya, which was consistent with the economic and social empowerment results.

Across the three areas, the most common types of women’s political empowerment observed by community informants were **more confidence talking to groups, more negotiation skills and more elected leadership roles in CFUGs**. Both confidence talking and negotiation skills were clear outcomes for the women involved in the peer educator trainings. For those who did not go through the peer educator training, these new skills were tied to other TAL training or participation in TAL study tours or generalized TAL support for women’s involvement in the CFCCs and CFUG leadership. Especially for the peer educators who were interviewed, they felt that they had changed in their own eyes, as well as changed in the eyes of their families and communities. The client informants tied TAL support to



women’s increased roles in elected⁵⁸ leadership roles in CFUGs because TAL staff verbally supported gender equality, included a gender module in the peer educator training and demonstrated support for women’s abilities by selecting equal numbers of men and women as peer educators.

Table 13 presents the differences in the extent of types of political empowerment which resulted from TAL in the study areas. Across the three areas, informants observed three political empowerment outcomes in their communities: **more confidence talking to groups, more negotiation skills and more elected leadership roles in CFUGs.** For women’s political empowerment (Table 10), there were the greatest discrepancies between the observations of TAL staff and the community client informants and also the greatest discrepancies across the study areas for the number of types of political empowerment. For staff, 13 of the 14 types of women’s political empowerment were resulting in communities from TAL but only 10 types in Bardiya, seven in Dang and three in Kailali. Bardiya was the only community with TAL’s presence during the last election and it was the only community where clients reported positive outcomes for women in the areas of more participation in voting in local or national elections and more representation in local elected office. However, as with economic and social empowerment, none of the political empowerment changes were considered widespread yet by the community informants.

Table 12: Women’s Political Empowerment Changes Attributed to TAL, by District

	Dang Individual Women Informants (Personal Changes)	Dang Focus Groups (Changes for Other Women)	Kailali Individual Women Informants (Personal Changes)	Kailali Focus Groups (Changes for Other Women)	Bardiya Individual Women Informants (Personal Changes)	Bardiya Focus Groups (Changes for Other Women)
More women’s legal rights knowledge	9/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	5/7 (Y, Y+)	0/11 (N)
More family support for engaging in community decision-making	10/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	3/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More community support for engaging in community decision-making	13/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	6/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More confidence talking to groups	13/13 (Y, Y+)	9/9 (Y)	1/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	7/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)

⁵⁸In terms of translation, the informants and local interpreter more commonly used the Nepali word for “nominated” to describe the CFUG process for selecting leaders.



More participation in voting in local or national elections	0/13 (N)	0/9 (N)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	2/7 (Y)	9/11 (Y)
More representation in local elected office	1/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	1/3 (Y)	0/10 (N)	2/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More negotiation skills	11/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	2/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	6/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More elected leadership roles in CFUGs	10/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y, Y+)	0/3 (N)	10/10 (Y)	3/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More organizing of community initiatives	9/13 (Y)	1/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	1/7 (Y)	9/11 (Y)
More participation in CBOs	2/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	2/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More participation in community NRM or conservation planning activities	2/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	4/7 (Y)	0/11 (N)
More participation in patrolling activities for conservation areas	2/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	1/3 (Y)	0/10 (N)	3/7 (Y)	2/11 (Y)
More participation in reporting of illegal or unsustainable resource use	1/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	1/7 (Y)	0/11 (N)
Total # Types of Political Empowerment Observed	12	7	4	3	13	10

[Coding: No (N); Yes (Y); Yes but not just TAL (Y+)] [Cell numbers are **highlighted** when 50+% of informants agreed]



Table 13. Observations about the Extent of TAL’s Political Empowerment Impacts on Women, by District

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT	All Areas - Staff Focus Group Observations	Dang - Client Focus Group Observations	Kailali Client Focus Groups Observations	Bardiya Client Focus Group Observations
More women’s legal rights knowledge	< 1/3 women	Observed	Not observed	Not observed
More family support for engaging in community decision-making	1/3 – 2/3 women	Observed	Not observed	Observed
More community support for engaging in community decision-making	1/3 – 2/3 women	Observed	Not observed	Observed
More confidence talking to groups	< 1/3 women	Observed	Observed	Observed
More participation in voting in local or national elections	>2/3 women (Bardiya only)	Not observed	Not observed	Observed
More representation in local elected office	Not for Nepal in past 10 yrs.	Not observed	Not observed	Observed
More negotiation skills	< 1/3 women	Observed	Observed	Observed
More elected leadership roles in CFUGs	1/3-2/3 women (TAL +)	Observed (TAL+)	Observed	Observed
More organizing of community initiatives	< 1/3 women	Observed but not common	Not observed	Observed
More participation in CBOs	< 1/3 women	Not observed	Not observed	Observed
More participation in community NRM or conservation planning activities	1/3-2/3 women	Not observed	Not observed	Not observed
More participation in patrolling activities for conservation areas	< 1/3 women	Not observed	Not observed	Observed but not common
More participation in reporting of illegal or unsustainable resource use	< 1/3 women	Not observed	Not observed	Not observed
Types of Political Empowerment	13	7	3	10



[Note: **Highlighted** rows indicate those empowerment aspects observed in all three areas.]

