

Enhancing Food Security and Agricultural Production Capacities among Rural Poor Household in Remote Hill Districts of Eastern Nepal

Stories of Change

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Stories of how Subsistence Farmers have Transformed themselves into Agri-Entrepreneurs in the Eastern hills of Nepal



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“Enhancing Food Security and Agricultural Production Capacities” is a project being implemented by Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) with the support of Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe e.V. EZE/EED, Germany in Sankhuwasava, Bhojpur and Khotag districts since April, 2010. The key objective of the project is to increase the accessibility of food and productivity in the agricultural sector by means of, “providing agricultural inputs and infrastructures, building capacity of peasants, creating employment opportunities and improving the agriculture sector for making it responsive to food security in the project districts “.

Foreword

With support comes success!

These remarkable success stories from the eastern hilly regions of Nepal prove that smallholder farmers can be part of the solution to hunger and poverty reduction. However, they cannot do it alone. What they need is inspiration that comes as a way of investment and support for agricultural and rural development, creating favorable conditions for the rural people to move out of subsistence farming toward commercial marketplace. There are more than 90% smallholder farms in the eastern Nepal. Approximately five million people depend on it for their livelihood. These small farms produce about 80% of the food consumed in Eastern Nepal.

In context of Rural Reconstruction Nepal's (RRN) many years of working in agriculture and rural development, two things have become increasingly evident. The first is that farming at any scale is a business, and smallholders and producers must be treated as entrepreneurs. The second is that promotion of rural enterprises can endorse growth and opportunities for livelihood promotion, thereby reducing poverty, food insecurity, vulnerability and inequality in rural areas. When these links are in place, wonderful things begin to happen.

RRN/EED



From Traditional Caste-based Occupation to *Commercial Vegetable Production*

Dik Bir B.K., a 50 year-old small-scale vegetable grower and his family of two daughters and a son from Wana VDC-7 of Sankhuwasava district have become the example for the vegetable production in his village. Mr. B.K. is Dalit, the so-called low caste group, whose traditional occupation is making ornaments and utensils.

He was engaged in this traditional occupation since last 17 years. But it was hard for him to make ends meet doing that. He still remembers his past, "Opening private gold shops requires huge investment; hence I used to working someone else's gold shop. I was paid little but the owner became richer exploiting my skills. Even though he worked very hard, his children did not have enough to eat and used to cry in hunger. This brewed rebellion in him. He decided to join the Maoists, who were then waging armed rebellion. "I went underground and worked with them for some years, which messed up my family life. I was looking for the best way to change my

life and to manage my family life. In the meantime, I heard about RRN and its farmer supportive mechanism. Then I went to the office and started to participate in various trainings and exposure visits. I learnt about cultivation and promotion of seasonal and off-seasonal vegetables. High Value Cash Crops training that I received from RRN/EED brought unexpected changes in my life. Now, I am producing market oriented seasonal and off-seasonal vegetables such as tomatoes, beans, cauli-flower, cabbage, mushroom and chillies twice a year. I earn more than NRs. 1,00,000 per year from a small patch of land.

He claims that vegetable production is profitable occupation. "It strongly supports small holders to sustain their livelihoods." Moreover, according to him, good earning can be made from commercial vegetable production rather than from traditional occupation, or sustenance agriculture, or from labor work in the foreign countries. This also ensures food security at household level. His farm is now full of seasonal and off-seasonal vegetables that are ready to be sent to the market.

– Bhakta Karki

Indra Maya Found her Fortune Under Poly-house

Indra Maya Rai is one of the most enthusiastic farmers I have ever come across. She has a knack for technology and innovation. Just with a small patch of land, I am overwhelmed to see her making fortunes, winning laurels and becoming an inspiration for other group members. She is one of many farmers in Kashmire Self-Help Group (SHG) of Sitalpati-1, a village in the Sankhuwasava district, who has made a sound return from tomato cultivation under ploy-house.

