

WOMEN, NATURE AND PEACE INITIATIVE

Empowering Women for Conservation and Peace



Meghauli Buffer Zone, Chitwan, Nepal

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Submitted by

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Consent and Ethical Considerations

Verbal consent was obtained from participants before any photographs or video recordings were taken during the programme. Participants were informed that these materials might be used for programme documentation, reporting, communication, and awareness purposes. Taking part in photography and video documentation was voluntary throughout, and care was taken to respect participants' preferences and privacy.

Executive Summary

The Women, Nature and Peace Initiative ran in the Megghauli Buffer Zone of Chitwan from May to August 2026, with the goal of strengthening women's knowledge, confidence, participation, and leadership in conservation, human–wildlife coexistence, livelihoods, and community preparedness. The programme took a participatory approach: it began with community consultation and moved through wildlife safety training, practical wildlife-sign and pugmark identification, livelihood skills, exposure visits, indigenous seed banking, climate-resilient agriculture, health support, women's leadership, emergency preparedness, community dialogue, and a final impact assessment.

It reached women from communities living close to forests, wildlife habitats, agricultural land, and river systems: more than 200 took part in wildlife safety training, around 150 in the initial Focus Group Discussions, 40 in the Women Nature Guardians / Community Rapid Response Team training, and 32 in the Sisabas follow-up preparedness and harmony circle session. Further, women were reached through livelihood, seed bank, agriculture, exposure, and health activities.

Overall, the initiative improved awareness of wildlife behaviour and safety, built women's confidence and participation in conservation, developed practical livelihood skills, and established a women-led community seed bank. In the final matched pre- and post-test assessment of 35 participants, mean knowledge rose from 54.1% to 68.0%; 34 participants (97%) showed improvement, and all reported increased confidence.

2. Background and Project Context



Figure 1: Google map of Meghauli

The Meghauli Buffer Zone sits within a conservation landscape where settlements, farmland, forests, rivers, and wildlife habitat all border Chitwan National Park. Communities here experience both the benefits and the difficulties of living next to a protected area. Wildlife movement, crop damage, fear of unexpected encounters, and limited access to practical safety information all affect daily life, and women feel these effects just as much, since they carry much of the farming, household work, forest-resource collection, and community activity.

The community — mainly Tharu, Kumal, Bote, and Mushar households, along with families who migrated from the hills—relies on farming for its livelihood and lives with the constant risk of wild boar, deer, monkeys, rhinos, and elephants damaging crops. People still depend on the forest for firewood and fodder despite that risk. During the programme, women also raised wider concerns: uncertain livelihoods and climate, flood and river risk, fire hazards, and a general lack of preparedness for sudden emergencies. The programme responded by taking a broader approach, linking wildlife safety with women's leadership, livelihoods, climate-resilient agriculture, traditional seed conservation, community dialogue, and preparedness. Women, landless and poor households, and families most dependent on the forest tend to face the greatest exposure, simply because of their daily responsibilities. Women who collect grass, fodder, and fuelwood in particular can spend long hours in areas where they may encounter wildlife. As the Practice Guide on multispecies coexistence puts it, the key questions are not only where wildlife occurs, but who carries the greatest risk, why they enter forest areas, and what real alternatives are available to them.

The Women, Nature and Peace Initiative was built on the recognition that human–wildlife coexistence cannot be solved through wildlife awareness alone. It calls for an approach that combines community safety, women's participation, local knowledge, fairness, and shared responsibility across communities, conservation institutions, government, and other stakeholders.

The initiative also rests on the principle that effective conservation and coexistence depend on informed, confident communities. Women should not be seen only as beneficiaries of conservation work; they should have real opportunities to act as communicators, local resource persons, and leaders in community safety and resilience.

Human–Wildlife Conflict and Human–Wildlife Coexistence

Nepal's conservation programmes have delivered real gains for wildlife. Over the past 16 years, the tiger population has tripled, and numbers of rhinos, elephants, monkeys, and wild boar have also grown, an achievement worth celebrating. Community forests, national parks, and wildlife corridors have expanded alongside this, creating more habitat for wildlife to thrive in.

