

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN FORUM



ANNUAL REPORT

Collective Campaign, Collective Identity

Foreword

I am pleased to present the National Indigenous Women Forum (NIWF)'s Annual Report for the fiscal year 2023-2024. This year has been marked by significant achievements and challenges, from the protest of Indigenous People over the degrading remarks made by Bhagwati Pandey toward the traditional Indigenous Practices of Indigenous People to the recognition of Tamang and Newa Indigenous Language to be used as an official language of Bagmati Province. Reflecting on the past year, we have witnessed the unwavering resilience and strength of Indigenous Women and Girls in the face of adversity. From our efforts to mitigate the adverse effect of the devastating earthquake in Rukum Westm, orienting the Women and Social Affairs committee member of the Federal Government, this year, NIWF has achieved its strategic goals. This report provides a detailed account of our activities, achievements, and the challenges we encountered over the past year. It also highlights the invaluable contributions of our partners, supporters, and the communities we serve. I am deeply grateful to the dedicated NIWF team, our partners, and all those who have supported our mission. Together, we are making strides toward a more equitable and just society for Indigenous Women and Girls. Thank you for your continued support.

In solidarity



Suni Lama
Chairperson



Dwarika Thebe
Executive Director

National Indigenous Women Forum (NIWF)

INTRODUCTION

National Indigenous Women Forum-NIWF was established in 1998 with the mission and vision to eradicating multiple forms of discrimination experienced by Indigenous Women and Girls of Nepal. Indigenous women, being Indigenous peoples, face racial, linguistic, religious, cultural, economic, and political discrimination and exclusion. Also, Indigenous Women, being women, face gender discrimination. Empowerment and strengthening of Indigenous Women is a must to end all forms of racial and gender discrimination, exploitation, suppression, and oppression against Indigenous women. Acceptance of the multi-caste and ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural reality of Nepali society by the People's Movement of 1990 has indeed paved the way for non-governmental organizations to contribute to the empowerment and strengthening of Indigenous peoples, women, and other excluded groups and communities.

In this backdrop, NIWF was founded in 1998. There are not only common problems and issues of Indigenous Women and other women and also of Indigenous women and Indigenous men but also distinct problems and issues that are unique to Indigenous women. Therefore, the NIWF was established to support and raise awareness of Indigenous women, to intensify advocacy for securing the rights of Indigenous women and Indigenous children, and to run programs with focus on advocacy, training, discussion, interaction, study, and research as needed.

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WE ARE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN FORUM

National Indigenous Women Forum (NIWF) works with indigenous women and girls across Nepal to empower and support them in securing indigenous women's rights. We focus on solving the root causes of vulnerability and exclusion of indigenous women and girls. From the grassroots to policy level, we come together to intensify advocacy for securing rights of indigenous women and indigenous girls, and run programs with focus on advocacy, training, discussion, interaction, research and publication as needed.

NIWF MISSION

Advocate ensuring the rights of highly marginalized and endangered Indigenous peoples, particularly women and girls.

NIWF VISION

Promoting the social, cultural, political and economic rights of Indigenous Women. Our Constituencies NIWF works with Indigenous women and girls across Nepal. In doing so, NIWF emphasises on the intersectionality of Indigenous women and girls. Indigenous men are not direct beneficiaries of our interventions, however, their engagement is valued as and when required. NIWF is led by Indigenous women where all the Board members are cis-women.

Executive Summary

NIWF has outlined a strategic plan for 2022-2026 with the vision of achieving a 50:50 gender ratio in Indigenous women's leadership across all decision-making levels. To ensure this plan's success, we have collaborated with Indigenous Women leaders at the local, provincial, and federal levels. Our mission focuses on enhancing access for endangered and marginalized Indigenous women by developing their capacities across various sectors. This year, our efforts included the "Santoshi Project," which aims to empower the endangered Bankariya Indigenous People of Nepal. Through this initiative, we provided education to 40 Bankariya children and empowered Ms. Santoshi Bankariya as a community leader.

Additionally, we offered soap-making training to the Bankariya community, promoting economic empowerment and biodiversity conservation. Our broad areas of work encompass Economic Justice, Social Justice, and access to Justice, Climate Justice, and Gender Justice. With the support of Women Fund Asia, we advanced the understanding of CEDAW General Recommendation Number 39 among elected Indigenous Women Representatives from Sudurpaschim and Madhesh Provinces. We also capacitated members of the Women and Social Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives and lobbied for the implementation of CEDAW GR-39. This year, our partners included MADRE, WFA, IUCN, MAMA CASH, UNDP, DCA, and APWLD.

