



INITIATIVE ON
NEXUS Gains

Women professionals' barriers to lead and influence in the WEFE sectors: The case of Nepal

Buchy M, Elias M and Khadka M (2023) Invisible women: barriers for women professionals in the water, energy, food, and environment sectors in Nepal.

Front. Sustain. Food Syst. 7:1146187. doi: [10.3389/fsufs.2023.1146187](https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2023.1146187)

Methodology : Qualitative Data collected in Kathmandu in May 2022

31 women and 34 men working in WEFE sectors within Government of Nepal (GoN) at the federal level (Ministry of Forests and Environment; the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation; and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development), civil society organizations, academia and the private sector.

A workshop with 20 women professionals representing a cross-section of stakeholder groups (including some the key informant interview participants) was subsequently conducted to further examine gender dynamics in WEFE sectors.

Discrimination in public WEFE sector spaces

Behavioral biases

- Uneven expectations and standards for male and female staff
- Uneven opportunities (training, foreign travels)
- Internalized biases

Organizational bottlenecks

- Unsafe workplaces: sexual harassment unchecked
- Insufficient GESI-related resources: focal points without ToRs
- Policy gap at Ministry /donor conditionality

Constraints in the private sphere

Family expectations :

- Restricted mobility,
- Priority responsibility as carer

Social norms:

- Men/women uncomfortable to travel together
- Women being assigned office work in KTM, which limits their chance of career progression

The private and public spheres also collide

Unconscious bias

- Men and women embody the gender norms and values that shape their sense of self and others in the workplace
- Older male officers were more dismissive than younger male colleagues of the challenges women face in their workplace.

Sexual harassment and domestic violence

- A form of control over women in the public space, domestic violence controls women in the private space.

Intersectionality

- Gender and beyond .. Entangled hidden and invisible powers caste/ethnicity: Madhesis and Dalits represent less than 1% of civil servants

The fight for women to be equal human beings goes on (in Nepal and elsewhere)

- Gender and social inclusion policy exist in the sector but unevenly across the different WEFE sectors
- Other work we have done also show limited coherence within policy and between policy and practice –limited implementation of policies on the ground
- The collusion between public and private spheres underline that efforts must focus on both spheres simultaneously



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