

EVENT REPORT

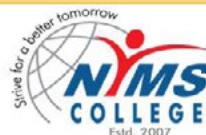


CO-PRODUCING A SHOCK RESILIENT BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM FOR WOMEN-LED ENTERPRISES IN NEPAL (CREW)

National Level Inception Workshop

26 January, 2022

Kathmandu, Nepal



Prepared By:

Avipsha Rayamajhi, Dipika Das, Dr. Mani Ram Banjade

Organized By:



EVENT DETAIL

NAME OF THE EVENT	National Level Inception Workshop- "Co-producing a shock-resilient business ecosystem for women-led enterprises in Nepal" (CREW)
DATE	26 th January 2022
VENUE	Hybrid- Zoom and Physical
TIME	2:00 PM-4:15 PM
ORGANIZER	Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS)
SPEAKERS	Presenters: Dr. Mani Ram Banjade, Dr. Meeta S. Pradhan, Mr. Bibhor Kayastha, Mr. Khilendra Gurung Moderators: Dr. Netra Timsina, Dr. Dil Khatri
SUPPORT TEAM	Ms. Dipika Das, Mr. Sushant Acharya, Ms. Avipsha Rayamajhi, Mr. Sujan Shrestha
NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	44

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CONTEXT

Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) has initiated a project “Co-producing a shock-resilient business ecosystem for women-led enterprises in Nepal” (CREW) in collaboration with Aria Solutions, NIMS College, and Himalayan Bio-Trade Pvt. Ltd (HBTL). The project is funded by International Development Research Center (IDRC) and aims to co-produce workable solutions for financially sustainable and shock-resilient agriculture and forest-based enterprises for women’s economic self-reliance. It is initiated in light of the unfolding impacts of COVID-19 on women and their already dwindling socio-economic status due to climate vulnerabilities, especially in rural Nepal.

As part of the CREW project, on 26th January 2022, SIAS organized a National Level Inception Workshop with the aim to share the project idea and approach with the participants from diverse fields and gather their feedback in further enhancing the project strategies and methodologies.

Altogether, 44 participants from 19 organizations attended the workshop. Among the attendees, 19 were the external stakeholders identified for the project, while the remaining 25 were SIAS staff, CREW project staff, and representatives from CREW partner organizations. The gender disaggregated glimpse of the attendees revealed that approximately 43 percent (19/44) representation was from women participants. Among the total percentage of women attendees, around 52.6 percent represented the women participants from the external stakeholders only. The external attendees were from diverse fields and background such as the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development projects and programs, women entrepreneur associations- Federation of Women Entrepreneur’s Associations of Nepal (FWEAN), Federation of Business and Professional Women, Nepal (FBPWN), financial institutions- Prabhu Bank, Muktinath Bank, National Cooperative Federation, Sana Kisan Bikash Laghubitta Bittiyasanstha Ltd.(SKBBL), product- based commodity association- Nepal Herbs and Herbal Products Association (NEHHPA), private agricultural companies, an independent gender expert, project partners and project staffs. A detailed list of participants and their respective organizations is presented in the Annex I.

EVENT STRUCTURE

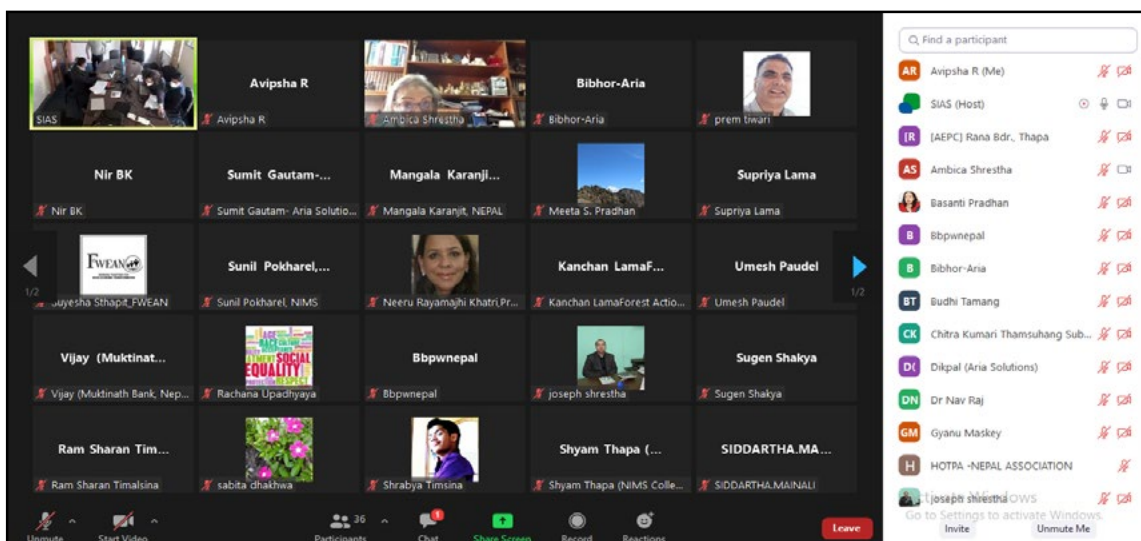
Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis in Nepal, the meeting was conducted in a hybrid model- some of the key presenters physically attended the meeting while most participants joined virtually via Zoom. The first session was moderated by Dr. Dil Khatri, Executive Director, SIAS and Dr. Netra Timsina, Chairperson, SIAS.

The event commenced with a round of introductions from the participants. It formally started with a presentation from Dr. Mani Ram Banjade, Principal Investigator (PI) of the project, regarding the project's introduction, objectives, research questions, study areas, expected outcomes, impact pathway and work packages. Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan, Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) of the project, took the presentation forward with an explanation of the research's conceptual framework. This was followed by presentations from Mr. Bibhor Kayastha, Aria Solutions and Mr. Khilendra Gurung, HBTL- on the specific roles and responsibilities of their institutions in regards to the project.

With the end of the presentation from project team and partners, participants shared their feedback and questions. Dr. Dil Khatri, Executive Director, SIAS ended the meeting with a brief concluding remark.



A glimpse of some of the project team members during the presentation



Screenshot of some of the virtual participants of the workshop

PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Mani Ram Banjade, Principal Investigator (PI), CREW Project

Dr. Banjade began by presenting the worsening situation of women in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted that with women already bearing the brunt of climate change, the pandemic had only exacerbated their situation. He cited research to show how economic activities of women have been affected by the pandemic. He particularly emphasized the status of women in agriculture and forestry and how they are impacted by gender-based barriers and other socio-economic variables. The causes for this can be attributed to reasons such as higher interest rates for loans taken from informal channels, lack of subsidies, lack of access to financial resources and women's property ownership. Although with changing times, women in rural areas have been familiarized with new technologies- particularly, mobile phones- they have failed to materialize it for their enterprises.