We are deeply grateful for their unwavering support. NIWF had significant opportunities to participate in international forums, including organizing a parallel event, "Empowering Dalit and Indigenous Women and Girls in Nepal," during the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, and participating in various high-level meetings such as the SBSTTA of the CBD in Nairobi and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New

York. The parallel event at the 68th High-Level Political Forum was a notable activity, advancing the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls. This report details NIWF's achievements and the challenges faced throughout the year. Thank you to our donors and partners, including MAMA CASH, MADRE, UNDP, APWLD, Women Fund Asia, and DCA, for their invaluable support.

KEY STRATEGIC AREAS

Lobby and advocacy

NIWF employs a bottom-up approach to engage with Indigenous Women at the grassroots level, extending its influence to local, national, and international spheres. We focus on building advocacy and lobbying skills for Indigenous women at both grassroots and policy-making levels. Our vision of achieving gender parity (50-50) is pursued through mentorship and continuous support for local leaders.



At the international level, NIWF continues its strategic implementation of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 39, fostering the Indigenous Feminist movement. We have expanded the reach of Indigenous Women and Girls by participating in key platforms such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Conference of the Parties (Biodiversity and Climate Change), and the High-Level Political Forum. These platforms are crucial for strengthening the Indigenous Women's rights movement and highlighting issues faced by Indigenous Women and Girls in Nepal.

With the support of Women's Fund Asia, We have been able to capacitate the Indigenous Women Leaders of Provincial and Federal including national level parliament. NIWF has given them self-monitoring, self-assessment and self-monitoring, negotiations, and the prevailing issues of Indigenous Communities.

For the past 25 years, NIWF has been advocating for the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls, making significant strides. This year has been particularly



momentous, with Humlu Indigenous communities gaining state recognition. Additionally, the Nepal government has declared Tamang and Nepal Bhasa as official languages in Bagmati Province. NIWF successfully submitted a

memorandum to the Ministry of Agriculture and Land in Bagmati Province, advocating for the betterment of the Bankariya Indigenous Community, a highly endangered Indigenous group.

Our efforts to implement CEDAW General Recommendation No. 39 include advocating with Indigenous Leaders in parliament to bring these issues to the House of Representatives. NIWF has also actively worked on the Education Bill and Civil Service Bill, pushing for the inclusion of Indigenous issues in government policies.

Capacity Building and Community Empowerment



NIWF is dedicated to the capacity building of staff, board members, and community groups. This commitment not only enhances community capacity but also ensures smooth organizational functioning. We have empowered Indigenous Women Parliamentarians and local representatives on issues affecting Indigenous Women and Girls. Our work with CEDAW General Recommendation No. 39, an international instrument protecting the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls, reflects our rigorous efforts for its meaningful implementation.



We have increased youth participation in various forums, fostering leadership and exposure. Our initiatives have strengthened grassroots climate resilience and equipped Indigenous Women Leaders with knowledge of climate-related national and international policies. Additionally, NIWF has established a mini-library for the Bankariya Community in

Makawanpur, providing educational resources to support their learning and development.

Addressing the Climate Crisis and Indigenous Rights

The climate crisis poses a significant threat to Indigenous communities in Nepal, leading to displacement from ancestral lands and territories, adversely impacting their livelihoods, and frequently resulting in the violation of their rights by the government under the guise of climate and biodiversity protection. NIWF's core mission is to build climate-resilient Indigenous communities while respecting and



promoting Indigenous knowledge and practices. To this end, we have been empowering Indigenous Women and Girls with knowledge of climate-related national and international frameworks, enabling them to advocate effectively at the grassroots level. NIWF has trained 10 Indigenous Women Groups in Integrated Pest Management, significantly benefiting the lives of Indigenous Women and Girls This Year we have been able to distribute essential materials to 100 families

of Rukum West who were affected by the devastating earthquake.



This year, NIWF documented the Indigenous knowledge of the Bankariya, Danuwar, and Tharu communities in Makawanpur, Kavrepalanchok, and Kapilvastu, respectively. We also provided these women with leadership and

entrepreneurship training, enhancing their capacity to contribute to their communities. NIWF has actively advocated on international platforms, gaining insights into various international mechanisms through participation in conventions such as COP and GEO-7. Additionally, NIWF has played a vital role in national policy reform, serving on the steering committee of the National Biodiversity Action Strategic Plan. We have also prepared a position paper on the Convention on Biological Diversity Target-3 from the Indigenous perspective, focusing on land and territories.



Research and Institutional Development

NIWF has been actively engaged in Feminist Participatory Action Research, contributing to the creation of knowledge and fostering community involvement. Our research initiatives include an in-depth study of Indigenous Returnee Migrant Women in Sindupalchok and an analysis of the social and economic conditions of Kamalaries residing in Sudurpaschim Province. In our continuous efforts to support highly endangered Indigenous

communities, we have produced and disseminated key reports such as “A Report on the Situation of Gender-based Violence against Chepang Women in Ichchhakamana Rural Municipality, Chitwan,” and “A Policy Review of Ichchhakamana Rural Municipality’s Policies and Programs for FY 2023/2024 (2079/2080 BS) from Gender Equality, Social Inclusion, and Indigenous Perspectives.” These documents serve as essential tools for advocacy and future reference.