The secret, I asked her? Indra Maya showed me her poly-house full of off-season tomatoes and proudly explained how it has helped to feed her children and become successful in vegetable farming. A small patch of land with six family members clearly visualizes her way of living. “The paddy we cultivated here for a long time would hardly feed my family for two-three months,” she said. Her husband was compelled to work as a wage laborer for many years just to make ends meet. “When I got an opportunity to participate on the spot vegetable cultivation training organized by RRN/EED, I learned

about the poly-house cultivation. I have received various tools, technologies (including poly-house) and improved varieties of vegetable seeds to establish demonstration plots in my small farmland,” she further adds.

“They have helped me do things right,” she says. “During the first year, I planted cauliflowers and tomatoes and earned NRs.15,000. My family’s happiness knew no bound. The earnings gave new inspiration to my family and they also encouraged me to pursue it further. The next year observed sharp increase in my income to

NRs 50,000 only from tomatoes production. It offered me more motivation to engage in vegetable farming. Since then, I have never looked back in life because it makes me feel like I found my fortune under the ploy-house. I continue to raise my production levels and generate more earnings, helping me to educate my children. In addition, I have renovated my house. Now it looks new, strong and quite beautiful. The poly-house has now become a main source of income. It is the appropriate technology to farmers, especially those who possess only small patch of land.”

– Ram Ghimire, Sankhuwasabha



Toll Free Phone and Agri-Markets

A unit of marketing centre at DADO office-Sankhuwasava has been established and agri-marketing information is being disseminated to the farmers and traders as well. Concerning these issues, different comments have been received from farmers of different SHGs and other stakeholders concerned.



Mr. Badri Narayan Dev, Planning Officer at DADO Sankhuwasabha says, "Farmers generally ask about insect-pest management and diseases. In addition, they also like to know about market price of different commodities such as fruits, cash crop etc". Similarly, Mr. Ratna Bahadur Rai, leader farmer from Diding VDC, says that toll-free phone has saved their time and money. In the past, he either had to walk a long distance or take a vehicle to reach DADO for information related to farm at district headquarter. This caused loss of time and money too. However, these days, he doesn't have to walk anymore. He has been using Toll-Free-Phone for different purposes such as to know market price of the agricultural commodities as well as to know about disease pest control and viable farming practices for income generation. He found this service very reliable, effective and free.

He says, "We would like to thank RRN/EFSAPP for this incredible innovation".

Likewise, Mr. Ramji Bamjan, from Wana says, "Toll-free number has become a facilitator to establish a good relation with DADO, Sankhuwasabha and improved coordination with DADO. Hence, we are now able to receive a lot of assistance from them." This Toll-free phone is gaining tremendous popularity among farmers", says Deepak Kumar Sharma-Agriculture Development Officer. According to him, 10-15 farmers have been calling every day to receive information.

Farmers can utilize this facility from home and this has become the major point of attraction. Farmers have benefited a lot from this service. This has contributed towards improving the precarious food security situation of the district.

– Moti Kumar Shrestha,
Sankhuwasabha

Training Generated Self-Employment for Jacob

28 years old Jacob Tamrakar is an inhabitant of Taksar VDC-2, Bhojpur district. Having no good source of income, he had been running tea shop for many years. His wife supports him to run his small business. His constant labor and sincere efforts was observed by different people of the community. He was looking forward to multiply his business and therefore seeking support from various service providing agencies. He made a request to District Agriculture Development Office (DADO) in this regard. DADO Bhojpur recommended Jacob to participate in the training organized by RRN/EFSAPP Sankhuwasava. The training was on agro-processing for making different food items out of millet, wheat, maize and potato etc. Thus Jacob learned the skill well.

At present, the living standard of Jacob is better as compared to the past. The shop that used to sell tea and snacks only has now sells different food items made out of millet, maize and potato, such as Millet-Donut, Maize-Biscuit, momos, noodles, Tibetan bread and many more according to the

demand of customers. In addition, he sells his these food products in weekly market commonly known as Haat-Bazaar.

Considering his dedication towards this newly adopted profession, RRN/EFSAPP provided him additional support in the form of

utensils like oven, fry-pen, noodle machine, and device for momo, grinder equivalent to NRs. 25,000. After the support, he has extended his business and is processing the food products in a large scale. "Selling these products, I am able to earn Rs. 25,000 every month. Income increase upto NRs.

