

## PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN MARKETING: ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF FARM WOMEN

Roshani Thapa (Silwal)<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*Cash income in hand is a necessary condition for overall empowerment of women. For this purpose, women need to be involved in marketing. There are several projects implemented for the economic empowerment of women. However, the interrelatedness of involving women in marketing for overall empowerment of women has not been studied for policy purposes. Hence, this study has attempted to address this research gap. The objective of this study was to analyse the importance of involving women in marketing for their overall empowerment. In order to analyse the factors affecting decision making of the producers' group, a regression model was used. The findings of this study have clearly shown a linkage that when more women become the members of the producers group, then there is increased participation of women in the decision making process of the producers groups. When women are able to influence the decisions of the group, then they take-up market oriented production and start participating in the marketing activity. The study has concluded that women's involvement in marketing can be increased by increasing women's participation in producers' groups and promoting market oriented production.*

**Keywords:** participation, marketing, producers' groups

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the mainstay of Nepalese economy contributing to about 35 percent to GDP and 74 percent employment to economically active labour force (MOF, 2011). Despite the fact that about 400,000 labour enter into a labour market annually, due to slow growth of agriculture (around 3 percent), there is a high underemployment (NPC, 2011). There are a lot of people going abroad in search of employment. NPC (2011) has reported that 1,726,318 people are employed abroad other than India and about the same number is estimated to be employed in India. This statistics includes 23,725 (1.4%) women working abroad. As a result, there are more women left behind at home taking care of agriculture. This is more alarming in small and medium-sized farms wherefrom more men are migrating seasonally in search of employment. There are two important issues linked with it: production of such farms is of small volume; and they are scattered. For this reason, there is not enough volume for big-house traders to be efficient in marketing. As a result, small sized farmers and their production pockets are not yet integrated with the target export markets.

It has been reported that women contribute 55 to 82 percent of the total labour in agriculture (WFDD, 2000). Yet, statistics shows that only 8 percent women have a land ownership certificate (CBS, 2011), only 31 percent get first hand extension message (WFDD, 1993) and less than 10 percent are involved in product marketing (CECI, 2008). It is the marketing activity that translates the production in to a cash income. Cash income in hand is the necessary condition for overall empowerment. For this purpose, women need to be involved in marketing. There are several projects implemented for the economic empowerment of women. However, the interrelatedness of involving women in marketing

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<sup>1</sup> Anthropologist, roshanithapa@gmail.com ,

for overall empowerment of women has not been shown explicitly for policy purposes. Hence, this study has attempted to address this research gap.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to analyse the importance of involving women in marketing for their overall empowerment. Nevertheless, the specific objectives are to:

- Analyse the cause and effect of involving women in marketing
- Evaluate the factors affecting women's participation in marketing
- Assess the impact of women's say in the farmers' organization to achieve food security

### METHODOLOGY

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

When women are involved in marketing, they have to come out from home. In most parts of Nepal, patriarchal society dictates that women should not come out from home. In such societies when women come out from home to go to marketing, the first layer of social barrier that women should not go out from home is broken. In the market place, they will be negotiating on price with the buyers. In the process, they will be looking at others' face and talking to them who may be from other men, from other ethnic group, religion, etc. It again breaks another layer of social restriction on women that they should not look at other's face and talk to them. These are simple activities in marketing but contribute significantly in the social empowerment of women. These kinds of hawkers start selling produce at the roadsides in the municipal areas or cities. After some time, they encounter warnings from the municipal authorities to leave such places. Such expelled hawkers join together and form hawkers union to make their voice lauder. The union starts analyzing their rights and start bargaining with the local government demanding for a place to sell their produce. It contributes to political empowerment of women. When products are sold, women now have the cash income in their hands. It is the starting point of economic empowerment of women. This is because, a woman is considered "economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions" (Golla, et al., 2011). It capacitates them to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth (Eyben et al., 2008) which is fundamental to strengthening their rights and to have control over their lives and exert influence in society (MOFA, 2010). This conceptual framework on how involving women in marketing contributes to overall empowerment of women in agriculture, is summarized in Fig.1.

