



A REPORT OF NATIONAL SEMINAR ON

THE FUTURE OF WASTE: GENDER EQUALITY & OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN NEPAL



STEELWORKERS HUMANITY FUND

CANADA

INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

NEPAL

15 NOVEMBER, 2025
KATHMANDU, NEPAL

BACKGROUND

Waste management in Nepal faced complex challenges, exacerbated by gender inequalities and inadequate occupational health and safety (OHS) provisions. To address these pressing concerns, ICA Nepal hosted a national seminar titled “The Future of Waste: Gender Equality and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) in Nepal” on 15 November 2025 at A One Hotel in Koteshwor, Kathmandu.

The seminar brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from municipalities, waste worker associations, civil society organizations, and international partners. Participants discussed the structural barriers that women waste workers encountered, the lack of formal recognition for informal workers, and the urgent need to strengthen OHS standards across the sector.

Through keynote remarks, panel discussions, interactive sessions, and knowledge sharing, the seminar highlighted pathways towards a more equitable and sustainable waste management system. Special emphasis was placed on integrating gender perspectives into municipal policies, ensuring safer working conditions, and promoting leadership opportunities for women in waste management. The event served as a platform to chart collective strategies for reform, build alliances among stakeholders, and reaffirm commitments to advancing both gender equality and occupational health in Nepal’s waste sector.

INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS (ICA) NEPAL

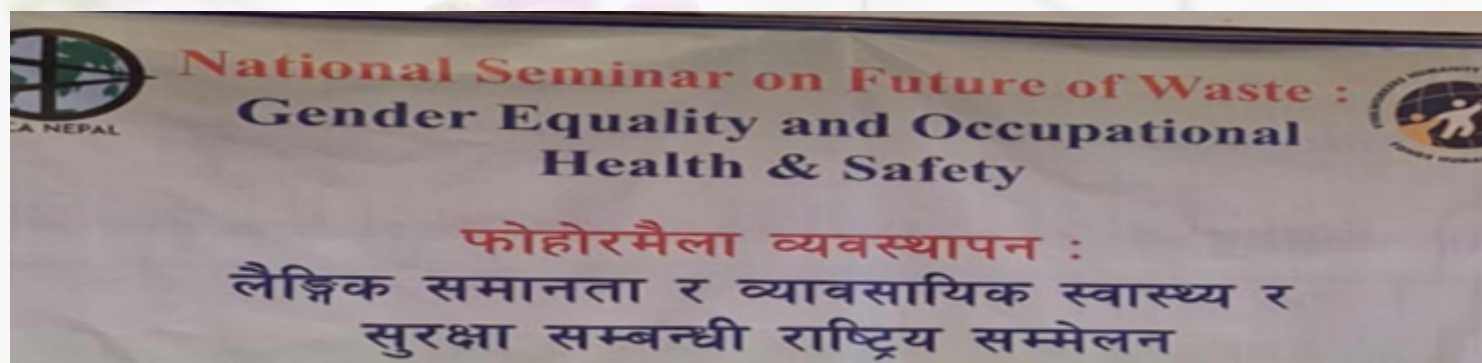
Driven by the belief in individual transformative potential, ICA Nepal has been a leading organisation in human capacity building for the last 27 years in Nepal. ICA Nepal empowers individuals, groups, organizations and communities to drive change through training, facilitation and community development. ICA Nepal facilitates community initiatives and promotes dialogue and community engagement for holistic societal development, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth for all.

Supported by the Steelworkers Humanity Fund, ICA Nepal is undertaking a comprehensive approach to empowering women waste workers in occupational health and safety, social protection, and leadership skills.

SEMINAR OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the seminar is to connect, share, build and collaborate partnerships in promoting gender-responsive occupational health and safety and sustainable waste management in Nepal.

RAISING NATIONAL-LEVEL AWARENESS ABOUT THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH RISKS DISPROPORTIONATELY FACED BY INFORMAL WORKERS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN.





NATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE FUTURE OF WASTE: GENDER EQUALITY & OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY IN NEPAL

15 NOVEMBER, 2025

VENUE: A-ONE VENUE, KOTESHWOR

PROGRAM SCHEDULE



Time	Agenda
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast and Registration
9:00 am – 10:30 am	Opening Ceremony Welcome Guests on the Dias National Anthem Panas Lighting • Context Setting Remarks – Ishu Subba • Policy Gap on Occupational Health and Safety in Waste Management – Enusha Khadka • Labour Registration and Trade Union Movement – Pema Lama (GFont) Formal Member of Parliament • Remarks from Guest (Ward Chairperson)
30 minutes	Networking/Tea Break
11:00 am – 1:00 pm	Paper Presentations on issues on cross cutting issues of waste workers in Nepal • E-Waste Management – Ramesh Dahal • Hospital Waste– Radha Acharya • Role of Scrap Business of Waste Management– Sanon Tamang and Yadu Maya Adhikari /Apsara • Lived Experience of Women Waste Workers – Anita Gurung
60 minutes	Lunch
2:00 pm to 3:30 pm	Dialogue on Gender Responsive on Occupational Health and Safety for Waste Workers – Prof. Dr. Tatwa P. Timsina
3:30 pm to 4:00 pm	Presenting Recommendations on Gender Responsive on Occupational Health and Safety for
4:00 pm to 5:30	Closing leading to Hi-Tea/Networking

OPENING REMARKS AND CONTEXT SETTING

Ishu Subba, Executive Chair of ICA Nepal



The seminar commenced with a welcome note and context setting by Ms. Ishu Subba, who warmly greeted the participants and set the tone for the day's discussions. In her opening remarks, she briefly highlighted the key objectives of the seminar, emphasizing the urgent need to address gender inequalities and occupational health and safety (OHS) challenges within Nepal's waste management sector.

Ms. Subba also provided an overview of the project titled "Integrating a Holistic Approach to Waste Management for Improving Occupational Health and Safety of Women Waste Workers in Kathmandu, Nepal." She outlined the project's core strategies, which included promoting gender-responsive policies, enhancing the safety and dignity of women waste workers, and fostering inclusive dialogue among stakeholders. She shed light on the project's major achievements, such as conducting participatory needs assessments, delivering targeted OHS training, distributing protective equipment, and facilitating policy advocacy with municipal authorities.

