



Protecting Tharus Women as Women Environmental Human Right Defenders (WEHRDs) in Nepal

Session: Indigenous Innovation and Leadership -
Gender, Risk, and Resilience
14 October 2025

Presented by: Samjhana Bista, PhD
Country Director,
DanChurchAid (DCA), Country Office Nepal



Protecting Tharus Women as Women Environmental Human Right Defenders (WEHRDs) in Nepal

- The findings and information provided in this presentation is based on the research, findings and initiatives taken by DCA in Nepal.
- Funding Agencies: RISE Grants Challenge, Duryog Nivaran, Danish Public
- Pictures are taken by DCA, with consent from the individuals in the picture.



Women Environmental Human Right Defenders (WEHRDs) at a glance

- The findings and information provided in this presentation is based on the research, findings and initiatives taken by DCA in Nepal.
- Funding Agencies: RISE Grants Challenge, Duryog Nivaran, Danish Public
- Pictures are taken by DCA, with consent from the individuals in the picture.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_3dzTti2Qo

The Context of Tharu Women in Nepal



In Nepal, the indigenous Tharu community have been marginalized and exploited for centuries, even though they represent a large percentage of the population.

The Tharus heavily rely on and are engaged in managing and using natural resources from the community forests for their livelihoods and food, however, they are often overlooked in decision making forums and planning processes, which are dominated by elites, mostly men.

Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders (WEHRDs) continue to face significant risk of violence including physical and sexual violence, verbal abuse, threats, and harassment while protecting and managing high-value forest resources.

The perpetrators include wood smugglers, poachers, and illegal loggers coming from outside or inside the communities or from their own families

Their Contribution in Environmental Conservation in Nepal

- Management of Community Forests
- Locally-led climate adaptation practices
- Green Enterprises
- Low-cost forest fire management



Gender-Based Violence faced by Tharu Women

- Intimate Partner' Violence
- Violence by Close Family Members
- Harassment and Abuse by Security Personnel, Park Authorities, Potential loggers and poachers
- Poor access to influential positions



Potential strategies to deal with GBV among the Environmental Defenders and WEHRDs

- Knowledge and skills of WEHRDs
- Engagement of Journalists in ethical reporting of the cases
- Men Engagement to fight Gender Based Violence
- Enhance interface pf WEHRDs with the Judicial bodies
- Enhanced capacity and understanding of State Agencies and other Duty Bearers



Thank You

- **Samjhana Bista, PhD;**
- Country Director,
- DanChurchAid (DCA), Country Office Nepal

- LinkedIn:
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/samjhana-bista-phd-60102347/>
- Email: sabi@dca.dk

