



**We Live With The Risk Everyday,
The Impact of Changing Climatic
Conditions: WeSHAPE Photovoice
Project, Nepal**

Community perspectives on climate change

Contents

- Introduction
- Escalating Climate Hazards
- Water Scarcity and Everyday Struggles
- Health and Wellbeing at Risk
- Livelihood and Economic Challenges
- Social Inequality and Community Resilience

Introduction

This photobook has been prepared as a part of the research project titled *“Developing women’s role in policy-making processes: shaping gender equity and inclusiveness in climate action for health and wellbeing in Nepal”*. A total of 21 participants, 12 from Pokhara Metropolitan City and 9 from Panchpokhari Thangpal Rural Municipality, engaged in the photovoice process after being identified with the support of co-researchers. The participants underwent a two-days training on basic photography techniques where they were oriented on the photovoice methodology and project objectives. Afterwards, participants collectively selected photo documentation themes, including living conditions and climate vulnerability, environmental hazards, impacts on livelihoods and health (including access to healthcare), and the compounding vulnerabilities faced by already marginalized groups due to climate change and extreme weather events.

Escalating Climate Hazards



When the river rose, flood swept away many houses...

“This is a photo of houses built near the Kahu River in Pokhara. Due to heavy rainfall during the night, the river flooded and caused significant destruction. With the help of the ward office and ward police, loss of human life was prevented, however, major impact was seen among women, children, and the elderly population. Everything, including food supplies and kitchen utensils, were swept away by the flood. The people living in these houses had no option but to leave their homes, and they are currently staying with relatives or living in rented accommodations. I think the reasons behind all of this are climate change, building houses in violation of river regulatory boundaries, and deforestation. To prevent losses from such types of destruction, we should be mindful when building houses near riverbanks. We also need to conduct awareness programs among people to make everyone aware of these issues. Poor them, there were pregnant and postpartum women in those houses. They were affected both physically and mentally. Many were crying, saying, Where do we go now? What will we eat?” ***Laxmi KC, Pokhara***



Infrastructure under constant threat.....

“This road in the picture first collapsed from a landslide and then by flood 8–10 years ago, later it was cemented. But two years ago, another big landslide collapsed it again. The nearby house was completely destroyed, even taking one life. Being close to the forest, this place always faces risks from wild animals, floods, and landslides. In the dry season the riverbed is empty, but in the monsoon all the rainwater from uphill turns it into a big stream, causing floods every year with greater intensity in each passing year, affecting villages up there too (Higher level).” ***Bhagwati Adhikari, Pokhara***

Every year the forest burns longer....

“This photo was taken near my home after a wildfire had just stopped. Wildfires have become a big problem here and across Nepal, especially in the dry season. Every year we face fires in dry months, and floods or landslides during the monsoon season. When forests burn, soil becomes loose, trees and plants are destroyed, water sources dry up and smoke pollutes the air. Sometimes fires burn for five to seven days, making it difficult to open our eyes. They are getting worse every year and once they start, they are very hard to control. It’s almost impossible to stop wildfire easily.” ***Kalpana Subedi, Pokhara***





*Unpredictable rain means
unpredictable livelihood....*

“This is a local shop near the river. The shop owner built this setup after the river swept away parts of the shop during a flood. Every year, there’s a high risk of flooding here during the rainy season. Right now, the river looks dry, but in the month of Jestha and Asar (June–July), it turns wild with heavy floods. In recent years, the rain has become unpredictable, sometimes it pours heavily, and other times there’s almost no rain at all.”

Manisha Lamsal, Pokhara



Winter is liveable, monsoon is a struggle...

“From this photo, I wanted to show that these days, people are busy preparing their fields for maize. Since it’s the dry season, they gathered all the dry leaves and burned them to clear the land. Everything looks dry now, though snow still falls in higher areas, even in the month of Chaitra. Beyond the Hills lie two small villages, which is livable in winter, but once the monsoon arrives, it becomes extremely difficult specially in past few years. During the rainy season, the river gets bigger and the roads are damaged, which makes daily life very challenging. Reaching even the nearest health post in Bhotang becomes a struggle. Recently, forest fires have affected a large area, and have scarred the hills, adding people’s difficulties. It was heard that the fire was started by some of the local residents themselves. Yet, at the hill’s base, Chaitra brings hope. A spring of sour water flows, believed to ease aches and back pain. People gather there for a festival, seeking healing and celebration despite the hardships of mountain life.” ***Soniya Lama, Panchpokhari***



Living on the edge: A family's struggle with unpredictable floods...

