



CHAUDHARY FOUNDATION



विश्व जल दिवस
विश्व मौसम दिवस



WATER AND
DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAMME



2025
2034

Decade of Action
for Cryospheric
Sciences

Event Proceedings of NADI RA NARI

Art • Film • Dialogue

on Water, Women & Climate



Compiled by:

Ms. Suchita Shrestha

Ms. Subhekshya Pandey

Ms. Bandana Koirala

Ms. Tisha Joshi

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Acronyms.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
1. Background	7
2. About the Event	9
3. Opening Session.....	10
3.1 Welcome Remarks.....	10
3.2. Remarks by Male Ally.....	11
4. Session 1: Activism Exhibition	13
4.1. Reflection Remarks by Ms. Yukta Bajracharya.....	13
5. Session II: Documentary Screening	15
5.1 Reflection Remarks by Dr. Susanna von der Heide	15
6. Session III: Panel Discussion	17
Key Takeaways of panel discussion	20
7. Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks	22
Annexes:	23
Anne 1: Program Schedule	23
Annex 2: Concept note.....	25
Annex 3: Some Snapshots of the event	27
Annex 4: List of Participants.....	30

Acknowledgements

We express our sincere gratitude to all who made the event possible.

At first, we extend our heartfelt thanks to more than 30 Tharu women, 40 students, and 5 male allies from Geruwa Rural Municipality and Madhuban Municipality of Bardiya district, whose creativity and lived experiences formed the heart of the “*Nadi ra Naari*” initiative, The initiative is part of the “Promoting Climate Resilient and Socially Inclusive Water Management in the Lower Karnali Watershed Region, Nepal (CLASSIK)” project, which has been working closely with communities in Geruwa and Madhuban.

We thank Ms. Geeta Pandey, Director– Policy Advocacy & Research, Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) Nepal, for her thoughtful opening remarks. We are grateful to the speakers - Dr. Dhiraj Pradhananga (UNESCO Chair in Mountain Cryosphere and Water), Ms. Yukta Bajracharya (Arts Programme Manager, British Council), and Prof. Dr. Susanne von der Heide (Cultural Scientist and Conservation Specialist).

We thank the panelists, Dr. Manju Sharma (Senior Sociologist and Institutional Social and GESI Expert, Department of Water Resources and Irrigation, Government of Nepal), Ms. Prizma Singh Tharu (Executive Director, Tharu Women Upliftment Center, Bardiya), Ms. Shanta Nepali (Director/Producer), and Dr. Rachana Upadhyaya (Researcher), and moderator Ms. Suchita Shrestha (Deputy Director, The Small Earth Nepal) for enriching the dialogue, as well as Ms. Merina Ranjit (Chief Operating Officer, Chaudhary Foundation) for her closing reflections. Additional appreciation goes to filmmaker Ms. Shanta Nepali for her documentary “Dhye Dreams.”

We thank Ms. Ashrayata Karki Chaudhary, board member of the Chaudhary Foundation, for handing out the token of love to the speakers and panelists.

We appreciate the active engagement of all the participants, including researchers, civil society practitioners, government representatives, filmmakers, and community members, whose questions and contributions made the discussions meaningful and inclusive.

The IHE Delft Water and Development Partnership Programme, financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided support to this event. The programme envisions a world where inclusive and diverse partnerships and marginalized knowledge transform the ways we know, use, share, and care for water. In addition, the event was also technically and financially supported by Chaudhary Foundation, Nepal under its Third Pole Initiative (TPI) platform.

Finally, we sincerely thank the organizing team members from Small Earth Nepal (SEN), KIRDARC Nepal, and the Chaudhary Foundation's Third Pole Initiative (TPI) for their dedication and collaboration in making this event a success.

Acronyms

CF	Chaudhary Foundation
CLASSIK	Promoting Climate Resilient and Socially Inclusive Water Management in the Lower Karnali Watershed Region, Nepal (CLASSIK)
COO	Chief Operating Officer
GLOF	Glacial Lake Outburst Flood
ICGT	International Conference on Gender and Technology
KIRDARC	Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre
NNGWWW	Nepal National Glacier, Water and Weather Week
SEN	The Small Earth Nepal
TPI	Third Pole Initiative
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Executive Summary

Nadi ra Nari (River and Woman) was organized on 26 March 2026 as a post-event of the Nepal National Glacier, Water and Weather Week (NNGWWW) 2026, aligning with the World Water Day 2026 theme, “Where Water Flows, Equality Grows.” Co-organized by The Small Earth Nepal (SEN), Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) Nepal, and Chaudhary Foundation’s (CF) Third Pole Initiative, the event explored the intersections of water, gender, climate change, and community resilience through art, storytelling, film, and dialogue.

Nadi ra Nari activism initiative originally started in Bardiya district, where more than 30 Tharu women, 40 students, and five male allies documented their lived experiences of flooding, water insecurity, and relationships with the Karnali River through paintings, poems, stories, songs, and other creative expressions. These community-generated works formed the foundation of the exhibition showcased during the event.