5f. Summary of TAL’s Impact on Women’s Empowerment

In summary, community informants felt that TAL had a positive overall effect on women’s empowerment but this impact was part of a larger social process of change related to social equity and gender equity. While there were many negative impacts of the Maoist conflict, many of our informants said that this movement had broadly changed attitudes about social equity and the rights of women, as well as ethnic and caste minorities. Women were involved as both combatants and leaders in the Maoist movement. The CFUGs did not escape the attention of the Maoist combatants who came to the Terai and remained one of the few social institutions that was allowed to function, albeit in a limited manner (i.e., annual meetings were prohibited for many CFUGs). They insisted that the CFUG leadership include those who were formerly disadvantaged and that CFUG revenues be distributed to the poorer segments of communities. For example, in Bardiya, our informants noted that before the Maoists, all of the communities were led by richer men and women but since the end of the conflict, poor men and women can lead the CFUGs.

For all three study areas, Table 14 summarizes the observed empowerment results for communities. In the Terai, the data suggest that PHE projects more often lead to diverse forms of social empowerment than types of economic and political empowerment and that the types of social empowerment impacts increase over time. The data regarding economic and political empowerment are less conclusive. The literature suggests that these outcomes depend both on whether projects use strategies directly intended to achieve them (e.g., livelihood or leadership training for women) and are also influenced by endogenous social factors (e.g., composition of communities and degree of traditionalism).

Table 14. Summary of TAL Empowerment Results Observed, by Informant Group and District

	Staff Group	Dang Client Focus Groups	Kailali Client Focus Groups	Bardiya Client Focus Groups
Total # Types of Economic Empowerment Observed (Maximum=11)	11	7	5	7
Total # Types of Social Empowerment Observed (Maximum=11)	11	10	5	13
Total # Types of Political Empowerment Observed (Maximum=13)	12	7	3	10



5g. TAL's Impacts on Women's Involvement in Conservation Activities

What constitutes involvement in conservation activities? For the agricultural communities of the Terai, these activities could refer to household-level farming changes (e.g., soil and water conservation practices such as terracing and tree planting or stall-fed cattle) or involvement in CFUG governance or resource management activities. Our informants reported the following changes (Table 15):

- In all three areas, women were reported to be more familiar with conservation and well-being linkages as a result of TAL PHE activities.
- In all three areas, the TAL suite of activities played a role in expanding important governance-related skills for women (i.e., confidence talking to groups and more negotiation skills), including CFUG leadership and membership duties. Increased confidence has also encouraged women to participate more in CFUGs. Increased literacy has contributed to their confidence but is not viewed as a necessary prerequisite to serving as a CFUG officer.
- Women were reported to be more involved in CFUGs in elected leadership roles but other social changes were seen as primary and TAL played only a contributory role. In the Bardiya area, women were more ready to take leadership roles because they had become less shy, less embarrassed about their illiteracy and also gained the ability to sign their names. Government policy has also helped to promote women's participation in CFUG leadership. Since 1988, the Government of Nepal has made women's representation on CFUG committees compulsory at a level of 33 percent and this rule has helped to increase women's representation in some, but not all, CFUGs (Khanal 2007). At first, women only served in the less powerful officer positions of vice-chair and secretary but increasingly they are being nominated as chair and treasurer with family, community and TAL support.
- Our informants reported that since the end of the Maoist conflict, there are now an increasing percentage of women members and women's participation at general meetings. This trend was attributed to greater interest on the part of women and also changing attitudes of men with respect to women's participation. In areas such as Kailali where many men have migrated to India or Nepali cities, women have increased their involvement in CFUG membership and leadership. Women seem more likely to get involved with CFUG meetings when they do not have to travel far; however, as CFUGs change and start to include members from multiple villages, as in the Kailali area, it may become more difficult for women to travel greater distances outside of their communities to attend meetings due to social strictures and/or lack of transport.
- Some CFUG and CFCC related policy changes help to increase women's participation and roles. For example, individuals are now allowed to be a

Box 4. The Trend of All-Women CFUGs

As of 2007, there were about 800 CFUGs in Nepal which were exclusively managed by women (Khanal 2007). For community activities involving money, women are being increasingly seen as more honest than men. In response to situations in which men leaders were perceived as being corrupt, women members have broken away to form all-women CFUGs. In other situations, mixed-sex CFUGs have elevated seated women officers to more responsible positions. In other situations, women have formed their own CFUGs because the male CFUG leadership provides no opportunities for women's leadership. Our case study informants noted that there are some CFUGs with all women officers in which men are still present as behind-the-scenes as "advisors" in all-women CFUGs.



member of more than one CFUG. Many CFUGs still have rules related to one member and one vote per households (e.g., as in Kailali) but other areas such as Bardiya report that there are now some CFUGs which are changing their rules when they update their five-year action plans and are allowing both a man and a woman from a single household to participate as CFUG members and voters, as per a 2009 Government of Nepal policy change.

