Agenda for Environmental Peacebuilding in Nepal

Executive Summary

This '**Agenda for Environmental Peacebuilding in Nepal**' addresses a critical challenge: environmental degradation, resource-based conflicts, and climate change are threatening not only ecosystems but the social cohesion and peace that hold communities together. The agenda is grounded in three fundamental realities. First, natural resources such as fresh water, forests, and arable land are limited and becoming increasingly scarce. Second, when resources degrade or become scarce, competition for access to resources and control can escalate into conflict, particularly where governance and equal access to resources is weak. Third, climate change acts as a threat multiplier: extreme climatic events such as floods, droughts, landslides, and unpredictable weather intensify the existing tensions and create new risks.

Developed through comprehensive field research, policy analysis, and extensive stakeholder consultations, the agenda highlights that Nepal is experiencing widespread environmental violence. Air, water, and soil pollution harm health and livelihoods; riverbed mining is depleting water sources; and human-wildlife conflicts continue to threaten lives and livelihoods. Resource-based conflicts are escalating over water access, extraction rights, pollution impacts, and inequitable distribution of resources. Marginalized groups, particularly women, Dalits, indigenous people, landless households and smallholder farmers, bear the heaviest burden of environmental violence while often being systematically excluded from decision-making processes that affecting their lives.

The agenda presents recommendations aligned with seven strategic dimensions: policy and legal reforms, governance strengthening, financing, capacity building, social inclusion, transboundary cooperation, and sectoral interventions. Priority actions include developing a dedicated national environmental peacebuilding policy, updating critical laws like the Water Resources Act 1992, strengthening local government capacity, ensuring meaningful participation of marginalized groups, preserving traditional knowledge, addressing transboundary water issues with upstream and downstream nations, mobilizing adequate financing, and shifting from reactive crisis response to preventive, inclusive planning.

This agenda is distinctive in its emphasis on coordinated, multistakeholder action. Success depends on sustained collaboration among government institutions at all levels, civil society, development partners, communities, and the private sector. By addressing environmental violence and resource-based conflicts through preventive, inclusive, and evidence-based approaches, Nepal can simultaneously safeguard ecosystems, enhance social stability, strengthen the quality of community well-being and peace for current generation and future generations.

Thus, this document serves as a roadmap for transforming environmental challenges, historically sources of conflict, into opportunities for cooperation, resilience, and enduring peace across Nepal.
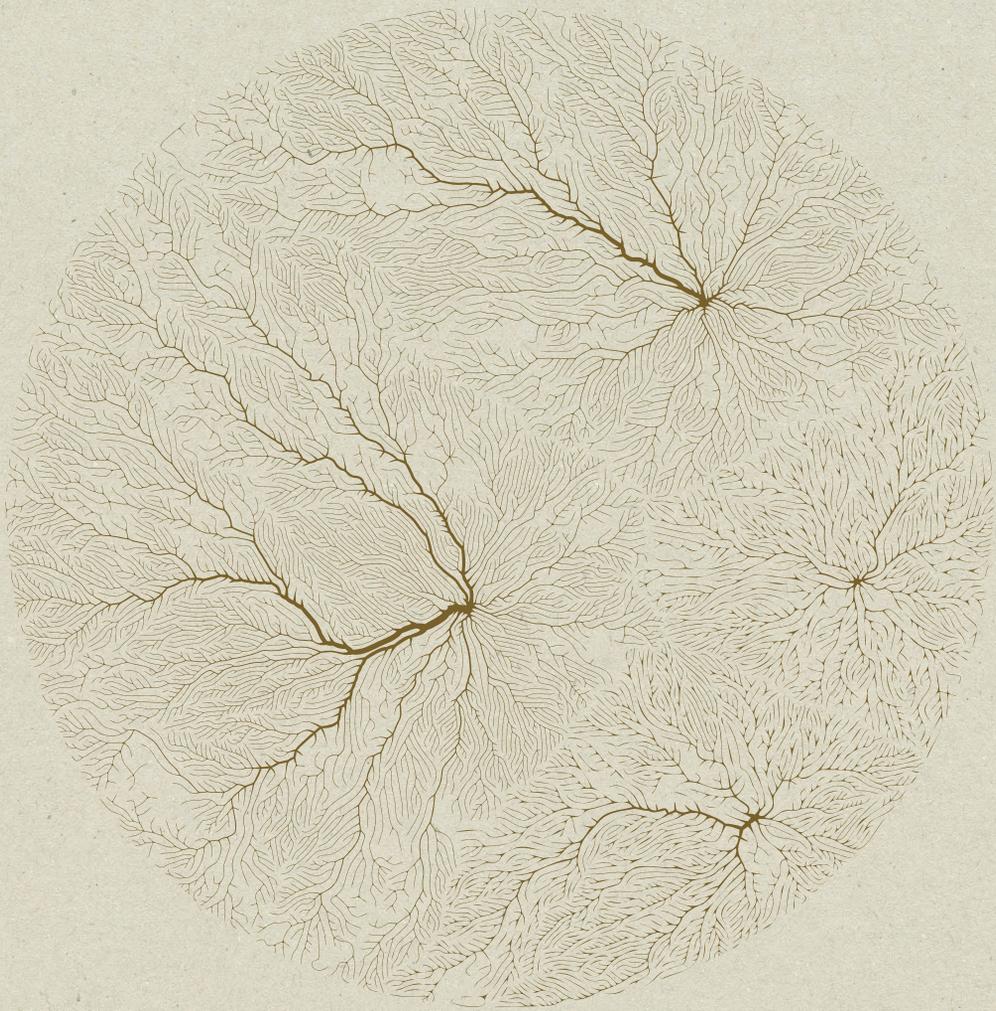
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Introduction

A historical perspective on environmental peacebuilding in Nepal builds upon the traditional systems such as Guthi, irrigation user groups, and customary forest management practices that fostered collective resource governance and local cooperation, forming an early foundation for environmental peacebuilding.[1]These traditional yet locally owned practices reflected the spirit and mechanisms of collaboration among local people and community members to manage shared resources in order to sustain their communities. These practices demonstrate early context-specific models of environmental peacebuilding that remain relevant for contemporary policy design. However, the traditional and customary natural resource management in Nepal started facing challenges due to different demographic and governance factors such as rapid population growth, deforestation, resettlement, rapid urbanization, state-centric control of natural resources, weakening of local customary institutions, and intensive agriculture leading to overexploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation.[2] The amplification of degradation in ecosystems and biodiversity, along with weak environmental governance, has collectively contributed to widespread environmental vulnerability.

The situation has worsened with the impacts of climate change in Nepal being increasingly observable over the past few decades with evidences indicating steady warming and environmental shifts.[3] For instance, rise in temperatures in the Himalayan region of around 0.05 °C per decade over the last 30 to 40 years contributing to glacier retreat and changing weather patterns or the recent drought in Terai with a severe impact on water usage, agriculture, and disaster signals a growing urgency of these challenges.[4]

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[1] Department of Water Resources and Irrigation, "Farmer Managed Irrigation Systems (FMIS) in Nepal," *Nepal Irrigation Management Information System (NIMIS)*, accessed January 2, 2026, https://nimis.dwri.gov.np/; Subedi, Salik and Shrestha, Sudha. (2024). A Case of Guthi System in Nepal: Backbone of the Conservation and Management of the Cultural Heritage. Conservation, 4(2), 216-235. https://www.mdpi.com/26737159/4/2/15.

[2] Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB). (2021). Population and Environment: An Impact Analysis from Nepalese Perspectives. *NRB Economic Review*, 9, 66-79. https://www.nrb.org.np/contents/uploads/2021/09/vol9_art3.pdf; Cook, N. J., Khatri, D. B., Poudel, D. P., Paudel, G., and Acharya, S. (2025). Dropping out of environmental governance: Why Nepal's community-based forestry program is losing participants. *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, 13(1), Article 00059. https://doi.org/101525/elementa.2024.00059.

[3] Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM), Government of Nepal. (2017). Observed climate trend analysis of Nepal (1971–2014). Ministry of Population and Environment. Retrieved January 2, 2026, from https://www.dhm.gov.np/uploads/dhm/climateService/Observed_Climate_Trend_Analysis_Report_2017.pdf.

[4] Ministry of Forest and Environment (MoFE). (2025). Nepal First Biennial Transparency Report. Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal. Kathmandu, Nepal.

The increasing variability and intensity of climatic events further intensifies vulnerability related to water scarcity, food insecurity and livelihood, placing an additional pressure on already fragile ecosystem and resource dependent communities for their survival and well-being. These potential risks, along with the loss and damages due to extreme weather events, resource scarcity, heightened ecological strain and competition over shrinking resources, create conditions where conflicts over resources become increasingly likely.

Natural resource–based conflicts in Nepal are also closely linked to rural marginalization, exclusion, and long-standing resource grievances,[5] as natural resources such as land, forests, and water are the primary livelihood base for significant number of populations.[6] Rural populations, especially the poor, landless, indigenous people and women, rely disproportionately on forests and natural resources for their livelihoods and are more vulnerable to environmental conflict as they depend heavily on natural resources for survival while often facing unequal access, weak tenure security, and limited voice in resource governance.[7] Recognizing the same, peacebuilding discourses and policy practices in Nepal has gradually started to look beyond a narrow focus on natural resources to deeper structural issues, including a broader social, political, and economic context in which the resource exists as well as the mechanisms through which natural resources are governed. Especially in the post-conflict period, the concept of environmental peacebuilding in Nepal gained momentum as part of state restructuring, with increased emphasis on inclusive governance, decentralization, and addressing resource-based grievances through participatory natural resource management.[8] Transfer of local resource management authority to local level, conflict-sensitive policies, introduction of climate-tagged budgeting, increase in climate budget allocation among the local-level governments, etc. illustrate partial alignment with the decentralized governance practices promoting peace.[9] A key challenge, however,

[5] Upreti, Bishnu. (2004). Dynamics of Resource Governance, Resource Scarcity and Conflict in Nepal. *Journal of Forest and Livelihood*, 4(1),13-18. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237329165_Dynamics_of_Resource_Governance_Resource_Scarcity_and_Conflict_in_Nepal.

