


Exploring sustainable farming opportunities: A case of a marginal female farmer

Chuliya Chaudhary lives in Kuti village in the Far-Western district of Kailali, Nepal. At 73, she is one of the oldest members of the Lakhrai Vegetable Farming Group. Widowed 22 years ago, she started as a daily labourer to support her 11-member household on as little as of Rs. 2 per day. The land she received after her husband's death was unregistered. Sustaining her family on farming alone was not an option due to limited options for irrigation. As cultural customs forbid women from ploughing land, Chuliya faced the additional burden of hiring men to plough her land. Her own sons were too young back then. Not only did she have to negotiate with men to set a time but, under the parma labour exchange system, she also had to work two days for every day that a man assisted her. Chuliya was interested in joining our collective farming group to access the solar pump for irrigation and benefit from the vegetable farming training provided to the group members. Her farming methods were previously limited to conventional knowledge. With the training, Chuliya has learnt of sustainable and efficient methods to scale up her kitchen garden. She now aims to grow enough to sell the surplus.

Chuliya joined the Lakhrai Vegetable Farming Group in Kuti village, comprising 16 women and men. Her group is one of 5 farmer groups established across 3 villages as part of the USAID funded Digo Jal Bikas (DJB) project, with the intention of helping farmers come together to pool and share resources for better livelihood outcomes, especially through enhanced water use productivity. This approach specifically targets marginal and tenant farmers who typically face the financial brunt of leasing land, and are unlikely to have access to irrigation systems. A total of 63 farmers, 34 of whom are women, are receiving support in the form of agricultural training, sustainable irrigation solutions, seed distribution and general guidance.



"I WASN'T AWARE THAT THERE IS A PROPER TECHNIQUE WHEN IT COMES TO GROWING DIFFERENT VEGETABLES. AT THE SAME TIME, WE DIDN'T HAVE IRRIGATION FACILITIES AND I COULD ONLY DO SO MUCH BY BRINGING WATER FROM THE HAND PUMP TO WATER THE VEGETABLES. NOW I HAVE RECEIVED TRAINING, THERE IS A SOLAR PUMP IN OUR FARMERS GROUP THAT CAN BE MOVED AROUND AND MOST IMPORTANTLY I HAVE THE RIGHT VARIETY OF SEEDS. THIS TIME I GREW BITTER GOURD, CUCUMBER, BEANS AND ZUCCHINI."

Chuliya Chaudhary, 73
Lakhrai Vegetable Farming Group
Kailai, Nepal

For the community in Kuti – living in the southwestern plains of Nepal surrounded by three rivers -- the onset of monsoon brings great dismay as the rivers swell up. The crops are destroyed, the agricultural fields are rendered useless with heavy sand deposits from the surrounding rivers and many families are displaced temporarily. But in dry season, lack of irrigation technology means the land remains un-cropped. At the same time, there is a high rate of outmigration of men, who are away seasonally or for multiple years, further burdening women's already full household and agricultural workloads. Through the farmers' groups and access to irrigation technology, farmers are now able to grow vegetables close to their homes, throughout the year. With the collective approach, the time burden of farming has been reduced through shared labour and land preparation. The productivity of land has improved. Daily diets have become more nutritious. For Chuliya, the communal tube well was constructed in her premises, which allows her to save time and resources.

Many farmers, specially females like Chuliya, are benefitting from the interventions under the USAID DJB project. The collective action approach helps farmers as it allows for resource sharing, thereby decreasing their overall financial burden, and provides a network where farmers can support each other during the aftermath of the monsoon floods and dry season water scarcity. This approach could be appropriate in similar contexts across Nepal with marginal and tenant farmers.

"...THE BORING IS DUG IN MY LAND SO IT IS EASIER FOR ME TO IRRIGATE MY LAND. SINCE THE PROJECT BEGAN, I HAVE MANAGED TO SAVE NPR 4000-5000 ALREADY. IT IS MY WISH TO CONTINUE GROWING VEGETABLES AND THANK THE PROJECT FOR THIS LEARNING OPPORTUNITY."

Chuliya Chaudhary, 73
Lakhrai Vegetable Farming



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Further information on the Digo Jal Bikas project can be found at: <http://djb.iwmi.org/>



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