But that same growth has brought real difficulty for local communities, who now face more frequent wildlife encounters, with losses of livestock and, in some cases, human lives. Frustration is growing, directed at wild animals such as tigers, leopards, elephants, and rhinos, and at times at the park authorities that manage them. Human–wildlife conflict is increasing.

Compensation and relief schemes exist, but community members are clear that no payment replaces a human life, and there is a strong call for better wildlife management. At the same time, Nepal's relationship with nature runs deep. Each community carries its own traditions of worshipping nature and wildlife — some honor Hanuman as the monkey god, while tigers and elephants are seen as vehicles of gods and goddesses, and rituals and processions traditionally open with prayers to nature. Worship peepal (Banyan tree), as a source of wisdom and relief from pain and sorrow. Each tribe and community have their own way to worship ritual for nature and animals. This is a place where people have shared water and forest resources with wildlife for generations, in a long practice of coexistence.

3. Project Goal and Objectives

Project Goal

To strengthen women's knowledge, confidence, leadership, and participation in conservation, human–wildlife coexistence, community resilience, and sustainable livelihoods in the Meghauli Buffer Zone.

Key Objectives

- Improve women's knowledge and practical awareness of wildlife behavior, human–wildlife safety, and coexistence.
- Strengthen women's participation and leadership in conservation and community-level preparedness.
- Support practical livelihood skills, climate-resilient agriculture, and indigenous seed conservation.
- Strengthen community dialogue, emergency preparedness, and local response capacity.

4. Implementation Approach and Methodology

The programme followed a participatory, women-centered, community-based approach rather than a fixed package of activities, one shaped by consultation with local women and stakeholders and designed around practical concerns raised by the community itself. It combined Focus Group Discussions, awareness sessions, practical demonstrations, scenario exercises, peer learning, exposure visits, livelihood training, follow-up discussions, and pre- and post-training assessment.

Stage	Method	Purpose
1. Listen	Consultation and FGDs	Understand women's experiences and priorities
2. Learn	Wildlife safety sessions	Build knowledge and risk awareness
3. Practice	Pugmark/sign learning and scenarios	Convert knowledge into practical skills
4. Connect	Exposure visits and stakeholder coordination	Build relationships and peer learning
5. Organize	Women Nature Guardians / RRT formation	Create a community preparedness mechanism
6. Prepare	First aid and emergency response	Strengthen immediate emergency capacity
7. Build Resilience	Livelihood programme and seed-bank concept for sustainable farming	Strengthen household/community resilience
8. Dialogue	Harmony Circle	Build trust and address conservation concerns
9. Assess	Pre-/post-test, reflection, and follow-up	Measure learning and document change

5. Project Coverage and Beneficiaries

The initiative worked primarily with communities in Wards 27 and 28 of the Meghauli Buffer Zone. Women were the principal focus, including women farmers, community forest members, local leaders, nature guides, CBAPU members, widows, and members of women's groups.

Activity / Engagement	Participants
Wildlife safety awareness and conservation	Direct 422 (Indirect 2,000+)
Initial FGDs	Approximately 150 women
Wildlife Safety Training	More than 200 women
Women Nature Guardians / RRT Concept Training	40 women
Harmony Circle session at Sisabas group	32 women

Activity / Engagement	Participants
Matched Pre-/Post-Test Assessment — Women Nature Guardians / RRT conceptTraining	35 participants
Livelihood for conservation	Total 155 women
Seed Bank Consultation and climate-adaptive agriculture and community seed banks training session	35 women
Exposure Visit (Entrepreneur) and Skill-Based Training (Bateko Dhup, Handicraft and Soap Making)	120 women
Women's Health Camp	Approximately 200 community members

6. Activities and Implementation Results

The Women, Nature and Peace Initiative ran across Meghauli and the surrounding buffer-zone communities through 2026, as a series of connected activities covering wildlife safety, women's leadership in conservation, community preparedness, livelihoods, and wellbeing. Each activity responded to issues raised directly by communities and was designed to build women's knowledge, confidence, skills, and participation in conservation and community development. Rather than treating wildlife safety, disaster preparedness, livelihoods, and women's participation as separate issues, the project connected them through awareness sessions, interactive discussions, practical demonstrations, skills training, exposure learning, community dialogue, and health support — all working toward the same goal of community resilience and peaceful coexistence. The activities below are grouped into three components: wildlife safety and community awareness, livelihoods, and health followed by the final impact assessment, and are described in the order they were delivered.