- TAL's approach made a difference in encouraging women's membership and participation. TAL made women's involvement compulsory for the Dang CFCC. Informants in that area report that over the past two to four years, women are speaking up more and their ideas and priorities are more often incorporated into CFUG Action Plans (Dang). These results are similar to those found for CFUG activities in the mid-Hills. In her 2004 case study of the roles of women in decision-making processes in four CFUGs in the mid-Hills, including two all-women CFUGs, Lamichhane found that women's involvement could be more strongly influenced by CFUG practices than by existing norms about gender relations.⁵⁹ These practices included good communication, motivation, direct extension services to women, inclusion in training/ workshops and income-generating activities, frequent meetings, and provision of opportunities and support by males. Confidence was a stronger barrier for women than their level of literacy. Lamichhane's work in the mid-Hills found that there was lower participation of women in the CFUGs located in homogenous Brahmin areas. Illiteracy was not a barrier if a woman had sufficient confidence to speak up in community meetings. She found that the CFUGs, and projects working with them, had more success in reaching women when they used short, periodic and localized trainings and workshops.
- With respect to women's direct involvement in other conservation activities, most women in the three study areas had not yet adopted on-farm conservation practices, expanded their participation in community planning for natural resource management/ conservation, patrolling conservation areas or reporting of illegal or unsustainable resource use. In Kailali, informants reported that male CFUG members, compared to women members,, were more frequently involved in early activities to get the CFUGs registered for handover and digging of trenches as wildlife barriers. Plantation tree cutting in Kailali was generally done by both men and women members. Older men in the Bardiya area tended to be more involved in the more environmentally focused conservation activities of TAL than women.
- If women are more involved in CFUGs, one might expect them to also become more involved in organizing other community initiatives. To some extent, this outcome was reported to be happening in Dang and Bardiya, but not yet in Kailali. The level of danger associated with community organizing was higher in some areas than in others so this may explain why Kailali women were less likely to initiate community development activities.
- Because of gender relations in the Terai, women's participation in community decision-making would not be possible without increasing household and community support for their participation. Informants in all three communities reported that many of them already were experiencing this expanded support due to other social changes, following the Maoist conflict, but they believe that

⁵⁹ Lamichhane, D. 2004. Decision Making Role of Women in Community Forestry (A Case Study from Syangja District). M.A. Thesis, Tribhuvan University, Tri-Chandra Multiple Campus, Nepal.



TAL played a catalytic role for increased support through its gender-inclusive approach to community meetings, training and other services. Spousal, family and community support for women has also increased women’s confidence and time to engage in CFUG conservation activities. Women are feeling more respect at home, with husbands and in-laws listening more, increasing their contributions to domestic duties (i.e., cooking, cleaning, and laundry) or community tasks associated with leadership. In the case of the Tharu and Yadav women, spouses, in-laws and the community have become more supportive of women’s ability to move outside their homes and engage in community activities. In the case of the TAL PHE Peer Educators (Adult and Youth), their training, knowledge, enhanced communication, negotiation and teaching experience have boosted their confidence but it is not clear if their CFUG involvement has increased or appreciably changed in quality or effectiveness.

Table 15. Empowerment Changes Related to Women’s Conservation Involvement, by District

	Dang	Dang	Kailali	Kailali	Bardiya	Bardiya
	Individual Women Informants	Focus Groups	Individual Women Informants	Focus Groups	Individual Women Informants	Focus Groups
More adoption of farm conservation practices	1/13 (Y+)	0/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	9/10 (Y)	1/7 (Y)	0/11 (N)
More conservation and well-being linkages knowledge	13/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	2/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	7/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More family support for engaging in community decision-making	10/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	3/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More community support for engaging in community decision-making	13/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	6/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More confidence talking to groups	13/13 (Y, Y+)	9/9 (Y)	1/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	7/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More negotiation skills	11/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y)	2/3 (Y)	10/10 (Y)	6/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More elected leadership roles in CFUGs	10/13 (Y)	9/9 (Y, Y+)	0/3 (N)	10/10 (Y)	3/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)



More organizing of community initiatives	9/13 (Y)	1/9 (Y)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	1/7 (Y)	9/11 (Y)
More participation in CBOs	2/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	2/7 (Y)	11/11 (Y)
More participation in community NRM or conservation planning activities	2/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	4/7 (Y)	0/11 (N)
More participation in patrolling activities for conservation areas	2/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	1/3 (Y)	0/10 (N)	3/7 (Y)	2/11 (Y)
More participation in reporting of illegal/unsustainable resource use	1/13 (Y)	0/9 (N)	0/3 (N)	0/10 (N)	1/7 (Y)	0/11 (N)

