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Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

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Best Practices for Integrating Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategies within Nepal's Agricultural Extension System

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GESI (Gender Equity and Social Inclusion) strategies aim to address caste-, gender-, and ethnic-based exclusion by integrating those themes within all levels of program design and implementation (USAID, 2014).

Caste is a hierarchal system based on the Hindu religion and is a major driver for systemic exclusion in Nepal. It classifies people based on "water acceptable" (pure) and "water unacceptable" (impure) (Nightingale, 2011).

Regions of Nepal can be defined by topography—Terai (plains), Hill, and Mountain—or by development region. From west to east, development regions include: Far-Western, Mid-Western, Western, Central, and Eastern (MOAD, 2016).

GESI mainstreaming is the explicit, systematic attention to relevant perspectives, knowledge, experience, and interests of men, women, the socially included and excluded, and religious, and ethnic groups. This involves assessing the implications of all involved groups within any planned intervention or policy (UN, 2002).

This technical note expands upon the "GESI Best Practices for Agricultural Programs in Nepal" Tip Sheet. For a summary of the best practices listed here please refer to the Tip Sheet.

1. Introduction

Exclusionism in Nepal is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon that intertwines the Hindu caste system, gender, and ethnicity and that varies geographically. The combination of the social diversity of Nepal's 30 million citizens, characterized by 125 identified caste and ethnic groups speaking 123 different mother languages, and topographic diversity, broken into three distinct zones (Terai, Hill, and Mountain), has perpetuated disparities in access to critical resources for many people (ADB, 2012; MOAD, 2016). Although the Hindu caste system, feudalism, and patriarchy are no longer formally integrated within the government of Nepal, the informal behaviors, perceptions, norms, and values that sustain those systems continue to influence the social mobility, health, and wellbeing of Nepali people (Nightingale, 2011).

At the household, community, and policy level power holders (i.e. husbands, mother- and father-in-laws, high-caste community members, and high-caste leaders) generally maintain a higher position relative to women, members of lower castes (Dalits), and ethnic minorities (Janajatis). However, the power dynamics between power holders and marginalized groups are highly complex and vary across time, spaces, as well as between individuals. In contrast to western conceptualizations of power, Nepali communities respect the ideas of "purity," a Hindu concept stemming from the idea of cleanliness, more than financial wealth. This concept of "purity" is integrated within a hierarchal structure that may be relatively constant, as is the case with Dalits and Janajatis, or fluid, as is the case with women, who experience varying levels of exclusion depending on menstruation,

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Best Practice refers to a technique or method that reliably gives a desired result through lessons learned and research (WHO, 2008).

Dalits are members of the lowest caste in Nepal. Historically, Dalits were excluded from public water taps, restricted from interaction with and entry to the homes of upper caste (Brahmin and Chhetri) homes, experienced unfair citizen and land rights, and were unrepresented in positions of power. Previously referred to as "untouchables," Dalit people have begun to improve their social and political standing since the Maoist revolution (Bennett, 2008).

Janajatis include groups of ethnic minorities that have been integrated within the Hindu caste system. Although Janajatis are not typically Hindus, their placement in the Hindu hierarchal system has historically resulted in their exclusion in political and social realms of Nepal (Bennett, 2008).

Agricultural Extension Services (AES) includes various forms of capacity building (improved market access, training, access and education surrounding agricultural technologies, etc.) provided to farmers through a pluralistic system of NGOs, private, and public institutions.

caste, marital status, and age.

Targeting these issues through the mainstreaming of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) approach, which seeks to address the complex situation of caste, gender and ethnicity, has been a major focus of development programs in Nepal (Bennett, 2008). The GESI approach is widely accepted among national and local partners including the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the international development community (ADB, 2012) and is similar to gender transformative approaches (GTA) that seek to change institutional and structural forms of discrimination in addition to improving the well-being and livelihoods of marginalized groups. However, the level of understanding and integration of GESI within programs varies greatly according to the availability of a GESI specialist within the organization, staff access to and participation in GESI trainings, the mission and goals of the organization, and also funding for GESI activities.