6.1 Wildlife Safety and Community Awareness

6.1.1 Community Entry, Coordination and Focus Group Discussions



Figure 2 - Community consultation and Focus Group Discussion.

Coordination meetings were held with the Nepal Tiger Trust, Buffer Zone representatives, local stakeholders, and women's groups to prepare for the activities ahead. From May 19 to 22, 2026, Focus Group Discussions were held with seven women's groups, involving around 150 women.

These discussions gave women a chance to share their experiences of human–wildlife interaction and safety concerns, along with crop and livestock losses, livelihood needs, and their participation in decision-making, as well as local environmental risks and preparedness needs. They

shaped the programme from the ground up, so it responded to what communities actually needed rather than to outside assumptions.

They also gave a clearer picture of human–wildlife interaction from the perspective of the women and other community members who live with these risks daily, not just where wildlife is present, but why people enter forest areas, when and where the risk is highest, and which groups in the community have the fewest alternatives.

This reflects the principle of participatory risk mapping, who enters the forest, why, when, where wildlife moves, and which locations carry the greatest risk. The everyday knowledge of forest users is essential to building safety measures that are realistic and genuinely owned by the community.

These consultations laid the groundwork for activities grounded in community realities, rather than safety measures designed elsewhere and applied without regard for local practice.

6.1.2 Wildlife Safety, Wildlife Behavior and Coexistence Training

A wildlife safety awareness programme ran from 3 to 8 June 2026 in the Meghauri area, covering wildlife understanding, safe forest practices, and snakebite risk.



Figure 3: Wildlife safety and awareness training.

Gauri Malakar facilitated the first session on the introduction of the program, the wildlife safety, and importance of pugmark identification, wildlife tracking, and basic camera-trapping techniques. Bikash Pathak followed with a session on wildlife behaviour, covering precautions for encounters with tigers, rhinoceroses, elephants, and leopards, and the compensation provisions available for wildlife-related damage.

Given how central forest activities are to women's daily work, Gauri Malakar also led a session on women's safety, covering risk reduction and alternative livelihood strategies, while Manesh Limbu ran a session on snake awareness — different snake types and how to avoid and respond to them.



Figure 4: Practical wildlife-sign and pugmark identification

Baburam Mahato and the Nepal Tiger Trust also led a hands-on pugmark identification session, helping participants connect what they'd learned to real observations in the field. Over the two days, more than 200 women from Wards 27 and 28 took part, covering wildlife behaviour, safety, risk awareness, and incident reporting.

The training focused on measures women could actually apply within their existing routines, rather than asking them to change how they live. The aim was sharper awareness and safer decision-making during the forest and community activities they already do.

Key messages included avoiding unnecessary solo movement in high-risk areas, staying alert to surroundings, keeping together as a group, recognising wildlife signs and behaviour, keeping a safe distance from wildlife, knowing which locations call for extra caution, and understanding communication and emergency response arrangements.

This mirrors the Practice Guide's own emphasis: safety measures work best when they're realistic, locally appropriate, and developed with the people who actually use the forest.

The training combined wildlife knowledge with community experience, and encouraged participants to share their own observations of wildlife behaviour and environmental risk.

6.1.3 Follow-Up Reflection and Community Learning

Follow-up discussions with four groups revisited what participants had learned, their confidence, changing perceptions, and any remaining concerns. Women reflected on how the wildlife safety information applied to their daily lives, and discussed ongoing challenges along with the importance of community communication and preparedness.



Figure 5 : follow-up reflection gathering

6.1.4 Literacy and Learning Materials

Wildlife awareness and safety posters were produced for distribution across the community, and a flipchart version was also developed so awareness sessions could run even without electricity.