[6] World Bank. (2022). Nepal country climate and development report (Report No. P176737). The World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099415012072225780/pdf/P17673706645dc00509eb704d74af8c17ba.pdf.

[7] World Bank. (2025). Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development Advisory Program (GRID Advisory Program). The World Bank: Washington, DC. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099102025185027763/pdf/P176456-35057b5d-ec64-43dc-88b4-7e6caa4390aa.pdf; The World Bank. "Supporting the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Nepal's Forest Sector," World Bank Feature Story, August 8, 2024. Accessed January 2026. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2024/08/08/supporting-the-indigenous-peoples-and-local-communities-in-nepal-s-forest-sector.

[8] Krampe, Florian, Hegazi, Farah, and VanDeveer Stacy D.. (2021). Sustaining Peace through Better Resource Governance: Three Potential Mechanisms for Environmental Peacebuilding. *World Development*, 144(C). https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X21001200?utm.

[9] Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal (MoFE). (2021). *Assessment of climate financing allocation: Unpacking eighty per cent allocation to the local level*. MoFE Government of Nepal. https://giwmscdnone.gov.np/media/pdf_upload/Climate%20finance%20allocation%20assessment%20Unpacking%2080%25%20of%20allocations%20to%20local%20levels_3mpfhag.pdf?; Gupta, A. (2025). Climate change budgeting in Nepal. Nepal Economic Forum. https://nepaleconomicforum.org/climate-change-budgeting-in-nepal/

lies in the limited recognition of decentralized resource governance and natural resource management reforms as explicit peacebuilding measures within Nepal's policy frameworks.

Nevertheless, combination of climatic and non-climatic drivers such as climate-induced environmental stress, population pressure, resource scarcity, and the increasing commercialization of natural resources continue to generate tensions. These pressures are further intensified by livelihood insecurity among resource-dependent communities, deep-rooted social inequalities, and political and institutional challenges related to resource governance and benefit-sharing, highlighting the limitations of existing governance responses. Moreover, the convergence of environmental degradation with ecological and social crises further heightens the risk of conflict.

Global perspectives on environmental peacebuilding recognize that environmental issues are not merely ecological concerns but are deeply intertwined with social and political dynamics. They are closely connected to the issues of human security.[10] The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (popularly known as Rio Conference) in 1992 highlighted the impact of human socio-economic activities on the environment and recognized that integrating and balancing economic, social, and environmental concerns is vital for sustaining human life on the planet.[11] This landmark conference shifted the focus from viewing the environment solely as a source of competition and potential conflict toward environmental peacebuilding, an approach that integrates environmental management with conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. This shift laid the conceptual groundwork for national-level environmental peacebuilding agendas, including in countries like Nepal.

Similarly, scholarly works on environmental peacebuilding also explored how cooperation over shared environmental resources and their management can promote peace and reduce conflict, moving beyond earlier views of the environment only as a source of tension.[12] Likewise, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been at the forefront in understanding how improved natural resource governance can support peace in post-conflict settings. The UN-wide guidance note on 'Natural Resource Management in Transition Settings' launched by the UN Development group and Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, endorsed by multiple UN agencies, marked a major step toward

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[10]   Ide, Tobias, Bruch, Carl, Carius, Alexander, Conca, Ken, D. Dabelko, Geoffrey, Matthew, Richard, and Weinthal, Erika. (2021). The Past and Future(s) of Environmental peacebuilding. *International Affairs*, 97(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa177.

[11]   United Nations. (n.d.). United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3–14 June 1992. United Nations. Retrieved January 5, 2026, https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992.

[12]   Ide, Tobias, Bruch, Carl, Carius, Alexander, Conca, Ken, D. Dabelko, Geoffrey, Matthew, Richard, and Weinthal, Erika. (2021). The Past and Future(s) of Environmental peacebuilding. *International Affairs*, 97(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1093/

officially integrating environmental peacebuilding into broader UN peacebuilding efforts.[13] This guidance is especially relevant for Nepal's post-conflict and federal transition context.

In parallel, Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 (SDG Goal-16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) integrated peace into the global sustainable development agenda, making conflict-sensitive programming a central component of sustainable development initiatives worldwide. Today, environmental collaboration is viewed as an essential aspect of preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding, with particular focus on conflict-sensitive natural resource management, ecosystem restoration, and participatory dialogue as foundations for building peace and stability. The potential of cooperation to reshape conflict dynamics by focusing on collective needs and generating joint solutions has become a core principle of environmental peacebuilding across regional, national, and local levels. This global shift reinforces the need for a nationally articulated environmental peacebuilding agenda.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

a. Environmental Violence refers to harm or threat arising from exploitation, degradation, and improper management of natural resources that inflict suffering on human beings. It links environmental destruction with human suffering, reflecting how ecological damage translates into social, political, and economic adversities. Importantly, environmental violence extends beyond direct impacts to encompass systemic issues, policies, and weak governance mechanisms that enable harm to the natural environment. Pollution-induced health crises among communities affected by disasters, loss of biodiversity, and structural discrimination embedded in policy and governance systems all reflect direct harm caused by natural resource depletion and environmental mismanagement.

b. Environmental Conflict arises when communities experience tensions due to environmental changes or disputes over the use, management, or control of natural resources. Increasing human-wildlife conflicts, hydropower development disputes, and disagreements between local governments and community forest user groups exemplify how environmental conflicts emerge from competing human needs, development priorities, and inadequate conservation efforts.

c. Reactive Approach to Environmental Peacebuilding refers to an approach where actions are undertaken by authorities or institutions after an occurrence of a crisis or disaster, often in response to environmental damage or conflict over natural resources. These interventions are designed to manage the immediate impacts, restore stability, and prevent further conflict or harm, rather than addressing risks in advance.

[13] United Nations Development Group. (2013). Natural Resource Management in Transition Settings: UNDG-ECHA Guidance Note. United Nations: Geneva. https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNDGECHA_NRM_guidance_Jan2013.pdf.

d. Proactive Approach to Environmental Peacebuildingemphasizes anticipating and addressing environmental risks before they escalate into conflict. In Nepal's context, it involves forward-looking policies, inclusive resource management, and early cooperation among stakeholders to reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen trust, and promote lasting peace.

1.1 Why the Agenda for Environmental Peacebuilding in Nepal?

Environmental peacebuilding in Nepal has emerged at the intersection of prolonged political transition, environmental degradation, and increasing competition over natural resources. Following the end of the armed conflict in 2006, issues related to land, forests, water, and extractive resources have become increasingly visible as sources of tension.[14] Climate change impacts, such as intensified or flash floods and landslides, droughts, and glacial lake outburst risks, have intensified existing vulnerabilities and deepened inequalities among communities dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods.[15] Weak governance, unclear tenure systems, and uneven benefit-sharing mechanisms have further exacerbated disputes over resource access and control, making environmental concerns a critical yet often under-addressed dimension of peacebuilding in Nepal.[16] This convergence positions environmental peacebuilding as a critical but often ignored component Nepal's peace process.

In the current context of Nepal, key conflicts stem from the interaction of environmental stress, governance challenges, and social inequalities, necessitating integrated approaches that address both ecological sustainability and societal peace.[17]

Thus, this **Agenda for Environmental Peacebuilding** is essential for Nepal to address

[14]   Pandey, N., Rüttinger, L., & Wolfmaier, S. (2020). *Climate-Fragility Risk Brief: Nepal*. Climate Security Expert Network. Retrieved from https://climatediplomacy.org/sites/default/files/202101/CSEN%20Climate%20Fragility%20Risk%20Brief%20Nepal.pdf.

[15]   Bhattarai, B., Bhattarai P., Khatri, A., & Giri P. (2025). *Living Unequal Futures: Examining Climate Change, Social Vulnerability, and the Imperative for Justice Among Risk-Populations in Nepal*. Centre for Social Change, https://socialchange.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Living-Unequal-Futures.pdf.

[16]   Bhattarai, P., & Khadka, S. (2024). *Governance Conflicts and Cooperation in Federal Nepal*. Centre for Social Change, https://socialchange.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Governance-Conflicts-And-Cooperation-In-Federal-Nepal-report-centre-for-social-change.pdf; Khadka, S., Puri, S., Khatri, A., & Bhattarai, P. (2022). *Triggers of governance conflicts in federal Nepal: A rapid assessment of conflicts in Nepal's federal governance system*. Centre for Social Change, https://socialchange.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Triggers-of-Governance-Conflicts-in-Nepal.pdf.

[17]   Khadka, S., Puri, S., Khatri, A., & Bhattarai, P. (2022). *Triggers of governance conflicts in federal Nepal: A rapid assessment of conflicts in Nepal's federal governance system*. Centre for Social Change. Retrieved from https://socialchange.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Triggers-of-Governance-Conflicts-in-Nepal.pdf; Matthew, R., & Upreti, B. (2005). *Environmental stress and demographic change in Nepal: Underlying conditions contributing to a decade of insurgency*. Environmental Change and Security Program (ECSP), Wilson Center. Retrieved from https://diplomacy21adelphi.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/Nepal_Env_Stress%2526Demo_Change.pdf.

the interconnected challenges of rising environmental conflicts, governance failures, policy gaps, social inequality, development pressures, and climate change while emphasizing the critical need for inclusive participation and moving from reactive to proactive and preventive approaches.[18] This necessity is further justified by the following factors:

a. Environmental Conflicts Are Rising Across Multiple Sectors: Nepal is witnessing an increasing number of environmental conflicts across various sectors including human-wildlife tensions, water disputes between upstream and downstream communities, riverbed mining, forest use, irrigation, hydropower development, industrial expansion, waste management, and many more. These conflicts stem from deforestation, land degradation, water scarcity, pollution, and climate-induced disasters. They disproportionately affect marginalized communities and directly undermine social cohesion and development goals, making environmental harm both a driver and amplifier of social and political tensions.

