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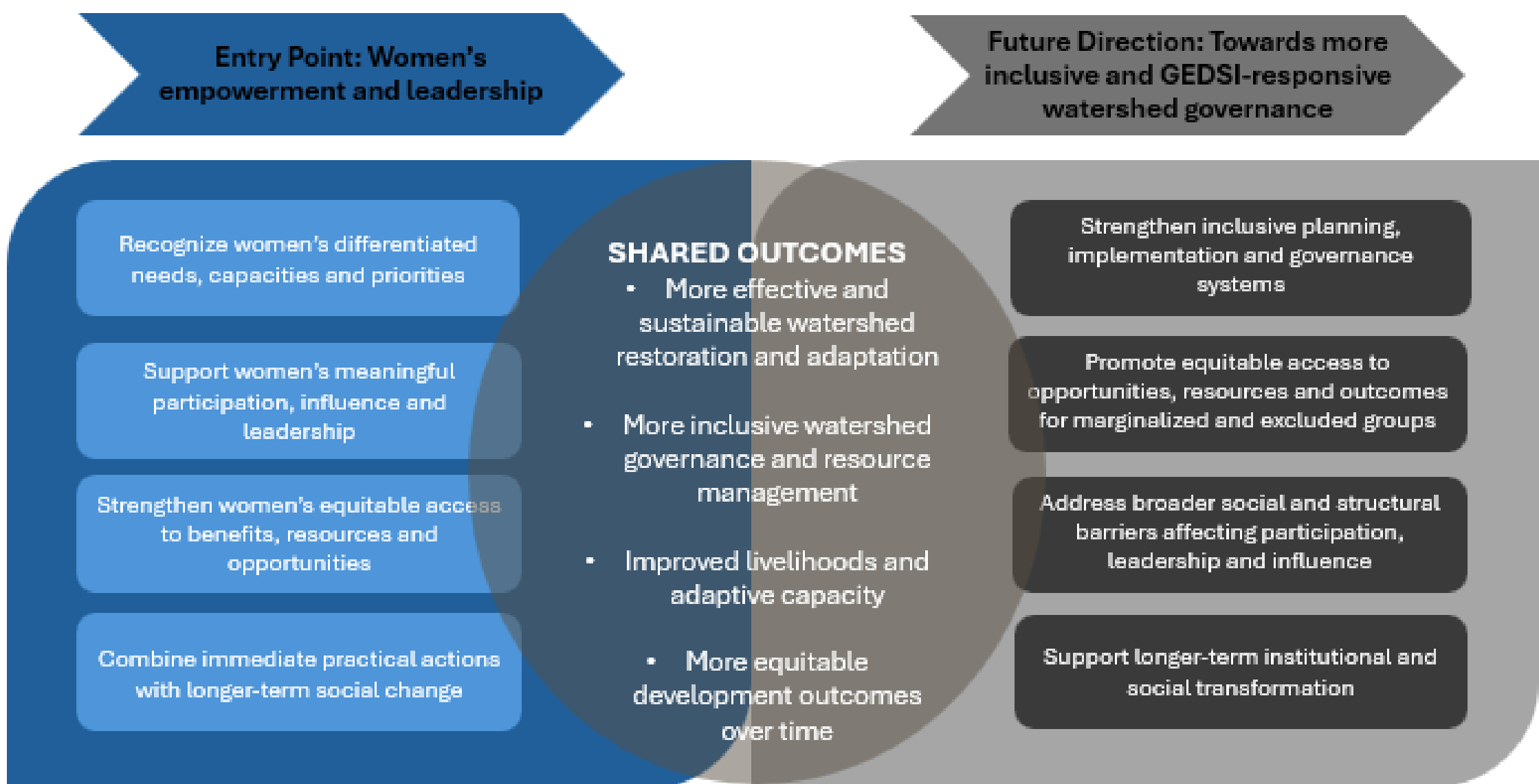
Gender Considerations in Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for Watershed Restoration

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1 Background

- Mohana Khutiya River Basin faces recurrent floods, ecosystem degradation, and livelihood stress. Climate change and disasters affect people differently depending on gender, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.
- Women are primary custodians of local ecosystems and water resources yet remain structurally excluded from governance and decision-making processes.
- A women’s empowerment and leadership approach is prioritized as a practical entry point to broader integration towards Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)-responsive watershed governance.