5h. Summary of TAL PHE Impacts by Study Area

Bardiya District

The Bardiya CFUGs appear to be in a process of social change that is much larger than TAL. Informants noted that almost all CFUGs in their areas now have more active women members than men members; leadership tends to be fairly equally divided between men and women, except in those communities with many male out-migrants. There seems to be much greater variety in the representation of previously underrepresented Dalits and ethnic groups, including on the Executive Committees. The study informants spoke of TAL in the context of broader social trends, which are widely discussed in recent social science literature for Nepal. Many of our informants indicated that while TAL has been supportive of these changes and has helped to speed up the rate of change, they felt that there were other larger social forces which have had had positive impacts on Tharus, Dalits and gender relations over the past ten to twelve years. Before and during the period of TAL support, the women informants reported that their husbands and families were more respectful and supportive, including helping with domestic duties, and moving to a model of joint household decision-making about purchases, land use and sales, schooling and pregnancy timing. For example, a mixed-sex focus group discussed a community where more confident women had banded together to pressure men to reduce their drinking and violence toward their wives. The informants appreciated that TAL's efforts to make women's participation compulsory in TAL-supported activities and the inclusion of issues about gender relations in the peer education curriculum.

Bardiya PHE communities had the longest exposure to TAL-PHE activities and the data, summarized in Table 14 above, suggest that Bardiya had higher women's social and political empowerment results than



the other two districts.⁶⁰ Technology, training and study tours may be key factors contributing to greater empowerment in Bardiya District. For example, the informant sample in Bardiya included more beneficiaries of technologies (i.e., improved cookstoves, biogas, solar panels, water pumps, arsenic filters) and more individuals who had received multiple technologies than in the other two districts. Considerable time savings can accrue from biogas units, improved cookstoves and water pumps. For example, with biogas or a better cookstove, women saved fuelwood collection time which can be as much as eight hours a day, depending on the household size.⁶¹ Women sometimes used newly available time on community affairs, including CFUG duties. In addition to technologies, most of the informants viewed training as a major benefit which had contributed to different types of empowerment. They most valued literacy and livelihood training, particularly activities suitable to an area prone to flooding.

The Bardiya informants mentioned numerous positive benefits for the TAL PHE peer educator trainings and peer education classes. The female TAL peer educators reported significant social and political empowerment changes since their TAL training and teaching experiences. Their husbands and parents-in-law had become much more encouraging of the women's involvement in peer education and other community initiatives and they were seeing the value of sending daughters to school and training. There was less familial and community shaming of women for their illiteracy. While changes in gender relations were already underway in Bardiya communities, our informants felt that TAL's peer education had helped speed up change, particularly through the discussions between men and women from the gender module of the peer education curriculum and the way that TAL consistently encouraged women's equal participation in project activities.

The Bardiya community informants also felt that TAL has contributed to other community-wide changes. These impacts included more united and organized communities, increased conservation knowledge, and increased conservation activities related to tree planting and protection in the community forests. Some informants reported that women in their communities are increasingly involved in anti-poaching patrols and reporting, particularly when many men have migrated for employment. Informants mentioned that women have even greater motivation than men to become involved in the CFUGs and the CFCC since women have the primary responsibility for obtaining fuelwood and the CFUGs control access to fuelwood at the local level. The informants believe that TAL has played a role in helping to encourage the CFCC to include more women in the management of the savings and credit cooperative.

Box 5. Pabitra's Story (Name Changed)

Pulled from school after Grade 5 and married at 15, Pabitra had two daughters and several sons before taking on community roles. She has been a FCHV for more than ten years. Despite her own lack of education and low level of literacy, Pabitra is now President of a VDC Paralegal Committee and the vice-chair of a CFUG. Through her FCHV work, she heard of TAL's PHE activities and attended several trainings. She recently installed biogas in her home and purchased an improved cookstove. She has gone on a TAL PHE study tour and learned about vegetable farming from TAL. Her husband now gives her more respect and encouragement, including doing cooking for the household when she is busy with community work. She has been motivated to seek assistance from other projects, including goat farming help from UNICEF. She is grateful to TAL for helping her gain more confidence talking and more negotiation skills and she has directly applied these roles while serving as a CFUG leader. Committed to creating opportunities for her daughters that she was denied, she has one daughter who is now working on her Master's Degree.

⁶⁰ Without community visits to the different communities represented by the CFCC, it was not possible to determine the proportion of women in each CFCC community experiencing different empowerment outcomes.

⁶¹ Informants said that they typically went on three to four collection trips per day for fuelwood and each roundtrip was one to two hours long.