b. Environmental Degradation Directly Threatens the Livelihoods and Social Stability: Nepal is confronted with widespread environmental challenges that directly undermine livelihoods, particularly for rural, indigenous, and marginalized communities dependent on natural resources. When communities lose access to water, fertile land, forest products, or grazing areas, their economic security is eroded, traditional livelihoods are disrupted, and social inequalities are further intensified, often forcing migration, increasing poverty, and heightening vulnerability to conflict and exploitation. Thus, environmental degradation is not merely an ecological issue but a matter of political economy and social stability, as resource scarcity triggers competitions and conflicts, especially in areas where people depend on farming, livestock, riverbed mining, and forest products for survival.

c. Climate Change Acts as a Threat Multiplier: Climate change intensifies existing inequalities and endangers vulnerable populations in Nepal through unpredictable rainfall, extended droughts, intense flooding, glacial melting, and landslides. Those most disenfranchised from political power and economic stability are hit hardest when resources shrink. Without addressing power disparities and discrimination alongside climate-induced pressures, technical environmental solutions alone cannot bring lasting peace, underscoring the need for environmental peacebuilding to enhance equal access, justice, and participatory governance.

d. Weak Governance and Institutional Fragmentation Perpetuate Environmental Violence: Nepal's environmental governance suffers from fragmented institutional responses, weak coordination across the three tiers of government, unclear mandates, poor policy implementation, and limited enforcement of existing laws. The transition to federalism has reshaped authority over natural resource governance, generating institutional ambiguity and conflicts between federal, provincial, and local governments. This weak enforcement allows harmful environmental practices to continue unchecked, creating confusion over

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[18]   Poudel, K. (2024, March 5). *Environmental peacebuilding in Nepal: Challenges and opportunities*. New Spotlight Magazine. Retrieved from https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2024/03/05/environmental-peace-building-nepal-challenges-and-opportunities/?utm; Rising Nepal Daily. (2025, January 13). *Human-wildlife conflict, emerging challenge for society: Minister Adhikari*. Retrieved from https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/55353?utm.

resource management responsibilities and eroding trust between communities and authorities, all of which perpetuate environmental violence and resource-based conflicts.

e. Policy Gaps Limit Effective Environmental Peacebuilding: While Nepal has made considerable legislative progress integrating climate adaptation, environmental protection, and community-based governance, a critical gap remains in the absence of a dedicated policy framework for environmental peacebuilding that addresses environmental conflicts and violence systematically. Existing laws and policies are insufficient to ensure environmental justice, with many remaining reactive and prioritizing post-disaster relief rather than preventive measures such as sustainable groundwater management, early warning systems, cooperative forest management, and community-based adaptation. Without explicit recognition of environmental violence and integrated peacebuilding provisions, resources and attention remain inadequate for addressing the root causes of resource-based conflicts.

f. Social Inequality and Power Asymmetries Drive Resource Conflicts: Environmental conflicts in Nepal are fundamentally shaped by persistent socio-economic inequalities, systematic exclusion of marginalized groups, such as Dalits, indigenous peoples, women, elderly people, persons with disabilities, and landless households, from equitable access to land, water, and forest resources. Longstanding power imbalances between the state, local elites, and resource-dependent communities hinder cooperation and can escalate disputes into violence. Environmental peacebuilding is imperative to go beyond simple cause-and-effect relationships to address the underlying marginalization, social inequalities, division of power, and economic structures that enable and perpetuate socio-economic tensions and injustices.

g. Development Pressures and Federal Restructuring Create New Tensions: Nepal is grappling with overlapping challenges of federal restructuring, rapid infrastructure development, and climate-induced risks. Development projects related to hydropower, roads, mining, and urban expansion have increased environmental stress and social tensions, particularly where local participation and conflict-sensitive approaches are limited. Against this backdrop, environmental peacebuilding offers a crucial framework to integrate conflict prevention, inclusive governance, and sustainable resource management, emphasizing dialogue, cooperation, and equitable access to environmental resources as pathways to sustaining peace, social cohesion, and resilience.

h. Inclusive Participation Is Essential Yet Often Missing: The notion of environmental peacebuilding worldwide emphasizes inclusion through the participation of women, young people, and other marginalized groups, who are often the most vulnerable to environmental disasters and climate-related risks yet are frequently excluded from political processes and decision-making. In Nepal, even well-intentioned community-based resource management models often fail to achieve genuine inclusivity, with leadership dominated by elite members and benefits distributed inequitably. This underscores the need for explicit accountability mechanisms in such processes. Traditional knowledge and cooperative practices that once sustained communities through collective resource management are eroding, diminishing community resilience precisely when climate impacts demand collective responses. In this

regard, an environmental peacebuilding approach could ensure meaningful participation and leadership of marginalized groups to transform environmental challenges into opportunities for cooperation and lasting peace.

2
Principles of Environmental Peacebuilding

The central idea of environmental peacebuilding focuses on converting environmental degradation and conservation challenges into opportunities for cooperation, equity, and resilience, rather than allowing them to escalate into conflict. Environmental peacebuilding views the limitation of scarce natural resources as an opportunity to build peace rather than exclusively as a pathway to violence. It is built upon nine major principles:

a. Interconnectedness of Environmental Conflicts and Environmental Violence: It recognizes that environmental violence and conflicts are interconnected. Addressing one form of environmental degradation can prevent multiple conflicts, just as solving governance gaps can tackle several environmental issues simultaneously.

b. Inclusive and Collaborative Resource Governance: It encourages communities to manage their shared natural resources such as land, water, and forests through agreements that work for everyone involved, rather than letting competition create conflict. It prioritizes a shift from top-down approaches and bringing local voices, especially from grassroots communities, directly into how policies are designed and carried out.

c. Equality and Social Justice: It recognizes that marginalized communities, including women, Dalits, indigenous groups, elderly people, and people with disabilities, bear the greatest burden and the most direct threats from environmental conflicts and violence. Environmental peacebuilding is directed towards addressing these inequalities by ensuring these communities have equal access to natural resources, meaningful participation in decisions that affect them, and genuine ownership over the processes and outcomes that shape their environment and futures.

d. Environmental Sustainability: It acknowledges that environmental sustainability demands the right balance between meeting human needs and protecting natural resources, so that ecosystems can thrive and support life for generations to come. This requires genuine partnerships with local governments and the communities who depend on these resources, ensuring they are active participants in how natural areas are managed and conserved.

e. Peace-Development Nexus: It acknowledges that understanding peace and development connectivity is essential for preventing environmental conflicts and violence. When causes of poverty, inequality, and resource scarcity are addressed, the likelihood of conflict is reduced while strengthening the bonds that hold communities together. Sustainable management of natural resources creates a positive cycle: fair distribution and shared management of resources means less violence, and this stability creates the foundation communities need to develop and thrive.

f. Prevention Over Reaction: It emphasizes the importance of a fundamental shift from reacting to crises to preventing them in the first place. This means investing in early warning systems, sustainable resource management, identifying the underlying drivers of resource based conflict, and community preparedness, which eventually contributes to building resilience before disasters strike, or foster conducive environment to address predictable resource contestation rather than responding after the damage is done.

g. Multi-Level and Multistakeholder Coordination: It emphasizes that environmental peacebuilding requires cooperation across local, provincial, national, and transnational levels, with clear roles and responsibilities at each tier. It also emphasizes multistakeholder coordination for obtaining better results in responding to environmental conflicts and violence in a timely manner.

h. Conflict Sensitivity: It emphasizes the importance of designing environmental policies and programs with a clear understanding of local tensions, inequalities, and potential triggers of conflict. It acknowledges that addressing socio-economic needs and ensuring fair access to resources is not just about development but a practical way to prevent conflict before its escalation.

i. Shared Responsibility for Building a Shared Future for Everyone: It recognizes that addressing environmental violence and conflicts is a shared responsibility across all levels of government, private sectors, industries, companies, communities, and individuals. However, the state, private sectors, industries, and companies bear greater accountability for prevention because they hold disproportionate control over power, resources, and the decisions that shape environmental outcomes.

3

Basis for Agenda Setting on Environmental Peacebuilding in Nepal

Environmental peacebuilding is a relatively under-examined and unexplored area of intervention in Nepal, yet it carries significant and underutilized potential given the environmental sensitivity and recurring crises the country has experienced from past to present. Recognizing this gap and opportunity, Centre for Social Change (CSC) has led environmental peacebuilding agenda-setting efforts over the past two years, spearheading collaborative efforts with relevant institutions and agencies within Nepal and internationally. This initiative emerged from a recognition that Nepal's environmental challenges require approaches that go beyond technical solutions to address the social, political, and governance dimensions of environmental issues.

The agendas presented in this document build upon previous research works conducted by CSC and extensive experiences of working in the field of environmental peacebuilding in Nepal. The development of this agenda is primarily grounded on a comprehensive review of national laws, policies, and regulatory frameworks related to environmental management, climate change, environmental governance, natural resources, and disaster risk reduction. This policy analysis and review of relevant documents revealed significant gaps in Nepal's legal framework, particularly the absence of dedicated policies for environmental peacebuilding and the predominance of reactive rather than preventive approaches in management of environmental crises. The review also identified how fragmented governance structures and weak enforcement mechanisms contribute to environmental violence and resource-based conflicts. These findings directly informed the formulating of this agenda.

CSC's study report titled *Towards Environmental Peacebuilding in Nepal: Understanding Violence, Addressing Conflicts, and Strengthening Governance* published in December 2025, serves a foundational basis for the agenda-setting which employed an extensive, multi-layered research process along with interactions among key stakeholders, including policymakers, government officials, environmental experts, local leaders, civil society representatives, youth representatives and practitioners working across multiple sectors at national, provincial, and local levels in Nepal. The in-depth interaction among these stakeholders provided crucial insights into policy-relevant institutional challenges, coordination failures across the three tiers of government, and the political dimensions of resource management. It also revealed insights into patterns of environmental violence, governance gaps, and potential pathways for peacebuilding in Nepal.

Furthermore, the development of a framework for the agenda was also backed by information and evidence generated through governance monitoring procedure under the 'Governance Monitoring Centre', a flagship initiative of CSC that regularly monitors media reports and news coverage under prominent themes of Natural Resource and Environment Governance, Development Governance, Ethnocultural Governance, and Political System and Governance in Nepal. The data and information gathered through media monitoring helped triangulate emerging issues, inform public perceptions, and track reported cases of environmental harms and conflicts in Nepal. Through this robust evidence base, CSC mapped key forms, triggering factors, prevalent patterns, and underlying drivers of environmental conflicts and violence.