The agriculture sector in Nepal is a driver of rural development, which has the potential to provide economic and social mobility for Nepal's most vulnerable populations: women, Dalits, and Janajatis. These groups not only combat barriers to agricultural development such as lack of access to services and markets, but also social and gender-based barriers. Nepal's Agricultural Extension Services (AES) system, with its strong connection to rural and remote communities, is well positioned to support development activities by integrating GESI within their current programs. However, several key challenges remain to implementing GESI strategies within Nepal's AES system. The feminization of agriculture and its impact on women's time poverty is a critical issue in the agriculture sector in Nepal. Additionally, although many organizations have a GESI strategy, more work is needed to translate GESI from theory into practice such as by increasing the adoption of monitoring and evaluation tools that track project impact for women and other marginalized groups. To help address these challenges, this technical note aims to orient AES practitioners in Nepal to best practices for implementing GESI strategies within agricultural initiatives.

2. Methods

The best practices and project examples presented in this technical note are based on formative research conducted in Kathmandu, Nepal in July 2017. The research involved a review of current practices for mainstreaming GESI followed by interviews on GESI best practices with a diverse group of stakeholders in Nepal. Researchers from the University of Florida, accompanied by the INGENAES Nepal in-country coordinator, met with stakeholders in Kathmandu who shared their experiences,

lessons learned, and good practices surrounding GESI mainstreaming in agricultural projects. The researchers met with 17 participant groups from 10 organizations (see list in Appendix) spanning local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, and the public sector. Stakeholders from these organizations provided useful insights on how best to overcome challenges that may be faced in mainstreaming GESI within agricultural development programs. Semi-structured group interviews were used to collect information from members of the organizations working on agricultural programs or with a GESI specialization. The interviews were divided into three parts: 1) specific strategies for integrating GESI; 2) GESI training (giving and receiving); and 3) community-level impacts resulting from GESI integration. The findings from these interviews were analyzed thematically at the University of Florida and the best practices presented below emerged out of the analysis of the stakeholder responses.

3. Mainstreaming GESI: Best Practices and Project Examples

Background on GESI in Nepal

Although Nepal has made progress at the national level in reduction the rate of poverty (Nepal Living Standards Survey, 2011), underneath this national trend are persistent differences in development based on region, gender and social groups (Bennett, Sijapati, and Thapa, 2013). Thus, inclusive growth is important to promote within the context of Nepal, particularly within the agriculture sector. To address the longstanding obstacles of gender and social inequities to inclusive development, the Government of Nepal adopted rights-based rhetoric into the 2008 – 2010 Three Year Interim Plan (TYIP) with the objective of ensuring inclusive growth by eliminating structural barriers (Bennett, Sijapati, and Thapa, 2013). To realize this objective the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) framework was adopted by the government of Nepal for planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation (Bennett, Sijapati, and Thapa, 2013). The GESI approach is intended to work in two steps. First, the barriers faced by excluded groups (i.e. women, low caste and ethnic minorities) to a program or policy should be identified; and then second, solutions within the policies or program should be created to help excluded groups overcome the barriers identified (Bennett, Sijapati, and Thapa, 2013). The GESI approach also calls for the collection of data disaggregated by gender and caste/ethnicity and incorporates intersectionality by differentiating between the needs of women from different groups (Bennett, Sijapati, and Thapa, 2013). Although the theoretical underpinnings of the GESI framework are strong, it has been difficult to fully translate GESI from theory into practice.

In the section below, the best practices for GESI described by the stakeholders interviewed are presented followed by relevant project examples from Nepal. The aim of this is technical note is to provide AES stakeholders in Nepal with specific practices and examples that can be used to further integrate GESI into agricultural extension services.

Best Practices for GESI

Best Practice #1: Use participation quotas to increase the participation and representation of excluded groups (but note that participation quotas alone are not a complete GESI strategy!)