The exhibition showcased 50 creative works that reflected community experiences of floods, environmental change, displacement, livelihoods, culture, and identity. The screening of *Dhye Dreams* further expanded the conversation by highlighting the experiences of women in Upper Mustang facing water scarcity and climate-induced displacement. Reflections from experts underscored the value of integrating local knowledge, cultural expression, and scientific understanding in addressing climate and water challenges.

The panel discussion emphasized that women continue to bear significant burdens related to water insecurity, disaster risks, migration, and unpaid care work, yet remain underrepresented in decision-making processes. Participants highlighted the importance of moving beyond symbolic representation toward meaningful leadership and participation of women in water governance and climate adaptation. The discussion also reinforced the need to recognize indigenous knowledge systems, support community-led adaptation practices, and strengthen collaboration among researchers, artists, policymakers, and local communities.

A central message emerging from the event was that art and storytelling can serve as powerful tools for amplifying lived experiences, fostering dialogue, and humanizing climate narratives that are often dominated by technical and scientific perspectives. By creating space for voices that are frequently excluded from formal discussions, *Nadi ra Nari* defied the traditional stakeholder dialogues and demonstrated how creative approaches can contribute to more inclusive and people-centered climate action.

The event concluded with a collective call to strengthen gender-responsive water governance, value local and indigenous knowledge, integrate arts and culture into climate discourse, and promote cross-sector collaboration to build resilient and equitable futures for communities affected by climate change.

1. Background

Disasters such as floods do not affect everyone equally. Depending on the vulnerability of the community, the flood risk is differentially experienced by different section of the communities specially marginalized including women and children. Several studies have revealed that women are found to be more vulnerable in comparison to men, especially during disaster, because of women's traditional roles and responsibilities at the household and community level.

Climate change has further exacerbated the frequency and intensity of water-related disasters – both flood and drought because of which overall local hydro-social systems are disrupted, including accessibility to water resources. Such changes worsen the already vulnerable situation of women and marginalized communities. For example, during flood events, women's drudgery related to water and caregiving tasks increases while access to basic hygiene facilities decreases. Additionally, risks of gender-based violence also increase during disaster events. While women bear the brunt of disaster, they are systemically excluded from decision making spaces and governance structure and mechanisms.

The “Promoting Climate Resilient and Socially Inclusive Water Management in the Lower Karnali Watershed Region, Nepal (CLASSIK)” project has been working with the communities of Geruwa and Madhuvan - municipalities of Bardiya district. For these communities, especially women, rivers are both a lifeline and a recurring source of devastation. Intensifying monsoon floods damages crops and homes, while erratic dry spells threaten drinking water and irrigation systems. Despite being at the forefront of water management and disaster response, women remain systemically excluded from formal water governance and decision-making processes

Within the context of climate change, disaster and gender, the *Nadi ra Nari* activism initiative emerged. On January 2026, more than 30 Tharu women, 40 students, and 5 male allies of both municipalities were engaged in the local level workshops under CLASSIK project. The researchers facilitated the workshop to document their lived experiences with the flooding event and day-to-day relationship with Karnali River. The participants used paintings and drawing as the major medium of expressions while other mediums such as poetry, traditional Tharu songs and dances, and clay sculptures were also used.

The artworks produced through the local level workshops formed the foundation of the *Nadi ra Nari* event.

The event was held on 26 March 2026 as a post-event of the Nepal National Glacier, Water and Weather Week (NNGWWW) 2026. It aligned with the World Water Day 2026 theme, "Where Water Flows, Equality Grows," while also contributing to the objectives of the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation (IYGP 2025) and the UN Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (DACS 2025–2034).

The event brought together researchers, filmmakers, artists, government representatives, civil society practitioners, and community members to foster dialogue on the intersections of water, gender, and climate change. It challenged the dominant narrative that portrays women solely as vulnerable groups, instead recognizing them as leaders, knowledge holders, and decision-makers who play a vital role in advancing water governance and climate resilience.

2. About the Event

Nadi ra Nari event was organized as an art and policy conclave combining an activism exhibition, documentary screening, keynote addresses and panel discussion to explore the intersections of water, gender, and climate change. The literal translation of "*Nadi ra Nari*" "River and Women", however, its deeper and symbolic meaning reflects the interdependencies between rivers and women, both of which are central to sustaining life, communities, and cultures.

The event focused on the relationship between river ecosystems and the lives of women in river-dependent communities particularly of Southern Nepal, while also highlighting the experiences of a mountain community facing water scarcity and climate-induced displacement in the Trans-Himalayan region.

The exhibition brought together artworks, poems, and creative writing by women, students, and male allies, from the Tharu community of Geruwa rural municipality and Madhuwan municipality of Bardiya district, reflecting everyday experiences shaped by river, flooding, water scarcity, and climate vulnerability.