A deepened understanding on environmental peacebuilding as an emerging field in Nepal was also developed through close collaborations among concerned stakeholders undertaking initiatives for environmental peacebuilding, such as an 'Environmental Peacebuilding Symposium 2024' conducted by CSC in collaboration with the Network for Education and Research on Peace and Sustainability (NERPS) at Hiroshima University, Hiroshima University Scholars Alumni Association Nepal, and Kathmandu University, School of Education. The research-based scholarly discussions supported critical examination of the challenges and opportunities of environmental peacebuilding in diverse socio-political and ecological contexts worldwide. The symposium also underscored the urgency of integrating environmental concerns into peacebuilding discourse, policy, and practice, particularly in a context marked by climate vulnerability, post-conflict transition, rapid development pressures, and federal restructuring in Nepal. These discussions informed the conceptual framing of this agenda.

Building on these foundations of research and scholarly engagements, CSC organized an Environmental Peacebuilding Summit on 21 December 2025 in Kathmandu, which served as a critical milestone in providing a clear structure to the agenda. The Summit brought together diverse stakeholders including government representatives, members from civil society organizations, environmental practitioners, community leaders, youth representatives, academicians, and international partners, to share knowledge and understanding of environmental stressors, environmental violence, circumstances for conflict and challenges for environmental peacebuilding.

Upon the completion of an initial draft of the agenda, CSC conducted 'A Consultative Workshop on Agenda for Environmental Peacebuilding in Nepal' on 24 December 2025 in Kathmandu aimed at further refinement of the agenda. The workshop invited academic and non-academic experts working in the field of environment, governance, peace, and development as well as representatives from governmental as well as non-governmental institutions. It also brought together community members including indigenous groups, nationalities, and persons with disabilities. The collective review of agendas during the workshop facilitated validation of emerging priorities, identification of policy priorities, and co-creation of actionable recommendations for advancing environmental peacebuilding in Nepal. This inclusive gathering provided a space for meaningful dialogue across different

sectors and perspectives, ensuring that the agenda reflects the concerns, experiences, and aspirations of multiple stakeholders.

The environmental peacebuilding agendas presented here, therefore, provide a broader basis for advancement of environmental peacebuilding in Nepal and represent a collective vision for transforming environmental challenges into opportunities for dialogue, cooperation, and lasting peace. This document is intended to be a living framework that can be adopted and adapted by all stakeholders, communities, practitioners, and policymakers alike. It is meant to guide action, inform decision-making, and serve as a basis for tracking, monitoring, and reviewing environmental peacebuilding processes across different regions and contexts in Nepal.

4

Key Forms of Environmental Conflicts and Violence in Nepal

Nepal's environmental challenges manifest in two distinct yet interconnected dimensions: environmental violence and environmental conflicts. Environmental violence refers to the direct harm caused by environmental degradation, resource exploitation, and climate-induced disasters that threaten communities' health, livelihoods, and security. Environmental conflicts, on the other hand, emerge from competition, inequitable access, and power struggles over natural resources among individuals, communities, governments, and across national boundaries. Both dimensions are deeply rooted in governance failures, social inequalities, development pressures, and climate change impacts. Understanding these issues is essential for designing effective environmental peacebuilding interventions that address not only the symptoms of environmental harm but also the underlying structural causes that perpetuate violence and conflict. The following sections present key environmental violence and conflict issues and policy responses in Nepal.

4.1 Environmental Violence Issues

a. Air Pollution from Industrial and Domestic Sources: Air pollution has emerged as one of the most pressing environmental violence issues affecting communities across Nepal, particularly along industrial corridors and in urban areas. Vehicle and factory emissions, chimney smoke, open waste burning, and wildfires contribute to severe air quality degradation. Extensive air pollution is contributing to increasing respiratory illnesses, respiratory distress, and deteriorating living conditions of citizens. It is also creating acute health hazards among people, fundamentally compromising their right to clean air and threatening their well-being.

b. River and Water Pollution: River pollution represents a critical form of environmental violence that directly impacts daily life, livelihoods, and cultural practices across Nepal. Major rivers have experienced severe contamination from industrial waste discharge, household garbage dumping, and other disposals. Communities report foul odors making it impossible to live near polluted rivers, loss of water usability for irrigation and domestic purposes, declining water quality, and associated health risks. Rivers that once served as sources of drinking water, irrigation, and cultural and spiritual significance have become hazardous, forcing communities to seek alternative water sources and abandoning traditional practices tied to these waterways.

c. Soil Degradation and Chemical Pollution: Excessive and unmanaged use of chemical fertilizers across Nepal has led to widespread soil pollution and degradation. This environmental violence manifests through reduced soil fertility, declining agricultural productivity, and health concerns related to consuming crops grown in chemically degraded soil. Farmers have become increasingly dependent on chemical inputs to maintain even diminished productivity levels, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of soil degradation. The loss of soil health threatens food security and agricultural livelihoods while also compromising human health through the food chain.

d. Deforestation and Forest Degradation: Widespread deforestation driven by road construction, settlement expansion, internal migration, and household fuel needs constitutes a major form of environmental violence across Nepal. The impacts include increased landslides, diminishing land productivity, declining water tables, altered rainfall patterns, reduced agricultural productivity, and extreme temperature fluctuations. Deforestation not only destroys ecosystems but also eliminates natural buffers against climate-related disasters, leaving communities increasingly vulnerable to floods, droughts, and extreme weather events.

e. Climate-Induced Disasters: Nepal faces intensifying climate-induced disasters including floods, landslides, prolonged droughts, and glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) that represent acute manifestations of environmental violence. Extreme and irregular rainfall patterns, river overflow, weakened land in hilly areas, and rising temperatures contribute to these disasters. The impacts are devastating: inundation of houses and farmlands, displacement of communities, destruction of crops and shelters, loss of lives and livelihoods, and psychological trauma. Several incidents in the most recent years exemplify how climate-induced environmental violence directly threatens communities across Nepal's diverse geographical terrain. These disasters act as threat multipliers, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities such as poverty and geographic isolation while undermining peacebuilding efforts.

f. Riverbed Mining and Associated Environmental Destruction: Haphazard and excessive extraction of sand and gravel from riverbeds, particularly in the Chure region, constitutes a severe form of environmental violence with cascading impacts. Weak regulation and enforcement allow destructive mining practices that deepen and widen rivers, cause severe erosion of agricultural land, dry nearby arable land, deplete groundwater levels, and create livelihood insecurity for communities dependent on riverbank agriculture. Farmers live in constant fear of losing their land to erosion while simultaneously witnessing the depletion of water sources essential for irrigation and drinking.

g. Water Scarcity and Resource Depletion: Water scarcity has emerged as a critical form of environmental violence, particularly affecting the hilly and Tarai regions and downstream communities. Dying springs, reduced river flows, groundwater depletion due to over-extraction, Chure degradation from illegal sand/gravel mining and forest fires, and inadequate water supply infrastructure collectively create chronic water stress. Communities struggle to meet household needs and irrigation requirements, with water tankers often unavailable or

insufficient. The scarcity affects daily life, agricultural productivity, and overall community well-being, creating conditions ripe for competition and conflict over this essential resource.

h. Waste Mismanagement and Pollution: Inadequate waste management infrastructure and practices constitute an ongoing form of environmental violence affecting urban and peri-urban areas across Nepal. Nepal generates tons of plastic waste daily, much of which is dumped into rivers due to poor regulations, weak enforcement, lack of awareness, and continued reliance on low-cost plastic packaging. Uncollected garbage, open dumping, poor sanitation systems, and weak municipal capacity create health hazards, environmental degradation, and visual pollution. Industrial, household, and other waste disposal in public areas and water bodies generate foul odors, spread disease, and degrade ecosystems while eroding quality of life for affected communities.

i. Extreme Weather Events and Climate Variability: Increasingly irregular and extreme weather patterns (such as severe heat waves, prolonged cold spells, unpredictable rainfall, and extended dry periods during monsoon seasons) represent manifestations of climate-induced environmental violence. These extremes disrupt agricultural cycles, damage crops, affect water availability, compromise health and educational activities, and create general instability in livelihood patterns. The unpredictability of weather undermines traditional agricultural knowledge and planning, forcing communities into reactive rather than proactive adaptation strategies.

4.2 Environmental Conflict Issues

a. Upstream-Downstream Water Disputes: Water conflicts between upstream and downstream communities represent one of the most prevalent and contentious environmental conflicts in Nepal. Upstream communities and large landholders exercise disproportionate control over water resources through geographical advantages and infrastructure such as dams that store and direct water for their benefit while reducing recharge and flow for downstream areas. During dry seasons when water becomes critically scarce, these power imbalances intensify, leaving downstream farmers struggling to access irrigation water during peak agricultural seasons. Several examples across Nepal demonstrate how infrastructure decisions create structural inequalities that institutionalize water access disparities and generate persistent grievances between settlements.

b. Community versus Local Government Conflicts over Resource Extraction: Tensions between local governments and communities over riverbed mining and resource extraction have emerged as significant environmental conflicts. In many cases, local governments engage in commercial river mining while simultaneously restricting community members from using river resources for personal needs unless they pay fees. This creates perceptions of exploitation and injustice, particularly when mining activities damage local resources and livelihoods. Weak enforcement of environmental regulations by local governments due to fiscal incentives, combined with their dual role as both regulators and beneficiaries of

extraction, erodes trust and generates confrontation between authorities and residents who depend on these resources for survival.

c. Community versus Industry Conflicts over Pollution: Active conflicts between communities and industries over pollution-related grievances characterize many industrial zones across Nepal. Industries and hospitals discharge waste into rivers, creating health risks for residents, and harming cultural values associated with these waterways. Communities have organized protests, filed complaints with authorities, and in some instances blocked factory operations to demand accountability. However, these actions often receive superficial responses or are ignored entirely, deepening the sense of injustice. Industries and hospitals possess political connections and economic leverage while marginalized communities lack resources to advocate effectively. These unequal power dynamics enable continued violations without penalties, undermining governmental legitimacy and creating conditions for escalating confrontation.