Women's empowerment and leadership as an entry point to broader GEDSI integration

3 Objective

Understand gendered vulnerabilities to flood risk in the basin

Document women's knowledge and their relevance to EbA planning and implementation

Identify structural barriers limiting women's participation in EbA governance

Promote women's leadership as an entry point to broader GEDSI integration

Design gender-responsive EbA interventions ensuring equitable access to benefits in the Watershed Restoration Plan



Women's voice



Community validation



Meaningful engagement

5 Existing Gender and social dynamics

Gendered division of labour

- Women are more concentrated towards unpaid subsistence and care work (farming tasks, livestock care, water/fuelwood collection, childcare).
- Men often control commercial farming inputs and decisions (ploughing, irrigation, fertilizers, marketing, land decisions).
- Agricultural wage labor is seasonal and shared but segmented by gender (women: transplanting/weeding; men: irrigation, tractor, commercial farm work).
- Men dominate market, extraction, and mobility-based work (timber, sand/gravel, migration, trade, governance roles).
- Women lead household coping activities (savings, small adaptation practices) while men lead formal disaster committees and resource decisions.

Governance and decision-making

- Women's participation in CFUGs, WUGs, and local councils is often quota-driven and tokenistic, with decisions frequently dominated by men.
- However, women-only CFUGs and increasing male outmigration have created greater opportunities for women's leadership and involvement.
- Women actively engage in disaster management and natural resource management as gauge readers, in CDMCs, forest fire control, reforestation, and women-led CFUGs.
- Mandatory 33% quotas, women-led CFUGs, and leadership/climate adaptation trainings are strengthening women's participation, skills, and confidence.

Gendered knowledge systems

- Women monitor local environmental change (spring flow, soil moisture, vegetation, drought signs, forest fire risk).
- Women hold traditional ecological knowledge (sacred spring protection, bamboo planting, sustainable harvesting practices).
- Women identify climate-resilient native species for fodder, fuelwood, and flood mitigation
- Men hold technical and infrastructure knowledge (irrigation canals, embankments, river training, terrace irrigation).
- Men usually dominate market and institutional knowledge (cash crops, market risks, timber/aggregate trade, flood response coordination).

Barriers to women's participation in EbA

- Entrenched gender norms and social expectations limit women's participation, leadership, confidence, and decision-making influence.
- Time poverty from unpaid care and household responsibilities restricts women's attendance in trainings, meetings, and leadership roles.
- Limited access to education, information, digital tools, and extension services reduces women's access to markets, opportunities, and early warning systems.
- Institutional barriers result in tokenistic participation and male-dominated governance and technical positions.

Gendered access to productive assets

- Women have limited land ownership and decision-making power, restricting adoption of climate-resilient farming and access to loans/subsidies.
- Women face limited access to formal finance and social protection due to unpaid/informal work, lack of collateral, and male-controlled bank accounts.
- Women have lower access to agricultural inputs, technology, and extension services because of mobility constraints, heavy workloads, and male-dominated systems.
- Women's market access is restricted by limited mobility, low control over income/assets, and weak access to market information, reducing income and bargaining power.

Gendered vulnerabilities to flood

- Women's unpaid workloads increase during floods due to water/fodder/firewood collection, added caregiving, debris cleaning, and food preparation.
- Women face higher health and safety risks from waterborne diseases, limited sanitation, physical strain, and violence risks in overcrowded shelters.
- Floods disrupt women's subsistence livelihoods and household food security by affecting crop care, livestock, water, and forest resources.
- Men are more affected by formal income and mobility losses through damage to farmland, irrigation systems, markets, and employment disruption.

6 Strategic Action Plan: Pathway to Women's leadership in EbA

Strengthen meaningful participation

Promote inclusive dialogue to address social norms and strengthen women's participation and leadership in EbA.

Enhance women's technical capacity

Strengthen women's technical capacity for EbA planning and implementation and support women-led groups.

Equitable access and benefit-sharing

Improve equitable access to natural resources (forests, water, and communal land) for EbA implementation.