In regards to this context, Dr. Banjade stated that the project's goal is to determine what makes a gender-responsive and shock-resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem for women in Nepal. He discussed seven research questions- impacts of COVID-19 on economic activities of women; risks, challenges and coping mechanisms among women farmers and entrepreneurs; gender-based constraints at different nodes of value chain; bridging the gap between women farmers/entrepreneurs and digital technology; adoption of gender and climate-responsive policies and creation of role models and local champions to instigate further change in the communities. The study sites for the project and the respective commodities in focus are- wintergreens in Dolakha, legumes in Ramechhap and vegetables in Arghakhanchi.

He further discussed three strategies of the research design that includes research analysis, policy and value chain analysis and co-production. Here, co-production includes development of business support system with women farmers/ entrepreneurs and cooperatives where they are involved. The final part of the presentation covered brief details of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach employed in the study's design. It is in alignment to the idea of an action research cycle aims to identify gender-based constraints, formulation and implementation of plans and strategies to address them. The approach will be further improved according to the constant monitoring done and reflections derived from them.

Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan, Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI), CREW Project

Dr. Pradhan presented the conceptual framework and its various elements. The framework which centralizes shock-resilient women-led enterprises has various factors that contribute towards creating an ecosystem of support. To understand the framework, it is important to remember that the elements have an interactive relationship with one another and are not linear.

To attain the core of the framework i.e. resilience, she highlighted the need for networking, resources and adaptation abilities. In order to achieve them, the framework focuses on developing well-being, decision-making and risk management abilities in an individual, community and other broader levels. Capacity building requires transformation and to make this possible, the framework includes development of agency, resources and voice. Resources cover access and control over human, economic and social factors, agency includes informed decision making, freedom and safety of movement and self-esteem and voice comprises the ability of listen and take actions accordingly. Other closely related factors that contribute to transformation are bringing change in power dynamics and informal institutional practices such as norms and values.

The other important aspects of the framework are five key domains- socio-cultural, economic, policy, environmental and technological. The five domains include their respective elements as targets and socio-economic domain is the most challenging to change among the five. She highlighted that given the project's timeframe of 30 months, it is difficult to attain changes in all five domains, but the framework shows possible factors to work on to attain the objectives.

In the end, Dr. Pradhan shared her field experience that women are ready to act and participate to bring change. Women are open to learn about technology and wards are willing to support programs beyond the traditional skills development activities such as sewing and cooperatives. Similarly, cooperatives have shown similar enthusiasm and look forward to new opportunities and collaborations.

Mr. Bibhor Kayastha, Aria Solutions

Mr. Kayastha presented the roles and responsibilities of Aria Solutions to primarily achieve objective two of the project. Their work is heavily focused on Ramechhap-based lentil cooperatives and will work towards branding and exploring export potentials, strengthening lentil-based cooperative management, developing integrated value-chain decision support system and providing assistance as required for other objectives.

There are eight outcomes in line with the second objective of strengthening business model, market development and technology usage. The outcomes focus on training, curriculum development, periodic monitoring, strengthening leadership and management, cash-flow management, better maintenance of database in cooperatives and brand development of products. He further assured that Aria Solutions will provide support to cooperatives beyond project period for three years without any cost.

The presentation concluded with him highlighting major work approaches that include collaboration with community-based organizations (CBO), civil societies, government agencies; human-centered designing and prioritization on continuous capacity-building.

Mr. Khilendra Gurung, Himalayan Bio-Trade Private Limited (HBTL)

Mr. Gurung presented a brief background of wintergreens and their gradual development for economic purpose. Wintergreens were materialized to produce essential oil from 1996 and the product expanded into the international market from 2003 AD. In regards to the increasing value and untapped potential of wintergreens, the project aims to scale up its sourcing and fulfill the demands of the international market. He explained that to attain this, they will establish two nurseries in Bhimeshwori Municipality. The nurseries will target a production of two lakhs wintergreen seedlings which will be transplanted in community forests, private lands and marginal fallow lands in Gaurishankar Municipality and Bhimeshwor Municipality in Dolakha. He further explained that the project will also venture towards research regarding use of better technology for the distillation process. Further, it will enhance the role of women in the value chain of wintergreens and contribute towards expanding their roles beyond collectors.

DISCUSSIONS AND FEEDBACK

◆ **Dr. Bina Pradhan, Gender Expert**

Dr. Pradhan appreciated the comprehensive nature of the research and suggested a relevant Ph.D. thesis titled “Microfinance behind closed doors” as an additional reference. The thesis presents the why and how of actions of women and presents their experiences and case stories as learnings. She advised that the report can be an instrumental reference to understand the agentive acts of women. Additionally, she also discussed women’s unpaid labor and lamented over the fact that the state and international actors haven’t provided any recognition to it. She hoped that the research would be instrumental in tackling the issue.

◆ **Ms. Kanchan Lama, Forest Action**

Ms. Lama lauded all the presentations and posed questions to project partners- Aria Solutions and HBTL. She stated that despite branding efforts, there is so much market competition and inquired if there are any relevant threat policies to tackle them. She appreciated the distillation plans regarding wintergreen and asked about the end benefits that women in the value chain would receive. She further questioned how the research plans to align the benefits with the elements of the conceptual framework- especially in the context of the wintergreen value chain in Dolakha. She expressed her interest in learning more in-depth about how the outcomes will help build agency, voice and other elements among women.

◆ **Dr. Rana Bahadur Thapa, Bio-Energy Section Head, Alternative Energy Promotions Center (AEPC)**

Dr. Thapa highly appreciated the concept of the research and expressed his interest to explore collaboration possibilities in regards to the use of alternative energy at any stage of the project’s implementation.

◆ **Ms. Chitra Kumari Thamsuhang, General Secretary, National Cooperative Federation Nepal**

Ms. Thamsuhang pointed out the interlinkage between cooperatives, women and enterprises and credited cooperatives to have contributed to women empowerment in Nepal. She claimed that other countries have taken cooperatives in Nepal as a successful example and derived lessons.

However, she expressed her discontent with the cooperatives’ implementation mode. According to her, several such women-oriented initiatives and cooperatives have been implemented in the past without any basis for selection. Once the project completes, the cooperatives revert to a dormant state. As a result, she proposed linking with cooperative apex entities as an useful approach to ensure the project’s momentum throughout time.