Participation quotas for women and marginalized groups was by far the most frequently mentioned GESI strategy by stakeholders. While setting benchmarks for women's and marginalized group's participation

in agricultural programs can be effective at increasing their involvement in agricultural groups, quotas are not a complete GESI strategy on their own. This is because participation alone in development projects does not equal empowerment due to gender and social inequities that perpetuate the inequitable distribution resources.

The inequitable distribution of resources has been well-documented within the literature. For example, research has found food and cash crops that generate lower revenues are more likely to be controlled by women, while cash crops with higher revenues are more likely to be controlled by men in contexts ranging from Uganda to West Africa to Latin America (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011; Croppenstedt et al., 2013; Kamuanga et al., 2008; Doka et al., 2014; Pfluger, 2015).

An example of this has also been found within the context of Nepal. When a project commercialized the production of buffalo milk failed to take into account the distribution of income benefits and men's control over marketing of livestock and livestock products. The project found that women's labor input increased, but that this did not translate into financial benefits for the women (World Bank, 2009). Ideally quotas should be used to encourage the participation of women and marginalized groups in program activities, while at the same time the project works to address the underlying barriers that previously prevented participation by these groups. Some projects in other contexts have found success with the combination of women's participation and trainings that address gender issues. For example, a review of agricultural development projects found that the most successful projects recognize the multiple aspects of women's empowerment and worked to empower them socially and within communities in addition to economically (Doss, Bockius-Suwyn and D'Souza, 2012). Additionally, Iyengar and Ferrari (2011) found evidence of increased decision-making power for women in savings and loan groups after a short intervention of gender discussion sessions[1].

While recognizing the ways in which quotas are not sufficient for integrating GESI, there were also examples from stakeholders of the ways in which the benefits of GESI quotas have not been fully realized. Most organizations cited the need to integrate GESI within "all levels of the organization and projects," however few stakeholders reflected this goal at the institutional level. Increasing the representation of women, Dalits and Janajatis within the staff, especially in director and management-level roles, is important for GESI mainstreaming within the AES system in Nepal. The best practices outlined below can help AES stakeholders use quotas for GESI integration more effectively; however at the same time, AES stakeholders are encouraged to complement quotas with other best practices listed here for a truly gender-transformative approach. In addition, providing GESI capacity building training for organizational staff at all levels can help to improve the implementation of GESI practices and to build support for GESI best practices such as quotas.

[1] These discussion sessions were developed by researchers from the London School of Economics with input from International Refugee Committee (IRC) and consisted of a 6 session series on topics such household decision-making along gender lines, the respective roles of women and men and the use of violence against women in the home. These sessions were attended by the project participants and their spouses and were facilitated by IRC staff members with the gender-based violence program.

Best practices for using participation quotas include:

- Integrating the representation of women, Dalits and Janajatis throughout the organization, not limiting participation quotas to the farmer's group or community levels.
- Extending targeted trainings in GESI to all members of the organization (i.e. program managers, specialists, program staff) as well as field-level staff.
- Including Dalits and Janajatis alongside Brahmins in group meetings challenges social norms that perpetuate isolation of lower caste groups.

Best Practice #2: Work with powerholders

It is important for AES stakeholders to recognize that gender dynamics may not only be harmful towards women but may also harm men. Also, in order for changes in gender and social dynamics that increase opportunities and resources for disadvantaged groups to be sustainable men and other power-holders must be engaged in the process. In order to make gender equity relevant for men and boys, projects should emphasize human rights and social justice for all as well the ways that equitable gender relations may impact their personal well-being and collective interests (Greig and Edström, 2012). Inequitable gender relations have also been shown to impact agricultural productivity. In Nicaragua, an initiative to empower women in agriculture found that households where men were more involved in child care had higher agricultural productivity because women were able to participate more in agricultural activities (Farnworth, 2010). Finally, community leaders can positively change attitudes associated with gender-based violence through social marketing techniques such as radio programs (Donovan and Vlais, 2005).

