



Powered by Women

**DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION
THROUGH GENDER DIVERSITY IN NEPAL'S
HYDROPOWER SECTOR**

September 2023



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



IFC

**International
Finance Corporation**
WORLD BANK GROUP

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Cover photo: Three female engineers inspecting the construction of the diversion tunnel of the 216 MW Upper Trishuli-1 (UT-1) run-of-the-river hydroelectric project in Rasuwa District, Nepal Water and Energy Development Company Private Limited (NWEDC).

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We are grateful to the governments of Australia, Japan, and Norway for supporting IFC's Nepal Environmental and Social Standards Hydropower Program and for their commitment to improving the sustainability of the private sector's business performance through the integration of gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

¹ One of the 19 companies that initially signed up for the PbW Nepal initiative became dormant. Eighteen member companies actively participated in the initiative.

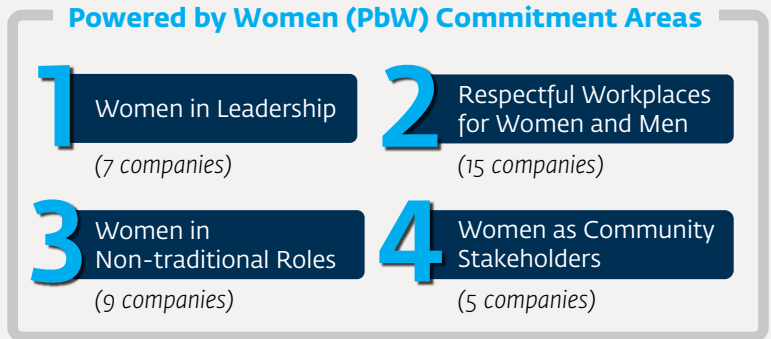
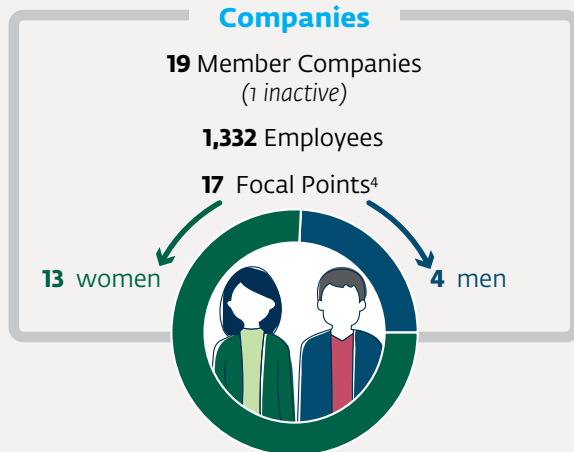
² NHPC and Lower Erkuwa are subsidiary companies that share common resources and are thus reflected as one company.

³ Formally Rairang Power Company Limited.

ABBREVIATIONS

3HC	High Himalaya Hydro Construction Private Limited
BPC	Butwal Power Company Limited
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
ESG	Environmental, social, and governance
GBVH	Gender-based violence and harassment
GRM	Grievance redress mechanism
HCEL	Hydro-Consult Engineering Limited
HPP	Hydropower project
HR	Human resources
IDI	IDI Hydropower Company Private Limited (IDI Hydropower)
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IPPAN	Independent Power Producers' Association, Nepal
MW	Megawatt
NHPC	National Hydro Power Company Limited
NWEDC	Nepal Water and Energy Development Company
PbW	Powered by Women
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

POWERED BY WOMEN NEPAL INITIATIVE: IMPACT IN NUMBERS



PbW Workshops, Trainings, Events, and Engagements

September 2020

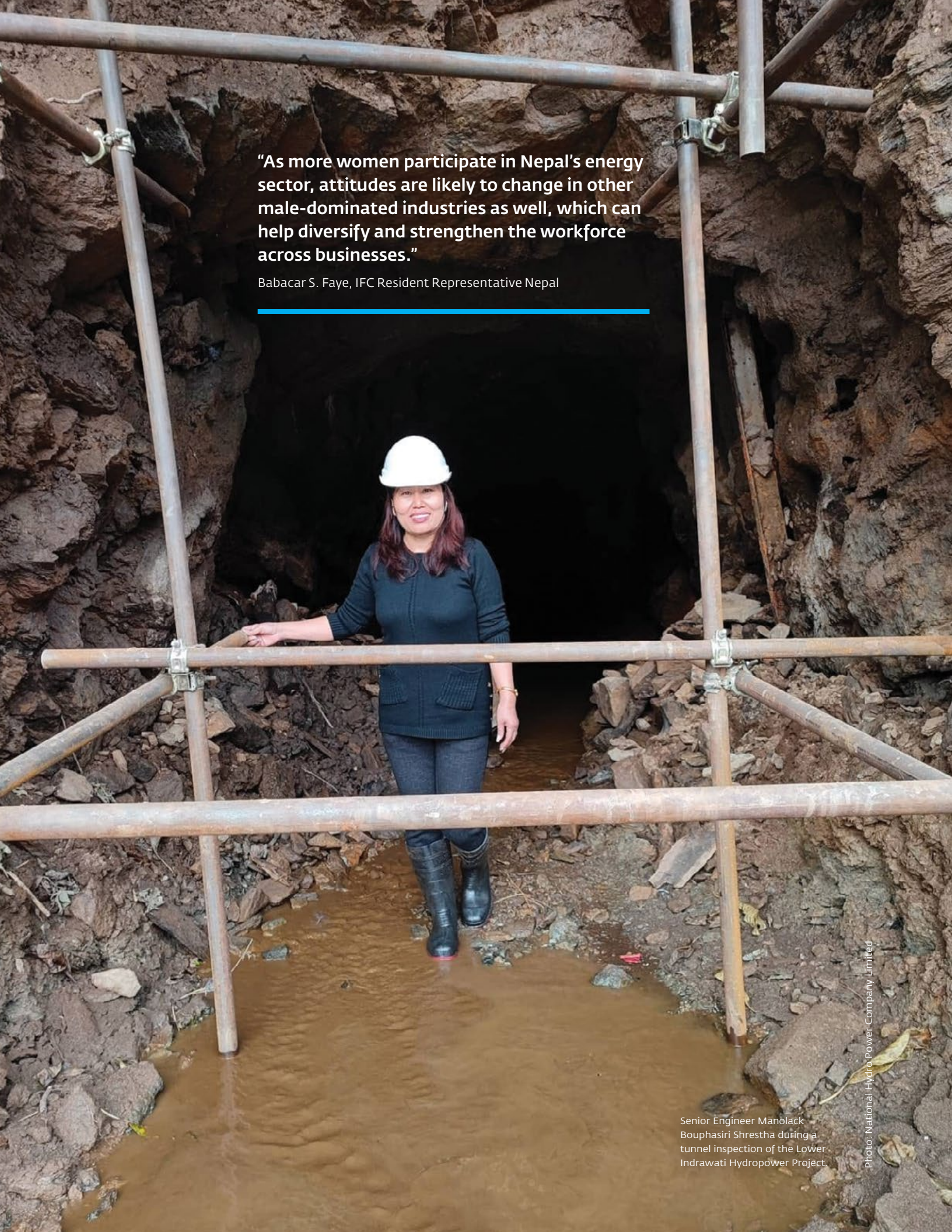


June 2023

- Powered by Women Nepal Initiative Launch
- **15** Powered Series Webinars
- **8** Business Roundtable Meetings
- **3 Powered Series Trainings** on Gender and Hydropower
 - Gender in Environmental and Social Impact Assessments
 - Gender and Hydropower II
 - Gender and Hydropower III
- **2 Capacity-Building Trainings**
 - Communications Training and Coaching Program
 - Inclusive Leadership for Company Sustainability Training
- **3 Trainings and Workshops on Making Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRMs) Work**
 - Set up GBVH GRM at the Corporate and Community Level
 - Finalizing Protocols and Process Maps for Workplace and Community-Based GBVH GRM
 - GBVH GRM Implementation Skills
- **4 Trainings and Workshops on Writing and Implementing Respectful Workplace Policies**
 - Training of Trainers – Understanding GBVH
 - Write and Implement Company Code of Conduct for Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment
 - Write and Implement a Workplace Policy for Prevention of GBVH, Sexual Harassment, and/or Discrimination
 - Actioning and Monitoring Policies on GBVH and GRM
- **8** events attended by PbW member companies where women leaders and Focal Points actively exchanged experiences of gender equality in the hydropower sector at national and international meetings, expos, and conferences



⁴NHPC and Lower Erkuwa have a common Focal Point as these are subsidiary companies sharing common resources and are recognized as one company.



“As more women participate in Nepal’s energy sector, attitudes are likely to change in other male-dominated industries as well, which can help diversify and strengthen the workforce across businesses.”

Babacar S. Faye, IFC Resident Representative Nepal

Senior Engineer Manolack
Bouphasiri Shrestha during a
tunnel inspection of the Lower
Indrawati Hydropower Project.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nepal aims to graduate to middle-income status by 2030 with the help of electricity sourced from hydropower. Within the hydropower sector, women are underrepresented and occupy only a small percentage of senior managerial roles.

The benefits of women in the workplace are well documented. Gender-diverse firms earn considerably higher returns on equity, with improved reputation, productivity, and sustainability (IFC 2019). Gender-diverse leadership is also positively linked to a company's environmental, social, and governance (ESG) outcomes, which in turn boost the company's financial performance (IFC 2018). A positive correlation has also been observed between the presence of women on boards and firm value, profitability, ethical and social compliance, and community engagement. By adopting a gender lens and encouraging diversity, ESG performance is also enhanced through the promotion of environmental and social standards, leading to sustainability in the marketplace. Equal opportunity and non-discrimination are essential to good practices and central to the International Finance Corporation's (IFC's) Environmental and Social Performance Standards, showing the clear link between gender and ESG performance and sustainability.

IFC launched Powered by Women (PbW) Nepal initiative in September 2020 to help hydropower firms realize the benefits of gender equality and diversity. The program, which ended in June 2023, used a peer-to-peer learning approach, inviting companies to close gender gaps in their operations by taking specific, measurable action in at least one of four commitment areas: promoting women in leadership, promoting respectful workplaces for women and men, promoting women in non-traditional jobs, and engaging women as stakeholders within the community.

This end of program report was prepared to analyze the results of the program. It highlights key achievements and reflects on the program's effectiveness and lessons learned. The analysis is based on company surveys, in-depth interviews with member companies and other stakeholders, and secondary data gathered from the periodic business roundtable meetings of PbW Nepal initiative.

Through the review, the report shows the journey of PbW Nepal initiative, and shares the voices of all those involved, to highlight the transformative and positive impact the program has had within the hydropower sector and beyond.

“As more women participate in Nepal's energy sector, attitudes are likely to change in other male-dominated industries as well, which can help diversify and strengthen the workforce across businesses,” said Babacar S. Faye, IFC's Resident Representative in Nepal. “Beyond the economic and moral imperative of having more women in the workforce, their participation brings in diverse perspectives to the planning and execution of projects. This will result in more women-friendly products and services, along with more attention to ESG – and that's the aspiration in the long run.”

2. CONTEXT

2.1 HYDROPOWER SECTOR IN NEPAL

In Nepal hydropower is increasingly being considered as a reliable, affordable, and clean source of energy that can contribute significantly to both the region's demand for electricity and the country realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – namely SDG 1: no poverty, SDG 3: good health and well-being, SDG 5: gender equality, SDG 6: clean water and sanitation, SDG 7: affordable and clean energy, and SDG 13: climate action.

Although Nepal has doubled its installed capacity in less than three years to 2,577 megawatts (MW) (March 2023), it is still relatively low to cater to the needs of 30 million people (myRepublika Nepal 2023). The country intends to expand its installed capacity to 15,000 MW by 2030 and sell surplus electricity to the regional power market. Over 3,200 MW of electricity generation capacity is currently under construction and these plants are expected to be completed by fiscal year 2025 (World Bank 2023).

Thus, Nepal has considerable hydropower energy potential. As the sector expands rapidly, there is considerable potential for thousands of women and men to be employed in the sector's supply chain. However, the labor-intensive sector has seen a shortfall in workers, primarily due to the continuous outflow of migrant workers over the past two decades and a lack of female talent to fill the gap (IFC 2020). With women making up more than half (54.5 percent) of the country's population, it is in their own interest to seize the opportunity to become central to the hydropower sector supporting the country's economic development. For example, during focus group discussions to develop the business case for gender diversity and equality in Nepal's hydropower sector (IFC 2020), the need and interest for more women as role models to help break gender stereotypes was viewed as critical by both male and female executives of all 20 companies.

Women do want to own and have decision-making power over hydropower companies in Nepal.

Anugya Sapkota, Hydropower Engineer at Hydro-Consult Engineering Limited and PbW Focal Point, recently joined the board of the Liberty Hydropower Company: "I aspire to be in a senior decision-making position where I am able to inspire other girls considering non-traditional jobs. I am excited to bring my technical knowledge and experience of hydropower and gender into the company board. I felt empowered to take on this new role as a board director thanks to the personal growth I experienced through the PbW journey and the strong connections I developed with like-minded people from the industry. As a result, I am no longer reluctant to speak up to ask that work conditions are gender friendly and am equally determined to step up to face a challenge."

Furthermore, Indira Panta, Executive Director of Kalinchock Hydropower Company, remarked, "Women do not have ownership or decision-making powers to use their assets for investment."

"Over half of the population of the country are women. If women are properly and adequately trained, then there is enough space for a job in this sector."

Kiran Malla, Executive Chairperson of 3HC

Within the hydropower sector in Nepal, however, women's entrance into this male-dominated sector continues to be impeded, gender diversity remains low, and women occupy few leadership and technical positions. Gender stereotypes and norms are limiting opportunities for women, who are perceived as more suited to administration, communications, and coordination roles, while men are considered physically stronger, more versatile, and better suited to field positions. This lack of gender diversity denies women access to important employment and leadership opportunities in the expanding sector and has the potential to inhibit the development of a sector that is crucial for Nepal's growing energy needs. There is therefore substantial scope for firms and the sector to actively promote gender diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, and in the communities in which they operate, and thus contribute to sustainable and gender-inclusive development.

2.2 GENDER EQUALITY IN NEPAL

Nepal falls in the bottom 50 countries in the world when it comes to gender disparities and inequality. In 2022, Nepal scored 0.692 in the Gender Inequality Index, ranking 96 out of 146 countries (World Economic Forum 2022). Among the eight regions covered in the 2022 Global Gender Gap Report, South Asia is ranked as the lowest for closing the gender gap. Within South Asia, Bangladesh and Nepal are leading the performance in closing the gender gap by 69 percent. Moreover, increases in the share of women in professional and technical roles were most notable in Nepal, Bangladesh, and India. This success is supported by recent changes in Nepal's legal and policy framework to mainstream gender, including the following:

- Changes to Nepal's Constitution in 2015 stipulate that women should occupy at least 33 percent of positions in the federal parliament and provincial assembly and 40 percent of positions in local government. In 2016, the country had a female head of state, a female house speaker, and a female chief justice for the first time.
- Gender equality, social inclusion, and gender-responsive budgeting have been introduced as concepts for adoption in Nepal's governmental development programs.
- Nepal's 2017 Labor Act is largely more gender-inclusive, providing anti-discrimination clauses and maternity leave, among other provisions.