Her remarks underscored the importance of centering women's voices in waste sector reforms and reaffirmed the project's commitment to building a more equitable and sustainable urban environment. The audience was invited to engage actively throughout the seminar, contributing insights and forging collaborative pathways for change.

POLICY GAPS ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN WASTE MANAGEMENT

Enusha Khadka, Executive Director of Institute of Innovation and Quality Assurance



Ms. Enusha Khadka delivered a compelling presentation on the critical policy gaps surrounding occupational health and safety (OHS) in Nepal's waste management sector. She emphasised that while waste workers—particularly women in informal roles—face significant physical, chemical, and psychological risks, existing policies often fail to recognise or address these vulnerabilities adequately.

Ms. Khadka highlighted several key gaps, including the absence of gender-sensitive OHS standards, limited enforcement of safety regulations in informal waste work, and the lack of formal recognition for waste workers who operate outside municipal contracts.

She pointed out that national labour and health policies rarely include provisions tailored to the unique risks faced by women waste workers, such as exposure to toxic substances during menstruation or pregnancy, and the psychosocial stress linked to stigma and economic insecurity. The presentation called for urgent reforms, including the integration of gender equity into municipal waste policies, improved data collection on workplace injuries and illnesses and the establishment of inclusive safety standards that protect all workers

LABOUR REGISTRATION AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Pemba Lama, Former Member of Parliament



Ms. Pemba Lama, former Member of Parliament and long-serving Secretary of GEFONT (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions), delivered a powerful presentation on the importance of labour registration and trade union mobilization in transforming Nepal's waste sector. Drawing from her extensive experience in labor rights advocacy, she emphasized that the informal nature of waste work particularly among women—has long kept workers invisible, unprotected, and excluded from social security and legal safeguards.

She argued that formalization begins with labour registration, which not only validates the existence of waste workers but also opens pathways to health insurance, pension schemes, workplace safety standards, and collective bargaining rights. Ms. Lama stressed that local governments have a critical role to play in this process. They must take responsibility for systematically collecting and maintaining data on waste workers, including their gender, employment status, work conditions, and occupational risks. Such data is essential for designing inclusive policies, allocating resources, and ensuring that interventions reach those most in need.

She emphasized how key a role trade unions play in organizing informal workers, especially in the waste management sector, highlighting their endeavors to raise awareness of workers' rights, advocate for decent wages, and guarantee safety measures. Unions also negotiate with municipalities and private contractors, amplifying the voices of workers who have long been excluded from formal labor protections. Ms. Lama stressed that stronger collaboration between trade unions, civil society organizations, and local governments is needed if there is to be a dignified, inclusive, and equitable waste management system.

She added that registration of labor is not only an administrative measure but a political act of recognition and empowerment. For women waste workers, who have been marginalized both in policy and practice, formal registration becomes a gateway to claiming rights, accessing benefits and protection, and social recognition. Ms. Lama reminded stakeholders that recognizing informal workers is not just about adhering to procedures; it is also an essential act of social justice and gender-sensitive empowerment.

CONGRATULATORY NOTE

Bhagwan Budhathoki, Member of Ward No. 32, Kathmandu Metropolitan City

Mr. Budhathoki began his remarks by extending heartfelt congratulations to ICA Nepal for organizing such a meaningful and timely national seminar. He highlighted the importance of strengthening waste management systems and ensuring gender-responsive Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) for workers who contribute significantly to the cleanliness and functioning of the city. He emphasized that sustainable improvements in these areas require coordinated efforts from local governments, partner organizations, and community stakeholders. Appreciating ICA Nepal's initiative to bring all these actors together on one platform, he conveyed his best wishes for the continued success of the project and its positive impact on women waste workers.



PAPER PRESENTATION SESSION

The seminar included a dedicated Paper Presentation Session that brought together experts working in different thematic areas of waste management and occupational health and safety. This session provided a platform for presenters to share key insights, field experiences, and evidence-based observations related to the challenges and opportunities faced by waste workers, especially women. Each presentation highlighted important dimensions of waste management from e-waste and hospital waste to the lived realities of women workers helping to build a comprehensive understanding of sectoral issues.

The session featured the following presenters and topics:

- E-Waste Management - Ramesh Dahal
- Hospital Waste Management - Radha Acharya
- Role of Scrap Business in Waste Management - Sanon Tamang and Yadu Maya Adhikari
- Lived Experience of Women Waste Workers - Anita Gurung, OHS Task Force

1. E-Waste Management



Ramesh Dahal
Environmental Specialist and Sociologist

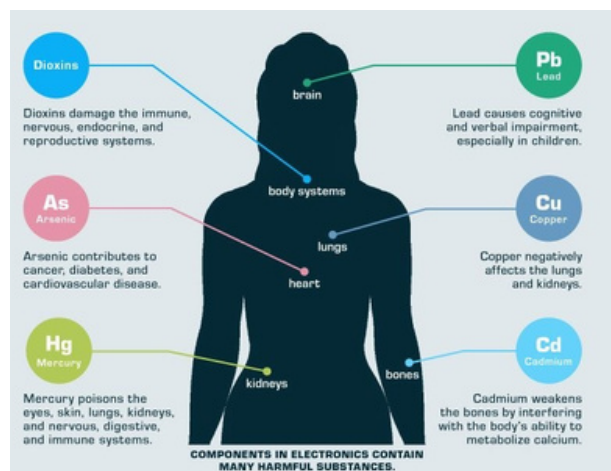
E-waste is a growing challenge in Nepal, encompassing discarded electronic items such as TVs, computers, household appliances and medical equipment. These items, if improperly disposed, pose serious risks to both human health and the environment. Women and children from marginalized communities are often exposed to e-waste while collecting valuable metals like gold, silver, and copper, putting their health at serious risk.