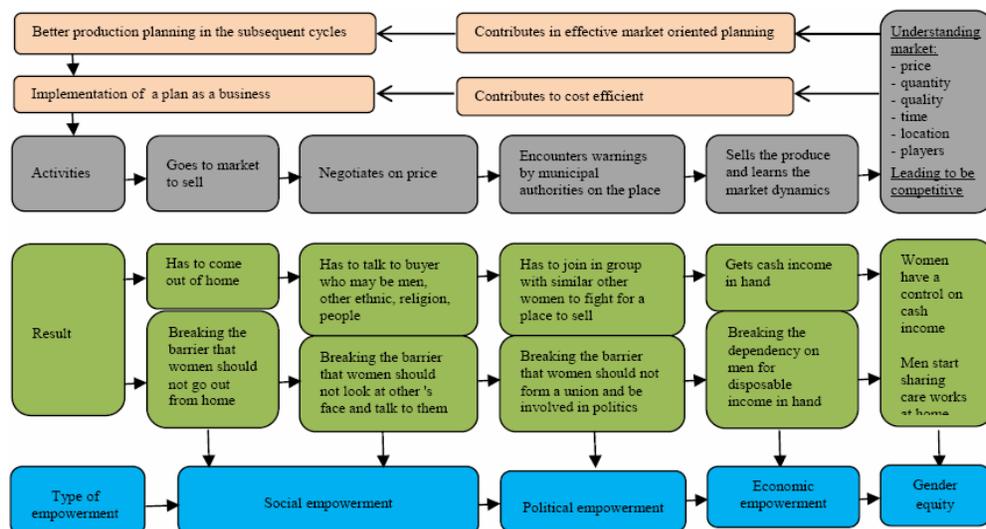


Fig.1: Involvement of women in marketing-necessary condition to achieve gender equality in agriculture development

#### ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to succeed and advance economically, women need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions. Skill transfer is usually addressed by the agriculture development programme of GOs and various I/NGOs; and access to economic institutions is enhanced by women's memberships in various cooperative societies in the community. This study has attempted to analyse the impact of such project activities to involve women in marketing and enhance their economic empowerment.

Among several agricultural crops, fresh vegetables are considered to be of high value and are seen being emphasized by most of the projects as an income generating activity. Hence, involvement of women in vegetable marketing is considered in this study as well. It has been well-established by various studies that hill and mountain districts of Nepal have comparative advantage of producing vegetables during rainy season (June-September) which can be sold as an off-season vegetable in the Terai (plain region) and bordering town of India (NPC, 2002). For this reason, this study has also considered off-season vegetable production in the hill and mountain districts.

In view of the smallness and scattered production, traders find it less profitable to collect produce from the small producers in the hill and mountain areas. In order for the producers' to reach a economic scale for marketing, producers are organized either in to farmers' organizations such as cooperatives or producers' groups and their produce is marketed through these organizations. As these organisations decide on the marketing issues, the gender composition of the members in these organisations has an influence on the types of decision being taken on agricultural production right from the production planning to final disposal of the produce in the value chain. In view of this fact, this study has included membership pattern in the farmers' organizations as an important variable determining the involvement of women in marketing.

#### SELECTION OF STUDY AREA

CECI-Sahakarya was found as one of the projects being implemented in Nepal which was supporting the rural communities to produce high value commodities and involve women in marketing. The CECI project management team was consulted about the availability of data for further analysis on the significance of involving women in marketing. CECI liked the idea and provided the data generated by Sahakarya Project from its Agriculture Production and Marketing Component.

#### THE AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING COMPONENT (APMC) OF THE CECI-SAHAKARYA PROJECT

Sahakarya is a CIDA funded bi-lateral project of the governments of Nepal and Canada implemented in Jumla, Dailekh, Surkhet, Dadeldhura and Baitadi districts from 2003 (CECI, 2004) to 2012. Among various components of the project, APMC was a very short duration project of Canadian \$ 839,394 implemented from November 2010 to July 2011 in the same five Sahakarya project districts. The project was implemented in partnership with eight agriculture cooperatives. The focus of the project was on enhancing production and marketing of vegetables (Sahakarya, 2010).

#### ANNUAL REVIEW AND PLANNING (ARP) DATA

CECI follows results-based management information system to monitor the project achievements. One of the tools used to gather information for this purpose is the annual review and planning (ARP). The ARP is conducted in each community level organizations or groups where at least one of the project activities has been implemented. The required

information is collected in a well-structured format from rigorous consultation in the group workshop. Information thus collected from the community level ARPs is collate and analysed by the implementing partner. The finding of the ARP is presented in the district level ARP amongst the beneficiaries and related stakeholders. With the permission of CECL, the community level ARP data collected by Sahakarya Project under its APMC was used in this study for further analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The ARP data was analysed first to characterize the membership pattern in the farmers' organizations followed by the involvement of women in marketing and achievement of food self sufficiency as follows.