This year, NIWF celebrated its 25th Anniversary Silver Jubilee, reflecting on our achievements and refining our future objectives. The event provided an opportunity to evaluate our progress and set strategic goals for the coming years. Additionally, NIWF has submitted the “NGO Joint

Submission for the Pre-Sessional Working Group (19-23 February 2024) Indigenous Women and Girls' Perspective" for the Universal Periodic Review. We also organized a panel discussion during the World Social Forum 2024 in Nepal.

International Exposure

This year, NIWF actively participated in and organized a parallel event during the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The event, titled "Empowering Dalit and Indigenous Women and Girls in Nepal," was co-organized with the Feminist Dalit Organization. This platform allowed NIWF to lay essential groundwork on the issues faced by Indigenous and Dalit women in Nepal. The event was honored by the presence of the Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens.



Additionally, NIWF representatives took part in several significant international forums, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nairobi, the High-Level Political Forum, and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. These engagements were pivotal in highlighting the concerns of Indigenous and Dalit

communities on a global stage. NIWF also participated in two GEO-7 dialogues, which were crucial for ensuring the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' issues in the

report. Furthermore, the organization engaged in media and communication training and received training on the Environment Human Rights Defenders Toolkit, enhancing our capacity to advocate for Indigenous rights effectively.

Brief Overview of Projects

Title	Capacity Building of Elected Indigenous Women Representatives from Sudurpaschim and Bagmati provinces
Donor	Women's Fund Asia
Duration	15 January 2023-15 October 2025
Project Location	Sudurpaschim and Bagamti Province
Beneficiaries	Indigenous Women Representatives from the local to the federal level of Sudurpaschim and Bagmati Province, and two Local levels
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Profile of elected Indigenous Women Representatives will show the representation of IW in local, provincial and federal levels, and provides a framework for CSOs and activists to increase their representation in the decision-making body and also make IW's participation more meaningful.• Capacity-building training to elected Indigenous Women representatives will build the personality of IW representatives in their personal and professional life. It will build their confidence, body language, presentation style, negotiation skills and management of relationships. It will teach adaptive leadership qualities to adapt to their circumstances, build team spirit, have analytical skill and

	<p>innovate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IW representatives will be familiar with international mechanisms and instruments such as UNDRIP, CEDAW, CBD, UPR and CERD, and lobby for their implementation in their plan, activities and budget. • The activity with Kamlari will provide CSOs with evidences to advocate for the rights, justice, voice, leadership and representative participation of Kamlaris in decision-making processes. • Government will pass/implement/amend laws, procedures and policies for Kamlari. Government will provide secured livelihood options, necessary support or compensation to Kamlaharis. • CEDAW Shadow Report provides the CEDAW Committee with better insight into actual critical situation of women and girls and of Indigenous women and girls in particular and help make the government accountable and responsible.
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Title	Study on the social and economic situation of freed Kamlari residing in Sudurpachhim Province
Donor	Dan Church Aid
Duration	1st October 2023-30th December 2023
Project	Kailali and Kanchanpur Districts

Location	
Beneficiaries	Kamalaries ana Kamaiya of the districts
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust data repository containing detailed information on Kamalaries, including socio-economic conditions has been documented. • Comprehensive needs assessment, identifying the specific requirements of Kamalaries and their families' assessment would inform targeted interventions and support programs. • Advocacy materials, such as policy briefs and fact sheets, to support their efforts in advocating for policy changes and enforcement of anti-bonded labor laws have been formulated.

Title	Organizational Strengthening
Donor	Mama Cash Netherlands
Duration	2024-07-18
Project Location	Kathmandu
Beneficiaries	Province Headquarters, Kathmandu
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive outcomes by generating increased interest

	<p>among the younger generation of Indigenous Women and Girls (IW/G)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of existing laws about climate change and actively engaged in advocating for climate justice • Logistical support of NIWF
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Title	Empowering Indigenous Women and Girls through capacity strengthening, climate-smart farming.
Donor	MADRE
Duration	November 2023 – September 2024
Project Location	Makawanpur, Kathmandu
Beneficiaries	Bankariya Indigenous Community, Young Indigenous Peoples
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a mini-library to provide English language and tuition classes specifically tailored for Bankariya students, enhancing their educational opportunities and language proficiency. • Offer advanced IPM (Integrated Pest Management) classes to equip individuals with specialized knowledge and skills in sustainable pest control methods. • Implement FIG (Focused Indigenous Group) cyber security initiatives targeting Indigenous women and girls, along