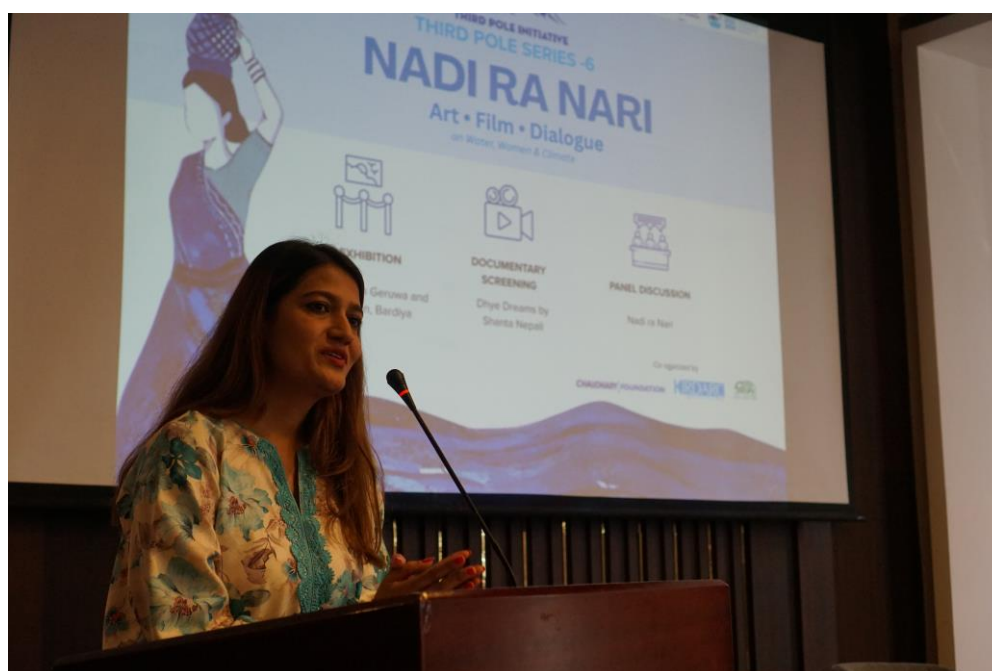
The documentary *Dhye Dreams*, directed by Ms. Shanta Nepali, highlighted the lived experiences of women in Dhye village in Upper Mustang as they navigate water scarcity and climate-induced displacement.

The event was co-organized by The Small Earth Nepal (SEN), Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC), Nepal and Chaudhary Foundation (CF). The event was a part of the CLASSIK project of which SEN and KIRDARC are partners while CF joined the CLASSIK team and co-organized it as part of the sixth edition of the Third Pole Series. The event was an example of how different organizations, including private actors, can come together for a common purpose, leverage resources and deliver an impactful action.

3. Opening Session

3.1 Welcome Remarks

Ms. Geeta Pandey, Director-Policy Planning & Research, KIRDARC Nepal, highlighted how climate change is deeply affecting communities, especially vulnerable groups who experience its impacts directly. She mentioned that while discussions around climate change and gender often recognize women as the “most affected,” they also tend to frame women only as “vulnerable victim” or high-risk groups. She emphasized the need to build a new narrative, where women are seen as leaders, decision-makers, and agents of resilience. Drawing from their own capacities, knowledge, and skills, women have already some capacities to respond to climate challenges and leading adaptation efforts. However, existing gender norms continue to limit women’s roles, often associating them only with responsibilities like collecting water and caretakers. She stressed the importance of breaking these stereotypes to make socially inclusive water and disaster governance system.



Ms. Geeta Pandey, KIRDARC Nepal, delivering the opening remarks during the session

She shared that women, in general, invited to formal meetings and workshops are often hesitant to speak, while men dominated the discussions. To address this, the “*Nadi ra Nari*” has provided a flexible and creative space where women were encouraged to express themselves through art and creative mediums rather than only formal discussions. The response was remarkable, revealing deep knowledge, lived experiences, and perspectives that had previously remained unheard.

She concluded by emphasizing that a collective approach, exemplified by *Nadi ra Nari* workshop, involving civil society, government, and the private sector, is essential to

addressing these challenges. By creating supportive spaces and facilitation with empathy, key gaps can be addressed to determine own pathways toward resilience and change.

3.2. Remarks by Male Ally

Dr. Dhiraj Pradhananga, UNESCO Chair in Mountain Cryosphere and Water, emphasized the importance of World Water Day and its theme, “Where Water Flows, Equality Grows,” noting that the *Nadi ra Nari* initiative, which originated in Bardiya, reflects an important effort to bring art and activism together to reframe conversations on water, gender, and climate change. He also acknowledged the collaboration among research institutes, civil society organizations and private sectors.

Highlighting the relevance of the event to the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation (IYGP 2025) and the UN Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (DACS 2025–2034), he stressed that protecting glaciers and advancing cryospheric science must go hand in hand with inclusive and equitable water governance. He noted that addressing cryosphere-related challenges requires not only scientific research but also meaningful engagement with the communities most affected by changing water systems.