With respect to conservation impacts from women's empowerment, the Bardiya informants said that the increased dialogue about PHE connections had led some households to make the connections between family size and land needs and understand that reducing pressure on existing land would help to reduce land degradation.

Dang District

The informants in Dang District pointed to the same broader changes in gender and social relations as were mentioned in Bardiya District. They pointed to decreasing constraints to women's mobility outside the home and community. Not only were more husbands and parents-in-law allowing the women to be involved in community meetings and trainings, but families were actively providing support to the women by helping more with household domestic duties. Many families are now enthusiastic about sending their unmarried daughters for different types of training being offered by TAL or other projects. Dang informants said that TAL, as well as other earlier development programs (i.e., UNDP, UNICEF), have played a supportive role with respect to the gender equity changes and social justice reforms for minority groups and lower castes (i.e., Tharu, Yadav) resulting from Nepal's transition to democracy in the early 1990s and the influence of the Maoist conflict (1996-2006).

Table 14 above indicates that the pattern of women's empowerment in Dang was similar to Bardiya, with the highest number of empowerment changes under Social Empowerment and lower numbers of changes for Economic and Political Empowerment. However, Dang had fewer empowerment changes were observed for Social and Political Empowerment than in Bardiya. TAL had only been present in Dang for about one year. Dang informants attributed some positive economic outcomes for women to TAL that were not given much attention in the other districts, including increased in the number of women starting or expanding businesses (i.e., cattle, goat, buffalo and pig farming; vegetable farming; and tailoring). However, discussions with TAL staff said that TAL's direct actions in this area were quite limited with respect to livelihood training for a few women and increased access to credit via the CFCC cooperative. The Dang women informants, more so than in the other two districts, attributed higher yields to TAL, as a result of learning improved farming practices and planting new vegetable crops. More Dang informants mentioned technology subsidies from TAL: TAL had provided technology subsidies more often in Dang than in Bardiya. Again, technology can result in substantial time-savings for women which can be used for a variety of activities, including enterprises and involvement in community-based organizations such as CFUGs. One woman client who had accessed a loan for a water pump gained two hours per day when she no longer had to collect water from outside her home. She also greatly valued the sanitation-related benefits. Those informants with improved cookstoves appreciated the time-savings and health benefits from reduced indoor air pollution. TAL benefits from a poor labor market with few employment opportunities for women, particularly those with education. However, Dang women were also motivated to become peer educators because of the respect they received in the role of a teacher to the community. Apart from their expanded CFUG roles, our informants did not notice many political empowerment changes for women as a result of TAL.



Box 6. TAL CFUG Governance Training

Along with another woman, Monita (*Name changed*) has worked with 21 CFUGs over the past year on their required public hearings, auditing, and governance processes. She has been involved in giving governance advice to CFUGs and sharing her knowledge about family planning and reproductive health. Her five-day TAL training on forest governance had direct and tangible conservation outcomes. Besides learning about technical assistance options for CFUGs, she learned about conservation topics, trained on anti-poaching patrolling and reporting and improved her math skills via the public auditing training. She was one of the only women that we interviewed who mentioned being involved with the development of a CFUG forest management plan and helped another CFUG to set up anti-poaching patrols and systems. Last year, she used her cell phone camera to report illegal firewood cutting and the poacher was caught and punished. She noted that her status had increased (i.e., she was invited to a ward level meeting for the first time) and she had much more confidence in her public speaking and negotiation skills.

As was true for all three areas, women in Dang District hold the primary responsibility for fuel wood and fodder collection, according to local gender norms. The Dang informants felt that the CFUG actions plans were more often addressing women's concerns and perspectives about these two forest products. In Dang, there has been an increase in women's interest in CFUG activities and benefits because women now see CFUGs as opportunities to be heard, expand their knowledge about their rights and PHE topics, expand their social networks, increase access to credit and increase their status in their households and communities. Like Bardiya District, gender relations in Dang's CFUGs (and in other community institutions) are in transition. Women's participation in CFUGs is changing and increasing; informants estimated the average percentage of women members and leaders of CFUGs is now about 60 percent. The informants noted a trend of more women and fewer men serving as CFUG leaders. The informants felt that, over the past two to four years, TAL had helped women to feel more confident. TAL had encouraged women to participate in CFUG general meetings, opened up participation opportunities and motivated CFUGs to have women in more influential roles than in the past, such as President and Treasurer. Community informants appreciated that TAL helped to enforce compulsory legal provisions for women officeholders for CFUGs. In addition, the informants said that increasing literacy rates also gave women the confidence to participate in CFUGs

but TAL had not conducted literacy training. These empowerment changes were especially significant for the Yadeb women, who are a more conservative sub-group of Tharus, who had previously been restricted to their homes. In addition to the changes noted above, women in the Dang CFUGs are engaged in anti-poaching teams and reporting activities but this is not a uniform pattern. The forest governance training appeared to provide very positive opportunities for women to learn the "rules of the game," job-related skills, increase their conservation knowledge and community status but there was only one woman informant who had been involved in this training. Other conservation benefits mentioned included a more united community attitude against poaching.