These advances are a positive step forward for gender equality in Nepal, although experts consider that many of the provisions have not yet translated into concrete action. Despite the Global Gender Gap Index indicators reflecting some improvements in Nepal, huge disparities remain in economic participation, education, and political empowerment, particularly in the following areas:

- **Education.** Only 30.7 percent of girls complete secondary education, with 18 percent of girls not entering secondary education at all, compared to 10 percent of boys not attending secondary education. And when girls do enroll in further education, they often only pursue subjects that are traditionally dominated by women, with a low number of women entering the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) field.

- **Economic participation.** Nepal has a high rate of female labor force participation (78 percent), compared with other South Asian nations, as a result of high male migration (The Global Economy 2022). However, women of working age are mostly working in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and education, and the wholesale, retail, and trade industries. Furthermore, only 13.2 percent were in managerial positions in 2017. A notable gender pay gap persists, with women earning roughly one-third less than men across all sectors irrespective of education levels (Central Bureau of Statistics 2018).
- **Gender-based violence.** According to the World Health Organization, in 2018 at least one in four women in Nepal experienced mental, physical, or other forms of violence during their lifetime, yet only one in three seeks help.

The Global Gender Gap Report notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed gains made in achieving gender equality globally. "Looking at the current situation, it is clear that the health emergency and the related economic downturn resulting from the pandemic has disproportionately affected women, resulting in the overturn of a lot of progress made in gender equality thus far. Most of the job layoffs seen during the pandemic have been women, which shows that working women aren't as valued as their male counterparts," states the report. This is also likely for Nepal.

In a heavy engineering-based industry, such as the renewable energy sector, deliberate efforts at gender mainstreaming by private or public companies remain largely non-existent (IFC 2020).

Gender and ESG principles and practices are strongly linked. PbW Nepal initiative provided an opportunity, in its design and delivery, to raise awareness of this link and the fact that ESG performance is enhanced when addressing gender equality and diversity at the corporate, project, and community levels. Furthermore, IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards promote good international environmental and social practices. For example, equal opportunity and non-discrimination are central to IFC Performance Standard 2: Labor and Working Conditions. Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) is a fundamental gender risk to address and respectful and safe workplaces are a fundamental risk

management strategy. The promotion of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, addressing GBVH, and inclusive stakeholder engagement are all core to IFC's role in ESG good practice standard setting in firms and the marketplace.

The link between IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards and gender equality aligns strongly with the Australian, Norwegian, and Japanese governments' development objectives and policies, as donors of PbW Nepal initiative.

Peter Budd, former Australian Ambassador to Nepal, commented: "Why are we supporting IFC through its Environmental and Social Standards on Hydropower? The Australian government is committed to upholding environmental and social standards in development cooperation. History tells us when social and environmental safeguards are too lax or not complied with, people and their communities can suffer a wide range of negative impacts. These include joblessness, homelessness, social dislocation, morbidity, mortality, ecosystem and other environmental degradation, and the loss of irreplaceable cultural assets. And with the stakes so high it is critical that companies and communities have the right guidance and processes to ensure safeguards can be applied appropriately. I think it is fair to say IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards are recognized as offering some of the highest levels of protection for those wanting to avoid those negative impacts and Nepal deserves nothing less than the highest protection for its environment given the role that the Hindu Kush Himalayas play, and will continue to play, in mitigating global climate change. In addition to its environment, the people of Nepal have the right to avoid or mitigate undue harm that may be occasioned by infrastructure projects. Preventing undue environmental and social harm is the goal of these standards. We agree with this goal, and understand that the application and safeguards result in better outcomes for both communities and the environment and that is why we are supporting IFC through this initiative."

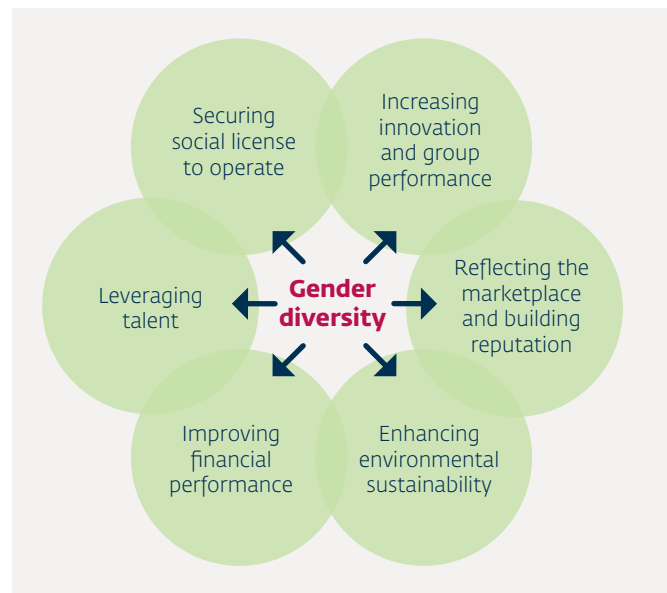
2.3 BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IN NEPAL'S HYDROPOWER SECTOR

In August 2020, IFC commissioned a report to inform PbW Nepal initiative (IFC 2020), to deliver on its commitment to mainstream gender into its programs. The report, Business Case for Gender Diversity and Equality in Nepal's Hydropower Sector, provided the foundation for PbW Nepal initiative to help companies promote business growth and efficiency and enhance sustainability through increased gender diversity (Figure 1).

Global research shows that the presence of women in business leadership is positively correlated with:

- Reduced employee turnover
- Increased innovation
- Deeper understanding of customers and markets
- Improved ESG standards and stronger corporate citizenship.

Figure 1: Business case for gender diversity



Including women at all levels in renewable energy (Figure 2) has the potential to generate benefits for companies, women, and the wider community.

Figure 2: Gender-smart approaches for renewable energy companies

Women in leadership

Companies with gender-diverse leadership earn considerably higher return on equity and have a stronger record and reputation for sustainability. Hydropower companies have few women on executive boards or in senior management. Companies can increase gender diversity through leadership programs, succession planning, retention programs, hiring targets, and other initiatives. Companies can also provide equal opportunity and non-discrimination policies to address GBVH. Providing respectful and safe workplaces is a fundamental risk management strategy for companies.

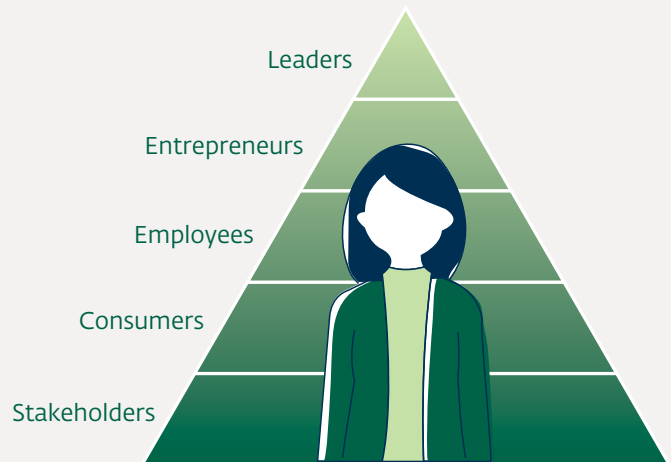
Women as suppliers and distributors

Women entrepreneurs are often credit constrained and lack certain skills or networks. By investing in training and engaging more women-owned small and medium enterprises, hydropower companies can significantly improve local economies and relationships. Companies can consider opportunities for women in distribution, maintenance, billing, and collections.

Women as employees

Equal opportunity recruitment and training programs can reduce costs by expanding the local labor pool. Hiring more women in jobs and departments predominated by men improves team dynamics and performance.

Women can work in **non-traditional roles** such as in dam construction and operations. Companies with women in engineering, security, and other technical positions not only help break gender stereotypes, but also serve as role models to attract female talent.



Women as clients and consumers

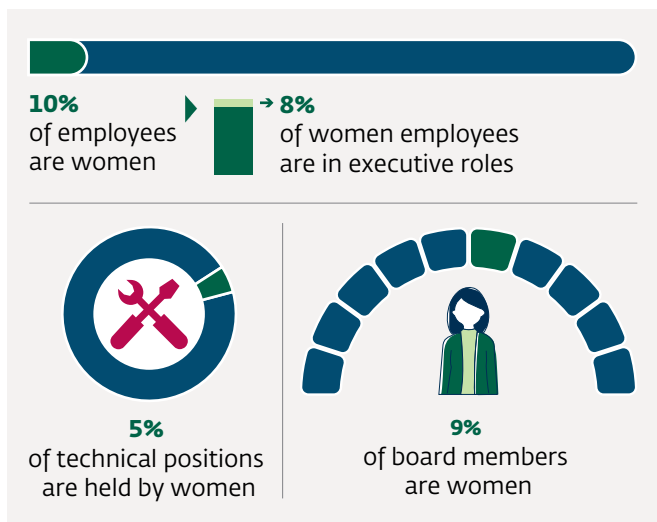
Women and girls benefit disproportionately from expanded access to electricity: lights for studying, time-saving appliances that allow for more time in productive activities, and improved safety due to street lighting.

Women as community stakeholders

Meaningfully engaging women in planning hydropower development and community investments guarantee benefits are more equitably shared and risks are averted, and helps to secure a social license to operate.

IFC's Business Case for Gender Diversity and Equality in Nepal's Hydropower Sector was the outcome of research undertaken in late 2019 and early 2020 to assess Nepal's hydropower landscape from a gender lens to understand the role of women in the hydropower sector, their contribution to business productivity, and opportunities and challenges. As part of the research, 20 companies associated with the hydropower industry in Nepal were consulted. The business case presents a unique opportunity for renewable energy companies to proactively take the lead in initiating positive change in the broader economy.

Figure 3: Findings of the Business Case for Gender Diversity and Equality in Nepal's Hydropower Sector



The analysis of the 20 companies revealed that (Figure 3):

- 10 percent of total employees (155 out of 1,535) are women
- Only 8 percent are employed in executive roles (13 out of 155 women)
- 5 percent of technical positions (35 out of 625) are held by women
- 9 percent of women (12 out of 132 board members) sit on company boards.

A key finding from the IFC study was that Nepal's hydropower sector could benefit from adopting targeted and tailored interventions to advance gender diversity and equality through policies and practices that have demonstrated net positive impacts on employees and businesses around the world.

To help advance this work, entry points at the corporate, project, and community level were identified through four key areas, as shown in Figure 4:

- Women in leadership
- Respectful workplaces (including a focus on GBVH) for women and men
- Women in non-traditional roles
- Women as community stakeholders.

“Specifically on the component for women in non-traditional jobs, we find that there is a huge untapped market for women to join hydropower companies to engage in this field. Particularly, we are referring to women as engineers or women security guards or even women as project managers in the field. And our work through the Powered by Women Nepal initiative has found there is huge potential to focus in this area. When we conducted interviews with companies in Nepal we found that women in non-traditional jobs occupy only 5 percent of technical or engineering roles or as plant managers and there were very few security guards, only three security guards among 20 companies focused on for this study. We found that where there are opportunities through educational systems or where companies put more emphasis on training staff there is an opportunity to build on this potential to generate more talent as a lot of this often stems from deficiencies around opportunities for education for women but also around cultural divides within Nepal. So, we really wanted to focus on this a bit more within the Powered by Women Nepal initiative.”

Kate Lazarus, Senior ESG Advisory Lead, Asia Pacific, IFC

3. POWERED BY WOMEN INITIATIVE

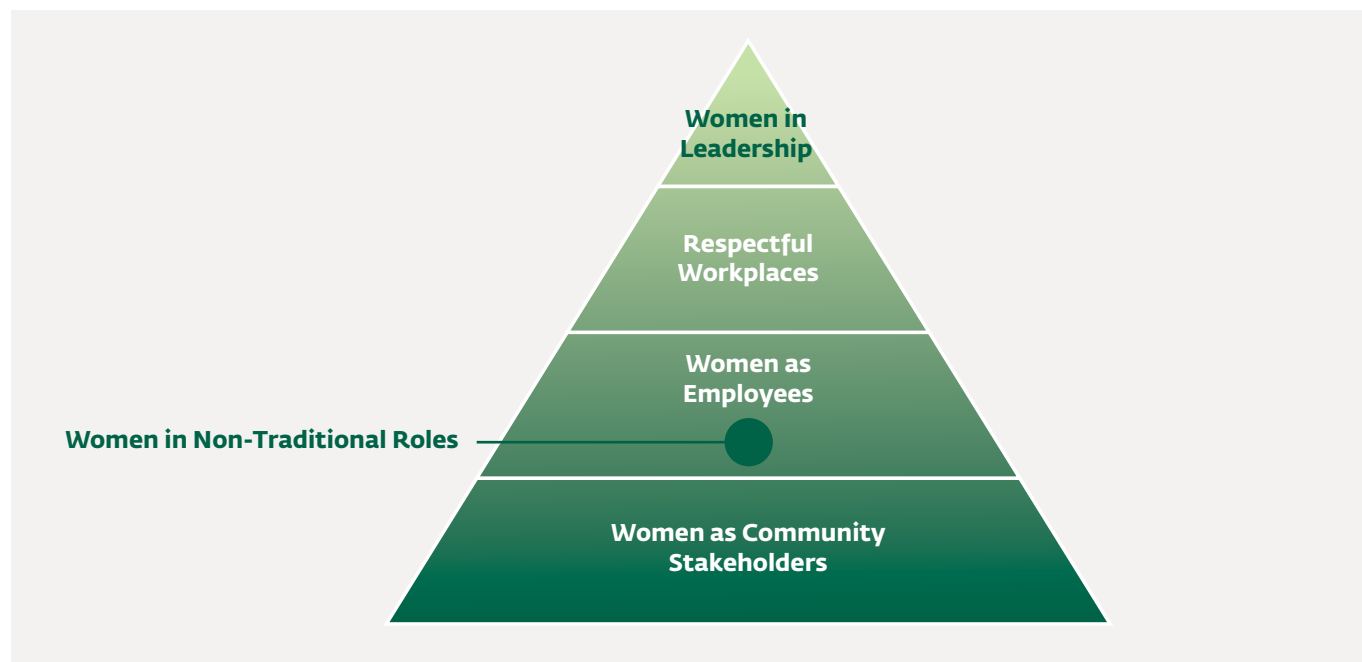
3.1 PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE

The PbW initiative is an IFC program that helps renewable energy companies build the business case for gender diversity, drawing on global evidence that increasing the proportion of women in leadership and promoting equal opportunity employment leads to improved environmental sustainability, better ESG performance, and responsible corporate choices – and encourages entrepreneurs. The PbW initiative promotes business growth, efficiency, and enhanced sustainability by supporting the private sector to close gender gaps within their organizations and the communities they work in. The program helps member companies achieve PbW commitments in a range of different areas through access to relevant research, tools, and resources. It also provides member companies with training and resources to put in place gender-smart workplace initiatives. Through the professional development opportunities, the

program improves not only the companies, but the skills of the Focal Points involved, both women and men, strengthening the voice on gender equality and diversity within the implementing sector.