In Nepal, evidence suggests that geographic heterogeneity and position within the hierarchy of the household are important factors that influence women's autonomy, decision-making power and level of empowerment (Diamond-Smith et al., 2011; Acharya et al., 2010; Thapa and Niehof, 2013). Two qualitative studies in Nepal found that mothers-in-laws have an influential role in decisions on a woman's antenatal care use and family planning (Diamond-Smith et al., 2012; Simkhanda et al., 2010). Other studies have found that women's low status in the household influences their access to food, particularly micronutrient-rich foods, and that household food distribution is based on household position (Gittelsohn et al., 1997; Sudo et al., 2006; Smith, 2002). Since three quarters of women report living in households with other family members, most often the husband's parents, it is important that projects take into account the influence of intra-household power dynamics on outcomes for women and engage with powerholders in order to empower women (Thapa and Niehof, 2013).

Stakeholders cited inclusion of all caste and ethnic groups present in the community in women's groups and farmer's groups as critically important for normalizing relations between community members. Also, both the desk review and field validation for this research project found that community-based, participatory interventions, which include activities that target and include all members of the household and community in engaging group activities, are most effective at improving uptake of information surrounding empowerment, including decision-making and control over resources.

Best practices for working with powerholders include:

- Combine women's participation requirements with gender-sensitive information, education, and communication with power-holders in the household and community (i.e. men, mothers-in-law,

and community leaders, and high caste groups) complementary to programming delivered to women and marginalized groups. This will more effectively target the underlying causes of women's and marginalized group's disempowerment in Nepal.

- Including Dalits and Janajatis alongside Brahmins in group meetings challenges social norms that perpetuate isolation of lower caste groups.
- Credit groups and participatory learning groups further inclusion by facilitating collaboration between members of different castes and ethnic affiliations.
- Promote formation of women's groups to increase access to formal and informal agricultural, economic, and social support; for example, access to innovative agricultural technologies and credit.
- Involve women in community-run savings and credit groups that encourage smart investment of added income.
- Credit groups should account for front-loaded incomes and facilitate improved financial management and budgeting strategies.
- Improve awareness about equitable household food allocation. Women in rural Nepal tend to favor men and elders (husbands, fathers-in-law, and mothers-in law) in the distribution of food resources.
- Conduct counselling to communicate benefits of women's empowerment to men through men-only group meetings and solo counselling.

Best Practice #3: Address time poverty

Projects that do not recognize women's time poverty may suffer from lack of engagement by women and may not achieve their objectives. Time use studies have shown that time poverty is an issue that affects women and girls more than men and boys (Blackden and Wodon, 2006). For example, in surveys conducted by Oxfam UK in Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia, Honduras, Malawi and the Philippines found that since women spend more hours on care work than men, they have less time for leisure, sleep or productive activities. In some cases, women wanted to spend more time on productive activities, but were prevented from doing so due to the burden of time poverty (Oxfam, 2017).It is important that projects recognize that women are more likely to spend time on nonmarket or reproductive activities, which can impact the benefits that women receive from projects in terms of cash income and workload. Projects that don't consider the value of time may end up overestimating the benefits for women of activities that increase both income and workloads (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011; Quisumbing et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2016).

Male out-migration has increased women's participation in agriculture in Nepal leading to the "feminization of agriculture" (see Box 5 below) (Saytal, 2010; Tamang et al., 2012; ADB, 2012). Although there is some evidence that men's out-migration has led to changing attitudes towards gender norms and has increased women's decision-making power, there is also evidence that it has increased women's time poverty. For example, due to a short of hired male labor some women plough their own fields, which was formerly considered a solely "male" task (Gosh et al., 2017). However, this shift in practice further burdens women by increasing their agricultural work load (Gosh et al., 2017).