Dr. Dhiraj Pradhananga addressing participants during the opening session

Reflecting on the broader Himalayan context, he spoke about the interconnectedness of glaciers, rivers, and downstream communities, noting that climate change is altering precipitation patterns and water systems across regions. He emphasized that linking science, policy, and community knowledge is important for addressing these complex issues. He also added that citizens are the frontliners during disasters; therefore, the approach of citizen science for climate data monitoring is important for either high-altitude or low-lying areas.

He also appreciated that through the medium of art, voices of the local community were brought to central level among major stakeholders, calling it an important step in

strengthening dialogue between major stakeholders and local communities. Referring to the documentary *Dhye Dreams*, he acknowledged its portrayal of women lived experiences of water scarcity and climate-induced displacement in Upper Mustang of Nepal.

He concluded by emphasizing three key messages: the need for gender-inclusive water governance, the importance of valuing local knowledge and lived experiences, and the need to connect scientific, policy, and community perspectives. He closed by stressing the importance of listening to women and marginalized voices in shaping resilient futures.

4. Session 1: Artivism Exhibition

The exhibition featured 50 creative works in total, including 42 artworks, 4 poems, and 4 stories, created by participants from communities in the Bardiya district. The works explored themes of burden of water collection, memory about flood events, environmental change, and the interconnected relationships between rivers, identity, culture, livelihoods, and everyday life. The exhibition encouraged visitors to engage with the stories and experiences behind each piece, creating space for reflection and dialogue on water, climate change, and gender. Artworks were available for purchase, with proceeds going directly to the artists.



Participant looking at the displayed artworks



Displayed artworks and stories made by women and children of Bardiya

4.1. Reflection Remarks by Ms. Yukta Bajracharya

Ms. Yukta Bajracharya, Arts Programme Manager at the British Council, reflected on the significance of the *Nadi ra Nari* exhibition and its role in demonstrating how arts and culture can contribute to people-centered development. Drawing from her experience as a poet, writer, and creative arts facilitator, she emphasized that alongside social, economic, and environmental dimensions, arts and culture constitute an important fourth pillar of sustainable development, despite often being undervalued and deprioritized.

Reflecting on the artworks, poems, songs, and stories displayed in the exhibition, she highlighted how they vividly portrayed the interconnected relationship between water, women, and communities. She noted that creative expressions presented the river not only as a physical resource but also as a source of companionship, memory, aspiration, and identity. Through narratives of flooding, displacement, and resilience, the artworks demonstrated how art can serve as a medium for critical reflection, questioning business as usual, and envisioning solutions through storytelling.

She further emphasized that art based on memory and emotions, in this context, had become evidence and appeal, helping communities make meaning of their relationship with water. She observed that the audience, through engaging with and interpreting the artworks, also became participants in this collective process of meaning-making. In her view, the event illustrated the unique ability of “art” to connect people across communities, experiences, time, and space.

Ms. Yukta also highlighted the importance of the creative process behind the exhibition, noting that the act of creating artworks, poems, and stories can be as meaningful as the final outputs themselves. She acknowledged the role of participatory and artistic spaces in enabling individuals, particularly women and young people, to express their thoughts, experiences, and emotions in safe and accessible ways.

Referring to the need to connect policy, science, and community voices, she stressed that arts and culture provide an inclusive platform for engaging with complex social and environmental challenges. She concluded by encouraging greater integration of arts and culture into development initiatives and urged to explore collaborations that use creative approaches to drive social change and respond to global challenges.



Ms. Yukta Bajracharya sharing her reflections

5. Session II: Documentary Screening

The documentary *Dhye Dreams*, directed by Ms. Shanta Nepali, shared the stories of women living in Dhye village in Upper Mustang. The film showed how water scarcity and climate change are affecting their lives, leading to displacement and loss of connection to their land. The film focused on lived experiences unlike other climate reports focusing on technical data only. It showed how environmental change not only impact physical infrastructure but also impacts intangible heritages viz., identity, culture, and belonging.



Screening of the documentary “Dhye Dreams”

5.1 Reflection Remarks by Dr. Susanna von der Heide

Prof. Dr. Susanne von der Heide, cultural scientist and conservation specialist representing the Himalayan Foundation, reflected on the documentary *Dhye Dreams* and shared her long-standing engagement with communities in Upper Mustang, including Dhye village. She appreciated the film for powerfully documenting the lived experiences of women facing water scarcity, climate change, migration, and the gradual transformation of mountain communities.

Drawing from her work across the Himalayan region, she highlighted that the drying of natural springs is one of the most pressing water-related challenges affecting mountain communities. She noted that declining water availability is impacting both household needs and agricultural livelihoods, forcing many families to adapt and, in some cases, relocate from high-altitude settlements.

She shared examples from Bhutan and Ladakh, where communities, supported by technical experts, have successfully revived dried springs and implemented locally driven water management solutions. These experiences, she noted, demonstrate the potential of combining local knowledge with technical expertise to strengthen climate resilience and restore critical water resources. She also discussed adaptation measures such as water storage systems and artificial glacier initiatives implemented in Ladakh, which have enabled

communities to make better use of seasonal water resources. She suggested that such approaches, could provide valuable lessons for addressing water challenges in vulnerable mountain areas of Nepal.