Building on lessons learned from IFC’s PbW initiative in Myanmar, and following an IFC study that found women are disproportionately represented throughout the workforce and life cycle of hydropower projects in Nepal, IFC’s PbW Nepal initiative was launched in Nepal in September 2020 and concluded in June 2023. The program gave participating companies (member companies) a unique opportunity to take the lead in closing gender gaps within the hydropower sector, with 19 hydropower companies⁷ signing up to the initiative. The initiative encouraged peer-to-peer learning and supported companies to develop and achieve time-bound actions in at least one of the four PbW commitment areas (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Key entry points of Powered by Women Nepal Initiative



⁷ Nineteen companies signed up for the PbW Nepal initiative. However, one company was inactive, resulting in 18 active companies. Since two companies among the 18 share common resources, the surveys conducted recognized them as one company to avoid double counting data and information.

Table 1: Timeline of Powered by Women Nepal Initiative activities

Date	Activities and corresponding Powered by Women Nepal Initiative commitments
2019	
May 28–31	Gender and Hydropower Training I
2020	
Sep. 22	Powered by Women Nepal Initiative Launch
Nov. 25	Powered Series #1: Women in Leadership
Dec. 16	Business Roundtable Meeting #1
2021	
Jan. 20	Powered Series #2: Women in Non-Traditional Jobs
Feb. 10–12	Training on Gender in Environmental and Social Impact Assessments
Mar. 4	Powered Series #3: Building Respectful Workplaces
Mar. 24	Business Roundtable #2
Apr. 7	Webinar for NMB Bank: Business Case for Addressing Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment
Apr. 21	Powered Series #4: Operationalizing Respectful Workplaces
May 19	Powered Series #5: Enabling More Women to Enter Fields in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)
Jun. 23	Business Roundtable #3
Aug. 25 – Oct. 5	Communications Training and Coaching Program
Oct. 5	Business Roundtable #4
Nov. 12	Powered Series #6: PbW Myanmar – Lessons Learned
Nov. 23–26	Gender and Hydropower Training II
Dec. 21	Powered Series #7: Transformational Leadership

Date	Activities and corresponding Powered by Women Nepal Initiative commitments
2022	
Jan. 27	Business Roundtable #5
Feb. 24	Powered Series #8: Making Grievance Redress Mechanisms Work
Mar. 23	Powered Series #9: Workplace Policy for Prevention of Sexual Harassment
Apr. 27	Business Roundtable #6
May 25	Powered Series #10: How Gender Crosscuts ESG
Aug. 24	Powered Series #11: Engaging Men in Advancing Women in the Workplace
Sep. 7	Business Roundtable #7
Nov. 1–10	Trainings and Workshops to set up Gender-Based Violence and Harassment Grievance Redress Mechanism at the Corporate and Community Level
Nov. 9	Powered Series #12: Mentoring to Cultivate Leadership
Dec. 5–7	Inclusive Leadership for Company Sustainability Training
2023	
Dec. 12, 2022 – Feb. 28	Virtual Trainings on Finalizing Protocols and Process Maps for the Workplace and Community-Based GBVH Grievance Redress Mechanisms
Jan. 25	Business Roundtable #8
Feb. 17	Powered Series #13: Integrating Gender in Occupational Health and Safety
Mar. 27 – May 11	Virtual Training Sessions: Write and Implement Workplace Policies
Mar. 29 – May 12	Virtual Training Sessions: Write and Implement Company Code of Conduct for Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment
Apr. 2–5	Gender and Hydropower Training III
Apr. 9–11	Training of Trainers: Understanding Gender-Based Violence and Harassment
Apr. 12–13	Workshops on Actioning and Monitoring Policies on Gender-Based Violence and Harassment and Grievance Redress Mechanisms
Apr. 26	Powered Series #14: Participatory Photography on PbW Nepal Initiative
May 21–23	Training on Gender-Based Violence and Harassment Grievance Redress Mechanism Implementation Skills

The four commitment areas constituted a challenge for the member companies to adopt specific, measurable actions that would create conditions for a gender-diverse workplace. Through internal consultation companies selected at least one commitment, developed action plans, and reported on progress and lessons learned through the roundtable discussions. A Focal Point was appointed by each company (both women and men) to oversee their commitment. A strong network was established through PbW Nepal initiative, which enabled sharing of achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. IFC provided resources, capacity building, and funding to support the Focal Points and companies. Table 1 provides a timeline of activities and corresponding PbW commitments delivered during the initiative.

To track the results and achievements of PbW Nepal initiative, IFC used a baseline and endline survey, as well as business roundtables where companies came together to present their results. IFC adopted a flexible, intuitive, and adaptive style of support to help companies fulfill their action plans. IFC's support to companies mainly consisted of providing peer-to-peer learning, targeted trainings, guidance through in-depth support, and opportunities to share innovative practices within the region and worldwide, delivered through more than 15 Powered Series webinars, 12 training courses, and eight roundtable meetings, including other in-person workshops and conferences.

These events enabled 783 participants (437 women, 346 men) to build their capacity and professional skills in gender, leadership, communication, and technical areas of ESG and sustainable hydropower. Participants included representatives from company boards, senior executives, young emerging leaders, women in middle and junior managerial positions, human resources (HR) personnel, public relations and stakeholder engagement officers, environmental and social sustainability officers, and occupational, health, and safety officers. IFC, through its PbW Nepal initiative team, also provided individual support to Focal Points to deliver internal training workshops on gender equality and diversity, and develop policies, procedures, and protocols.

IFC, through its strong partnership with the International Centre for Hydropower, a leading adult learning training organization in Norway, co-developed and delivered high-quality training courses to the PbW participants. Training modules covered gender and hydropower, and gender in environmental and social impact assessments. They drew on both local and international case examples and lessons learned to increase environmental and social capacity.

Understanding where gender fits within the environmental and social impact assessment is crucial to guaranteeing that women in communities are key stakeholders in hydropower development. IFC and the International Centre for Hydropower's collaboration was a fit-for-purpose three-day training course for hydropower companies in Nepal that are developing the best approaches and tools to genderizing the environmental impact assessment (EIA). This enabled local experiences to be discussed, along with global practices on social and gender impacts, how gender crosscuts IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards (in particular, the growing risks of GBVH in remote locations of hydropower development), and how differentiated approaches are required with indigenous peoples. The training emphasized that gender is key to enhancing sustainability outcomes for hydropower developed in Nepal.

Quarterly business roundtable meetings

Eight PbW Nepal initiative business roundtables were held to bring together all the Focal Points and management of member companies to expand their networks, discuss corporate or program challenges, and exchange lessons learned from implementing their commitment targets. These meetings were crucial to obtaining updates from the companies on their progress made against commitment areas and action plans.

Participation of PbW members at events

In addition to the trainings and webinars organized by the PbW Nepal initiative, there was a marked increase in the number of women invited and actively participating as experts in a range of events to exchange experiences. These women were drawn from the PbW Nepal initiative and highlighted the significance of the initiative in promoting gender equality in the hydropower sector. Table 2 provides a timeline of the events that PbW members attended.

TAILORED ADVISORY SERVICES TO ADDRESS GBVH IN THE HYDROPOWER SECTOR

Specialized consulting services in the first phase were provided to four companies – Hydro-Consult Engineering Limited (HCEL), Nepal Water and Energy Development Company (NWEDC), Urja Developers, and Solu Hydropower Private Limited – to support their work in GBVH. Specifically, IFC provided in-person training on how to develop a good practice workplace and community-based GBVH redress mechanisms, and how to develop a GBVH action plan and a monitoring and evaluation framework; individual company support sessions to further develop and tailor the company’s workplace and community-based grievance redress mechanism and GBVH action plan; and feedback on company protocols and process maps.

The second phase included targeted support to four companies – Butwal Power Company Limited (BPC), Solu Hydropower Private Limited, Urja Developers, and Independent Power Producers Association, Nepal (IPPAN) – to help them develop at least one of the following respectful workplace policies:

- GBVH prevention policy
- Anti-discrimination policy
- Anti-harassment policy
- Code of conduct to address sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

IFC also provided a training of trainers on GBVH to key staff of the four companies to help them implement their GBVH protocols and build capacity within their companies; training to integrate GBVH policies and guidelines into their HR policies; workshops to develop frameworks, procedures, and action plans for the effective implementation and monitoring of the policies and guidelines; and targeted one-off GBVH training to the employees of BPC, Urja Developers, and Solu Hydropower directly involved in the grievance redress mechanism process (for example, Grievance Handling Officer, Public Relations Officer, Site-Based Managers, and Supervisors).



Participants engaged in group work during Training of Trainers - Understanding GBVH.

Photo: Dean Laplonge/Factive Consulting

“It was a joy to deliver the respectful workplace training as part of the Powered by Women Nepal initiative. I was able to witness the transformative journeys of so many participants as they came to understand how our beliefs and privilege can contribute to a culture where disrespectful behaviors occur. When you hear from female participants that they feel more empowered to speak out about harassment, as we did in this training, that is music to my ears. When male participants share how they recognize the way they have been behaving – in their workplaces and homes – has not always been respectful, I know with absolute certainty that the training has been a huge success. I have enjoyed every minute of my time with the company participants and with my fellow trainer Yamuna Panchkoti.”

Dean Laplonge, GBVH Consultant, Factive Consulting

Table 2: Events attended by PbW members

2022	
Mar. 22	Ring the Bell for Gender Equality in Nepal organized by Nepal Stock Exchange
Apr. 2–4	Himalayan Hydro Expo organized by IPPAN
Sep. 3–4	Women in Nature Network Conference organized by WINN Nepal
Sep. 12	Sustainable Hydro Conference organized by Nepal Hydropower Association
2023	
Jan. 25	Workshop on Women in Energy in Nepal organized by IPPAN’s Women in Energy Committee
Mar. 31	Ring the Bell for Gender Equality in Nepal jointly organized by UN Global Compact Nepal, UN Women, IFC, Nepal Stock Exchange, and UN Resident Coordinator’s Office
Apr. 18–19	Power Summit organized by IPPAN
Apr. 27	Conference on Developing Women Leadership in the Financial Sectors of Nepal organized by National Banking Institute

“IFC’s Powered by Women Nepal initiative has provided a sustainable and replicable gender program which has effectively reached into a heavy engineering sector with low levels of female representation. It is reaching to the low- and middle-income countries within the hydropower sector with its impact of providing a platform for gender equality and women in employment at a time when it is needed the most following the impact of COVID-19 in reducing the percentage of women in the workforce in the region. Powered by Women has opened IFC’s, the donors’, and partners’ eyes to this important discipline and work in gender equality and diversity.”

Isabel Chatterton, Asia Pacific Regional Head of Industry, Infrastructure and Natural Resources, IFC

3.2 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The program has realized clear and transformative success in the four main commitment areas, with cross-cutting changes observed in the member companies. Figure 5 shows the number of member companies participating in the four areas through a gender-smart approach. Some organizations have made significant progress in closing the gender gap, within and outside their commitment areas, and notable shifts in thinking and practices in the workplace around gender equality have been reported by both women and men.

Over the program’s duration, member companies reported an increase in the number of women on their boards and in managerial roles. There was also an observed increase in the uptake of paternity and maternity leave, and women in non-traditional roles also increased. Overall, companies have reported that promoting gender equality has been good for business and female staff are now more confident.

Figure 5: Gender-smart approach – commitment areas of each member company

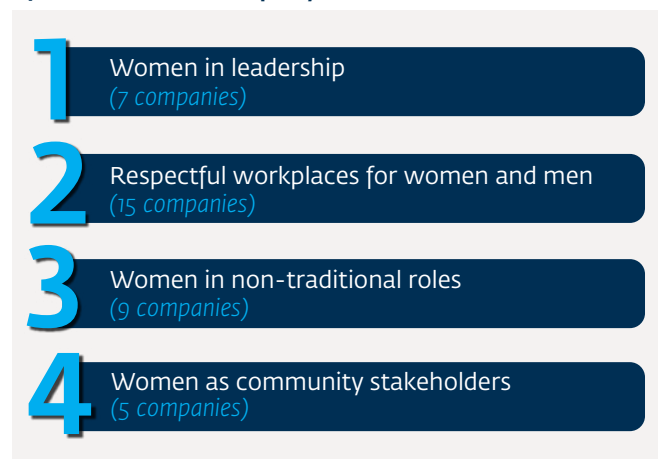
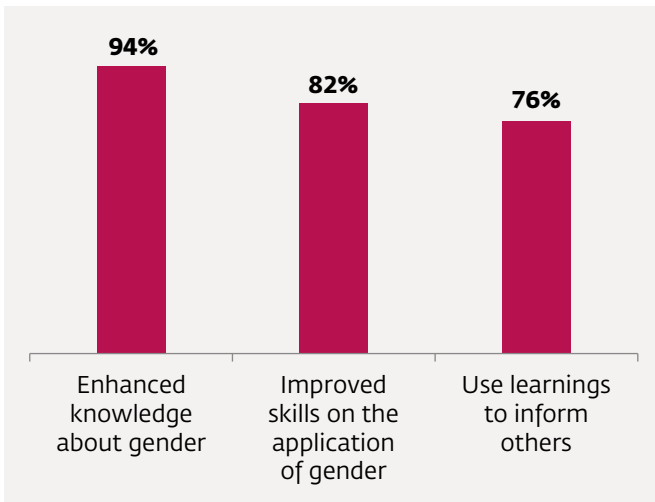


Table 3: Companies participating in each of the four commitment areas of PbW Nepal Initiative

	Women in leadership	Respectful workplaces	Women in non-traditional roles	Women as community stakeholders
Butwal Power Company Limited	●	●		
Chaudhary Group Energy Infrastructure Private Limited	●	●	●	
High Himalaya Hydro Construction Private Limited		●	●	
Hydro-Consult Engineering Limited		●	●	
IDI Hydropower Company Private Limited	●			●
Independent Power Producers' Association, Nepal	●	●		
Kalinchock Hydropower Company Private Limited	●	●		
National Hydro Power Company Limited/ Lower Erkuwa Hydropower Company Private Limited		●	●	
Nepal Water and Energy Development Company Private Limited		●	●	
Nilgiri Khola Hydropower Company Limited		●		
NRN Infrastructure and Development Limited	●	●		
Ridi Power Company Limited		●		
Ruby Valley Hydropower Limited		●	●	
Sanima Hydro				●
Sanjen Jalavidhyut Company Limited		●		
Solu Hydropower Private Limited	●	●	●	●
Urja Developers Private Limited		●	●	●
White Lotus Power Private Limited			●	●

A total of 94 percent of the member companies reported having actively participated in the PbW activities. This is confirmed through the endline survey. Of these, 100 percent were found to be very satisfied or satisfied with the PbW activities they engaged in.