40,000 if there is some especial occasion or festival per festival," says Jacob. Incessant rise in his business transaction brought a great enthusiasm to Jacob.

Jacob is thankful to RRN/EFSAPP for showing him the path to livelihood. He has now become

a good example to other youths of his society. Currently he is disseminating his gained skill to local people of community as a resource person.

– Ram Ghimire, Sankhuwasabha





It Happened just like it Has to Happen-the Secret behind Successful Akabare Khursani Farming



I am Arjun Biswakarma, resident of Wana VDC-7, Sankhuwasava district. I have been producing round chilies (Akabare Khursani) in a large scale in my village since couple of years back. I can be found selling chilies from local 'haat bazaars' to district bazaar. People know me as an 'Akabare Khursani Producer' rather than from my own name. It makes me feel good when people look at me and tag my name as a successful 'Akabare Khursani Producer'.

I was not like this until few years ago. It happened just like it has to happen in my life. I still remember that day when I was recommended from my SHG to participate in high value cash crop training organized by RRN/EED/EFSAPP. Five days training on cultivation and promotion of 'Akabare Khursani' drastically changed my entire mindset. A young man, who had before never heard about farming of Akabare Khursani for income generating purposes, suddenly decided to establish 'Akabare Khursani' farm in his village. Somehow I could not believe myself nor could my neighbors. However, everything goes as perfectly and success comes one after another.

At the beginning, I received seed support from RRN/EED, from which I produced 400 seedlings and planted in 1.5 'Ropani' of land. During first harvesting period, I sold them for three months and earned NRs. 90,000. Demand of such type of chili is very high and

fetches good price of Rs. 100 per 250 gram. In my opinion, chili cultivation is not very difficult. It requires low input and yields high output based chilies planted once yields for three years.

When I told my community members that I would plant 400 chili seedlings and that would give me profit of approximately NRs. 160,000, it was hard for them to believe. But when I secured profit of more than NRs. 200,000 from 400 seedlings, they had to accept. I am planning to extend its cultivation in additional two 'Ropanis' of land. Income made out of this cultivation will be further utilized for pig farming. My another plan is poultry farming.

RRN/EFSAPP support has helped me in creating self employment. Furthermore, it showed me the path to livelihood. I heartily acknowledge RRN/EFSAPP for support. It's a dream come true for me.

– Arjun Bishwakarma
Wana-7



The Wage has Helped me Secure *the Food Requirements for this Year*

During a group meeting, I found out “RRN/EED” would soon construct an irrigation canal that would irrigate my small land. Along with other group members whose economic status is similar to mine, I worked 40 days to build the canal. I received NRs. 10,000 as my wage. I spent NRs. 5000 to buy rice, oils, spices, and other essentials goods that was sufficient for seven to eight months consumption for my family. With the remaining money, I bought a male goat, school uniform for my daughter. I have kept a little bit aside for Dashain, the biggest festival of Hindus in Nepal. The wage has helped me secure food requirements for this year.

Furthermore, I participated on a five-day training session on cultivation and promotion of high value cash crops. Upon completion of the training, I received improved seeds of cash crops and vegetables such as chilies, mushrooms, onions, ginger, tomatoes, cauliflowers, beans, etc.

I have received support from every angle. I have a small piece of land, but the rice I planted earlier was

sufficient for to feed the family for four months. With the technical know-how and sufficient water facilities, my paddy and wheat yield has doubled. Now I am growing chilies, beans, cabbages, cauliflowers and tomatoes in my garden. I am happy because my daughter is getting to eat nutritious green vegetables. Before, all we ate was rice and salt.

Today I am one of the active leaders

in my community. I participate in all community activities and share my farming knowledge with other needy women like me.

– Sushila Niroula,
Hanchuwa SHG, Malta-6

Benefits from Commercial Vegetables Farming

Commercial and semi-commercial farming has brought a great change in livelihood of the farmers at Adarsha SHGs, Piple, Shankhuwasabha district. The change came about when RRN/EED inspired the people of Piple to grow vegetables on commercial scale.

Almost all group members are actively engaged in vegetable farming and about 70% of them are women. The household income of the farmers, which was negligible until few years back, now ranges from NRs. 10,000 to 30,000.