### MEMBERSHIP PATTERN IN FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS

The project target was to reach to 8,000 households through producers' groups. The project reached to 8,406 households through 281 producers' groups. Each household has one member in the producers' group. The membership pattern in these producers' group is presented in Table 1. These members were covered under 281 producers' groups. All the remaining analysis in this study is based on the information from these households.

Table 1. Membership in producers' groups (Nov 2010 to July 2011)

Description	Unit	Male	Female	Total
General membership	Number	3455	4951	8406
	Percent	41.10	58.90	100
Working committee	Number	1064	1388	2452
	Percent	43.39	56.61	100

Though results presented in Table 1 show that women's participation in producers' group is more than 50 percent (higher than women's representation in population), it is still

lower than their involvement in agricultural production. Nevertheless, women's presence is a necessary condition to reach to a working committee and have a say in the decision making process. To this effect, 59 percent participation looks encouraging.

Producers group is an informal organisation of producer farmers formed for the purpose of technology transfer in group. Nevertheless, these informal groups have also working committees that executes group decisions. The working committee decides the activities for the group and its policies in production and marketing of crops. Hence, participation of women in working committee is a reflection of empowerment of women in taking decisions women think that are beneficial for them. In terms of women's empowerment on taking decisions is not at par as compared to their labour contribution in production.

### MEMBERSHIP PATTERN IN PRODUCTION

In terms of participation in vegetables production and in selling too, Table 2 shows that more women were involved. The rate is almost close to their representation in the working committee. It shows that there is a positive relationship between women's say in decision making on farm business and taking up of income generating commodity. Though vegetables

Table 2. Producers' groups involved in fresh vegetable

Gender	Production		Selling	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	2278	43.60	1870	43.15
Female	2947	56.40	2464	56.85
Total	5225	100.00	4334	100.00

were considered to be market oriented production, there were only 83 percent (4334 out of 5225) selling their vegetables. It shows that there are some producers who are growing vegetables for their own consumption only.

## WOMEN INVOLVED IN MARKETING

Though there are more than 56 percent women involved in production of vegetable, there are less women (36%) directly involved in marketing (Table 3). As marketing activity translates the produce into cash income, this result shows that women's economic empowerment is lagging behind. Nevertheless, as compared to less than 10 percent involvement of women in agriculture marketing in Nepal (CECI, 2008), this 36 percent direct involvement of women in marketing shows a progress being achieved by the project activities to bring more women in marketing.

Table 3. Number of women directly involved in marketing

Description	Status
Number of members in the PG	8,406
Number of women directly involved in marketing	3,015
Percentage of women involved in marketing	36

## REGRESSION RESULTS ON FACTORS AFFECTING WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN MARKETING

Based on the availability and sufficiency of data, this study has considered two regression models - first on women's involvement in marketing, and second on food sufficiency.

As depicted in Fig.1, women's participation in marketing contributes to overall empowerment of women through their economic empowerment. Marketing starts with the production of market oriented produce. It is discussed by the members in the working committee of producers' group on what has a good market for the coming season and what would be better for them to grow. As it is the working committee that takes the decision, women need to be in the working committee of the producers' groups to have their say in the discussion. As the working committee is formed by the producer's group, it necessarily requires women to be in the producers groups first to reach to the working committee and have their say in the decision making process. Vegetable production enterprise needs some cash investment as well. In order to take-up vegetable production enterprise, one needs to borrow credit. Hence, the ones who are the members of rural financial institution such as Savings and Credit Organisations have a better chance to take-up vegetable production. In addition to these three variables, the total production of the households and the total quantity sold by the households can also affect the participation in marketing. Based on the availability of information on these variables, following regression model was fitted and estimated. The received cross-sectional data was checked for heterocedasticity and multicollinearity, and was found fit to run the model.

$$Wpm = a_0 + a_1Mpg + a_2Fmd + a_3Wsc + a_4Tvp + a_5Tqs + e \quad (1)$$

where: Wpm is women's participation in marketing; Mpg is women members in the producers' group; Fmd is female members in the working committee of the producers' groups; Wsc is number of women members of the producers' groups who are also the members of the Savings and Credit Organisations; Tvp is total vegetable production by the group; Tqs is total quantity of vegetables sold; e is a random error assumed to be normally and independently distributed (NID); and ais are coefficients to be estimated. The regression results are presented in Table 4.

