

The background image shows a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a river flows through a rocky bed. A suspension bridge with colorful prayer flags hangs across the river. On the right, colorful buildings are built on a hillside. The overall scene is hazy and atmospheric.

Women in Informal Trade: A case of the Kailash Landscape

Presented by

Md Quaisar Ali & Yatika Agrawal
Research Associate
CUTS International, India

Outline

- Background
- Comparative analysis of Sub-Saharan Africa and Hindu Kush Himalayan Region
- Capacity Building Workshops (CBWs)
- Gender sensitisation
- Findings
- Conclusion

Background of the Project

- ❑ The project “Strengthening the Role of Women in the Transboundary Landscapes of the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region : Building resilience to shocks and vulnerabilities” (WE-TRADE) focuses on strengthening women’s role in trade – both in terms of access and benefits – within ICIMOD’s transboundary landscapes with particular emphasis on building their resilience to shocks and vulnerabilities.
- ❑ The major objective is to link women traders/entrepreneurs in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region through a regional network, enhancing their capacities and investment opportunities and fostering border markets in the selected landscapes.

Comparative Analysis

Women in Cross Border Trade: A Comparative study between Sub-Saharan Africa and Hindu Kush Himalayan region

A literature based comparative analysis is done to find:

- ❑ The kind of problems faced by women cross-border traders/entrepreneurs in HKH and SSA.
- ❑ The type of intervention done by the government to deal with the problems women cross-border traders/entrepreneurs.

Findings

SN	Problems	SSA region	HKH region
1	Lack of Finance	✓	✓
2	Gender-based violence and sexual harassment	✓	✓
3	Lack of trade facilitation	✓	✓
4	Poor border management and infrastructure	✓	✓
5	Corruption and insecurity	✓	✓
6	Lack of information and awareness	✓	✓

Source: Compiled by author based on various sources

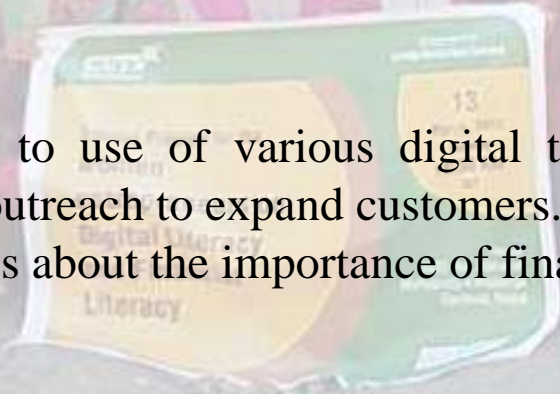
Capacity Building Workshops (CBWs) on Digital literacy and Financial literacy

In Kailash landscape, CUTS International has organised three CBWs

- ❑ Two in Dharchula, India
- ❑ One in Darchula, Nepal

Objectives

- Upskill women to use of various digital tools and digital platforms for their business promotion and outreach to expand customers.
- Create awareness about the importance of financial management and budgeting.



Key takeaways

- Almost 103 women entrepreneurs/traders benefited from the training programme.
- Women entrepreneurs/traders developed an understanding of the usage of various digital platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram for business promotion and to increase business outreach in local, national, and international markets.
- Participants developed an understanding of different tools such as remove background, google translate and how to click pictures and write product specifications.
- Participants also developed an understanding and skills of financial literacy to manage their income.
- Familiarise participants with internet and mobile banking procedures, use of Unified Payment Interface (UPI), and online frauds.

Recommendations

- One-day training programme is not sufficient to accommodate all the training modules and it is difficult for the participants to understand all the features within a short period of time.
- Training of basic skills of customs, packaging, loan schemes, and export procedures is required.
- Product-wise digital and financial training should be organised at regular intervals in collaboration with government.
- After the completion of project, continue follow-up of the learning process is required.

