

Integrating Gender and Nutrition into Agricultural Extension Services

Workshop Documentation

Linking Agricultural Extension, ICT and Youth Engagement to Promote Family Nutrition in Nepal

March 20-22, 2017

Lalitpur, Nepal

Report prepared by Nancy Erbstein



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Executive Summary

From March 20-22, 2017, a group of fifteen Nepali innovators that together reach millions of nutrition-sensitive agriculture stakeholders gathered to explore how they could collaborate to promote family nutrition (see Appendix I for participant list). Together individuals brought expertise in agricultural extension, nutrition extension, ICT development and youth civic engagement, and represented government, private and civil society sectors.

This effort reflected exploratory research findings that identified the potential of linking these arenas to take on the cultural, social and informational barriers to nutrition-sensitive agriculture, with a particular emphasis on potential/returning migrant workers and their families (INGENAES publication by Pokharel, Erbstein and Budhathoki, forthcoming 2017). The workshop was designed to build relationships and share knowledge across these typically disconnected sectors in order to generate ideas, practices and action at their intersections. A highly participatory process involving all as presenters and members of work groups produced rich information about enhancing family nutrition via agricultural extension, ICT and youth engagement in Nepal.

Participants were highly enthusiastic about meeting new potential collaborators who could help them develop new dimensions to their work. Each identified specific action agendas by way of workshop follow-up. In the three weeks after the workshop, all participants remained in contact with each other and the workshop organizers. Several launched new collaborative efforts within this time period, including development of a kitchen garden program and use of participatory video production in a program to increase nutritional and agricultural resilience.

The following technical report documents the workshop process and key points generated by workshop participants. A separate report on the workshop evaluations has been prepared as well but is not intended for dissemination.

I. Workshop Methods

The workshop was designed to build relationships and share knowledge across these typically disconnected sectors in order to generate ideas and practices at their intersections.



Figure I
Workshop Concept

Seventeen participants were invited and confirmed, and ultimately fourteen were able to participate (three individuals encountered unanticipated work and family demands). Participants were identified and invited by workshop coordinators Nancy Erbstein and Kabita Devkota based the following criteria:

- sector mix
- gender balance
- broad geographic representation
- reputation for innovative
- links to regional or national networks of potential collaborators/stakeholders
- commitment to action.

Please see Appendix I for a list of workshop participants and their organizational affiliations.

The workshop launched with an afternoon gathering over appetizers in a private room at a popular local restaurant near the Ministry of Agriculture and Development central office building. This initial gathering provided an opportunity for participants to meet, describe their work in an informal setting, learn about workshop objectives, share their insights about practices that contribute to effective convening, and practice making short presentations with the timer we intended to use for panels. The group left energized, enthusiastic about their new contacts and committed to an on-time start.

Day 2 and 3 activities were hosted at Pasa Yard (www.pasayard.com), a youth social enterprise that offered a relaxed meeting venue and delicious food (which participants described as “tasting like home-made”). The friendly environment was highly conducive to both informal conversation and focused work.

Day 2 began with setting group agreements, articulating personal workshop goals, and assessing the groups’ geographic connections. The group committed itself to respecting people/ideas/time, self-care, full engagement, communication, and using English for presentations and Nepal or English for questions and group work.



Figure 2 Participant Place Connections (e.g. hometowns, maithi)

Key shared participant goals included building relationships with potential collaborators, identifying shared interests and creating new opportunities to extend their work in ways that would benefit community stakeholders. Many also expressed specific interests in learning through stories about approaches to using ICT in agricultural and nutrition extension and potential ways to engage youth.

A series of panel presentations and associated activities, which built on each other topically engaged all workshop participants as presenters and collaborators (see Appendix 2 for the full agenda). We began the day by focusing on why we should care about nutrition in Nepal, priority nutrition-sensitive messages tailored to families and how those might be adapted to different places and populations, with input from representatives of USAID-supported programs SABAL (www.usaid.gov/nepal/fact-sheets/sustainable-action-resilience-and-food-security-sabal) and Suaahara II (www.usaid.gov/nepal/fact-sheets/suaahara-project-good-nutrition?_ga=1.212080605.813396385.1490805557).

The next session identified characteristics of successful ICT initiatives through exploring several Nepalese models of ICT use that could potentially be employed to promote nutrition-sensitive agricultural messaging:

- a farmer-inspired and informed SMS-based system for linking farmers with markets and research-based information about agriculture that has enrolled over 11,000 farmers (www.thenationsmiles.org/page/10),
- a pilot program linking farmer cooperatives and secondary school students in 3 VDCs to map and share data on crops with markets using Open Street Map (www.kathmandulivinglabs.org/projects/engaging-youth-in-mapping-agriculture-and-food-security),
- story-telling and video use to build and strengthen value chains linking rural farmers to the Kathmandu market (<http://storycycle.com/stories/tag/greengrowth>),
- a high profile, well-designed magazine with over 7000 subscribers that elevates the profile and promising practices of Nepali farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs (www.rndinnovative.com.np),
- youth radio and podcast that has over 7.2 million weekly listeners (www.equalaccess.org/country-programs/nepal/nepal-projects/chatting-my-best-friend/ and <http://equalaccess.org.np/archives/series/sathi-sanga-manka-kura>).

