

# Participatory action research to address gender norms and power dynamics of female community health volunteers in Nepal



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# Background

- Around 52,000 local women within the community are currently active as FCHVs (1: per 120 households) acting as a frontline health resource
- FCHVs as close-to-community providers – engaged in community-based preventive and promotive activities, have been a key element in the progress of health indicators such as maternal and child mortality
- Bridges the gap between community and government health services, reaching the unreached
- Effects of gender norms on their work and experiences are context-embedded and dynamic
- Addressing these norms is essential to effectively support FCHVs in navigating challenges

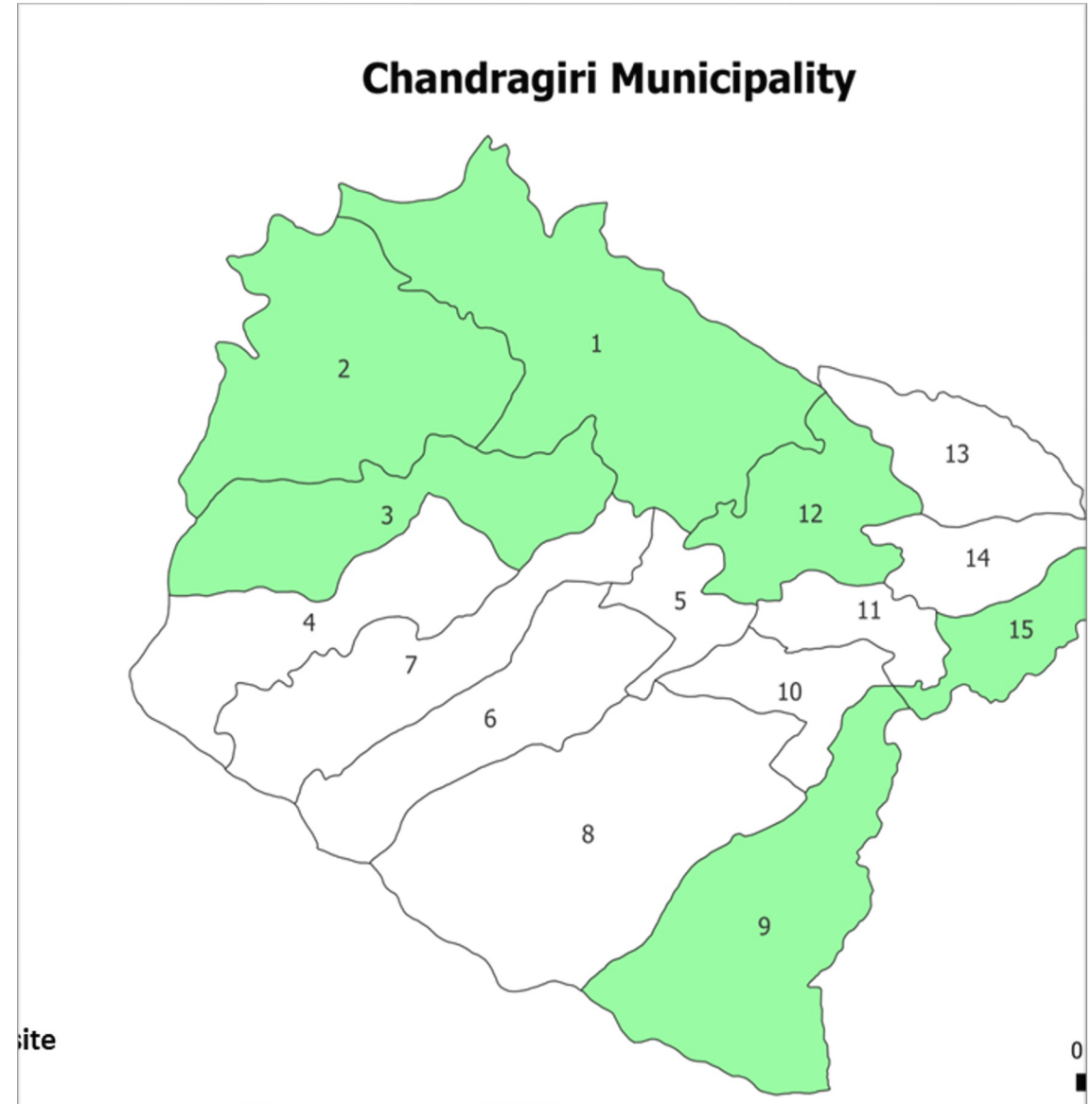


# Study objective

- To explore how participatory action research can support FCHVs in addressing gender norms and power relations within both their communities and the healthcare system

## Study site and participants:

- 12 FCHVs from six wards of Chandragiri municipality
- Stakeholders from municipality and wards



# Participatory Action Research Approach

CTC formative study

FCHVs faced numerous challenges shaped by gender norms

PAR process

## Planning Workshops

Findings sharing with local stakeholders and planning

Root cause identification using problem tree analysis

1. Lack of acknowledgment of work by health facilities and community
2. FCHVs felt that they needed to work on short notice