“This is a house of a single women living with her daughter in law and a grandson. As you can see in the photo their house is located just at the bank of the river. Every year they live in the constant threat of flooding. Few years back it was easy to predict heavy rainfall, only during the monsoon but nowadays it is very hard to predict. This has caused immense pressure to her and her family. Before the monsoon begins, they make temporary makeshift house in higher ground and relocate there but nowadays heavy rainfall can occur at anytime of the year and she was saying to me that she has not been sleeping properly at night due to the fear of unpredicted rainfall and flashfloods. Unfortunately, they don't have any other land to build the new house in safe place and every year they have to spend Nrs.20000 to 30000 to make temporary house which is a huge amount of money for them.” ***Nabina Shrestha, Panchpokhari***



We had never seen a disaster of this magnitude before...

“I have taken this photo to show the effects landslides caused by heavy rainfall. Last year there was a lot of rain in our area which led to landslides. It became very difficult for us to pick our children from school in the valley, as the bridge had been damaged by floods, and people had to cross the river using ropes until a small trolley system was built. In 2081 B.S (2025-2026), a massive flood swept away all the bridges and a huge landslide struck. People say the flood might have happened because the snow in the mountains is melting. Even our schools in the village were damaged. Small landslides had happened before, but nothing as big as what we saw in 2081 B.S. These events are happening because of climate change”.

Shanti Maya Tamang, Panchpokhari



Water Scarcity and Everyday Struggles



I worked hard, but without rain nothing survived...

“This is a photo of my agriculture land showing just a piece of huge vegetable farming area. During the monsoon, water usually flows through the canal nearby. But this year, we’re facing a big water shortage. The vegetables I planted have dried up completely. Last year, the rainfall was on time, but this year it wasn’t. I worked hard to grow those vegetables, but without rain, they couldn’t survive. Now, we must carry drinking water from below because the local water sources have dried up.” ***Manisha***

Lamsal, Pokhara



An elderly woman's struggles due to water scarcity....

“This is the home of an elderly woman. Last year, a wildfire destroyed her house. Her husband died three years ago when a *tauha* (bamboo roof support) collapsed. She has two sons, but they live separately and don't look after her. She faces many struggles, especially with access to water. There used to be a small “kuwa” (water source) nearby her house, but it dried up so she had to travel all the way bottom of the hill to fetch water. She raises a cow and sells milk twice a day to support herself, but water scarcity is making it hard for her to manage her livestock. Sometimes I help her by bringing water. Even though life is hard, she doesn't want to leave her home. I took this photo when she was going downhill to take her cow out for grazing.” *Laxmi KC, Pokhara*



Vulnerable individual and his struggle for water....

“The picture reflects the story of a man living up in the hills, all alone in a small shed. Long ago, he went to India for work but had a bad accident that injured his head. Sometimes he cooks for himself, but often someone brings him food like dhido, which he eats with salt and chili. If no one brings food, he goes hungry. Life is harder now because of climate change. He must walk far to get water. In recent years springs and streams nearby dried up. Water now comes only in the monsoon, and the rest of the year he has to travel far away to fetch water or just stay thirsty. We are afraid if the climatic conditions keep on changing than we all might have to face similar situation like him.” ***Dilimaya Syangtan, Panchpokhari***



Shifts in water access reshape life...

“I have taken this photo of a place in our area which we call Shakhulek, which is a home to seven natural springs. In the past, they flowed throughout the year, but now they dry up in the summer and return only during the monsoon. Our elders often spoke of the main spring’s water as a remedy for skin allergies. Recently, through planned effort, a proper water tap system was built, making access much easier for everyone. But since the earthquake, the springs’ flow have weakened, and changing weather conditions seems to be part of the cause. This loss affects daily life and farming, as we depend on both the rain and these springs for our crops.” ***Srijana Shrestha, Panchpokhari***

Health and Wellbeing at Risk



Unsafe homes and heat struggles....

“Many families in the area live in unsafe and unmanaged houses; some without proper roofs, and electric wires hanging dangerously overhead. Sanitation is poor, which is concerning, especially for the children living there. When strong winds blow, roofs can easily fly off. In the Lekhnath area of Pokhara, temperatures have become unbearable, reaching up to 38–40 degrees. It used to be cooler, but now the air is hotter and more polluted. Because of this, people suffer from headaches, dizziness, respiratory tract infections (RTIs), eye and stomach problems for women. Mosquitoes have increased, leading to increased number of dengue and diarrheal diseases in the community.” ***Laxmi Koirala, Pokhara***

Heat, mosquitoes and emerging illness: Changing circumstances of our village....