E-waste contains hazardous substances including lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic, brominated flame retardants, and chlorofluorocarbons. These chemicals contaminate soil, water, and air, creating long-term environmental damage. Remarkably, one ton of mobile phones can yield around 140 grams of gold, making e-waste both a valuable resource and a dangerous hazard.



Exposure to these toxic substances can damage the brain, heart, kidneys, and lungs. Mercury and lead are particularly harmful, causing neurological impairments, cognitive issues, reproductive problems and cardiovascular diseases. Women and children involved in informal recycling are the most vulnerable, as they often work without protective equipment.

E-waste contains a complex mix of materials, including 69 naturally occurring elements and over 1,000 different substances, ranging from toxic metals such as lead, mercury, beryllium, thallium, cadmium, and arsenic, to brominated flame retardants and polychlorinated biphenyls (Barshai, 2025). At the same time, e-waste holds valuable metals like gold, silver, platinum, and palladium, as well as critical raw materials including cobalt, germanium, bismuth, and antimony, making it a potential source of income for waste collectors. Iron and aluminum are also extensively used in electronic devices. Notably, one ton of discarded mobile phones and personal laptops can yield approximately 140 grams of gold, highlighting both the economic opportunity and the environmental responsibility associated with e-waste management.



Improper handling of e-waste exposes humans, especially women and children, to serious health risks. Toxic substances such as mercury, lead, and arsenic in batteries, plugs, and devices can damage the brain, heart, kidneys, and lungs, cause neurological impairments, cognitive deficits and birth complications, and increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases. People recovering metals from e-waste are also exposed to CFCs, which affect the central nervous system and respiratory health, highlighting the urgent need for safe and regulated e-waste management.

Owing to the tremendous growth in this sector, generating over 62 million tons of e-waste annually has become a major social and environmental challenge, particularly for developing countries that often receive second-hand electronic and electrical equipment from developed nations, mostly through illegal or donations-based exports. E-waste recycling in Nepal remains an informal, low-paid, and unregulated activity, which tends to involve women and children in exposure to toxic chemicals like CFCs and HCFCs without protective equipment or training.

While developed countries formalize e-waste work with proper occupational health and safety measures, Nepali workers lack labor protections, thus creating unsafe and exploitative situations. Women are significantly contributing to e-waste recycling amidst all these risks, hence contributing to the green economy, but they also call for urgent policies that guarantee safety, rights, and recognition.

Generating over 62 million tons of e-waste annually poses serious social and environmental challenges, especially for developing countries like Nepal, where informal, low-paid recycling exposes women and children to toxic chemicals such as CFCs and HCFCs without proper protective equipment (Robbins et al., 2014; Byte Recycling Ltd, 2025). Unlike developed countries with formalized OHS measures, Nepali workers face unsafe and exploitative conditions, yet women's role in e-waste recycling remains vital to the green economy, emphasizing the need for protective policies (Sustainability Directives, 2025).



Nepal currently lacks specific e-waste policies, and existing legislation, such as the Solid Waste Management Act, 2011, provides little guidance on handling electronic waste, discouraging private-sector investment and leaving the country ill-equipped to manage growing volumes of hazardous EEEs (Mandal, 2021). Despite being a signatory to the Basel Convention, large amounts of e-waste are illegally exported, highlighting weak enforcement, inadequate facilities, and technological gaps. This policy void contributes to unsafe, informal recycling practices, exposing vulnerable populations—especially women and children—to toxic substances while valuable resources are lost.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach. Establishing formal, hazard-safe recycling infrastructure, ideally outside residential areas and managed by trained personnel, can ensure safe dismantling, material recovery, and proper handling of toxic substances (Basnyat & Gille, 2022). Promoting the 3R principles reduce, reuse, and recycle alongside extended producer responsibility can create economically viable circular economy solutions, retain valuable materials, and strengthen a local second-hand electronics market. Complementing these measures with government-led policy reform, provincial and local interventions, and widespread public awareness campaigns can foster safe, sustainable, and socially responsible e-waste management in Nepal.

E-waste is a growing environmental, social, and health concern, particularly in countries like Nepal, where marginalized women and children are exposed to toxic substances while extracting valuable materials. Improper disposal of EEEs releases hazardous substances such as mercury, lead, cadmium, CFCs, and HCFCs, causing lasting harm to human health and the environment. This underscores the urgent need for government action at all levels through policy reform, public awareness, and advocacy to ensure safe and sustainable e-waste management.

2. Hospital Waste Management



Radha Acharya
IPC Focal Person, Bir Hospital

Nepali electronic waste is, for the most part, informally and unsafely recycled. Workers, including women and children, are exposed to hazardous chemicals without proper training or protective equipment. Although there are occupational health measures within the formalization of this work in developed countries, it is nonexistent for Nepali workers, perpetuating exploitative conditions. Still, women play a very important role in helping develop this green economy. Therefore, this intensifies the need for policies regarding safety, protection of rights, and recognition.

Hospital waste management plays a critical role in maintaining public health, environmental safety, and infection control within medical facilities. Proper segregation, collection, treatment, and disposal of clinical waste ensure that patients, healthcare workers, and surrounding communities remain protected from hazardous exposures. Effective waste handling is especially vital in high-patient-load institutions, where large volumes of biomedical waste are generated every day. A systematic and scientific approach is therefore essential to reduce risks and maintain a safe healthcare environment.



Proper segregation of hospital waste by utilizing color-coded bins and appropriate sharps containers is the beginning of effective management. Safe transportation, periodic collection, and adequate staffing minimize the risk of occupational hazard. Proper utilization of personal protective equipment with strict adherence to protocol safeguards workers. These measures prevent needle-stick injuries, cross-contamination, and infectious disease transmission.

Improper hospital waste management continues to pose serious environmental and public health concerns in Nepal. The growing volume of biomedical waste ranging from infectious materials to chemical and pharmaceutical residues—has not been matched with adequate infrastructure, skilled personnel, or systematic monitoring. Many health facilities still lack functional sterilization equipment, standardized procedures for waste segregation, or trained staff to handle hazardous materials safely.

