

PP-08**Fishing Gears Used by Fisher's Community in Chitwan**

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Chitwan district home some of the indigenous fishing communities including the Bote, Manjhi, Kumal, Darai and Musahars living around banks of Narayani River and Chitwan National Park (CNP). Fishing, their ancestral practice have been continued for generations. Fishing gear is an integral part of these fishing communities for catching fish. Gears have advanced overtime and documentation of gears provide an overview of gears.

Each gear have its own features, and the ways of its application. Traditional knowledge of sewing and mending gear has been passed down to the next generation. The local material "bamboo" used in traditional gears making is biodegradable. For the modern gears fishers often buy gears directly or buy the materials (Nylon, parachute, sinker, and float) and sew the gear themselves. Traditional gears (Dhadiya, Dhawka, Chinautte, Sworhna) along with some modern gears (Gill net and Cast net) is common among fishers in Chitwan. There are government regulations on the type of gears practice and fishing permit for licensed fishers only. monsoonal ban during monsoon reinforces fish population. Regulations are critical to control overfishing and protect critically endangered species of Ghariyal (*Gavialis gangeticus*) found in these areas. The military is responsible for inspecting these water bodies.



Figure 1: Dhawka

However, there is no improvement in fisher's livelihood and most of them remain in poor financial condition, living around the Narayani river banks and CNP periphery risking their life during flood and from possible wild animal attack. Fish catch is decreasing with lower catch per unit effort (CPUE) now compared to a decade ago. Regular catch of 10-15 kg/day like a decade ago, have now become the tale of the past. Lack of education and no alternative job makes the life even harder for fisher's during the seasonal ban. On the other hand, illegal fishing has made the problem even worse. Destructive gear like Electrofishing and bombing used by poachers have affected the fish population and encroached fishers only source of income.



Figure 2: Dhadiya

With a less promising future, youths of these community are drawn towards foreign employment. The practice of making traditional gears is dying and only a handful of fishers practice traditional gears. Although traditional gears are bio-degradable, they are less effective in practice. With no subsidy on gear, the profit margin further decreases due to the regular gear maintenance. Major actions should be taken to control illegal fishing, providing alternative employment during seasonal ban and program to improve gear through aid to uplift fishers' life. Fishing gear, as small as it seems, holds a tremendous importance in fishers' lives. Thus, the issue regarding the gear is "TOO BIG TO IGNORE".