d. Human-Wildlife Conflict: Communities living near protected areas, particularly around Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Chitwan National Park, and Bardiya National Park, experience persistent human-wildlife conflict as a form of environmental violence. Wild animals, including elephants, wild buffaloes, wild boars, and others regularly cross reserve boundaries, destroying crops, damaging houses, causing injuries and deaths. Despite government and community interventions such as electric fencing, these measures remain largely ineffective. Limited compensation guidelines that cover only certain animal species leave many affected households without recourse. This environmental conflict creates economic losses, psychological fear and insecurity, and resentment toward conservation policies, while habitat fragmentation and expanding human settlements continue to intensify these conflicts.

e. Seasonal Water Conflicts During Dry Periods: Environmental conflicts in Nepal intensify dramatically during dry seasons when water scarcity becomes acute. Drying water sources, reduced irrigation flow, and over-extraction create heightened competition between communities, particularly along upstream-downstream gradients. Agricultural activities become flashpoints for conflict as farmers struggle to irrigate crops during critical growing periods. These seasonal conflicts recur annually but is likely to intensify progressively as climate change reduces overall water availability and increases rainfall unpredictability. Without effective water governance and equitable allocation mechanisms, seasonal scarcity transforms into persistent social tensions that undermine community cohesion.

f. Transboundary Water Tensions with Neighboring Countries: Nepal faces complex transboundary water conflicts with immediate neighboring countries over shared river systems including Koshi, Gandak, Arun, and Mahakali. Upstream actions such as dam construction and water diversion projects by neighboring countries significantly affect downstream water availability in Nepal, impacting irrigation, livelihoods, and flood patterns. There are many instances where natural course changes restricted Nepali farmers from paddy cultivation, and Indian embankments causing floods on the Nepal side, illustrating how transboundary infrastructure decisions create powerlessness among affected communities.

Existing bilateral frameworks, such as Kosi Agreement (1954, amended 1966), Gandak Agreement (1959, amended 1964), and Mahakali Treaty (1996) remain limited in scope in the changed socio-political and environmental context and lack robust enforcement and dispute-resolution mechanisms. This creates uncertainty for Nepali communities who depend on predictable water flows but have minimal influence over upstream decisions. The power asymmetries between Nepal and its larger neighbors, combined with inadequate water-sharing agreements, generate both international tensions and domestic frustration directed at the government's perceived inability to protect national interests.

g. Conflicts Within Community Resource Management User Groups: Internal conflicts within community-based natural resource management institutions such as Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) and water user committees reveal how these mechanisms, despite their peacebuilding potential, can reproduce and reinforce existing inequalities. Elite capture of leadership positions in regards to resource management, unequal benefit-sharing from community resources, such as timber sales or eco-tourism income, and exclusion of women and marginalized groups from decision-making, create tensions that undermine the cooperative intentions of these institutions. When benefits are distributed inequitably or when leadership becomes dominated by higher caste, wealthier, or politically connected members, resentment builds among excluded groups. These internal dynamics not only perpetuate social hierarchies but also limit the capacity of community institutions to manage resources sustainably and peacefully.

h. Development-Induced Environmental Conflicts: Large-scale infrastructure projects, particularly hydropower developments, road construction, mining operations, and urban expansion, generate environmental conflicts through multiple pathways in Nepal. Land acquisition without adequate consultation or compensation, environmental degradation from project activities, weak consultation processes that exclude affected communities from decision-making, and inequitable benefit-sharing mechanisms create grievances among local populations. Several disputes over land seizure and lack of community consultation illustrate how development projects can trigger conflicts when they prioritize economic gains over social justice and environmental sustainability. These conflicts reflect broader tensions between rapid development aspirations and the rights and livelihoods of communities bearing the environmental and social costs of such development.

i. Conflicts Arising from Reactive Disaster Response: The predominance of reactive rather than preventive governance approaches generate conflicts around disaster response and resource allocation. When disasters such as floods, landslides, and droughts occur, the absence of early warning systems, community-based preparedness, and sustainable planning results in unequal losses and uneven distribution of relief resources. This creates perceptions of injustice and favoritism, fueling grievances and mistrust toward governmental institutions. Repeated disasters without long-term solutions force communities to adopt increasingly unsustainable coping strategies such as encroachment on forests, over-extraction of groundwater, and settlement in hazard-prone areas. These strategies themselves become sources of environmental degradation and inter-community conflict. The reactive approach

also intensifies competition over scarce resources during crisis periods, potentially escalating tensions into violence. These are clear cases of lack of institutional learning.

j. Conflicts Rooted in Marginalization and Social Exclusion: Environmental conflicts in Nepal are fundamentally shaped by the persistent marginalization and social exclusion of vulnerable groups, including women, indigenous peoples, Dalits, religious minorities, elderly people, persons with disabilities, landless households, and others. They are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and disasters and also systematically excluded from natural resource governance, decision-making processes, relief distribution, compensation mechanisms, and policy formulation. This exclusion stems from deeper structural inequalities, power asymmetries, elite capture of resources, unequal distribution, perceived injustices, and livelihood insecurities arising from resource scarcity, leading to confrontations that disrupt social harmony and peace at the community level. These conflicts extend beyond mere competition over resources like water, land, and forests, reflecting historical patterns of discrimination where marginalized communities face barriers to equitable access for drinking water, household purposes, cultivation, irrigation, participation in management, and benefits from institutions. When these groups assert their rights or challenge existing power structures, tensions escalate from resource-specific disputes to broader social conflicts, underscoring the need for environmental peacebuilding to address root causes for lasting transformation.

Below are the tabular representation of the key issues surrounding environmental violence and environmental conflict in Nepal and their triggering factors. The consolidation of these issues also formed an empirical basis for this Environmental Peacebuilding Agenda.

Table 1: Environmental Violence Issues and Their Triggering Factors

Environmental Violence Issues	Triggering Factors to Violence
• Air pollution driven by industrial emissions, chimney smoke, haphazard waste, and plastic burning	• Weak environmental governance, poor enforcement of regulations and inadequate regulatory mechanisms
• Water/river pollution driven by industrial discharge and household waste disposal	• Chure degradation due to illegal sand/gravel mining, landslides, and forest fires
• Soil pollution and degradation due to use of chemical fertilizers	• Unplanned and rapid development without proper environmental risk-mapping
• Deforestation for household consumption, road construction, and settlement expansion	• Haphazard infrastructure development such as roads, settlements, and dams
• Floods due to extreme rainfall and river overflow	• Resource extraction prioritizing short-term economic gains
• Droughts and water scarcity leading to dried springs, reduced river flows, and groundwater depletion	• Inadequate waste management systems and infrastructure
• Riverbed mining for sand and gravel extraction	• Population growth and internal migration
• Land degradation and diminishing land productivity	• Industrialization without proper environmental controls
• Wildfire caused by excessive heat, human negligence, and traditional practices such as burning dried leaf litter to promote new vegetation	• Climate change intensifying natural hazards
• Irregular weather patterns resulting in extreme heat waves and cold waves	• Socioeconomic pressures driving unsustainable practices
• Development projects displacing communities	• Excessive use of chemical fertilizers and unsustainable farming methods
	• Erosion of traditional knowledge and community-based cooperative resource management practices

Table 2: Environmental Conflict Issues and Factors Leading to Conflict

Environmental Conflict Issues	Factors Leading to Conflict
• Upstream-downstream water disputes over control of and access to water resources	• Unequal control over water flows by upstream communities, combined with social hierarchies that limits downstream access and deepens the exclusion of marginalized groups such as Dalits, women, people with disabilities, and landless communities.
• Inter-community conflicts over water for irrigation during dry seasons	• Contestation of geographical power dynamics between upstream and downstream communities over controlling water resource and its access
• Community-government tensions over riverbed mining rights and revenues	• Unequal land holdings creating structural advantages
• Human-wildlife conflicts claiming properties and lives	• Infrastructural decisions favoring certain communities such as upstream communities benefitted by construction of dam
• Transboundary water conflicts over sharing of water resources across border and embankment-related floods	• Seasonal resource scarcity with dry season intensifying competition over access to existing resource
• Conflicts over forest resource access and use	• Elite capture of community-based resource management institutions and lack of participatory decision-making and exclusion of local voices
• Conflicts within community-based resource management groups over leadership and benefit-sharing	• Inequitable benefit distribution from natural resources
• Competition over increasingly limited resources such as water, land, and forests	• Absence of comprehensive transboundary water-sharing agreements
• Tensions between communities and private extraction industries	• Inequitable enforcement of resource-based rights driven by power asymmetries in governance structures

• Disputes over land use and conversion decisions	• Historical marginalization and land tenure insecurity • Unclear mandates and overlapping responsibilities across government tiers reflecting over "three Cs" problem: clarity, coordination, and capacity • Outdated legal frameworks that undermine effective governance

5

Key Actors and their Roles in Environmental Peacebuilding in Nepal

Environmental peacebuilding in Nepal involves a diverse set of actors whose roles span governance, advocacy, research, media, and community engagement. Government institutions at federal, provincial, and local levels play a crucial role in formulating policies, regulating natural resource governance, upholding accountability, and ensuring conflict-sensitive implementation of development and environmental laws. Local governments and community-based institutions, including forest user groups and water user associations, are critical for managing resources at the grassroots level and mediating disputes. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contribute by facilitating dialogue, promoting inclusive participation, advocating environmental justice, and supporting capacity-building initiatives. Academic and research institutions generate evidence, provide critical analysis, and inform policy through research and knowledge dissemination. Additionally, development partners and international organizations support environmental peacebuilding through technical assistance, funding, and promotion of global best practices, while local communities remain central actors whose knowledge, agency, and participation are essential for sustaining peace and addressing environmental issues in Nepal.

