

# Spring-water management, agriculture and resilient livelihoods in the mid-hills of Nepal

## Key details

### Location

Nepal

### Duration

**Start** Oct 2024 **End** Sep 2028

**Budget** AUD 2,800,000

### Commissioned organisation

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial  
Research Organisation

### Partners

Australian National University; Nepal Water Conservation Foundation; Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies; Nepal Development Research Institute

### Project leader

Wahid Shahriar

### ACIAR Research Program Manager

Dr Neil Lazarow

**Program** Water

**Project code** WAC/2022/151



## Research need

The project aims to support inclusive and resilient rural livelihoods in the mid-hills of Nepal through improved spring-water management. It intends to achieve this by piloting socio-technical solutions, participatory learning, generating transdisciplinary knowledge, exploring governance options, building stakeholder capacity, and mainstreaming springshed management into public policy and development planning.

Spring water is crucial for diverse users and is used extensively in the mid-hills of Nepal, supporting local communities, agriculture, livestock, municipalities and businesses. It is the veins through which life flows, binding families, feeding crops, nourishing livestock, sustaining cities and supporting the delicate ecosystems the mountain communities depend on. For many, springs are more than just water sources; they hold deep cultural significance.

In recent years, rapidly declining spring water resources have raised severe developmental concerns. This situation has particularly affected rural communities, especially women, who are primarily responsible for collecting household water. If timely efforts to improve spring-water management are not implemented, many people may leave the mid-hills, jeopardising the agriculture-based social fabric and destabilising communities.

There is a significant opportunity for developmental research and capacity building focused on the complex

interplay between spring water, climate change, hydrogeology, governance, drinking water supply, agriculture and community livelihoods.

With enhanced capacity and an inclusive approach, local governments will be better equipped to address the water management challenges in the Nepali mid-hills and support rural development. The project will also build local-to-national policy linkages through active processes of policy learning, community empowerment and evidence-informed recommendations.

## Expected outcomes

- Enhanced knowledge, attitude, skills and practices of spring water users and local governments in managing spring water use, springsheds and catchments.
- Increased knowledge and skills of women and marginalised households in spring-water management.
- Increased capacities of local government agencies for inclusive water use planning and governance.
- Informed policies and regulations supporting active and equitable local water management practice, planning and governance.



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