Figure 6: The initiative's impact

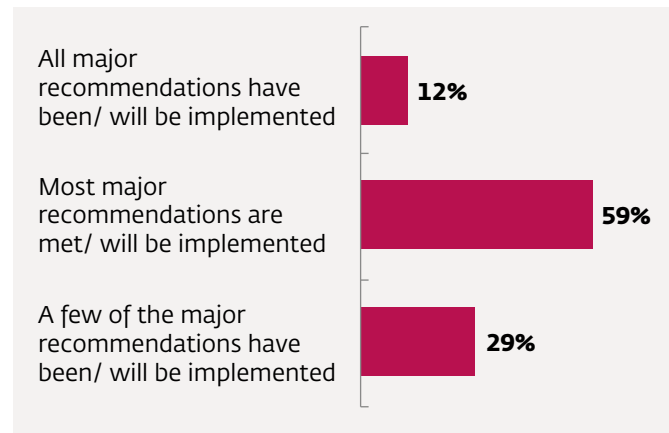


Changes reported by companies due to PbW Nepal initiative include enhanced knowledge about gender (94 percent), improved skills on the application of gender (82 percent), and using the learnings to inform others (76 percent) (Figure 6).

PbW Nepal initiative helped companies introduce new policies, programs, and practices to enhance gender equality and diversity, address GBVH, and promote respectful workplaces as a means to address pervasive risks and, by doing so, make the workplace a more attractive place to be, enabling women to actualize their talents and increase sustainability. The program worked with clients such as NWEDC, as part of the ESG advisory services, to link IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards and gender. The gender-related interventions aim to reduce the risk of GBVH in the workplace and the communities in which the companies operate.

A total of 71 percent of companies reported that they have implemented or will be implementing all or most of the major recommendations made by PbW Nepal initiative, with 29 percent advising that a few major recommendations have been implemented or are planned to be implemented in the near future (Figure 7).

Figure 7: PbW recommendations adopted by companies



At the end of the program, participating companies had achieved the following:

- 88 percent of companies reported reduced absenteeism
- 7 percentage point increase in women recruited in non-technical roles (35 percent at the end of the program compared to 28 percent at inception)
- 19 percentage point increase in women in leadership positions (with a 7 percentage point increase in board positions and a 12 percentage point increase in managerial roles)
- 63 percent of companies formalized/adopted gender-mainstreamed HR policies/procedures that are benefiting 1,075 individuals in their workforce.

Overall, the results show an improvement due to the actions undertaken by the member companies under the program's four commitment areas. These overall achievements are detailed in the following sections, along with impact stories of the member companies and lessons learned from the program.

4. ACHIEVEMENTS, IMPACT STORIES, AND LESSONS LEARNED

4.1 OVERALL ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT OF POWERED BY WOMEN NEPAL INITIATIVE

PbW Nepal initiative successfully influenced the hydropower sector, breaking down barriers and shifting thinking on gender.

The enthusiasm and motivation of the participants was clearly evident. As a result of the program, both women's and men's way of thinking transformed. Moreover, company practices changed, with members making strong commitments to addressing gender-related risks, sustainability, and gender equality, and implementing good practices. Through the Focal Points, capacity was built. Changes in behavior and improved skills in communication, leadership, conflict resolution, policy development, action planning, ESG, and technical hydropower project (HPP) matters were also evident.

“Powered Series webinars have eased my fear of facing the audience while presenting. I am more confident to share my views than I was before,” shared Prashamsa Lamichhane, Public Relations Officer and Focal Point, IDI Hydropower Company Private Limited.

A strong, interactive, and supportive member network was established, effectively creating a think tank for gender equality in the HPP sector in Nepal, as well as other related issues. The program's impact on the HPP sector beyond the Focal Points and their companies could be observed in the field-based sites and, in some cases, the community.

The donor governments of Australia, Japan, and Norway confirmed the significant impact of the investment made by the program and IFC's contribution. The donor governments, member companies, Focal Points, and other stakeholders recognized IFC's PbW Nepal initiative team for its commitment, support, funding, and technical resources that were provided to make the program a success. They also acknowledged the important link to IFC's Gender team, which worked directly with private developers such as NWEDC through the initiative, making sure deep capacity was built through this engagement.

A female site-based geologist on duty.



Photo: Sanima Hydro

PbW Nepal initiative provided an important platform for dialogue, was inclusive, and provided links to climate change and gender issues and ESG. The program's analytical and interactive approach provided the opportunity for deeper analysis. It was consistent in its approach, highly communicative, and adaptive in its way of interacting, while adapting to the challenges Nepal faced, including post-earthquake political instability and the COVID-19 pandemic. It drew from the PbW Myanmar initiative but was adapted to Nepal's context.

PbW Nepal initiative came at a valuable time for closing the gender gap in the hydropower sector as the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women in the workforce and increased GBVH risks in remote locations. It used the pandemic as an opportunity for the member companies and Focal Points to focus on a positive initiative during a challenging time, using a hybrid approach of delivering both online and offline events.



Kabita Pokhrel at the Power Summit, 2023.

“Powered by Women Nepal has boosted my confidence level and increased my leadership skills. I can see now from a gender lens. Powered by Women Nepal is an asset for me forever.”

Kabita Pokhrel, Executive Director, Ruby Valley Hydropower Limited, and Focal Point

Its impact can be observed through the strong improvement under all four commitment areas and the impact stories that have come out through the interviews and photography webinar, as confirmed by donors, stakeholders, and other IFC representatives involved with the program. The initiative can be replicated within Nepal’s renewable energy sector, in other sectors, and in other countries.

The development and implementation of gender equality policies and guidelines within member companies, complemented by the capacity building provided to all those involved and support through IPPAN and the government of Nepal, should enable the sustainability of the program and support new recruits and hopefully future generations in Nepal. This was evidenced through the high turnout of women at the IPPAN Power Summit in April 2023 – a marked increase from all previous years.

Kate Hayes, Advisor to the Australian government, highlighted the benefits of the initiative: “Powered by Women Nepal initiative enabled a shift in entrenched structural barriers and cultural norms. What was obvious was that IFC was already on the gender equality journey, working in a harder technical area. The cross-learning aspect of making a business case for gender inclusion was brilliant, showing the benefit of gender diversity and increasing the performance of companies. The program was implemented during a difficult time in Nepal, following the impact of the earthquake, politics, and COVID-19. High-profile men were observed supporting the program. The program ensured women and men were in the room to open their eyes and see the benefits that could be accrued. Focal Points were clearly transformed, in terms of their lens on gender equality and what it means.”

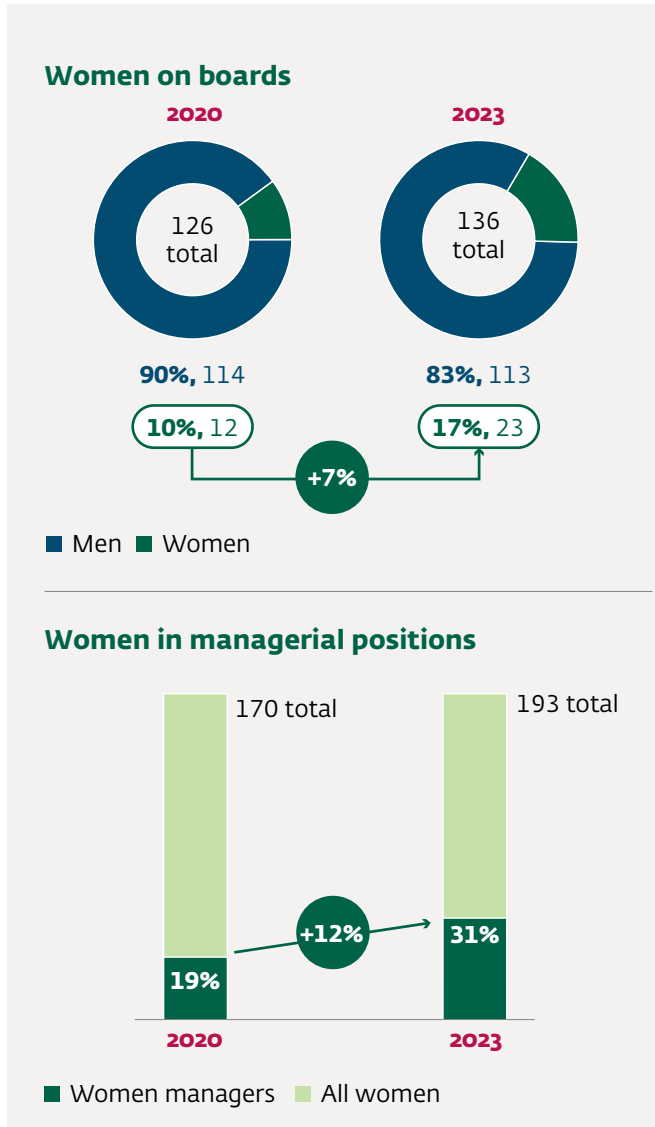
4.2 COMMITMENT 1: PROMOTING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Having women in leadership roles has many benefits. Empowering women and building their capacity boosts their confidence to participate in leadership roles and contribute to decision-making. This in turn improves businesses’ equity, reputation, productivity, and sustainability. Gender-diverse leadership is also positively linked to ESG.

Seven member companies committed to promoting women in leadership within their organizations, although most companies showed interest in this area despite not making a formal commitment. Of the member companies, four were led by women (24 percent): NRN Infrastructure and Development Limited, Ruby Valley Hydropower Limited, White Lotus Power Private Limited, and Kalinchock Hydropower (Figure 8).

By the end of the program, the total number of women at the board and management levels had doubled. The number of women in the position of director on their company boards increased from 10 percent in 2020 to 17 percent in 2023, and the number of women in managerial roles increased from 19 percent to 31 percent over the same period. Similarly, 49 percent of female employees (95 women) participated in the leadership trainings offered by the companies in 2023, up from 16 percent (27 women) in 2020.

Figure 8: Women on boards and in managerial roles, 2020–2023



In addition, 10 companies reported having strategies and targets in place to increase gender parity on their boards, at managerial levels, and across departments.

Nine of the member companies have women-led committees to amplify women’s voices, increase women’s representation on committees, and drive gender-friendly services and decisions within the workplace, which is a 12 percentage point increase in the number of women heading committees from 2020 to 2023.

There is also evidence of growing representation of women as members on different committees to advance women’s participation, support, and voices on important issues relating to GBVH, as follows:

- Urja Developers: Management Committee and Occupational Health and Safety Committee
- NRN Infrastructure and Development: Risk and Investment Advisory Committee
- Butwal Power Company: Grievance Redress Committee and Staff Union Association
- IPPAN: Women and Energy Subcommittee
- Kalinchok Hydropower: Recruitment Committee/Panel.

The Focal Points noted the importance of having women in leadership roles to create a gender-friendly workspace. Thus, having women on the board and in senior management was crucial to design, promote, and approve gender-friendly policies. It was also noted that female employees were reluctant to seek leadership positions. Companies can change this mindset by investing in targeted training programs aimed at women’s professional development within the company. Lastly, where women are leaders/directors, they need to be given equal decision-making power as their male counterparts.

NETWORKING THE NETWORK – HOW IPPAN TOOK ON GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN NEPAL

IPPAN is an autonomous non-profit, non-governmental organization that provides a link between the private sector and government organizations involved in developing hydropower in the country with the aim of Nepalese citizens getting the maximum benefit from the development effort. The organization, which has 400 members, also actively helps exchange technology, expertise, knowledge, and financial and management information among independent power producers in the country.

IPPAN and IFC have a longstanding partnership, having worked together on projects involving technical, commercial, financial, and environmental and social dimensions, including gender equality and diversity through PbW Nepal initiative, for which IPPAN signed a memorandum of understanding with IFC at its Power Summit in 2019. Initially, IPPAN supported IFC in its outreach to hydropower companies for the Powered by Women – Business Case for Gender Diversity and Equality in Nepal's Hydropower Sector. This report provided the foundation for PbW Nepal initiative to help companies promote business growth and efficiency and enhance sustainability through increased gender diversity.

Following this initial engagement, IPPAN signed up as one of the 19 companies within Nepal's hydropower sector to partner with IFC, committing to addressing gender diversity and equality in the workplace. Specifically, IPPAN committed to two areas: promoting women in leadership and promoting respectful workplaces for women and men. In meeting this commitment IPPAN has successfully included two women on its Executive Committee and set up a Women and Energy Subcommittee, chaired by Kabita Pokhrel, IPPAN Executive Committee member. The Women and Energy Subcommittee will oversee the development of a policy on GBVH, supported by the PbW training, and will revise its code of conduct to integrate and address sexual harassment in the workplace.



PbW members participating in a panel discussion titled Sustainable and Inclusive Hydropower Development at the Power Summit, 2023.

"We recognize the need to make conscious efforts to increase the number of women in the power sector. Our organization has already taken a step forward by making women participation mandatory in the Executive Committee," said Ganesh Karki, Vice President of IPPAN. Moreover, the IPPAN Executive Committee announced they will have three female members in 2023.⁸

IPPAN has also promoted women in leadership through presenting at awareness sessions on women empowerment at the Himalayan Hydro Expo in April 2022, convening the Women in the Energy Sector Workshop in January 2023, and successfully holding one of the region's biggest summits, the Power Summit – Broadening Green Energy Markets, in April 2023. The summit empowered women to lead and present at key sessions, providing exposure to PbW Nepal initiative and its achievements. "IFC's support has been very helpful in raising the bar and benchmark," said Kabita Pokhrel, Chair of IPPAN's Women and Energy Subcommittee, a member of IPPAN's Executive Committee, and Executive Director of Ruby Valley Hydropower Limited.

IPPAN remains committed to PbW Nepal initiative and will continue its work with its member companies on gender equality and diversity. "IPPAN has been and would always continue to act as a strong ally for all such initiatives and meaningful engagements to create a better, inclusive, and sustainable future together," noted Shailesh Mishra, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of IPPAN and PbW Focal Point.

"It can be observed in the market that women can do better than men, as they are very sincere and capable."

Ganesh Karki, Vice President of IPPAN

⁸ IPPAN's Annual General Meeting held on 15 June 2023 elected four female members into its 27-member Executive Committee.

Usha Khatiwada, CEO, NRN Infrastructure and Development, at an HPP site.

Photo: NRN Infrastructure and Development



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS – A FEMALE CEO LEADING WOMEN INTO LEADERSHIP IN THE HYDRO-POWER SECTOR

Usha Khatiwada, as CEO of NRN Infrastructure and Development and PbW Focal Point, is seen as a role model in Nepal for women in leadership as she has experienced the challenges and opportunities of rising through the ranks of a traditionally male-dominated industry such as the hydropower sector.

“If you are not given a seat at the table, bring your own folding chair,” advises Usha, echoing the words of US congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. “The future is better with women at every table where decisions are being made. PbW Nepal initiative inspired us to recognize that diversity is not simply going to happen overnight and there must be a concerted effort to focus on gender diversity and that it needs to be made a priority within an organization.”