Gender Sensitisation Programme

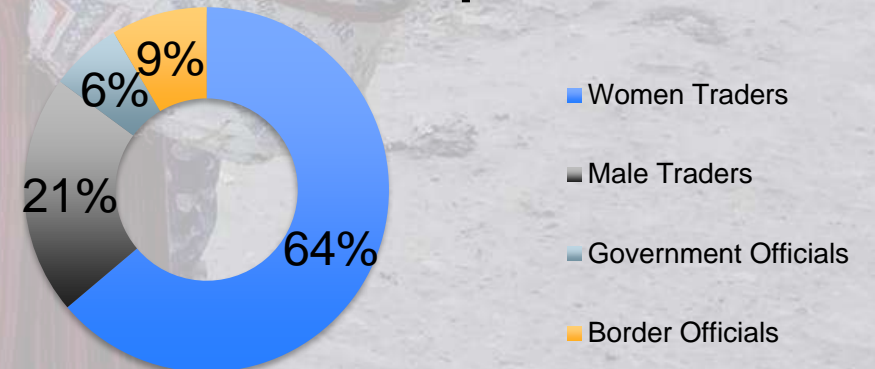
Objective

To raise the gender equality concern in cross-border trade, CUTS International has conducted gender sensitisation consultation to examine personal attitudes, beliefs, and present scenerio of different sexes at the India-Nepal border.

The gender sensitisation consultation was conducted at both sides of the bridges namely,

- Kali Bridge (Mahakali in Nepal)
- Jhualaghat Bridge
- Banbasa Bridge

Stakeholder Composition



Findings

- These bridges are used for daily movements of people, goods and services. The bridge entryway opens at 7:00 am Indian Standard Time (7:15 am Nepal Standard Time) and closes at 5:00 pm IST (5.15 pm NST)
- Primary trading goods includes forest and agricultural products such as Kretha, Tej Patta (Bay leaves), Curry Patta (Curry leaves), Mushrooms and others
- A significant proportion of cross-border traders are women, and are actively engaged in hand-weaving, loading/unloading, agriculture and allied activities. Goods traded through these bridges are either used directly for consumption or sold to street vendors for further retailing, particularly on the Nepal side.
- Appropriate checking is executed by border officials on both sides of the bridge
- All traders are permitted to carry a weight of 10 kilograms at a time, manually on head and shoulders
- Trade at Kali bridge and Banbasa bridge is vibrant in comparison with the trade at jhulaghat bridge
- No biasness in custom procedures
- No discrimination between male and female traders

Findings

- Traders are allowed to carry only one type of goods up to 10 kilograms at a time. Therefore, they have to cross a bridge many times a day, which consumes more time and energy. Additionally, the goods have to be unloaded and unpackaged twice for checking at both ends of a bridge
- Absence of women centric infrastructure
- No gender inclusive database
- Women cross-border traders have to face some gender-specific issues such as limited access to finance, access to technology and market linkages, absence of childcare facilities, inadequate toilet facilities, and other safety, security and mobility related challenges
- Social obligations and social stigma impact the decision making of women traders
- Lack of media campaigns
- Other challenges such as the absence of storage facilities and restrooms, standing in long queues, and limited information regarding policies and procedures hinder effective trade facilitation.
- Due to high transportation cost in Nepal, people find it cheaper to buy goods locally in Nepal instead of coming to Jhulaghat (India). As a result only minimum trade activities takes place in Jhulaghat

Conclusion

- The people of India and Nepal are dependent on each other in terms of daily needs
- Infrastructure developments are needed at border areas.
- Better socio-economic understanding is required among all stakeholders that women's participation in cross-border trade is vital for the sustainability of border economies along the India-Nepal border.
- While better infrastructure can enhance their mobility, there is a need for awareness among women regarding the goods that can be carried, weight restrictions, prices across borders, among others.
- To promote optimal and effective trade facilitation at border points, information dissemination through sustained campaigns, display boards in local languages, help and monitoring desks, and at-the-border grievance redressal system are crucial.
- Regular engagements between local communities and customs and other border agencies to promote gender-friendly cross-border trade practices is essential.



THANKYOU