6.1.5 Women Nature Guardians and Community Rapid Response Concept Training

A two-day training on 22–23 August 2026 built women's understanding of conservation, human–wildlife coexistence, community preparedness, disaster management, and what a community-level Rapid Response Team (RRT) could look like. It opened with a session on human–wildlife coexistence in Megghauli, facilitated by Prabin Poudel, a Conservation Officer at Chitwan National Park, who discussed the relationship between the park and the surrounding communities.

Doma Poudel, a female nature guide, led a session on the role of women in conservation, showing how women can contribute through awareness, communication, observation, leadership, and community engagement.



Figure 6: Women Nature Guardians / RRT concept training.

Bikash Pathak covered conservation and wildlife behavior, and why understanding animal behavior matters for both conservation and community safety. Gauri Malakar then introduced the concept of a Community Rapid Response Team, explaining why a locally organized response mechanism matters, and participants worked through what roles community members could play in communication, preparedness, coordination, and responding to wildlife incidents and other local emergencies.

In a session titled “From Human–Wildlife Conflict to Human–Wildlife Coexistence,” Doma Poudel encouraged participants to reflect on how better knowledge, preparedness, communication, and shared responsibility can lead to safer coexistence. Basant Rana also led a session on disaster management, connecting wildlife-related risks to broader emergency preparedness, and later provided first-aid training. Bikash Pathak, Doma Poudel, and the Nepal Tiger Trust team ran further discussions and exercises on animal behavior and how communities should respond during wildlife

encounters. The training closed with Gauri Malakar introducing Harmony Circles, local spaces where community members can share concerns, work through problems, exchange experiences, and find practical solutions together.

In total, 40 women attended, including members of community forests, nature guides, CBAPU members, local leaders, and elected representatives, across a programme covering wildlife safety, first aid, emergency preparedness, communication, incident reporting, and women's leadership in conservation.

The proposed Women Nature Guardian mechanism is a chance to move past one-off awareness activities toward sustained women's involvement in community safety and conservation. Women who deal with forest-related risk regularly also hold knowledge that can feed directly into local monitoring, communication, awareness, and planning.

Women Nature Guardians could help identify local risk areas, document wildlife-related incidents, share practical safety information, stay in touch with vulnerable households, and take part in seasonal community reviews, giving a formal voice to women whose daily experience would otherwise sit outside conservation decision-making.

The underlying principle is simple: people who carry the greatest risk shouldn't only receive information and training; they should help shape how safety and conservation interventions are designed.

Practical Wildlife-Attack Scenario Exercises and First Aid

Participants practiced simulated responses to wildlife entering or approaching community areas like (elephant, tiger, and rhinoceros scenarios) focused on safe decision-making, keeping distance, protecting vulnerable people, avoiding panic, managing crowds, and coordinating with the right responders. First-aid practice covered immediate response to bleeding, fractures, burns, choking, and snakebite, with the consistent message that professional medical care should still be arranged as quickly as possible.



Figure 7: Practical emergency response exercise.

Harmony Circle: Dialogue and Peacebuilding

As part of the same training, the Harmony Circle brought Women Nature Guardians

and community participants together to talk through wildlife incidents, compensation challenges, Buffer Zone rules, fear, misinformation, and practical solutions, the first session of the dialogue mechanism set out in the original proposal.

Systematic documentation of wildlife-related and other environmental incidents is a key part of building community preparedness; it helps communities move past reacting to single events and start recognizing patterns over time.

A simple community incident record may include the date and time, location, animal involved, activity being undertaken, gender of the affected person, level of forest dependence, nature of the impact, speed of emergency response, relief or compensation process, and follow-up action.

Documentation isn't only about reporting; it should be reviewed periodically with affected communities to spot recurring risk patterns and improve future safety planning. As the Practice Guide recommends, that review should ask who is affected and whether the same vulnerable groups keep carrying the greatest burden.

6.1.6 Harmony Circle Follow-Up: Sisabas Wildlife Safety and Preparedness Session

On 29 August 2026, a wildlife safety and community preparedness session was held in Sisabas with 32 local women, focused on wildlife awareness, community vulnerabilities, disaster preparedness, and next steps.