A third session identified youth leadership networks that could further serve as resources in developing and disseminating family nutrition-sensitive agriculture messaging, as well as the kinds of capacity-building support young people might need to play such a role. Our consideration was informed by several examples:

- Young Professionals in Agricultural Research and Development-Nepal, a national network of young people promoting youth participation in agriculture (www.ypard.net/country/nepal/),
- Center for Migration and International Relations, which links and supports Nepali migrant workers globally (www.cmir.org.np/),
- Association of Youth Organizations of Nepal, a national network of 90+ youth leadership organizations (<http://ayon.org>),

- Farm to Finger Pvt Ltd., a new youth-led effort to build a value chain linking remote rural high value crops with Kathmandu markets that has engaged 500 individual farmers and farmer cooperatives representing another 2000 farmers (www.facebook.com/farm2finger),
- Nepal Policy Center, which includes links to networks of young women and indigenous communities (www.nepalpolicycenter.org.np),
- Ministry of Youth and Sports initiatives such as the national youth council (www.nationalyouthcouncil.org).

Participants wrapped up Day 2 working in cross-sector teams to envision how these various tools, knowledge-bases and networks might be brought together to strengthen family-sensitive agricultural extension activity. Their thinking was informed by lessons learned about elements of successful agricultural extension that were shared by representatives from:

- Young Professionals in Agricultural Research and Development-Nepal (www.ypard.net/country/nepal),
- Ministry of Agricultural Development Agricultural Extension (Far West and Central Regions) (www.moad.gov.np/en/),
- R&D Innovation Nepal (www.rndinnovative.com.np).

Day 3 focused on moving knowledge into action, as participants revisited and refined their team concepts, shared considerations for strategically piloting and pitching innovations, and specified intended next steps within and across their organizations.



Figure 3 Teams developed project concepts linking agricultural extension, nutrition, ICT and youth leadership

2 Workshop Findings

Through the panel presentations, discussions and activities the workshop generated rich information about enhancing family nutrition-sensitive agriculture through ICT and youth engagement.

2.1 Nutrition Messaging: Adapting Priority Messages

Panelist presentations reflected a high degree of concurrence on high priority nutrition messages. These included:

- Increase dietary diversity,
- Equitably distribute food across family males and females, as well as elders, adolescents and children,
- Spend your money on nutritious food.

Panelists also made the following recommendations to intermediaries promoting nutrition and nutrition-sensitive agriculture:

- Invest in low cost, woman-accessible technologies,
- Integrate nutrition education with health education (not agricultural extension) using local women health workers.

Group discussion generated several additional recommendations.

- Share the nutritional value of traditional foods across places and populations.
- Educational materials need to emphasize not only what to eat but also appropriate amounts, as well as provide tools to assist with measurement (e.g. special glasses, fun plates representing food groups/portions)
- Visuals and use of storytelling are important tools for adapting and sharing nutrition information.
- Support planning/budgeting for weekly food.
- Consider using ICT to provide nutrition information and shape growing, purchasing and eating habits given the high cost of print materials and increasing smart phone penetration.
- Messaging needs to be not only informative but compelling... consider building on what matters to people, such as local/traditional food cultures, parents' concern for their children's health, pride, etc..
- Knowledge does not equal behavioral change: deal with cultural and infrastructure barriers to accessing nutritious food.

2.2 Using ICT Innovation to Promote Family Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture

Participating ICT innovators shared a wealth of knowledge about key ICT use barriers and characteristics of effective strategies. Important barriers to consider include:

- lack of connectivity
- lack/cost of requisite technology

- limited digital literacy
- low literacy
- limited skill/comfort with technology use
- lack of trust
- lack of motivation
- culturally/linguistically inappropriate content
- low status of agriculture limiting access to media that could help raise its profile

Despite these barriers the group remained optimistic about the potential role of ICT and highlighted the following strategies for overcoming them.

- Get to know your end-users/audiences.
- Ask potential end-users what tools they need/want.
- Create a user-friendly platform for all stakeholders.
- Create value for users.
- Measure impact and use findings to inform ongoing improvement.
- Foster partnerships/relationships to build a user base.
- Build on local existing institutions and support them to take ownership.
- Capitalize on collaborations that can link different knowledge and skill sets (e.g. older farmers and tech proficient high school students).
- Tap people’s inclination to tell stories and appreciate visuals.
- Incorporate the arts.
- Empathize with your users.
- Aim to influence and inspire.
- Provide a platform for sharing real problems that matter and expertise to help address them.
- No one person/organization can do impactful ICT—it requires collaboration.