As a result, biomedical waste often gets mixed with general municipal waste, transported without proper containment, and disposed of in open sites, exposing waste workers, community members, and the environment to significant risks. Even in hospitals that have autoclave or sterilizer machines, inconsistent operation, poor maintenance, and the absence of clear responsibility-sharing mechanisms weaken the overall waste management system. Challenges remain especially in segregating waste at the source, ensuring color-coded bins are used properly, guaranteeing PPE for handlers, and developing accountability mechanisms through regular audits and supervision. These systemic gaps highlight the urgent need for stronger institutional commitment, trained human resources, adequate budget allocation, and strict compliance with national health-care waste management guidelines to protect public health and create a safer hospital environment.



Improper hospital waste management in Nepal continues to endanger public health and the environment due to inadequate infrastructure, insufficiently trained staff, and weak monitoring systems. Strengthening institutional commitment, ensuring proper segregation and protective measures, and enforcing compliance with waste management guidelines are urgently needed to create safer hospital environments.

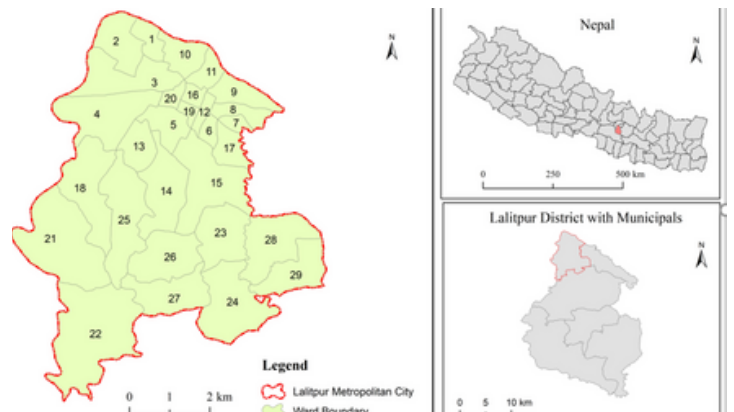
3. Role of Scrap Business of Waste Management



Scrap dealers (“kabaadi workers”) play an important but often overlooked role in the urban waste management ecosystem of Lalitpur Metropolitan City. Their work contributes significantly to recycling, resource recovery, and environmental cleanliness. Despite this, their contribution is rarely acknowledged, and their working conditions, income stability, and social security remain poorly documented. This report explores the livelihood realities, challenges, and opportunities of scrap dealers based on recent field research conducted in Lalitpur.

Sanon Tamang and Yadu Maya Adhikari
Mphil/PhD Social Work, Tribhuvan University

The scrap value chain in Lalitpur is primarily run by marginalized and low-income communities. Many workers migrate to the city for survival and informal employment. A majority of scrap workers have limited formal education, resulting in restricted employment choices and a strong dependency on daily scrap-based income. Women’s participation is present but remains comparatively low due to social roles, safety concerns, and physical demands of the work. Overall, the workforce is characterized by poverty, limited services, and lack of institutional support.



The main feedstock of the scrap economy in Lalitpur Metropolitan City is from household wastes, which constitute 70%, while hotels and restaurants contribute 20%, and construction sites 10%. There are 82 registered scrap dealers that employ 630 people, with most shops having 6 to 10 employees. Workers earn between Rs. 1,000–3,000 per day, averaging Rs. 2,000, amounting to a monthly wage of Rs. 30,000–90,000. These figures indicate the extensive number of jobs available in this sector and thus the economic vulnerability of the workers who depend on variable volumes of waste flows. Most workers are also exposed to occupational hazards without proper safety measures or protective equipment.

Despite these challenges, the scrap sector is key to maintaining the city's recycling chain and keeping the environment sustainable. Ensuring the safety of occupations, income security, and support mechanisms must become a priority in protecting workers and enhancing the efficiency of the sector.

The gender dynamics and safety conditions within Lalitpur’s scrap sector reveal deep structural inequalities. Only a handful of women are formally registered as scrap business owners, and even they are mostly engaged in administrative tasks rather than field operations. No women are involved as scrap collectors, reinforcing the male-dominated nature of physically demanding and hazardous work. A few women contribute informally within family-run shops, but their labor remains unpaid and invisible in official records. The sector is also shaped by ethnic and economic marginalization, with 88% of workers belonging to Madhesi communities and only 12% to Pahadi groups, reflecting a dual burden of gender and socio-economic exclusion.

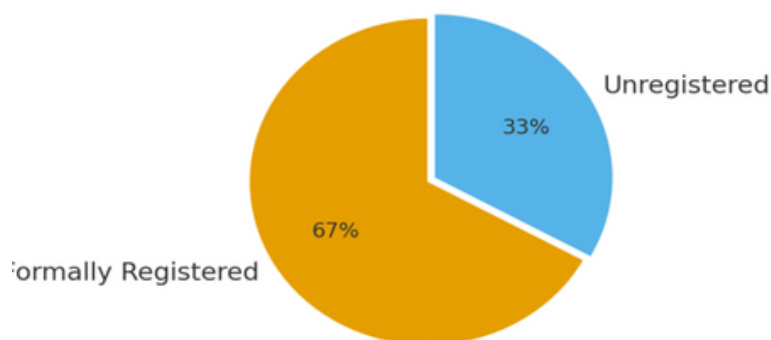
Occupational health and safety conditions are equally concerning: although 67% of scrap shops are registered, 33% still operate informally without regulatory oversight, making it difficult to enforce safety standards. Workers—especially those in informal setups—lack protective equipment, face daily exposure to hazardous materials, and remain outside formal support mechanisms.

This combination of informality, gender exclusion, and unsafe working environments highlights the urgent need for inclusive reforms, stronger municipal monitoring, and gender-sensitive interventions within Lalitpur’s waste value chain.