Ms. Thamsuhang also talked about policy-level challenges and how cooperatives in Nepal have been struggling in regards to branding. She shared about failure in branding coffee in collaboration with cooperatives in Nepal due to policy complications and emphasized the significance of having the adequate policies in place.

She further mentioned that there are many women as members and in leadership positions in cooperatives of Nepal. However, there are many segregated cooperatives and the representation of women is at a higher level in women-only cooperatives as compared to other types of cooperatives. She argued this to be

one of the reasons for higher statistics of women in cooperatives in Nepal and advised focusing on enhancing the participation of women beyond women-only cooperatives. For this purpose, she suggested the capacity building of men along with women.

◆ **Mr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Muktinath Krishi Company**

Mr. Mahat mentioned possible collaborations in regards to repair and maintenance of machineries through their business associates. He highlighted the private sector's role during the implementation phase of the project and mentioned input supply, technology transfer and market linkage. Muktinath Agriculture Company has already been working in four sectors- production, technology transfer, facility development and marketing at national and international markets. Hence, he expressed willingness in collaborating with the project for the marketing of the products during the implementation phase in line with their working areas.

◆ **Mr. Vijay Muktan, Head of Small and Micro-Banking, Muktinath Bikas Bank**

Mr. Muktan stated that Muktinath Krishi Company and Muktinath Bikas Bank work hand in hand. While the bank provides financial services, the agricultural company helps with value chain development. In regards to this dynamic, he stated that they are willing to collaborate accordingly. Further, he also mentioned that Muktinath Bikas Bank has recently opened a branch in Ramechhap and it would be helpful in facilitating financial services to the target beneficiaries of the project.

◆ **Ms. Suyesha Sthapit, Executive Director, FWEAN**

Ms. Sthapit pointed out that the research does not integrate the management of agricultural waste. She mentioned that FWEAN is working on a new initiative- Black Soldiers Fly (BSF) - which deals with agricultural waste management. Hence, she highlighted possible collaboration in regard to waste management. Additionally, FWEAN also has local chapters in Dolakha, Ramechhap and Arghakhanchi and assured possible assistance to connect with beneficiaries in the sites.

◆ **Dr. Nav Raj Simkhada, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubittiya Sansthan Ltd.(SKBBL)**

Dr. Simkhada claimed that according to his study, half of the cooperatives are at a fragile state in Nepal and require strong institutional development. He expressed interest in collaboration with SKBBL since it also works in enterprise development. Further, he suggested conducting Key Informant Interview (KII) from the buyers' perspective to understand the higher level of value chains. Lastly, Dr. Simkhada pointed out issues with supply chain management and how supply is unable to meet demand due to various reasons. He advised exploring the issue through research questions so that implementers like SKBBL can benefit as well.

◆ **Mr. Joseph Shrestha, Founder, Reverse Vending Machine Nepal**

Mr. Shrestha firstly posed a question about the training and repair maintenance of agriculture machinery and the availability of spare parts and processing systems in the study sites. He mentioned his enterprise and its work in the development of cold stores and dryers in Nepal and suggested possible collaborations in regards to machineries and training.

KEY SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- ◆ Dr. Mani Ram Banjade appreciated the participant's queries and feedback. He asserted that co-production is at the core of the project because its goal of women empowerment cannot be attained by a single organization. Dr. Banjade also informed that they are exploring local level scenarios but the absence of appropriate institutional setups at the local level has been a challenge.

He acknowledged the participant's interest in collaborations and mentioned that the team will reach out to them for assistance and partnerships in various aspects in the future. He thanked them for their enthusiastic response and stated that they look forward to creating deeper impacts through collaborations.

- ◆ Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan agreed that there are many possibilities of collaborations. She stated that it is important to work around with available resources in the best possible ways and that cooperatives have proven to be resourceful and accessible in this case. She emphasized the need to make the process more efficient.

Dr. Pradhan also responded to statements from the participants regarding the issue of unpaid labor work. She stated that organizations can assist in facilitating negotiations at a broader level. In addition, dialogues within mixed groups regarding gender roles and responsibilities as well as the demonstration of men and women champions as role models can help take the conversation forward. She further highlighted the need for similar organizations to jointly collaborate and exchange ideas to achieve the desired goals.

- ◆ Dr. Netra Timsina, Chairperson, SIAS put forth his remarks by sharing his experience in other relevant projects. He assured that there will be no interference in the knowledge system and rather space to flourish knowledge and ideas. The project can independently move ahead with the research's theory of change and research questions that has been formulated. He concluded his remarks by thanking all the participants.

- ◆ Dr. Dil Khatri, Executive Director, SIAS gave the concluding remarks. He was positive that the workshop had opened many doors for collaboration and remarked that they would initiate more conversations regarding partnerships during the implementation phase. He further highlighted three key messages to take away from the event. Firstly, cooperatives are largely flourishing as means for savings and credits but they have potential beyond that as well. Hence, he advised exploring the full potential of cooperatives and materializing it for entrepreneurship development.

Secondly, he acknowledged the need to seek input in the sector of technology, specifically in energy. For this, he recognized the role of collaboration and also informed about ongoing discussions with Alternative Energy Promotions Center (AEPC).

Thirdly, role models and champions are an integral part of the project that will help in creating wider impacts. For the success of this approach, he attributed the need for collaboration with local chapters.

Lastly, he highlighted that the research will focus on generating evidence and creating replicable models. Hence, the research approach prioritizes a deeper level of engagement with households from which relevant reflections can be shared as outcomes.

Dr. Khatri finally concluded the event by expressing his gratitude for everybody's participation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to all the key presenters for their excellent and comprehensive presentations about the project. We also appreciate and thank all the participants for their valuable suggestions and feedback.