Usha is leading by example through her recent participation at the Power Summit – Broadening Green Energy Markets convened by IPPAN in April 2023, and Ring the Bell on Gender Equality at the Nepal Stock Exchange. In addition, she was a guest speaker at the International Conference on Water Resources and Renewable Energy Development in Asia held in March 2023 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and

“The future is better with women at every table where decisions are being made. PbW Nepal initiative inspired us to recognize that diversity is not simply going to happen overnight and there must be a concerted effort to focus on gender diversity and that it needs to be made a priority within an organization.”

Usha Khatiwada, CEO of NRN Infrastructure and Development

a speaker at the Women in Tech Global Conference in May 2023. She is nominated for the Women in Leadership category at the She Inspires Awards to be held in November 2023 and will be awarded a Women with Hydro Vision Award in July 2023.

Usha has attended and benefited from a number of the PbW Nepal initiative trainings, webinar series, and round-table discussions covering diverse topics such as why gender in ESG matters, building respectful workplaces, and advancing sustainable hydropower.

Commenting on the benefits of the program, Usha notes, “A peer-to-peer learning platform has been created through PbW Nepal initiative, which has helped in the transformation of ways of thinking around gender equality and diversity. This has been the best part of PbW Nepal initiative.” Applying what she has learned from the initiative, Usha confirms, “I have also successfully advocated to bring in female leaders as representatives on the board of directors and key committees within NRN Infrastructure and Development, and a human resources policy has been prepared, as guided by the Powered series, and brought to implementation as a result of the advisory services provided by IFC, which is a great achievement to promote a respectful workplace.”

4.3 COMMITMENT 2: PROMOTING RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES FOR WOMEN AND MEN

Respectful workplaces are workplaces free from harm, bullying, and harassment. This is an important aspect of risk management, which IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards address. ESG is core to respectful workplaces through its good practice standards for operational frameworks, training, grievance redress mechanisms, awareness programs, and codes of conduct – which are all fundamental for managing gender-related risks and promoting good social practices. Implementing gender-inclusive employment practices improves the recruitment and retention of talented employees. Gender-friendly policies are important in allaying fears around GBVH risk for women staff, as this risk impacts them personally and can impede field work and hinder or undermine effective job delivery. There is overwhelming literature and evidence that gender-sensitive and family friendly policies such as childcare, respectful workplaces, and flexible work contribute to boosting staff productivity, supporting business growth, and attracting and retaining employees (IFC 2019).

Promoting respectful workplaces for women and men was the most subscribed commitment area, with 15 companies committing to respectful workplaces within their organizations. At the beginning of the program only seven companies had included gender in their HR policies; at the end of the program this had increased to 12 companies. From 2020 to 2023, through PbW Nepal initiative, there was a 100 percent increase in all other policies and procedures. The percentage of member companies developing and implementing respectful workplace policies and procedures in 2023 was as follows (Figure 9):

- Mainstreaming gender in HR policies: 71 percent
- Adopting an anti-GBVH policy: 29 percent
- Setting up gender-inclusive hiring panels/committees: 24 percent
- Adopting respectful workplace guidelines: 47 percent
- Appointing respectful workplace advisors: 18 percent
- Adopting a code of conduct to prevent bullying and sexual harassment: 41 percent
- Providing training sessions to promote respectful behaviors: 47 percent.

It was also reported that 47 percent of companies now have a formal grievance redress mechanism in place at the corporate level compared to only 6 percent at the time of the baseline survey. Moreover, 29 percent of companies integrated GBVH within the grievance redress mechanism and appointed a Grievance Handling Officer (Figure 10).

Of the 15 member companies committed to this area, all reported that respectful workplace programs, family friendly policies, and flexible work arrangements have resulted in higher attendance, reduced unplanned absenteeism, and reduced productivity losses within their companies. Companies have also reported on cross-cutting changes and progress they have made outside of their commitment areas. Member companies have implemented the following family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements:

- Flexible work arrangements (16 companies benefiting 1,276 employees)
- Maternity leave (15 companies benefiting 176 women)
- Paternity leave (14 companies benefiting 112 men)
- On-site childcare support (3 companies benefiting 233 employees).

The Focal Points noted the importance of developing policies that integrate GBVH risks in consultation with staff to make sure they are meaningful, and regularly communicating them to the workforce. Such policies also need to be fully backed by the highest levels of senior management and the roles of key staff developing and implementing them recognized to enable their successful implementation. In addition, the personnel involved must be well trained to undertake their roles, especially when dealing with sensitive issues. As GBVH is a complex area and requires in-depth understanding, companies need to invest in capacitating staff through refresher training courses from time to time. Including board directors and CEOs in GBVH training and information sessions is also crucial to enable management to provide appropriate guidance.

Figure 9: Baseline and progress results for the companies writing and adopting respectful workplace policies

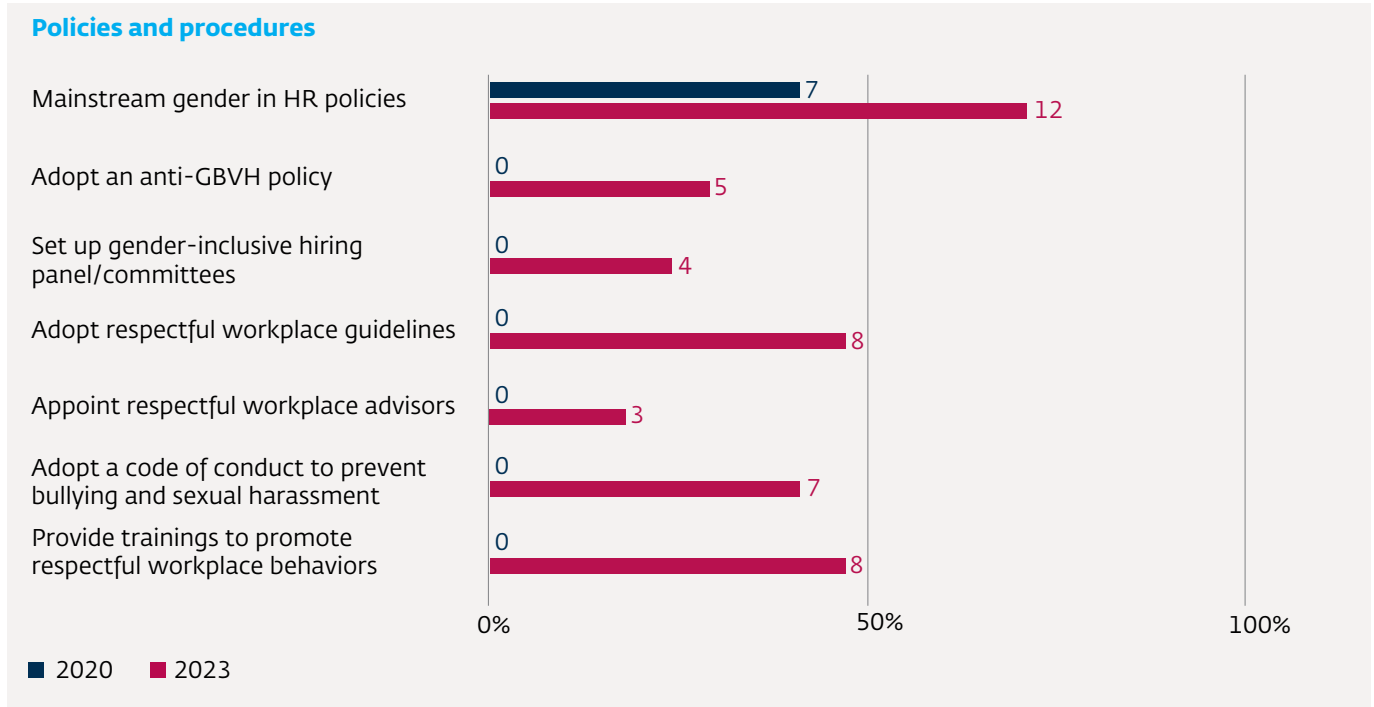
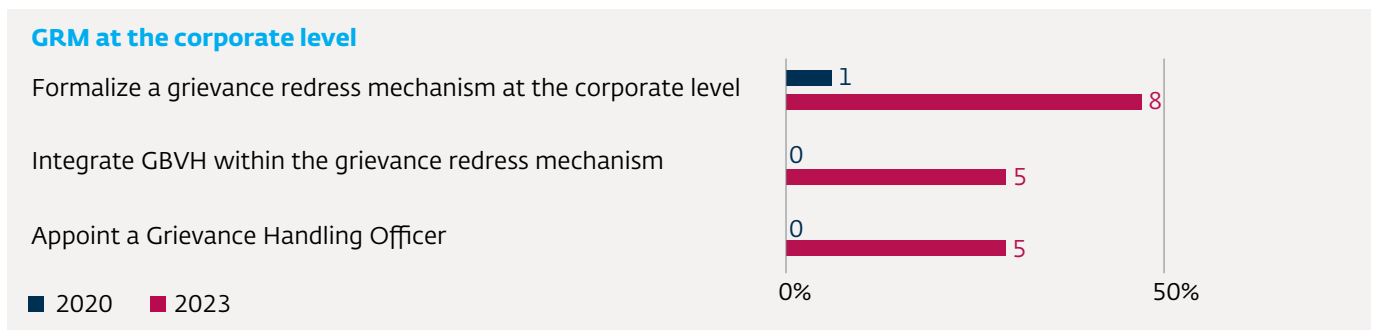


Figure 10: Baseline and progress results for the companies setting up a grievance redress mechanism at the corporate level



“Powered by Women Nepal initiative has supported the companies in creating better workplaces. Men are more respectful. Women are now leading the company and are doing a very good job, not a lesser outcome.”

Isha Shrestha, Nilgiri Khola Hydropower Company

Female engineers at NWEDC on duty.



Photo: Nepal Water and Energy Development Company Private Limited

NWEDC CLOSING GENDER GAPS ACROSS THE COMPANY AND THROUGH ITS INVESTMENT IN UT-1

For more than a decade, IFC has been engaged with the Nepal Water and Energy Development Company (NWEDC) to establish a \$453 million debt and \$29.2 million equity financing package for the development, construction, operation, and maintenance of the Upper Trishuli 1 Hydropower Project, known as UT-1, a 216 MW run-of-river hydropower project that will significantly increase Nepal's domestic energy production and help meet its growing demand for electricity. The investment is complemented by the Nepal Hydropower Environmental and Social Advisory project – led by the ESG advisory, with gender expertise provided by the Gender and Economic Inclusion Group. UT-1 is the first hydropower project in Nepal to undertake a consent process with affected indigenous communities as per IFC's Performance Standards 7: Indigenous Peoples. Gender equality and diversity are also a priority issue for NWEDC, which has committed, through the PbW Nepal initiative, to promoting respectful workplaces and encouraging women in non-traditional roles.

Key achievements have been observed: female employees have been recruited for technical positions and a Director role within the Environmental and Social Department; and a risk assessment of GBVH was undertaken through a gender safety audit, resulting in a grievance redress mechanism and a code of conduct that includes GBVH,

with subsequent amendments to the operational manual to follow. What makes these initiatives more impactful is that they apply at the corporate, site, and contractor level. Encouraging women to engage in non-traditional roles has been a challenge. To address this issue, gender sensitization workshops were held on site for male staff and contractors; and two female civil engineers, as well as female technical contractors/specialists, have been appointed. Through its commitment to engaging women as community stakeholders, NWEDC has undertaken a gender impact assessment as part of its EIA and has disaggregated data using the gender considerations recommended in the Nepal Hydropower Environmental Impact Assessment Manual – with the gender and hydropower training sessions and Powered webinar series raising awareness of these considerations.

Dipesh Bista, Senior Manager, Environmental and Social Department, and Focal Point, has found value in the initiative, "Learning and experiences in enhancing women's participation in hydro portfolios has been truly enriching. Collaboration with IFC through the gender cooperation agreement has led to key learnings on how gender provisions at the policy level can reduce gender gaps at an organizational level. Lessons and good practices from pioneering institutions were truly inspiring and such experience sharing workshops would be fruitful for all participating organizations."

Post-training achievement – participants of Gender and Hydropower Training III.



Photo: Laura Bull/International Centre for Hydropower

Shalaka Joshi, Gender Lead, South Asia, IFC, is supporting the gender advisory services to NWEDC. She observed the following about the PbW Nepal initiative: “It is exceptionally intuitive as it builds a platform for change, adapted beautifully for Nepal, drawing from lessons learned in Myanmar. It is being implemented in a very inclusive way, where international best practices are being used and enhanced by local partners on the ground. The project design and implementation has been challenged as the hydropower sector is difficult to achieve changes in gender equality. The PbW Nepal initiative has created an environment where learning is practical and appetite for learning is vetted. The IFC engagement with NWEDC provides a beautiful umbrella, enabling a deep dive with one of the largest projects in Nepal. Senior leaders are now speaking the language of gender equality and diversity as they now have the data and are able to do the analysis and address the gaps.”

FEMALE AND MALE PROFESSIONALS WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE WORKPLACE AT KALINCHOCK HYDROPOWER

Kalinchock Hydropower Company, through its engagement with the PbW Nepal initiative, is providing a leading example of young female and male professionals working together to advance women in leadership and promote respectful workplaces for women and men, with a clear improvement in the workplace through a change in gender lens.

Since joining the PbW Nepal initiative, Prabha Pant, Administration Officer and Focal Point, and Nischal Manandhar, Finance Officer, have learned about new ideas of addressing gender gaps within their company, women empowerment and respectful workplace issues, ways to address these issues, and how to develop a gender-friendly policy as a result of consultations and participation in PbW Nepal initiative events.

“The participation of both males and females in the programs and workshop has created a more gender-friendly environment in the workplace. Programs and action plans of IFC are very productive and reliable. We really appreciate the effort made by the IFC team. These programs taught us how to achieve goals through the

action plans in a step-by-step manner, which is useful for any program management,” said Nischal. “After IFC’s recommendations were adopted, now everyone can share about their situation without any hesitation or fear.”

Kalinchock Hydropower has developed and implemented an HR policy; a code of conduct to address sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment; and respectful workplace guidelines. A female has been appointed as the Respectful Workplace Advisor, where staff can openly talk about problems they are having related to GBVH or other gender-related issues. Achievements include the following: the number of women on the board has increased, with one female maintaining this position; an inclusive hiring panel has been established with at least one woman as its member and this provision has been integrated into the HR policy; a female corporate lawyer has been hired as the Company Secretary; and enhanced gender diversity is resulting in a 50-50 representation of women and men in all trainings provided to staff.

Both Prabha and Nischal have seen that a respectful workplace environment strengthens staff unity and teamwork by making it easier to share views and ideas without any hesitation. Through inclusive consultations during the development and finalization of the respectful workplace guidelines and code of conduct, employees have better knowledge of respectful workplace issues and harassment, including the company’s policies on gender equality and prevention of GBVH.

“Workplace harassment is now being addressed. The result has been a happier and friendlier workplace, which has improved the workplace. On a personal level, I had a friend in a big company who was being harassed at the manager level. As a result, they left the company, with the company losing skills and intellectual property. At that time, I was not empowered to say anything. Now because of PbW Nepal initiative I am more empowered to encourage others in making sure the workplace environment is respectful,” concluded Prabha.