Referring to the work of the Himalayan Foundation and its collaboration with partners under the Third Pole Initiative, Prof. Dr. von der Heide highlighted initiatives supporting women's groups, climate-resilient agriculture, and orchard development in mountain regions. She emphasized the central role women play in adapting to environmental change, managing natural resources, and sustaining community livelihoods.

While acknowledging the resilience and adaptability of mountain communities, she expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of some high-altitude settlements experiencing severe environmental change and increasing resource scarcity. She stressed the importance of documenting local cultures, traditional knowledge, and lived experiences, particularly as climate change continues to transform communities across the Himalayas.

She concluded by commending featured documentary film for bringing visibility to these realities and emphasized the need for continued collaboration, innovation, and investment in community-led adaptation efforts and build resilient and sustainable futures.



Dr. Susanna von der Heide sharing her experiences and insights from her work in Mustang

6. Session III: Panel Discussion

The panel discussion of *Nadi ra Nari* centered on the interconnected relationship between gender, water, climate change, and lived experiences across Nepal's diverse landscapes. Building on the artistic expressions, documentary screenings, and narratives shared throughout the event, the discussion highlighted how water insecurity and climate-induced changes disproportionately affect women and marginalized communities. The session examined the increasing burden placed on women due to climate change, migration, changing socio-economic dynamics, and failures in public service systems. It also explored the role of storytelling, research, and community knowledge in bringing voices of unheard and informing policy and practice.

The discussion further highlighted the need to move beyond formal representation toward meaningful participation of women in decision-making, while recognizing women as primary users and managers of water resources and during disaster risk management. The role of art and visual storytelling in bringing human realities into climate discourse was also emphasized as a powerful tool complementing scientific research and evidence.

The four panelists (below) expressed their perspectives on the above-mentioned themes:

- Dr. Manju Sharma, Senior Sociologist and Institutional Social and GESI Expert, Department of Water Resources and Irrigation, Government of Nepal
- Ms. Prizma Singh Tharu, Executive Director, Tharu Women Upliftment Center (TWUC), Bardiya
- Ms. Shanta Nepali, Filmmaker/Producer, Shanta Nepali Productions
- Dr. Rachana Upadhyaya, Researcher, University of Bristol

The panel discussion session was moderated by Ms. Suchita Shrestha, Deputy Director – Program Development and Partnerships, SEN. Below is a summary of the panel discussion session:

Ms. Shanta Nepali reflected on the process of documenting the lived realities of communities facing climate-induced changes and migration. Drawing on experiences from Upper Mustang, she highlighted that water is not merely a resource but also a connection to land, culture, identity, and history. She stressed that climate change discussions often focus heavily on data and scientific indicators while overlooking the human experiences of displacement, loss of belonging, and disappearing ways of life. She emphasized that films and storytelling have the potential to bridge this gap by humanizing climate impacts and making invisible struggles more visible to wider audiences and policymakers.

Dr. Manju Sharma highlighted the gendered burden associated with failures in public service systems, particularly when water sources dry up or access to water becomes increasingly difficult. She noted that women and girls often bear these burdens through unpaid domestic work and caregiving responsibilities. While acknowledging improvements in women's

representation within institutional mechanisms such as Water Users Committees, she stressed the need to move beyond numerical participation towards meaningful engagement in decision-making processes. She also emphasized the importance of integrating local knowledge with technological innovations and engineering solutions to strengthen water management systems and localization of adaptation strategies.

Ms. Prizma Singh Tharu focused on the experiences of women in flood-prone communities of Bardiya and highlighted the compounded vulnerabilities faced by indigenous communities whose livelihoods are closely connected to rivers and natural ecosystems. She explained that during disasters women experience cascading responsibilities, balancing household security, care work, and livelihood concerns simultaneously. She also discussed the heightened risks women face during and post disaster, particularly in temporary settlements, including inadequate facilities and protection concerns. At the same time, she stressed that women possess significant traditional knowledge and resilience capacities that remain undervalued in disaster risk management and planning processes. She urged the policymakers and other stakeholders to address the unique need of women and girls affected by flooding and to include them if decision-making process be more socially inclusive.



Ms. Suchita Shrestha (left) moderating the panel discussion.

(From Left to Right, Dr. Rachana Upadhyaya, Ms. Shanta Nepali, Ms. Prizma Singh Tharu and Dr. Manju Sharma)

Dr. Rachana Upadhyaya discussed structural dimensions of gender inequality within climate adaptation and water governance. She emphasized that when public systems fail, the burden is transferred to households, disproportionately affecting women and girls. She highlighted the issue of “time poverty,” where women’s extensive unpaid work limits opportunities for economic participation and social mobility. She also noted significant demographic shifts resulting from male outmigration, which increasingly positions women as primary farmers, irrigators, and users of water-related technologies. Hence, she argued that policies and

interventions need to recognize women as primary users and leaders rather than simply participants within existing systems.