ANNEX

ANNEX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

S. N.	Name	Organization
1.	Ms. Januka Pandit	Deputy Director General, Department of Agriculture
2.	Dr. Rana Bahadur Thapa	Bio-Energy Section Head, Alternative Energy Promotions Centre (AEPC)
3.	Dr. Bina Pradhan	Gender Expert, Independent Researcher
4.	Ms. Kanchan Lama	Forest Action
5.	Mr. Prem Raj Tiwari	President, NEHHPA (Nepal Herbs and Herbal Products Association)
6.	Mr. Vijay Gurung	Head of Small and Micro-Banking, Muktinath Bank
7.	Dr. Nav Raj Simkhada	Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittiyasanstha Ltd. (SKBBL)
8.	Dr. Rudra Shrestha	Enabling Environment Director, Kishan II project
9.	Mrs. Chitra Kumari Thamsuhang Subba	General Manager, National Cooperative Federation, Nepal
10.	Ms. Basanti Pradhan,	4th Vice President, Federation of Women Entrepreneur's Associations of Nepal (FWEAN)
11.	Ms. Neeru Rayamajhi Khatri	President, Federation of Women Entrepreneurs' Associations of Nepal (FWEAN)
12.	Ms. Suyasha Sthapit	Executive Director, FWEAN
13.	Ms. Samjhana Karki	Enterprise for Management, Economic Reform & Gender Equality (EMERGE) On behalf of Dr. Mona Shrestha, Executive Director
14.	Mr. Bharat Raj Dhakal	Executive Director, Muktinath Krishi Company
15.	Mr. Sugen Shakya	Head of Treasury and Global Markets, Prabhu Bank
16.	Mr. Joseph Shrestha	Co-Founder, Reverse Vending Machine Nepal
17.	Ms. Ambica Shrestha	President, Federation of Business and Professional Women, Nepal (FBPWN)
18.	Ms. Mangala Karanjit	Secretary General, Federation of Business and Professional Women, Nepal (FBPWN)
19.	Mr. Ram Sharan Timalsina	Muktinath Krishi Company Ltd.
20.	Dr. Netra Timsina	Chairperson, SIAS
21.	Dr. Dil Khatri	Executive Director, SIAS//CREW
22.	Dr. Mani Ram Banjade	SIAS/ Principal Investigator, CREW
23.	Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan	SIAS/ Co-Principal Investigator, CREW
24.	Dr. Sony Baral Gauli	SIAS/ Co-Principal Investigator, CREW
25.	Ms. Sabita Dhakawa	CREW/ SIAS
26.	Mr. Bibhor Kayastha	CREW/ Aria Solutions
27.	Mr. Buddhi Tamang	CREW/ Aria Solutions

28.	Mr. Dikpal Karki	CREW/ Aria Solutions
29.	Ms. Yuvika Adhikari	CREW/ Aria Solutions
30.	Mr. Sumit Gautam	CREW/ Aria Solutions
31.	Mr. Khilendra Gurung	CREW/ HBTL
32.	Mr. Sunil Pokharel	CREW/ NIMS College
33.	Mr. Shyam Thapa	CREW/ NIMS College
34.	Ms. Rachana Upadhyaya	CREW/ SIAS
35.	Dr. Sidhartha Mainali	CREW/ SIAS
36.	Mr. Kamal Devkota	CREW/ SIAS
37.	Ms. Gyanu Maskey	CREW/ SIAS
38.	Mr. Nir Bahadur BK	CREW/ SIAS
39.	Mr. Umesh Paudel	CREW/ SIAS
40.	Ms. Supriya Lama	CREW/ SIAS
41.	Mr. Sujan Shrestha	CREW/ SIAS
42.	Ms. Dipika Das	CREW/ SIAS
43.	Mr. Sushant Acharya	CREW/ SIAS
44.	Ms. Avipsha Rayamajhi	CREW/ SIAS

ANNEX II: PHOTOS

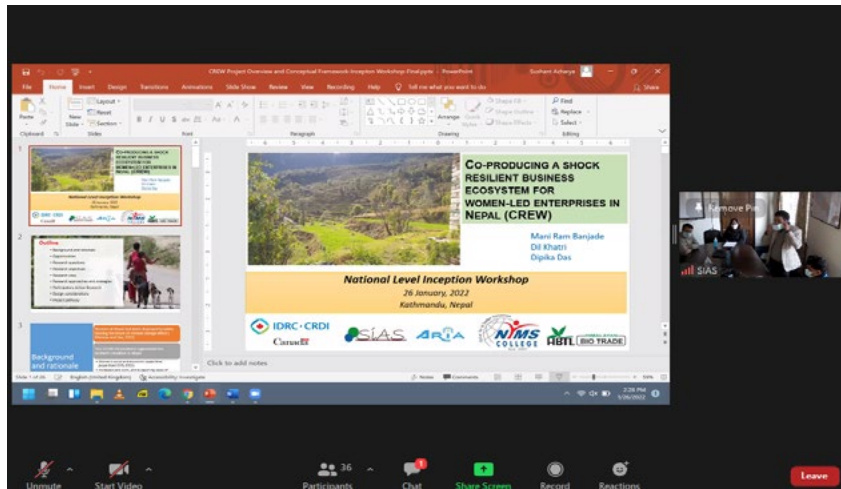


Image 1: Screen capture of one of the presentations



Image 2: Dr. Mani Ram Banjade during his presentation

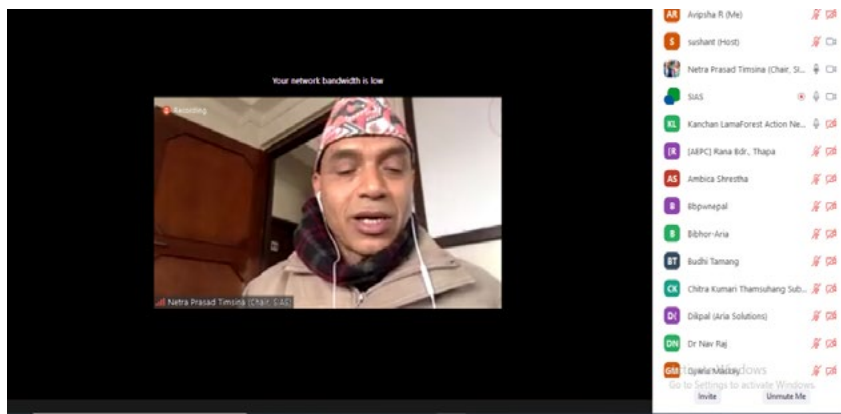


Image 3: Dr. Netra Timsina moderating the feedback session

ANNEX III: POWERPOINT SLIDES

PRESENTATION I: Dr. Mani Ram Banjade, Principal Investigator (PI)



CO-PRODUCING A SHOCK RESILIENT BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM FOR WOMEN-LED ENTERPRISES IN NEPAL (CREW)

Mani Ram Banjade
Dil Khatri
Dipika Das

National Level Inception Workshop

26 January, 2022
Kathmandu, Nepal



Outline

- Background and rationale
- Opportunities
- Research questions
- Research objectives
- Research sites
- Research approaches and strategies
- Participatory Action Research
- Design considerations
- Impact pathway



Source: The Diplomat

Background and rationale

Women of Nepal had been disproportionately bearing the brunt of climate change effect (Mainaly and Tan, 2012)