The kawadi sector in Lalitpur Metropolitan City plays a very important role in urban waste reduction, resource recovery, and circular economy practices. However, this sector is primarily informal, unsafe, and inequitable despite providing over 630 employments within the city through 82 shops. Workers, especially in unregistered shops, do not have basic occupational health and safety measures and work daily amidst fire hazards, sharp metals, chemicals, and dust, along with electrical dangers. In the meantime, women's participation is minimal, often invisible, and deeply entrenched in gender norms of unpaid family support roles. It is clear that resolving these challenges will involve coordinated action from municipal authorities, waste organisations, and businesses of scrap.

This would be significantly enhanced by prioritizing the provision of PPE, establishing fire and electrical safety systems, formalizing unregistered shops, introducing regular health checkups, and creating gender-inclusive employment pathways through the piloting of women collector programs. Targeted investment, policy support, and structured monitoring could transform the scrap economy into a safer, more dignified, and well-regulated system that secures further environmental sustainability while protecting health, income, and wellbeing across its workforce.

Scrap Business Registration Status in Lalitpur



4. Lived Experience of Women Waste Workers



Anita Gurung

ICA Nepal, OHS Task force

Women waste workers remain among the most invisible and undervalued labor groups in Nepal, despite being the backbone of urban cleanliness. Their daily contributions sustain the city's hygiene and recycling systems, while their struggles, aspirations, and lived realities often remain unheard. This section highlights two powerful personal stories: those of Kesha and Rita, whose experiences reflect the resilience and challenges shared by countless women in the waste workforce.

Kesha, 32: Surviving Harsh Realities Under the Koteshwor Bridge

Kesha works every day under the Koteshwor bridge, collecting, sorting, and selling waste to sustain her household. The environment in which she works is hazardous: dusty, noisy, and full of mixed waste that exposes her to infections, cuts, skin problems, and respiratory risks. Yet again, on top of being dangerous, waste collection becomes the only reliable source of income. Along with many in her community, Kesha faces very low wages, job insecurity, and a double burden of performing both physically demanding waste work and unpaid household duties.

Social stigma adds further hardship, as waste work is rarely acknowledged as dignified labor. With ICA Nepal's storytelling and empowerment programs, Kesha gradually began voicing her concerns and dreams. She consistently expresses a hope for safer working conditions, better opportunities for income, and greater respect from society. Her story reminds that the cleanliness of the city rests on the unrecognized labor of women like her, whose contributions remain essential yet overlooked.



Rita, 30: Carrying the Weight of the City Before Dawn

Rita starts her work hours before the sun rises, sweeping and cleaning the streets on which thousands afterwards walk, hardly recognizing her work. Her job is one of the most exhausting, and despite its importance, she receives very little recognition and scant pay. Once done with her dawn tasks, Rita rushes home to cook and clean for her family, taking care of them juggling public labor with heavy domestic responsibilities.



This routine of constant, high demands leaves Rita physically worn out and emotionally drained, yet she continues working because her family's wellbeing depends entirely on her daily earnings. Despite performing essential city services, she remains excluded from social protection, health insurance, and dignified wages—conditions that expose her to vulnerabilities in the long run. Her story also echoes broader gendered realities of sanitation work in Nepal, where women bear the heaviest workloads with the least recognition, protection, or upward mobility. Often, Rita says that while she is proud of the work she does, she wishes society would value her contribution by offering her safer conditions, proper equipment, and fair compensation. She has shown how improvements in occupational health and safety, gender equity, and the expansion of municipal support systems are matters of urgency, not only for her well-being but for the whole sanitation workforce that silently sustains the city every day

Their stories are not isolated; rather, they reflect the daily realities of hundreds of women whose work keeps the city running but who remain behind the scenes. Their experiences reveal how gender, poverty, and social discrimination intersect to create layers of vulnerability for women in Nepal's waste sector. From unsafe working conditions and unstable incomes to crushing domestic burdens and the constant absence of recognition, the challenges they face are deep-seatedly structural. And yet, their remarkable resilience, dedication, and pride underscore both the strength within this workforce and the imperative for its transformation. Their voices cry out for a waste management system where women are treated not as invisible workers but as valuable contributors worthy of protection, respect, decent wages, and social security. Elevating women like Kesha and Rita is not just about justice; it is crucial for building a more humane, inclusive, and sustainable urban future.



DIALOGUE SESSION ON GENDER -RESPONSIVE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

Prof. Dr. Tatwa P. Timsina, Founding Chairperson, ICA Nepal



The seminar included a dedicated Dialogue Session on Gender-Responsive Occupational Health and Safety(OHS) facilitated by Prof.Dr. Tatwa P. Timsina, the Founding Chairperson of ICA Nepal.Dr. Timsina is a senior development expert with more than 27 years of professional experience in facilitation, adult learning, organizational development and participatory methods. Over the years, he has facilitated learning and leadership development programs for the Government of Nepal, UNDP, USAID, ADB and numerous civil society and private sector institutions. His long-standing expertise in participatory dialogue, inclusive facilitation and social research provided strong grounding for this national-level discussion

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World Cafe Dialogue Session

The interactive World Café model was followed in the session to generate deeper collective insights on gender-responsive Occupational Health & Safety. A total of six thematic tables were formed, each centered on a key question related to gender, safety, policy, leadership, inclusion, and shared responsibility. Participants were divided into six groups of approximately 12 members each, representing a balanced mix of local government officials, union representatives, and women waste workers.

To support effective facilitation, each thematic table was guided by a Theme Leader :

- 1.Ishu Subba
- 2.Enusha Khadka
- 3.Nabina Khadka
- 4.Anita Gurung
- 5.Samjhana Shahi
- 6.Pramila KC



Each of the groups held 10-minute rotational discussions at all six tables. In this way, each participant could contribute experience, knowledge, and perspective to each of the questions. At the end of six rotations, every group had interacted with all six questions to build a full collective understanding. All important discussion points were listed on chart papers on the walls so that participants could easily compare cross-cutting issues, divergent opinions, and emerging priorities.

Thematic Questions

1. What are the most significant unseen occupational health and safety risks that disproportionately affect women workers in Nepal across sectors (agriculture, garment, construction, informal economy, waste management, etc.)?