Across the discussion, several cross-cutting themes emerged, including the importance of integrating indigenous and local knowledge systems, strengthening collaboration between research and creative storytelling, and recognizing intersectional dimensions of vulnerability. Panelists repeatedly highlighted the need to address not only technical and infrastructural challenges but also social and institutional dimensions of water security and climate adaptation.

During the open floor discussion, participants raised important questions connecting gender, water, migration, indigenous knowledge, and climate vulnerability. Ms. Sejal Pokherel, from UNESCO, reflected on the experiences of non-agricultural, water-dependent communities such as the Sonaha community in Bardiya, noting that while discussions often focus on agriculture and land rights, communities dependent on fishing and gold mining are frequently overlooked. She asked the panelists about the use of intersectional approaches in climate research and the role of creative storytelling to document lived realities of women in these communities.

Dr. Dhiraj asked filmmaker, Ms. Shanta, if she has any upcoming documentary projects regarding urgent climate concerns in Mustang, and the possibility of integrating scientific data and glacier-related research into visual storytelling. Similarly, Ms. Muskan Bajracharya reflected on the relationship between research and filmmaking, questioning why data-driven research and creative storytelling have not historically been combined more often and what opportunities exist for future collaboration between the two fields.

Ms. Geeta Adhikari shared experiences from Dhankuta and Dharan, where communities revived traditional water conservation systems to address severe water shortages. She highlighted how these locally led practices have successfully helped recharge dried springs and are now being replicated across municipalities. She emphasized the need for such grassroots innovations to be recognized within state policy frameworks.

Public health professional Ms. Dusala Adhikari raised concerns about climate-induced migration, shrinking services in remote regions, and the growing struggles faced by migrants moving to urban centers. She asked the panelists what kind of policies and strategies are needed to support vulnerable communities while ensuring access to health, education, and livelihoods in remote areas.



Panelists Ms. Shanta Nepali (left) and Ms. Prizma Singh Thakuri (right) addressing the questions

Responding to the discussion, Ms. Shanta emphasized that storytelling and film play a powerful role in documenting emotional and lived realities that are often absent from research reports. She explained that her recent work focused intentionally on displacement, belonging, and the experiences of women adapting to new lives after migration rather than centering scientific data. She also shared that her upcoming documentary explores changing food practices and environmental relationships within the Tharu community.

Dr. Manju highlighted that migration is shaped by both “push” and “pull” factors, with climate change and water insecurity increasingly becoming major drivers of displacement. She stressed the importance of coordinated action among governments, NGOs, and private actors to create stable living conditions and scale up successful community-led water conservation practices. Dr. Rachana added that many existing disaster and climate frameworks fail to adequately reflect Nepal’s geographical realities and emphasized the need for more locally grounded and intersectional policy approaches.

In the closing reflections, the panelists stressed the importance of moving beyond symbolic representation toward meaningful leadership of women in water governance and climate adaptation. They called for stronger collaboration among researchers, artists, institutions, and communities to amplify marginalized voices and create more inclusive and people-centered responses to climate challenges.

Key Takeaways of panel discussion

- Women must be recognized as leaders and decision makers and not only as vulnerable population.
- Participation of women should be meaningful, not symbolic or tokenistic.

- Local knowledge and community solutions need more integration in planning and execution.
- Art and storytelling should be included as evidence in policy conversations.
- Collaboration across sectors is necessary to attain the goal of socially inclusive water resources management and disaster management.

7. Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks

Ms. Merina Ranjit, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Chaudhary Foundation, delivered the closing remarks and reflected on the vision behind the Third Pole Initiative. She emphasized that the initiative was founded on the belief that the voices of the Himalayan region, often referred to as the “Third Pole,” deserve greater recognition and representation in national and global conversations.

She noted that *Nadi ra Nari* marked the sixth edition of the dialogue series and highlighted its role in creating spaces for storytelling, reflection, and collaboration around issues of water, climate change, culture, and community resilience.

Drawing inspiration from a poem written by Roshan Shahi, a Grade 10 student from Bardiya, she shared the lines: “I feel the river’s destination is the ocean. The river never asks how far the ocean is; it just keeps flowing because it believes.” She reflected that this message captures the spirit of the Third Pole Initiative, which seeks to foster collaboration, amplify local voices, and create pathways for Himalayan perspectives to reach broader audiences.

She concluded by thanking all participants, partners, speakers, artists, and community members for their contributions to the event and reiterated the importance of working together to ensure that the stories, experiences, and aspirations of diverse communities of Nepal are heard on the national and global stage.