BUTWAL POWER COMPANY TAKES A ZERO TOLERANCE APPROACH TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Butwal Power Company (BPC) was established in 1966 in Nepal by a visionary Norwegian engineer, Mr. Odd Hoftun, and became a public listed company in 1993. Due to its international leadership, BPC was set up following international best practices, with clear equal employment opportunities and gender policies in place and a senior management supportive of gender equality and diversity. BPC's engagement with the PbW Nepal initiative has resulted in further improvements through its commitment to promoting women in leadership and building respectful workplaces.

For the first time in its long history, BPC now has an independent female on the board and female representation on its union. It is also now a requirement to have a woman on the HR panel, and females are encouraged to apply for all advertised vacancies within the company. The Personnel Manual has been revised to address bullying and sexual harassment, and a comprehensive policy document on a GBVH grievance redress mechanism for the workplace and community has been prepared and endorsed, with ongoing awareness raising for staff. To improve the manual, IFC's GBVH self-assessment tool has been piloted to understand the company's strengths and areas of improvement in its ability to promote gender equality and the right to work in a safe and respectful environment, free of all forms of violence and harassment.

To complement this, a female employee has been appointed as the Grievance Handling Officer, as female employees find it more comfortable to speak to another female about a grievance. An induction/orientation program that provides awareness on the grievance redress mechanism is being delivered. Evidence suggests that the process is working, with staff already reporting concerns with less fear of speaking out or reaching out for support. Swasti Aryal, Senior Planning and Monitoring Officer and Focal Point, observed during her recent site visit that "so many women approached wanting to know what GBVH is, with a separate session being held, with so many questions.



GBVH workshop with site-based employees of BPC.

Photo: Butwal Power Company

A big achievement has been the change in attitude and confidence for women employees to enter into a dialogue and share their problems, with women also more confident now and happy at work."

The innovations introduced are working effectively due to Senior Managers confirming that the learnings are discussed in top management meetings, and department heads are asked to share the same with employees in their respective departments during fortnightly departmental meetings, with a clear message of zero tolerance for all forms of violence. Training and workshops on gender-related issues within the company were found to be important as they have enabled employees at project sites to upskill and build knowledge. Furthermore, IFC's training on GBVH risk governance to BPC's board and senior management has helped the board understand what they can do to support efforts to address the risks of GBVH. This has allowed them to provide timely oversight and monitor the rollout of the GBVH policies that BPC has developed with PbW Nepal initiative's support.

Swasti, on her experience with the PbW Nepal initiative, commented, "Getting involved in the PbW Nepal initiative as a Focal Point has been an entirely new and exciting experience for me. As an individual, it has provided me with a lot of learning and exposure in the field. The series of workshops, trainings, webinars, and programs has significantly aided my development professionally and personally. As a company, there is no doubt that it has benefited greatly, particularly in its commitment areas: women in leadership and respectful workplaces. The initiative took a very innovative and practical approach, with a deep engagement of all the member companies. I truly acknowledge the time and effort that the PbW team has put into making this program a huge success. PbW has been an effective and beautiful journey."

GENDER TAKES CENTER STAGE AT URJA DEVELOPERS

Urja Developers has shown strong commitment to three areas of the PbW Nepal initiative – women as stakeholders, respectful workplaces for women and men, and women in non-traditional roles. It has made significant progress in developing an anti-bullying policy; a non-discrimination and equal pay policy; a policy on the prevention of GBVH; a code of conduct that addresses sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment; and a respectful workplace policy/guideline for its head office and project sites. Specifically, Urja Developers, with support from IFC's advisory services, has set up a grievance redress mechanism which includes GBVH at the corporate and community level, with protocols and an action plan developed to roll it out. To further enrich this initiative, a female employee has been designated as the Grievance Handling Officer and the company plans to include GBVH in its daily Toolbox Talks in the near future.

Jyotika Shah, former Environment and Social Associate, Urja Developers, commented on the initiative, "The first thing we did was to look into our grievance policy and assess where we could make some improvements. We have grievance collection boxes at the head office and also at our project sites so people can anonymously submit their grievances if they like, making any complaints or communications that might be sensitive easier to do."

Through introducing these policies, Kalandika Rana, Corporate Governance Officer and Focal Point, has observed that there is "more awareness among the employees on the importance of promoting a respectful workplace. This has improved team communications as well as interdepartmental communication. It has also helped increase retention of female employees."

Urja Developers has also been actively encouraging a culture of prioritizing women at the senior management level and in non-traditional roles. For example, it is prioritizing hiring female personnel for technical and non-traditional roles at the project sites and head office. It has two female employees working on site as operations officers, five female engineers at the head office, two



Colleagues from Urja Developers celebrating International Women's Day, 2023, organized by the Lalitpur Metropolitan City Office.

females at the senior management level (with one heading the Management Committee), and three females on the board. Capacity-building training workshops have been provided for women in non-traditional roles to discuss issues they face and possible solutions, informal mentoring is supporting all female employees, and it is a requirement to have female representation on the Environmental, Social, Health, and Safety Committees at project sites. This has led to a significant increase in female engineers working at the head office and project sites, with staff more comfortable to talk about issues surrounding gender and equality.

Sauravi Bhattarai, former Site Supervisor at Urja Developers, reflected, "From my own experience non-conventional choices have certain challenges but also bring out ample opportunities. The STEM field is usually a challenging field and requires years of hard work and dedication and it is very necessary to have patience and dedication to move forward to build up our career. For women who are involved in non-traditional occupations, Powered by Women is the best platform because it helps the member companies with trainings and resources to close gender gaps and build up gender-smart workplaces."

In 2022, Urja Developers revised its stakeholder engagement guidelines to promote women's participation in community consultations. This is reflected in women-only focus group discussions and consultations held to understand their needs and demands, resulting in an increase in outreach to women affected by projects. Gender-disaggregated data is now collected in project areas during the initial environmental examination/EIA phase and a

gender impact assessment is carried out as part of the social impact assessment. A Community Liaison Officer has been hired and introduced to local women's groups, enhancing accessibility for the women in the community if they need to discuss any issues.

Urja Developers' senior management is positive about the impact of the changes made and has committed to working with IFC to continue this ground-breaking work in gender equality and diversity. The second phase of support from IFC will upskill Urja Developers' staff and strengthen its ESG component within programs and projects. Kalandika concludes, "The PbW Nepal initiative has been a great learning experience for us. The initiative has helped us look at things from a gender lens and understand the relevancy of gender in the hydropower sector. The webinars, workshops, and roundtable meetings have been highly informative and have provided a platform for knowledge and experience sharing."

"I was always active and wanted to work. I was able to be stationed at the project site due to the support from my husband and his family. However, in the end, it was my self-determination, confidence, and proactiveness which helped me continue to do the job."

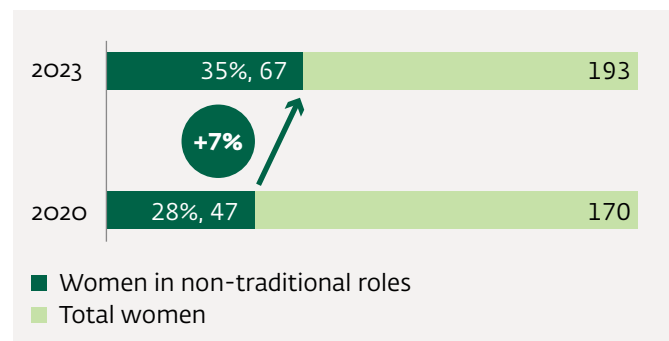
Manolack Bouphasiri Shrestha, Senior Engineer, NHPC, and Focal Point

4.4 COMMITMENT 3: PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL ROLES

Non-traditional roles in the hydropower sector tend to present particular challenges for women, as they involve significant travel and may require moving to a remote location, working outdoors, or keeping irregular and unusual hours. The physical safety of female employees at project sites is also a concern. The challenges of hiring and retaining female employees in technical roles, especially on site, can to some extent be addressed by implementing sanitation and safety measures such as dedicated and lockable accommodation (rooms, bathrooms), sanitary/washing facilities for women, and common break rooms, and providing assistance with childcare.

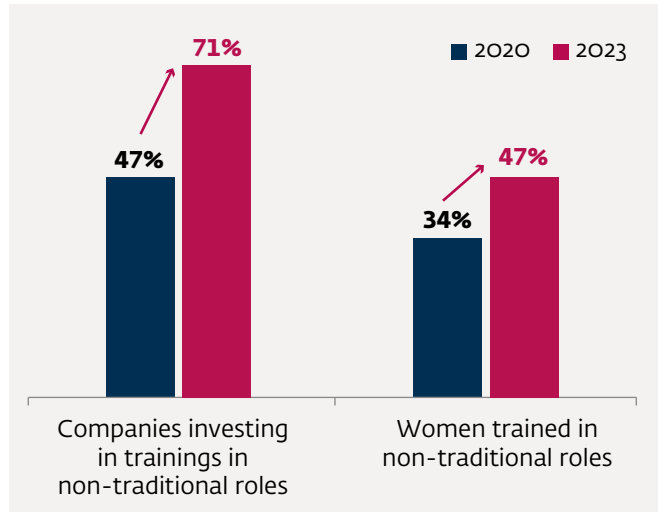
Almost half of the PbW Nepal initiative member companies (nine) committed to promoting opportunities for women in non-traditional roles. There has been a 7 percentage point increase in women recruited in non-traditional roles. At the beginning of the program there were only 47 women in non-traditional roles, and this has increased to 67 women. Of the total women in non-traditional roles, 90 percent are engineers (60 women), while the other 10 percent (7 women) are in positions of Executive Directors, CEOs, and security guards (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Women in non-traditional roles



Twelve companies are investing in training for women in non-traditional roles, with 90 of 193 female employees being trained (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Baseline and progress results for the women in non-traditional roles commitment



“In Nepal, the number of women engaged as an employee and entrepreneur are both very low as it is a male-dominated sector. There are various reasons behind this. Firstly, there are a lack of women in the STEM field. Secondly, the hydropower sector is remote and not easily accessible in the starting phase. Thirdly, the gender bias which prevails in society since the hydropower sector is located in remote areas, it is thought that it is not safe enough for women to go there ... But with my determination and support from my husband, I started a job away from my hometown.”

Kabita Pokhrel, Executive Director, Ruby Valley Hydropower Limited, and Focal Point

NATIONAL HYDROPOWER COMPANY LIMITED IS NOT MUCKING AROUND WHEN IT COMES TO SUPPORTING WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL ROLES

Through PbW Nepal initiative, the National Hydropower Company Limited (NHPC) has committed to promoting women in leadership, promoting respectful workplaces, and encouraging women in non-traditional roles. To meet these commitments, the company successfully developed a policy to create a safe workplace that addresses GBVH and encourages gender equality and diversity, which has been approved by senior management.

Kumar Pandey, Chairperson of NHPC, observed that “there are a number of things that are very inherent to the hydropower industry that is different to other industries in the fact that you have to be away from home with limited facilities, with security an issue, as well as being away from home can be difficult for young women that have families and children.”

Manolack Bouphasiri Shrestha, Senior Engineer and Focal Point, can attest to this. She started her career in a non-traditional role on site at the Indrawati 3 HPP owned by NHPC. Maintaining her role in a male-dominated industry for more than 20 years, being promoted from Operational Engineer to Station Manager, has had its challenges.

Manolack, a Lao national, had to break down cultural norms to be accepted by her male peers. This was made more challenging as she had to learn about the culture of Nepal and the Nepali language to be accepted.

A critical aspect of her success was that her Nepalese family were supportive of her staying on site, as was senior management. In her role she has had to deal with challenging emergencies, including earthquakes, landslides, flooding, and other local issues. She is certainly not afraid of mucking around in the mud.

Now in a managerial role, she has found that her colleagues are responding positively to the open and

flexible family environment that has been created. Manolack has found PbW Nepal initiative extremely useful and helpful: “It has provided an environment where women and men advance together and cooperate with each other in the workplace; it has made us more socially active and made us more confident in ourselves to share our knowledge and opinions. The program has enabled us to raise awareness within the company of the importance of women in non-traditional roles and I can see this is changing staff and the way they understand gender equality and diversity.”

Manolack has clearly benefited from the network created by the PbW Nepal initiative and has been an inspiration for all involved. Kumar suggests, “A way forward could be to focus on hiring a pool of women who are trained and skilled up, and potentially focusing on upskilling local women; this would mean women are able to enter into a job on site.”

HCEL LEADING THE WAY IN EMPLOYING WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL ROLES AND PROMOTING A RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE

Hydro-Consult Engineering Limited (HCEL) has been actively involved in implementing its commitments to PbW Nepal initiative in the areas of women in non-traditional roles and respectful workplaces for women and men.

It has addressed gender equality and diversity in the workplace through developing and implementing a Standard Operating Procedure that addresses GBVH risks. This has been supported by internal staff training to make sure that the issues are understood and that the new procedure is adopted by all staff. A GBVH specialist provided specialized training on GBVH to HCEL, as well as one-on-one meetings and follow-up support on the development of the procedure.



A female engineer proudly standing alongside her male colleagues.

Photo: Hydro-Consult Engineering Limited

Furthermore, HCEL has been targeting women’s representation in all the technical departments of the company. To do this, it now has an inclusive hiring panel that includes a female and is making sure that flexible working arrangements and attractive benefits are provided to female employees. This includes providing time in lieu – that is, when an employee is required to work extra hours, they are offered the equivalent amount of leave within that fiscal year. In addition, a nominal family allowance is allocated in each employee’s salary for raising up to two children.

Manohar Shrestha, CEO of HCEL, is leading by example, having attended a three-day women in leadership training course to understand and apply good practices within HCEL’s workplace, and making commitments to increase the number of women employees, with eight female engineers now employed by HCEL.

Anugya Sapkota, Hydropower Engineer and Focal Point, observed that “previously, we had little understanding of the absence of respectful workplaces in our day-to-day occupation. After the trainings, it has made us aware of the importance of talking about these issues in the office. Following PbW Nepal initiative, employees now feel more safe and secure, and there has also been an increase in women reaching out for non-traditional roles.”

LOCAL WOMAN'S LIFE TRANSFORMED THROUGH JOB AT IDI HYDROPOWER

IDI Hydropower may only be a small company, but it has made significant changes through its commitment to PbW Nepal initiative. Following its commitment to advancing more women and training them in non-traditional roles, IDI Hydropower hired a female Security Guard in its HPP Powerhouse in Pokhara in September 2021.

Shanti Pun Gurung had always been a hard worker. She had been working since she was 16 years old to support her family, and now, at the age of 40, she was still working hard to make ends meet. Shanti has been through a lot in her life, and she had learned to be tough and resilient. But even with her strength, she had been struggling financially for years.

She heard many rumors about the construction of a hydro-power plant in her village. Before the construction period, IDI Hydropower held many consultations to discuss the location of the aboveground structures and the increase in employment opportunities. The company talked about the different positions and departments where they were going to hire. The company had prioritized local employment. They tried to visualize the different scenarios and encouraged female employment. When Shanti reached out to the company representative to discuss what kind of job she could do with her capabilities, they suggested the post of Security Guard. Initially, she hesitated as she had never worked in that field before, but she knew she needed a change so decided to apply – and got the job!