The media and the private sector also play distinct but complementary roles in addressing environmental challenges. The media contributes by bringing local environmental issues to the forefront, raising public awareness, shaping discourse, and holding institutions accountable through investigative reporting and advocacy. By amplifying community voices and highlighting environmental risks and conflicts, the media helps inform policy debates and encourages transparency in environmental governance. The private sector, on the other hand, bears responsibility for complying with government standards, laws, and policies related to environmental protection and prevention of environmental harm. Beyond regulatory compliance, private sector actors can contribute to environmental peacebuilding by adopting sustainable business practices and allocating resources to support small-scale environmental protection initiatives through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. Such engagement can help mitigate environmental harm, reduce conflict risks, and foster collaborative relationships with communities and government institutions.

Table 3 presents the key actors and their respective roles in operationalizing and advancing environmental peacebuilding in Nepal.

Table 3: Key Actors and Their Roles in Environmental Peacebuilding

Key Actors	Role/Responsibilities
Federal government (federal parliament, ministry, judicial bodies, constitutional bodies, public authorities and agencies, departments, commission, and committees at the federal level)	• Formulation of national environmental, climate, and natural resource laws, policies, regulations, and standards. • Oversees national regulatory compliance (e.g., Environmental Impact Assessment/ Initial Environmental Examination (IEE/ EIA), pollution standards, biodiversity conservation). • Coordinates inter-ministerial and inter-governmental mechanisms for environmental governance. • Mobilizes national budgets, oversees climate finance, and manages national-level programs focusing on conflict-sensitive environmental and developmental programming. • Leads transboundary negotiations on water, air quality, and climate. • Provides national-level data systems, monitoring frameworks, and early-warning mechanisms.
Provincial government (provincial assembly, ministries, line agencies and directorates, program implementation units, departments)	• Adapts federal policies to provincial contexts and develop province-specific environmental guidelines. • Supports local governments through technical assistance, capacity building on environmental monitoring, disaster risk reduction, agriculture, forestry, and climate planning. • Integrates of environmental and peacebuilding concerns into local planning.

	• Regulates provincial infrastructure, local industries, irrigation systems, and provincial extraction permits.
	• Facilitates coordination across districts and municipalities.
	• Oversees provincial-level disaster preparedness and response systems.
Local government (municipalities, rural municipalities, district assemblies, ward offices, coordination committees, judicial committees)	• Implements environmental bylaws, monitors resource extraction, and regulates local industries and waste management.
	• Issues local permits, enforces pollution control, and oversees local-level EIA/IEE compliance.
	• Coordinates disaster preparedness, early warning, and emergency response.
	• Mediates local disputes over water, land, forests, and resource use.
	• Engages communities through awareness, mobilization, and inclusive participatory planning.
	• Prepares municipal climate and environmental plans.
Community groups (community forest user groups (CFUGs), water user groups, town committees, farmer groups, indigenous nationalities, women, youth)	• Manage local forests, water systems, community lands, and shared natural resources.
	• Apply traditional knowledge systems for sustainable resource use.
	• Monitor local environmental changes and report violations.
	• Mediate household- and community-level disputes.
	• Mobilize volunteers for conservation, restoration, and disaster response.
	• Advocate for rights, equitable access, and accountability.

Civil society and National/International non-governmental organizations	• Conduct research, evidence generation, advocacy, and policy monitoring. • Build community capacity for environmental management, rights, and negotiation. • Facilitate dialogues between government, communities, and private sector. • Monitor governance gaps and document and highlight environmental violence. • Provide technical support and promote inclusive participation.
Private sector (industries, brick kilns, mining contractors, construction companies, agribusiness, investors)	• Complies with environmental laws, pollution standards, and responsible extraction practices. • Adopts cleaner technologies, waste management systems, and sustainable supply chains. • Conducts environmental assessments and mitigation planning. • Invests in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and community development. • Reduces emissions, effluents, and ecological footprints. • Adopts sustainable livelihood and economic development practice by investing in sectors like renewable energy and sustainable tourism • Creates employment opportunities to reduce socio-economic gaps which are among the root causes of conflict
International bodies and development partners	• Provide financial, technical, and capacity-building support for environmental and climate programs.

	• Support pilot projects, innovation, and evidence-based interventions.
	• Facilitate regional cooperation, policy dialogue, and learning exchange.
	• Strengthen institutional capacity and policy coherence across government tiers.
Media (print-based, television, radio, online platforms)	• Reports environmental violence issues, and their impacts on communities.
	• Highlights environmental violence and governance failures.
	• Informs the public and hold institutions accountable.
	• Amplifies grievances responsibly that might otherwise remain invisible.
	• Promotes transparency through investigative journalism.

Recommended Actions for Environmental Peacebuilding

The following strategic actions are suggested across multiple dimensions to advance environmental peacebuilding in Nepal. These recommendations are organized thematically to address governance, financing, capacity development, social inclusion, transboundary cooperation, and institutional mechanisms.

6.1 Policy and Legal Reforms

a. Develop a Dedicated National Environmental Peacebuilding Policy: Nepal requires a comprehensive national policy framework that explicitly recognizes and defines environmental violence and conflicts as distinct yet interconnected challenges requiring targeted interventions. This policy should integrate conflict-sensitive approaches into all environmental and climate initiatives, establish clear institutional mandates for environmental peacebuilding across the three tiers of government, provide guidelines for preventive rather than reactive governance, mandate environmental conflict assessments for all development projects, and create accountability mechanisms for environmental justice. The policy should be developed through inclusive consultations with marginalized communities, civil society, and relevant government agencies to ensure broad ownership and legitimacy.

b. Update and Harmonize Outdated Environmental Laws: Critical laws such as the Water Resources Act 1992 require urgent review and revision to reflect Nepal's federal structure established by the 2015 constitution. Legal reforms should clarify the division of powers and responsibilities across federal, provincial, and local governments regarding natural resource management, eliminate contradictions and overlaps between different laws and regulations, strengthen enforcement mechanisms and penalties for environmental violations, incorporate provisions for climate-induced migrants and their rights to compensation and resettlement, and effectively integrate Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles for communities affected by development projects. These reforms should ensure that legal frameworks support rather than hinder environmental peacebuilding efforts.

c. Strengthen Environmental Justice Mechanisms: Establish accessible and effective grievance redress mechanisms at all government levels specifically designed to address environmental conflicts and violations. This includes creating specialized environmental courts or tribunals with technical expertise to handle complex environmental disputes, developing clear procedures for communities to file complaints against polluters and resource exploiters, ensuring legal aid and support for marginalized communities to access justice, implementing mandatory public hearings for projects with significant environmental impacts, and establishing independent monitoring bodies to track

environmental violations and government responses. These mechanisms should be designed with the specific needs of marginalized groups in mind, including language accessibility, procedural fairness, and reduced procedural barriers.

d. Mainstream Conflict-Sensitive Environmental Impact Assessments: Strengthen and transform Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) processes to systematically incorporate conflict analysis and peacebuilding considerations. This requires mandatory conflict risk assessments for all development projects affecting natural resources, participatory assessments that include meaningful consultation with affected communities, consideration of cumulative impacts on resource availability and inter-community relations, assessment of how projects affect local power dynamics and resource access for marginalized groups, and development of conflict-mitigation and peacebuilding action plans as integral components of project approval. Strengthen monitoring and enforcement to ensure that approved projects comply with environmental and social safeguards.

6.2 Governance Reforms and Institutional Strengthening

a. Establish Clear Mandates and Coordination Mechanisms Across Government Tiers: Address the coexistence, coordination, and collaboration problems by developing formal coordination frameworks that clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for environmental management across federal, provincial, and local governments. Create inter-governmental coordination committees specifically focused on environmental peacebuilding at national and provincial levels, establish regular forums for information sharing and joint planning on natural resource issues, develop protocols for resolving jurisdictional disputes over resource management, and ensure adequate and predictable fiscal transfers and technical support to local governments for environmental governance. These mechanisms should facilitate vertical integration while respecting the autonomy of different government tiers.

b. Strengthen Technical Capacity at Local Government Levels: Invest systematically in building the capacity of local governments to manage environmental resources and conflicts effectively. This includes comprehensive training programs for local officials on conflict-sensitive natural resource management, environmental law enforcement, participatory planning and community engagement, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction, and monitoring and evaluation of environmental programs. Provide technical assistance and tools for environmental data collection and analysis, establish mentorship programs pairing experienced practitioners with local government staff, and create performance-based incentives for local governments that demonstrate excellence in environmental peacebuilding. Capacity building should extend to local judicial and quasi-judicial bodies to handle environmental disputes effectively.

c. Transform Community-Based Resource Management Institutions: Ensure genuine inclusivity and transparent governance in community forestry and user groups to utilize their significant peacebuilding potential. Mandate and enforce equitable representation of marginalized groups in leadership positions with decision-making authority, establish

transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms with regular audits and public disclosure, create safeguards against elite capture through rotation of leadership and term limits, provide capacity building for marginalized members to participate meaningfully, develop internal conflict resolution mechanisms with access to neutral external mediation when needed, and link user groups to broader landscape-level planning to address upstream-downstream dynamics. Undertake regular social and equity audits to assess inclusivity and equity in practice, not just in technical compliance.

d. Transition from Reactive to Preventive Environmental Governance: Systematically shift governance approaches from crisis response to prevention and preparedness. This requires investing in early warning systems for floods, droughts, landslides, and other climate-induced disasters; developing and implementing sustainable resource management plans before crises emerge; establishing community-based disaster preparedness programs with regular drills and capacity building; creating ecosystem-based adaptation strategies that build natural resilience; implementing sustainable groundwater management and rainwater harvesting programs; promoting ecosystem restoration initiatives that prevent degradation; and developing long-term climate adaptation plans integrated with development planning. Allocate adequate budget and personnel for prevention rather than channeling most resources to post-disaster relief while.

