

DISTRIBUTION, ACCESS AND GENDERED ROLES OF COMMON PROPERTY WATER RESOURCES IN BHOTECHAUR, NEPAL

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1. INTRODUCTION

Common Property Resources (CPR) are natural resources owned and managed collectively by a community or society rather than by individuals (OECD, 2001). Many natural resources exist in the ecosystem out of which water is one. The distribution of this resources varies both spatially and temporally. In a country like Nepal, these disparities are create by the local customs, values and norms. The access, distribution and gender role are major attributes in managing water and these are shaped by social, cultural and economic conditions of a society. Thus, this study tried to analyze the accessibility of water in terms of distribution, collection, use and understanding the gendered roles in the current socio-economic context.

2. METHODOLOGY

With an objective to understand the water management aspects in rural Nepal, the Bhotechaur village (latitude 27.80°N, longitude 85.51°E), which is located in Melamchi Municipality at Sindhupalchok District, was selected as the study area. Key person interviews, time line surveys, resource mapping, time use survey and case studies were conducted in order to facilitate qualitative and quantitative data requirements. Respondents were identified through purposive sampling technique to represent the different contexts of the society in terms of gender, caste and economic strata. Time use survey was categorized as economic and non-economic activities and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software through frequency analysis. Further, economic activities were divided into System National Counting (SNA) and Non System National Counting (Non-SNA) activities with time in a day versus frequency/number of persons.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Water Distribution and Access

Springs and streams are the common water sources in the study area. In the past, local people used perennial spring sources, which was conveyed to their settlements through a farmer-managed canal. Nowadays, the installation of pipes and taps to divert the water from these water sources has made water easily accessed to the households. It has significantly reduced their water fetching time, especially the women were found to be benefitted. Anyhow, the study found disparities in water distribution between rich and poor, upper and lower cast, influential and non-influential people. The rich upper cast and influential local people are enjoying more privileges and have been using water from the common water taps in addition to private taps. Also water

sources, accessibility and distribution are still controlled by those influential people. Though people have also approached the ward office for the construction of a reservoir tank at the water source, their requests are frequently put down by the influential local people. The disparity was also observed between upper and lower settlements, where the inhabitants of the upper settlements control the flow of water to the people of the lower settlements. During the heavy discharge period, lower settlers have to involve in maintenance works for displacements or pipeline clogging as they use temporary diversion of flow. These local people say “*there is water when they do not need, but there is no water when they need the most*”.

Gendered Roles

SNA activities included farm and livestock works whereas Non SNA included child care and domestic works. As indicated in Figure (1), it is clear that contribution of men is more during morning hours; which may be due to engagement of women in household works. According to the Figure (2), it is apparent that household works and water collection is predominantly done by women; though they are not officially addressed as the direct contributors to the SNA works.

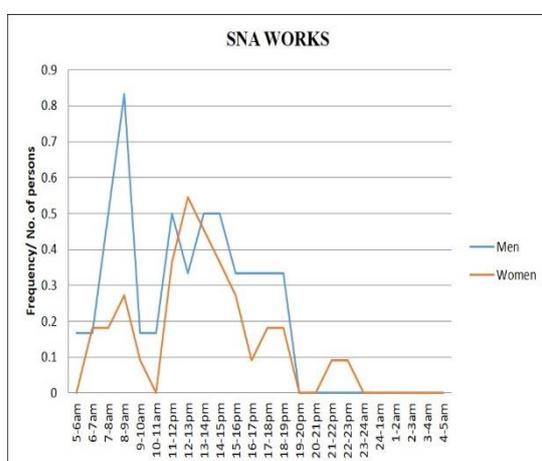


Figure 1: SNA works

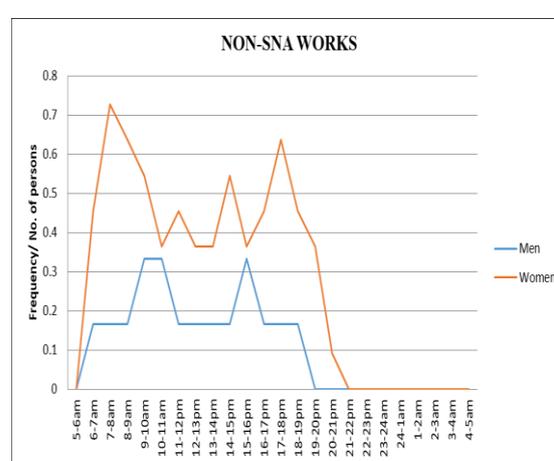


Figure 2: Non-SNA works

Water User Association (WUA) is present to look after the overall water management in the study area. WUA comprises two women as members out of seven members. WUA is there only for the namesake, the women participants are never consulted for any decision related to water management in the study area.

4. CONCLUSION

Despite plenty of water sources available, people are facing water related problems due to socially created barriers in the study area. The caste discrimination is mainly responsible for the disparity towards access and distribution. In collection and water management, there is still rampant discrimination against women. Even women were suppressed in expressing their opinion against the male dominated WUA. The people from the lower settlement are going through the tough time in water accessibility.

5. REFERENCES

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