“This is a photo of a sister in our village who suddenly fell very sick. We rushed her straight to Kathmandu, where doctors told us it was dengue. Dengue was rare here before, but last year a few people became seriously ill, and one even died. We knew mosquitoes breed in dirty places and can cause dengue, but seeing it reach our own village was a surprising thing. I think the mosquitoes' numbers are increasing because it is getting hotter by each year. Our place was supposed to be the coolest place even in summer but now it is getting hotter and because of this all these new diseases are entering in our village, and we have to suffer at the expense of our health.” *Shanti Maya Tamang, Panchpokhari*





Rising mosquitoes and health challenges....

“The person in this picture is originally from Syangja and living here since decades. Currently she is in hospital fighting with malaria. Six years ago, also, she got diagnosed with malaria for the third time, and it was so serious she spent 27 days in the ICU. She used to make and sell ghee, and we often bought from her. Even though she recovered, her health is not the same. She says that changes in the environment have caused an increase in mosquitoes, leading to the rise of malaria cases in the village.” ***Laxmi KC, Pokhara***



Livelihood and Economic Challenges



Flood, Pandemic, and life struggle...

“Near my house, about 7–8 years ago, a block factory was established. A person took out a large loan to build it and ran it well for 2-3 years. However, he still had a lot of loan remaining. Then a heavy flood destroyed the whole factory. He took another loan to rebuild, but just then COVID-19 pandemic hit, and no one could help with the rebuilding. The financial loss became too much for him, and he tried to end his life. Since then, he hasn’t been well. Now his son runs the factory, but water has become a big problem, something they never faced before. Climate change is making things worse. Due to the family’s weak financial condition, people can’t even buy blocks easily nowadays. They are struggling a lot.” ***Laxmi KC, Pokhara***

Less water and more hard work.....

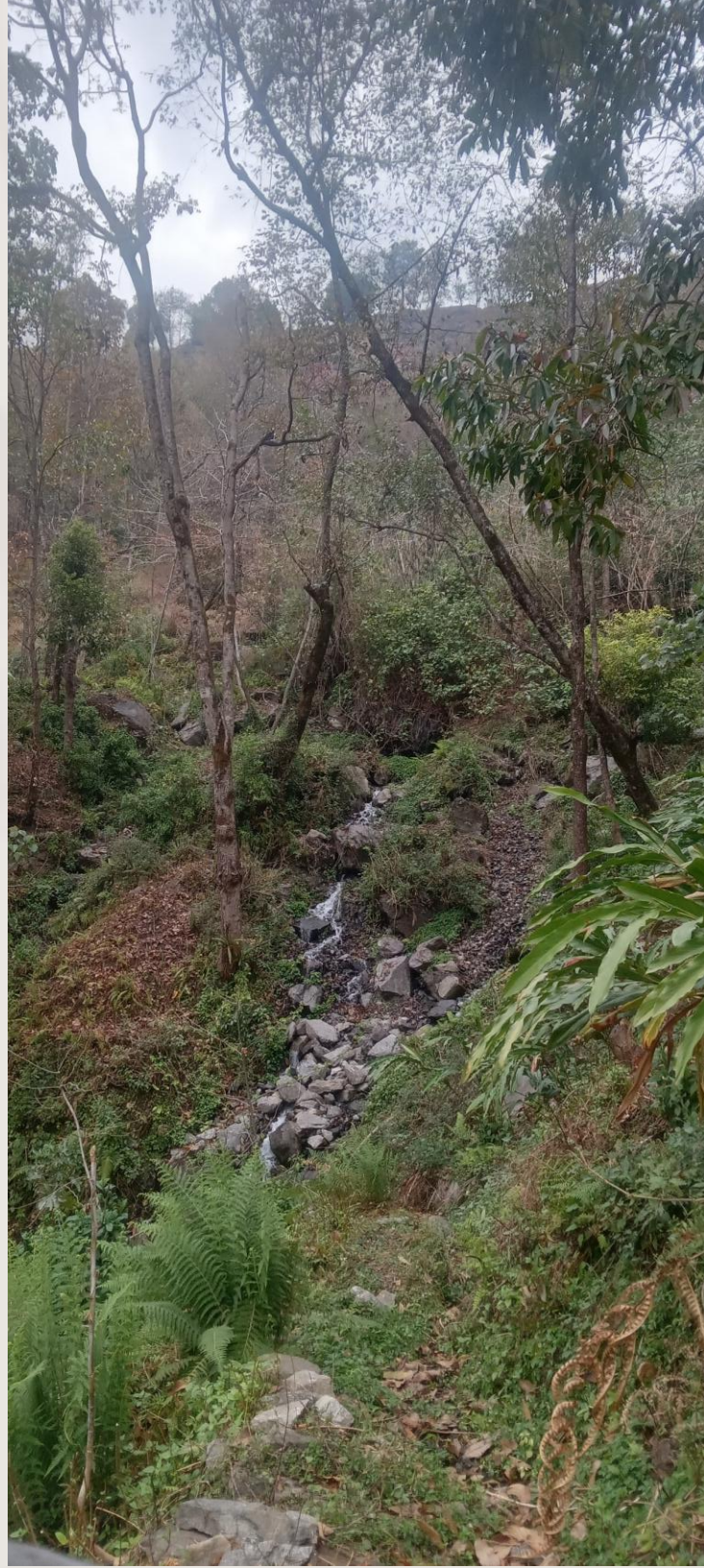
“The sister in the picture is from our community who rents about two ropanis (0.25 acres) of land to grow vegetables and support her family. Through her hard work, she manages household expenses and her child’s education which is why I wanted to share her story. However, climate change has negatively affected her livelihood, due to delayed rainfall and limited tap water for irrigation, her crops like pulses and potatoes are not growing well, reducing her harvest and income compared to previous years. She once shared with me that it is becoming harder for her to manage livelihood from farming due to unpredictable rainfall pattern and increasing heat.” *Bhagwati Adhikari, Pokhara*