6.3. Financing Environmental Peacebuilding

a. Establish a Dedicated Environmental Peacebuilding Fund: Create an earmarked financing mechanism within the existing Environment Protection Fund or as a separate entity dedicated to environmental peacebuilding initiatives. This fund should support conflict prevention and mediation activities in resource-dependent communities, community-led environmental restoration and sustainable management projects, capacity building for local governments and community organizations, research and monitoring on environmental conflicts and peacebuilding outcomes, and pilot and demonstration initiatives testing innovative approaches to environmental peacebuilding. The fund should have transparent governance with representation from government, civil society, and affected communities, with prioritization criteria favoring marginalized and conflict-affected areas.

b. Mandate Budget Allocation for Environmental Peacebuilding Across Government Levels: Make environmental peacebuilding a mandatory budgetary consideration in budget planning and allocation processes. Federal, provincial, and local governments should allocate specific percentages of their environmental and development budgets to conflict-sensitive initiatives, establish performance-based conditional grants that reward local governments demonstrating effective environmental peacebuilding, integrate peacebuilding indicators into environmental program monitoring and evaluation, ensure that at least 80% of climate finance reaches local-level implementation as specified in the National Climate Change Policy 2019, and create financing mechanisms that support long-term initiatives rather than only short-term projects. Budget transparency and participatory budgeting processes

should ensure community input into resource allocation decisions.

c. Mobilize Climate Finance for Conflict-Sensitive Adaptation: Leverage international climate finance mechanisms (including the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, and bilateral climate finance) to support environmental peacebuilding. This requires integrating conflict analysis and peacebuilding objectives into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), developing project proposals that explicitly address how climate investments will reduce environmental conflicts, ensuring that climate finance benefits demonstrably reach marginalized and conflict-affected communities, creating safeguards to prevent climate projects from exacerbating existing tensions, and building capacity of national and local institutions to access and effectively utilize climate finance. Nepal should advocate in international forums for recognition of environmental peacebuilding as a legitimate, priority, and eligible use of climate finance.

d. Incentivize Private Sector Contributions to Environmental Peacebuilding: Develop mechanisms to encourage private sector actors, particularly industries contributing to environmental degradation, to invest in environmental peacebuilding. This includes establishing Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER)[19] frameworks with mandatory contributions to community welfare, creating tax incentives for industries investing in pollution control and ecosystem restoration, requiring environmental and social impact bonds for extractive industries and large infrastructure projects, supporting social enterprises and green businesses that create sustainable livelihoods while protecting the environment, and developing public-private partnerships for environmental infrastructure such as waste management and renewable energy. Hold industries legally and financially accountable through mandatory environmental audits and community consultations.

6.4. Social Inclusion and Equity

a. Ensure Meaningful Participation of Marginalized Groups: Environmental peacebuilding cannot succeed without addressing the systematic exclusion of marginalized communities. Actions should guarantee representation and leadership of women, Dalits, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, youth, and landless households in all environmental decision-making bodies, implement affirmative action-based policies for participation in resource management institutions, provide capacity-building opportunities and resources specifically targeted at empowering marginalized groups, ensure that consultation processes are accessible (language, location, timing, disability access), create safe and

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[19]   Within this framework, CER is defined as the integration of environmental stewardship into core business strategy. It emphasizes 'eco-efficiency' and 'pollution prevention', moving beyond mere legal compliance to proactively manage resource consumption and environmental risks. By internalizing these ecological costs, firms enhance long-term competitiveness and stakeholder trust. See Mazurkiewicz, P. (2003). *Corporate environmental responsibility: Is a common CSR framework possible?* World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/577051468339093024/pdf/421830csrframework01PUBLIC1.pdf.

protected spaces for marginalized groups to voice concerns without fear of retaliation, and establish accountability mechanisms when institutions fail to ensure inclusive participation. Participation must extend beyond tokenism to genuine power-sharing in decisions affecting natural resources.

b. Address Land Tenure Insecurity and Resource Rights: Insecure land tenure and unclear resource rights are fundamental drivers of environmental conflicts. Actions should accelerate inclusive land registration and documentation for landless and marginalized households, recognize and formalize customary land and resource rights of indigenous peoples, resolve historical land disputes through context-specific restorative justice approaches, provide legal protections for traditional resource users against displacement by development projects, ensure that women have equal land and property rights in both law and practice, and develop transparent and equitable land allocation policies for climate migrants and displaced communities. Land governance reforms should prioritize security of tenure for vulnerable groups as a foundation for environmental peacebuilding.

c. Implement Gender-Responsive Environmental Peacebuilding: Women and girls face distinct vulnerabilities to environmental violence while being systematically excluded from environmental governance. Gender-responsive actions should ensure women's equal participation and leadership in all environmental peacebuilding initiatives, address gender-based violence that often increases during environmental disasters and resource conflicts, recognize and support women's roles as environmental custodians and knowledge holders, provide sex- and gender-disaggregated data and analysis for all environmental programs, ensure that climate adaptation and disaster response meet specific needs of women and girls, create economic opportunities for women through sustainable environmental enterprises, and integrate gender perspectives into environmental education and awareness programs. Environmental peacebuilding strategies must recognize intersectionality, i.e., how gender interacts with caste, ethnicity, disability, and other identities to shape vulnerability and agency.

d. Empower Youth as Environmental Peacebuilders: Young people are both disproportionately affected by environmental violence and essential actors for sustainable change. Youth empowerment actions should institutionalize environmental peacebuilding into school and university curricula, create platforms for youth to participate in environmental governance and policy dialogue, support youth-led environmental initiatives through grants and technical assistance, facilitate intergenerational knowledge exchange to preserve traditional environmental wisdom while embracing innovation, engage youth in monitoring and advocacy around environmental issues, create green employment opportunities that provide sustainable livelihoods, and ensure youth representation in community resource management institutions. Youth should be recognized as agents of change rather than merely beneficiaries of environmental programs.

6.5. Knowledge, Research, and Capacity Building

a. Generate Relevant Data for Evidence-based Policy Making and Programming: Generating relevant data for evidence-based policy making and programming is vital for advancing environmental peacebuilding in Nepal. Reliable, up-to-date, and context-specific data on natural resource use, climate risks, and conflict dynamics will help policymakers identify root causes of environmental stress and social tensions emphasizing proactive approach to peacebuilding. Such evidence also supports inclusive decision-making, ensuring that policies timely address the needs of vulnerable and conflict-affected communities. Therefore, building a stronger database for data-driven approaches should be strengthened in order to support coordination mechanism, promote sustainability, and foster long-term peace and resilience. Partnership with academic communities and research-based institutions should be promoted in order to build a stronger database.

b. Document and Revive Traditional Knowledge and Cooperative Practices: The erosion of indigenous and traditional knowledge systems represents a critical loss of community resilience and peacebuilding capacity. Actions should systematically document traditional environmental management practices, indigenous knowledge on climate adaptation, and cooperative resource-sharing mechanisms before they are irreversibly lost, integrate traditional knowledge with modern scientific approaches in environmental programs, support intergenerational knowledge transfer through mentorship programs and community exchanges, recognize and compensate knowledge holders for their contributions, protect intellectual property rights of indigenous and local communities over their traditional knowledge, and create educational materials and curricula that incorporate traditional environmental wisdom. This knowledge preservation should be community-led and consent-based with proper consent and benefit-sharing.

c. Establish Environmental Peacebuilding Research and Learning Networks: Create institutional mechanisms to generate, share, and apply knowledge on environmental peacebuilding. This includes establishing a national Environmental Peacebuilding Research Center or network that coordinates research, convenes practitioners, and disseminates findings, supporting action research that engages communities in identifying and testing solutions to environmental conflicts, creating platforms for sharing lessons learned and best practices across regions and sectors, developing case study documentation of successful environmental peacebuilding initiatives in Nepal, facilitating South-South learning exchanges with countries facing similar environmental and conflict challenges, and investing in longitudinal research that tracks environmental peacebuilding outcomes over time. Research should be participatory, accessible, and relevant to policy and practice.

d. Develop Environmental Literacy and Awareness Programs: Build sustained public understanding of environmental issues, rights, and responsibilities as foundations for environmental peacebuilding. Actions should integrate environmental education into formal education at all levels with emphasis on local environmental challenges, implement public awareness campaigns on environmental laws, rights, and grievance mechanisms, conduct community-based education on sustainable resource management and climate adaptation, provide media training for journalists to report responsibly on environmental conflicts,

develop culturally appropriate and multilingual environmental education materials, and create experiential learning opportunities through environmental clubs, youth camps, and community initiatives. Environmental literacy should empower citizens to participate effectively in environmental governance and hold authorities accountable.

e. Build Conflict Transformation and Mediation Capacity: Effective environmental peacebuilding requires skilled practitioners who can facilitate dialogue, mediate disputes, and transform conflicts. Capacity building should train government officials, civil society practitioners, and community leaders in conflict analysis, mediation, and facilitation skills, establish national and provincial rosters of trained mediators available to support environmental conflict resolution, create certification programs for environmental peacebuilding practitioners, provide ongoing mentorship and peer learning opportunities for conflict transformation practitioners, develop culturally appropriate mediation approaches that incorporate local conflict resolution traditions, and support the establishment of community mediation committees with clear mandates and resources. These capacities should be formally institutionalized rather than dependent on individual champions.

6.6. Transboundary and Regional Cooperation

a. Strengthen Transboundary Water Governance with India and China: Nepal's transboundary water challenges require urgent, sustained diplomatic and technical attention. Actions should initiate high-level political negotiations to develop comprehensive, legally binding and enforceable water-sharing agreements with India and China that reflect current realities, update existing treaties (Kosi, Gandak, Mahakali) to address gaps and incorporate climate change considerations, establish joint river-basin management authorities with representation from all riparian countries, create shared early warning systems for floods, droughts, and water quality issues, develop benefit-sharing mechanisms for transboundary water projects that ensure equitable distribution, establish protocols for prior consultation and consent on upstream projects affecting downstream communities, and create technical working groups for ongoing dialogue on water management issues. These frameworks should include provisions for community participation and grievance mechanisms.

b. Engage in Regional Environmental Peacebuilding Forums: Participate actively in regional and international platforms addressing environmental peacebuilding. This includes engaging with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on shared environmental challenges, participating in Himalayan regional forums addressing transboundary environmental issues, contributing to United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) initiatives on environmental peacebuilding, sharing Nepal's experiences and learning from other countries through international networks, advocating for coherent regional frameworks addressing climate-induced migration and displacement, supporting regional research and knowledge exchange on environmental conflicts, and building regional solidarity for equitable climate finance and adaptation support. Regional cooperation can

create pressure for transboundary issue resolution while building shared approaches to common challenges.

c. Facilitate Cross-Border Community Dialogue and Cooperation: Beyond formal diplomatic channels, support community-to-community connections across borders around shared environmental challenges. Actions should facilitate continuous dialogue between Nepali and Indian communities affected by transboundary water issues, support joint watershed management initiatives involving communities from both sides of borders, create platforms for sharing traditional knowledge and adaptation practices across borders, enable cross-border monitoring of environmental conditions and resource use, develop joint early warning and disaster response protocols for border communities, and build understanding and solidarity among communities facing similar environmental challenges. These grassroots connections can build pressure for policy change while creating immediate cooperation opportunities.