2.3 Youth Engagement

The youth engagement discussion highlighted the fact that young people are already bringing energy, creativity, familiarity with technology, openness to new ideas, approaches and flavors, a commitment to national well-being, gender-, and geographic-sensitivity, capital, and, in the case of some returning migrant workers, new farming skills, to bear upon agricultural entrepreneurship and food systems. Nepal has a wealth of youth resources that could be further tapped to promote family nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

Participants agreed that public perceptions and portrayals of agriculture as a low status occupation are a significant barrier to Nepali youth becoming interested in and pursuing agriculture-related work. Raising a new generation to feed the future will require taking on these cultural dynamics.

To fully build upon this youth potential, workshop participants suggested that many young people would likely benefit from the following types of capacity-building support:

- Professional skills (e.g. planning, time management, communication, networking)
- Research/business planning skills
- Navigating bureaucratic systems and value chain syndicate dynamics
- Exposure to new technologies
- Increased information about existing resources to support involvement in agriculture (e.g. through government extension, banks, etc.)
- Opportunities to explore potential interests in agriculture and nutrition before fully investing in a direction

In addition, the impact of youth resources will likely be magnified if older adults engaged in cultivating Nepal's food systems further recognize the capacities and commitments of young people in this area and help to build ladders of opportunity for them.

2.4 Learning from Agricultural Extension to Support Family-sensitive Nutrition

Examples of agricultural extension efforts and factors that contribute to their success included many of the lessons shared by ICT innovators. Additional points included the following.

- Use local resource people
- Consider models like Farmer Field School
- Provide information about valuable, solutions-oriented appropriate technology
- Employ strategies that provide motivation and recognition (e.g. competitions such as a farmer story-telling contest)
- Be prepared to adapt “models” to local contexts
- Demonstrate impact
- Bring a clear vision and passion
- Focus on sustainability

2.5 Workshop “Big Ideas”

In order to explore the potential (and pitfalls) of cross-sector collaboration, participants worked in small groups to envision potential efforts. Each group developed and presented a “big idea.” One focused on engaging youth in radio and video drama production to promote off-season vegetable production, consumption and marketing among vulnerable populations in rural villages, with a pilot program in

Sindhupalchowk. A second planned a kitchen garden campaign—to be piloted in Lamjung and Kathmandu - that would tap youth clubs and employ video. The third proposed piloting a multi-faceted, replicable “Agri-Hub” in Kathmandu—a public-private partnership that would provide a one-stop shop for learning about and trying out health and wealth-promoting agricultural innovations, which could elevate the profile of agriculture and provide educational resources to potential and returning migrant workers.



Figure 2.0 Big Idea teams each presented their projects for group feedback.

Feedback sessions revealed the importance of having “critical friends” who can ask challenging questions to support proposal improvement, as well as the utility of diagrams and logic models that can help raise questions and focus discussion.

3 Workshop Next Steps

Participants uniformly expressed enthusiasm for meeting new potential collaborators that could help them develop new dimensions to their work. Each identified specific action agendas by way of workshop follow-up (with some individuals launching this activity immediately, engrossed in discussion for over an hour after the formal workshop end). Examples of intended next steps ranged from the personal (e.g. learning more about nutrition and paying attention to my family’s nutrition) to individual professional activities (e.g. making an effort to learn more about youth initiatives regarding agriculture, developing youth radio programming to help elevate agriculture as a professional option) to plans to pursue Big Idea elements (e.g. developing video that could support a youth kitchen garden campaign) to new collaborations based on new relationships (e.g. exploring potential connections between SMS and mapping systems to generate new data resources and help link farmers to markets, developing new food products, and opening up a new market for remote farmers with an overabundance of sweet potatoes). Three weeks after the workshop as this report was finalized, participants reported being in touch with each other on social media, pursuing efforts to integrate participatory videography into a large-scale development effort, launching a kitchen garden and supporting a group of friends to launch kitchen gardens.