Shanti was nervous at first, but as she started working, she found that she enjoyed her job. She was responsible for the safety and security of the hydropower plant, and she took her job seriously. Shanti was respected by her coworkers, and she felt like she was making a difference. As time passed, Shanti's financial situation began to improve. Her salary was good, and she was able to pay off her debts and save some money. She was finally able to take care of herself and her family without worrying about how she would pay the bills.



A female security guard on duty at Lower Solu Hydropower Project in Solukhumbu District.

Photo: Solu Hydropower Private Limited

But it is not just Shanti's financial situation that has improved. The office environment has too. Shanti feels like she is part of a team. Her coworkers at the hydropower plant are supportive and friendly. They work together to solve problems and improve the safety of the plant. Moreover, seeing this bold lady taking care of the hydro-power plant has set an example for the locals that "if your determination and willpower are strong, then there is no word like impossible."

Shanti's job at the hydropower plant has changed her life in many ways. She now has financial stability, a supportive work environment, and a sense of pride in her work. Shanti knows that she was fortunate to have found such a great job, and she is grateful for the opportunities it has given her.

IDI Hydropower continues to advance its commitment to gender equality in the workplace and is in the process of formalizing its employment benefits and HR policies to integrate gender as a core component. Recently, the company appointed a female Stakeholder Consultation Officer to increase engagement with women in community consultations. Furthermore, training on the operation and maintenance of the powerhouse has been delivered, with equal participation of male and female staff.

4.5 COMMITMENT 4: ENGAGING WOMEN AS STAKEHOLDERS IN THE COMMUNITY

Meaningfully engaging women in planning renewable energy development and community investments guarantees benefits are more equitably shared and risks are averted, and helps to secure a social license to operate. IFC Performance Standard 1: Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts states that for projects with adverse impacts, an informed consultation and participation process is required. This process should capture both men’s and women’s views, if necessary, through separate forums or engagements; and reflect men’s and women’s different concerns and priorities about impacts, mitigation mechanisms, and benefits, where appropriate.

Linked to this, IFC’s Performance Standard 7: Indigenous Peoples sets standards to ensure that the development process fosters full respect for the human rights, dignity, aspirations, culture, and natural resource-based livelihoods of indigenous peoples; anticipate and avoid adverse impacts of projects on communities of indigenous peoples, or when avoidance is not possible, to minimize and/or compensate for such impacts; and promote sustainable development benefits and opportunities for indigenous peoples in a culturally appropriate manner – with gender inclusion also emphasized as part of this standard.

“These training programs and workshops have been instrumental in enhancing my skills and knowledge in the area of gender equality and equity. Further, it has helped to communicate effectively with stakeholders on how to promote gender equality in the operations, which ultimately contributes to enhancing sustainability within our company.”

Sital Pokhrel, Solu Hydropower Private Limited and Focal Point



Photo: IDI Hydropower Company Private Limited

Indigenous women pose following a women-only consultation held by IDI Hydropower Project in Kaski District.

Five member companies committed to engaging women as stakeholders in the community. Through the endline survey, nine companies (half of the PbW member companies) reported having undertaken a gender impact assessment as part of the EIA process. At the community level, more member companies implemented gender equality and diversity policies, procedures, and practices in 2023, as follows:



A significant increase in women reached through consultations has been observed. Five companies held women-only consultations in 2023, which reached 412 women, compared to only two companies in 2020, which reached eight women.

Interestingly, all companies found the PbW gender and hydropower training series to be useful in raising awareness about the gender considerations in the Nepal Hydropower Environmental Impact Assessment Manual, with 64 percent following the manual to conduct EIAs of their projects and 41 percent including the gender considerations in the terms of reference for an EIA.

White Lotus Power Private Limited has initiated consultations with women affected by its projects since the beginning of 2022. “The consultations have led to the change in design of our community development and livelihood restoration plans. We are now able to identify women’s needs and provide support to build basic infrastructure for sheep farming, engage with the local government to enable access to safe drinking water for affected households, and build a permanent meeting and training space for women’s groups (Aama Samuha),” elaborated Suman Joshi, Executive Chairperson at White Lotus and PbW Focal Point.

“I have realized that reaching out to project-affected women requires working with them, understanding them, and being sensitive to their needs.”

Rajmi Aryal, former Stakeholder Engagement Officer and Manager, IDI Hydropower Company Private Limited

MAINSTREAMING GENDER AT ALL LEVELS OF SANIMA HYDRO

As part of its PbW Nepal initiative commitment, Sanima Hydro has been working to strengthen its engagement of women as stakeholders in the community through five hydropower projects (HPPs)⁹ and one hydro and engineering consulting firm project. To do this a female Stakeholder Engagement Officer has been appointed, with a women-only consultation already held for the environmental study for the Upper Tamor HPP. Public awareness and training on gender equality and diversity and health camp services were also provided.

There has also been a significant increase in the percentage of women having local shares in two hydropower projects: Swet Ganga HPP (male: 65 percent (tentative), female: 35 percent (tentative)) and Middle Tamor HPP (male: 47 percent, female: 53 percent). Sanima Hydro is encouraging women’s engagement through direct consultations (both mixed and women-only) with families affected by its projects to make them aware that they can share in the benefits from the HPP through owning shares, and to also understand their perspectives and needs and the impact of projects on their lives. In the case of Swet Ganga, door-to-door visits were made to hydropower-affected families, and a women-only group was consulted by a female Stakeholder Engagement Officer to inform them about local shares from the project before the initial public offering was issued. Sanima Hydro is also providing tailoring lessons to project-affected women to enhance their skills and employment opportunities.

Further achievements within the company include appointing one woman to the board (with five out of six

⁹ 1. Middle Tamor Hydropower Project (73 MW), Taplejung District, Sanima Middle Tamor Hydropower Private Limited.
2. Mathillo Mailung Khola Jalvidhyut Aayojana (14.3 MW), Rasuwa District, Mathillo Mailung Khola Jalvidhyut Limited.
3. Jum Khola Hydropower Project (56 MW), Dolakha District, Sanima Jum Hydropower Private Limited.
4. Sunkoshi Small Hydropower Project (2.6 MW), Sindhupalchowk District, Sanima Hydropower Limited.
5. Lower Likhu Hydropower Project (28.1 MW), Ramechhap, Swet Ganga Hydro and Construction Private Limited.



Photo: Sanima Hydro

Sadiksha Koirala (in the middle), Business Development Officer and PbW Focal Point at Sanima Hydro, disseminating learnings from PbW's Gender and Hydropower Training II to her female colleagues in the office.

▶ subsidiary companies of Sanima Hydro having a woman on the board). Orientation sessions for women at Sanima Hydro have been conducted on site through cascading the learnings from the Gender and Hydropower II training session delivered by the PbW Nepal initiative. The orientation sessions discuss GBVH, among other issues.

Sanima Hydro has also seen an increase in women being hired into non-traditional roles and within the Finance and HR departments. Sadiksha Koirala, Business Development Officer and Focal Point, from Sanima Hydro, noted, "Recently we have hired a lot of women in non-traditional roles. For instance, a female Structural Engineer and a female Geotechnical Engineer have been hired by our company. Before there were only male employees in that role. Likewise, there are two site-based female Civil Engineers at one of our project sites, i.e., the Middle Tamor HPP. Now there are more females in our Finance Department than males. Before this initiative started, there

were only 4 females out of 13 staff (30 percent) while now there are 11 female finance staff out of 20 (55 percent). Our Human Resource and Administration Department also has 75 percent of female employees."

Sanima Hydro's meaningful actions in gender equality and diversity have had a ripple effect throughout the company. The planned next step will be to discuss the issue of GBVH with the board members to raise awareness and stimulate further action within the company.

The PbW Nepal initiative has proven worthwhile not only for the company but also personally for Sadiksha: "I have found it amazing professionally and personally. It has been such a great opportunity to be part of the initiative. I found all the training very empowering. Before I was shy and lacked public speaking skills and this has now improved significantly."

SOLU HYDROPOWER FINDS INNOVATIVE WAYS OF INTEGRATING GENDER ON SITE

Solu Hydropower Private Limited has been ambitious in its commitment to the PbW Nepal initiative, selecting all four commitment areas to achieve meaningful impact at all levels of the company and in the community.

Key achievements include the following: the internal promotion of a woman from a middle to senior managerial position (to the position of Finance Manager); a woman hired into the role of an Assistant Manager, Human Resources; and a woman appointed to the board. Furthermore, the company has established a gender-inclusive HR panel; is applying GBVH mitigation measures; has developed an assessment tool to gauge GBVH issues at the project level; and has developed a code of conduct to promote anti-bullying and anti-harassment in the workplace. Segregated bathroom and toilet facilities have been developed on site; and three females have been appointed as Environment, Health, and Safety Officers at site offices – a role that was traditionally held by men.

An interesting innovation that Solu Hydropower has introduced is the integration of GBVH issues into its daily Toolbox Talks that are held on site before a shift starts. The Toolbox Talks are set up to inform all employees (particularly construction staff and contractors) about the important health, environmental, and safety issues and measures that must be taken to avoid any incidents and accidents to protect the community and staff on the project site. Following the development of the anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy, the Toolbox Talks now also include information on the importance of this policy to promote a respectful workplace for women and men. This innovation, which is being implemented by the Health, Safety, and Environment team, has led to an improvement in the behavior of staff and contractors and in the overall workplace environment.

Sital Pokhrel, Assistant Manager of Human Resources and Focal Point, has found the PbW Nepal initiative positive and helpful personally and professionally, “IFC has been very supportive, providing advice and leadership on what to do or not; they have always been contactable. I found the network building very useful as you could share different ways of doing things with the Focal Points of PbW in terms of how other HPP companies are addressing the challenges they face.”

Sital has been encouraged by senior management in her involvement in PbW Nepal initiative, which has built her capacity and confidence, “I now have female colleagues often reach out to me as they felt unable to discuss certain things and are concerned about sensitivity. I think it is important that women are represented in senior management for women to feel more moral support to speak out. If commitments are fulfilled to make more attractive for female employers, through good will of the company, the company will benefit. As female employees are often more dedicated, and work more. Women in a leadership role is a must to create a gender-friendly workspace.”

The Toolbox Talks provide a good example of integrating gender equality and diversity into daily management systems and many other member companies of the PbW Nepal initiative are now looking to adopt this innovation.



A female engineer at Urja Developers monitoring the electrical system.

Photo: Urja Developers Private Limited

5. CROSS-CUTTING BENEFITS OF THE POWERED BY WOMEN NEPAL INITIATIVE

5.1 IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF HYDROPOWER PROJECTS BY ADDRESSING GENDER THROUGH AN ESG LENS

PbW Nepal initiative has engaged directly with firms through IFC's investment and advisory services, linking investment to improved ESG and gender equality and diversity, and managing risks such as GBVH within project-affected communities and in the workplace through the application of IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards.

This work can be observed in the projects of two IFC clients: NWEDC, through its Upper Trishuli 1 Hydropower Project, known as UT-1, a 216 MW run-of-river hydropower project, and Urja Developers, with three¹⁰ hydropower projects totaling 90 MW at the construction and operational stages and four¹¹ hydropower projects totaling 294 MW at the pre-construction stage. The PbW Nepal initiative has provided in-depth advisory services to develop and incorporate GBVH provisions and grievance redress mechanisms into their policies and procedures, as well as promoting respectful and safe workplaces to manage these risks. These new policies and procedures promote equal opportunity, non-discrimination, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. By implementing these measures both women and the company have benefited.

Joo Nam, IFC Investment Officer for the UT-1 HPP, observed, “Powered by Women Nepal initiative has been a landmark program for many. The company now has women at a senior level and in non-traditional roles. Recently, a woman was appointed as the Director for the Environmental and Social Department. PbW Nepal initiative is very important for Nepal and inclusiveness. The result has been more equal opportunity, with the company's reputation and productivity improving.”

Tarun Shankar, IFC Investment Officer for Urja Developers, commented, “Powered by Women Nepal initiative, its outcome is obvious; the client is very positive and recognizes the value the initiative has brought to the table. With enthusiasm manifesting within the team, and equal opportunity at the senior level for both genders. PbW Nepal initiative can replicate across to new infrastructure, new hydropower assets, reaching remote corners of the country.”

IFC's continued engagement with these clients through its ESG advisory services and investment services will result in the sustainability of the initiatives introduced through the PbW Nepal initiative by addressing gender through an ESG lens.

¹⁰ Mai Beni Hydropower Project: 9.51 MW; Lower Jogmai Khola Hydropower Project: 6.2 MW; and Middle Mewa Hydropower Project: 73.5 MW.

¹¹ Siwa Khola Hydropower Project: 9.3 MW; Upper Myagdi-1 Hydropower Project: 53.5 MW; Myagdi Khola Hydropower Project: 65 MW; and Dudhkoshi-9 Hydropower Project: 166 MW.

5.2 POWERED BY WOMEN NEPAL INITIATIVE IS SUSTAINABLE AND BEING REPLICATED AT MANY LEVELS

The Powered by Women Myanmar program was replicated to design the PbW Nepal initiative. At the end of the program in Nepal signs of sustainability and replicability can be observed at the global, regional, and country level and within the hydropower sector.

For example, PbW Nepal initiative is being used as a positive example globally for IFC's Gender and Climate space as it focuses on women in leadership and on improving the workplace environment. In addition, PbW Nepal initiative has demonstrated that hydropower projects can achieve high impact in gender diversity and equality by participating in such initiatives.

IFC is planning to deliver a peer learning project for women in trades in Papua New Guinea and a women's employment program in Bangladesh and will draw from the lessons learned from PbW Nepal initiative when designing the projects.

The program also successfully reached beyond Nepal's hydropower sector – for example, Pashupati Renewables now boasts having an equal number of female and male employees. According to their website, “Gender diversity is an important aspect for any corporation as it fosters a good working environment and discipline in the workplace, which is ultimately good for business. So, this is a great step taken towards gender parity by Pashupati Renewables. The Directors are talented and experienced individuals from their respective fields ... Pashupati Renewables is leading the way to an industry ‘Powered by Women’” (Pashupati Renewables 2023).

Within the hydropower sector, there are signs of replication within the member companies. For example, Urja Developers recently conducted a three-day GBVH induction training to sensitize all its employees (both women and men) on GBVH, and BPC recently delivered training on a pilot GBVH self-assessment tool to 100 employees. By the end of the program, member companies had delivered 51 training sessions on gender equality and diversity, reaching 4,087 employees.

5.3 MEN AND POWERED BY WOMEN NEPAL INITIATIVE

Gender is not only about women but also men. Their role is crucial as champions of gender equality and diversity within their workplaces and addressing GBVH in the workplace, in the community, and at home. Men play an important role in challenging entrenched social and gender norms, speaking up as bystanders, and being accountable for their own behavior.