The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the women's situation in Nepal

- Women's social and economic capabilities jeopardized (WB, 2021).
- Increased care work, and burgeoning cases of domestic violence
- Job loss: 41 percent women; 28 percent of men (IIDS, 2020)
- 15 percent of women-led businesses collapsed (TKP, 2021)
- Over 80 percent Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs) suffered from a slump in sales



Background

- Higher interest rates through informal channels; often excluded from the government's economic relief packages.
- Most of the women work at lower end of value chain (production)
- Deeply rooted socio-cultural barriers and gender-based discrimination limit women's entrepreneurial capabilities
- The gender-based constraints (GBCs) intersect with other social identities such as age, caste/ethnicity, class and educational level
- Regulatory constraints creates additional restrictions for access to finance for women.
- Limited capacity in benefiting from digital technologies

Opportunities that can be harnessed

- Burgeoning use of smartphones in rural areas
- Readiness of women to participate and commitment of other stakeholders
- Federalism – empowered and resourceful local governments
- Emphasized by all stakeholder consulted: Marketing aspect and governance of cooperative are the two arenas requiring concerted effort to transform the agriculture and forestry sectors to empower women
- Some frameworks are there: WEE and Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)

Research Questions

What constitutes a gender responsive and shock resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem for women in Nepal and how can such a supportive environment be created?

Specific Research Questions

1. What are the short/long term impacts/disruptions caused by COVID-19 on women farmers and women-led enterprises?
2. What are the climate risks and challenges women farmers and entrepreneurs are confronted with, and, if any, how are they coping with these risks and challenges?
3. What are the key gender-based constraints women face in the different nodes of the value chain of selected agriculture/forest products?





Research Questions...

4. How to increase access and capacity of women farmers/entrepreneurs to FinTech and digital platforms?
5. How do smart technologies (digital marketing platforms, climate smart technologies) help overcome women's gender role and time constraints and contribute to entrepreneurial competencies?
6. How does women's collective action help influence local governments to adopt gender and climate responsive policies to promote women's entrepreneurship?
7. How do women entrepreneur role models and local champions contribute to women's entrepreneurial aspirations?

Objectives

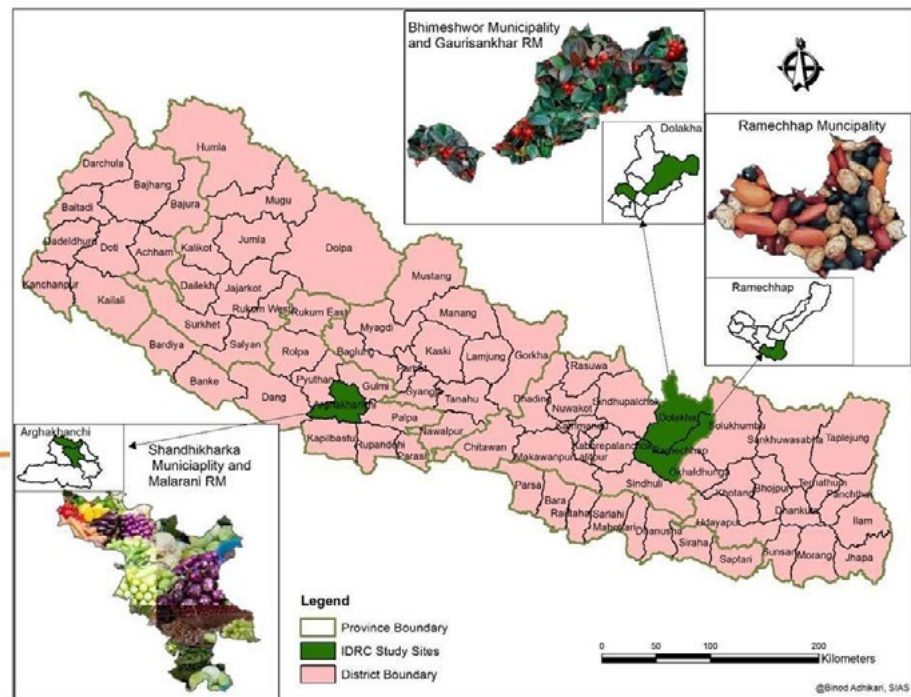
Goal

To "*co-produce realistic solutions for financially viable and shock-resistant agriculture and forest-based enterprises that support women's economic self-sufficiency*".

Specific objectives

- 1) To understand gender-based constraints to women's economic empowerment in the context of agriculture and forest-based enterprises in Nepal.
- 2) To facilitate technological and institutional innovations for shock resilient women engaged enterprise development by strengthening 'ecosystem of support' (through interventions on improving production environment, value addition and branding, technological support, linkage with financing and market).
- 3) To develop capacity of women farmers and entrepreneurs to increase political space, agency and voice in collective action arenas.
- 4) To disseminate knowledge and inform policies and practices towards enhancing women's economic empowerment.

