



PHOTO CREDIT: OXFAM NEPAL

A brief overview on
Women Empowerment
Centers in the Mahakali River Basin

Emerging Women Leadership in Transboundary Water Governance

Why Women Leadership in Transboundary Water Governance?

Women living in the river basins are dependent on the rivers for a number of reasons, that includes domestic use, irrigation, and other forms of livelihood. However, women have limited control over the resources they are dependent on and are impacted by the water-induced disasters, living in a constant fear of loss of lives and properties.

With the belief that empowering these women can eventually change their lives in a positive way, creating a forum for the women where they are able to raise issues with the concerned stakeholders, demanding action, is therefore one of the major components of the TROSA project. Women need to be better informed and be involved in opportunities for transboundary water dialogues and decision

making because they are the ones impacted the most by transboundary water management issues.

When the water governance policies and practices are implemented with agreed transboundary commitments, and when there is political will and authority within governments and private sectors to meaningfully engage women in water governance, it will create an enabling environment for greater inclusion of women's voices.

When the basin communities, especially women, have increased access to, and control over, riverine water resources, it will ultimately contribute to reduce poverty and marginalization, and they can realise their basic human rights. Achieving transformation in women's roles in governance and management of water and natural resources means that the change can be sustained for future generations too.

TROSA

The Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA) is a five-year (2017-2021) regional programme jointly implemented by Oxfam and its partners¹. The programme brings together efforts to support the lives of communities (especially women) living along the Mahakali River Basin.

TROSA GOAL

Reduced poverty of river basin communities through increased access to, and control over riverine water resources.

TROSA OBJECTIVES

- Improved policies and practices of government that protect the rights of river basin communities
- Improved policies and practice of private sector and other actors that respect the rights of river basin communities to water resources
- Strengthened capacity of the river basin communities and civil societies to influence transboundary water resource management
- Amplification of women's profile and influence in dialogues and decision-making on water management and water infrastructure



WEC for women leadership in transboundary water governance

One of the objectives of TROSA is to support women leadership in decision-making processes, policy dialogues, and project-specific interventions around transboundary water governance. Women's inclusion and empowerment is a central tenant for this programme.

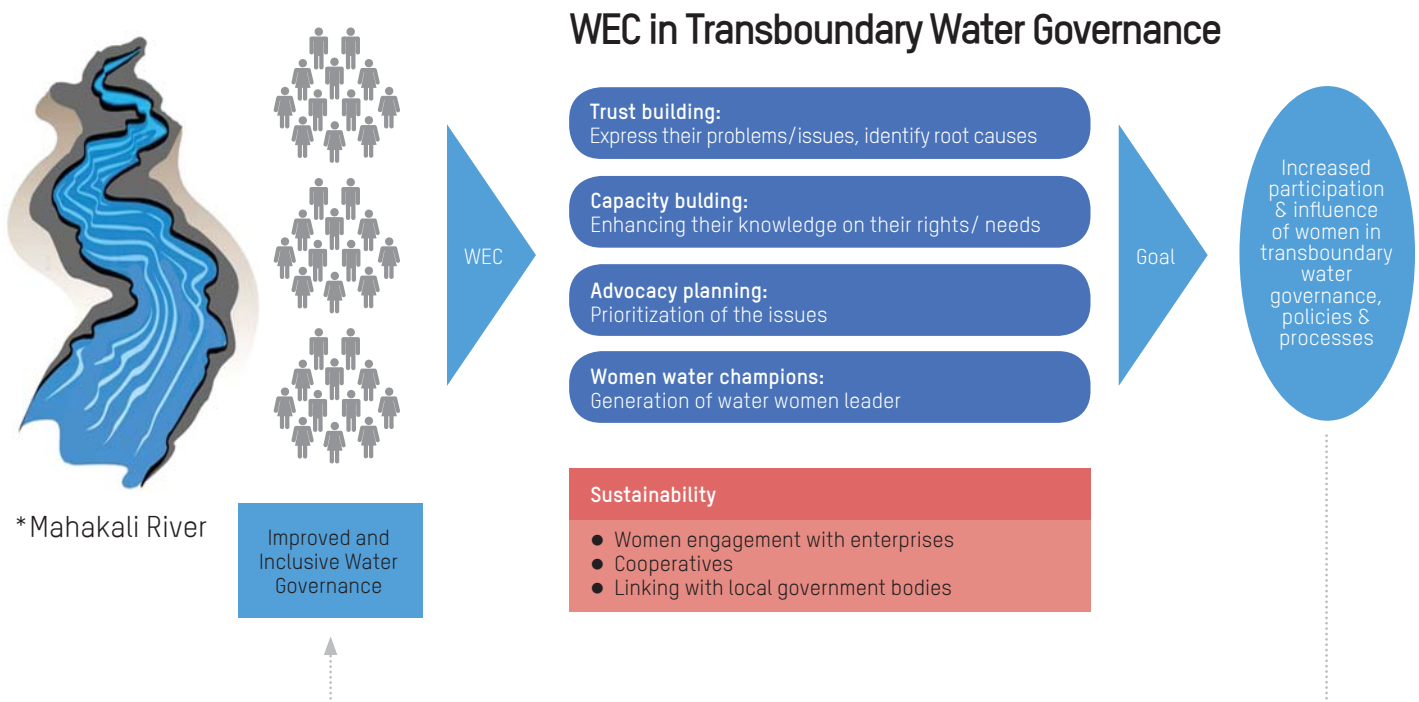
WEC (Women Empowerment Centre), also known as Community Discussion Centre), brings women and girls as well as men and boys together for up to two hours regularly to strengthen their knowledge on women's rights, gender issues, local decision-making processes, improve their advocacy and leadership skills in participatory manner.