In Dang, it was quite clear that the women experiencing the most empowerment changes were the PHE peer educators who already may have been more progressive than the average woman. For example, in contrast to other women interviewed, all five of the interviewed peer educators were already engaged in conservation activities (i.e., fencing, poaching patrols, preserving new trees and controlling illegal timber cutting) prior to the presence of PHE in their communities but after their exposure to PHE training, their conservation activities became more systematic.

Kailali District

The changes occurring in Kailali District, with respect to gender and social relations, were similar to the other two districts and informants generally felt that TAL and PHE activities were supportive of social



and gender equality but not the determining factor. Husbands, families and communities had become more comfortable with allowing women to take training, attend meetings, and get involved in community affairs, including the CFUGs. The Kailali informants also mentioned the gender module in the PHE peer education classes as one activity which helped to contribute to changing gender attitudes in a positive way for women. Both men and women informants noted men's increasing involvement in domestic duties, including cooking, animal care and laundry, especially as women became more involved in CFUG activities and leadership. In an area with mostly extended family households, increased domestic support from parents-in-law is also helping women become more involved in community affairs. At the community level, the Kailali informants saw increased involvement of women in decisions, committees, CFUG membership and leadership, the membership of the savings and credit cooperatives and savings groups, and conservation activities for the CFUGs.

Although both Dang and Kailali have had TAL-PHE activities underway for the same amount of time, the informants in Kailali seemed less often to attribute women's empowerment impacts to TAL. This difference was particularly true for political empowerment indicators attributed to TAL's impact (Table 14). For economic and social empowerment, Kailali women informants reported some of the same empowerment changes as were reported in Bardiya and Dang Districts. For example, the informant groups of peer educators thought that the most important empowerment change was training related to gender discrimination and the opportunity for women to learn skills and earn respect in an area with very limited opportunities for women to work. As with the other two areas, the peer educators and PHE-trained FCHVs hoped for more in the way of incentives since they were volunteers but requests included teaching materials, bicycles and meals or snacks at monthly meetings. In addition to the mothers' group involvement, savings and awareness changes regarding the importance of saving, knowledge changes from peer educator classes, Kailali women had started new businesses, gained more access to technologies such as biogas and improved cookstoves, and had the opportunity to travel via the study tour. In one area, an informant mentioned that training on agriculture and fertilizer use had helped to increase food security, which was an inconsistent result in the other communities but much-valued. A few informants in Kailali noted that women in some communities had become more united after learning about PHE issues, started mediating household disputes to help reduce domestic violence and had organized anti-liquor campaigns. Informants reported that some husbands had become more receptive to condom use for family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention. In the area around Kailali, there are communities with high rates of male out-migration to India (i.e., 35-50 percent in some communities on a seasonal or year-long basis) and the community recognized the importance of TAL's PHE education related to HIV/AIDS.

In terms of the impact of empowered women on conservation, Kailali was similar to Dang and Bardiya. Informants reported a pattern of increasing women's participation in, and influence on CFUG decision-making but TAL's impact was contributory rather than primary. Some all-women CFUGs have formed when men-dominated CFUGs did not open up to women. These new women's CFUGs sometimes have ten to twenty percent male members. Older men in some communities, who have leadership experience and may be the only men left in communities when younger men migrate, sometimes are asked to serve as advisors to the CFUGs. This pattern could indicate behind-the-scenes control or simply be a way that people show respect to their elders. Another important CFUG change noted by informants in Kailali District was the increased involvement of young people in CFUG membership and leadership. A few women informants in Kailali had gone through the TAL forest governance training to learn about the fiscal audits and hearings required for CFUGs by the Government of Nepal. These women felt significantly empowered to help CFUGs to achieve conservation outcomes. Other



conservation impacts related to women's empowerment from TAL included reduced forest cutting, more involvement in anti-poaching, and cleaner homes and communities. On their own farms, Kailali informants said that women have initiated on-farm conservation practices. For example, one woman mentioned that after she attended a training on organic fertilizer, she adopted the practice and was able to increase her yields significantly.

6. CONCLUSION

This Nepal case of the PHE activities of the WWF-Nepal TAL Project is part of the learning agenda on women's empowerment for the global Population-Health-Environment (PHE) Project. From a research perspective, the key research questions focus on how PHE activities have contributed to women's empowerment and how empowered women contribute to conservation outcomes. From an operational perspective, this case study and another planned for Kenya in August 2010 aim to pilot a new methodology, the WWF Women's Economic, Social and Political Empowerment (WWESPE) Tool, for project staff. The aim is to help conservation and/or other PHE project staff understand how their PHE (or conservation-only) projects are contributing to women's empowerment and the conservation outcomes from these efforts and learned how to enhance these women's empowerment impacts (i.e., more types of empowerment impacts and more women benefiting).