Box 2: Feminization of Agriculture

Feminization of the agriculture sector is a process in which the proportion of women involved in agricultural labor increases as compared to the involvement of men, resulting in an unbalanced division of labor (Tamang et al., 2014). In Nepal, this shift is occurring in response to massive outmigration of men to urban centers and internationally. In 2014, 8% of the population sought work visas in a foreign country—nearly all of whom were men (Ministry of Labor and Employment [MoLE], 2013-2014). According to the World Bank, 30% of Nepal's GDP comes from remittances from foreign labor (See Box 1), one of the highest proportions in the world. There are main five areas where the impact of feminization of agriculture has been significant in Nepal, these are: 1) division of labor; 2) agricultural productivity; 3) household nutrition; 4) women's empowerment; 5) standard of living.

Best practices for addressing time poverty and male out-migration include:

- Some stakeholders mentioned the importance of using a "family approach" that promotes active participation of all household members in domestic and agricultural activities to avoid increasing women's time poverty through project interventions.
- Work within women's time constraints by holding short, engaging modules.
- Promote time- and labor-saving agricultural technologies that are applicable and available to your communities. This may include permaculture, dual-purpose techniques (e.g. livestock to manage community forestry), or other innovations.
- Increase women's access to gender-responsive agricultural technologies that consider how male migration affects women's roles and time constraints. The INGENAES technology assessment tool kit is available online to help AES stakeholders evaluate the gender implications of agricultural technologies (link here).
- Implement income-generating kitchen garden projects for women. While the remittances associated with male outmigration improve living standards as a whole, the increase in income is highly seasonal. Seasonal poverty is complicated by the national trend of decreased agricultural intensification. Implementing less-intensive kitchen garden projects to income is an effective means of:
    - Reducing seasonal malnutrition associated with seasonal poverty and reduced agricultural productivity.
    - Alleviating economic loss from production excess.
    - Increasing women's interest in kitchen garden projects.
    - Increasing the accessibility and availability of nutritious foods.
- Promote less-intensive agricultural activities to combat seasonal poverty, such as conversion of seasonal cropland to permaculture, agroforestry, and increased poultry production. For example, according to interviews with the Ministry of Agriculture and Development, production of cardamom has been a popular, high-value permaculture crop option for women heads of household.
- Address shifts in household nutrition by emphasizing consumption of garden products and integrate nutrition messages within agricultural modules.

Best Practice #4: Monitor and evaluate impact of GESI activities

Without data disaggregated by caste, gender, and social group it is impossible to monitor the GESI activities of a project or to see the impact of gender-related activities that a project does. Having group-specific indicators and collecting caste, gender, ethnicity, and other group membership-related disaggregated data allows projects to document successes in GESI activities and to adjust project activities if the impacts are not what they expected. Although there is widespread recognition that such forms of disaggregated data are necessary for ensuring that projects, many organizations and projects still do not report data as group-disaggregated.

Although data collection may be challenging, collecting and analyzing caste, sex, and social group disaggregated data may improve an organization's buy in and performance of their GESI strategy (Henry et al., 2015; Bennett, 2005). There are four ways in which sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis can improve organization's GESI strategies. First, the collection of disaggregated data makes groups involved in the project, particularly vulnerable groups, more visible within the project. The importance of disaggregating caste and other social designations aside from gender is important because this can bring to light that women, men, and non-binary genders are not a homogenous group, highlighting the different needs of each gendered group and their unique needs from the project. Second, gender-disaggregated data can highlight potential gaps between men and women. With this information, projects can monitor whether project activities are increasing or decreasing gaps in assets, income, free time, and other key indicators between men and women. Third, data disaggregated by caste, gender, and ethnicity can improve evidence-based practice of development. More specifically, identifying what works in projects to promote GESI and what elements can be expanded and improved for future projects. Finally, the collection of group-disaggregated data can highlight the impact that changes in GESI can have on other development outcomes such as poverty, health status, or agricultural productivity (World Bank, 2012; Henry et al., 2015). Another study that analyzed the World Health Organization's (WHO) gender, equity and human rights (GER) strategy found that more needed to be done to incorporate monitoring and evaluation with in the planning process (Sridharan et al., 2016). Only about half of the plans disaggregated data by gender or income and only 7% of plans used more specialized monitoring and evaluation tools. More examples of how to specifically use data disaggregated by gender, income, caste, ethnicity and other factors could help to increase the practice of collecting disaggregated data (Sridharan et al., 2016). This statement was echoed in an earlier article by Bennett (2005), which emphasized the importance of data disaggregation beyond gender-based disaggregation as a key factor determining the validity and accuracy of monitoring and evaluation processes in Nepali development projects.