¹Oxfam Nepal Partners for TROSA – Nepal Environment and Equity Development Society (NEEDS) in Kanchanpur, Rural Women's Development and Unity Centre (RUWDUC) in Dadeldhura, Rural Development and Environment Management Society (RUDES) in Baitadi, Sankalpa in Darchula

WECs at TROSA are formed with special focus on transboundary rivers to sensitize them about their rights and responsibilities around riverine water resources, to capacitate them in becoming leaders and involving them in transboundary water resources planning and decision making.

Each TROSA WEC has around 30-35 members, majority of women and also men members, living along river basin who depend on riverine resources for their livelihoods, have experienced transboundary issues such as floods and landslides.

The WEC meetings/classes are run by a trained social mobiliser (SM).



*Mahakali River

Improved and Inclusive Water Governance

Sustainability

- Women engagement with enterprises
- Cooperatives
- Linking with local government bodies

*Mahakali River is a transboundary river that demarcates Nepal's western border with India.

How does a WEC function?

Trust building: The WEC members will share their stories, their problems related to transboundary river and river resources, challenges in their livelihoods, gender issues, women rights and their basic needs which will make them realize that they all are on the same boat.

Capacity building: Discussions on rights of women and gender issues, local decision making processes, advocacy, leadership, transboundary rivers, water governance to strengthen their knowledge.

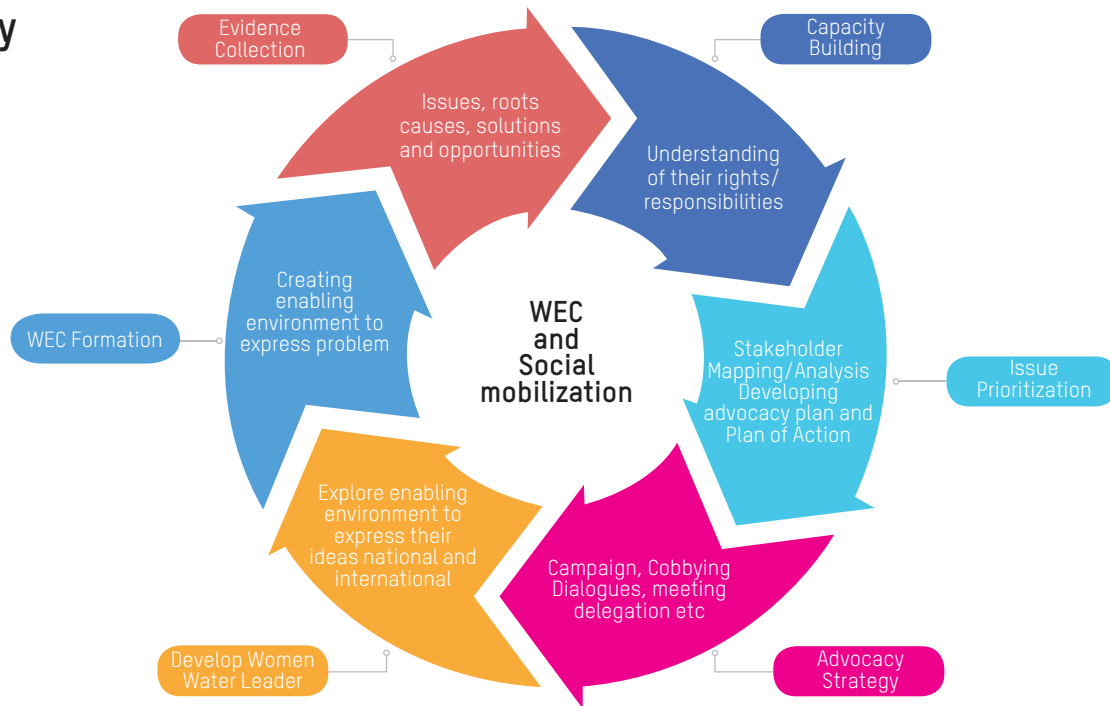
Advocacy planning: WEC members are also oriented to prepare advocacy plan and plan of actions to implement them. The discussion will mainly focus on identifying key river governance issues looking at root causes and contributing issues, identifying their key stakeholders; conducting power mapping and analysis; knowing their local services providers; and collectively exploring measures to mitigate them by raising their voices and making themselves heard in front of the concerned local government authorities.

Women water champions: As a group, they become a strong organisation and register their groups in the municipality to become a community forum recognized by the government.

They will increase their participation in and influence of transboundary water resource governance. Learning from the WEC meetings/ classes will help members to strengthen their profile and their voices to influence at all levels in dialogues and water resource decision-making processes and ultimately develop women water leaders.

Sustainability: To ensure the sustainability of WEC beyond the project phase, TROSA will support the center to engage the members with enterprises and cooperatives so that they have access to other possible alternatives for their livelihood. The project will also support the members to participate at local, national and regional level platforms where they can build linkage with the authorities.

Strategy



Key Highlights of TROSA WEC in 2017/2018

29 WECs in **4** districts



WEC meetings/classes timely conducted



17+ WECs demanded local authorities: drinking water; water for irrigation; protection from flood; protection of riverine biodiversity (Mahashir fish); river sand mining management

Expected Changes via TROSA WEC:

- River basin communities and WEC members are aware of their right to water, right to protect their culture and livelihood resources, threats to these resources, and understanding of responsibilities towards equitable management of river resources
- WEC members and communities increase their participation in water resource governance dialogues
- WEC members strengthen their voices and profile to influence at all levels in dialogues and decisions on water resource
- WEC members emerge as Water Governance Champions and have opportunity to actively engage with policy and decision makers at local, national, and regional level.

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