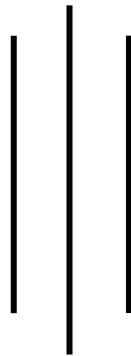
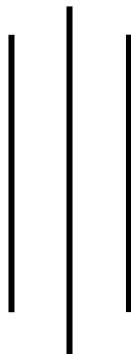


**A Report on the
Problems of Natural Resource Management
in Nepal**



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Introduction

1.1 Meaning of Natural Resources

Natural Resources are those resources that exist in the nature and are developed without the intervention of humans. Common examples of natural resources include air, sunlight, water, soil, stone, plants, minerals, animals and fossil fuels.

Based on the availability, there are two types of natural resources:

- 1. Renewable Natural Resources:** The natural resources that are available in infinite quantity and can be used and renewed repeatedly are called renewable natural resources. Example: forest, wind, water, etc.
- 2. Non-Renewable Natural Resources:** The resources that are limited in quantity and cannot be repeatedly renewed within a short span of time are called non-renewable natural resources. Example: Fossil fuels, minerals, etc.

Natural resources are the resources which we can find abundantly available in nature and which can come to good use in the development and enhancement of living in a country. This is also the reason why natural resources are important, because they help in development, adding to the fact that we all need them at almost every point in our lives. Everything that we own comes from natural resources or has used natural resources to be created. Almost all of what we do, what we eat, what we wear, how we travel, everything we do, uses natural resources. Our cars use fuel which comes from the earth, we need water to survive, which also comes from the natural world, the food we eat comes as a natural resource, too. Thus is the importance of natural resources in our lives.

1.2 Importance of Natural Resources

The importance of natural resources in our day-to-day life cannot be overstated. Natural resources are the materials or substances produced by the environment without any interference from humans. They include sunlight, atmosphere, water, land, vegetables, oil, coal and natural gas, metals, energy supply, food, and a lot more.

Here is a list of a few importance of natural resources:

1. **Source of Energy:** Natural resources such as solar radiation, wind, geothermal heat, water, tides, fossil fuels, petroleum, etc. are used in generating energy.
2. **Source of Food:** Humans, animals, and plants depend solely on natural resources for food. These food sources are plants, aquatic organisms, and other animals. All classes of food nutrients needed by man are provided by nature. No man, animal, or plant can survive without food.
3. **Source of Raw Materials for Industries:** Every industry in the world depends on natural resources for its raw materials. For example: petroleum industry derives its raw material from long deposited fossils. Similarly, textile industry, construction industry, power sector, and food industries utilize natural resources as their raw material.
4. **Medicinal Value:** Herbs and plants found as natural resources are used to make medicines. These medicines are then used to cure diseases and illness of people.
5. **Shelter:** The provision of shelter is also provided by natural resources. The furniture, the bricks used to build the walls, the bedsheet, pillow and blanket, everything comes from natural resources. Similarly, forests provide shelter to other animals and plants.
6. **Employment Opportunities:** Natural resources are used as raw materials in different industries. When these industries get raw material, they can function properly and they can provide employment to people.

1.3 Major Natural Resources of Nepal

Despite being a small landlocked country sandwiched by two giant countries, China and India, Nepal is very rich in natural resources.

Here's a list of major natural resources of Nepal:

- 1. Forest:** Forest is one of the major natural resources of Nepal. According to [FAO](#), about 37.4% of the total area of Nepal is covered by forest. The forest of Nepal is the main source of firewood in Nepal. Similarly, paper, furniture and timber industry are dependent on the forest.
Community forests also help the locals to obtain necessary plants to feed their domestic animals, firewood to cook, and a lot more.
- 2. Agricultural Land:** Agricultural Land is another important natural resource of Nepal since about 70% of the total population of Nepal are still dependent on agriculture. Agriculture sector of Nepal contributes more than one third of Gross Domestic Product and employees two-thirds of the country's labor force ([ResearchGate](#)). The employment opportunities provided by agricultural land helps Nepalese to sustain their day-to-day life.
- 3. Water:** Nepal has abundance sources of water. Despite being a landlocked country, there are many sources of water. There are many large rivers like Karnali, Seti, Koshi, Gandaki, Bhotekoshi, Sunkoshi, and several others. These sources of water are used in the generation of electricity, irrigation projects, drinking and household works. (Myth buster: Nepal is not the second richest country in terms of water resources; in fact, it's not even in the top 9, according to [FAO](#))
- 4. Minerals:** Nepal is rich in terms of minerals. Researches proof that there are various minerals resources like metallic, non-metallic, decorative stones, fuel metals, etc. in the mountainous region of Nepal which occupies about 80% of the land area of Nepal.

1.4 Natural Resource Management

Natural resource management refers to the management of resources such as animals, plants, soil, land to improve the quality of life. It focuses on how they could possibly be managed for our today and tomorrow. It deals with the way in which people interact with natural landscapes.

According to [USAID](#), “The purposes of natural resource management in Nepal is to conserve land, forest, and water resources to maintain the ecological functions of these resources while intensifying agricultural and forestry production.”

An example of resource management is the lumber tree forest. These forests are less diverse because of the harvesting of lumber trees for a longer time. Such a forest is the result of the management of the resource by timber companies and can sustain life because the locations for harvest are rotated and the rate of tree cutting is controlled. The forest becomes a sustainable source of lumber for a long time period due to such practices.

There is a need to manage our resources today, not just for us, but out future generations too. Natural resources are limited, there is a crisis for these resources, hence needs to be managed. For example, usage of water and availability of water always needs to be balanced, with a growing population, there is an exponential increase in the consumption of water while the availability of fresh water is decreasing by the day.