Key Discussion Points

- Challenges in managing menstrual health during work.
- Increased accident risks due to lack of proper training.
- Physical and emotional difficulties related to menopause.
- Unjust salary deductions causing financial strain.
- Undefined working hours and lack of overtime pay.
- Difficulty balancing family responsibilities with work demands.
- Exposure to gender-based violence and trafficking risks.

Theme: Strengthening Gender-Responsive OHS Support

Recommendations

- Ensure proper and consistent use of PPE.
- Provide health awareness and menstrual/menopause support.
- Strengthen workplace safety and prevent GBV & harassment.
- Improve working conditions in sanitation and waste sectors.
- Increase supervision and accountability.

- Support women workers facing age-related health issues.
- Reduce workload and provide flexibility for women with care duties.
- Ensure safe working spaces with protective systems.
- Establish incident-reporting mechanisms.
- Provide fair wages and prevent salary cuts.



After analyzing the discussion points shared by all members during the rotation, the group consolidated the key ideas and jointly developed ten priority recommendations for improving gender-responsive OHS for women waste workers. These recommendations reflect common challenges, shared experiences, and practical solutions identified across groups.

2. How can women workers' leadership in OHS committees and decision-making spaces be strengthened?



Key Discussion Points

- Need for scientific recognition of women-specific OHS risks.
- Women should be encouraged to raise workplace safety concerns confidently.
- OHS-related policies require timely revision to reflect gender needs.
- Limited family support restricts women's participation in leadership roles.
- Low public awareness of gender equality and women's leadership capabilities.
- Government support is required to reduce women's care burden so they can participate in decision-making.
- Ensure 50% mandatory representation of women in all OHS and workplace decision-making committees.

Theme: Strengthening Women's Leadership in OHS Decision-Making Recommendations

- Ensure 50% mandatory representation of women in all decision-making committees.
- Promote active inclusion of women in OHS leadership roles.
- Provide mentorship and leadership development opportunities for women workers.
- Address harmful social beliefs that discourage women's leadership by increasing awareness.
- Introduce measures to reduce the double burden of work and household responsibilities.
- Strengthen collaboration between health services and OHS systems to support women's unique needs.
- Create gender-responsive support mechanisms to encourage women's participation in OHS committees.
- Ensure equal access to information, training, and safety resources for women.
- Expand social protection and labor policies that enable women to participate in leadership roles.
- Promote a culture where all stakeholders—institutions and communities—actively support women's leadership.



3. What barriers do women and marginalized groups face in accessing safe and healthy working conditions?



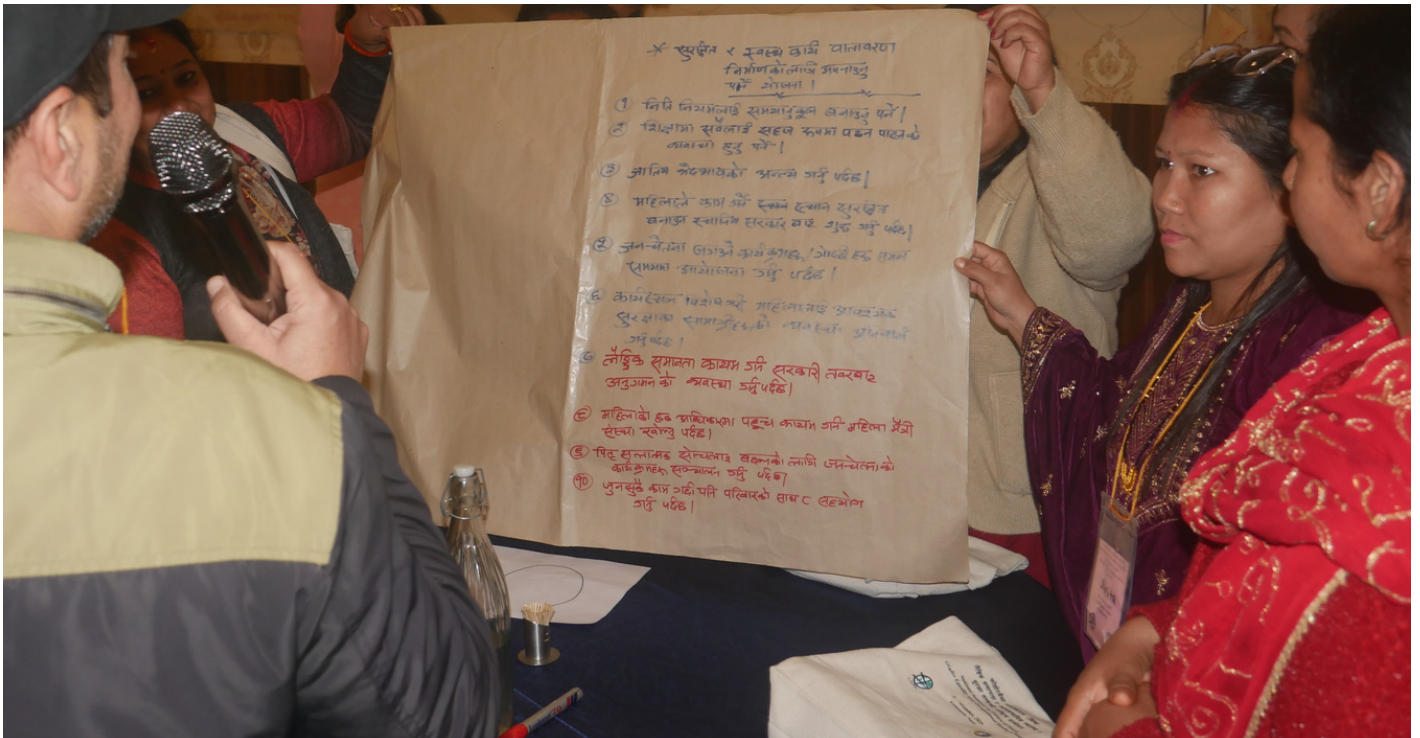
Key Discussion Points

- Gender wage gap and unequal pay.
- Limited voice and weak grievance mechanisms for women workers.
- Insufficient family support, affecting participation and safety demands.
- Low education levels, reducing awareness of rights and OHS standards.
- Limited opportunities and poor access to safe jobs and training.
- Heavy household responsibilities, restricting time and mobility.
- Caste-based discrimination, limiting equal access to decent work.
- Poverty, pushing women into unsafe and exploitative work conditions.