6.7. Development Partner Engagement and Coordination

a. Align Development Assistance with Environmental Peacebuilding Priorities: Development partners should align their programs and investments with Nepal's environmental peacebuilding needs. This requires conducting mandatory conflict-sensitive environmental analyses for all development projects and programs, integrating environmental peacebuilding objectives into country assistance strategies and sector programs, supporting government capacity building for environmental peacebuilding at all levels, providing technical and financial resources for policy reforms and institutional strengthening, prioritizing investments in preventive approaches rather than only emergency response, ensuring that development projects do not exacerbate environmental conflicts or inequalities, and supporting long-term initiatives that build community resilience and sustainable resource management. Development partners should coordinate their efforts to avoid fragmentation and duplication.

b. Establish Multistakeholder Platforms for Environmental Peacebuilding: Create inclusive platforms that bring together government, civil society, development partners, private sector, and communities to coordinate environmental peacebuilding efforts. These platforms should facilitate regular dialogue and information sharing among stakeholders, identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration, coordinate advocacy for policy reforms and increased financing, support joint program design and implementation, provide space for conflict prevention and early warning, enable collective learning and adaptation of approaches, and ensure accountability of all actors to affected communities. Such platforms should be institutionalized at national, provincial, and local levels with clear linkages between them.

c. Support Civil Society as Environmental Peacebuilding Champions: CSOs play critical roles as mediators, advocates, and implementers of environmental peacebuilding. Development

partners should provide flexible, multi-year funding for civil society environmental peacebuilding work, support civil society capacity building in conflict transformation and environmental governance, protect civic space for environmental advocacy and watchdog functions, facilitate civil society participation in policy dialogue and decision-making, enable networks and coalitions of CSOs working on environmental issues, support community-based organizations and grassroots movements led by affected communities, and recognize and protect environmental defenders facing threats for their work. CSOs, particularly those led by and accountable to marginalized communities, should be resourced as partners rather than merely implementing agents.

6.8. Monitoring, Accountability, and Learning

a. Develop Environmental Peacebuilding Indicators and Monitoring Frameworks: Establish clear indicators and monitoring systems to systematically track progress on environmental peacebuilding. This includes developing indicators measuring reductions in environmental violence and conflicts, improvements in environmental governance and resource access, participation and empowerment of marginalized groups, effectiveness of grievance mechanisms, and restoration of ecosystems and livelihoods. Implement participatory monitoring that includes community perspectives and experiences, conduct regular assessments of environmental conflict risks and early warning, track budget allocations and expenditures on environmental peacebuilding, evaluate impacts of policies and programs on both environmental and peace outcomes, and publicly report findings to ensure transparency and accountability. Indicators should be disaggregated by gender, caste, ethnicity, and other relevant identities.

b. Establish Accountability Mechanisms for Environmental Violations: Strengthen systems to hold polluters, resource exploiters, and negligent authorities accountable. Actions should implement strict enforcement of environmental laws with proportionate and deterrent penalties for violations, establish public disclosure requirements for industrial emissions and waste discharge, create citizen monitoring mechanisms with legal standing to report violations, ensure effective investigation and prosecution of environmental crimes, provide remedies and compensation for communities harmed by environmental violence, hold government officials accountable for failure to enforce environmental regulations, and establish independent environmental ombudsman or similar mechanisms to receive and investigate complaints. Accountability systems should be accessible to marginalized communities and protect whistleblowers and complainants.

c. Create Feedback and Adaptive Management Mechanisms: Environmental peacebuilding requires ongoing learning and adaptation. Mechanisms should enable regular reflection and learning among practitioners and policymakers, create feedback loops from communities to decision-makers on program effectiveness, establish processes for adaptive and reflexive management that allow course corrections based on learning, document and disseminate innovations and successful approaches, conduct periodic reviews of policies and

strategies with stakeholder input, support experimental and pilot initiatives that test new approaches, and build organizational cultures of learning rather than only accountability for predetermined results. These mechanisms should value local knowledge and community experiences as critical sources of learning.

6.9. Specific Sectoral Actions

a. Water Resource Management: Implement integrated water resource management approaches that address upstream-downstream inequities, establish water user associations with inclusive governance and equitable allocation mechanisms, develop sustainable groundwater management plans with community participation, invest in water infrastructure (rainwater harvesting, ponds, irrigation systems) designed with conflict-sensitive approaches, regulate groundwater extraction and deep boring with environmental and equity considerations, protect and restore watersheds and water recharge areas, create drought preparedness plans including water sharing protocols, and develop progressive pricing and allocation systems that ensure basic water needs are met while discouraging waste.

b. Forest Management: Reform community forestry to ensure genuine inclusivity and equitable benefit-sharing; regulate timber harvesting and prevent illegal logging and trade and elite capture; invest in reforestation and forest restoration prioritizing degraded areas; develop conflict-sensitive integrated landscape approaches linking forests, agriculture, and settlements; address drivers of deforestation including infrastructure development and settlement expansion; create livelihood alternatives reducing dependence on unsustainable forest use; implement participatory forest monitoring with community forest watchers; and ensure that forest carbon initiatives benefit local communities and respect their rights.

c. Extractive Industries and Mining: Establish strict environmental and social standards for riverbed mining and other extraction, require Environmental and Social Impact Assessments with genuine community consultation, implement benefit-sharing mechanisms ensuring local communities gain from extraction, strengthen enforcement against illegal mining with proportionate and deterrent penalties, rehabilitate degraded areas affected by past extraction, regulate extraction to prevent depletion of water resources and water-stressed agricultural land, create alternative livelihoods for communities dependent on small-scale mining, and ensure that local governments balance revenue needs with environmental protection and conflict prevention.

d. Human-Wildlife Conflict Management: Strengthen physical barriers (electric fencing, trenches) with regular maintenance and community participation, expand compensation schemes to cover all wildlife species causing damage and loss, accelerate compensation processing to provide timely relief to affected households, invest in community-based wildlife monitoring and early warning systems, develop wildlife corridors that reduce human-wildlife overlap, support alternative livelihoods reducing dependence on resources

in wildlife areas, ensure that conservation policies include affected communities in decision-making, and address root causes including habitat loss and human encroachment through integrated landscape planning.

e. Waste Management: Invest in comprehensive waste management infrastructure at local levels including collection, segregation, recycling, and safe disposal systems, implement extended producer responsibility policies requiring manufacturers to manage product waste, strengthen enforcement of regulations against waste dumping in public spaces and water bodies, promote waste reduction and circular economy approaches, support waste-based enterprises creating employment while addressing pollution, mandate at-source segregation and collection of waste at household and institutional levels, ensure that waste management workers have safe working conditions and fair wages, and create public awareness on waste reduction and proper disposal.

Conclusion

This document presents a comprehensive agenda for addressing environmental violence and conflicts in Nepal through integrated and multistakeholder approaches. Achieving meaningful environmental peacebuilding requires strong environmental governance, adequate and predictable financing, inclusive participation, and effective transboundary cooperation, supported by sustained political will, institutional reforms, and long-term commitment from government, civil society, development partners, private sector, and communities.

At the core of this agenda is the recognition that environmental conflicts in Nepal are not merely technical or ecological problems but are deeply embedded in governance failures, unequal power relations, insecure resource rights, and exclusionary development pathways. Strengthening governance, through clearer mandates across government tiers, conflict-sensitive laws, accountable institutions, and accessible justice mechanisms, is essential to prevent environmental degradation from escalating into violence and social unrest.

Equally critical is financing environmental peacebuilding in ways that prioritize prevention rather than crisis response. Without dedicated funding mechanisms, transparent budget allocations, and effective mobilization of domestic and international climate finance, even well-designed policies risk remaining aspirational. Sustainable financing must reach local governments and communities, particularly in environmentally stressed and conflict-affected areas, to support long-term resilience and peace.

The agenda also underscores that social inclusion is not ancillary but foundational to environmental peacebuilding. Centring the voices, rights, and leadership of marginalized communities, including women, indigenous peoples, Dalits, youth, and landless households, is necessary both for justice and for effectiveness. These groups bear a disproportionate burden of environmental violence while possessing critical knowledge and capacities for sustainable resource management and conflict transformation.

Finally, Nepal's environmental peacebuilding efforts cannot succeed without robust transboundary and regional cooperation, particularly on shared water resources, climate-induced risks, and cross-border ecological systems. Strengthening diplomatic frameworks, regional platforms, and cross-border community dialogue is essential to address upstream–downstream inequities and shared vulnerabilities that transcend national boundaries.

Taken as a whole, the recommended actions provide a pathway for Nepal to move from reactive, fragmented responses toward preventive, inclusive, and cooperative environmental governance. By advancing reforms across governance, finance, inclusion, and transboundary cooperation simultaneously, Nepal can build environmental peacebuilding institutions that not only manage resources sustainably but also reduce conflict, enhance resilience, and promote justice for present and future generations.

Centre for Social Change
सामाजिक परिवर्तन केन्द्र

About CSC

Centre for Social Change (CSC) is a non-profit making social think-tank based in Kathmandu, Nepal Since its establishment in 2015, CSC has been actively working to bring positive transformation in the socio-political dynamics of Nepali society through involvements in the fields of research, development practice, education, advocacy, and community mobilization. CSC's current works are focused on issues surround conflict transformation, peacebuilding, democracy and governance, migration, labor and employment, civic space, civil society development, public policy, climate change, and social development.

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