Baburam Mahato and the Nepal Tiger Trust team led discussions on animal behaviour and pugmark identification, helping participants read wildlife signs and understand why awareness matters in areas shared with wildlife. Gauri Malakar led a participatory mapping session in which participants identified vulnerable and disaster-prone locations in and around their community, flagging areas that need special attention in future preparedness and planning. Narbada Sapkota, a community leader, led a discussion on community roles, future activities, and Harmony Circles, encouraging participants to think about how they could contribute collectively to safety, preparedness, communication, and future initiatives.

The session also opened up discussion on wider risks and emergency preparedness — sudden floods, fire hazards, wildlife attacks, and the importance of household-level readiness. Participants raised the need for emergency bags with essential documents, clothing, dry food, and medicine, and for a community-level response mechanism for future emergencies.



Figure 8: Sisabas wildlife safety and disaster preparedness session.

Within this initiative, peacebuilding covers both relationships between people and relationships between people and nature. Wildlife-related incidents can bring fear, frustration, anger, and insecurity, and if communities keep experiencing losses without support or a chance to talk them through, tolerance for wildlife and conservation institutions can erode. Harmony Circle dialogues give communities a space to talk through fears, experiences, environmental change, wildlife-related concerns, and possible solutions together, and to make sure women's experiences are heard alongside everyone else's.

The project links peacebuilding directly to community safety, communication, participation, and fairness; improving human safety also supports conservation by building the social conditions that long-term coexistence depends on.

6.2 Conservation-Linked Livelihood Activities

Livelihood activities were built into the initiative to give women practical skills and new sources of income. Economic independence matters here, it builds women's confidence and their stake in community and conservation work. The approach encourages women to make use of resources already available to them and to adopt production methods that support conservation as well as their own long-term income.

Given the real constraints women face limited education, poverty, and the demands of household work the focus stayed on small-scale activities that need little investment. Consultation and training sessions introduced practical options

including incense making, herbal soap production, herbal flower tea, handicrafts, candle making, and tailoring, alongside the personality development and public speaking training that women themselves asked for.

6.2.1 Bateko Dhup Livelihood Training

On 12–13 June 2026, 20 women, mostly widows, took part in traditional Bateko Dhup incense-making training with Kalika Ama Samuha. The training covered household-level production and discussed future options for product development and income. Women were pleased with the results: while they aren't yet producing dhup for market sale, they no longer need to buy it, and can now make and use it at home for rituals, saving money in the process.



Figure 9: Women participating in Bateko Dhup production training.

6.2.2 Exposure Visit and Peer Learning

On 13 June 2026, 14 women visited the Kasara Micro Enterprise Women's Group in Ghailaghari for a peer-learning exchange on group organisation, enterprise activities, production, and livelihood opportunities. Several women now plan to pursue further training and start small businesses of their own, selling to tourists and others.



Figure 10: Exposure and peer-learning visit.

6.2.3 Seed Bank Planning Consultation

On 11 June 2026, 10 women from Meghauri Mahila Krishi Samuha took part in a consultation on setting up a women-led community seed bank, covering indigenous and traditional seeds, seed loss, climate resilience, collection, selection, storage, record-keeping, lending, exchange, and women's role in conserving local agricultural diversity.



Figure 11: Seed bank planning and training consultation

6.2.4 Climate-Resilient Agriculture, Indigenous Seed Banking and Sustainable Farming



Figure 12: Climate-resilient agriculture and seed-bank training.

On 21 August 2026, Chandra Prasad Adhikari led a training and presentation on climate-adaptive agriculture and community seed banks for women farmers, addressing the mounting challenges climate change brings — irregular rainfall, drought, flooding, rising temperatures, pests, and disease. Participants learned climate-resilient practices such as soil and water conservation, organic farming, protecting agricultural biodiversity, and conserving and using local, indigenous seeds.

