

# Integrated and inclusive climate change adaptation in Nepal

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PAPRIKA POLICY BRIEF

A research project funded by the French National Research Agency

May 2013

Nepal is one of the countries prone to the potential impact of climate change. Despite significant efforts at the national level (e.g. Government of Nepal – Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011) and evident people's capacities to face changes in climate patterns (e.g. Chhetri et al., 2012), number of communities remain particularly vulnerable in the mountains, exposed to erratic rainfall and landslides, in the hills, prone to landslides and flash floods and in the Terai plain threatened by riverine flooding and droughts amongst other hazards.

Overcoming the unequal power relationships amongst castes, gender and age groups has been considered as a major challenge to climate change adaptation (CCA) (e.g. Jones and Boyd, 2011; Onta and Resurreccion, 2011). Such power relations have been identified as a major driver of people's vulnerability in facing the negative effects of climate change. Means of protection are most often available locally but these are primarily accessible to male adults of those castes of higher status. Such situation does not prevent all members of all castes, including women and girls of the lowest untouchable castes, to display significant capacities in facing changes in climate patterns. Capacities refer to the set of endogenous knowledge, skills and resources people resort to in dealing with the effects of climate change.

Enhancing people's adaptation to climate change in Nepal is therefore a complicated task which involves actions from the top down, to address the unequal access to means of adaptation across castes, gender and age groups, and from the bottom up, to harness all castes' and gender and age groups' capacities. Achieving such goal requires a preliminary holistic assessment of adaptation needs and opportunities based upon both local and scientific knowledge to fully appraise the extent of both vulnerability and capacities. A close collaboration is thus needed between a large array of stakeholders from inside and outside local communities, inclusive of all castes, gender and age groups. Such collaboration must rely upon dialogue and trust amongst stakeholders, including all gender and age groups and castes of different status (Fig. 1 and 2).



Figure 1: Multi-caste, age and gender CCA activity in Bochahi, Saptari, in April 2012



Figure 1 : Participatory 3-dimensional mapping for integrating knowledge and actions in climate change adaptation

## Fostering the participation of marginalised castes, gender and age groups in CCA

Dialogue and trust are essential for all stakeholders to recognise, value and integrate marginalised castes' as well as gender and age groups' vulnerability and capacities in facing climate change. Most members of marginalised castes, gender and age groups know what their needs and resources. The issue for these groups is usually to make their vulnerability and capacities tangible and recognized by others. In that sense, it is often insufficient for CCA practitioners to only work with a particular lower caste or any other marginalised groups, for example women or children, in isolation from the larger community, including male adults and powerful castes. These marginalised groups should interact with those with power within the community or larger society otherwise CCA initiatives remain clustered and fail to address the unequal power relationships which prevent sustainable adaptation to climate change.

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The PAPRIKA project is funded by the Agence Française de la Recherche (ANR) and institutionally supported by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS).

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