Arjun Bajgain, an active member of the SHG says, "I had been producing vegetables as subsistence farming. Now I am fully involved in vegetable farming after receiving training and other supports from the project. I grow vegetables in more than seven 'Ropanis' of the land and earn Rs.300,000-400,000 annually only from it. I have been able to buy a piece of land and hybrid cows too."

Mithula Khanal, another member of the SHG said that vegetable farming made her a self-employed and financially strong. "Now I earn more than my husband does. Now I can bring up my children in a better way." Rudra B.K. and Laxmi

Sunwar, members of the group, said that the project has changed the villagers' lives. "We now don't have financial problem. We earn Rs. 150,000 and save about Rs. 80,000 annually from approx. two 'Ropanis' of land," they added.

"Now, we are planning to work for collective vegetable farming", says Harihar Khanal. Almost all the group members, both men and women, have actively engaged in vegetable farming because of its attractive income.

The group members are planning to establish a vegetables collection centre to sell their products. At present, they sell vegetables in the local market at Khandbari and Tumlingtar. The vegetable farming has improved the local community's living standard. The support the farmers got for construction of community ponds has also contributed to the increased production of vegetables and other crops.

– Bhakta Karki

Jayram : First Commercial Vegetable Farmer in Tumlingtar

Tumlingtar lies between Arun and Sava River, which is famous mainly for black grams and maize production. There has been always problem of irrigation, sometimes for drinking water too; so the production of rice is quite unlikely.



Hardly five to ten households out of 1500 are engaged in kitchen garden for vegetable production. Jayram Dudhpau is one who initiated subsistence kitchen gardening for vegetable production in 2000. He wanted to grow different varieties of vegetable instead of producing maize, which requires high cost in terms of labor and fertilizer for low outcome. However, he didn't have technical know-how of vegetable production.

He participated in various skill enhancement and capacity development training offered by "Enhancing Food Security and Agricultural Production Capacities Program (EFSAPP) of RRN/EED for vegetable production. The training has doubled his confidence and motivated him to establish commercial vegetable farming in Tumlingtar. First, he produced cauliflower, cabbage, onion, broad bean, cucumber, carrot and eggplant equivalent of NRs. 10,000 in his small farm land of one 'Ropani'..

Jayram bought a tractor to increase his income. However, it didn't help him much so he decided to sell it and buy more land for vegetable cultivation. In the past, he had to spend most of his income in buying vegetables, food products and other household stuffs to feed his big family consisting of ten members. Now, he does not have to buy vegetables. It has been proved that vegetable farming is five times profitable in comparison to other crops. Now, Jayram has been able to better education to his children and provide better quality of life to his family.

Even though there is lack of irrigation in Tumlingtar, different varieties of vegetables are being successfully cultivated by Jayram. He earns approximately Rs. 50,000 in one season.

Jayram has become pioneer in commercial vegetable farming in Tumlingtar.

– Subash Kumal, Sankhuwasabha



Renovation of the Agrate canal *brought Happiness to Inhabitants of Pangtha*

A grate irrigation canal is located in Pangtha ward no. 9, in Khandbari Municipality. Pangtha is the least developed part of the Municipality. The canal was in vulnerable state due to landslides caused by heavy rainfall previous year. The villagers repaired the canal themselves. But due to seepage and leakage water wasn't distributed properly to the land. Consequently, the villagers had to depend on rainfall to irrigate their land.

The production of rice and barley reduced significantly and the village came closer to the brink of food crisis. The crisis forced them to realize the importance of conservation of water resources for increasing agricultural production. With the coordination of district line agencies, RRN/EED reached out to the village to support the villagers. The renovation of the canal was identified as the single most important priority by both the villagers and line agencies. The feasibility study was done, and design and estimate for completed and sent for approval. Major technical and financial support