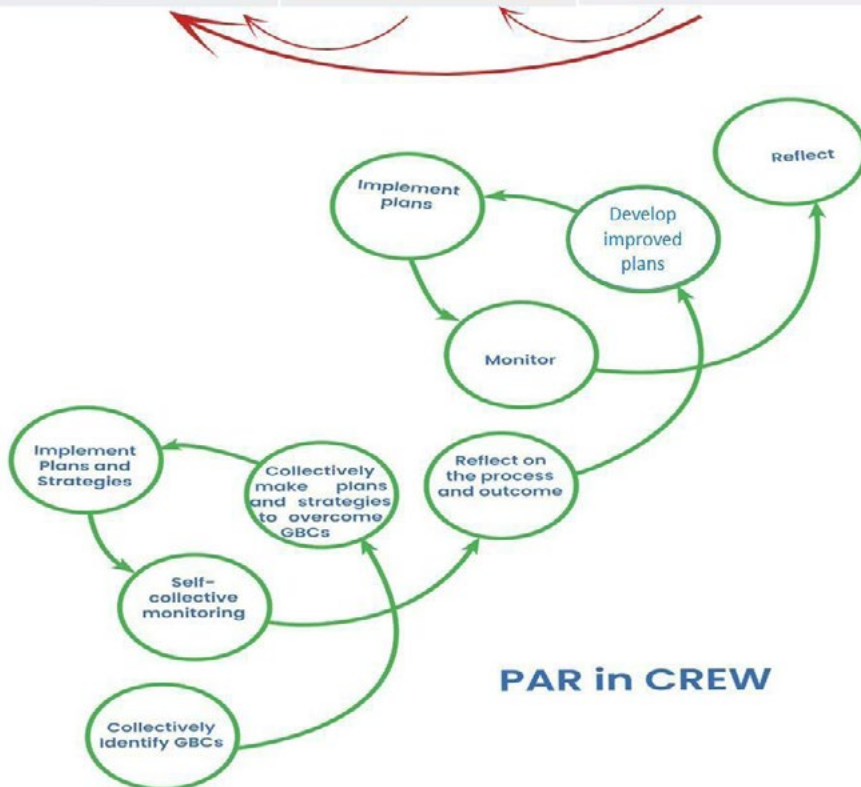
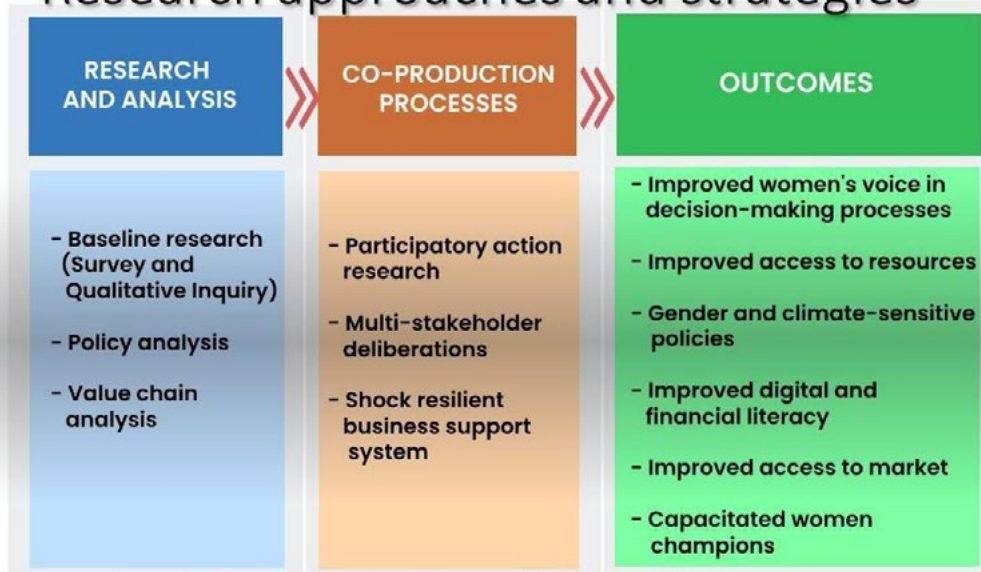
Study sites



Brief overview of working areas

District	Study Sites	Site Features	Targeted Beneficiaries	Interventions
Ramechhap	Ramechhap Municipality	Middle Hills, Semi-Arid region	400-500 women members of a cooperative	Market access, digital technology and access to finance, cooperative management
Argakhanchi	Sandhikharka Municipality & Malarani RM	Middle Hills, Irrigated and Unirrigated land	400-500 women vegetable producers and entrepreneurs	Improve access to markets, digital technology/ information system
Dolakha	Bhimeswor Municipality (Boch, Lakuri danda) & Gaurishankar RM (Jhyanku)	High altitude	200-300 women Wintergreen collectors	Experiment with propagation techniques, climate friendly distillation techniques, women's role in decision-making

Research approaches and strategies



Expected Outcomes

- Improved businesses of women engaged agriculture and forest-based enterprises through application of DigiTech and FinTech to improve decision-making, wellbeing, and risk management.
- Increased profitability and value of women engaged enterprises through increased access to local, regional and international markets.
- Enhanced resilience of women engaged agriculture and forest-based enterprises based on improved environment for production, value addition and branding, technological support, linkage with financing and market for women engaged agriculture and forest-based enterprises will be developed.
- Increased support of local governments in the working areas on climate-smart and gender-friendly entrepreneurial engagement plans and other WEE related activities.
- Increased political space and say of women in public forums and higher nodes of agriculture value chains.
- Improved governance of participating cooperatives and women engaged enterprises in project sites.
- Increased uptake of research results into local government's policies and programs.



Research design: key considerations



Understanding both subjective and objective dimensions of WEE measures

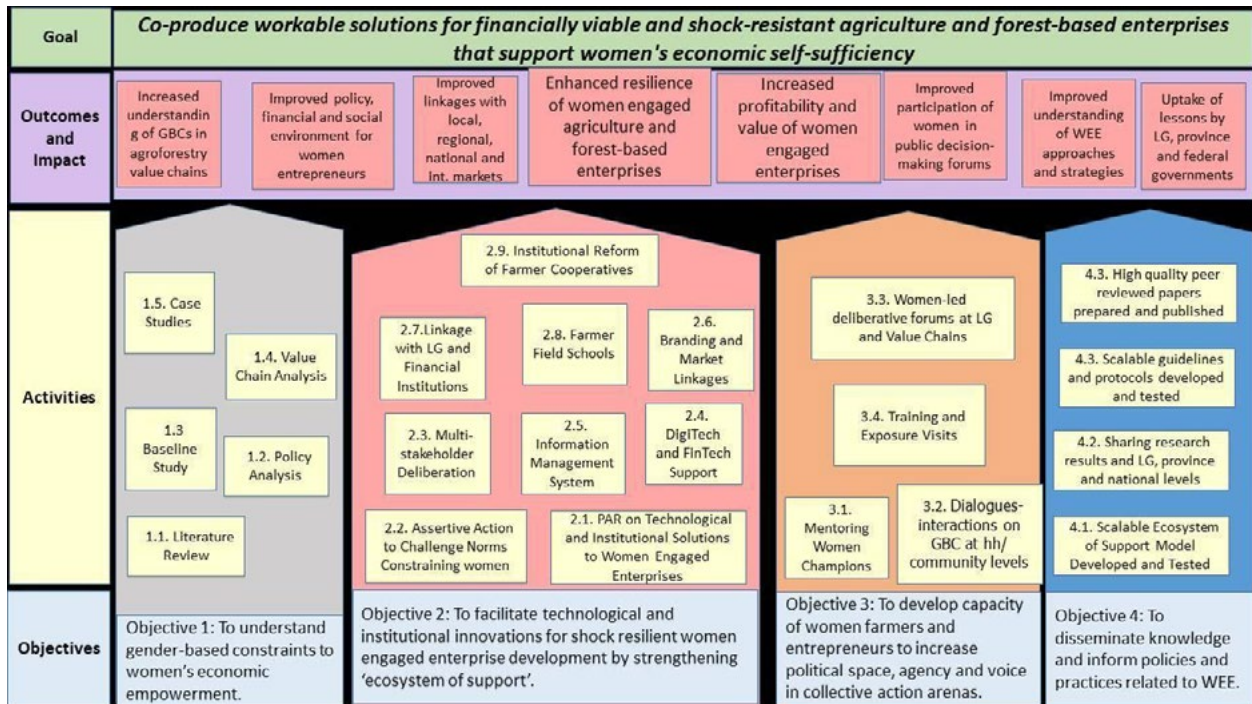
Intersectional approach

Co-production of business ecosystem for shock resilient women-led enterprises

Mix-methods: combining quantitative and qualitative tools

Sustainability- collaboration with local governments; governance reform of women engaged cooperatives; continuous support on digital technology