For example, the USAID-funded Suaahara project (2011-2016) utilizes gender-disaggregated data in their monitoring and evaluation plan through a modified Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) and participation records to monitor the involvement of women in the project. The overall goal of the Suaahara project is to improve nutritional status among children under two and their mothers and worked in 20 districts in Nepal (Cunningham et al., 2013). In recognition of the linkages between agriculture, nutrition and women's empowerment, the Suaahara project collected baseline women's empowerment data using the WEAI (Malapit et al., 2015). The WEAI was administered to 4,080 households in the project area. The results of the survey pointed to the important influence of women's empowerment on child health outcomes, particularly in households with low production diversification where women's empowerment may actually mitigate the negative consequences of low production diversification on dietary diversity (Malapit et al., 2015). These results point to the importance of

collecting and analyzing data on women's empowerment, which may lead to important finding and influence future program design. It is important to recognize, however, that current monitoring and evaluation plans using the WEAI do not disaggregate findings by groupings other than gender, for example by caste or ethnicity.

Box 1: WEAI Domains and Adaptations[2]

The traditional WEAI typically includes 5 domains: Production (input in productive decisions and autonomy), resources, income, leadership (group membership and leadership), and time (workload and leisure). In the Nepali context, it may be more effective for organizations to tailor the WEAI to the unique situation of their target communities and capacity of staff utilizing the metric. Methods of doing this are summarized below:

Abbreviated WEAI (A-WEAI)

This simplified WEAI involves removing sub-domains from leadership, production, and time domains. This is effective for staff with limited field time availability or experience conducting survey data.

Adapted WEAI

The WEAI can be adapted to include any combination of domains and sub-domains of the original survey. Project indicators can also be incorporated within this metric depending on the survey focus. Due to the diversity in empowerment conditions and the effect of "layered disempowerment" caused by overlap of caste, gender, and ethnic exclusion, this may be the most effective means of gathering reliable data using the WEAI in Nepal. Below are good practice tips for implementing an *Adapted WEAI*:

- Consult local partners when determining which domains of empowerment are most integral to the community.
- Reference previously implemented household surveys in the region/community.
- Ensure accurate translation to the local language/dialect; Focus groups with implementers can be used to verify that translations convey the original intent of the questions.

Qualitative validation of the WEAI

Qualitative validation improves understanding of empowerment in context, allows prediction of potential barriers within programs, and gathers details about impact and sustainability of programs. Qualitative validation of the WEAI requires skilled researchers to frame and pose questions in real time.

Best practices for monitoring and evaluation include:

- Track the impact of activities to empower specific groups (i.e. women, Dalits or Janajatis) through the collection of data disaggregated by gender and also caste/ethnicity
- Measure empowerment through the WEAI or WEAI adaptations
- Adjust programming accordingly based on monitoring and evaluation data to improve the effectiveness of projects for targeted groups

[2] Information from this section was adapted from Malapit *et al.*, 2015.

Promising examples from projects in Nepal

Through the interviews with AES stakeholders, several projects were mentioned as examples of a particular GESI best practice. Below are three examples of GESI best practices implemented by projects in Nepal.

Example 1: Engaging powerholders

The Suaahara Integrated Nutrition project (a USAID-funded initiative led by Save the Children) explicitly includes targeting of "household decision-makers, especially men and mothers-in-law" in their project activities. One example of how this is being accomplished is through the *Bhanchhin Aama* ("Mother Says") radio program, the host of which is a progressive-thinking mother-in-law who encourages good, practical nutrition and sanitation practices. In the future, Suaahara will initiate a "Letters to Father" campaign, which will target soon-to-be fathers as enablers of their children's health through good child nutrition practices and supporting maternal health of their wives.