The session gave particular attention to community seed banks, how they conserve traditional seeds, improve seed security, reduce agricultural risk, and build women's leadership in farming — and explored ways to link indigenous seeds and organic agriculture to local markets, homestays, tourism, and other livelihood opportunities. The seed-bank rack and its initial seed collection were formally handed over to the women's farmer group, who now manage collection, storage, record-keeping, lending, exchange, and seasonal replenishment themselves. The seed bank also opens up income opportunities for women through producing, preserving, exchanging, and selling locally adapted indigenous seeds.



Figure 13: Community seed bank in operation.

The seed bank feeds into the broader resilience goal of the initiative: strengthening traditional seed conservation, climate-adaptive agriculture, and access to locally appropriate seeds all help households withstand environmental change.

It also shows why conservation needs to connect with practical livelihood and household needs. Coexistence can't rest only on asking communities to avoid risk — programmes also need to strengthen local alternatives and resilience, so vulnerable households are better equipped to manage environmental and livelihood pressures.

In that sense, the seed bank complements the wildlife safety and peacebuilding work by building community self-reliance, women's participation, and long-term environmental resilience.

6.2.5 Livelihood Follow-Up and Sustainability Planning

Follow-up with the women trained in Bateko Dhup found continued interest and use of their skills at home, along with plans to move toward selling products. Soap-making, basket weaving, and corn-leaf products emerged as further livelihood options women could pursue in their free time, selling to local markets and hotels for regular or extra income. Sustaining this will need further support with product quality, packaging, pricing, group organisation, and market access. Ms. Janki Chaudhary has already conducted training sessions for more than 100 women and is helping them connect with markets and improve their packaging.



Figure 14: Skill based training

6.3 Free Community Health Camp

A two-day free health camp was held on 19–20 August 2026 at the Jitpur Basic Health Centre. Around 200 community members (170 women and 32 men) attended for health check-ups, consultations, health education, and HPV-DNA testing for cervical cancer prevention. The camp responded directly to a need raised by the community, and helped build trust and connection among participants.



Figure 15: Community health camp at Ward no 28.

It focused particularly on marginalized groups who often hesitate to seek medical care. During the camp, doctors identified serious health issues in some of the women attending — a reminder of how much difference accessible medical services and community support can make.

The health camp supported the broader goal of building trust between project partners and local communities. Conservation work is often introduced through awareness activities or technical interventions, but genuine community engagement also needs trust, mutual respect, and attention to people's wider wellbeing.

Pairing a health activity with wildlife safety and environmental awareness gave the initiative another way to engage positively with local households, reinforcing a people-centred approach and the understanding that conservation and community wellbeing go together.

In that way, the health camp contributed indirectly to the project's peacebuilding and coexistence goals by strengthening the relationships and trust that long-term collaboration depends on.

6.4 Final Impact Assessment and Documentation

The final assessment documented outcomes, participant learning, lessons, and sustainability opportunities. Pre- and post-test forms were matched and scored for 35 participants. Mean knowledge increased from 54.1% to 68.0%, representing an increase of 13.9 percentage points. Thirty-four of 35 participants (97%) showed improvement, while one showed a decline. All 35 participants reported increased confidence.



Figure 16: Final assessment and reflection.

7. Key Results and Outcomes

Consistent with the proposal's own framing, results below are separated into short-term outcomes achieved during this reporting period and the longer-term outcomes the project is designed to contribute to but cannot yet claim as proven.

7.1 Short-Term Outcomes Achieved

- Improved understanding of wildlife behaviour, risks, and practical safety measures.
- Increased awareness of wildlife signs and responsible pugmark identification.
- Improved understanding of National Park, Buffer Zone, incident reporting, and wildlife damage relief processes.
- Increased confidence and participation among women in conservation and community safety discussions.
- Strengthened discussion of community-level emergency preparedness and response.
- Development of the Women Nature Guardians / Community Rapid Response Team, with two Harmony Circle dialogue sessions held (Meghauli and Sisabas).
- Development of practical livelihood skills training — Bateko Dhup, herbal soap making, local handicrafts — for alternative income generation, supporting women's economic empowerment, alongside exposure learning.
- Establishment and operation of a women-led community seed bank.
- Increased awareness of climate-resilient agriculture and indigenous seed conservation.
- Improved trust and community engagement through responsive programme activities, including the health camp.