Theme: Strengthening Gender-Responsive Safety and Well-Being

Recommendations

- Promote equal opportunities and representation for both women and men.
- Ensure access to quality education and awareness programs for all workers.
- Enhance financial independence through targeted income-generation and support initiatives.
- Create safe and enabling workplaces where women feel confident and encouraged to work.
- Develop flexible work arrangements and supportive systems to balance domestic and work responsibilities. Strengthen social protection mechanisms that address women's specific occupational health and safety needs.
- Provide targeted support for marginalized groups to improve their safety and inclusion in the workforce.
- Address challenges faced by women due to limited literacy by offering simple, accessible communication tools.
- Increase access to specialized psychosocial and counseling services for women at risk.
- Adopt gender-responsive approaches that prioritize women's safety, equality, and participation in all sectors.



4. How can policymakers integrate gender-sensitive approaches into national OHS standards?



Key Discussion Points

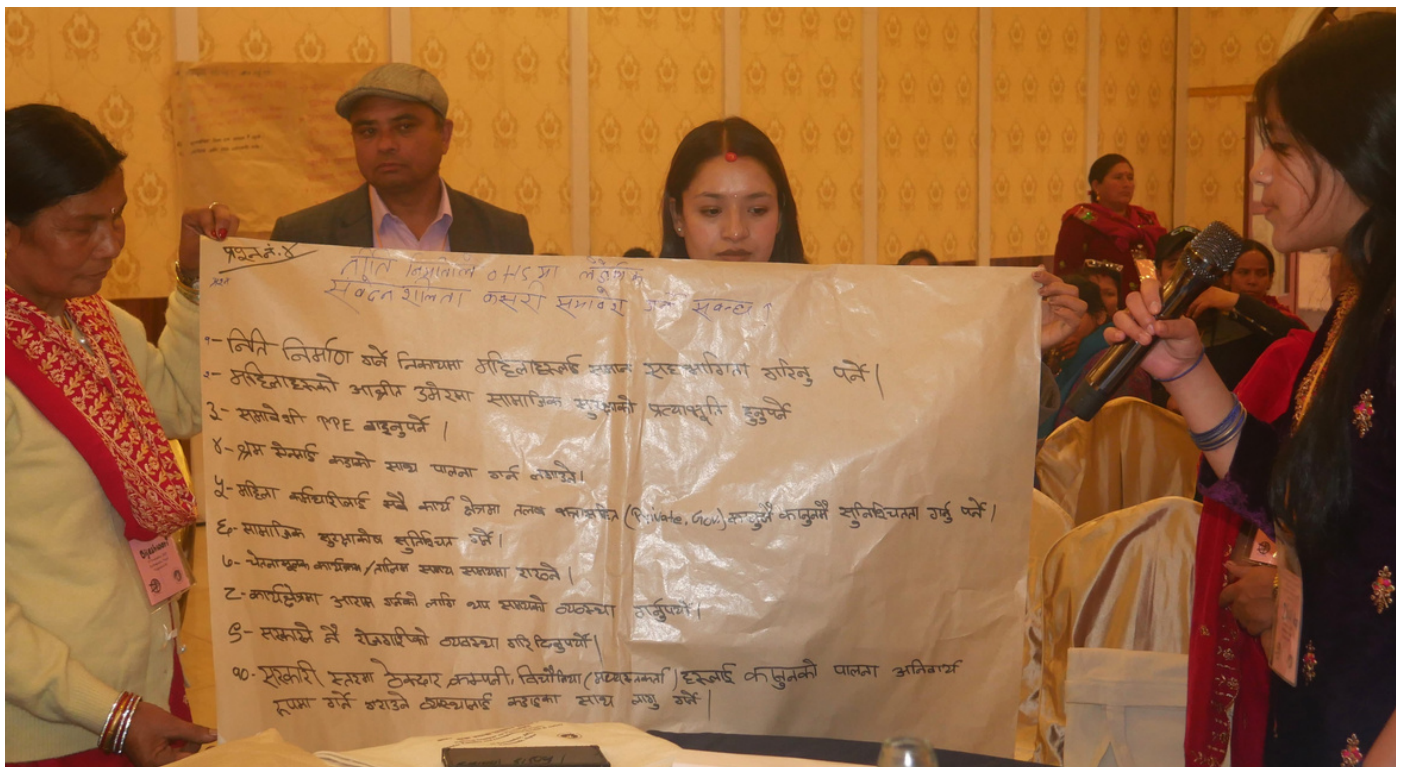
- Ensure no gender-based discrimination in workplaces or OHS policies.
- Increase availability of inclusive, gender-sensitive PPE.
- Night-shift workers should not face salary or allowance deductions.
- Women's biological and practical needs are not adequately addressed in workplace policies.
- Lack of scientific studies on gender sensitivity and women's representation in OHS.

- Labour laws and OHS standards are poorly implemented.
- Nepotism and favoritism hinder fair opportunities for women.
- Women in dependent age groups lack adequate social security support.

Theme: Strengthening Gender-Sensitive Policies and Inclusive OHS Implementation

Recommendations

- Ensure women's participation in policy-making processes across all OHS and labour-related sectors.
- Integrate community-level experiences and challenges of women workers into national OHS policy reforms.
- Increase access to gender-responsive PPE for women workers.
- Raise awareness at the household and workplace level to reduce discriminatory attitudes toward women workers.
- Guarantee equal opportunities for women in all work sectors, including both private and government fields.
- Expand community awareness programs focused on labour rights and workplace safety.
- Conduct ongoing training and orientation programs for employers and supervisors on gender-sensitive OHS practices.
- Develop sector-specific OHS guidelines tailored to the needs of women workers.
- Strengthen labour inspections to ensure compliance with OHS standards.
- Promote gender-sensitive grievance-handling mechanisms to support victims of workplace discrimination, harassment, or unsafe conditions.