Example 2: Participatory methods and engaging powerholders

The Nepali Technical Assistance Group (NTAG), a Nepali nutrition-focused NGO, uses participatory role-play activities with men and women's groups to improve their awareness about household food allocation and shift nutrition practices that disfavor women's and children's health. [3] Additionally, NTAG has found success in engaging men in maternal health conversations through counseling with Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs). NTAG has found that engaging men in counselling sessions focused on how men benefit from women's empowerment alleviated the following challenges during the implementation of women's empowerment activities:

- Push-back from men against shifting norms and traditions in women's roles and practices.
- Lack of understanding on the part of male community members about women's health and nutrition requirements, especially during pregnancy and first 1000 days of motherhood.
- Unfamiliarity of men with the domestic responsibilities of women and their time commitments.

Example 3: Creating women's groups

BBP-Pariwar, another Nepali NGO, promotes the formation of women's groups within its target communities. In one observed field example, a women's group designated themselves the "Women's Group for Sustainable Agriculture" to attract more support from government initiatives seeking to give support to more sustainability-oriented grower networks. This women's group is now awaiting increased governmental AES support for their initiatives in community-sourced organic fertilizers.

[3] See the INGENAES website (http://ingenaes.illinois.edu/library/#activity-sheets-englis) for information on how to conduct a role play activity focused on household nutrition. See "Who does what?" and "What goes on the Plate" for activities designed to facilitate understanding household inequalities surrounding food allocation and labor.

Box 3: Observations from the field

In July 2017, INGENAES conducted a participatory research activity outside of Dhulikhel (Kavrepalanchowk District) in collaboration with BBP-Pariwar (mentioned in Example 3: Creating women's groups, above). The methodology, termed Community Concept Drawing (CCD), was developed by Chesney McOmber (PhD candidate-UF) and conducted by Lacey Harris-Coble (INGENAES- UF) and Katie McNamara (PhD student- UF), is under development as a tool for development practitioners with the potential for application to other fields (like policy and development). Researchers noted that women's participant groups communicated more freely and confidently during the activity, whereas men, particularly older men, were overall more hesitant and less confident. Researchers hypothesize that the involvement of women in women's groups, farmer's groups and other organizations lead to improved communication skills and self-confidence. Furthermore, women tend to be the majority recipients of development-related interventions, including training. While the improvements made among women are positive and needed, these initial findings alert us to the importance of integrated gender approaches in rural development, specifically the continued involvement of men. The efforts that Nepal has made towards improving the status of women is immense; The remaining goal is to sustain that improvement through gender-equitable approaches that engage men and women.


Photo: Members of a women's group (left) and male community members (right) from BBP-Pariwar participate in an INGENAES research activity outside of Dhulikhel.

Conclusion

Gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) strategies within development initiatives in Nepal address the country's challenges with gender-, caste-, and ethnic-based exclusion. Agricultural development projects have a particularly important role for delivering GESI-sensitive information, materials, and trainings as the front-line field agents in many development projects (ADB, 2012). As INGOs are required by Nepali law to implement their projects through local partners, capacity building of local NGOs and governmental agriculture extension agents (called Junior Technical Assistants in the Nepali context) is critical to the effective and equitable delivery of agricultural goods, services, and information. Evidence continually supports that integrating GESI-sensitive training into agricultural development programs promotes more inclusive behavior among the public, especially those living in rural areas. Many stakeholders voiced that they were integrating GESI based on participation quotas for women. This has led researchers to identify the expansion of GESI strategies beyond participation and representation of

excluded groups as the most important first step for fully and holistically realizing stakeholder goals in mainstreaming gender and social inclusion.