Impact Pathway



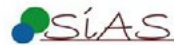


Conceptual Framework The CREW Project

The Project Inception

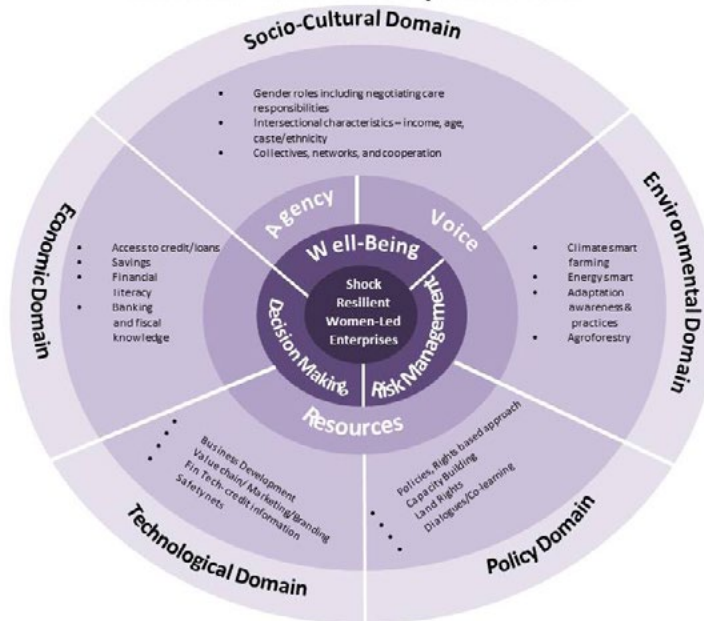
Meeta S. Pradhan, Dipika Das, & Rachana Upadhyaya

Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies
26th January 2022



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A Conceptual Framework for an 'Ecosystem for Support' Approach in Women's Economic Empowerment



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The Core: “Shock Resilient Women’s Enterprises”

These are enterprises or initiatives:

- Led by or co-managed by women
- Formal (co-operatives or CFUGs) or informal (farmer’s groups)
- In the agriculture sector and forestry (NTFPs)

They are resilient to shocks (such as climate change or COVID)

- “...the ability to survive and cope with a disaster with minimum impact and damage”*
- “... the women have entrepreneurial characteristics, resourcefulness, networking, adaptability and continuity...” when facing a disaster**
- they have “cognitive preparations, continuous learning, and the generation of social capital” (networks, shared understanding and trust)***

Thus the key issue is strengthening women’s capacities and capabilities.

[*Cutter et al., 2008 ** Matharu & Juneja, 2021 *** Prasad et al., 2014]

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Strengthening Women’s Capacities



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WEE: What needs to be transformed to increase capacities?

❑ RESOURCES

- human, economic, social - leading to Material Changes

❑ AGENCY

- household/community decisions, freedom and safety of movement, skills, knowledge, self esteem/confidence, aspirations, actions and resistance - leading to Cognitive and Perceptual Changes

❑ VOICE

- meaningful participation, individual/collective feedback that is valued

Closely related.....

❑ RELATIONS

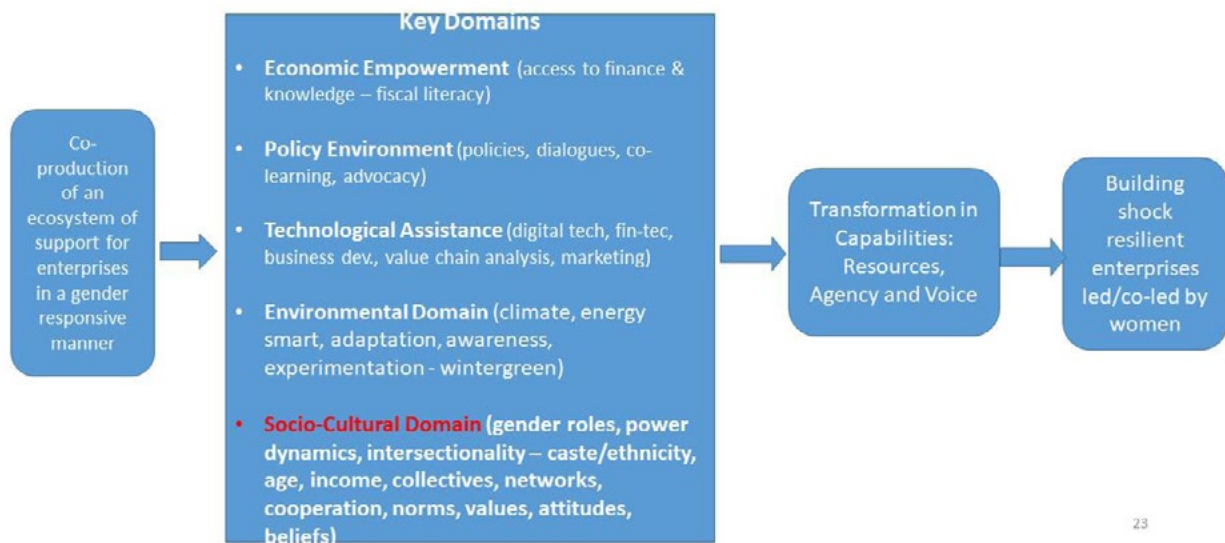
- power dynamics within households/community, networks

❑ STRUCTURES (or "Rules of the Game")

- laws, policies, norms, institutional practices, including informal institutional practices (norms, values, attitudes and beliefs)

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Strengthening Capacities, Improving the Context



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Elements within the Contextual Domains

Economic Domain

- Access to credit/loans
- Savings – household and collectives
- Financial literacy - banking and fiscal knowledge
- Mobile banking
- Increased access to land ownership

Policy Domain

- Review of Policies – identifying opportunities and gaps
- Rights based and GESI approach
- Deep listening, Dialogues and Co-learnings
- Policy advocacy – especially with local governments

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Elements....