The conceptual idea presented in Fig.1 was supported by the data and was verified by the regression results. The results are conclusive that the number of women involved in marketing is affected by women's say in the working committees of the producers' groups. The result significantly shows that the more the participation of women in the working committees of the producers' groups, the more is the participation of women in marketing. It has further shown that the number of women as a general member in the producers' group also significantly determines the number of women involved in marketing. The relationship between the women's general membership in the producers' group and their

representation in the working committee is plotted in Figure 2. It clearly shows that women's participation as a general member in the producers' group is a necessary condition to have their say in the group and participate in the marketing activity subsequently.

Number of women in producers' groups who are the members of SCOs was found significant in determining the number of women involved in marketing. The result is as expected because production of vegetable required credit and credit is obtained from SCOs only when one becomes a member of SCO. By getting access to credit and producing vegetable, more women are encouraged to go to market.

Table 4. Regression results of women's participation in marketing of farm produce

Description	OLS estimates
Constant	3.98009 *** (0.50058)
Female members in producers' groups (No.)	0.08991 ** (0.03506)
Female members in decision making body of producers' groups (No.)	0.60141 *** (0.06621)
Female members of producers' groups who have a membership in SCO (No.)	0.23064 *** (0.05148)
Total vegetable production (kg)	0.00005 * (0.00003)
Total quantity of vegetables sold (kg)	0.00002 ** (0.00001)
R Square	0.67737
F-value	115.05547 ***
Number of observations	281

Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* refer to significance at the 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10 levels, respectively.

ns = not significant.

Figures in parentheses indicate standard errors.

Dependent variable = Number of women directly involved in marketing

In a market oriented production, more production means more to sell. There are two aspects now in selling the farm produce - first is the total quantity being produced and the second is the total quantity being sold (percentage sold). In this study, total quantities produced and sold were significant determinants of the number of women being involved in marketing.

Women's participation in marketing has several impacts in the farm households. As women always spent more of their income on family welfare, the households having women are directly involved in marketing are better-off in producing foods for the family. That is when more women join producers' group as a member, they start taking up production of high value crops and make income from it. As a result, they also learn about improved technology and access production inputs and technology for food crop production. Their enhanced overall capacity is reflected in the total food production. Consequently, those households gradually become self-sufficient in food production. As the food self sufficiency data was available for three categories such as sufficient for less than three months, sufficient for three to nine months, and sufficient for more than nine months. These three categories of household were regressed on the number of women members in the producers groups separately.

$$\text{Food self sufficiency for less than 3 months} = a_{0L3} + a_{1L3} \text{Wpg} + e_{L3}$$

$$\text{Food self sufficiency for 3-9 months} = a_{0L3} + a_{13-6} \text{Wpg} + e_{3-6}$$

$$\text{Food self sufficiency for more than 9 months} = a_{0M9} + a_{1M9} \text{Wpg} + e_{M9} \quad (2)$$

where;  $W_{pg}$  is the number of women member in the producers' group;  $e$  is a random error assumed to be NID; and  $a_{ij}$ s are coefficients to be estimated.

The regression results presented in Table 5 corroborate with the conceptual idea that the overall enhanced capacity is reflected in the food production and achieved self sufficiency in food. The increasing percentage of women members in producers group was found to be significantly related with the decreasing number of households whose food production was sufficient for less than three months. On the other hand, it was significantly related with the increasing number of households whose food production was sufficient for both three to nine months and more than nine months.

Table 5. Regression results of households with production sufficient for various periods

Description	OLS estimates for percentage of households whose production is sufficient		
	0-3 months	3-9 months	>9 months
Constant	42.6677 *** (3.3818)	43.0592 *** (3.7475)	14.5196 *** (3.4030)
Percentage of women members in producers' groups	-0.2549 *** (0.0534)	0.1045 * (0.0591)	0.1340 ** (0.0537)
R Square	0.0756	0.0111	0.0219
F-value	22.8310 ***	3.1251 *	6.2328 **
Number of observations	281	281	281

Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* refer to significance at the 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10 levels, respectively.

ns = not significant.

Figures in parentheses indicate standard errors.

Dependent variable = Percentage of households whose production is sufficient for up to three months, three to nine months and more than nine months

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study have clearly shown a linkage that when more women become the members of the producers group, then there is increase participation of women in the decision making process of the producers groups. Women influence the decisions of the group as per their contribution in production. Women take-up market oriented production and start participating in the marketing activity. Increasing women's participation in producers groups and marketing activity also enhances food sufficiency at the household level. From the consistent findings of this study it can be concluded that women's involvement in marketing can be increased by increasing women's participation in producers' groups and promoting market oriented production through these groups.

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