

Supply Chains offering opportunities for women farmers

Around one quarter of Nepali people live on less than \$1.90 a day according to the Asian Development Bank. In this young democracy prone to natural disasters, such as the earthquake of 2015 and the floods of 2017, subsistence agriculture is the main source of livelihood for four out of five people.

CONNECT, the economic development component of the ukaid funded Rural Access Programme is helping farmers shift from subsistence to commercial farming by building reliable supply chains.

The innovative Yuva Vayu (a Nepali word meaning Youth Wind) model, designed to build an army of women that will be valuable assets to their supply chains over the long term, has become a key component in delivering CONNECT's goal to embed a strong and commercial relationship between MSMEs and the farmers in their supply chains that will continue even after CONNECT's exit.

Yuva Vayus (YVs) are CONNECT's response to traditional social mobilisers. CONNECT has identified high potential women, who are hungry for change, ambitious for self, family and community and ready to volunteer their services, taking a leadership role in mobilizing, activating, energizing and shepherding the farmer groups they belong to.

Yuva Vayus like Nirmala Kumari Dhakal, a dairy farmer from Dailekh, are receiving training, coaching and technical support with the aim of empowering them to be champions of commercial farming and advocates of long term commercial agreements.

Nirmala lives with her mother and sister, 4km from Belpata Dairy Cooperative (BDC). She has been a member of the cooperative since it was established. The family earns a living from agriculture and the milk they sell to BDC.

Nirmala and the 21 other dairy farmers in the supply chain have recently completing 45-day Animal Village Health Worker training, receiving a GoN accredited qualification. Successful completion of the course not only gives them skills to improve both their and their communities' farming practices but enables them to provide basic veterinary services from which they will gain additional income.

“Whenever there used to be problem with our animals, we would depend on witchcraft. After RAP-3 CONNECT intervention we received many trainings, women have become independent.”

“Previously, we didn't even know about milk collection and storage. Now, we are aware about this and quantity of collected milk have increased along with increased grass production. It was not like this before. Many things have changed now.”

“women used to be limited in their locality like "the ponds frog". Now, the trainees have become independent in our village after getting all these trainings. They have increased self-confidence of doing something on their own. In coming days, they are confident enough to give services and charge money and do well in society.”