Changing weather has made farmers lives hard....

“I have also taken a picture of our water source that once flowed steadily. Now, in winter, the water dries up but flows again during the monsoon. Since the earthquake, the water has started drying up more than before. Many families still depend on this source to irrigate their fields, collecting and storing extra water to manage during times of drought.

Landslides don't occur right near the houses, but it strikes nearby. Last month of Ashoj, another landslide took place. Normally, there isn't heavy rain that month, but these days the weather has changed. Just recently, in Bhotang, a big landslide even swept away a bridge because of the unseasonal rainfall and this change in weather is making very hard for farmer like us who are totally depended on their crops to manage day to day necessities.” ***Sunita Tamang, Panchpokhari***





The story of water and grinding mill of Bhotang....

“This is a photo of our mill by the river. About 35 years ago, these rivers flooded so badly and the whole village had to relocate. Now, because of climate change, both rivers have almost dried up. They flow only during the monsoon, when we can even swim there.

In Bhotang, about 400–500 households depend on this water mill to grind maize and millet. These days, we start grinding and storing grains months ahead, so we have enough after Mangsir (November/December). Before, the mill ran all year because the rivers never dried. Now, climate change has made the rivers flow only in certain seasons.” ***Kalpana Tamang, Panchpokhari***



Social Inequality and Community Resilience



Rising waters, rising fears but ignored by ward officials...

“This photo shows our informal settlement across the riverbank in Pokhara, where we collect sand and pebbles for a living, which is a hard and risky work. Behind our small house, there stands a tall building, showing the gap between rich and poor. Life here is tough with high costs, few jobs, and with constant fear of floods. Every monsoon the river rises, and the flood damages our homes, but as informal settlers, the ward office ignores our concerns. Weather is changing and becoming unpredictable recently. Two years ago, unusual rainfall in the month of Baisakh (May) caused floods that destroyed homes and forced many to leave. We stay here because we have no other choice, even though danger is always near.” ***Jyoti Nepali, Pokhara***

Small dreams, big challenges...

“This is another photo of our roadside resting place, which we call Chautara. Here, a woman runs a small shop to support herself. Maybe one day she dreams of having a bigger shop somewhere else, but for now, this little shop helps her manage daily life. It reflects her resilience and determination. The area is now dusty due to ongoing construction after a major landslide last year. Heavy rainfall had caused logs to block the river, leading to a massive flood that destroyed houses and buried paddy fields that once produced about 40 muri (three metric tons) of rice. Last year’s destruction is something we will not be able to forget.” *Bhagwati Bastola, Pokhara*





Tending land and hope: A women fighting alone...

“I took a picture of a strong, single woman who lost her husband in a tragic bus accident. One of her daughters is married, while the other daughter and son are still to marry and are away for their studies. Living alone, she has built her own greenhouse tunnel and is engaged in agricultural production. Water is scarce here, and pests attack more often, perhaps a sign of the changing climate. However, she keeps working, nurturing both her land and her hope.” ***Shanti Maya Tamang, Panchpokhari***

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank The British Academy, UK, for funding this project, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK, for their technical support and guidance and all the participants who supported to carry out the field level activities.

WeSHAPE



Funded by