Understandably, there are several challenges associated with mainstreaming a broad, complex theme like GESI within all levels of an organization and its programs—yet this is what local and international NGOs and government institutions are increasingly asked to do to meet the requirements of donors. Some individuals within the Nepali development community feel that this stretches projects thin and hinders complete, effective mainstreaming of GESI. In essence, they feel that the result of "generalized mainstreaming" (mainstreaming with a general, rather than specific intent) is *dilution* of the issue of exclusion in Nepal. Furthermore, although GESI is becoming a mainstay of development interventions in Nepal, the funding and capacity available to organizations surrounding best practices in mainstreaming GESI are limited.

This research identified two major challenges to achieving the full benefits of GESI approaches in Nepal. First, responses from stakeholders regarding integration of social inclusion were less clear than those regarding gender equity. Second, GESI strategies focused on women and largely ignored other genders. The concept of GESI within the development community must be expanded and nuanced to truly include all genders and all social groups. This will require a stronger presence and role of GESI specialists within organizations and inclusion of those specialists in the design of agricultural programs.

Furthermore, engagement of household level and community-level power-holding groups such as men and mothers-in-law, upper and middle castes, wealthy and/or landholding groups remains a mostly untapped area for potential empowerment strategies. In addition, the feminization of agriculture within Nepal is a GESI issue, which needs more attention in order to improve agricultural productivity, reduce women's time burden, promote good nutrition outcome and to promote women's empowerment. Finally, stakeholders consistently cited difficulties spanning the gap between theory and practice in GESI programs. The two primary takeaways from discussion with stakeholders include: 1) if there are not specific activities or goals, the broad incorporation of GESI as a cross-cutting theme may not be an effective means of making significant contributions to inclusion in agriculture and 2) across all stakeholders, GESI strategies are primarily informed by top-down discussions and negotiations with international partners and the government of Nepal, local stakeholders have very little control over the services their communities receive. Long-term goals for mainstreaming GESI should include reframing of the issue in practical, actionable interventions and ground-up transfer of knowledge regarding local beliefs and perceptions of exclusion and empowerment to inform project design (ADB, 2012).

Improved inclusion of Nepal's diverse social groups is one of four pillars originally stated in the GoN's Tenth Plan for Poverty Reduction (ADB, 2017). However, reaching GESI goals will require all development actors to make shifts in the structure and function of programs. More importantly, all GESI strategies must address the underlying hierarchies (ethnic, patriarchal, and religious) that influence inclusion and exclusion in Nepali society.

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Appendix 1: Participating Organizations

Save the Children, Airport Gate, Kathmandu, Nepal
http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6150545/k.B8DE/Nepal.htm

Nepali Technical Assistance Group (NTAG), P.O. Box 7518 Maitighar, Kathmandu, Nepal
http://www.ntag.org.np

Suaahara II, Nayabato, Ringroad, Lalitpur G.P.O Box: 5752, Kathmandu Nepal
https://www.usaid.gov/nepal/fact-sheets/suaahara-project-good-nutrition

CEAPRED, Nayabato, Ringroad, Lalitpur G.P.O Box: 5752, Kathmandu Nepal
http://www.ceapred.org.np/

Ministry of Agriuculture and Development (MOAD), Kathmandu 44600, Nepal**v**
http://www.moad.gov.np/en

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Chakupat, Lalitpur GPO Box 688, Kathmandu, Nepal
https://nepal.helvetas.org/en/

International Development Enterprises (iDE), Bakhundole, Lalitpur PO Box 2674, Kathmandu, Nepal http://www.idenepal.org

Heifer International, Hattiban, Lalitpur – 15 G.P.O Box 6043, Kathmandu Nepal
http://www.heifernepal.org

Helen Keller International, P.O. Box 3752, Green Block, Ward No. 10 Chakupat, Patan, Lalitpur, Nepal http://www.hki.org/helen-keller-international-nepal

CIMMYT, Khumaltar, Lalitpur http://csisa.org/csisa-nepal/

Katie McNamara and Lacey Harris-Coble at the University of Florida

June 2018