7.2 Hoped-For Long-Term Outcomes (Not Yet Measurable)

The proposal identifies the following as longer-term, aspirational outcomes the project contributes toward rather than results this reporting period can claim as achieved:

- Reduced fear-driven behavior and misinformation related to wildlife.
- Stronger trust and cooperation around conservation efforts.
- Reduced tolerance for activities harmful to wildlife.
- Gradual reduction in human–wildlife conflict through informed and collective practices.

Progress toward these outcomes would need to be tracked through continued monitoring, participation records, reflection sessions, documentation of wildlife encounters, and tracking of issues discussed and resolved through the Harmony Circles, beyond the current reporting period.

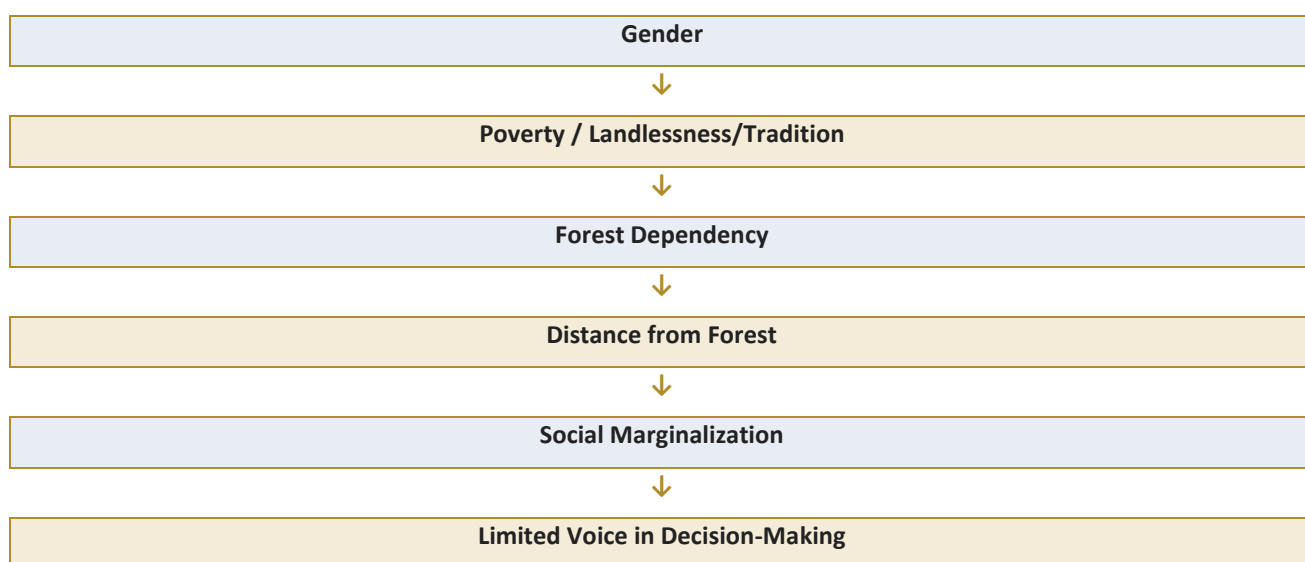
7.3 Gender, Vulnerability and Forest Dependency

One of the important lessons emerging from the project is that human–wildlife risk should not be understood as affecting the entire community in the same way. Vulnerability can increase when several factors overlap, including gender, poverty, landlessness, dependence on forest resources, distance from forest areas, social marginalization, age, disability, and limited participation in decision-making.

Women from poor and forest-dependent households may experience multiple layers of vulnerability. Their responsibilities for household resource collection can increase their exposure to wildlife and environmental risks, while poverty and limited access to alternatives may reduce their ability to avoid dangerous areas.

This understanding supports a more targeted approach to community conservation. Instead of treating all households or all women as one group, future programs should identify those individuals and families who experience the greatest exposure and ensure that they are actively involved in planning, decision-making, and benefit-sharing.