TAL PHE contributions to Women's Empowerment

- Overall, the TAL and TAL-PHE approach in Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape were helping to advance women's empowerment and their involvement in conservation in Terai project communities. There were changes in women's economic, social and political empowerment within the communities which were involved in the CFCCs that were studied in three districts. The extent and pattern of empowerment varied. The duration of the intervention increased empowerment impacts. There were not significant differences observed in the implementation model provided by WWF in the three communities. Other community-level factors likely to have an impact on women's empowerment impacts appear to be the differences in the local community implementers and their leadership, as well as the social characteristics of the communities, themselves.
- TAL's PHE implementation model had had a positive impact on women's empowerment. One successful element has been the use of adult and youth teams of men and women peer educators, who were supervised by Local Resource Persons. In addition, by directly addressing gender issues in a peer education class module, staying firm on gender equity commitments for women's meaningful involvement in local resource management/conservation institutions (i.e., CFUGs and the CFCC) and TAL activities, and modeling responsible and gender equitable selection criteria for activity participants, TAL PHE has had a positive impact on women's empowerment.
- TAL-PHE has relied on PHE volunteers, including its own peer educators, the TAL PHE Local Resource Persons (LRPs) who supervise the peer educators, and the FCHVs who work for the Ministry of Health and distribute health and family planning commodities, provide referrals and dispense some information. The TAL PHE volunteers and LRPs receive nominal stipends for classes or services provided. The peer educators and FCHVs receive training from TAL PHE. Some but not all have of the peer educators been given training materials. Other benefits of being associated with TAL and providing services include higher status in their communities and greater access to TAL goods and services. This situation is possible because there are few paid job options for women in these areas, particularly those with education. To continue to motivate these important volunteers, WWF, ADRA and other projects should continue to explore how to provide additional incentives, including



income-generating opportunities from the sale of health products, as is being done elsewhere in Nepal.

- In all three communities, those women who appeared to be receiving the most goods and services from the TAL PHE approach were the newly trained peer educators, the existing health volunteers (FCHVs), and those who served or were closely affiliated with CFCC or CFUG leadership.
- There are more types of women's social empowerment occurring in the three districts as a result of TAL and TAL-PHE economic and political empowerment changes. The most common areas of social empowerment reported were more family health care knowledge, more knowledge about conservation and well-being linkages, more training participation and more math skills. The peer education training was particularly supportive of social empowerment areas, including topics as diverse as anti-poaching, health, public health, reproductive health, family planning, environment, and savings and credit. Through TAL, local women, their husbands, families and the broader community became more accustomed to the idea of women participating in training on a variety of PHE and economic topics. Those who became peer educators and those who participated in TAL's forest governance training reported improved math skills from the quantitative reporting requirements associated with their duties. Longer exposure to TAL and TAL-PHE activities seemed to increase the types of social empowerment which were occurring.
- In terms of women's economic empowerment, it appears that TAL, writ large, has contributed to different types of positive changes for local women. Livelihood activities are part of TAL and mostly include a variety of trainings. Literacy training has not been part of TAL but plans are underway for ADRA to offer these courses to TAL clients in areas where ADRA has funding to provide these services.⁶² Both types of training are highly valued by women and are much-needed conservation incentives. Other types of TAL-related economic empowerment include women's saved time from the adoption of technology changes. While many of the women informants did think that access to credit had increased from the CFCC cooperatives or smaller Mother's Group savings clubs, the rate of borrowing for women still seems low. It was not clear if their applications were being rejected by their CFUGs and the CFCC or if women were not applying due to a lack of knowledge about credit. TAL could and should do more to directly promote women's economic empowerment.
- TAL and TAL-PHE contributed to women's political empowerment skills and were able to build on community-level social changes which had already been catalyzed by the Maoist movement's influence (e.g., weakening of the elite controlled Village Development Committees and CFUG leadership, increased representation and programs for Dalits and Janajati). More men migrated during the conflict period and gender roles changed in these households and communities. Women took on more CFUG and community leadership roles. Communities and CFUGs increasingly supported women in leadership roles since women were perceived as less corrupt than male traditional leaders. The CFUGs increased in importance during the conflict when other community institutions were restricted. Although there is not yet much spillover to other community activities and institutions, CFUGs are training grounds for women to learn leadership skills and either TAL or TAL-PHE could do more to provide leadership training for women. This could be a focused leadership training or the cultivation of leadership skills through other trainings such as the existing

⁶² This activity evolved from the gender action planning conducted in February 2010 with WWF and ADRA staff at the end of the case study field research.



forest governance training. While political empowerment did occur in the absence of leadership training for women, it is clear that this would be a useful addition to PHE peer education activities to increase the number of politically empowered women.