PbW Nepal initiative successfully engaged 24 percent of men as Focal Points of the initiative, who now advocate for a more gender-balanced workforce, supported by male senior managers as champions of the initiative within the hydropower sector. Strong leadership by men at a senior level has been key to the success of PbW Nepal initiative.

Specifically, the initiative held a Powered Series webinar (#11) focusing on Engaging Men in Advancing Women in the Workplace, and men participated in all the training, events, and roundtable discussions and benefited from in-depth support in addressing GBVH and promoting respectful workplaces. The voices of the men involved in PbW Nepal initiative are captured below:

“It is essential to debunk the myth surrounding women and work if we are to promote women in the roles traditionally dominated by men. Often it is the mindset, perception, cultural norms, and structural barriers that prevent women's entry into distinct fields despite their potential,” explained Yuvraj Shrivastava, Powered Series Speaker, Chief of Human Resources and Administrative Officer, Ncell Axiata, Nepal.

As the Vice President of Butwal Power Company, a leader in the hydropower sector in Nepal, Tika Ram Bhatta has been demonstrating the company's commitment to gender equality and diversity from the highest level of the organization by presenting on the issue of anti-bullying and prevention of GBVH to all newly recruited employees as part of their orientation program. “We want to break free from the tradition of male-dominated boardrooms and executives. We will promote women to leadership roles by the end of the PbW Nepal initiative,” he committed.

Manohar Shrestha, CEO of HCEL, attended the three-day women in leadership training course himself, so he could personally understand and apply it in his workplace. Since then, he has committed to increasing the number of women leaders at HCEL. “We need to work with schools, colleges, universities to motivate more females to enter science, technology, engineering, and math roles. This is one way we can bridge gender gaps in the STEM fields and non-traditional roles across sectors,” he commented.

Shaliesh Mishra, CEO of IPPAN and Focal Point, has been actively engaged in PbW Nepal initiative and considers women leadership important: “Men’s engagement in the Powered by Women initiative is crucial to creating a gender-diverse workforce within the hydropower sector.”

Neeraj Neupane, Human Resources Head of Solu Hydropower Private Limited, has been actively supporting Sital Pokhrel, Assistant HR Manager and Focal Point, in implementing PbW Nepal initiative within the company, attending most of the webinars and training courses. “What I learned from the initiative is that we need to have inclusive teams at site and we have made this possible through better facilities and better work culture.”

Santosh Adhikary, Chartered Accountant at Ridi Power Company Limited and a Focal Point for PbW, considers the initiative useful for both men and women to overcome unconscious biases and break the gender norms. “Recently, we appointed one more female to the board of directors of the company, excelling the PbW commitment to appoint 25 percent of women on the Board by 2023. We will not stop until we have equal representation of women at all levels and across departments.”

Chetan Ghimire, Administrative Officer at Sanjen Jalavidhyut Company Limited and a former PbW Focal Point, considers the respectful workplaces webinars from the PbW Powered Series effective in understanding the role and nuances of the Respectful Workplace Advisor. “Following the trainings and PbW webinars on respectful workplaces, we appointed a female as a Respectful Workplace Advisor in 2021 with an aim to prevent and enable staff to turn to for help with workplace problems.”

Dipesh Bista, Senior Manager, Environmental and Social Department, NWEDC, reflecting on the PbW Nepal initiative work, noted, “Integrating gender-based violence issues within the company’s existing mechanisms will be a breakthrough toward preventing GBVH risks both at the community and corporate levels.”

Male attendees of the GBVH trainings shared their experiences and learnings:

“The GBVH training has helped me become more aware of gender privileges and the power associated with that. I will be more mindful of this at work and also at home with my family members.”

Roshan Bhandari, ESG Officer, Urja Developers Private Limited

“Previously when I used to have conversations with my site workers regarding the problems they face, workers used to stay quiet or ignore me and I did not really understand why. What I have realized over these three days of training is that my approach was perhaps not respectful enough. I found the interview techniques through the role play exercise very useful. I am sure this will help me kickstart better conversations with my workers.”

Krishna Bahadur Chaudhary, Senior Administration and Social Executive, Solu Hydropower Private Limited

“I am more aware of how to sensitively deal with GBVH complaints from survivors/ witnesses while investigating an alleged incident. I had underestimated how challenging such interviews could be, but the GBVH survivor-centered approach has better prepared me to make things work in our company should we face such incidents.”

Resham Bahadur Pun, Environmental, Health, and Social Manager, BPC

Rajmi Aryal, former Manager and PbW Focal Point at IDI Hydropower Company, during a factory visit.



Photo: IDI Hydropower Company Limited

5.4 POWERED BY WOMEN NEPAL INITIATIVE CONTRIBUTED TO PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Participants of PbW Nepal initiative reported that their personal learning through IFC trainings and activities – and their improved knowledge of gender equality principles and practices – had significantly contributed to their professional and personal growth. Furthermore, both women and men are now more confident and proactive. This was also noted by IFC investment, advisory, and gender staff, as well as other partners involved in PbW Nepal initiative, citing improved skills in leadership, communication, conflict resolution, policy development, action planning, ESG, and other technical matters. An improved ability to conceptualize and implement gender policies and programs within their companies was also evident.

Prashamsa Lamichhane, Focal Point for IDI Hydropower, is at the start of her career and has found PbW Nepal initiative instrumental in improving her confidence in communications. “Before I joined Powered by Women Nepal initiative, I was afraid to speak publicly, and now I am confident to speak up all the time. Being part of PbW trainings at the starting phase of my career has really helped me to build my confidence to speak and communicate publicly, and I hope it will not end.”

Valerie Badilla, the consultant who delivered the communication training module and had previously worked on Powered by Women in Myanmar, commented that “the Powered by Women team were very active, helping to promote strong impact and address the challenge of COVID-19. Through the training I observed a huge improvement of skills. It was a very inspiring and transforming experience to witness as a trainer. With the impact of the support going well beyond the workplace to participants that were completing further studies, and many participants wanted assistance with delivering the training within their own companies, which was provided.” Many participants of the communication module commented on how important and useful it was in building their skills in leadership and communication.

“Powered by Women Nepal initiative has been successful and positive due to its continuous and consistent approach, targeted at the private sector, such as the hydropower sector, using an analytical approach and design that has enabled a deeper impact on gender equality. The program is aligned with Norway’s general objectives of gender equality and social inclusion including through infrastructure projects.”

Jan Erik Studsrød, Counselor, Energy and Climate, Embassy of Norway, Nepal

Chief Executive Officer of NRN Infrastructure and Development at a site visit to Likhu Hydropower Project in Ramechhap District.



6. CONCLUSION

Overall, PbW Nepal initiative has been a resounding success, having made an observable impact in the hydropower sector, including breaking down barriers and shifting thinking on gender.

The enthusiasm and motivation of participants that was triggered by the initiative is testament to its success. Moreover, there is evidence of transformation in both women's and men's way of thinking and changes in company practices, with members making strong commitments to gender equality and its implementation. Through the Focal Points, capacity was built. Changes in behavior and improved skills in communication, leadership, conflict resolution, policy development, action planning, ESG, and technical HPP matters were also evident.

PbW Nepal initiative member companies have realized successes in the four commitment areas, as well as in broader company operations. These include an increased focus on the recruitment of women in non-traditional jobs, such as field engineer roles, and more women being promoted to leadership positions. Shifts in company culture have also created more respectful and safe workplaces, which has translated into more gender-aware interactions with outside stakeholders, particularly communities and customers.

Member companies report that promoting gender equality has been good for women and men within the hydropower sector and good for business. Through their commitment to specific, measurable actions on gender diversity, many member companies have seen an improvement in their reputation, and the workplace environment is more productive and friendlier. Companies report that female staff are now more confident, proactive, and knowledgeable on the topic of gender equality and diversity and interacting within their organization. In addition, more women are board directors, in positions at a senior management level, and employed in non-traditional roles.

The program has had positive impacts on the wider industry and has increased the awareness of the link between gender and good ESG practices through IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards and gender-sensitive approaches to EIAs. Notably, the program has motivated the inclusion of gender-specific targets in IFC investments in UT-1 (NWEDC) and Urja Developers, which build on opportunities identified through their participation in PbW Nepal initiative.

The program has built a strong and effective network of both women and men within Nepal's hydropower sector for gender and ESG, which will enable ongoing partnerships and sharing of experiences. This will, in turn, catalyze further changes in the sector and at the company level over time, as employees strengthen their capacity developed through the program to deepen gender-sensitive approaches to their work and engagement with communities. The PbW approach can further be adapted and replicated in other sectors across the region, with Nepal's hydropower sector offering good lessons for other industries.

“Powered by Women Nepal initiative is a beautiful enabler. IFC provides international standards providing a safe environment to bring out the best results and the best people to activate and motivate better professional outcomes. Powered by Women Nepal initiative started up the light in Nepal for gender equality. It is repeatable, providing a roadmap to expand into the renewable energy sector. Very beautiful, unforgettable catalyzer.”

Laura Bull, Head of Studies, International Centre for Hydropower, and partner to PbW Nepal initiative

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

To document the journey of the PbW Nepal initiative, information was gathered through a quantitative survey, a desk-based review, and qualitative research. This information was then used to evaluate the progress made by member companies against their commitments, including stories and other innovative approaches.

Figure A1 shows the methodology used for the three phases of the review and development of the report:

- **Phase 1:** Initial program kickoff, planning, and inception. This included preliminary data collection, analysis and evaluation, and preparation of draft lists, interview questions, and outlines/templates of lessons learned, case studies, and the report.
- **Phase 2:** Detailed data collection, evaluation, and analysis. This included face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions, supplemented with virtual interviews and a comparative analysis of the baseline and endline surveys of PbW members.
- **Phase 3:** Finalization and dissemination of the report.

The methodology focused on using primary and secondary data, both qualitative and quantitative, to understand what was involved in implementing the PbW Nepal initiative, and what was achieved, including its overall impact on reducing the gender gap in the workplace with concrete examples.

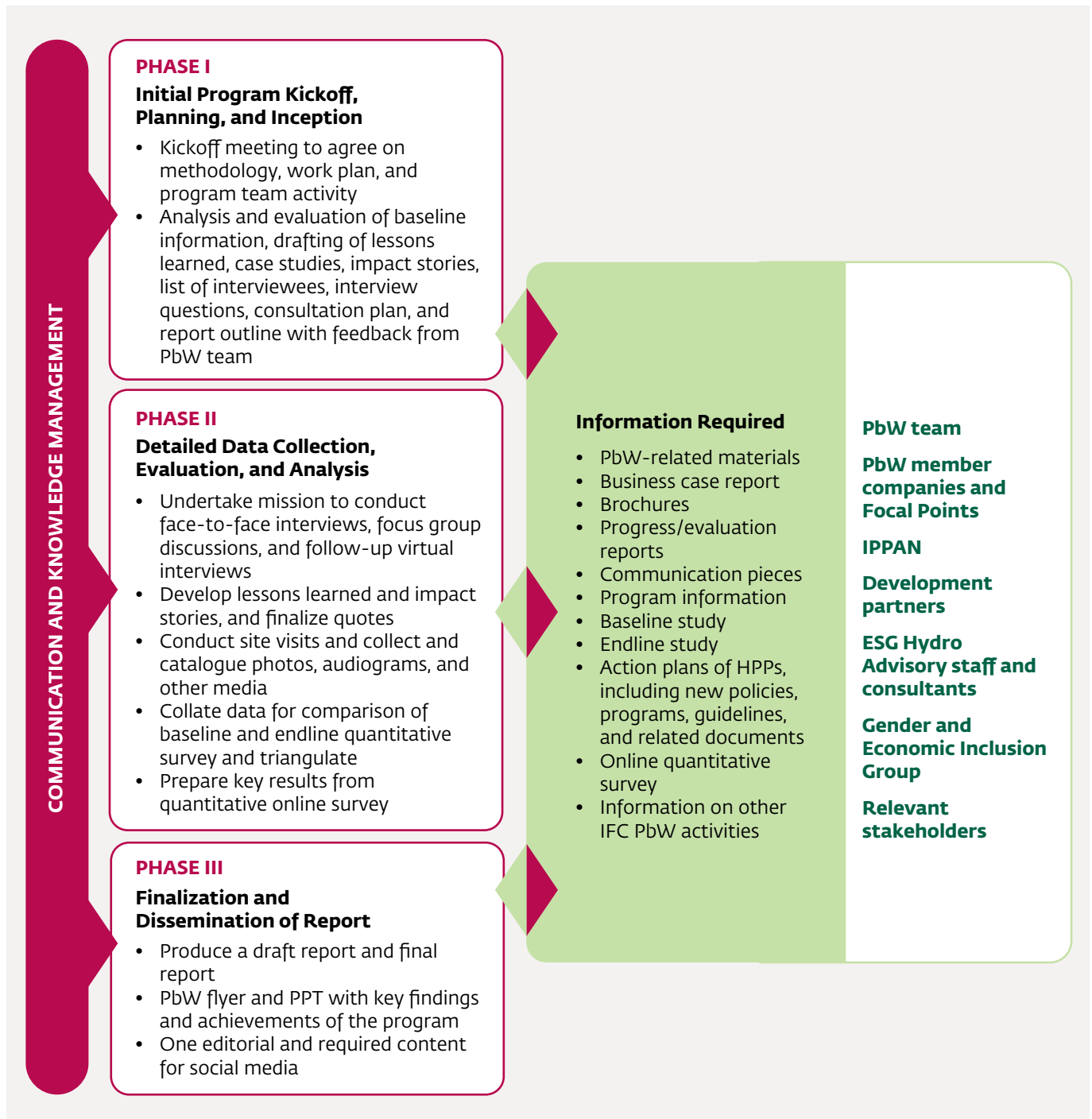
Interviews were held with the PbW member companies, donors (that is, the governments of Australia and Norway), IFC's Gender and Economic Inclusion Group, other relevant IFC staff, and key stakeholders. Focus group discussions were held with the CEO's Group, the Human Resource Managers Group, and the IPPAN Executive Committee.

Innovative techniques were used to continue to engage the PbW member companies and Focal Points in establishing their voice in the case studies and impact stories as well as empower them and continue to build their capacity in gender equity in the workplace. For example, Focal Points captured photos of PbW activities being implemented in the workplace and shared their stories in an interactive webinar, which also enabled reflections and learnings with other Focal Points. Audiograms were also used by Focal Points and key stakeholders to tell their stories of the PbW Nepal initiative, for inclusion in the final report.

A mission to Nepal was undertaken from March 27 to April 4, 2023, to conduct face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, and site visits; and attend the gender training workshop and meetings with HPP companies and donors. As part of the gender training workshop, a focus group discussion was held on the endline survey, interview template, and content for the report. Following the mission, online interviews were held with key stakeholders not in Nepal and to fill gaps in feedback from PbW members and other key stakeholders.

Collaborative inputs were received from the Nepal Hydro Environmental and Social Advisory Team Lead, the PbW team, Hydro Advisory staff and consultants, the Gender Specialist, and PbW member companies and Focal Points, as well as communication staff, editors, and designers.

Figure A1: Methodology for review and end of program report



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