Layers of Vulnerability



8. Monitoring and Impact Assessment

Monitoring and assessment were integrated into programme implementation through attendance records, participant interaction, observation, group discussion, follow-up reflection, and structured pre- and post-training assessment. The final assessment focused particularly on participants in the Women Nature Guardians / Community Rapid Response Team training.

Indicator	Result
Matched participants	35
Mean pre-test knowledge score	54.1%
Mean post-test knowledge score	68.0%
Knowledge increase	+13.9 percentage points
Participants showing improvement	34 of 35 (97%)
Participants reporting increased confidence	35 of 35

Beyond the numbers, the final assessment pointed to real shifts in participants' knowledge, confidence, and attitudes toward wildlife safety and conservation. Women showed a stronger grasp of wildlife behaviour, safety precautions, wildlife signs and pugmarks, and the importance of reporting incidents responsibly. Perceptions moved from fear and uncertainty toward greater awareness, confidence, and shared responsibility, with women increasingly seeing themselves as active participants and leaders in conservation and community safety.

9. Challenges and Lessons Learned

The programme confirmed that community conservation work needs flexibility. Participants arrived with very different levels of knowledge and experience, which meant leaning on practical demonstration and discussion rather than classroom-style teaching alone. Lingering fear of wildlife and uncertainty about response procedures also underlined the value of follow-up and scenario-based learning.

- Community consultation improves programme relevance and trust.
- Practical learning is particularly effective for wildlife safety and preparedness.
- Women benefit from safe spaces to share experiences and discuss local risks.
- Follow-up is necessary to reinforce learning and to reach a wider share of community members.
- Conservation activities are strengthened when connected with livelihoods and household resilience.
- Community preparedness requires communication, coordination, and clearly understood roles.
- Additional community needs may emerge during implementation and should be considered where appropriate.
- A single session is not enough to build lasting awareness — communities need repeated, varied engagement to stay informed and to build unity around conservation.

10. Sustainability and Future Direction

Several activities created a foundation for continued action beyond the implementation period. The women-led seed bank provides a practical community resource for conserving and exchanging local seeds. Livelihood training introduced skills that can be further developed through product improvement and market support. Women participating in the Nature Guardians / RRT training can continue to support awareness, communication, and preparedness within their communities.

- Provide periodic refresher training on wildlife safety and emergency preparedness.
 - Strengthen Women Nature Guardians through mentoring and practical mock exercises.
 - Support the community seed bank with technical guidance and record management.
 - Develop market-oriented support for livelihood products.
 - Strengthen coordination with Buffer Zone, community forest, conservation, and local government structures.
 - Expand practical safety and preparedness learning to additional vulnerable communities.
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11. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Women, Nature and Peace Initiative showed that women can take on a stronger role in conservation when programmes are built around their real experiences, knowledge, concerns, and aspirations. It moved beyond awareness alone, combining wildlife safety, practical learning, livelihoods, seed conservation, health support, dialogue, leadership, and emergency preparedness.

The results point to real progress in knowledge, confidence, participation, and community engagement. The pre- and post-test findings give measurable evidence of learning, and participant engagement and follow-up discussions point to broader qualitative shifts in awareness and confidence. What's needed now is continued support to turn these early gains into sustained, community-led action.

Future programming should prioritize continued mentoring of women leaders, practical RRT exercises, strengthened seed-bank management, livelihood development, regular wildlife safety refresher sessions, and stronger institutional coordination.

This initiative's experience shows that effective conservation and coexistence take more than awareness of wildlife. Communities need real opportunities to understand risk, build practical safety measures, strengthen resilience, share local knowledge, and take part meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives.

Above all, the project underlined why women's participation matters. Women who live closest to environmental and wildlife-related risk shouldn't be seen only as beneficiaries of conservation programmes; their knowledge, experience, leadership, and priorities are central to finding practical, sustainable coexistence solutions.

The next stage can build on this foundation by strengthening Women Nature Guardians, community-level rapid response capacity, incident documentation, Harmony Circle dialogue, climate-resilient livelihoods, and mechanisms for continued community learning, moving from short-term awareness toward a longer-term, women-centred, community-owned model of coexistence.

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