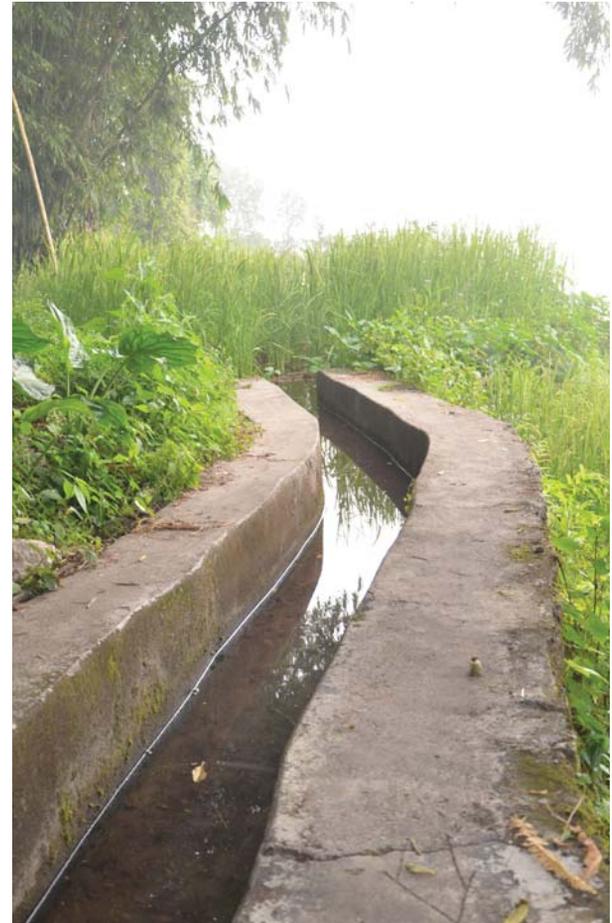
was provided by RRN/EED. The project provided NRs. 589,770 for purchase of cement, pipe and for labor cost. The community managed sand, stone and other human resources worth about NRs. 86,800. Thus, the project has been successfully completed.

The renovation of the canal has helped villagers produce more crops such as , wheat, mustard, and potato and other high value cash crops such as ginger, onion, garlic, tomato, etc. "Increased production of rice, barley and cash crops has enhanced household income and decreased food insecurity at local level", says Jagat Bikram

Ghimire, the Chairman of Irrigation Scheme. The renovation of this canal has directly benefitted more than 50 households, irrigating approximately 900 'Ropani' of land in total. Another member of this Scheme, Mrs. Srijana Ghimire thanks RRN/EFSAPP/EED for the support. The productivity has increased economic growth and has reduced rural poverty, food insecurity and drought in this area. All those changes have brought happiness to the farmers.

The problem of water seepages and leakages has been fully controlled. Now the canal distributes water throughout the year.

– Surendra Gautam,
Sankhuwasabha



Dream Comes True !

Road access improves people's incomes and livelihoods. This enables them to sell their products in market giving them income. In order to translate this potentiality into reality, RRN/EED has invested in construction of more than six kms agriculture roads in Dhiding, Piple and Tumlingtar of Sankhuwasava district connecting them with nearby markets.

The local people of Diding made an appeal for construction of agriculture link road to RRN/EED/ EFSAPP. As per the need of the community, the project has supported for the construction of 2.5 km non-gravel road connecting Diding to the Khandbari Bazaar.

Now, approximately 600-700 households of this areas as well as neighboring villages have been connected to the market of district headquarters and a major road links the district. "Community

people easily can bring their vegetables and other agro-products to sell in the market. They can also buy what they need for their households and farmlands. EFSAPP/RRN has changed our fate", says Sunita Rai, a member of users group committee. She thinks that the construction of rural road would have been impossible without support from the project. She

Mr. Ratna Bahadur Rai, an active member and lead farmer of the community adds, "Farmers

started to receive better price of their commodities such as tea, cardamom, potato, ginger etc compared to the past. It has reduced the cost of transportation as well as opened up opportunity for livelihoods and employment, eventually contributing to combating food insecurity problem in the district".

Leader of users' committee, Mr. Appa Sherpa says delightfully, "Road services have not only increased growth and productivity but also established social cohesion among the community people". Our dream would have never come true had EFSAPP/RRN not supported us."

Construction of road in rural areas of Sankhuwasava district has been crucial for development of the rural areas: It has generated employment opportunities, improved socio-economic services and overall growth and productivity. It has also reduced gap and established strong linkages between rural and urban communities.

– Sita Rai, Sankhuwasabha







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