Ms. Merina Ranjit concluding the ceremony

Annexes:

Anne 1: Program Schedule

ART EXHIBITION & DOCUMENTARY SCREENING

Event Schedule

Time	SESSION	ACTIVITY	SPEAKERS
1:45-2:00	Registration	Registration, welcome tea/coffee, and ushering to hall	Emcee: Subhekshya Pandey
2:05-2:10	Session 1	Official opening of event Welcome remarks	Ms. Geeta Pandey Director- Policy Planning and Research, KIRDARC
2:10-2:15	Session 2	Background on exhibition and artists	Dr. Dhiraj Pradhananga UNESCO Chair
2:15-2:20	Session 3	Video compilation screening (screened throughout the art exhibition)	—
2:20-2:50	Session 4	Group photograph Official opening of art exhibition Outside Hall	Emcee
2:50 – 2:55	Session 5	Seating of guests for documentary screening	Emcee
2:55-3:00	Session 6	Remarks on the importance of art as expression	Ms. Yukta Bajracharya
3:00-3:30	Session 7	Documentary screening (30 minutes)	—
3:30 - 3:35	Session 8	Remarks on the documentary	Dr. Susanne von der Heide
3:35 - 3:45	Session 9	Presentation of token of appreciation to guests	—
3:45- 3:50	Session 10	Introduction and commencement of panel discussion	Emcee
3:50-4:45	Panel Discussion	Panel Discussion Moderator: Ms. Suchita Shrestha Deputy Director, SEN	Panelists: Ms. Shanta Nepali Filmmaker / Producer Ms. Prizma Singh Tharu Executive Director Tharu Women Upliftment Center (TWUC), Bardiya Dr. Manju Sharma Senior Sociologist & GESI Expert DWRI, Government of Nepal Dr. Rachana Upadhyaya Research Associate

Time	SESSION	ACTIVITY	SPEAKERS
			University of Bristol
4:45-4:59	Session 11	Concluding remarks — panel discussion	Ms. Suchita Shrestha Deputy Director, SEN
4:50-5:00	Session 12	Presentation of token of appreciation to panelists	Ms. Ashrayata
5:00- 5:05	Session 13	Closing remarks	Merina Ranjit CF
5:05- 5:30	Networking	Hi-tea and networking	—

For participants only - Please do not circulate

Annex 2: Concept note



2025
2034
Decade of Action
for Cryospheric
Sciences



विश्व हिमनदी दिवस
विश्व जल दिवस
विश्व नीलम दिवस

CHAUDHARY FOUNDATION



Third Pole Series-6: नदी र नारी (Nadi ra Naari)

I. Background:

Water is the essence of life and for us human beings, it is at the core. The 2026 UNU-IWEH report has declared the planet has entered an era of “global water bankruptcy” highlighting serious issues like rapid depletion of freshwater sources, drying of groundwater at an irreversible rate, soil degradation, and so on. This means that billions of people will lose access to clean and safe water and will face various socio-economic obstacles due to water scarcity. However, the impact is unequal as women and girls are usually the ones tasked with collection and management of safe drinking water and sanitation. This then has a direct impact on their safety, health, education, and livelihood.

Every year World Water Day is celebrated on 22nd March, and this year's theme is Water and Gender, highlighting the importance of women's role and the obstacles they face in water collection, management and conservation. The Small Earth Nepal (SEN), in partnership with Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) Nepal, Chaudhary Foundation and Third Pole Initiative, aim to celebrate this year's World Water Day by amplifying the stories of ground level realities faced by women from various local communities of Nepal through art, storytelling, and panel discussion with water and gender experts.

II. Program details:

A. Art Exhibition

The exhibition shares the lived experiences of women and students from river-dependent communities in Geruwa and Madhuwan of Bardiya district, expressed through art, storytelling, and creative collaboration. The exhibition will feature artworks that offer a



CHAUDHARY FOUNDATION



glimpse into how communities understand and respond to changing rivers, water scarcity, and climate challenges.

B. Documentary Screening

The evening will also feature a screening of *Dhye Dreams*, a 27-minute documentary by Shanta Nepali. Set in the village of in Upper Mustang, the documentary follows the lives of women who continue to stay rooted in their homeland despite water scarcity, migration, and the impacts of climate change. Their stories reflect resilience, memory, and a deep connection to place.

C. Panel discussion: Nadi ra Nari, where water flows equality grows

Third Pole Series is a regular discussion platform organized by the Third Pole Initiative (TPI), with the aim to foster multistakeholder dialogues and exchanges so that private sector engagement becomes visible and effective in tackling climate change and promoting tangible collaboration. This month's discussion will take form as a panel discussion and focus on the cross-cutting issue of gender equality and water.

Annex 3: Some Snapshots of the event



Group photo commemorating the successful completion of the event.