Discussion of potential solution with FCHVs - Video making

Plan

Act

Reflect

## Intervention development and showcasing

Script writing by FCHVs

Script finalization

Extensive preparation for community film

Shooting the footages at their local area

Preliminary video review and reshooting the selected footage

Final video review and planning for showcasing at local level

Community showcasing in respective wards

## Evaluation

Observations

Reflective workshops

Interviews

Discussions

Community engagement

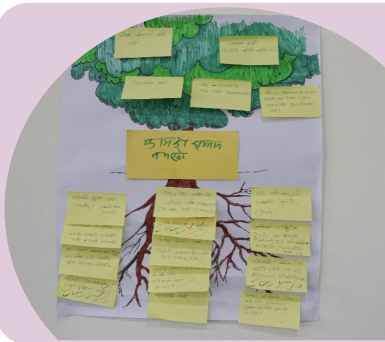
# Identification process



Identified the root causes of the top two problems using problem tree analysis

Lack of recognition for FCHV's contributions in both their families and communities

Unanticipated mobilization of FCHVs by relevant authorities



Top three ranked root causes for a problem 'lack of work recognition'

Low respect for a voluntary job

Lack of awareness among the community people and family members led to limited family support

Lack of attention from higher authorities



Agreed solution to address the first issue:

**To co-create a short video** reflecting their lived experiences, engagement, and challenges further influenced by gender norms and values for increased family and community support

# Findings

The co-created video was showcased in the presence of community people and stakeholders

- 6 different wards of the Chandragiri
- On FCHV day
- Social media (Facebook, YouTube)

**Community showcasing - around 353 people viewed the film**

Ward representatives

School principal, teachers,  
Health workers and FCHVs

Students

Other community and family members

Members of other local organizations - clubs  
and local cooperative

**Social media – more than 1000  
views on YouTube**

# Findings

- **Increased recognition of FCHV's work**

- better understanding of the work particularly dual responsibility performed by FCHVs as by the community people, family, and stakeholders

*"I feel FCHVs face many challenges as they need to perform their gender roles at home and go to work outside as FCHVs."*

*Male ward chair*

- increased appreciation, realizing FCHV's hard work and devotion

*After watching the video, I realized despite working day and night without complaining FCHVs face many hardships and challenges and they are less respected and appreciated for their hard work. So, today I would like to thank them from the core of my heart."*

*A female participant attending the showcasing event*

# Findings

- increased understanding and support from their families for their work and dual responsibility

*“One of my fellow FCHV friends who is retiring soon shared that she showed the video to her husband, who usually didn’t help her with household chores. After watching the video, her husband started to help her, and she felt that if she could have shown the video earlier, her husband would have understood sooner.”*

*FCHV\_Chandragiri municipality*

*“After watching the film, family members have become more understanding, and now it has become easier to go to work.”*

*FCHV\_Chandragiri municipality*



# Findings

- **Capacity development**

- FCHVs while involved in the process noted enhancement in self-confidence, communication skills, and technical advancement in using cameras and sound systems

*“It is the first time doing this type of work and it was quite challenging to use the camera, write the script, act, and edit the film ourselves. But I learned many things and became able to share FCHVs lived experience through this film.”*

*FCHV\_Chandragiri municipality*

# Findings

- FCHVs, stakeholders, and community people considered the video to be an innovative and effective approach to communicating information

*“After watching the video, I realized messages can be given more effectively through videos. This was the first time I watched a video that presented the challenges faced by FCHVs, which was very clear. I felt very happy.”*

*Female participant attending the showcasing event*

*“As people forget things they listen, but when they watch they never forget so it is a good way to make people understand things and convey messages. I think the video has depicted the truth.”*

*Male ward chair*

# Key learnings

## Collaboration and inclusion

participatory approach emphasized collaboration and inclusion of all stakeholders, including FCHVs and municipality officials, ensuring that their experiences and insights are accurately represented in the process

## Empowerment

process of filmmaking empowered FCHVs equipping them with the skills to operate cameras, engage in scriptwriting, and effectively convey their lived experiences

## Storytelling as advocacy

participatory filmmaking can serve as a powerful advocacy tool. FCHVs can use the films they create to raise awareness about gender norms and power imbalances and advocate for change at the community and policy levels

## Training and capacity building

providing training and capacity-building opportunities for FCHVs in filmmaking techniques guided them to effectively convey their messages and ensured the quality of the final product

## Community engagement

local issues with local solution-engaging community members in the filmmaking process eased to complete the process, and in dialogue delivery, shooting and getting community consent

## Adaptation and flexibility

every community is unique, and what works in one context may not work in another. This participatory approach allowed us to be adaptable and flexible and make a joint plan with FCHVs as per their feasibility and availability



**Thank You!**



## Brief Bio

- Ms. Abriti Arjyal has more than a decade of experience in health system and social research, with specific expertise in implementation science and applied research. She brings rich experience in and application of qualitative tools and techniques, participatory action research, health policy and system research, and community engagement considering the aspects of gender and intersectionality.