Appendix I: Workshop Participants

Primary Focus	Name	Organizational Affiliation
Agricultural Extension	Sunita Nhemaphuki	R&D Innovations Pvt. Ltd.
	Tika Ram Thapa	Ministry of Agriculture and Development
	Asmita Nagila	YPARD-Nepal
Nutrition	Pratistha Joshi	Helen Keller International/Suahaara II
	Sangita Budhathoki	Helen Keller International/SABAL
Youth Leadership	Yubraj Nepal	Center for Migration & International Relations
	Nikita Bhusal	YPARD-Nepal
	Pradip Pariyar	Nepal Policy Center
	Deepak Ratna Tuladhar	Farm to Finger Pv't Ltd.
	Brabim Kumar	PeopleNPower
ICT	Ankita Joshi	Equal Access Radio/SSMK Team
	Nirab Pudasaini	Kathmandu Living Lab
	Saurav Dhakal	StoryCycle/Green Growth
	Ishwor Malla	ICT For Agri Pvt. Ltd/Creating SMILES

Workshop facilitators included:

- Nancy Erbstein** (UC Davis Department of Human Ecology)

Nancy's research, teaching and outreach focus on youth civic engagement and use of data to foster sustainable, equitable community development. She works in California and Nepal.
- Kabita Devkota** (INGENAES-Nepal)

Kabita has worked as an educator and a training organizer in multiple venues, and now supports INGENAES-Nepal activity.
- Mark Bell** (UC Davis College of Agriculture and Environmental Science, International Learning Center)

Mark serves as Director of the International Learning Center. He has worked internationally throughout his career, and currently specializes in the use of ICT in agricultural extension.

Appendix 2: Workshop Agenda

20 March, 16:00-17:30: Workshop Overview, Introductions and Networking

21 March, 8:30-16:00 Information Sharing and Envisioning

8:30-9 Registration, Opening Activity and Tea

9-9:30 Welcome

9:30-10:30 Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Messaging

- **Presentation: Key Messages and Emerging Messaging Lessons**
Why is Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture important for Nepal now? What are 3 High Priority Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Messages? What are 2 lessons you've learned about how to effectively tailor those messages to different places and/or populations?
- **Group Work: Message Adaptation**
Think about your hometown, your maithi or a place you've spent a lot of time working... you might want to consider a particular population based on jaat, gender, age group and/or experience—such as migrant returnees. Using the information about key messages that you just heard, generate 1 compelling message for the group you have in mind. Write on card, along with place/population selected. Share out, briefly explaining place and/or population and adaptation approach (e.g. specific language, wording, imagery, content, etc.). Discussion and facilitator summary.

Break

10:40-11:40 ICT Innovation

- **Presentation: ICT Innovation and Some Lessons-Learned About Their Success**
What is 1 example of an ICT innovation you've developed to support small-holder and emerging farmer agricultural learning, production, marketing or nutrition? What are the 3 considerations to make ICT efforts successful based on your experience?
- **Group Work: Adapting ICT Use**
Take one of the messages developed earlier and, considering what's required for success, identify how might you use one or more of these ICT tools to develop/share it. Identify the top 2 barriers to that approach that you'd need to keep in mind. Write on cards, pair and group discussion, facilitator summary.

11:45-12:30p Lunch

12:30-13:45 Tapping Youth Knowledge and Networks

- **Presentation: Nepali Youth Networks**
Introduce your network - why does it have an interest in agriculture and/or nutrition? What other existing youth networks could be tapped in developing/disseminating priority nutrition-sensitive agriculture information?
- **Group Work: Tapping/Building Youth Knowledge to Strengthen Family-/Nutrition-Sensitive Ag Extension**

Brainstorm in small groups, write answers on 3 cards

1. Skills/knowledge youth bring to this work
2. Skills/knowledge youth would likely need to develop
3. Any additional youth networks to tap

Groups share out, facilitator summary.

Break

13:55- 15:15 Learning From Extension and Putting it All Together

- Presentation: Learning From Extension Successes and Failures
Share 1 example of an extension innovation you've developed to support small-holder and emerging farmer Agricultural Learning, Production, Marketing, Nutrition (success or failure!). What are the 3 considerations to make extension efforts successful based on your experience?
- Group Work: Envisioning Putting It All Together/Thinking Outside the Box
Break into 3 small groups [designed to mix nutrition, ICT, youth and Extension people]. Envision 1-3 approaches to improving nutrition sensitive ag through ICT use and youth engagement based on what you've heard today.

15:15-15:30 Evaluation/Wrap-Up

22 March, 8:45-15:00 Moving From Vision Toward Practice

8:45 Tea and Check In

9:00-9:30 Day 1 Group Recap

9:30-10:15 Revisiting Envisioning Putting It All Together/Thinking Outside the Box

- Regroup in final Day 2 grouping. Review/revise emerging visions. Select a top option to present.

10:15-11:15 Group Presentations/Feedback (20 minutes per group)

11:30-12:15 Lunch

12:15-13:00 Piloting and Pitching

- Facilitated group discussion: What does it take to design a strong pilot project? A strong pitch?

13:00-13:45 Getting Practical: In Your Own Organization/Certificates

- Participants share specific next steps inspired by the workshop and receive certificates of participation.

13:45-14:00 Evaluation