	<p>with FIG members, to raise awareness and mitigate online threats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct FIG awareness campaigns focused on child marriage, aiming to educate communities and advocate for its elimination. • Establish the Indigenous Girls Opportunity Fund to support educational and developmental opportunities for two Indigenous girls, fostering empowerment and advancement within their communities.
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Title	'Strengthening production and processing capacity and institutional development of Indigenous women producer groups for resilient livelihoods'
Donor	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Duration	1st January 2023- 30th December 2023
Project Location	Makawanpur, Kapilvastu and Kavrepalanchok
Beneficiaries	Banakriya, Chepang, Tharu, and Danuwar Indigenous Community

Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthened local-level Indigenous institutions support Indigenous social and economic infrastructures ● Elevated economic status demonstrated by the increased income of the intervened producer groups focusing on forest-based enterprises through scaled-up production, value addition, ● participation, and advancement in the value chain and product diversification in Tharu (bamboo-based products), Bankariya (NTFP collectors), Danuwar (vegetable-based pickle) and Chepang (soap) ● IP Knowledge will be documented and institutionalized in the intervened communities
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Title	Feminist Participatory Action Research on Human Rights of Women Migrants 2022- 2024, Building Knowledge and Movement from the Ground Up: Women Migrants Flight for human rights and migration justice (Migration FPAR)
Donor	Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development- APWLD
Duration	29th September 2022- 29th December 2023
Project Location	Sindhupalchok
Beneficiaries	Indigenous Returnee Migrant Women

Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of highly marginalized, IW groups on political, social, economic, and cultural aspects through research and capacity development programs • Mobilized internal and external resources for Indigenous Women for their economic self-sustainability. • Collaborated and coordinated with national/international organizations with shared goals and vision and also with government/non-governmental organizations
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Title	Empowering Chepang Indigenous Women and Girls to end VAW/G and Strengthen their Resiliency
Donor	UNDP
Duration	1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023
Project Location	Ward no 1 and 2 of Ichchhakamana Municipality, Chitwan District
Beneficiaries	Chepang Women of Icchakamana municipality
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved socio conditions of Chepang women by addressing violence against women through training and public awareness programs. • Increase the meaningful participation of Chepang

	women in the formulation and implementation of policies related to Chepang women and community.
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Title	Strengthening Indigenous Women's voices: Bridging Policies and Communities for Climate Resilience
Donor	FIMI
Duration	July 2024-July 2025
Project Location	Kathmandu
Beneficiaries	Indigenous Women Representatives
Outcome	Improved Capacity of Indigenous Women Representatives in lobbying for the rights of Indigenous Women. Improved global visibility and influence of Indigenous voices in biodiversity discussions as a result of increased participation in policy formation and Formulation of actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing climate-related frameworks to better react and address Indigenous perspectives and priorities, thus fostering more inclusive and active climate action in Nepal.

Title	Linking and Learning through Action Research on River Rejuvenation, Indigenous Technology & Knowledge and Climate Change
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Donor	MAMA CASH
Duration	May 2024- May 2025
Project Location	Ramechhaap
Beneficiaries	Indigenous People of Manthali and Bhatauli
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This research will document the reasons for the depletion of water sources affecting the flow of the river. • This will help amplify the voices of tribal women involved in the conservation of water and nature for generations. • This research will produce a high-quality document with shared learning from both Nepal and India.

Title	Climate Action for Indigenous Women in Nepal
Donor	Salasan Canada
Duration	August 2024- December 2026
Project Location	Sindhupalchok and Kavrepalanchok
Beneficiaries	Indigenous Women and Girls
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching gendered effects of climate change and best practices in addressing them; • Providing access to Indigenous community planning and

mobilization resources from project conception to implementation;

- Providing community engagement and curriculum development assistance;
- Assisting in the training of mentors who will train the International Working Groups in their communities; and,
- Creating a network with Canadian Indigenous Women Climate experts to provide advice and support throughout the project.

Board Members

Suni Lam	Chairperson
Yasso Kanti Bhattachan	Vice-Chairperson
Man Maya Tamang	General Secretary
Sushila Maya Gole	Treasurer
Alina Saba	General Member
Ranjeeta Lama	General Member
Muna Shakya	General Member

Staffs

Dwarika Thebe	Executive Director
Ashok Lama	Admin and Finance Officer
Saraswati Sherpa	Program Officer
Sanila Lama	Field Coordinator
Santoshi Bankariya	Field Supervisor
Anisha Buda	Media and Communication Assistant
Pemba Lama	Admin and Finance Assistant
Sabnam Lama	Young Researcher