Women Empowerment, Livelihood and Rural Infrastructure: Achievements and Lessons on Gender Mainstreaming of Nepal’s Decentralized Rural Infrastructure Livelihood Project (DRILP)

Laxmi Prasad Subedi

This paper discusses the achievements made in enhancing the livelihoods of the rural population, in particular the poor, women, and excluded groups, while constructing road infrastructure in rural areas. The paper is based on the achievements of the ADB funded Decentralized Rural Infrastructure and Livelihood Project (DRILP) implemented in 18 hill and mountain districts of Nepal in addressing gender disparities. It discusses how the adoption in the rural infrastructure project of an innovative labour-based, environmentally-friendly and participatory (LEP) approach, with a transport plus strategy, addressed the issues of gender equality, women’s empowerment, and the creation of jobs for the rural population. It also highlights the project’s contribution to the national objectives of employment creation, poverty reduction, and economic growth. The primary focus of the project was to enhance the social and financial capital of the poor, women, dalits, and ethnic minorities, estimated to be 70% of the subproject area population. The project aimed to bring women’s overall participation up to 50% by requiring building groups to comprise at least 40% women members and mandating 33% compulsory participation of women at all levels of project institutions. The paper outlines the key achievements on women’s empowerment with an analysis of results on awareness raising, capacity and skills development, economic enhancement, and institutional evolvement. Finally, the paper ends by highlighting key elements integrated into the follow-on project of DRILP, the DRILP additional financing to further enhance the achievement of the gender equality and social inclusion goals.