Natural resources are depleting every day not only because it is being used up by people, but also because it is being polluted and destroyed due to various human activities such as deforestation, modernization, global warning to name a few.

The objectives of natural resources management are as follows:

- To maintain ecological diversity.
- To provide resources for future generations.
- To maintain employment facilities for people.

1.5 Environment and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is the overarching paradigm of the United Nations. The concept of sustainable development was described by the 1987 Bruntland Commission Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” according to [UNESCO](#).

Sustainable development has four dimensions—society, environment, culture and economy—which are intertwined, not separate. In the name of economic development, the price of environmental damage is paid in the form of land degradation, soil erosion, air and water pollution, deforestation, etc.

The goals of sustainable development are:

- To promote the kind of development that minimizes environmental problems.
- To meet the needs of the existing generation without compromising with the quality of the environment for future generations.

Sustainable development can be achieved by the following steps:

1. **Awareness:** The first step to attain sustainable development is to create awareness about why the goals of sustainable development matters to everyone’s lives. The children and young people, the students should be educated regarding sustainable development.
2. **Change in Mindset:** After we are aware of the goals of sustainable development, we should realize that it is only us that can stop the degradation and it is also us who can help achieve the goals of sustainable development.
3. **Action:** When children and young people become aware of the goals, more and more people take actions across the globe. All of us should take actions to achieve sustainable development.
4. **Conscious Human Activities:** We should all be aware of how our activities impact the environment. We should reduce the actions that impact the environment negatively and increase those that help in sustainable development.

2. Problems of Natural Resource Development

Since 1980, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)/Nepal has invested approximately \$77 million in seven projects designed to address natural resource management issues, particularly in the hilly regions of Nepal where most poor farmers live. Rapti Area Development project and the Resource Conservation and Utilization (RCU) project are the two largest projects of [USAID](#).

The major thing to focus in natural resource management in Nepal is how to improve the management of land, forest, and water resources in order to maintain both the productive capacity and ecological functions of these resources. During the past two decades, Nepal has faced significant loss and damage to forests, soils, and riverine systems in many areas which has led to widespread environmental damage and declining agricultural productivity, and degradation in several other sectors.

The problems of natural resource development in Nepal is a result of several factors and reasons. Some of them are briefly explained below:

- 1. Lack of Capital:** In order to manage the natural resources that are present in our society, a lot of steps are necessary. Those steps require a lot of capital which is not present in adequate quantity in Nepal. Till the date, 25% of the total population is below the poverty line ([Multidimensional Poverty Index, NPC](#)). In such situation, managing enough saving is not realistic. When there is not enough saving, the financial institutions cannot collect those savings to form a big sum of money for investment.
- 2. Illiteracy:** As of 1995 to 2005, about half of Nepal's adult population, 51%, was illiterate ([UNESCO](#)). Now, even though that number has reduced, they are nowhere near ideal. Still about 32.09% of the population is illiterate ([MacroTrends](#)). When so many people are illiterate, it's not realistic to think that people will be aware of need of sustainable development, and they are less likely to contribute in the management of natural resources.

3. **Lack of Technological Advancement:** Nepal is also lagging in terms of technological advancement. Since so many people are illiterate, technological advancement is difficult. We lack the machinery and technology that can play a role in natural resource management.
4. **Lack of Skilled Manpower:** Due to lack of quality education throughout the country, the workforce of Nepal hasn't been able to obtain proper skills. For the same reason, even if we somehow manage to obtain advanced machinery or technology, they are less likely to come in proper utilization.
5. **Lack of Infrastructure:** Nepal is also poor in terms of infrastructural development. Among the infrastructures, transportation is one that is very essential for proper natural resource management. Due to lack of adequate transportation facilities, natural resources in various parts of Nepal cannot be utilized and exploited in necessary amount. In most cases, favorable sites for executing natural resources lie in remote areas, which do not possess adequate facilities of transporting heavy equipment needed for the said purpose.
6. **Limited Market:** Nepal is a small country between two enormous and developed countries, China and India. Because of that, Nepal faces a lot of competition in terms of where and how it can utilize the natural resources. Since India and China are so developed, they can utilize and offer products obtained from natural resource in a lot more competitive price.
7. **Political Instability:** The government of Nepal hasn't been stable ever since it got democracy. The governments make plans and policies to utilize and manage the natural resources. But when there is political instability, the government changes and the plans and policies are never implemented.

3. Conclusion

Putting the above into perspective, natural resource management is not at where it should be, but it isn't impossible. There are several problems of natural resource management in Nepal. From lack of individual efforts to political instability, there are many reasons why natural resources have not been managed.

Natural resource management is essential in order to achieve sustainable development in our country. With the proper utilization and management of natural resources like forests, agricultural land, water, and minerals, Nepal can have a boost in its economy and development, and that too, sustainable development. There are a lot of lessons that individuals and the government of Nepal and take in order to enhance natural resource management.

Nepal has a lot of potentiality in terms of development backed by natural resource utilization. Nepal has several rivers, huge amount of land area is covered with forests, presence of arable land, and many ores. Though the problems like lack of enough capital, illiteracy, lack of technological advancement, lack of skilled manpower, lack of infrastructure, limited market, political instability, etc. are rooted throughout Nepal and may seem almost impossible to overcome, they aren't impossible. With proper efforts from individuals and related authoritative and governmental bodies, these problems of natural resource management in Nepal can be overcome.

Hence, all the citizens and the government of Nepal should work together to solve the burning issue of the problems of natural resource management. It is the only way by which Nepal can be on the path of development. Nothing is impossible. Plans and policies are already being set up and are being implemented as well. We should play our own roles to achieve the goal of natural resource management and sustainable development in Nepal.