Strengthen women's economic empowerment

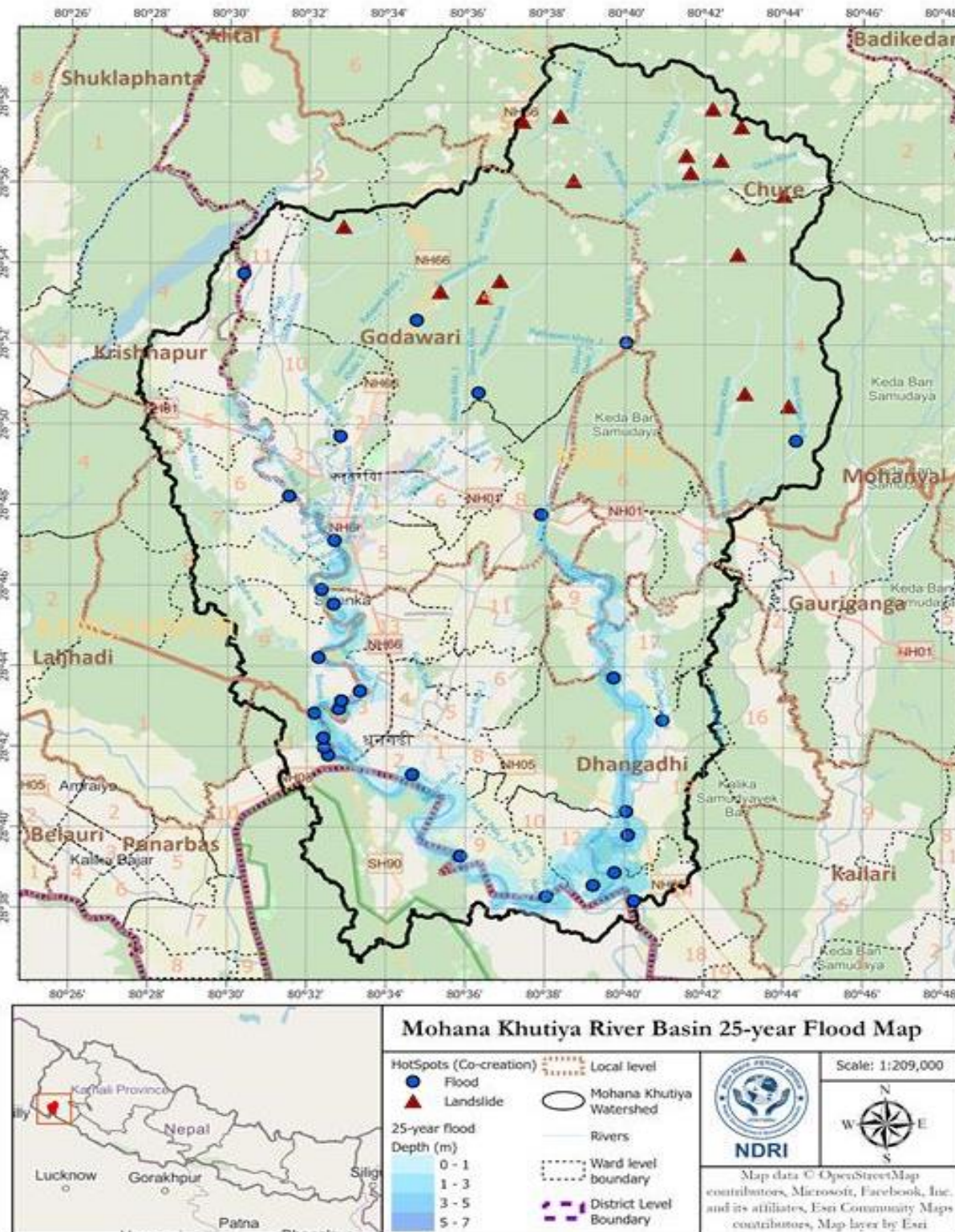
Strengthen women's economic empowerment through equitable access to EbA benefits.

Social safeguards in EbA governance

Integrate social safeguards into EbA governance, planning, and implementation systems.

2 Project Area

- Mohana-Khutiya River Basin in western Nepal extends from the Chure (Siwalik) Hills to the Terai.
- Basin Area- 702 sq.km.
- Highly vulnerable to flood and landslides.
- Part of the six priority river basins where structural and non-structural interventions are under implementation by the Department of Water Resources and Irrigation (DWRI) with support from the Asian Development Bank.
- Administratively in six rural and urban municipalities of Kailali and Kanchanpur Districts.



Mohana-Khutiya River Basin

4 Methodology and Approach



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