Environmental Domain

- Climate smart farming
- Energy smart farming
- Adaptation awareness and practices
- Experimentation with cultivation of NTFPs

Technological Domain

- Production empowerment
- Business development including risk management
- Value chain analysis
Marketing/Branding
- Fin Tech - credit information
- Safety nets

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The Socio-Cultural Domain

- Gender roles including negotiating sharing of care responsibilities
- Intersectional characteristics – income, age, caste/ethnicity
- Collectives, networks and cooperation
- Traditional and discriminatory norms, values, attitudes and beliefs

Opportunities we have seen:

- Women active in production and some leadership in marketing
- Increasing access to local savings and credit – cooperatives
- Increasing voice for wanting enhanced capacities
- Women leading, questioning and ready to act
- Women (and some men) ready for becoming leaders and mentors
- Women ready to experiment with cultivation of wintergreen and its management
- Increasing access to and use of smart phones and openness to learn new technologies
- Receptive local governments to meaningfully support development of women's enterprises
- Receptive members of cooperatives (women and men) to bring changes in gender responsive management structures, processes and capacity building

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Thank you!

“As women achieve power, the barriers will fall. As society sees what women can do, as women see what women can do, there will be more women out there doing things, and we’ll all be better off for it.”

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Photo Credit: LI-BIRD

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PRESENTATION III: Mr. Bibhor Kayastha, Aria Solutions

Co-producing a shock Resilient Ecosystem for Women-led enterprises in Nepal

CREW

INCEPTION WORKSHOP



Project Interventions



Bibhor Kayastha,
Founder Director



About Aria

Since 2019 April.

Vision: Building a better tomorrow, together.

Working in sectors of financial inclusion, humanitarian cash and vouchers, enterprise development, education management.

Provide management consulting services, technology products and services and branding related services.



Introduction

- Major responsibility to achieve Objective 2 of the project
- Heavy focus on Ramechhap based lentil cooperative – ensuring achievement of key performance indicators set by the project
- Building a well positioned brand of local lentils in national market (explore export possibilities)
- Strengthen lentil cooperative’s management
- Developing integrated value chain decision support system connecting information from “farm to fork” – with data points required for project’s research component
- Provide support as required to consortium lead and other partners to achieve other Objectives



Objective 2

- To strengthen business model and management with technology and market development for shock resilient women-led agriculture and forest based enterprises.





Outcome 2.1

- Improved production, quality and productivity by training, accessing and utilizing climate smart, women friendly production and post-harvesting techniques, tools and technologies

KPIs:

- Improved production by 20%
- Improved productivity by 20%
- Reduced post harvest losses by 10%



Outcome 2.2

- Strengthened enterprise management (Operations, Finance, Human Resource, Supply Chain and Logistics, Sales and Marketing) with internal policies, business processes and procedures conducive to women producers, business owners and managers enabling the balance between economic activities and unpaid care work.

KPIs:

- Gender-sensitive business policies developed.
- Women friendly Standard Operating Procedures for all business processes developed and implemented.





Outcome 2.3

- Strengthened women-led enterprises' capacity to provide its members and producers with production inputs, tools, financial intermediation, market assurance and extension services

KPIs:

- Supply and market network developed
- Enterprise management and leadership teams have capacity to manage supplier and customer relationship



Outcome 2.4

- Established distinguished brands of products (highlighting women's leadership and environment friendliness in the business model) with strong market presence through digital marketing; e-commerce; mass media exposure; and innovative distribution and retail channel development

KPIs:

- Brand recognition increased among target customers.
- Sales revenue increased by 100% during the project period.





Outcome 2.5

- Increased number of women involved in higher nodes of value chain

KPIs:

- 100% increase in women business leaders in the enterprise and business owners in supply chain (logistics companies, distributors, wholesalers and retailers) during the project period.



Outcome 2.6

- Enhanced women-led enterprises' resilience against adverse effects of climate change; COVID-19 and other shocks

KPIs:

- Capacity built on resilience-building
- Contingency funds established
- Pre-crisis market assessments carried out
- Resilience indicators set
- Crisis response strategies developed and implemented





Outcome 2.7

- Digitally transformed women-led enterprise/value chain management and decision-making processes through adoption of user-friendly state of the art information technology.

KPIs:

- Women friendly IT systems for business management (farmers, cooperative, e-commerce) and decision-making developed and implemented.



Outcome 2.8

- Increased access to finance and subsidized financing provisioned by the Government and Financial Institutions for women entrepreneurs and climate change adaptation in addition to COVID-19 recovery packages.

KPIs:

- Established women-led cooperatives' linkages with at least 1 A or B class banks for wholesale lending and linkages with women business owners for direct financing.
- Established linkages with government agencies to receive subsidies and recovery packages.





Approaches

- Working together with community based organizations, civil societies, private sector and government agencies
- Human centered designing
- Interactive and continuous capacity building, learning and improvement
- Indirect messaging to establish brand





Co-Producing a Shock Resilient Ecosystem for Women-led Enterprises in Nepal *Interventions in Dolakha District*

Himalayan Bio Trade Pvt. Ltd (HBTL)
January 26, 2022

Wintergreen Nursery Development in Dolakha

1. **Experimentation on nursery techniques in Bhimeswor Municipality, Dolakha**
 - Formation of Wintergreen collectors' Women's Groups in Lakuri and Bonch
 - Development of 2 Wintergreen nurseries from seed and stem cuttings
 - Target production of 200,000 Wintergreen seedlings



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Transplantation of Wintergreen Saplings

2. Transplantation of Wintergreen saplings in CF, marginal fallow lands and private lands in Bhimeswor Municipality and Gaurishankar Rural Municipality, Dolakha

- Plantation of 200,000 Wintergreen seedlings in CF lands from nurseries in Lakuri and Bonch
- Plantation of 100,000 Wintergreen saplings from new regeneration in private lands and marginal fallow lands in Lakuri and Boch
- Plantation of 50,000 Wintergreen saplings from new regeneration in private lands and marginal fallow lands in Jhyaku



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Development and Installation of Efficient Distillation Systems

3. R&D of climate friendly and energy efficient Wintergreen distillation systems

4. Fabrication and installation of climate friendly and energy efficient Wintergreen distillation systems in Lakuri



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Capacity Development of Women Entrepreneurs' Groups

5. Training to Wintergreen Collectors Women's Groups on:

- Entrepreneurship development
- Financial management and record keeping using digital technology
- Sustainable harvesting, management and good practices
- Operate distillation system

6. Replication of this model in other parts of Dolakha



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