5. What collective actions (unions/communities/organizations) can advance gender equality and workplace safety?



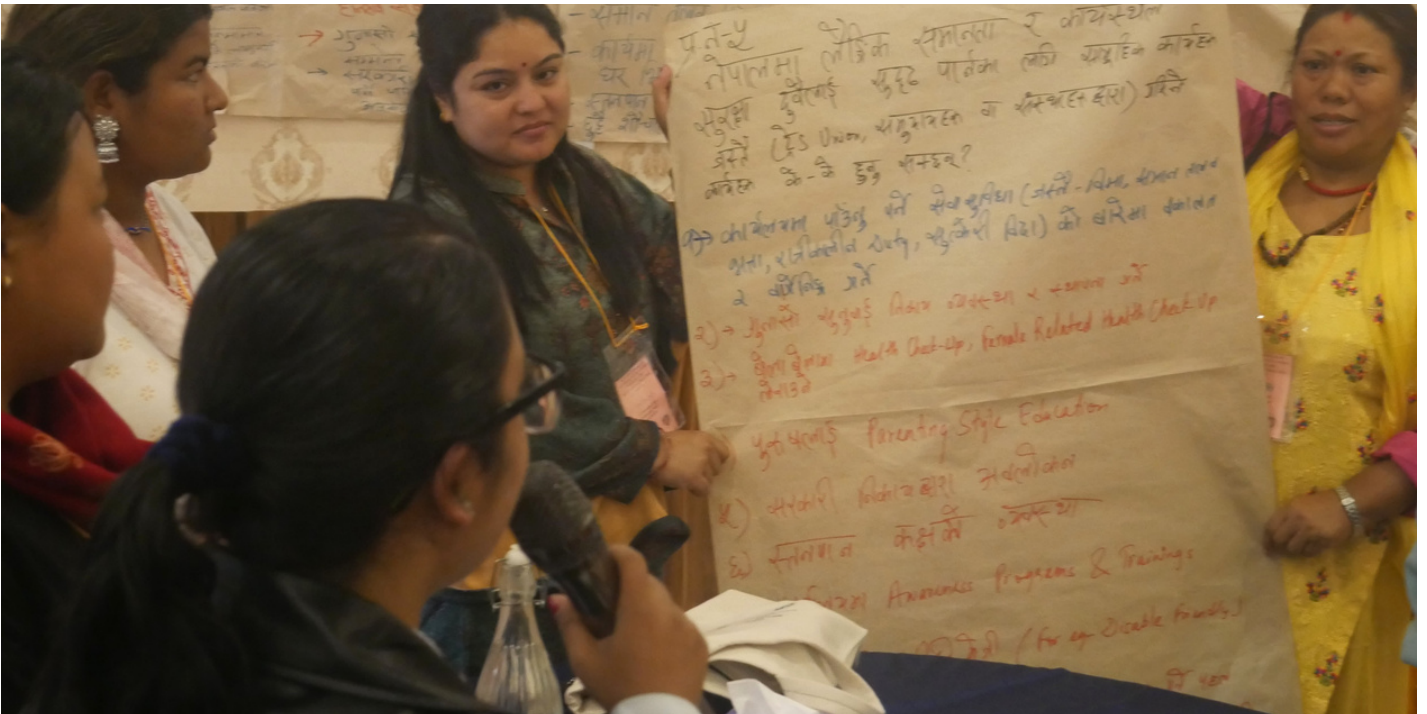
Key Discussion Points

- Broader community awareness on gender equality and OHS is needed.
- Workplaces lack adequate health and safety facilities.
- Women's personal and safety concerns are often overlooked by employers.
- No safe transportation for night-shift; many workplaces lack CCTV.
- Women's issues are not regularly addressed through local government mechanisms.
- Equal workload sharing and respectful treatment at the workplace is still missing.

Theme: Strengthening Collective Action for Gender Equality & Safer Workplaces

Recommendations

- Promote coordinated actions between unions, government agencies, and organizations to advocate for gender equality and workplace safety.
- Ensure timely delivery of essential social security and safety services (e.g., maternity benefits, leave provisions, protective gear).
- Provide gender-inclusive PPE for all workers.
- Conduct regular awareness and counseling programs for workers and their families.
- Strengthen collaboration between the private sector, government, and community networks to create safer work environments.
- Promote inclusive and gender-responsive workplace policies.
- Organize periodic multi-stakeholder dialogues and review meetings to assess progress.
- Introduce comprehensive grievance-handling mechanisms within the workplace.
- Ensure that government bodies proactively integrate workplace safety into local policies and practices.
- Provide leadership development and skill-building opportunities for women workers.



6.What programs are needed to engage men as champions and responsible partners for safer, gender-equitable workplaces?



Key Discussion Points

- Minimum wage enforcement remains weak.
- Employers should ensure health insurance and medical support.
- Strict action is required against gender-based violence.
- Workplaces lack proper daily attendance systems.
- No regular monitoring of guideline implementation.
- Women's participation in decision-making is very low.
- Limited availability of women-empowerment training programs.
- Work allocation should consider women's physical safety and capacity.

- PPE management is weak, with no proper system for distribution, storage, or regular use.
- There must be a strict institutional rule to take action whenever gender-based violence is reported.

Theme: Building Supportive and Gender-Responsive Workplace Systems

Recommendations

- Encourage supervisors and colleagues to actively support women workers through positive behavior, inclusive practices, and respectful workplace conduct.
- Strengthen coordination among institutions, unions, and government agencies to expand gender equality and OHS awareness.
- Develop programs that promote positive workplace culture and encourage proactive support for women's safety and wellbeing.
- Ensure workplaces adopt gender-responsive practices—such as flexible duty arrangements, safe facilities, and supportive supervision.
- Provide orientation and capacity-building for staff to identify and address harassment, discrimination, and harmful norms in the workplace.
- Promote leadership roles that champion gender-responsive occupational safety and inclusive decision-making.