Participants interacting



Displayed artwork depicting a traditional Dehri (grain storage structure) created by a Tharu woman



Participants listening to the panel discussion



Displayed handicrafts and artistic creations by Tharu women from Unnati Cultural Village



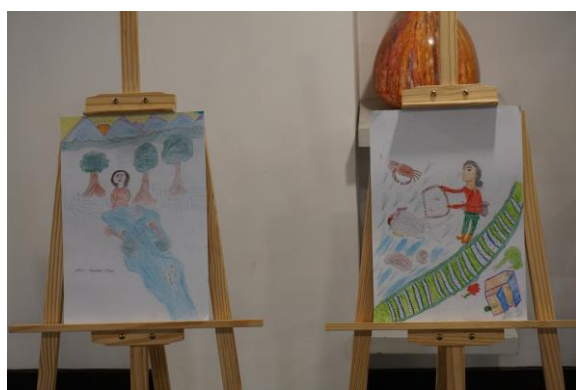
Ms. Subhekshya Pandey, Research Assistant, SEN, guiding the event proceedings and addressing participants



Participants observing artworks created by women and children from Bardiya



Participants observing the artworks and engaging in discussion



Student-created artworks on display



Dr. Susanna von der Heide and Ms. Shanta Nepali exchanging insights and experiences



Participant during open discussion session



Ms. Ashrayata Karki Chaudhary presenting a token of appreciation to panelist Dr. Rachana Upadhyaya



Ms. Ashrayata Karki Chaudhary presenting a token of love and gratitude to speaker, Ms. Yukta Bajracharya

Annex 4: List of Participants

Third Pole Series-6
26th March, Thursday, 1:45- 5:30 p.m.
Vivanta Kathmandu, Jhamsikhel Road

S.N.	Name	Organization	Position	Gender	Ethnicity	Photo/video consent	Signature
1	Aakriti Dotel	Nepalese Youth for Climate Action	National Network Coordinator				
2	Amita Thapa	NYN	Member	F		✓	<i>Amita</i>
3	Anushiya Shrestha	SIAS					
4	Anushuya Joshi	SEN, AEPC	President			✓	<i>Anushuya</i>
5	Barsha Lekhi	UNESCO					
6	Bindu Shrestha	NYCA	Green Discussion Coordinator	F	Janjati	✓	<i>Bindu</i>
7	Chanda Sunar	GEDSI expert					
8	Deepika Ghimire	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center	Project Coordinator	F		✓	<i>Deepika</i>
9	Dhiraj Pradhananga	TU/SEN	UNESCO Chair	M		✓	<i>Dhiraj</i>
10	Dikchhya Baral	DidiBahini	Youth Researcher	F		✓	<i>Dikchhya</i>
11	Dikshya Subedi	Youth Action for Sustainable and Eco Nepal (YASEN)	Founder	F	Brahmin	✓	<i>Dikshya</i>

				Gender	Ethnicity	Photo/video consent	Signature
12	Dipika Khadka	Nepal Climate Hub (NCH)	Climate Storyteller	F		✓	<i>Dipika</i>
13	Tista Prasad Joshi	Nepal Academy of Science and Technology	Senior Scientist				
14	Gargee Pradhan	GEDSI specialists					
15	Jyotsna Lama Khadka	SmartPaani Pvt Ltd	General Manager				<i>Jyotsna</i>
16	Komal Rai	NYN	Board member	F		✓	<i>Komal</i>
17	Lava Kafle	Wow development quality assurance pvt ltd	Founder				<i>Lava Kafle</i>
18	Manju Sapkota	Bacha ko Pyaro					
19	Manohara Khadka	IWMI	Country Representative				
20	Nisha Onta	Governance Lab	Executive Director				
21	Omkar Kafle	Tribhuvan University	Student				
22	Parbata Gautam	FECOFUN	General Secretary				
23	Prakriti Gurung	UNESCO	Lead Natural Sciences sector	F		✓	<i>Prakriti</i>
24	Prakriti Gurung	UNESCO					

				Gender	Ethnicity	Photo/ Video consent	Signature
25	Pranit Budhathoki	Practical Action	Climate Finance Delivery				P.B.
26	Rachana Upadhyaya	University of Bristol	Research Associate				R.U.
27	Rahul Aryal	YAR Scholars	Data Analyst and Researcher				
28	Rajan Subedi	Oxfam	Program manager	M	prokatin	✓	Raj
29	Rajana Maharjan	NAMI, SCHEM college	Lecturer	F	Newar	✓	Rajana
30	Renu Shrestha	ActionAid International Nepal	Program Development Manager-WRS				
31	Rewati Raman Dhakal	Nepal Center for Philanthropy and Development (NCPD)	CEO				
32	Rubina Thapa	Catalyst for change Nepal	Project Associate	F	Chhetri	✓	Rubina
33	Salu Basnet	Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies	Researcher				Salu
34	Samikchhya Gurung	Tri Chandra	Researcher				
35	Sanskriti Shrestha	BrihaTech	Graphics Designer Intern	F	Newar	✓	Sanskriti
36	Saru Tamang	Tribhuvan University	Researcher				Saru
37	Shikha Thapa Magar	Nepal Development Research Institute	Executive Director	F	Magar	✓	Shikha

							Signature
38	Shrinkhala Thapa	IFRC					
39	Sijal Pokharel	UNESCO	Project Officer	F		✓	Sijal
40	Sudha Acharya	BrihaTech	Admin officer	F	Brahmin	✓	Sudha
41	Sushan Bhattarai	IIDS	Researcher				
42	Yukta Bajracharya	British Council	Arts Programme Manager	W	Nepali	✓	Yukta



For further contact or inquiries:

+977-9847694139 | info@smallearth.org.np