- The WWESPE tool triangulates data from staff, community leaders and project clients. The study results indicate that the WWF staff had a good understanding of social dynamics in their client communities but a somewhat overly optimistic opinion about their project's impacts on women's empowerment. They could refine their instincts and ground-truth their perceptions about project impacts through the periodic use of the WWESPE methodology and use the information to make operational adjustments related to empowerment of clients.
- A few caveats apply with respect to attribution of empowerment results to TAL PHE activities. The vast majority of TAL clients who were interviewed were not able to distinguish between the TAL project identity and the TAL-PHE activities. In this case, TAL preferences and USAID regulations meant that the PHE activities were not distinctly branded. Accordingly, it was not possible to definitively attribute women's empowerment outcomes to activities to PHE, pre-existing health services or TAL conservation activities. If PHE practitioners aim to compare women's empowerment outcomes from PHE-integrated implementation models versus PH-only or conservation-only models, then a quasi-experimental design would be needed to control for community differences and service differences and branding would be needed to ensure proper attribution of outcomes by clients. Furthermore, women's empowerment changes are always taking place within a larger social context (e.g., democratization, conflict and post-conflict settings, increased education, legal reforms/policy changes, social norms). In the case of TAL, the Terai and Nepal, this factor was frequently mentioned by the community informants. Accordingly, the WWESPE methodology should be adapted to include questions for staff, local leaders and clients about the nature of these changes and a literature review would also help to enrich the research results.

Impacts of Empowered Women on Conservation Outcomes

- With respect to TAL's impact on conservation through women's empowerment, TAL has been able to increase women's involvement in resource management and conservation activities, including CFUGS, CFCC, anti-poaching patrols, forest management, conservation study tours, and the forest governance courses.
- The most significant changes in women's behaviors related to conservation outcomes involved the CFUGs and community forest lands. In terms of knowledge and attitudes, women in all three areas were reported to be more familiar with conservation and well-being linkages as a result of TAL PHE activities. In all three areas, the TAL suite of activities played a role in expanding important governance-related skills for women (i.e., confidence talking to groups and more negotiation skills), including CFUG leadership and membership duties. Increased confidence has also encouraged women to participate more in CFUGs. Increased literacy has contributed to their confidence but is not viewed as a necessary prerequisite to serving as a CFUG officer.
- TAL played a contributory but not primary role in women's increased involvement in CFUGs in elected leadership roles. Other broader social changes were seen as primary, including changes in government policy that made it compulsory for CFUGs to nominate women for 33 percent of the committees. Increasingly, women have been nominated for the chair and treasurer positions, with support from their families, communities and TAL. Some CFUG and CFCC related policy changes help to increase women's participation and roles. For example, individuals are now allowed to be a



member of more than one CFUG. Since the end of the Maoist conflict, there are now an increasing percentage of women members and women's participation at general meetings.

- TAL's approach made a difference in encouraging women's membership and participation. TAL made women's involvement compulsory for the Dang CFCC. Informants in that area report that over the past two to four years, women are speaking up more and their ideas and priorities are more often incorporated into CFUG Action Plans (Dang).
- With respect to women's direct involvement in other conservation activities, most women in the three study areas had not yet adopted on-farm conservation practices, expanded their participation in community planning for natural resource management/ conservation, patrolling conservation areas or reporting of illegal or unsustainable resource use.
- Although the women who appeared to be receiving the most goods and services from the TAL PHE approach (i.e., the newly trained peer educators, the health volunteers (FCHVs) with the Ministry of Health, and those who served or were closely affiliated with CFCC or CFUG leadership), the sample and the methodology did not allow a determination of whether or not the women receiving the most goods and services from TAL PHE were more involved in conservation activities (i.e., CFUG or CFCC roles) than other women not receiving TAL benefits.

Performance of the WWESPE Methodology

- The mix of training staff in gender analysis and gender action planning, meeting separately with community leaders and service providers and using a mix of interviewing techniques (groups, pairs, married couples and individuals) yielded quite useful information.
- The methodology is a rapid qualitative assessment which is based on data triangulation. It is not a substitute for in-depth community survey or other qualitative research which can tease out how empowerment takes place, what fosters or hinders it from happening, determinations of how many women in a community benefit from empowerment outcomes and the differences in conservation-related knowledge, attitude and behavior changes by empowered and non-empowered women.
- Lessons from the piloting of the methodology in Nepal include locating interviews in individual communities, spending more time in each community to allow visual inspection of impacts and easier comparison of community differences and reducing the number of communities visited in the same period of time. With more time in each community, there would not be a need to have the initial one-day workshop which brings together community teams from all three communities, including the CFCC chairmen, CFCC PHE committee chairs and some peer educators.
- To maximize the benefits of the tool, it would be helpful for PHE and conservation projects to include similar questions about empowerment in their baseline surveys, add empowerment related monitoring indicators and use the rapid methodology on a periodic basis to update the baseline and influence project management.