

## **Contextualizing the Integrated Water Resources Management Policies in the Rural Hill Regions of Nepal**

PUNYA P. REGMI

*Integrated Development and Research Services (IDRS), G.P.O.Box 2216, Kathmandu, Nepal*

Water is one of the principle sources of economic development in Nepal. There are about 6,000 rivers and rivulets in Nepal with a flow of around 234 billion cubic meters draining yearly 194,741 m<sup>3</sup>. About 76% of the drainage area is located in Nepal with 33 major rivers flowing to India covering more than 1,000 km. However due to rugged mountainous topography and number of other factors have impeded the field of integrated water resource management. At present only small fraction of water resources is utilized in the country for the productive use. The three major areas that have utilized the water comprise of Hydropower, which generates a total of 400 MW of electricity against the total potential of 83,000 MW, irrigation with coverage of 41% of the agricultural land, and only 66% of the total population with access to piped drinking water facilities. The majority of water sources in Nepal are rivers of monsoon type and some are snow-fed originating from the Himalayan region.

In order to address the overriding issues and facilitate the integrated water resource management to maximize its benefits and to enhance growth of economy of the country, Water Resource Strategy (WRS) was formulated with the formulation of National Water Plan (NWP). Under this plan, there are many action programs which consist of water supply and sanitation, hydropower development and extension of irrigation facilities. The principal goal of WRS is to improve the living condition of people of Nepal through access to water source for multiple uses. For this purpose, Policy, Plan and Program (3 Ps) have been formulated for short and long-term development of water resources; which involves prioritization, selection of options and evaluation of the 3 Ps. The 3 Ps and proposal in WRS are overlapping and interchangeable. However, integration of environmental protection measures at all levels of 3 Ps and WRS is likely to bring better options for environmentally sound and sustainable benefits to the country.

The full paper will outline the strategies and policies currently being undertaken regarding the integrated management of water resources in Nepal. Example of Water Resources Management (WARM) approach of Helvetas Nepal in Western, Mid-Western and Far-Western rural regions of the country will be highlighted. Based on the outputs of the approach, the paper will introduce workable plans and policies regarding the management of water resources which will be appropriate for the rural communities in the remote mountain hills.