

How to mainstream gender into national waste management policy

Case study from Nepal

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Despite women's extensive engagement within the informal sector as waste pickers, for example, working at waste transfer stations or open dumps, women were previously not recognized as stakeholders in the first place. This made it difficult in the past for the stakeholders, including the policymakers, to reflect gender aspects into national waste management policies and programmes. However, it gradually changed during the development of the draft Nepal National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025.

When developing the [Nepal National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025](#) (which has not been approved by the cabinet as of December 2024), gender-related waste management data was collected at the initial stage in Nepal as part of the project, "[Strengthening the capacity of the waste sectors in Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal by means of a circular economy concept aimed at reducing greenhouse gases \(GHGs\) and short-lived climate pollutants \(SLCPs\)](#)", funded by International Climate Initiative and implemented by UNEP-IETC (2017-2022).

The survey was carried out in 35 municipalities across 7 provinces, and all the municipalities were asked to provide information on the total number of staff members engaged with waste management with each role and position, for example. The survey was extended to cover transfer stations, landfill sites, and dump sites as well.

The result of the survey was published by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MOFAGA), the key ministry of Nepal's waste management, as [Baseline Assessment of Waste Management in Nepal](#) (MoFAGA, 2020). The assessment includes analysis of gender division of labour in the waste sector and calls for actions such as further collecting sex-disaggregated data and gender information at household, community, local government and private enterprises levels and securing budgets for mainstreaming gender in waste management.

The survey made it possible for the stakeholders, including the ministries that are key in developing the national waste management policy, to understand the gender aspects of waste management at the initial stage and further discuss how to address the issues identified in the survey during the policy development.

Further, during the development of the strategy and action plan, different methods were adopted to collect information and data on gender issues in waste management, in addition to the survey. These include:

- **Consultations with various stakeholders:** Meetings, workshops, and interviews were organized with various stakeholders, including ministries, municipalities, private sector, waste segregators and pickers, including informal workers.
- **Technical committee:** To make sure that the development of the strategy and action plan was led by the government itself, a technical committee was organized, which consisted of 11 members from the key ministries, municipal association and experts, as well as LEAD Nepal, who played a key coordination role in the process. The Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA), the focal ministry of the waste management of Nepal, chaired the committee and led the overall process. The committee was utilized as a venue to present and validate the findings from the survey and the consultations.

From this process, key issues and challenges were identified, and a strategic objective to promote social justice and equity of waste management was thus included in the draft national strategy and action plan with the following action plan:

5.1. Ensure gender and social groups are mainstreamed in all waste management activities

- Action 5.1.1. Collect and record gender and social groups disaggregated data to assist evidence-based gender-sensitive waste management policies.
- Action 5.1.2. Review and revise policies with gender-sensitive action plans (ensure gender representation in decision making roles).
- Action 5.1.3. Allocate sufficient budget to gender and social groups sensitization training.
- Action 5.1.4. Encourage and enable women participation in specific jobs such as truck driving, engineering, planning, running waste entrepreneurial businesses etc.
- Action 5.1.5. Develop educational and awareness materials and deliver training on mainstreaming gender in the waste sector at all levels to avoid the presumption that waste is a gender neutral subject

5.2 Improve the conditions of the informal waste sector, recognize and build a mutually beneficial partnership.

- Action 5.2.1. Conduct a detailed survey of the informal waste workers and study the informal supply-chain.
- Action 5.2.2. Enhance the entrepreneurial capacities of informal sector workers and build a mutually beneficial partnership working modality.
- Action 5.2.3. Remove the stigma associated with waste-related work and improve social acceptance of waste-related job holders as a dignified livelihood option through formalizing the informal waste sector as Cooperatives/Associations/CBO/MSEs or individual contractors and engaging them in waste-to-resource initiatives
- Action 5.2.4. Improve the working and living conditions of the informal sector by providing health facilities, providing childcare facility to waste pickers, and ensure their wage is as per the national minimum wage standard

5.3 Protect the health and safety of the waste management workers

- Action 5.3.1 Develop and adhere to the Occupational Health and Safety Guideline for personnel working in waste management service provision both in municipalities and in the private and corporate sector
- Action 5.3.2 Ensure safety gear and equipment and health facilities (immunization and accident/injury insurance) to the workers and provide sensitization

(Edited by Junko Fujioka, Gender Focal Point, UNEP-IETC)

For more details, please watch the recording of UNEP-IETC's webinar, '[Gender and Waste: How to mainstream gender into national waste management policy](#)', organized on 28 November 2023.

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